

The Interpreters of Malady



Avelino Perez, from "Oaxacan Folk Art: Response to COVID-19."
Cesar Mendoza

By [Pilar Viladas](#)

Alan Eliot Goldberg, an architect based in New Canaan, Conn., and his wife, Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg, started collecting Mexican folk art in the 1960s, and in 2017 [donated](#) 1,000 pieces to the [Mexican Museum](#), a Smithsonian affiliate. (Its new home is under construction in San Francisco.) Since then, the couple has focused on Oaxacan folk art, which Mr. Goldberg said he admired for its high quality and for the artists' embrace of their Zapotec and Mixtec heritage.

Last year, when the pandemic decimated tourism in Mexico, and with it, artists' incomes, he organized a competition for the artists and produced a book showcasing 27 of their entries. Published by the Mexican Museum, "Oaxacan Folk Art: Response to Covid-19" is edited and designed by Mr. Goldberg, with a text by Gwen North Reiss, a foreword by Marta Turok and original photographs by Judith Haden. Its pieces, almost all of them in clay or carved wood, by 26 artists, express the shock and sorrow over the pandemic, as well as whimsy.

Mr. Goldberg noted that the net proceeds from the book, which is available in English and Spanish editions, will go to the artists, and he is working to secure funding for a virtual exhibition. The printed copies were held up in a supply-chain snag but will be available soon online. The price is \$29.95 for the English edition and \$24.95 for the Spanish edition.