

NMSU OutsmART Program – Online Retablo Making Workshop

More info/registration: <https://uam.nmsu.edu/retablomaking/>



Brief Introduction to Retablos

A retablo is a devotional painting of saints, religious personages, or votive offerings created on small sheets of tin-coated iron. They tell us about the lives, culture, and communities of the people who made and used them, and how those traditions carry on today. Largely created by self-taught artists, these paintings were used primarily by the Mexican people as objects of veneration in their homes or placed at pilgrimage sites as votive offerings. There are two types, the Santos and Ex-voto. Both devotional and especially ex-voto retablos may be deposited at a shrine as a votive offering, or alternatively kept at home. Their function was to induce spiritual qualities of love, respect, devotion, faith, sacrifice, and humility directed toward the person or thing, i.e., the model that they represent. Today individual artists faithfully carry on the tradition of hand-painted retablos, and contemporary artists, from diverse cultural backgrounds, draw creative inspiration from this popular art form.

Material List:

- Cardboard cut into rectangles
- Sandpaper (optional for rounding edges of your cardboard)
- Markers
- Ruler/Straight Edge (optional)
- Pencils
- Oil pastels (optional, other good ideas would be crayons, paint)
- Stencils (see website for download/you will need scissors from home)
- Glue Sticks/Mod Podge (optional for collage style)
- Magazines/Photos (optional for collage style)
- Gold Marker/Paint Pen (optional)
- Scissors (optional)

Steps for Making Your Retablo (Ex-Voto) on a piece of cardboard

Step 1 – Cut a piece of cardboard into a rectangle. This will be your retablo. A good size is 8 inches tall by 11 inches wide. It does not have to be exact. It can be a little smaller or bigger. If you picked up a packet from the NMSU Museum there is a piece of cardboard that has been pre-cut for you.

Step 2 – You can sand the edges of your cardboard before drawing on it or you may do it at the end of the project. Sanding will smooth the edges and give it a cleaner look. There is a small piece of sandpaper in your kit.

Step 3 – Think about what you want to draw as your narrative on your retablo. A narrative is like a story. A retablo does not have to be religious; it can be about something important to you. It can be about family members, memories, friends, or maybe a person you admire. It can be a wish or a way to thank someone. You should use some symbols in your story. Animals and flowers are examples of symbols in retablos. We have many symbols in New Mexico; roadrunners, petroglyphs, the Zia sun. You should sketch your idea on a piece of paper first. You will be adding one or two sentences to your retablo. These sentences will be on the bottom of your retablo. Look at the examples and find the symbols.

Step 4 – Take your ruler or straight edge and draw three lines on the bottom of your cardboard with ½ inch between each line. I recommend practicing on a sheet of paper after deciding what you want to write to make sure it fits. See diagram/examples:

Story Area



My working days can be tiresome and boring. But thanks to the Holy Heart my soul gets free at night. I fly among the stars touching the Moon with my fingertips and diving in the infinity. I feel myself so happy and alive.

text



Step 5 – Draw your story using your pencil (you may use the stencils here if you choose). Be careful not to press too hard. Your pencil will punch a hole in your cardboard. If you make a mistake you can erase and redraw.

Step 6 – Outline your drawing with markers so that your drawing will be visible on your cardboard. You can use the oil pastels after you are done using your markers. Try not to use the pastels before the markers. If the pastel gets on your marker it will be hard to use. The oil pastels can be mixed once they are on your cardboard.

Step 7 – After you have finished your drawing and coloring in you can write your text on your lines at the bottom of your retablo.

These are the steps for a retablo using markers and pastels/crayons. You can also paint or collage photos or magazine images on your cardboard using the included glue stick.

The completed retablos can be used for the museum's next event, "Joseph's Feast Day," a community-sourced collection of homemade altars built by confined families all over the world. Altars can include retablos, photographs, food offerings, rosaries, or other materials that may connect to stories of surviving COVID-19, struggles with illness/hardship and other journeys associated with labor. Photos of completed altars may be sent to artmuseum@nmsu.edu, from March 1-March 18. Submissions will be posted on the UAM Instagram [@nmsuartmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/nmsuartmuseum) on Saint Joseph's Day, March 19. To reserve an appointment to view the exhibit, visit <https://uam.nmsu.edu/timed-tickets/> To learn more about this event and other upcoming events, visit <https://uam.nmsu.edu/>.

