

Fever Dreams: Alebrijes

Pedro Linares (1906-1992)

[Pedro Linares](#) was an artisan from México City, who specialized in making [piñatas](#), carnival masks and ["Judas" figures](#) from [cartonería](#) (a kind of [papier-mâché](#)). He sold his work in the street markets.

In 1936, when he was 30 years old, Pedro Linares fell ill with a high fever, which caused him to hallucinate. He thought he died. In his fever dreams, he was in a forest with rocks and clouds, many of which turned into wild, unnaturally colored creatures, frequently featuring wings, horns, tails, fierce teeth and bulging eyes. He heard a crowd of voices repeating the nonsense word "alebrije." After he recovered, he began to re-create the creatures he'd seen, using papier-mâché.

Eventually, a [Cuernavaca](#) gallery owner discovered his work. This brought him to the attention of [Diego Rivera](#) and [Frida Kahlo](#), who began commissioning more alebrijes, elevating folk art to fine art. The tradition grew after British filmmaker [Judith Bronowski's 1975 documentary on Linares](#). Later, sculptors from Oaxaca saw his work and started carving Alebrijes out of copal wood and painting them with intricate patterns. Today, the Linares family continues to make Alebrijes in Mexico City, and there is a parade of Alebrijes every year in Mexico City. Alebrijes have entered into popular culture including the Disney Movie Coco (2017).

































Assignment suggestions

- Create your own alebrije: take a personal fear and make it real and fanciful
- Explore the concepts of Scary/Funny or Ugly/Beautiful
- Create an artwork inspired by alebrijes or early Mexican art
- Explore biomorphic forms and patterns in alebrijes

Use any media you like 2D or 3D.

Sources

- [Documentary on Pedro Linares](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUpOWFBVadI>
- [Documentary on Linares Family Tradition](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmTSY-VozkA>
- Oaxacan Alebrijes:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtJgbrsl30M>
- [*En Calavera: The Papier-mache Art of the Linares Family*](#)
By Susan M. Masuka