

# Where to find Day of the Dead altars

**Tequila Rock Revolution blends metal, mariachi music.**

**LIFE** By [Nancy Flores](#) - American-Statesman Staff



Stencil artist Eleanor Herasimchuk, aka Niz, painted Austin artists who have played at The Continental Club over the years including Gary Clark Jr.

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Although I grew up on the Texas-Mexico border and spent time during the Día de los Muertos season polishing the gravestones of loved ones in Mexico and sprucing up their resting places with new flowers, I don't remember my family creating Day of the Dead altars.

I fell in love with this Día de los Muertos tradition later on in life while living in Mexico City. It was there where I was blown away by elaborate altars that

showcased everything from marigolds and sugar skulls to music and all kinds of objects offered to the deceased to honor their memory and lure their spirit back to Earth for the occasion.

As the holiday grows in popularity in Austin, so does the local altar tradition. Along with its annual Viva la Vida Festival, the Mexic-Arte Museum currently has on display large-scale community altars in its exhibit “Love to Death,” which runs through Nov. 26. These sophisticated and extravagant altars honor both deceased celebrities and Austinites alike.

Last year’s exhibit included altars for people such as Mexican singer-songwriter Juan Gabriel, East Austin historian Danny Camacho and Roberto Gómez Bolaños, who played the iconic role “El Chavo del Ocho.”

Some of my favorite altars this year honor three powerful women. As the founder of the Modern Ballet of Mexico, later renamed Ballet Folklórico of Mexico, dancer and choreographer Amalia Hernández helped elevate the dance form to an international audience. The altar, sponsored by the Consulate General of Mexico in Austin, includes albums that the dance company and its musicians recorded, Hernández’ photographs, a small mural of Mexican landscapes and a life-size catrina skeleton dressed as a ballet folklórico dancer.

Another impressive altar honors the late pop culture icon Selena. Hanging on a wall above the altar, a television monitor plays Selena’s last concert in the Houston Astrodome on a loop. The altar, created by Stephanie Sandoval, includes some of the Tejano music star’s favorite things — pizza, Coca-Cola, lipsticks and a sewing machine.

On March 31, 1995, Selena’s former fan club president Yolanda Saldivar fatally shot Selena at a Days Inn motel in Corpus Christi. But for many fans of the Tejano superstar, who was on the brink of crossing over to the English-language music market, Selena’s legacy lives on. On Nov. 3, Selena will receive a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

In honor of Frida Kahlo's 110th anniversary, the museum replicated a pyramid that Mexican muralist Diego Rivera had constructed in Kahlo's famous Blue House garden. The museum's pyramid serves as an altar to Kahlo, best known for her striking self portraits and regional Mexican fashion. The altar features photographs of her and Rivera and complements the museum's concurrent photo exhibit "Diego y Frida: A Smile in the Middle of the Way," which also runs through Nov. 26 and can be found in the museum's south gallery. Through the lens of various famous photographers, the couple's relationship comes to life.

Other unique altars include one dedicated to the forgotten history of Koreans in Mexico and one in honor of beloved pets that have died. Visit [mexic-artemuseum.org](http://mexic-artemuseum.org) for more information on the altars. Admission is free every Sunday.

### **Tequila Rock Revolution**

A metal-meets-mariachi music mashup? Austin rocker Haydn Vitera calls his latest project Tequila Rock Revolution. The music salutes mariachi roots and infuses it with modern metal and electronica. The result makes for a must-see show that features a 10-piece supergroup donning Mexican sugar skull face paint.

On Nov. 1, catch Vitera's Tequila Rock Revolution show "Mariachis y Metaleros" at 3TEN Austin City Limits Live. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and tickets, which can be purchased at [3tenaustin.com](http://3tenaustin.com), cost \$15.

Vitera, who has been a trailblazer in Austin's Latin rock music scene, teamed up with Vanessa Del Fierro of San Antonio's all-female band Mariachi Las Coronelas in 2014 when they collaborated at an opening show for the Los Angeles metal-mariachi band Metalachi. Vitera describes the musical chemistry between his band Vitera and Del Fierro as immediate. "There was something special in this new fusion of sounds and styles," he said on the band's website.

Keep an eye out for a Tequila Rock Revolution full-length album in 2018.

### **Art for the love of music**

Two of Austin's prominent street art and graffiti artists will pay homage to music culture in their own ways.

Stencil artist Eleanor Herasimchuk, also known as Niz, honors Austin musicians who have played at The Continental Club over the years with a mural and paintings of various local artists at the venue's gallery. Niz, whose work was recently featured in Mexic-Arte Museum's Fifth Street wall project called El Mero Muro, highlights Austin creatives such as Gary Clark Jr. and Tameca Jones. Visitors can check out the artwork already on display at The Continental Gallery, where live music shows begin at 8:30 p.m. nightly.

Austin's annual graffiti art show, Emerge, returns on Nov. 4 from 6 p.m.-1:30 a.m. at The Gatsby (708 E. Sixth St.). The show, curated by veteran graffiti artist Nathan Nordstrom, also known as Sloke, honors the four elements of hip-hop culture — MCs, graffiti, DJs, and break dancers. Emerge will feature live painting, breakdance battles, a gallery and music from performers such as Killah Priest of the Wu Tang Clan and Austin rapper Clemits. Niz' artwork will also be among the gallery's pieces. Emerge brings together both new artists with seasoned professionals. Visit [facebook.com/emergeATX](https://facebook.com/emergeATX) for more details.