

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DENVER BOTANIC  
GARDENS

**PRESS CONTACTS**

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**Spirit Guides: Fantastical Creatures from the Workshop of  
Jacobo and María Ángeles**

April 28 – September 8, 2024

**PRESS TOUR: Thursday, May 2, 10-11:30 a.m.**

You are invited to tour the exhibition with Jacobo and María Ángeles.

RSVP To [Erin.Bird@botanicgardens.org](mailto:Erin.Bird@botanicgardens.org) by Monday, April 29.

Photography is permitted.



Created by the workshop of Mexican artists Jacobo and María Ángeles, brightly colored and richly patterned sculptures depict imaginary hybrid animals that act as both spirit guides and astrological embodiments of human character. Inspired by the Zapotec calendar, **Spirit Guides: Fantastical Creatures from the Workshop of Jacobo and María Ángeles**, features eight large sculptures created for Denver Botanic Gardens' outdoor exhibition. On view April 28 – September 8, 2024, the exhibition is presented throughout the Gardens' York Street location and is included with general admission.

Jacobo and María Ángeles were inspired by an ancient Zapotec stone calendar on view in the Museum of Cultures of Oaxaca. Indigenous to southern Mexico, Zapotec culture is deeply connected to plants, seasons and animals. The artists explain: "A Zapotec legend tells that on the day you were born, a little animal came running or flying—your protector in this world. This animal is your *tona*, a creature with whom you share your destiny and soul. In addition to your *tona*, you have a *nahual* determined by your birth year—this creature is a spirit animal with personality traits similar to yours."

This stone calendar has deteriorated with time, leaving portions of it illegible. The Ángeles team used the illegible portions of the calendar as imaginative jumping-off points for their own interpretation of the calendar and zodiac, filling in the blanks with their own mythical creations. For example, cranes and camels are included in the exhibition but are not featured in Zapotec cosmology. The artists chose to depict these animals for their dynamic shape and form.

The fiberglass sculptures are monumental, at nearly eight feet tall and up to nine feet wide and four feet deep. The sculptures are created through a multistep process that includes conceptual sketches, renderings of small wooden sculptures, papier mâché molds and the final step of casting the fiberglass. Artisans at the workshop then paint the sculptures with colorful, intricate geometric patterns that are inspired by Zapotec and other Indigenous designs.

QR codes linking to content on the free Bloomberg Connects mobile app will provide additional information. Additionally, signs throughout the exhibition will highlight the plant diversity of southern Mexico, illuminating their relationships with Indigenous peoples spanning thousands of years.

### **About the Artists**



Jacobo and María Ángeles are a married artist team based in San Martín Tilcajete in Oaxaca, Mexico. Joyful, fanciful and distinctively patterned, the Ángeles' animal sculptures embrace both contemporary art and folk art traditions. With increasing demand for their works, the artists employ more than 100 artisans in a workshop that also acts as an art school, offering creatives the opportunity to advance and develop their artistic skills. The workshop's creations have been exhibited in museums around the globe, including the Museo de Arte

Popular in Mexico City and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

**Related Programs** – all tickets include admission to the Gardens.

#### **[Spirit Guides Outdoor Art Tour](#)**

Select Fridays and Sundays

\$16, \$8 member, \$5 student

Experience the wonder of *Spirit Guides* in the Gardens on this tour that explores the outdoor sculpture exhibition as well as related plant themes. Join a knowledgeable guide to learn more about the artistic process and the rich biodiversity of Mexican flora.

#### **[Art at the Gardens Tour](#)**

Select days, dates and times

\$16, \$8 member, \$5 student

Walk through the indoor galleries and outdoor exhibition with a guide who shares stories about the work on display.

#### **[Curator Conversations](#)**

Select days, dates and times

\$20, \$10 member, \$5 student

Stroll through *Spirit Guides* and/or indoor exhibition with a curatorial staff member. Explore the diverse art exhibitions and learn about the artists, artworks and processes during an engaging, interactive experience.

#### **[Introduction to Wool Felting](#)**

Sunday, April 28, 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

\$135, \$115 member

Luna Cultura introduces participants to wet felting and needle felting techniques to create unique, textural artworks. Take inspiration from the Gardens and add nature-inspired elements into the final pieces. This class is conducted in English and Spanish.

#### **[Plein Air Drawing in the Gardens](#)**

Friday, May 24, 1-4 p.m.

\$75, \$65 member

Plein air (painting outdoors) allows artists to experience and capture the changing details of light and atmospheric conditions in real time. Venture outdoors to draw from life, receiving feedback from the instructor as you work. Students may use drawing or painting materials of their choice.

### Culturally-Inspired Fabric Books

Saturday, June 15, 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

\$135, \$115 member

Luna Cultura teaches how to create a fabric book inspired by traditional Mexican art and artists. Take inspiration from the Gardens to add nature-inspired elements into a final book. This class is conducted in English and Spanish.

**Images:** (L): Jacobo and María Ángeles, *Jaguar-Eagle*, fiberglass and acrylic paint, 2024 (R) Jacobo and María Ángeles, *Monkey-Iguana*, fiberglass and acrylic paint, 2024.

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**About Denver Botanic Gardens:** Green inside and out, Denver Botanic Gardens was founded in 1951 and is considered one of the top botanical gardens in the United States and a pioneer in water conservation. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Gardens has a robust living plant collection, natural history collection and art collection along with temporary art exhibitions. The Gardens is a dynamic, 24-acre urban oasis in the heart of the city, offering unforgettable opportunities to flourish with unique garden experiences for the whole family – as well as world-class art exhibitions and education programs in the Freyer – Newman Center; plant conservation efforts and horticultural research. Additional sites extend this experience throughout the Front Range: Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms is a 700-acre native plant refuge with an active farm in Jefferson County; Mount Goliath is a high-altitude trail and interpretive site on the Mount Blue Sky Scenic Byway. The Gardens also manages programming at Plains Conservation Center in Aurora. For more information, visit us online at [www.botanicgardens.org](http://www.botanicgardens.org).