



ART CENTER

OF BATTLE CREEK

To Whom It May Concern:

October 15, 1997

On behalf of the Art Center of Battle Creek, I am writing this letter in support of Dr. Irene Vasquez and the Magical Rain Theaterworks. It has been an honor to work with such a community treasure, and the entire staff of the Art Center greatly valued the opportunity to learn from such an amazing woman, lessons we will keep with us always.

Through a generous grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation's Expert-in-Residence program, the Art Center had the pleasure of working directly with Dr. Vasquez and her theater group to bring to life the Art Center's six-week exhibition of Mexican folk art, in a project titled *Living Traditions*. The Art Center believes that to increase the public's understanding of art from other cultures, it is important to surround each exhibition with supplemental programming, accessing the culture from varying angles of interpretation. At our first planning meeting, we asked committee members to describe the type of program that would best meet their needs and brainstormed programming ideas. With this information we sought a scholar/expert whose skills and expertise matched the needs identified by the planning committee members. We were very please to secure the services of Dr. Vasquez in connection with this project, naming her our very own Expert-in-Residence.

As the project progressed, it became very clear to us that indeed, we had chosen the right person. Dr. Vasquez's scholarly credentials and life experiences brought not only depth to the programming, but breadth as well. Her ability to relate complex cultural traditions, history and beliefs to an incredibly wide range of audiences astounded us. At a scholarly Gallery Talk/Lecture geared to the adult learner, Dr. Vasquez enraptured the standing-room-only audience so completely that one woman was moved to tears at Dr. Vasquez's eloquent discussion about Mexican religious and cultural beliefs. Her ability to access the audience's own experiences and to connect the values found in Mexican and American culture was profound. People stayed late after the talk, hungry for more information and connection.

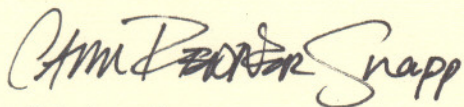
Dr. Vasquez was also an invaluable asset to our Docent group, leading a workshop connecting the artwork to real Mexican life and culture. Because of this workshop, Docents were able to bring lively background information to their gallery tours, enchanting children with stories from Mexico and intriguing adults by being able to relate the historical and cultural relevance, materials and techniques used in the artwork.

School assemblies were a large part of the *Living Traditions* programming, bringing Mexican art and culture directly to school children through storytelling, costumes and skits. From tiny kindergartners to high school seniors, all squealed with delight at the antics and stories of Magical Rain Theaterworks, forgetting that while they were having fun, they were also learning very important lessons about not only Mexican culture, but all cultures other than their own.

The end of the project was marked by the Hispanic Heritage Celebration, held in the Art Center's parking lot. Attendance surpassed our wildest dreams, drawing crowds of young and old alike, many who had not visited the Art Center before. All were captivated by the stories of Magical Rain Theaterworks and enchanted by Mexican culture.

In summary, we at the Art Center wish we could have a Dr. Vasquez and Magical Rain Theaterworks with every exhibition. Gallery attendance doubled our optimistic estimates. Teachers wrote us thank you letters. Children brought in their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, excited to see first-hand the artwork they had learned of at the assemblies. Members of the community congratulated us on being able to offer such quality programming. But the true credit goes to Dr. Vasquez and Magical Rain Theaterworks. They were able to bring to life - for everyone - the beauty, grace and charm of Mexican art and culture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Carol Redner Snapp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carol" being the most prominent.

Carol Redner Snapp
Curator of Exhibitions and Collections