Unity Through Art features a selection of works in a variety of media by artists who identify as Latinx or Hispanic. These artists were invited to present their cultural narrative using materials and style reflective of their own personal work. The selected artwork amplifies our culturally rich communities and how their contributions as value to our region of the globe.

INCLUDED IN YOUR PACKET:
- Unity Through Art exhibition overview and copy of exhibition card
- Artist bios and exhibit information
- Vocabulary
- Studio Activity
EXHIBITION OVERVIEW:

Discussions about unity and divisiveness are always timely, but given our current national climate, the discussion may be more necessary. Often, when we take the words away and let imagery speak the message becomes clearer.

The current exhibit at Waterworks Visual Arts Center, *Unity Through Art*, accomplishes just that. Artist Nico Amortegui points to his larger-than-life rocking horse, Pinocchio, and llama, and explains children from all cultures play with toys. They need no translation as toys speak for themselves.

The galleries are filled with artists’ works in a variety of media who identify as Latinx or Hispanic. The exhibit features three solo artists as well as a group of ten artists participating in a group show. These artists were invited to present their personal cultural narrative using materials and styles reflective of their art practice. The selected artworks amplifies our culturally rich communities and how their contributions add value to our region of the globe.

ARTIST BIOS

**NICO AMORTEGUI** describes himself as “the byproduct of a close-knit, artistic family filled with architects, carpenters, designers, photographers, and artists,” therefore – “I paint out of necessity.” “My work is often full of unapologetic color and is a direct product of my expressed energy - meaning there are no sketches or previous drawings.” Nico emigrated from Columbia to the US in the late 90s, and “became starkly aware of the transaction between two 'allied' countries and my encounters in this place we had always referred to as the ‘American Dream’. Throughout my art practice, I enjoy illustrating 'snapshots' of a nomadic lifestyle - one that was focused on survival of the time - my own (as an immigrant) and of those I have encountered along the way. Creating portraits of others who have defied the odds and/or were infamous or honorable in one life time often takes over my canvases.”

Nico Amortegui was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia. He has lived and worked in the United States since the late 1990s. His current artistic focus is large-scale paintings on canvas or wood panels and sculpting and wood-working with found objects. He lives in Charlotte with his wife and two daughters.
JAMAUL PHILLIP SMITH had many influences in his life that formulated his current work. From living in the DC/MD area with his mom and aunts to developing his craft around his grandparent’s New Mexico. His work reflects growing up in the 90s when lowriders were at their peak and all of the cool kids in the Southwest had one, and the Go-Go and Hip Hop artists making tracks that sounded like the pure art form Rap music once was.

His Honduran-born grandmother who helped to raise and mold him, always told him to follow his dream no matter what and stay true to his roots. Even though she was the only person in the family to speak Spanish fluidly, that did not stop him from being in the thick of things when it came to going to weddings and events with his friends. Jamaul’s latest works are a representation of new ideas with old concepts and his marriage of digital art with traditional drawings.

GLISER FUENTES MENA, artist of the collection of oil paintings and animation, One Mind, Many Dreams, offers, “The characters in my works do not have a name, nor do they have a story. Their plots vary according to the viewer’s perception.” “Everything we see and experience is nothing more than a projection of our thoughts. We live submerged in a dream which can be happy if we live with love and unhapp[y] if we live it with fear. [Our happiness depends on] how we interpret our existence.” “Love is a state and not a feeling, and if we give value to conflict, we cannot give value to peace.”

Cuban Artist Gliser Fuentes Mena was born into a family of artists. Home was her first school and from childhood she was surrounded by brushes, colors and clay. She enjoys the privilege of having a father who is a sculptor and an older brother who is a painter, sculptor and ceramicist. She was positively influenced in her first months of life, when my father confessed: "This is my daughter, my masterpiece." She studied at the School of Fine Arts San Alejandro (1994). She has participated in various collective and personal exhibitions over the years and won prizes and honorable mentions in a variety of events and contests.
Where is Home?
A compilation of work from ten contributing Latinx artists

Leticia Alvarez  Olisa Corcoran  Francisco Gonzalez

Rosemary Meza-Desplas  Lizbeth Ortiz  Jeannifer Jean Sandoval

Natacha Villamia Sochat  Stef Bernal-Martinez  Yholima Vargas-Aleem
VOCABULARY

- **Mola** - the elaborate embroidered panels that make up the front and back of a Kuna woman's traditional blouse.
- **Reverse applique** - the technique used to make a mola. Two or three pieces of different colored cloth are placed on top of each other and stitched together. The bottom layer remains attached to the background color and supports the stitching of the other pieces.
- **Positive space** - the objects or shapes within an artwork
- **Negative space** - the space around and between those objects
- **Analogous colors** - a group of colors next to one another on the color wheel
- **Complimentary colors** - colors across from one another on the color wheel
- **Collage** - is an art technique, which uses a collection of materials/techniques to create a work of art
- **Assemblage** - a form of sculpture made of found objects arranged/grouped to create a new piece

BEFORE YOU VISIT:
In preparation for your gallery and studio visit, we encourage you to talk about the lesson the day before you arrive. Review the vocabulary terms with your students and facilitate a discussion using the questions below. How you do this is up to you... however we find that students who have been introduced to the ideas, vocabulary, and concepts surrounding the exhibition have a richer experience while they are here.

SPRING 5th GRADE ARTstops: *Unity Through Art*
Welcome to Waterworks Visual Art Center’s ARTstops!
Upon arrival, you and your students will participate in a 45-minute gallery tour of our current exhibitions and a 45-minute hands-on studio activity related to the current exhibition. Student questions and comments are encouraged during the gallery portion of your visit. We would like this to be an interactive and engaging experience for you and your students!

GALLERY TOUR:
Students will be led through the current exhibitions by one of our trained Art Partners docents. During the gallery tour, students will hear personal stories of the featured artists and what inspires their creativity. The professional works viewed will also serve as inspiration for the students when they create their own one-of-a-kind masterpiece in the studio.
THE STUDIO ACTIVITY:
Each student will create a colorful modern Mola. Mola art is an important part of Kuna culture and ethnic identity. The Kuna people live off the coast of Panama (a country linking Central and South America). Mola is the word for "clothing" in the Kuna language and it is the most famous form of art produced in Panama. The Kuna people create molas by drawing on ideas or stories from their history, culture and beliefs. They usually portray birds, fish, family life, spirits and cultural designs. Their contemporary molas may include airplanes and warships, biblical themes, cartoon characters, national emblems or commercial ads.

Molas are designed and sewn into a woman’s clothing, usually with one panel on the front of the blouse and a matching or similar one on the back. Each mola is hand stitched using thousands of tiny stitches and several layers of colorful material. Although they sometimes use the technique of appliqué, usually reverse appliqué is used to make molas. First the material is layered and the design is stitched in place. The result is the colors of the material underneath remain visible. Detailed molas can take up to a year to make.

Putting a modern twist on the traditional mola, students will use imagery, cut paper, yarn and found objects to create their unique mola.

An instructor will guide the artists through the process of selecting an image and materials, then demonstrate cutting and arranging the shapes on a background. Finally, an adult assistant will use an iron to meld the shapes together.

Individual molas may be gathered after completion and displayed in your school.

The Elements of Art and Principles of Design embedded in this lesson include line, color, shape, pattern and texture.

Interdisciplinary Connection/Discussion Questions:
Read the artist biographies of Gliser Fuentes Mena, Jamual Smith and Nico Amortegui before facilitating inter-disciplinary connection discussion.

1) Artists often use art as a tool for learning and to share their personal stories. If you were an artist, what personal story would you share with your community?

2) Assemblage is a form of sculpture made of found objects arranged to create a new piece.

During your visit the Gallery, ask students to look for the work of Nico Amortegui and think about how he combines materials in creation of his assemblages.