

## “CREATURES OF A DREAM WORLD” COMING TO DUPAGE IN 2022

*Installation at Cantigny Park will feature captivating “alebrijes” in a celebration of Mexican artisanship and cultural diversity.*

**November 1, 2021** — The partnership of Cantigny Park, the DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Mexican Cultural Center DuPage today announced a five-month outdoor art exhibit featuring dozens of mythical animals inspired by Mexican folklore. “Alebrijos: Creatures of a Dream World” opens at Cantigny on June 1, 2022.

The word *alebrijes*—pronounced ah-leh-bree-hehs—refers to imaginary creatures that possess elements from different animals. They originated in the 1930s from the vivid dreams of Mexico City artist Pedro Linares. The artistic tradition of *alebrijes* gained popular exposure in the United States with *Coco*, the 2017 Disney/Pixar film.

At Cantigny, located 35 miles west of Chicago in Wheaton, visitors will discover whimsical *alebrije* sculptures of assorted sizes throughout the gardens and grounds. A few of the creatures may turn up in surprising places.

“‘Creatures of a Dream World’ will be a park-wide celebration of Mexican culture, and a must-see for families throughout the region,” said Timothy P. Knight, President and CEO of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and Cantigny Park.

The Chicago-based McCormick Foundation, Cantigny’s parent organization, awarded a grant to the Mexican Cultural Center DuPage to help make the exhibit possible, along with sponsorship funding from the National Museum of Mexican Art in Pilsen. The DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau is working with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (Illinois Office of Tourism) to secure additional resources and will commit marketing dollars to promote the event.

Six established artists from Mexico City, recruited by the Mexican Cultural Center, have signed on to create the *alebrijes* destined for Cantigny. The artisans belong to a collective that participates in the internationally known *La Noche de los Alebrijos*, a parade and festival in Mexico City held this time each year in celebration of *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead).

Thirty smaller creatures (about 5 feet long) will be crafted in Mexico and shipped to DuPage. However, 18 larger ones—up to 13 feet tall and 8 feet wide—are to be constructed and painted in local studios. The artists will live and work in DuPage for three months leading up to the exhibition opening.

The partners believe “Creatures of a Dream World” can deliver a boost to the local hospitality industry. Area hotels and restaurants took a hard hit from the pandemic and are still recovering.

“What a wonderful opportunity this is to celebrate DuPage County’s cultural diversity through art,” said Beth Marchetti, Executive Director of the DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Like the Frida Kahlo exhibit in 2021, the *alebrijes* will appeal to residents, tourists and businesses. We can build on this in so many positive ways.”

Before and during the exhibit, public and educational programming throughout DuPage will be extensive, from studio demonstrations and talks by the artists to lectures about Mexican heritage and culture. In addition, Cantigny itself anticipates numerous special events, such as themed garden tours and dinners, concerts by Mexican musicians, and artistic workshops for children.

“We are excited to share this work with the community,” said Fernando Ramirez, President and Founder of Mexican Cultural Center DuPage, based in the City of West Chicago. “It’s gratifying to see our collaboration and partnership with Mexican artists lead to a major installation like this. People are going to love it, and they’re going to learn some fascinating things about Mexico’s cultural traditions.”

Admission to “Alebrijes: Creatures of a Dream World” will be included with Cantigny’s regular parking fee, currently \$5 per car (\$10 on summer weekends). Exhibit dates are June 1 through October 31, 2022. For more information, visit [Cantigny.org/Alebrijes](http://Cantigny.org/Alebrijes).

“We want this to be the area’s most accessible and memorable outdoor exhibit of the year,” said Matt LaFond, Executive Director of Cantigny Park. “I hope it brings a lot of first-time visitors to the park, especially families.”

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### **About Cantigny Park**

Cantigny Park, part of the Chicago-based Robert R. McCormick Foundation, is the 500-acre Wheaton (IL) estate of Robert R. McCormick (1880-1955), long-time editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. It is home to the McCormick House, First Division Museum, display gardens, picnic grounds, walking trails, and a Visitors Center with a gift shop, theater, and food options. Hours, directions, and upcoming events are posted online at [Cantigny.org](http://Cantigny.org).

### **About the DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau**

The DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau (DCVB) is the official destination marketing organization for DuPage County, Illinois' second largest County, comprised of 38 communities. The DCVB works in partnership with community business and civic leaders to maximize travel and tourism opportunities which contribute to the economic vitality of the County and its residents. For more information, visit [DiscoverDuPage.com](http://DiscoverDuPage.com).

### **About the Mexican Cultural Center DuPage**

The Mexican Cultural Center DuPage encourages and promotes our heritage through cultural, ethnic, and civic activities designed to educate and inspire our Mexican community and the community at large. For more information, visit [MCCDuPage.org](http://MCCDuPage.org).

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