

# RAINFOREST MASKS OF COSTA RICA



The enchanting *Rainforest Masks of Costa Rica* exhibition and sale returns to Selby Gardens for the 18th consecutive year, thanks to the continuous support of art collectors and enthusiastic admirers. Feel the vibrancy of hundreds of masks created by a collective of indigenous Borucan artists in a display like no other in the world. These masks allow visitors to experience the rich biodiversity of the rainforest through the eyes of the artists, who are intricately connected to their land.

The Borucan artists share a strong sense of community and consider their art as ambassador for their culture. Each one-of-a-kind mask bursts from a single log of balsa wood and comes to life through the creativity, skills, and collaboration of a designer, a carver, and a painter.

## JANUARY 9-31, 2021

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## THE STORY AND TRADITION BEHIND THE MASKS

Five hundred years ago, the Spanish came for their land and gold. They enslaved and killed thousands of natives. Tribal lore depicts how brave warriors wearing masks frightened the invaders, who thought them to be “diablitos” or little devils. Thanks to their scary masks, twelve families remained in the place now called Boruca.

Since, this proud community has been honoring their “victory” and retelling their story of survival through the “Fiesta de los Diablitos,” which runs December 30<sup>th</sup> through January 2<sup>nd</sup> each year. By the end of these four days of ceremony and celebration, the heart of every Borucan overflows with joy for the rebirth of their culture for another year. They eagerly show the world that the Borucan people and their culture live on, despite the hardships they have endured.

## THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN RAINFOREST MASKS



In the 1980's, elders from the tribe feared their younger generations were losing their cultural roots. Artist Don Ismael Gonzalez trained a group of young boys from 11-12 years old in traditional mask making. For several years, this group continued working in Ismael's workshop, sharing their carving and new painting skills.

Around 1995, a client commissioned a mask featuring a macaw and a “little Indian face.” Thus, began the tradition of the

rainforest masks depicting local flora and fauna. This has also empowered artists to keep preserving their environment and to rediscover their culture.

For the past 18 years, the Selby Gardens' exhibits have been fertile ground for creativity to flow and for this art to reach new levels. The modern masks keep evolving thanks to new admirers, providing a beautiful cultural exchange between the Sarasota community and the Borucans.

Visit [SELBY.ORG](http://SELBY.ORG) for more on rainforest masks and events.