

DOLORES

PORRAS

Sorrow, Roots and Clay

There are artists that are intertwined in México's name.. People like Frida Kahlo, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Cantinflas and Juan Gabriel are not easily forgotten. Every one of them has changed Mexico when it comes to art, they were all pioneers in one way or the other. But often, we are not appreciative enough of our cultural roots, we value soccer star players above those important roots. I'm not saying that those artists don't represent Mexico's essence, I'm not trying to say they do not deserve praise. The thing is, that Mexican essence is mixed, we are a product of both indigenous people and Spaniards. We are extremely good at representing that mixed heritage, but, here is the part of that heritage that made Mexico into Mexico? Where do our roots truly lie?



Come with me, let's go to a southeastern Mexican state, where there is more food, diversity and fauna than what can be imagined. There, in Oaxaca, lived a woman able to make her native state stand out by using only her hands.

Dolores Porras was one of the most dedicated and talented artisans to ever be born in Mexico. She began working when she was only thirteen years old, practicing pottery six days out of every week. She was able to make potter's clay into real Mexican essence.

For Porras, working on clay was an everyday thing, her hometown, Santa María Atzompa, has been home to all sorts of pottery since several centuries ago. But she was the one to keep pottery refreshing and new.

Throughout the years, she has been using the same ancient techniques and Oaxacan symbolism, which she has complemented with new knowledge and ideas from all over Mexico.

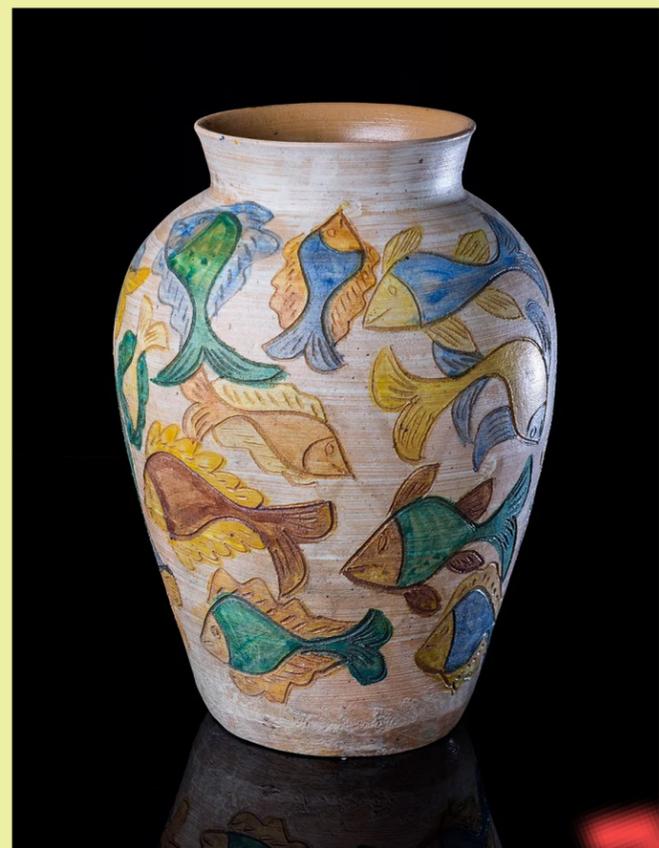
What's beautiful about her art, is that it's profound, and capable of flourishing with her. You can tell by looking at her art when she began to use her own color process or when she was feeling under the weather. In her last years, she developed Parkinson Disease, which stopped her from working the way she was used to.

Like most Mexican women, she gave it all to that which she loved, and after nine children and sixty years working her art, the time for her and her soul to rest arrived suddenly.

You are dust, and unto dust you shall return; a phrase typical of our Catholic Mexican society. From clay to clay and mud to mud. I deeply admire artists like Dolores Porras, not only because they were extremely hardworking, but also because they were able to keep alive something we are forgetting about, and probably will.

Today her only legacy is clay waiting to be turned to dust once again, but hopefully someone capable of creating art that is unique and gorgeous, won't truly become dust again. I admire her for being capable of celebrating and preserving something precious we are all about to lose.

Like most Mexican things, her work was quick to draw the gaze of many Americans and Europeans. Michael Peed, an American pottery professor, even made a documentary about Dolores and her art. I firmly believe that we as a country should appreciate value Mexican art as Mexicans, instead of relying on some outside party. Not only do we need to be thankful for our art and heritage, we need to help keep it alive, like Dolores was able to when she was still breathing.



BY: PAO
BERDEJA

TRANSLATION:
ERNESTO OCAÑA



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