



TITLE: *Horsemen of the Apocalypse*  
 ARTIST: Rufino Tamayo  
 DATE: 1959  
 SIZE: 18" x 24"; framed: 19 ½" x 25 ¾"  
 MEDIUM: Lithograph  
 ACQUISITION #: 67.15  
 Additional works in the collection by the artist?  
 Yes X No   



**MoFA**  
 Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts

### Artist's Quote

"Can you believe that, to say that ours is the only path when the fundamental thing in art is freedom! In art, there are millions of paths—as many paths as there are artists." – Rufino Tamayo

### Artist's Biography

Rufino Tamayo was born in 1899 in Oaxaca, Mexico to a family of Zapotec Indian descendants. He had become an orphan at the age of twelve and moved to live with his aunt in Mexico City. At eighteen years old, he enrolled in Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes to expand his interest in drawing. After three years however, Tamayo left the school to pursue independent study and developed an interest in European art movements of the time such as Cubism and Fauvism. He continued his work at the National Museum drawing pre-Columbian objects which peaked his interest in combining his culture with modern art. He was influenced by the earthy colors of his homeland.

Tamayo was against popular Mexican artists such as Diego Rivera, and was ostracized for his modern styles that rejected the political themes of the muralists. Because of this, he left for New York in 1926 in order to pursue his creative expression. In New York, he taught in Manhattan while also focusing on his paintings as well as printmaking. He was quickly gaining popularity and his works were featured in a variety of shows such as the Venice Biennale. Tamayo's legacy was recognized with the opening of the Rufino Tamayo Museum of Contemporary Art in 1981 that holds works by himself as well as Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali. He died at the age of 91 in 1991. His work is known for the melding of cultures and his drive to stay true to his creative expression as opposed to following the trends.

### Contextual Information

This lithograph is one of a four-part series representing the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, a common subject in art history. From the Book of Revelation of the New Testament, the chapter is about the end of the world. The Four Horsemen are introduced as Jesus opens the first four of seven seals which start the Apocalypse. The Four Horsemen symbolize 1) conquest or pestilence (white horse), 2) war (red horse), 3) famine (black horse), and 4) death (pale horse). This piece presents Horseman #1 who rides a white horse, wears a crown, and carries a bow. In biblical terms, the color white did not have the association of purity as it does today. It stood for disease and leprosy which is why the first horse is sometimes referred to as pestilence (a fatal epidemic disease).

Biblical works were not often the subject of Tamayo's imagery, but he rejected the political messages of his Mexican contemporaries in hopes of reaching a broader audience. Christianity, a widely practiced religion, allowed Tamayo to create on a more universal platform. He also focused on creating art that fused Western culture with his Mexican heritage.

### Mixografia

Rufino Tamayo was first introduced to the idea of printmaking in 1973 but was adamant about creating prints which showed volume, depth and texture. He worked with Luis Remba, who is known for changing the world of printmaking. Together, they created "mixografia" which combined printmaking with three dimensional elements. Remba explains it best saying "I set to work and found a way to print with texture. The method allowed the artist to create a collage or maquette out of various materials, such as charred wood, rope, cotton and other natural substances, which we would then cast in copper as a printing plate." The Remba family continues their practices in Los Angeles. They worked with many artists including Helen Frankenthaler and Louise Bourgeois. Although Tamayo was instrumental in the creation of this groundbreaking mixografia process, this work is a lithograph.

### Vocabulary

**Lithography:** the process of producing a picture, writing, or the like, on a flat, specially prepared stone, with some greasy or oily substance, and of taking ink impressions from this as in ordinary printing.

**Fauvism:** style of painting that flourished in France around the turn of the 20th century. Fauve artists used pure, brilliant color aggressively applied straight from the paint tubes to create a sense of an explosion on the canvas.

**Cubism:** an early 20th-century style and movement in art, especially painting, in which perspective with a single viewpoint was abandoned and use was made of simple geometric shapes, interlocking planes, and, later, collage.

### References

<https://mixografia.com/>  
<https://mlagallery.com/blogs/biographies/5808718-rufino-tamayo-mexico-bio>  
<https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/mixografia-printmaking-rufino-tamayo-mexican-family-business>  
<https://publicdomainreview.org/collections/the-four-horsemen-of-the-apocalypse/>

## HORSE SELF-PORTRAITS

### Activity Lesson Plan K-5

**Session Activity:** Students will be able to use their study of horses to combine science with art. Like the Tamayo image, which shows a horse and rider, students will create self-portraits of themselves riding horses. They will incorporate self-symbols and characteristics within their pictures.

#### Objectives:

- Students will incorporate their new knowledge of horses into their discussion and artwork.
- Students will utilize self-defining characteristics and symbols in artworks.
- Students will be able to freely express their visions.

**Materials:** Construction paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils, printed examples of art with horses and riders, two days for field trip and activity

**Procedure:** To start the lesson, contact Happy Trails Ranch for a field trip (<http://www.happytrailsranch.com/FieldTrips.aspx>) or contact the FSU Equestrian team to come to the class and teach about horses. Students will expand their knowledge of horses to enrich their self-portraits on horses. Once back in the classroom, students will observe images of horses and horses with riders. In addition to the image by Rufino Tamayo, discuss as a class horse imagery by artists such as Kehinde Wiley, Franz Marc, Leonardo da Vinci, and Rosa Bonheur. Emphasize the different ways the artists depict their subjects. Explain to the students the way Rufino Tamayo spoke about freedom of expression. Encourage students to make a list of self-defining characteristics to include in their self-portraits. Just as Tamayo includes symbols, a crown and a bow, in his image, ask students to each develop at least one self-symbol from those characteristics to include in their self-portraits. Next, students will create their pieces using a variety of materials to highlight the uniqueness of each student's work. Display the self-portraits. Ask students to each include a paragraph to tell one fact about horses included in their images and to explain self-symbols.



Franz Marc, *The Large Blue Horses*, 1911, Oil on Canvas, 105.7 x 181.2 cm



Leonardo da Vinci, *Study of Horses*, 1482, Drawing



Rosa Bonheur, *The Horse Fair*, 1850s, Oil on Canvas, 244.5 x 506.7 cm



Kehinde Wiley, *Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps*, 2005, Oil on Canvas, 274.3 x 274.3 cm

#### Next Generation Sunshine State Standards K-5

**Big Idea:** Critical Thinking and Reflection

**Enduring Understanding 1:** Cognition and reflection are required to appreciate, interpret, and create with artistic intent.

**VA.3.C.1.1:** Use the art-making process to develop ideas for self-expression.

#### Next Generation Sunshine State Standards 6-12

**Big Idea:** Historical and Global Connections

**Enduring Understanding 2:** The arts reflect and document cultural trends and historical events and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged.

**VA.912.H.2.3:** Analyze historical or cultural references in commemorative works of art to identify the significance of the event or person portrayed.

## THE APOCALYPSE THROUGH THE AGES

### Activity Lesson Plan 6-12

**Session Activity:** Rufino Tamayo's work *Horsemen of the Apocalypse* displays a larger theme of epic destruction that is portrayed by different cultures and times.

#### Objectives:

- Students will compare and contrast images of apocalyptic art.
- Students will learn to effectively communicate, through writing and discussion, the similarities and differences in artwork.

**Procedure:** Start the discussion by explaining the symbols of Rufino Tamayo's work, *Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. Simply state, as examples of symbolism, the bow, the white color of the horse, and the crown represent conquest. Next, display different works with the same apocalyptic subject. Discuss the way each image portrays the end of the world through the eyes of the artist. Have the students examine the different types of media and discuss each time period's influence on the works created. Compare and contrast the images based on the symbolism. Discuss the way various western sub-cultures create varying interpretations even with the same subject. Also compare and contrast the effects of the works on the viewers. For example, talk about the different impact effected by a set of four pictures, one for each horseman, as opposed to portraying the Four Horsemen together.

**Writing Prompt:** Have students pick and research two images from a range of apocalyptic works. Have them think about artwork as a product of time period, medium, and culture. Next, have the students write a 500-word essay comparing and contrasting interpretations of the apocalypse.



Albrecht Durer, *The Four Riders of the Apocalypse*, 1498, Woodcut, 38.8 x 29.1 cm



Hieronymus Bosch, *Garden of Earthly Delights*, 1490-1510, Oil on Oak Panels, 220 x 389 cm



Kandinsky, *Rider of the Apocalypse*, 1911, Tempera on Glass, 29.5 x 20.0 cm

#### Other examples of works for writing prompt and discussion:

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/21/apocalypse-art-best-mayan-2012\\_n\\_2342791.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/21/apocalypse-art-best-mayan-2012_n_2342791.html)

<https://fineartviews.com/blog/52229/art-world-wasteland-apocalypse-and-post-apocalypse-inspired-art-is-on-the-rise>

<http://doomfordummies.blogspot.com/p/apocalyptic-visual-art.html>

#### Vocabulary

**Apocalypse:** an event involving destruction or damage on a catastrophic scale.

**Sub-culture:** a cultural group within a larger culture, often having beliefs or interests at variance with those of the larger culture.