



Today's Masterpiece: José Guadalupe Posada, *Broadside: To Our Lady of Guadalupe*, ca. 1890. Lithograph on newsprint. Gift of Forrest D. Colburn, 2009.16.



Welcome back to **Masterpiece Minute with Doc Brown on Virtual SDMA**. I'm your host, **Michael Brown**, Curator of European Art at The San Diego Museum of Art. Drop in the first Friday of each month at 10:00 a.m. to pick up a new mini talk led by SDMA curators and special guests spotlighting works of art from the Museum's collection.

Today's masterpiece is by José Guadalupe Posada, the trailblazing printmaker and cartoonist, active in Mexico from the 1880s to the 1910s. Today's subject is his depiction of the Virgin of Guadalupe, understood as a beacon of freedom and national pride both before and after Posada's career.

Posada was born in Aguascalientes, central Mexico, in 1852 and rose to prominence as a satirical cartoonist and graphic artist in Mexico City just around the time he executed this masterpiece of popular art, in the final decade of the nineteenth century. While printmaking was already deeply established in Mexico, Posada's clear, indelible imagery, and his famous animated skulls or *calaveras*, had an enormous impact on later generations of artists, from Diego Rivera to the Taller de Gráfica Popular.

Here he depicts the Virgin of Guadalupe, whose apparition to indigenous farmer San Juan Diego, according to tradition, occurred in 1531. As the story goes, Mary, born aloft on a crescent moon surrounded by a mandorla of sunlight, appeared to Juan Diego four times, speaking to him in his native Nahuatl language. The four oval vignettes recount the final three of these visits, in which she exhorts him to build a chapel on the site of the encounter, while the fourth depicts Juan Diego before the bishop, presenting his cloak, called a *tilma*, which bears Mary's supernatural image. The sixteenth-century *tilma*, made of *ayate* or woven plant fibers, is preserved today in a large modern basilica with a capacity of 10,000 visitors.

Widely reproduced in paintings, prints, and now, every conceivable manner of commercial ephemera, the image's power expanded far beyond one of Christian devotion. Banners with the Guadalupe were carried into battle during Mexican independence from Spain in 1810, and by Emilio Zapata's revolutionaries in 1914.

The sonnet below the image extols not only the figure of Mary, but also the nation of her patronage, Mexico. Posada's prints reached wide audiences throughout Mexico and in the United States through, often in broadsheets on brightly colored newsprint.

This has been Doc Brown with Masterpiece Minute, thanks for listening here on Virtual SDMA!



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