

El Día de los Muertos 2010 Day of the Dead

Altar Proposal Guidelines

Community groups, individuals, and artists are invited to create altars to be displayed in the galleries of the Indianapolis Art Center as part of our annual El Día de los Muertos/ Day of the Dead exhibition. Altars may incorporate both traditional and non-traditional elements.



Please contact us if you have any questions:

Laura Alvarado, Director of Outreach (317) 255-2464 ext. 235 or LAlvarado@indplsartcenter.org

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Schedule for Altar Exhibition

Proposal Deadline: Friday, September 3, 2010 (entries must be received by 5pm).

Exhibition Dates: Friday, October 8 through Sunday, November 28

Installation Dates: Monday, October 4 - Thursday, October 7 (all altars must be installed during these dates, there are no exceptions)

Celebration Date: Saturday, October 30th (3 p.m. - 8 p.m.)

Takedown Dates: Sunday, November 28th (Noon- 6p.m.)
Monday, November 29th (9 a.m. - 9 p.m.)
Tuesday, November 30th (9a.m. - 9 p.m.)

About the Altar (Ofrenda)

The goal of constructing an altar, or *ofrenda*, is to honor and welcome back the soul of the deceased person. An altar may be dedicated to an individual or a group of people who have departed. Items on the altar should celebrate the spirit of the deceased in a way that encourages enjoyable memories.

Please note that the altars are to be for specific people, not animals, political or domestic causes. If you wish to work with these themes you should fill out a *Shrine* application. If you have questions about whether or not your subject is appropriate please contact us.

Applying for an Altar

You will need to fill out the Altar application attached to these guidelines. Please be aware that we reserve the right to choose which altars will be accepted into the show. We will make every effort to accommodate as many participants as possible. In the case of inappropriate subject matter we reserve the right to turn down your application - but will contact you to discuss possible modifications that would make your altar fit in with our celebration.

Please pay special attention to the *Description of Elements* section of the application. It is important that we know how you will be constructing your altar to make sure that the

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hardware and materials used are compatible with our gallery space. In addition, we are available to consult you in your altar construction in order to make the best looking altar possible.



Image above: Altar by the Tamarindo
Foundation for Oscar Romero

How is the altar structured?

- Altars traditionally have three levels: (1) elements on the floor, (2) elements on a table or other elevated area, and (3) elements on a wall.
- For our exhibition, altar formats may be interpreted in traditional and/or contemporary ways. Altars can be viewed as multi-media works of art.
- Objects may be arranged around or over the levels of the altar—examples are a canopy, archway, or hanging from the ceiling. **Important:** Please don't include items on your altar that are easily removable. Altars often have very cherished, irreplaceable objects on them—these are encouraged—however, they should be securely fastened to your piece.
- Traditionally, flowers and flower petals are often arranged to lead people to the altar. If you choose to add flowers, please keep in mind that these need to be cared for and contained in some way.
- **Size Limits:** Height: up to 8 feet Depth: no more than 2 ½ feet Width: may vary, but tends to be 3 to 4 feet.

Traditional Altars

Include many of the following elements:

- ♦ **Fresh flowers or flower petals**—typically marigolds or other yellow or orange flowers. Known as *xempasuchitl*, the flower of the dead, these make a path to the altar for the deceased's soul.
- ♦ **Candles**—to light the way to the altar for the deceased's soul.
- ♦ **Papel picado**, or cut tissue-paper banners—with images of skeletons and flowers.
- ♦ **Foods** beloved by the deceased person, especially fresh food.
- ♦ **Photographs** of the deceased person or other representative objects that tell the story of the deceased.
- ♦ **Toys, trinkets, and items that represent or were owned by the deceased.**
- ♦ **Incense or fragrant herbs**, in particular sage, sweetgrass or *copal* (traditional Mexican incense)—to purify the altar, represent spirit & guide the soul through scent.
- ♦ **Salt** is also used for purification.
- ♦ **Icons, retablos, rosaries or other religious symbols or objects** as appropriate.
- ♦ **Vessels containing water**—representing the life force, and so the soul may also quench its thirst, or other drink favorites of the deceased. *Please do not place full bottles of liquor/beer on altars for the length of the exhibition.
- ♦ **Figurines of skeletons or skulls**—such as sugar skulls decorated with icing.
- ♦ **Pan de muerto**—traditional Mexican bread baked for the occasion—found in many *panaderias* (bakeries) in October.

Contemporary /Non-Traditional Altars

Might incorporate the following items:

- Artistic elements-sculpture, paintings, fabric, text, video, music, string lights, etc.
- Non-traditional structure or design, such as an altar that is not made in three levels.

What are the requirements for installing an altar?

Each artist installs his or her altar creation. Your design should be able to be installed by one person within a couple of hours or within several 2-hour shifts. If the altar is more complex or will take longer, please recruit and bring helpers as necessary. Other artists installing at the same time as you might need brief assistance, so please be prepared to help each other out. Creating an altar is traditionally a collaborative process!

Keep in mind that all Altars must be installed no later than 10 p.m. on Thursday, October 7th.

Altars will NOT be allowed to be installed after this point - no exceptions!

General Guidelines for Altar Construction

- Keep your safety and the public's safety in mind when installing your altar.
- OK to hammer nails into the wall to hang objects.
- Please bring your own tools and hardware.
- Upon request, the Art Center will provide ladders for all artists to share.
- *Do Not plan to draw or paint directly on the wall.*
- *Do Not use Velcro, foam tape or double-stick tape to attach items to the walls.*
- *Do Not use stickers, contact paper, or similar materials*
- Keep food packaged or wrapped to discourage vermin.
- Candles will only be lit during the public celebration. Please provide supervision for lit candles.
- The public will be encouraged to lay flowers and bread on the altars during the celebration. If you do not wish to have these additions please let us know in your proposal.
- Feel free to make your altar as expressive and artistic as you wish!

Text and signage:

- NEW procedure regarding label and bio: Once your altar design is accepted, **please email us your full label copy and a brief bio about yourself or your group.** This will help speed up the process of getting your label formatted and translated into Spanish. (Please let us know if you can provide your own Spanish translation.) We will do our best to get a draft to you for final review.
- Your label may include an explanation of elements of the altar, a poem, or your remembrances of the deceased individual you are honoring. Please keep this additional text to one-half of a page or less.
- After the altars are up, the Art Center will mount/hang the label text (and light altars appropriately).