

WERE-:NENETECH FORMS

On display October 8, 2021 to March 13, 2022

Mythological Creature Projects
Inspired by the Artwork of
Ruben Ulises Rodriguez Montoya

About the Artist

Ruben Ulises Rodriguez Montoya (b. 1989, Parral, Chihuahua, Mexico)

is an artist who makes mixed-media sculptures that center around mythologies and social issues concerning border culture, abjection, and mestizaje. Aided by magical realism, nahualismo, Sci-Fi, and the labor of his family. His work hybridizes and creates parallels between land, the human, and the animal as a way to investigate the process in which violence eradicates, erases, and erodes communities of color. He has exhibited at Residency Art Gallery, Commonwealth and Council, Virginia MOCA, Company Gallery, Anonymous Gallery, Murmurs, and Sargent's Daughters. In September 2020, Montoya debuted his first solo show at Sargent's Daughters, which was reviewed by The New York Times. Montoya graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with an MFA in Sculpture + Extended Media in 2020.

<https://rubenulisesrodriguezmontoya.com>

About the Exhibition

WERE-:NENETECH FORMS

were-:Nenotech Forms is a group exhibition centered around migration, transformation, and modes of survival in the Sonoran Desert. Developed by Los Angeles based artists rafa esparza and Timo Fahler over an extended residency period in Tucson, the exhibition also includes work by Karla Ekatherine Canseco, Julio César Morales, Amina Cruz, Chico MacMurtrie, Ana Mendieta, and Ruben Ulises Rodriguez Montoya.

The exhibition, whose title is derived from were- a prefix that indicates shapeshifting and nenetech, a Nahuatl term that translates to "close together" and refers to twinning, creates a ground for other artists to show new and existing works that explore biomimicry (the process where organic strategies are used to solve human problems), adaptation, and survival in the Sonoran Desert borderlands.



Mythological Creature Sculptures

Objectives:

Students will imagine their own mythological creatures, practicing verbal and written communication. They will exercise problem-solving strategies as they build sculptures representing their creatures using primarily found objects. This project can be done either individually or in small groups. The full-size photographs at the end of this packet can be used in your lesson.

Vocabulary:

Found objects: Ordinary objects found at home, around your neighborhood, or in the trash or recycling. These objects are repurposed as art materials.

Nahuales (also known as Nagual): In Mesoamerican mythology, a person who can shape-shift, or transform into another animal or creature.

Materials: found objects, cardboard, cloth, paper, scissors, glue, glue guns, string, wire, etc.

Procedure:

View and discuss Montoya's work, especially the parallels created in his work between land, the human, and the animal; discuss students' prior experiences in creating or seeing sculpture assembled from ready-made or found objects; explain that students will use imagination and skill to assemble a sculpture; discuss possible ways students may create their work of art using a variety of materials. Ask students to identify found objects used in Montoya's sculptures.

Discuss examples of mythological creatures found in Montoya's work, as well as in other contexts. Students will write a description of their own mythological creature, including details about what it looks like, its abilities, where it lives, and its name. Students will then share these descriptions with a partner, giving one another feedback. Students can sketch out what their creature will look like.



Ask students to collect objects from home over a period of time. These items will be shared by the class. Once items are collected, students will sift through the materials and envision how to make their sculpture.

Students can help each other problem-solve as they work on their sculptures. They will need to think about the best way to adhere their materials to each other. Wire or string can be used to hang them if desired.



Evaluate and Reflect: Allow time for students to enjoy seeing their sculptures displayed. Discuss the work, emphasizing the three-dimensional qualities, surface treatment, use of imagination, and problem-solving. How did their concept evolve throughout the process? How did the available materials change their original design?

Alternative Project: Mythological Creature Collages

Objectives:

For a 2-D option, students can make collages in place of sculptures. The lesson will follow a similar structure as described above.

Vocabulary:

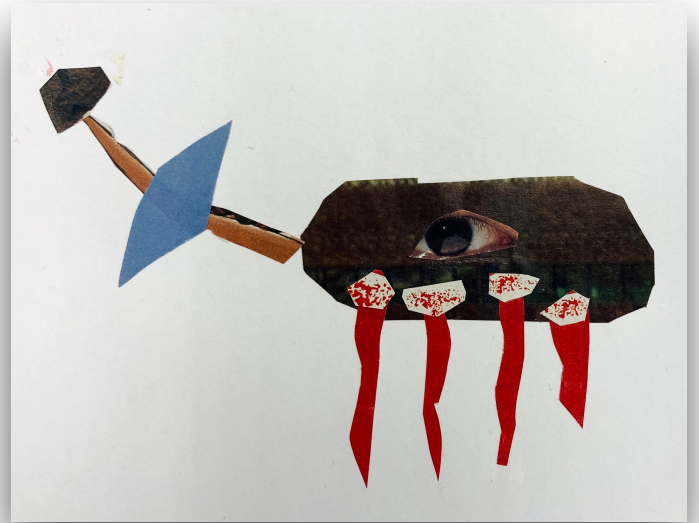
Collage: A work of art made by piecing together different materials such as photographs and cut-outs from books, magazines, etc.

Materials: magazines that can be cut up, scissors, paper, glue



Procedure:

Follow the procedure described above. After viewing and discussing Montoya's work and mythological creatures in general, students can write a description of their mythological creature and then share it with a partner. Students will then cut out clippings from magazines, gluing them to a sheet of paper to create an image of their creature.



Images:

Page 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8: Installation view of *The Lil Rats that Made it on Board the Ship*, 2021, mixed-media sculpture by Ruben Ulises Rodriguez Montoya. In background: *La Linea* (1845), 2021, neon by Julio Cèsar Morales. On view at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson, October 8, 2021 - March 13, 2022. Photograph by Julius Schlosburg.

Page 3, 4, and 9 - 12: Detail of *The Moth that Drinks the Tears of Sleeping Lizards*, 2021, mixed-media sculpture by Ruben Ulises Rodriguez Montoya. On view at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson, October 8, 2021 - March 13, 2022. Photograph by Julius Schlosburg.

Page 5 and 6: Student work photographed by Harrison Orr.

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were-:Nenotech Forms is co-organized by artists rafa esparza, Timo Fahler, and Curator-at-Large Laura Copelin with support from Assistant Curator Alexis Wilkinson.

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