



Art

Mexican Art

Year 5 Unit 2

**Key Vocabulary:**

**Core Knowledge**

Magical Realism	Magical realist paintings are modern realist paintings with fantasy or dream-like subjects.
Symbolism	Symbolism is the idea that things represent other things.

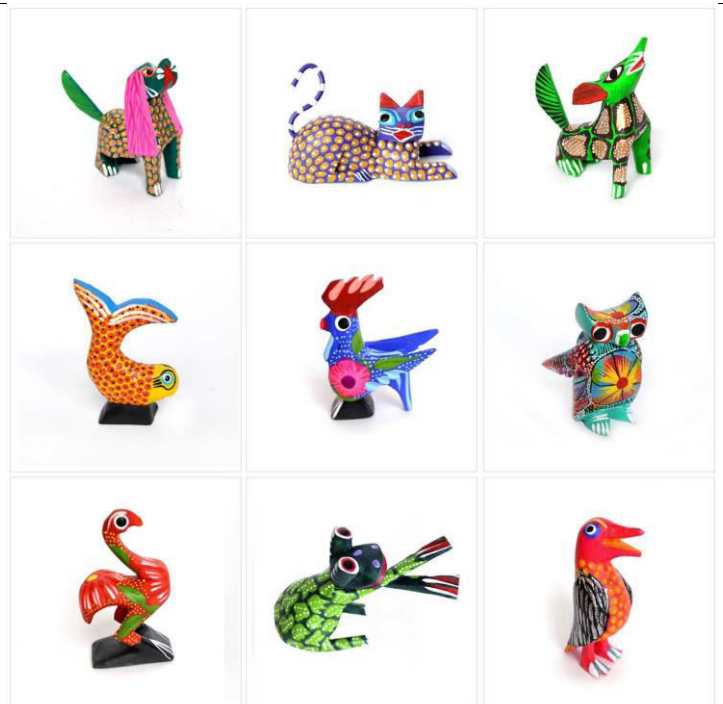
**Technical Vocabulary**

Block Printing	Block printing is the process of printing patterns by means of engraved wooden blocks.
Sculpture	A 3D, solid piece of artwork.
Albrijes	Mexican folk art sculpture, sometimes based on mythical creatures.

**Key Works of Art**



Self Portrait, Dedicated to Dr Eloesser, 1940, Frida Kahlo



**Alebrijes:**  
Mythical Mexican Folk Art Sculptures

## Cultural Knowledge

### Ancient Mexican Art

Mexican art history begins with early peoples, such as the Olmecs, Incans, Mayans and Aztecs. These early artists produced works during the 3,000-year period between 1500 BC and 1500 AD. The Olmecs, the original writers of hieroglyphics, created a calendar, which influenced their architectural designs. The position of sunlight and shadows determined where they placed architectural details. They made sculptures of huge heads that may have represented their rulers.

### Religious Influences

The Colonial Era which lasted from 1521 to 1821 due to the Spanish conquering Mexico meant a new religion was introduced, Christianity. When they built churches, the native craftsmen decorated the stonework with European-style designs and included the Virgin Mary, angels, and the cross.

### Murals

The Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) had a big impact on art. The people overthrew the harsh Mexican dictator, Porfirio Diaz, who had actually pushed for cultural and artistic development, however, he wanted Mexico to be like Europe. The government used art as propaganda and commissioned murals with political messages for public buildings.

A muralist movement began during this time. Artists broke with European traditions to paint vivid scenes of human activity. **Artists believed that Mexican art should reflect Mexican life.**

### Folk Art and Crafts

In Mexico, folk arts and crafts are called "artesanía" and are handmade by people with no formal art training. There is a wide variety of artesanía in Mexico because Mexico has many different raw materials and varied groups of people. Bold colours and decorative details give Mexican folk art the attractive edge it is famous for, like the mythical Alebrijes.

### Day of the Dead

This a Mexican festival in which family members come together to pray and celebrate the lives of the dead. They make folk art sugar skulls and handmade masks.

**Sugar skulls** represent a departed soul and may have the names of the loved ones written on the foreheads. Family members place the skulls on an altar or the loved one's grave to honor the return of the person's spirit. While they require a lot of work to make, sugar skulls are colorful, sparkly, and inspire joy.

**Handmade masks** are also an important part of Mexican culture. They originated to celebrate the Day of the Dead, but are now used for other celebrations too.

### Pottery

Mexican pottery date back to the early cultures who lived in Mexico before the Spaniards came. These native people created ceramics using their hands to shape the pottery. They did not use pottery wheels. Each family made their own pinched pots or coiled pieces, but sought out craftsmen for larger ones. Potters used open firing and natural pigments to decorate the clay.