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

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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.

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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 processional 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.

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

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.
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.

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.

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