

New Exhibition at Blanton Museum Reveals How Artists Spark Creativity in One Another

*The cross-curatorial exhibition, **In Creative Harmony: Three Artistic Partnerships** delves into the relationships between three pairs of artists: Arshile Gorky and Isamu Noguchi; Mexican printmakers José Guadalupe Posada and Artemio Rodríguez; and mother–daughter duo, Nora and Eliza Naranjo Morse.*

AUSTIN, TX — December 12, 2024 — Opening on February 16, 2025, at the Blanton Museum of Art at The University of Texas at Austin, [In Creative Harmony: Three Artistic Partnerships](#) explores how human connection drives creativity. This major exhibition will be on view through July 20, 2025.

Emphasizing that art is rarely developed in isolation, *In Creative Harmony* examines three distinct pairs of artists to show how shared visual languages, techniques, and conceptual interests shape innovation. The artistic partnerships are as follows:

- Mexican printmakers working a century apart, **José Guadalupe Posada** and **Artemio Rodríguez**, who engage in a dialogue across time.
- Friends and innovators in abstract painting and sculpture, **Arshile Gorky** and **Isamu Noguchi**, who shared creative trajectories.
- Mother-daughter descendants of Pueblo potters, **Nora and Eliza Naranjo Morse**, who are collaborating for the first time in diverse media.

“Artists have inspired one another for centuries. *In Creative Harmony* demonstrates how these exchanges push the boundaries of creativity by beautifully weaving together three transformative partnerships and more than a hundred artworks. This extraordinary exhibition is an opportunity for our visitors to experience iconic artworks by Gorky, Noguchi, and Posada, while discovering new works by three incredible artists working today, Artemio Rodríguez, and Nora and Eliza Naranjo Morse,” said **Director Simone Wicha**.

In the spirit of collaboration, three of the Blanton’s curators were invited to each organize a pairing in the exhibition, with their own perspective on partnership: **Vanessa Davidson**, research curator of Latin American art; **Claire Howard**, former Blanton associate curator of collections and exhibitions, and current Hansjörg Wyss curator of modern art at the MFA Boston; and **Hannah Klemm**, curator of modern and contemporary art.

Holly Borham, curator of European art, prints, and drawings, also organized a companion exhibition in the museum’s Paper Vault galleries, which looks at partnership through the lens of

European printmaking families. Collectively, they consider the varied ways legacy, connection, and collaboration influence artistic production.

“The breadth of artists as well as time periods, mediums, and perspectives within this project highlights the exceptional expertise and depth of the Blanton’s curatorial team,” added Wicha. “Our large team of nationally renowned curators is committed to presenting innovative exhibitions like this one, which advances new scholarship while engaging our community and inspiring meaningful conversations that extend beyond the galleries.”

In Creative Harmony features artworks from the Blanton's collection, along with loans and debut works, showcasing a variety of mediums across the three partnerships. The adjacent exhibition of European prints, [*A Family Affair: Artistic Dynasties in Europe*](#), will be on view at the same time.

José Guadalupe Posada and Artemio Rodríguez: Calaveras y Corazones



(Left) José Guadalupe Posada, *Calavera Oaxaqueña* [Calavera from Oaxaca], ca. 1910, type-metal engraving, Artemio Rodríguez Collection; (Right) Artemio Rodríguez, *Mickey Muerto 3* [Dead Mickey 3], 2005, silkscreen on paper, Artemio Rodríguez Collection, courtesy of the artist

In Creative Harmony opens with a relationship across time. This first pairing brings together two masterful Mexican printmakers who never met, but who engage in a vivid, visual dialogue across the span of a century. Working in Mexico City at the turn of the twentieth century, **José Guadalupe Posada (1852–1913)** was known as the “Printmaker of the People” as well as the “Mexican Goya.” Living in the U.S. from 1994 to 2008, **Artemio Rodríguez (b. 1972)** embraced Posada’s foundational precedent as he found his artistic voice.

“José Guadalupe Posada's unique prints made me comprehend that it was indeed possible to become an artist in every sense of the word through printmaking. This certainty opened my eyes and helped me focus entirely on this vocation,” said Rodríguez in a text written exclusively

for the Blanton's digital publication: *José Guadalupe Posada and Artemio Rodríguez: Tradition, Inspiration, Invention* (April 2025).

Posada's precedents served young Rodríguez as a bridge to Chicano artists' strategies to translate ideals of social justice and resistance into graphic form. Both their works employ caustic political critique and social satire, while also celebrating their respective communities' popular tales and traditions. Splicing narrative lessons learned from Posada with elements of Chicano as well as medieval and Netherlandish visual cultures, Rodríguez creates a syncretic art that expands Posada's legacy into other worlds.

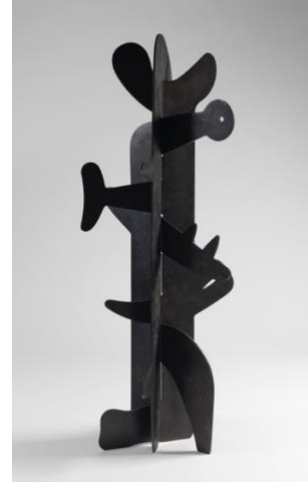
Posada's lifetime spanned the long decades of Porfirio Díaz's dictatorial regime (1884–1910) until the beginnings of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), and his prints reflected a rapidly changing nation. During Rodríguez's U.S. sojourn, he witnessed a country fighting an internal battle against undocumented immigrants while simultaneously waging war in the Persian Gulf.

Both times of crisis evoke the refrain: "All's fair in love and war!" *Love* (celebration) and *War* (satire) structure this exhibition, which brings these two radical artists together for the first time. This section will feature approximately 80 prints, including many artworks by Posada drawn from Rodríguez's personal collection, as well as loans from esteemed institutions.

"The virtual, visual dialogue Rodríguez maintains with Posada manifests itself in parallel imagery anchored in each artist's respective context. On one hand, both artists illustrate profound respect for communal heritage and beloved traditions, while on the other, they raucously raise the dead into living, mischievous *calaveras*, skeletal vehicles for grim humor, biting irony, and socio-political parody. Their *calaveras* can be alternately murderous or coy, lovesick or menacing, or downright blasphemous— as in Rodríguez's "murder" of Mickey Mouse (*Mickey Muerto*) and Superman (*Supermuerto*), both featured prominently in the galleries," said Vanessa Davidson, research curator of Latin American art. "The first exhibition to explore Posada's and Rodríguez's virtual partnership, it spotlights channels of inspiration and hybrid strains of innovation that run deep, despite distant chronologies."

"Posada's images have been an essential reference in my work. It is a great honor to exhibit my prints alongside the brilliant work of the quintessential master of Mexican printmaking," added Rodríguez.

Arshile Gorky and Isamu Noguchi: Outside In



(Left) Arshile Gorky, *Dialogue of the Edge*, circa 1946, oil on canvas, 32 1/16 x 41 1/8 in., Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, Gift of Mari and James A. Michener, 1991 (photo: © 2024 The Arshile Gorky Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York); (Right) Isamu Noguchi, *Trinity (Triple)*, 1945 (fabricated 1988), bronze plate, 55 3/4 x 22 1/4 x 19 1/2 in., Collection of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York (photo: Kevin Noble © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York)

The second part of the exhibition highlights the close friendship of painter **Arshile Gorky (c. 1904-1948)** and sculptor **Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988)**, informed not only by their creative trajectories, but also by a shared sense of otherness. Their independent engagements with Surrealism and abstraction generated personal and highly original visual languages that had a profound impact on the development of twentieth-century American art.

Gorky, born in present-day Turkey, lost his mother in the Armenian Genocide before immigrating to the U.S. as a teenager. Noguchi was born in Los Angeles and raised in Japan, and voluntarily entered an internment camp during World War II. Each found himself in New York in the 1920s and struggled to make a life and find a voice as an artist.

As Gorky and Noguchi's friendship blossomed in the 1930s, they demonstrated increasing artistic confidence by embracing abstraction. In the 1940s they exhibited together and engaged with the Surrealist movement in New York. Still, as this section argues, Noguchi and Gorky remained independent of any one art movement as they developed their signature abstract styles grounded in the natural world.

"The tension between outside and inside structures not only Gorky's and Noguchi's distinctive forms of biomorphic abstraction, which imbue natural forms with memory and myth, but also the identities that informed their friendship, and their artistic legacies," said Claire Howard, former

associate curator of collections and exhibitions at the Blanton and current Hansjörg Wyss curator of modern art at the MFA Boston.

This section includes more than 20 paintings, drawings, and sculptures from the late 1920s to the 1940s. Many of the works will be brought together for the first time in decades, including a series of collaborative drawings on view together for the first time.

Nora Naranjo Morse and Eliza Naranjo Morse: Lifelong



(Left) Nora Naranjo Morse, *Moon Orchids*, 2016, clay, full installation (dimensions variable) 4 ft x 27 in., Courtesy of the artist; (Right) Eliza Naranjo Morse, *Hurt*, 2018, watercolor and clay on paper, 10 x13 in., Courtesy of the artist

The exhibition concludes with a collaboration between **Nora Naranjo Morse (b. 1953)** and her daughter **Eliza Naranjo Morse (b. 1980)**, who come from a long lineage of Kha' p'o artists, a Tewa Speaking Pueblo community in Northern New Mexico. Although Nora works primarily in pottery and Eliza in drawing and graphic arts, for *In Creative Harmony* they are collaborating for the first time to create an immersive environment that combines ancestral knowledge and familial storytelling with their contemporary global experience.

These new works include Nora's life-size sculptures made from the clay used for centuries by Pueblo ceramicists and inspired by traditional Tewa Pueblo pottery methods, as well as a series of burlap figures created with locally found and recycled material. On the gallery walls, Eliza's paintings depict anthropomorphized animals, inspired by her family, community, and the popular culture she saw as a child: "It's playful, it's both serious and not serious, and sometimes it doesn't look serious but is describing serious things," said Eliza of the artwork.

For a drawing series created by both Eliza and Nora, they passed the artworks back and forth, building on the marks the other had made. Of collaboration, Nora said, "[It] is an exchange, a

trust of shared ideas that opens the door to the unexpected—igniting imagination and a collective expression—whatever form that working together takes.”

“Ancestral methods, community, and collectivity have always been central tenants of Nora and Eliza’s work. The new works created for this show articulate a beautiful, shared vision drawing on their family histories, life experiences, and the legacy of the land,” said Hannah Klemm, curator of modern and contemporary art. “I’m thrilled that this exhibition has provided an opportunity for them to directly collaborate together for the first time at this scale.”

In Creative Harmony: Three Artistic Partnerships is organized by the Blanton Museum of Art.

A digital publication for each of the three artistic partnerships will be published online in April 2025.

Public Programs

Friday, February 28, 2025, 7–11 p.m.

B Scene

The Blanton’s art party celebrates the opening of *In Creative Harmony* with live music, art talks, food & drink, and late-night hours. More info will be made available at blantonmuseum.org/bscene

Saturday, March 8, 2025, 4 p.m.

Art with an Expert: Artemio Rodríguez

Part of the museum’s Blanton All Day program, artist Artemio Rodríguez will speak about his own art practice and the influence of Posada. More info will be made available at blantonmuseum.org/allday

Saturday, April 12, 2025, 4 p.m.

Art with an Expert: Claire Howard on Noguchi & Gorky

Part of the museum’s Blanton All Day program, curator Claire Howard will speak about Noguchi and Gorky’s artistic partnership. More info will be made available at blantonmuseum.org/allday

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About the Blanton Museum of Art:

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art holds the largest public collection in Central Texas with more than 21,000 objects. Recognized as the home of Ellsworth Kelly’s *Austin*, its major collecting areas are modern and contemporary U.S. and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and Baroque paintings, and prints and drawings. The Blanton offers thought-provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.