



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

Vita Rose photographs of Guadalupe
de la Cruz Rios and family

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2024

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	Vita Rose photographs of Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios and family
Date:	1996-1999
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.372
Creator:	Rose, Vita
Extent:	19 Photographic prints (color; 4"x5")
Language:	English , Spanish; Castilian .
Summary:	This collection includes photographic prints made by Vita Rose circa 1996 of Doña Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios and her family in Nayarit, Mexico. Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios was a Wixarika (Huichol) visual artist, musician, and spiritual leader.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of Vita Rose, 2007.

Related Materials

The National Museum of the American Indian has four yarn paintings attributed to Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos. These include catalog numbers [26/2619](#) , [26/2624](#) , [26/2626](#) , and [26/6986](#) .

Processing Information

Processed by Rachel Menyuk, Processing Archivist, 2024.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Vita Rose photographs of Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios and family, image #, NMAI.AC.372; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

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Guadalupe de La Cruz Rios

Guadalupe de La Cruz Rios: Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios (1917-1999) was a Wixarika (Huichol) maraka'ame (shaman) and internationally renowned artist and musician. She was known as a gifted teacher, healer, singer, artist, and ceremonial leader who led yearly pilgrimages, Wiricuta, the sacred land of the Wixarika (Huichol) community. She died on Mother's Day, 1999.

Vita Rose

Photographer Vita Rose first encountered Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios in 1996 while traveling to Nayarit, Mexico with a group of pilgrims from California. The group accompanied a Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wiricuta, and Rose was invited to take photographs by Doña Guadalupe. Rose subsequently participated in two additional pilgrimages to Wiricuta and stayed with the de la Cruz Rios family on their ranchos and homes in town. She went on to live in Nayarit, Mexico for two years before returning to the United States and settling in Arizona.

Scope and Contents

This collection includes 19 color photographic prints taken between 1996 and 1999. The majority of the photographs are of Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios during pilgrimages to the sacred high desert site of Wirikuta (Wiricuta). Rose titled each photograph and included a narrative description for each image based on her personal experiences with de la Cruz Rios and her family. Additional family and community members photographed by Rose include—Dona Manuela and her great-grandson Cristian; niece Maria Felix and her children Oscar, Laura, Umberto, and Matchua; and Xochil with her Aunt Doña Cuca. The photographs also include Wixarika (Huichol) ceremonial practices and items used during the pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta).

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Nayarit (Mexico)
- Pilgrimages
- Wixarika (Huichol)

Cultures:

- Wixarika (Huichol)

Names:

- Cruz-Ríos, Guadalupe de la

Container Listing

Photo-folder 1

P33762: [The Transmission, 1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, holding gladiolas in a room in the Hotel Boganvilia in Tepic, Mexico. The photograph was taken a two months before her passing.

Doña Guadalupe, Huichol marakame (shaman) and internationally renowned artist, blesses us two months before she crossed over into the realm of the ancestor. While spending a few weeks at the Hotel Boganvilia in Tepic, Mexico, she told us that they were waiting for her in the parking lot, and that she was very happy to see them. I believe that mi abuela (my Huichol Grandmother) is transmitting, as she looks out at us from this photograph, the wisdom and compassion that she exemplified during her lifetime.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 1

P33763: [The Vision, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, wearing a beaded wide-brimmed hat, and smiling at the camera. She is at the first stop on the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta) in Mexico.

When we were with her, Doña Guadalupe often seemed to be contemplating something imperceptible to the rest of us. Upon arrival at Crashing Clouds, the first stop on the annual pilgrimage to the sacred high desert site of Wiricuta, she appears joyous. I think she is happy to be with the beloved Gods and Goddesses of the place, whom she has not seen for a whole year. Notice she is glowing.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 1

P33764: [Ooshama, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, wearing a beaded wide-brimmed hat. She has markings on her face made from a paste of oosha root and water, gathered during the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta) in Mexico.

Doña Guadalupe was a Huichol marakame (shaman) and internationally renowned artist. When on their annual pilgrimage to Wiricuta, the sacred highland desert in Mexico, Huichols stop to harvest oosha root. Once back in the village, they use twigs to paint sacred symbols on each other's faces from paste made from the root and water. They are thus recognized and protected by the Gods who can see the paintings even when they are no longer visible to human eyes.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 1

P33765: [The Blessing, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, blessing the gathering with a spray of sacred water from the spring at Tate Matinieri. At the closing ceremony of the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta), held at the Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios ranch in Santa Mario del Oro, in Mexico.

Tired, exhilarated and covered in sacred dirt from a week's travel through the desert of Wiricuta, 25 Huichol and Gringo pilgrims arrive back home to Tatewari (Grandfather Fire) and a closing ceremony at Doña Guadalupe's small rancho in Santa Maria del Oro. Here the marakame (shaman) blesses us with a spray of sacred water from the spring at Tate Matinieri. Doña Guadalupe knows that we Gringos are not used to having water sprayed at us by mouth and is enjoying introducing us to yet another Huichol custom that takes us outside our normal reality and comfort zone. Huichols love to laugh, and no ceremony is too serious for a joke. Perhaps the laughter is itself the sacred blessing.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 1

P33766: [Elders, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios (right), Don Domingo (left) and Dona Manuela holding her great-grandson Cristian in her lap (center). Manuela and Guadalupe wear their vestuarios (traditional ceremonial clothing) as they sit in preparation for the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta), in Nayarit, Mexico. Guadalupe also holds her bulto (bundle of ceremonial objects) in her lap.

Doña Guadalupe, Don Domingo, Doña Manuela and Cristian, her great-grandson, sit quietly during the preparation for the annual pilgrimage to Wiricuta. Elders are highly respected among the Huichols as holders of sacred ancestral wisdom. They speak the ancient tongue, communicate directly with the many Gods and Goddesses in the Huichols universe, tienen mucho kupoori (they have power granted by the Gods) and they understand how the world works. Doña Guadalupe and Doña Manuela are wearing their vestuarios, traditional ceremonial clothing worn only during the holiest of days. Doña Guadalupe, on the right, holds her bulto, the wrapped bundle of her sacred ceremonial objects.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 2

P33767: [Muvieris, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios holding her great nephew Oscar. She is working with her muvieri, a prayer arrow made with sticks, yarn and raptor feathers during the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta), in Nayarit, Mexico.

Doña Guadalupe, mi abuela (my grandmother), simultaneously blesses her great nephew Oscar and teaches him Huichol language and tradition. She is working with her muvieri, (prayer arrow made with sticks, yarn and raptor feathers) during the annual pilgrimage to the sacred high desert of Wiricuta.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 2

P33768: [Two Faces, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios holding her great nephew Oscar during the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta), in Nayarit, Mexico.

Two faces, one marked by life's experiences both joyous and tragic, the other, that of a baby boy just stepping onto life's path. Mi Abuela Doña Guadalupe, matriarch and principal marakame (shaman) of her extended family, was born 90 years ago and has joined her ancestors. Oscar is now 11 years old. Doña Guadalupe had no children of her own yet she was mi Abuela, my Grandmother, to dozens of nieces and nephew and their children and we gringos who had the incredible good fortune to know her, hear her stories and be in ceremony with her. Her wise teachings were offered freely to all who cared to listen. She particularly loved and teased the children, passionately admonishing them to follow el camino derecho, the good path, and the traditional moral and ethical teachings of their Huichol ancestors. May her wish be granted and may these two faces represent an unbroken chain of wise tradition.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 2

P33769: [Dona Guadalupe's Altar, 1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: View of a tuki (temple), or altar, commemorating Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, on a small rancho outside Tepic, Nayarit, Mexico. The tuki includes Guadalupe's shaman's chair and drum, as well as other sacred objects and gifts.

Doña Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios died on Mother's Day, 1999. Her shaman's chair and drum, as well as other sacred objects and gifts, are reverently displayed in the family tuki (temple) on a small rancho outside Tepic, Nayarit, Mexico. Doña Guadalupe, known to many as mi Abuela (my Grandmother) was a powerful marakame (shaman), cantadora (singer of sacred songs) and renowned artist. It is unusual for a woman to achieve such eminence in the Huichol community, and even less common to receive the worldwide recognition granted her as an artist and peacemaker. Her death left her extended family bereft of a spiritual leader and guide.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 2

P33770: [Dona Manuela's Hat, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Wixarika (Huichol) woman, Dona Manuela, wearing a ceremonial hat with raptor feathers and rimmed with small metal

dangles. Worn for the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta), in Nayarit, Mexico.

Doña Manuela shares her small rancho with chickens, a burro, and her great grandson Guillermo. Her husband Domingo had been dead for only a few months when her grandson brought her the two-week-old infant, covered with sores and crying continually. She nursed him back to health, at times going without food herself to buy the baby powdered milk. The miracle of renewed life was mutual. Doña Manuela's ceremonial hat is crowned with raptor feathers and rimmed with small metal dangles whose music brings her mind back to the Gods. Doña Manuela is a treasure to her family as she holds the mysteries of the old ways embedded like jewels in the matrix of the Huichol language, partially or totally lost to younger generations who live in the mestizo community.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 2

P33771: [Native Americans, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Maria Felix, niece of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, holding her son Oscar at their home in Tepic, Mexico. They are seated under a United State flag with Native American imagery superimposed on it.

Maria Feliz and Oscar stand beneath a Native American flag in their home in Tepic, Mexico. Huichols feel a kinship with indigenous people worldwide. According to one version of their history, Huichols were once part of the greater Aztec nation, but split off when the Aztecs became warriors and conquerors. There is no record of engagement in war in Huichol history; their strength lies in their shamanic relationship to the spirit world.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 3

P33772: [Xochil and the Machetes, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: View of Xochil, a young Wixarika (Huichol) girl, sitting with her maternal aunt Dona Cuca during a fertility rite in Nayarit, Mexico. Xochil receives machetes that have just been used to clear out weeds from the milpa (corn field) of her grandmother Dona Manuel.

Huichol Xochil, with the guidance of her maternal aunt Doña Cuca, receives the machetes that have just been used to clear out the weeds from the milpa (corn field) on her grandmother Doña Manuel's rancho in Nayarit, Mexico. As the men of her extended family hand her their precious tools, they are enacting an ancient fertility rite, combining the male and female elements of spring planting. Together they pray to the Goddess Tatel Urianaka, "the moist earth waiting to be plowed," for a successful harvest to provide them with corn for tortillas, and therefore life-giving sustenance, for another year. Xochil's special status is granted to her as the oldest girl not yet entered into menarche. She will lead the procession in a counterclockwise circle around Tatewari, Grandfather Fire, and from

there into the tuki or temple where she will carefully lay the machetes in for of the altar to be blessed.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 3

P33773: [Creating God's Eyes, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: View of Laura and Umberto, children of Maria Felix, weaving God's eyes. Maria Felix, niece of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, uses the God's eye weaving to mark the number of journeys to Wirikuta (Wiricuta), in Nayarit, Mexico, her children have taken.

Huichol older children and adults take vows to travel five times to Wiricuta, the sacred high desert in Central Mexico, and the younger children accompany them. Maria Felix uses God's eye weavings to keep records of the number of journeys each of her seven children has taken. Each child is represented by a specific color combination. Laura and Umberto are weaving God's Eyes for their younger brothers and sisters. Huichol children begin to make their traditional artesanía, which has its basis in their ceremonial practices, from as early as 2 or 3 years of age.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 3

P33774: [Blue Corn, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: View of a young Wixarika (Huichol) woman winnowing corn kernels from last year's harvest as part of a ceremony on the small family rancho of Dona Manuela in Nayarit, Mexico.

Like a nymph pouring out a stream of sacred water, a young Huichol matron winnows corn kernels saved from last year's harvest. Another woman will next toast the corn a few grains at a time in a comal, roasting pan, directly over the flame of Tatewari, Grandfather Fire, while her nephew feeds wood to the God. This is very hot and tiring work. The women then make hundreds of small corn tamales to place as offerings before the altayn the Tuki, temple, on the small rancho of the family matriarch Doña Manuela. Don Mariano, the marakame (shaman) guiding the ceremony, commented that it was the women in this extended family who were guarding and preserving the ancestral traditions.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 3

P33775: [El Sombrero, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Matchua, a young boy, wearing his full regalia for the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta). His mother Maria Felix, niece of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, has embroidered an 8-pointed design in the center of his shirt representing a peyote cactus button. His hat is trimmed with seedpods.

Matchua wears his full regalia during the Huichol annual pilgrimage to Wiricuta, the sacred high desert in Central Mexico. The very

youngest children wear their own vestuarios (sacred clothing), which are embroidered by their mothers with symbols seen in peyote visions. Matchua's mother Maria Felix embroidered the deep pink eight-pointed design in the center his shirt representing the peyote cactus button eaten by pilgrims of all ages. The seedpods around the rim of Matchua's sombrero rattle like light rain and remind him to listen to the Gods voices.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 3

P33776: [La Ceremonia del Toro, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: View of a young bull being butchered as part of a Bull Ceremony, in Nayarit, Mexico. The ceremony is marking Maria Felix, niece of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios, completing her vow of traveling five time to the sacred high desert of Wirikuta (Wiricuta).

Maria Felix has fulfilled her vow to travel five times to the sacred high desert of Wiricuta. Her family celebrates the occasion with the Bull Ceremony. We Gringos join them in staying up all night to pray and drink liquidos made with hicouri (peyote). At dawn the gentle young bull that we had been petting for a week is led to a clearing in front of the tuki (temple) and sacrificed with a swift knife blow to the heart. His long bellow, his death song, opens a nierika (doorway between the worlds) through which the Gods and Goddesses come down to earth to participate in the ceremony. We bath our muvieris (prayer arrows) in his blood, thus receiving some of his kopoori, his strong life force. The young men who skillfully butcher him let nothing go to waste and the weeklong fast is broken with tacos de toro, seasoned with salsa and gratitude.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 4

P33777: [Matchua with Black Puppy, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Matchua, a young boy, wearing his full regalia for the annual Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to Wirikuta (Wiricuta) and holding a small black puppy. His mother Maria Felix, is the niece of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios. His hat is trimmed with seedpods.

Matchua, whose name means the physical and spiritual strength in our arms and hands, wears his traditional vestuario (ceremonial clothing) during the annual pilgrimage to Wiricuta, the sacred desert. Every morning, Huichols give thanks to Tatewari, Grandfather Fire, for the matchua that enables them to work and create beautiful artesanía another day. A black female dog accompanied the sole human survivor during the ancient flood that destroyed the world. In the same tradition that gives us the story of the silke, the human/seals of Scandinavia, she later shed her dog skin and became the mother of the Huichols who would inhabit the newly washed world.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 4

P33778: [Grapefruit Caper, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: Portrait of Matchua, a young boy, posed smiling with a grapefruit peel on his head. His mother Maria Felix, is the niece of Wixarika (Huichol) marakame, or shaman, Guadalupe de la Cruz Rios.

Toys are conspicuous for their absence on the rancho, but Matchua never lacks for something to play with. Whether he's wrestling with a puppy, climbing a tree with his many brothers, sisters and cousins, or creative a stellar sombrero out of a grapefruit peel, he's always busy and twinkling. To obtain the grapefruit, we had to negotiate a narrow concrete wall, ford a stream, cross a scorpion infested milpa (corn field), send older brother Umberto up the 40' tree, and then run home since the fruit was "borrowed." Eaten with salt, it was delicious.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 4

P33779: [Altar with Virgen de Guadalupe, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: An altar set up for a Wixarika (Huichol) Bull Ceremony, with velas (candles), corn in five colors, jicaras (gourds), muvieris (prayer arrows), and a portrait of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in Nayarit Mexico. A Bull Ceremony is held when a Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrim completes five journeys to Wirikuta (Wiricuta). See also P33776.

When a Huichol pilgrim completes five viajes (journeys) to the sacred high desert of Wiricuta, the community holds a Bull Ceremony. The animal's life is sacrificed with tenderness and regrets after a night of prayer and ritual. The altar, set up outside on the ground, includes many velas (candles), corn in 5 colors, jicaras (gourds), and muvieris (prayer arrows). Many but not all Huichols have adopted the Virgen de Guadalupe into their pantheon, along with Tatewari, Grandfather Fire and Kayumari, Elder Brother Deer.

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)

Photo-folder 4

P33780: [Peyote Ceremony, 1996-1999](#)

1 Photographic print

Notes: View of Hicouri (Peyote), a box of Sherman's cigarillos, and muvieris (prayer arrows) laid out on a flowered fabric, in Nayarit, Mexico. The Hicouri (Peyote) was gathered during the Wixarika (Huichol) pilgrimage to the sacred high desert of Wirikuta (Wiricuta).

Hicouri (Peyote) is "hunted" in the desert of Wiricuta with ceremonial arrows. Once the marakame (shaman) finds and shoots una abuela (a large, many clustered grandmother peyote cactus), each pilgrim eats a small piece of the bitter cactus and the hunt continues. Peyote is always harvested leaving the rootstock intact to insure future plant growth. After sunset, the group gathers around Tatewari (Grandfather Fire) and prays that Hicouri send each of them a vision that will guide them on their life's path. The pilgrims smoke Sherman's cigarillos, offering the smoke to the Gods and then carry home koopoori (positive energy) and blessings gathered in their muvieris (prayer arrows make with yam and raptors' feathers).

Culture: Wixarika (Huichol)