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The Natalie and James Thompson Art Gallery and the Department of Art and Art History, Santa Clara University

Jo Farb Hernandez
San Jose State University, jo.hernandez@sjsu.edu

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The results of research on the state's traditions and tradition-bearers will be presented to the public through educational programs, media projects, concerts, the Delta Blues Symposium, and other events coordinated by ASU and the Arkansas Arts Council.

Since beginning work in September, I have already established an Internet discussion group, ArkFolkNet (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ArkFolkNet/>) to enable those interested in Arkansas traditions to share information. I have nominated two outstanding Arkansas traditional artists, a Pine Bluff blues musician, CeDell Davis, and a Mountain View potter, basketmaker, and ballad singer for the National Heritage Fellowship. Arkansas has not had one of its citizens honored with the award since 1985.

I am also working to create new programming for the Delta Blues Symposium for 2006 including a performance of Latino musicians from the Delta and a Blues-in-the-Schools program.

Much of the work involves traveling to inform others about ASU, including its Heritage Studies doctoral program, as well as the Arkansas folklife program. I spoke recently at the Talking Ozarks Symposium at Missouri State University in West Plains, and have traveled to speak at the Tennessee Folklore Society meeting and to the American Folklore Society meeting in Atlanta.

I'm working to meet with as many of my colleagues both in and out of state to learn about what projects are working and to look for new ways to serve the people of Arkansas.

I am also conducting a series of interviews with Arkansas musicians and other

artists to both further that understanding and to enhance the archives at Arkansas State University.

For more details about the Arkansas folklife project or to suggest leads or topics, please contact me at 417-938-4633 or via email at Luster@aol.com. To subscribe to "ArkFolkNet" send an email message to ArkFolkNet-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

*J. Michael Luster, Ph.D
Arkansas Folklife Program
Arkansas State University
PO Box 102
Mammoth Spring, AR 72554
417-938-4633*

CALIFORNIA

THE NATALIE AND JAMES THOMPSON ART GALLERY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY, SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

Jo Farb Hernandez

A groundbreaking collaboration during fall, 2005 between the Natalie and James Thompson Art Gallery in the School of Art and Design at San Jose State University and the Department of Art and Art History at Santa Clara University, focused on Spanish traditional arts and their iterations among Mexican artists. The exhibitions, book, videos, lectures, panel discussions, community receptions, and procession combined to enable us to explicitly explore the links between the Spanish Catalan tradition of creating monumental press-molded paper constructions used in community performance events with their cultural arts

manifestations in Mexico and in Mexican-American communities within the U.S., tied within the rubric of both SJSU's and SCU's academic program and curricular offerings.

Spurred by the publication of the 225-page fully illustrated book *Forms of Tradition in Contemporary Spain* (University Press of Mississippi, 2005) that explores the works of four traditional artists from various parts of Spain, the Thompson Gallery mounted an exhibition featuring works by each of these artists as well as documentary photographs of their works *in situ*. The exhibition reception was preceded by a public slide lecture given by exhibition curator and author Jo Farb Hernandez, and the objects on display were complemented by a running video of four DVDs featuring the artists at work.



A group of cabezudos done by the students in the SCU class.

Artists David Ventura and Neus Hosta, co-founders of the Ventura and Hosta studio in northeastern Spain, are among the foremost artisans creating monumental figures or *gigantes*, which are used as important components of village festivals around Catalunya and beyond. With funding from SJSU's Natalie and James Thompson Endowment and supplemented with funds from the Center for Multi-Cultural Learning at Santa Clara University, the two artists were brought to California for a three-week residency.

After attending the opening at the SJSU's Thompson Gallery, they initiated an intensive workshop integrated into SCU's Sculpture 64/164 course taught by Professor Sam Hernandez.

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish artists, Professor Hernandez presented the concept of developing ideas for the creation of *cabezudos* or "big heads," the large helmet-style masks worn in conjunction with the *gigantes* in traditional Spanish processions. Each student was to create his/her own figurative helmet-mask sculpture after viewing Ventura and Hosta's demonstrations of the different stages in the technical processes as they created their own *gigante* that will remain at SCU. This included preparatory sketches for the design, the creation of a full-scale clay original, pulling a plaster mold from the clay form, layering special paper imported from Spain into the negative sides of the mold pieces, drying, removing, and reassembling the rough paper components, and finally painting and designing and creating costumes for each "big head."

During the course of the semester, several additional elements enhanced the students' understanding of the background and function of these works within the communities in which they are traditionally used. These included a panel discussion that presented specific information on the conceptual, technical, and aesthetic differences between Spanish and Mexican traditions in monumental paper constructions. Panelists were Jo Farb Hernandez, who provided background contextual information on the tradition of using the *gigantes* and *cabezudos* in Spanish festive processions; David Ventura and Neus Hosta, presenting slides of their work; and Rubén Guzmán, Mexican paper sculptor currently living in Oakland, California, who also presented

slides and actual objects for the audience to view. Having the Spanish and Mexican artists interact was fascinating; among other new understandings, we all agreed that the Mexican and Mexican-American paper tradition is more freely inventive and idiosyncratic than the Spanish tradition, which is more steeped in folkloric and culturally-proscribed parameters.



Ventura and Hosta's gigantes in procession in Navata, Spain, summer 2005.

A selection of works by Ventura and Hosta and documentary photographs by Jo Farb Hernandez that had been on display at SJSU's Thompson Gallery were transported to the SCU Department Gallery for a smaller and somewhat different exhibition titled "Connections and Links." Paper works by Mexican paper artist Rubén Guzmán were also included in this second display.

To celebrate the unveiling of the monumental sculpture created by Ventura and Hosta for the SCU community, a community-wide paella dinner was hosted by the Department of Art and Art History. Later, when all of the student works had been completed, a university-wide processional and performance of all of the monumental constructions took place. Administered through a collaborative partnership between the Departments of Art and Art History, Music, and Performance Studies, the students "wore" their *cabezudos* and "danced" them to a percussion ensemble consisting of faculty and students from the Music Department. The procession was enthusiastically received and covered widely in television and print, in both mainstream and Spanish-language media organs.

Having the opportunity to watch, study with, and learn from two traditional artists from Spain helped to develop a much broader multicultural understanding among our student, faculty, and community participants than a less experiential and hands-on approach would have, and enabled us to trace those connections and explore the changes between Spanish and Mexican traditions over time within a broader context. Couched in relation to the contemporary arts issues that the university students typically study, this emphasis on traditional and folk arts has broadened their bases and academic experiences, and has greatly enhanced all aspects of the university communities of both institutions.

*Jo Farb Hernandez, Director
Natalie and James Thompson Art Gallery
School of Art and Design
San Jose State University
San Jose, CA 95192-0089*