

Hector Dionicio Mendoza: Geographies of Identity



Large Print Labels

Hector Dionicio Mendoza: Geographies of Identity

Hector Dionicio Mendoza was born in Uruapan, Michoacan, Mexico, and grew up with an appreciation for faith, ritual, and the environment. The artist's multimedia artworks blend ideals of geography, memory, and labor. His use of cardboard boxes, cinder blocks, and other recycled materials, along with plants and natural imagery draws out these associations. Mendoza's grandfather, a fifth-generation *curandero* (shaman) of Afro-Caribeño lineage, who practiced alternative healing traditions, was a pivotal influence on his artistic concepts, materials, and imagery. In Mexico, as well as Central and

South America, the *curandero* plays an important role to many people beginning the difficult passage to El Norte/The North (United States), by providing blessings and protection for the journey. Mendoza immigrated to King City, California, with his family when he was twelve years old. The foundation of his artistic practice is rooted in Indigenous Purépecha people's reverence of ancestors and spirits in nature as well as the religious and spiritual concepts of Catholicism, shamanism, and ethnobotany.

Hector Dionicio Mendoza is currently an Associate Professor of Sculpture and Installation in the Visual and Public Art Department at California State University Monterey Bay. He holds a BFA from California

College of the Arts in San Francisco and an
MFA from Yale University.

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Sculpture Court

Hector Dionicio Mendoza

(b. 1969, Uruapan, Michoacan, Mexico)

Coyota/e, 2021

cardboard, glue, epoxy,
wood, spray paint

*Collection of OZArtNW,
Bentonville, AR*



“Coyote” is a slang term used to describe individuals (predominantly men) who facilitate illegal border crossings from Mexico to the United States. “Coyota” specifically refers to females in this role. As a child, Mendoza learned that his aunts worked as coyotas to help protect people, who were crossing the border, from male coyotes, who were often

known to abandon migrants and to be violent predators.

Mendoza's artworks address nuanced, complex topics, such as the role of coyotes and coyotas within the border-crossing experience, through storytelling reminiscent of magical realism. In his sculptures, reality takes poetic flight into the supernatural. This sentiment is also embodied in his decision to elevate everyday materials associated with day labor to the level of fine art, bringing an element of wonder to materials that are often overlooked and underestimated.

Hector Dionicio Mendoza

(b. 1969, Uruapan, Michoacan, Mexico)

Mil Usos Monumento/ Labor Monument, 2021

cardboard, glue, epoxy, plaster,
wood, spray paint

*Courtesy of the artist and
Luis De Jesus Los Angeles*



Mil Usos Monumento/Labor Monument exemplifies Hector Dionicio Mendoza's signature sculptural collage technique of combining multiple materials, textures, and patterns together into a large, cohesive form. Through both its size and title, this monumental artwork questions the lack of societal appreciation for agricultural labor that is so pivotal to the United States economy —

labor regularly carried out by migrants. This artwork is a memorial for the underrecognized laborers. The figure's kneeling stance shows a strong worker at rest — worn, somber, and powerful.

Hector Dionicio Mendoza

(b. 1969, Uruapan, Michoacan, Mexico)

Wall (Muro), 2022

cardboard, wood, glass, epoxy,
rubber cement, soil

*Courtesy of the artist and
Luis De Jesus Los Angeles*



Wall (Muro) is inspired by common DIY walls created in neighborhoods not only in Mexico, but in communities in the United States and around the globe. Concrete and bottles are repurposed to line domestic walls and windowsills as a form of protection for those with little means. The broken glass is both dangerous and aesthetically attractive, asserting a combination of the need for both safety and beauty in life. *Wall (Muro)*

symbolically refers to these actual walls, as well as the metaphorical walls that we construct within ourselves.