



Mike McCollum

Artist Liz Reid talks with Michelle Jauregui, 5, one of the kindergarteners from Mintie White School who visited the Pajaro Valley Art Gallery yesterday.

Students enjoy art from Mexico

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"Mi Casa Es Su Casa" (My house is your house) is not only the title of Pajaro Valley Art Council's latest exhibit, it also doubles as an invitation to hundreds of area students to visit the impressive collection of Mexican art.

The exhibit, which opened Nov. 2 and will run through Dec. 18, features art in various mediums from the Mexican states of Michoacan, Jalisco, Guanajuato and Oaxaca. Kindergarten through college students have been invited to tour the exhibit through the end of the show.

Students from Cabrillo College and about a dozen schools from Pajaro Valley and North Monterey County school districts are scheduled to tour the gallery this month.

Exhibit curator Alejandro Reyes helps conduct tours of the exhibit, which is at 37 Sud-

den St.

Reyes, a native of Mexico who has lived in Watsonville for the past six years, said he wanted to bring a taste of Mexican art to the area. The exhibit, he said, will help expose the public to the eclectic and prolific art of Mexico.

There may be some people who have a "stereotype" of Mexican art that is restricted to images of velvet paints and curios of a Mexican sleeping against a cactus plant, he said.

"We want to show the community we have other types of art," Reyes said.

When children walk through the exhibit, certain items remind them of stories they have heard elders in their families tell, Reyes said.

The exhibit contains works by Latino artists with international fame, such as Diego Rivera, Rufino Tamayo and Jose Luis Cuevas. Other works were done

by some of the many artisans working across Mexico.

On Tuesday, Reyes led a third-grade class from Starlight Elementary School through the various rooms of the gallery. The children "ooh'ed" and "aah'ed" as they observed papier-mache figures, colorful masks, wooden animal sculptures and a large altar. Altars are constructed on the Day of the Dead, a traditional Mexican custom of making offerings to deceased family members.

Offerings are placed on the altar and can include food, drink, flowers, pictures, and anything else the deceased had a fondness for while he was alive.

One student spotted a picture of Elvis on the altar and started laughing.

Several girls huddled together when they came to a painting by Humberto Oramas titled "Avaricious," a ghastly portrait of a

human figure. They were convinced it was *La Llorona* (The Crying Woman), a Latin-American folk tale of a woman condemned for eternity to search for her children that she drowned. It is said that one can hear her cries at night as she wanders aimlessly in search of her lost children.

Alma Castaneda said she liked the exhibit very much, with one exception.

"Everything is so pretty," Castaneda said. "I wish I could take something, but not *La Llorona*."

The gallery is open Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 4 p.m. There is no admission charge.

On Dec. 12 from noon to 4 p.m., the gallery will celebrate the Virgen de Guadalupe with food and music representing the four Mexican states whose art is on exhibit.

For more information, call the gallery at 722-3062.