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For Immediate Use
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“Fowler in Focus: X-Voto—The Retablo-Inspired Art of David Mecalco” Opens Jan 31 at the Fowler Museum at UCLA



For more than two decades artist David Mecalco has sold hand-painted devotional images (*retablos*) from a stall in Mexico City’s La Lagunilla Sunday antiques fair, commonly referred to as the Thieves’ Market. In recent years these vibrant works—pulsing with images of the Virgin Mary, the devil, skeletons, animals, petitioners, and more—have brought him international recognition. See a selection of forty-two works by the artist in *Fowler in Focus: X-Voto—The Retablo-Inspired Art of David Mecalco*, on display at the Fowler Museum at UCLA from Jan. 31–May 16, 2010.

Traditionally, wooden or metal-backed Mexican *retablos* are placed in churches, shrines or home altars, and many are now commissioned as expressions of gratitude (*retablos ex votos*) for prayers answered. Mecalco re-conceptualizes the art form,

creating lively paintings inspired by the realities of life in the barrios and saloons of Mexico.

David Mecalco (b. 1963) is a lifelong resident of Mexico City. He received his formal art training at Mexico’s National School of Painting, Sculpture, and Engraving from 1980 to 1985 and is best known for his folk-influenced votive paintings, wall-mounted shrines, and reliquary boxes. Mecalco first began experimenting with devotional imagery in the early 1990s, blending elements of Mexican religious iconography with contemporary graphic and fine art influences. The resulting works of art, which are deliberately executed in an untrained or naive style, test the limits of the traditional forms after which they are patterned.

Mecalco’s artistic vision is particularly notable for its startling depictions of street life and alternative lifestyles in contemporary Mexico. His juxtaposition of time-honored sacred symbols such as *milagros* with starkly secular and controversial content is especially popular with foreign collectors, and in recent years, his work has been exhibited at the Tate Modern in London, the Musée International des Arts Modestes in Sète, France, and art galleries across the United States.

The works in this exhibition are drawn from the Thomas Wortham Collection of Latin American Popular Arts, which was donated to the Fowler Museum in 2008. A Professor Emeritus from UCLA’s

2-2-2 Fowler Exhibition Tells Story of Tea through Art from Asia, Europe and America

Department of English, Wortham began acquiring nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin American popular and outsider art in the mid-1990s and quickly developed an extensive and eclectic assemblage of art, including more than sixty works by David Mecalco.

This exhibition is curated by Patrick Polk, the Fowler Museum's curator of Caribbean and Latin American popular arts, and is scheduled in conjunction with the 2010 centennial of the Mexican Revolution. A second Fowler in Focus exhibition honoring the centennial will open in the fall of 2010, and will feature pre-Columbian art from the Fowler collection,

Fowler in Focus: X-Voto—The Retablo-Inspired Art of David Mecalco will be on view in the Fowler in Focus gallery, the central space within the long-term exhibition *Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives*. Fowler in Focus is dedicated to rotating installations of new acquisitions, sub-collections, and particular artistic genres in the Fowler's permanent holdings.

The Fowler Museum at UCLA is one of the country's most respected institutions devoted to exploring the arts and cultures of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas. The Fowler is open Wednesdays through Sundays, from noon to 5 p.m.; and on Thursdays, from noon until 8 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. The Fowler Museum, part of UCLA Arts, is located in the north part of the UCLA campus. Admission is free. Parking is available for a maximum of \$10 in Lot 4. For more information, the public may call 310/825-4361 or visit fowler.ucla.edu.

Related Event:

March 14, 2010 1–4 pm

Kids in the Courtyard: Little Boxes, None the Same

At this free, drop-in workshop, create miniature worlds in little boxes made of tin and found materials, inspired by *Fowler in Focus: X-Voto—The Retablo-Inspired Art of David Mecalco*.

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