

## Enríquez de Allen; Outside the Norm

Maria Enríquez de Allen is considered an Outsider Artist. Her calling appeared to be inborn since one of her brothers was an artist and so were a couple of her aunts. Since her youth, she aspired to study fine arts, but never had the opportunity to enroll in any art classes.

Through the years, Enríquez de Allen's creative power for making all kinds of playful and utilitarian decorative objects manifested itself in a variety of media. In doing these, she would enlist the assistance of her children, thus engaging them in the creative process.

Consequently, she passed her passion for the arts to all her children who were able to display cultural traditions through art, music, dance, and design. This artistic inclination seemed to be inherited, for several of her grand and great-grandchildren have shown their own instinctual capabilities in the arts.

In Mexico, as a primary school teacher in the late 1940's and 1950's, Maria made all sorts of educational art projects for her students. Some of these would be for class instruction while others were to be done as homework. In addition, besides writing songs, she directed plays at school and designed and created the play's stage designs (including special lighting effects).

This theatrical interest carried over to the time when she worked for the city of Chicago as an arts and crafts instructor at the Halsted Urban Progress Center. Here at the HUPC in Pilsen, during the late 1960's and the 1970's, Maria created and directed special programs in the HUPC's auditorium to celebrate Mother's Day, Cinco de Mayo, and other festivities. Her creative spirit was finally given ample time to flourish during this time. It was during this period, when she would sit at home creating art projects for her classes, that her imagination took wings.

This established the foundation for her career as an artist after retirement. It was after the age of 65 that Maria Enríquez de Allen began to heavily participate in art exhibitions and give recyclable materials art workshops throughout the Midwest. Her artwork was honored with widespread recognition appearing in some major exhibitions while at the same time being published in several publications.

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