

UMLAUF

sculpture garden & museum

While at UT, Jiménez also started working in fiberglass, a material integral to his cherished lowrider car culture. Emanating from a place “where craftsmanship and the illusion of flawless finish were seen as positive things,” he prized fiberglass for its industrial uses and slick surfaces.

Like Umlauf, Jiménez was committed to ensuring that his art was accessible to everyone, regardless of socio-economic status or level of education. Following graduation, he studied in Mexico City, absorbing the populist and mythical influences portrayed in the work of Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. In 1966, Jiménez spent a year in New York assisting the abstract expressionist sculptor Seymour Lipton. Successful exhibitions at New York’s Graham Gallery brought momentum to his career. In the 1970s, he relocated to the West and taught at the University of Arizona and later at the University of Houston.

Jiménez’s work resides in the permanent collections of numerous museums, private collections, and public locations. He received accolades throughout his career, including fellowship grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Mexico Governor’s Award (1993), Texas Artist of the Year Award (1998), and a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Texas at Austin. In 1994, Jiménez delivered the eulogy at the University’s memorial service for his former teacher, Charles Umlauf.

Jiménez died in 2006 while working on the thirty-two foot *Blue Mustang* that now rears up at the Denver International Airport. His home and studio in Hondo, New Mexico, are listed in the State Register of Cultural Properties and will be considered by the National Register of Historic Places.



CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

1. Luis Jiménez, *Sodbuster, San Isidro* (1982; cast 1995), fiberglass sculpture, two parts, man and plow: 70" x 44" x 90"; Oxen: 64" x 59" x 159", courtesy of Russell Tether Fine Art, Dallas.
2. Luis Jiménez, *Blackjack [or Black Jack]*, fiberglass sculpture, 10" x 5" x 13", courtesy of the Grace Museum, Abilene. The Grace Museum Collection, Arts Alliance purchase with funds from Sindy and David Durham.
3. Luis Jiménez, *Sodbuster*, 1981, color lithograph, 32" x 45", courtesy of Russell Tether Fine Art, Dallas.
4. Charles Umlauf, University of Texas at Austin, class register, 1963. Collection of The Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum.

SODBUSTER, SAN ISIDRO

LUIS JIMÉNEZ

The UMLAUF would like to thank Judy Tedford Deaton, Randy Kerr, Jesús Moroles, Erika Parker, Ross Smeltzer, Russell Tether, and Vault Fine Art Services.



Insights: Jesús Moroles

Wednesday, January 28, 6-8 PM

Artist and sculptor Jesús Moroles worked extensively with Jiménez and assisted him with *Sodbuster*. Moroles will detail Jiménez's process and share stories.

INSIGHTS is free and open to the public.



This project is supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department.

The Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum provides educational experiences that encourage the understanding and appreciation of sculpture, and exhibits the work of Charles Umlauf and other contemporary sculptors in a natural setting.

The UMLAUF provides art-in-education programs for at-risk youth, touch-tours for the visually impaired and those with special needs, and free tours for every public school child. The UMLAUF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

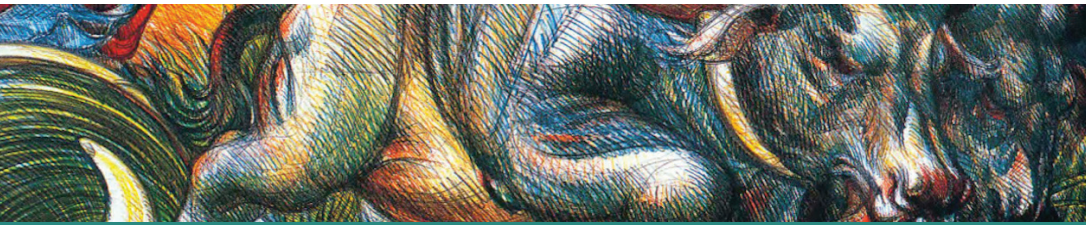
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Luis Jiménez at the UMLAUF



One of the most celebrated and controversial American artists of the twentieth century, Luis Jiménez was born in El Paso in 1940. Both his grandmother and father were undocumented immigrants, moving across the Mexican border into the city's predominantly Hispanic "Segundo Barrio," where Jiménez was born and raised. Luis Jiménez Sr., once an aspiring artist, became an accomplished neon sign designer and shop owner.

The young Jiménez began apprenticing in his father's shop at age six, ultimately learning how to weld and paint while absorbing the business' commercial aesthetic. Holding high expectations for his children, Jiménez's father sent him to study architecture at the University of Texas at Austin. But in his fourth year, he changed his major to fine arts and got married. His father felt that his son had "thrown everything away," resulting in a five-year rift between them.

Fortunately, Jiménez studied with a different kind of authority figure in the Art Department: Professor Charles Umlauf. Jiménez credits UT's art classes with teaching him sculptural skills in wood and stone, as well as life drawing. He must have impressed the older artist, garnering a rare high grade in Umlauf's 1963 life drawing course.

SPRING SEMESTER		SESSION 19 63	
SUBJECT DRAWING - LIFE		ASSISTANT	
NAMES	MONTH		
BAILLEY KATHIE	ART 316L.3	X	10 1111 11 11
BUCKNALL MARY			11 10 11 11 01
ELICK, JEANNE			11 10 11 11 11
FOX LOUIS			11 10 11 11 11
JACOBS JAMES			10 11 10 10 01
JIMENEZ LUIS			1 1001 11 11
KEISLER VIRGINIA			1 0 11 11 11
PETERSON SHERYL			0 1 1 1 1 1 1 0
ART 316L.3			
BARBERA MARTIN			1 0 1 1 1 1 0 1
CHILDERS CLAIRE			1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 4
ENGLISH SADI JANE			1 0 0 10 10 10
GILL DON			1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
HAZELWOOD JULIANNE			1 1 1 1 1 0 0 1
KURGAS ANN			1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
LANGFORD MARY			1 1 0 1 1 1 1 1
NEFF SALLY			1 1 0 1 1 1 1 1
SMITH ALAN			1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
WADE ROBERT			1 1 0 1 1 1 1 1

Luis Jiménez's grade in Charles Umlauf's 1963 drawing course at the University of Texas at Austin.

Sodbuster, San Isidro

January 21–April 19, 2015



Photo: Randy Kerr

A pair of brawny blue and purple oxen heaves at the yoke, veins bulging on their massive heads. Their Bunyanesque, white-haired driver wields his plow through undulating grasses, leaving ancient artifacts scattered in the upturned earth. The tension in man and beasts pervades the sculpture, from the oxen's precariously cantilevered forms to the sweat on the driver's brow. The luminously transparent colors range from high-keyed realism to unnatural boldness. Jiménez custom-designed a special platform to support his 1300-pound fiberglass sculpture, which he named *Sodbuster, San Isidro*.

Welcome to Luis Jiménez's magnificent steroidal cosmology. The twenty-four foot, two-piece *Sodbuster* is iconic in the artist's long history. Commissioned by the City of Fargo, North Dakota in 1977, this was one of Jiménez's very first public works in a career spanning four decades. It symbolizes the next step after his famed Progress series, through which he revisits traditional Western tales of how the West was won by including those who were marginalized or excluded. Like many of his fiberglass outdoor sculptures, the original *Sodbuster* deteriorated over time. Jiménez made five more castings in 1995. This is the artist's proof, the version once featured at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art. Later deaccessioned from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, it is the sole *Sodbuster* never exhibited outdoors.

Sodbuster's themes derive from Mexican American and Native American cultures, the intersection of high and low art, and the celebration of humanity itself. Jiménez pays tribute to the Mexican farmworkers and laborers who toiled in the Great Plains, developing America's agricultural industry. The sculpture acknowledges the work ethic of Fargo's Lutheran community while paying homage to the patron saint of farmers, Saint Isidore, beloved throughout Latin America. Jiménez compares his art to that of the *santeros*, the artisans of

carved and painted saints in New Mexico and southern Colorado who have been working since the 1700s. He intentionally stylizes his images like the *santeros*, as he says, "to exaggerate certain characteristics." For him, *Sodbuster* is the ideal example: "His muscles bulge, his veins pop out. Sweat beads on his forehead allude to the blood beads on the face of God. The beard is beaded, simplified."

The furrowed earth yields corn kernels spilling from a Native American pot and chiseled points (or "arrowheads"). If *Sodbuster* developed out of Southwestern artistic traditions and Plains geology, the most overt art historical allusion is to God from Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling. Just as God creates Adam, the oxen's driver brings life and abundance to the Great Plains. Jiménez embeds multiple layers in his allegory of the genesis of the American West.



LEFT: Michelangelo, detail from *The Creation of Adam* [head of God], 1512
RIGHT: Jiménez, *Sodbuster study with sweat*, 1981, Collection El Paso Museum of Art, photo: Damian Andrus.

Renowned for his large-scale public art, Jiménez was equally facile with smaller objects and in two-dimensional work. The 10" high fiberglass sculpture, *Black Jack* (2004), was named for Jiménez's own horse. The lithograph of *Sodbuster, San Isidro*, offers a single example of the artist's lifelong dedication to printmaking. Displayed alongside Charles Umlauf's 1963 class register, this modest but monumental exhibition celebrates one of the greatest visual interpreters of popular culture.

Katie Robinson Edwards, Ph.D.



Curator, UMLAUF

1. Camille Flores-Turney, *Howl: The Artwork of Luis Jiménez* (New Mexico Magazine, 1998), 15; Oral history interview with Luis Jiménez, 1985 Dec. 15-17, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
2. Michael Brenson, "Movement's Knowledge," in *Luis Jiménez: Working Class Heroes/Images from Popular Culture* (Exhibits USA, Mid-American Arts Alliance, 1997), 15-16.
3. Quoted in Camille Flores-Turney, *Howl: The Artwork of Luis Jiménez* (New Mexico Magazine, 1998), 63.