

Art Card Club

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STAMP ART AND ARTIST PROFILES *Celebrating Hispanic Month ART & Stamps*

Rafael López, Artist

This month's artist profile features Rafael López, the creator of 7 stamps for the United States Postal Service and illustrator of more than a dozen picture books. Rafael López is an internationally recognized illustrator and artist. His illustrations bring diverse characters to children's books and he is driven to produce and promote books that reflect and honor the lives of all young people. He is a founder of the Urban Art Trail movement in San Diego's East Village creating a series of large-scale murals that brought the community together. His murals can be found in urban areas, at children's hospitals, public schools, under freeways and at farmer's markets around the country. López's community work with murals is the subject of the children's book *Maybe Something Beautiful, How Art Transformed a Neighborhood*.



We are joining the U.S. Postal Service in honoring Hispanic Heritage Month, which runs from September 15th to October 15th as our theme for your #5 Sept/Oct Art Club Subscription Box. During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we honor the diverse history of generations of Latinos, whose aspirations and achievements have shaped the soul of our Nation.

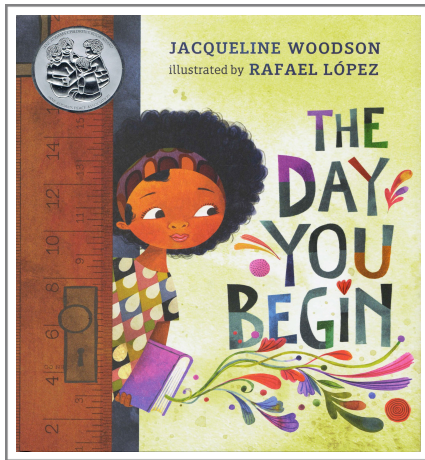
The USPS unveiled a vibrant collection of piñatas stamps at the 36th Annual Piñata Festival. Artist Víctor Meléndez, created four captivating designs - two donkeys and two seven-pointed stars - celebrating the beloved Mexican tradition of piñatas. This marks the third consecutive year that the USPS has issued Hispanic-themed stamps. (Day of the Dead stamps in 2021 and the Mariachi stamps last year in 2022.) Just thrilled to include in your Sept/Oct Art Club Subscription Box (#5) both the 2022 Mariachi and new 2023 Piñata Stamps. (Google both stamps to learn more)

"Growing up, I remember nostalgic weekends listening to the uniquely Mexican sound of mariachi music in Plaza Garibaldi in Mexico City," said stamp artist Rafael López. "Mariachi music is an emblem of Mexican cultural heritage with roots in the United States and followers around the globe and I'm excited and honored to share the vibrant spirit of this music with these stamps."

Though mariachi's exact origins are obscure, it appears to have begun in western Mexico, where itinerant musicians made their living traveling from village to village and visiting ranches in the countryside to perform. The music of early mariachi included folk traditions from Spain, Mexico and Africa that melded to create a new indigenous musical form; the son. The sones developed in various regional styles, including the son jalisciense from Jalisco; the son huasteco, from northeastern Mexico; and the son jarocho or veracruzano, from the region around the Gulf port of Veracruz. The most well-known example of the son jarocho is the song "La Bamba." Beginning in the 1930s, mariachi music reached a new, wider audience as it was embraced by urban radio stations and used on soundtracks by Mexican filmmakers. It soon became one of the most popular musical genres in Latin America. Mariachi bands traditionally used the round-backed guitar called the vihuela, which gives the mariachi music its rhythmic vitality; the guitarrón, which is a bass guitar; and the Mexican folk harp, the arpa. By the 1940s and 1950s, the modern urban mariachi sound emerged with the expanded instrumentation including violins and trumpets. Today, ensembles continue to broaden the use of instruments, with some groups adding six to eight violins, two to four trumpets, an accordion, and the arpa, which had fallen out of use but has made a comeback among professional groups. This combination of instruments creates a unique music that is exuberant and expressive.

Born and raised in Mexico City to architect parents, López was immersed in the rich visual heritage, music and surrealism of his native culture.

A few of the books he has illustrated: **Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You** written by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor became a #1 New York Times Children's Picture Books Bestseller securing the Schneider Family Book Award from the American Library Association. **The Year We Learned to Fly** written by Jacqueline Woodson was a New York Times Bestseller and Kirkus Prize Award finalist.



He also collaborated with Woodson on **The Day You Begin** which became a New York Times #1 Children's Picture Books Bestseller and received the Jane Addams Children's Book Award and National Cartoonist Society Book Illustration Award. His illustrations for **Dancing Hands**, How Teresa Carreño played the piano for President Lincoln written by Margarita Engle received the American Library Association Pura Belpré medal. He also secured the 2016 Pura Belpré medal for illustration for **Drum Dream Girl** and the 2010 Pura Belpré medal for Book Fiesta. There are many more books and awards too numerous to list here.

In 2022 he served as the first Guest Artist of the Smithsonian Postal Museum teaching workshops to children and families. That same year he created 57 portraits for the **Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino**. He lives in an industrial loft in downtown San Diego and has a house on a hill in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. "I spend eight months in San Diego and four in San Miguel. When I am in one place, I long for the other. This duality helps me stay visually stimulated," says Lopez.

FEATURED ART CARD: HONORING WOMEN FARMWORKERS



FARM WORKERS DESERVE RESPECT

I chose this painting as the Featured Card in your #5 Hispanic Heritage Box because farm workers are essential. When it comes to our life, they are on the frontlines

providing our very sustenance. Everyday we should appreciate what it really takes to get food on our plates at home and in restaurants and honor the people who do this truly essential work.

During and right after the pandemic I joined with many artists to raise awareness about farmworkers' working conditions and to recognize their contributions. I suggest you look up the following documentaries about these five (5) women who have worked toward justice for farmworkers and agricultural laborers. Watch the documentaries to learn more about the work of Maria Moreno, Dolores Huerta, Monica Ramirez, Jessie de la Cruz, and Emma Tenayuca. Agricultural businesses and consumers depend on highly productive agricultural workers to labor on our farms and ranches. We must provide farmworkers with a path to immigration status and citizenship. They deserve respect and stability.

BIRTHDAY CARD #5 "When life Gives You Lemons, MAKE A MARGARITA" is the fun message on the newly designed the Birthday Card (#5) using my painting: "Hand Blown Margarita Glass with Lemons". I don't know about you but for me a homemade Margarita is a top Birthday celebration idea. I've printed a recipe on the back of the card.

THANK YOU CARD #5: My fifth **Thank You Card** design is a fun colorful hand script, on eco-friendly kraft card stock with matching envelope. The card is perfect to send or give to someone to show your appreciation in English and Spanish in honor of the theme.

HEADING HOME THROUGH MALIBU - Driving back from the airport through Malibu just as the sun sets captured my heart. The winding way home along Pacific Coast Highway brings sweet memories and crisp California smells and visuals. The vibrant colors seemed a perfect pairing for Hispanic Heritage Stamps and theme.

ABSTRACT SAND DUNES STUDY - The range of purples and blue hues in this seascape painting compliment and pair well with the various art cards & colorful stamps selected for Box #5. Its a favorite seascape study painting and I hope you enjoy it, whether to keep or send off with a short note.

CALENDAR ART - FLOWER FIELDS & SOUTH MOUNTAIN - This painting is on the CALENDAR #5 October included in this Box. It was suggested on Instagram that I should title this "Hometown" by Santa Paula California classmate Barbara Crow (Brink). When you leave Santa Paula going east on Telegraph Road you pass this iconic view of the flower fields with a dramatic backdrop of South Mountain. The vibrant colors and agricultural theme of flower fields seem a perfect paring to this months theme. And other Art Cards included.