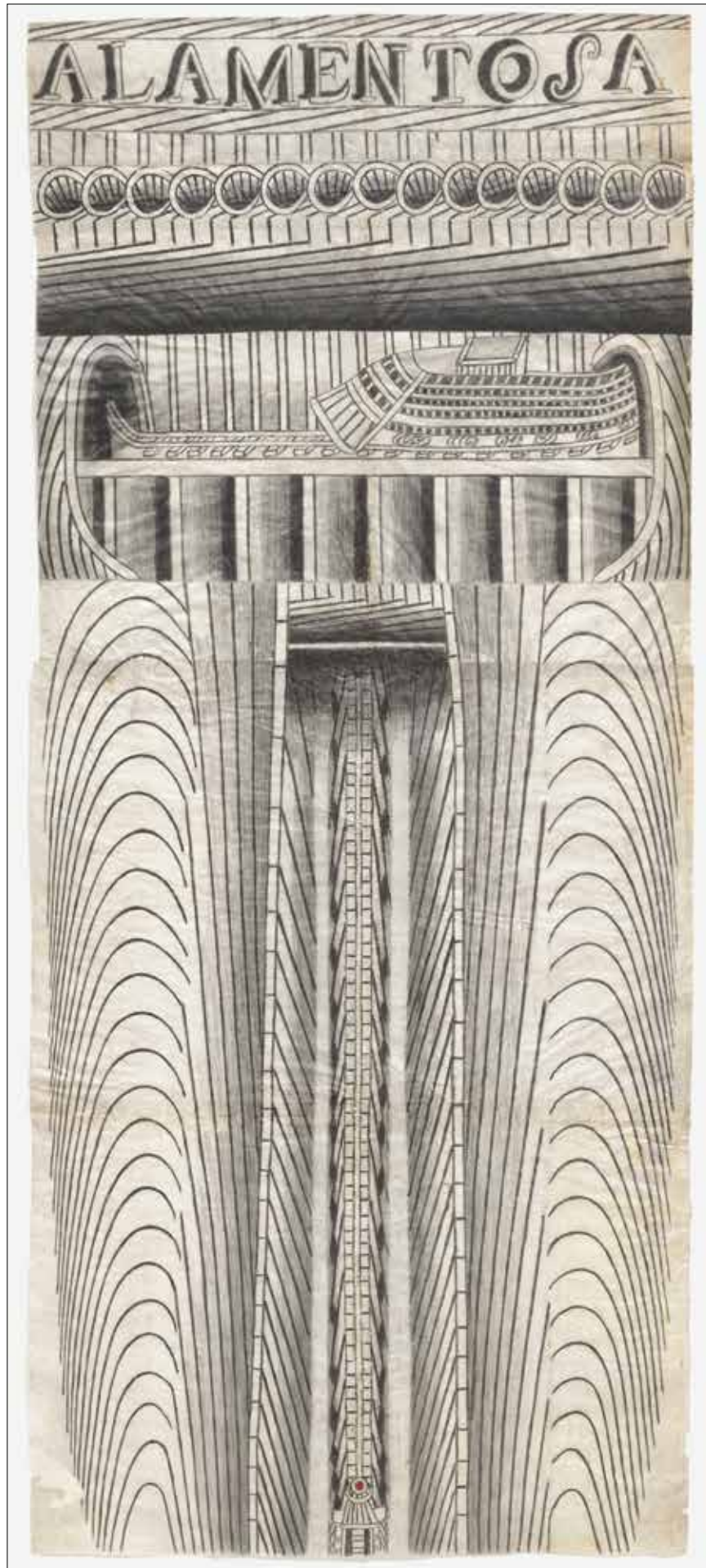


# Martín Ramírez "Alamentosa"



*Untitled (Alamentosa)*, c. 1953  
Pencil and watercolor on paper  
80 ¼ × 34 ¾ in. (203.8 × 88.3 cm)  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

*Sin título (Alamentosa)*, c. 1953  
Lápiz y acuarela en papel  
80 ¼ × 34 ¾ pulgadas  
(203,8 × 88,3 cm)  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

## Martín Ramírez: His Life in Pictures, Another Interpretation

*Martín Ramírez: His Life in Pictures, Another Interpretation* is the first solo presentation of the self-taught artist Martín Ramírez in Southern California.

Born in 1895 in Mexico's southern region of Jalisco, Martín Ramírez migrated as a young man to the United States to seek work on the railroads while his wife and three children remained at home. The Great Depression of 1929 left Ramírez unemployed and homeless. He was identified as a vagrant by police and subsequently incarcerated in state psychiatric hospitals, with questionable diagnoses of mental illness, until his death in 1963. During his thirty-year confinement, Ramírez began to make art and, over time, produced a body of remarkable drawings resourcefully executed with matchsticks, melted crayons, and other makeshift implements. Ramírez developed a distinctive style of concentric lines and undulating patterns, shot through with cultural references and narrative imagery of both Mexico and America.

Ramírez's journey is one of injustice and misinterpretation on the one hand and an indomitable will and artistic brilliance on the other. His story provides historical echoes of many social issues we still face today: immigration, mass incarceration, economic volatility, national and cultural borders, and the rights of the mentally ill.

Martín Ramírez' watercolor *Alamentosa* employs powerful concentric lines to create the feeling of movement and rhythm — expressive elements for students to analyze and explore. Stylized trains and tunnels are frequent subjects in Ramírez's work. They embody both the realities of and metaphors for the migrant experience.

Note: The origin of the word "Alamentosa" is unknown. Ramírez biographer Víctor Espinosa speculates that "'Alamentosa' could be a slight misspelling of 'La Lamentosa' — the sorrowful (or wailing) one —, a nickname once given to the train that passed near Ramírez's childhood region in reference to its melancholy whistle." (Víctor M. Espinosa, *Martín Ramírez: Framing His Life and Art*, 2015)

Ask your students:

*What type of journey does this picture suggest?*

# Inquiry and Projects

## **K-2**

Students look carefully at the form and content of the artwork. They share thoughts about the drawing, and about their own train travels, and create drawings of movement and transportation.

### **INQUIRY**

- Describe the different types of lines you see in *Alamentosa*
- Look closely at the train at the top of the artwork. Is it similar to trains you have seen? How is it different?

### **PROJECT**

- Have you traveled outside of your neighborhood to visit family or friends? How did you travel? Have family or friends travelled a long distance to visit you? How did they get here?
- Create a drawing of the car, train, or plane you or your family or friends used to travel. Use different types of lines to express the speed and communicate your feelings about the trip or visit.

## **3-5**

Students discuss migration using Ramírez's drawing and their own personal and family histories. They investigate reasons to come to the United States and the hardships and challenges migrants may face.

### **INQUIRY**

- Imagine you are riding one of the trains on a journey to a new country, far from home. How does it feel to travel on the tracks, to cross the bridge, to go through the tunnels?
- Describe the landscape you're speeding through. Do you feel welcome there?

### **PROJECT**

- Ask a relative to share a family story of moving or migration. When and why did the move take place?
- Create a painting of that moment from your family's past. Start by choosing a key word to describe your story and paint it across the top of your painting. Use colors to express the feelings of the event.

## **6-12**

Through the lens of Martín Ramírez, students collect visual resources from their families or local communities and examine the interplay between national, state, local, and personal history.

### **INQUIRY**

- Share Martín Ramírez's biography. Do elements in *Alamentosa* communicate circumstances or consequences of his life? Explain.
- Describe how aspects of *Alamentosa* may express the facets of the broader migrant experience.

### **PROJECT**

- 3- to 4-student teams each create a small-scale exhibition of personal, local, or historical photos that express a theme of migration.
- Teams collaborate to choose focus and a title. Research, select and caption images. Write an exhibition statement. Mount and present exhibition.

## Martín Ramírez: Su Vida en Imágenes, Otra Interpretación

*Martín Ramírez: Su Vida en Imágenes, Otra Interpretación* es la primera presentación individual del artista autodidacta Martín Ramírez en el sur de California.

Nacido en 1895 en Jalisco, en el sur de México, Martín Ramírez emigró en su juventud a Estados Unidos para buscar trabajo en el ferrocarril mientras su esposa y tres hijos permanecían en el hogar. La Gran Depresión de 1929 dejó a Ramírez sin empleo y sin hogar. La policía lo identificó como vagabundo y posteriormente fue recluido en hospitales psiquiátricos estatales, con un cuestionable diagnóstico de enfermedad mental, hasta su muerte en 1963. Durante su confinamiento de treinta años, Ramírez comenzó a crear arte y, con el tiempo, produjo un conjunto de extraordinarios dibujos ejecutados hábilmente con fósforos, crayones derretidos y otros elementos improvisados. Ramírez desarrolló un estilo característico de líneas concéntricas y patrones ondulantes, inyectados con referencias culturales e imágenes narrativas de México y Estados Unidos.

El recorrido de Ramírez es, por un lado, un recorrido de injusticia y malentendidos y, por el otro, una voluntad indomable y una genialidad artística. Su historia ofrece ecos históricos de muchos problemas sociales que todavía enfrentamos en la actualidad: inmigración, encarcelación masiva, volatilidad económica, fronteras nacionales y culturales, y los derechos de los enfermos mentales. Las acuarelas de Martín Ramírez emplean líneas concéntricas impactantes para crear la sensación de movimiento y ritmo: elementos expresivos para que los estudiantes analicen y exploren. Los trenes y túneles estilizados son temas frecuentes en las obras de Ramírez. Representan las realidades y las metáforas de la experiencia migratoria.

Nota: El origen de la palabra “Alamentosa” se desconoce. Víctor Espinosa, el biógrafo de Ramírez, especula que la palabra “‘Alamentosa’ podría ser un leve error de ortografía de ‘La Lamentosa’, la afligida (o que solloza), un apodo dado alguna vez al tren que pasaba cerca de la región donde Ramírez vivió en su niñez y que hace referencia a su silbato melancólico.” (Víctor M. Espinosa, *Martín Ramírez: Framing His Life and Art*, 2015)

Pregunte a sus estudiantes:

*¿Qué tipo de recorrido sugiere esta imagen?*

# Investigaciones y Proyectos

## K-2

Los estudiantes observan atentamente la forma y el contenido de la obra de arte. Comparten sus opiniones acerca del dibujo y acerca de sus propios viajes en tren, y crean dibujos de movimiento y transporte.

### INVESTIGACIÓN

- Describan los diferentes tipos de líneas que ven en Alamentosa.
- Observen el tren en la parte superior de la obra de arte. ¿Es similar a los trenes que han visto? ¿Cuáles son las diferencias?

### PROYECTO

- ¿Han viajado fuera de su vecindario para visitar a familiares o amigos? ¿Cómo viajaron? ¿Sus familiares o amigos han viajado una larga distancia para visitarlos? ¿Cómo llegaron?
- Hagan un dibujo del automóvil, tren o avión en el que ustedes o su familia o amigos viajaron. Usen diferentes tipos de líneas para expresar la velocidad y comunicar sus sentimientos acerca del viaje o la visita.

## 3-5

Los estudiantes debaten la migración mediante el uso de los dibujos de Ramírez y sus propias historias personales y familiares. Investigan los motivos para viajar a Estados Unidos, y las dificultades y desafíos que pueden enfrentar los inmigrantes.

### INVESTIGACIÓN

- Imaginen que viajan en uno de los trenes en un recorrido hacia un nuevo país, muy lejos de su hogar. ¿Qué sienten al viajar sobre las vías, cruzar el puente, atravesar los túneles?
- Describan el paisaje que recorren. ¿Se sienten bienvenidos allí?

### PROYECTO

- Pidan a un familiar que comparta una historia de la familia acerca de una mudanza o migración. ¿Cuándo y por qué se hizo la mudanza? Hagan una pintura de ese momento del pasado de su familia.
- Comiencen por elegir una palabra clave que describa su historia y píntenla a lo largo de la parte superior de la pintura. Usen colores para expresar los sentimientos del evento.

## 6-12

Desde el punto de vista de Martín Ramírez, los estudiantes recopilan recursos visuales de sus familias o comunidades locales y examinan la interacción entre la historia nacional, estatal, local y personal.

### INVESTIGACIÓN

- Compartan la biografía de Martín Ramírez. ¿Los elementos en Alamentosa comunican las circunstancias o consecuencias de su vida? Expliquen.
- Describan cómo los aspectos de Alamentosa pueden expresar las facetas de la experiencia más amplia del migrante.

### PROYECTO

- Equipos de 3 a 4 estudiantes cada uno crean una exposición a pequeña escala de fotografías personales, locales o históricas que expresan un tema de migración.
- Los equipos colaboran para elegir el enfoque y el título. Investiguen, seleccionen y capturen imágenes. Escriban un enunciado para la exposición. Monten y presenten la exposición.
- Teams collaborate to choose focus and a title. Research, select and caption images. Write an exhibition statement. Mount and present exhibition.



# ARTransmissions

## CDE Standards

Listed below are the California Department of Education Visual Art Standards that apply to ARTransmissions's grade level inquiry questions and projects.

### **K-2**

Students look carefully at the form and content of the artwork. They share thoughts about the drawing, and about their own train travels, and create drawings of movement and transportation.

#### **INQUIRY**

- Describe the different types of lines you see in Alamentosa
- Look closely at the train at the top of the artwork. Is it similar to trains you have seen? How is it different?

#### **PROJECT**

- Have you traveled outside of your neighborhood to visit family or friends? How did you travel? Have family or friends travelled a long distance to visit you? How did they get here?
- Create a drawing of the car, train, or plane you or your family or friendstypes of lines to express the speed and communicate your feelings about the trip or visit.

#### **KINDERGARTEN - Visual Art:**

##### **1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION**

- 1.1 Recognize and describe simple patterns found in the environment and works of art.
- 1.3 Identify the elements of art (line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, and shape/form.

##### **2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

- 2.4 Paint pictures expressing ideas about family and neighborhood.
- 2.5 Use lines in drawings and paintings to express feelings.

##### **4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING**

- 4.2 Describe what is seen (including both literal and expressive content) in selected works of art.

#### **FIRST GRADE - Visual Art:**

##### **1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION**

- 1.3 Identify the elements of art (line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, and shape/form.

##### **2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

- 2.4 Plan and use variations in line, shape/form, color, and texture to communicate ideas or feelings in works of art.

##### **3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**

- 3.3 View and then describe art from various cultures.

#### **FIRST GRADE - History Social Science:**

- 1.5 Students describe the human characteristics of familiar places and the varied backgrounds of American citizens and residents in those places.
- 2. Understand the ways in which American Indians and immigrants have helped define Californian and American culture.

**SECOND GRADE - Visual Art:****1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION**

- 1.1 Perceive and describe repetition and balance in nature, in the environment, and in works of art.
- 1.3 Identify the elements of art (line, color, shape/form, texture, value, space) in the environment and in works of art, emphasizing line, color, and shape/form.

**2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

- 2.1 Demonstrate beginning skill in the use of basic tools and art-making processes, such as printing, crayon rubbings, collage, and stencils.

**SECOND GRADE - History Social Science:**

- 2.1 Students differentiate between things that happened long ago and things that happened yesterday.
  - 1. Trace the history of a family through the use of primary and secondary sources, including artifacts, photographs, interviews, and documents.

**3-5**

Students discuss migration using Ramírez's drawing and their own personal and family histories. They investigate reasons to come to the United States and the hardships and challenges migrants may face.

**INQUIRY**

- Imagine you are riding one of the trains on a journey to a new country, far from home. How does it feel to travel on the tracks, to cross the bridge, to go through the tunnels?
- Describe the landscape you're speeding through. Do you feel welcome there?

**PROJECT**

- Ask a relative to share a family story of moving or migration. When and why did the move take place?
- Create a painting of that moment from your family's past. Start by choosing a key word to describe your story and paint it across the top of your painting. Use colors to express the feelings of the event.

**THIRD GRADE - Visual Art:****1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION**

- 1.1 Perceive and describe rhythm and movement in works of art and in the environment.

**2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

- 2.3 Paint or draw a landscape, seascape, or cityscape that shows the illusion of space.

**THIRD GRADE - History Social Science:**

- 3.3 Students draw from historical and community resources to organize the sequence of local historical events and describe how each period of settlement left its mark on the land.

**FOURTH GRADE - Visual Art:****1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION**

- 1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art (e.g., color, shape/form, line, texture, space, value), emphasizing form, as they are used in works of art and found in the environment.

**2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

- 2.7 Use contrast (light and dark) expressively in an original work of art.

**3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**

- 3.2 Identify and discuss the content of works of art in the past and present, focusing on the different cultures that have contributed to California's history and art heritage.

#### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.5 Describe how the individual experiences of an artist may influence the development of specific works of art.

#### 5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

Students apply what they learn in the visual arts across subject areas.

### **FOURTH GRADE - History Social Science**

4.3 Students explain the economic, social, and political life in California from the establishment of the Bear Flag Republic through the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush, and the granting of statehood.

2. Compare how and why people traveled to California and the routes they traveled.

### **FIFTH GRADE - Visual Art:**

#### 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

2.7 Communicate values, opinions, or personal insights through an original work of art.

#### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.1 Identify how selected principles of design are used in a work of art and how they affect personal responses to and evaluation of the work of art.

### **FIFTH GRADE - History Social Science:**

5.8.5. Describe the continued migration of Mexican settlers into Mexican territories of the West and Southwest.

## **6-12**

Through the lens of Martín Ramírez, students collect visual resources from their families or local communities and examine the interplay between national, state, local, and personal history.

### **INQUIRY**

- Share Martín Ramírez's biography (also available online). Do elements in *Alamentosa* communicate circumstances or consequences of his life? Explain.
- Describe how aspects of *Alamentosa* may express the facets of the broader migrant experience.

### **PROJECT**

- 3- to 4-student teams each create a small-scale exhibition of personal, local, or historical photos that express a theme of migration.
- Teams collaborate to choose focus and title. Research, select and caption images. Write an exhibition statement. Mount and present exhibition.

### **SIXTH GRADE - Visual Art:**

#### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.2 Discuss works of art as to theme, genre, style, idea, and differences in media.

#### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

3.1 Research and discuss the role of the visual arts in selected periods of history, using a variety of resources (both print and electronic).

#### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

4.3 Develop specific criteria as individuals or in groups to assess and critique works of art.

#### 5.0 CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS

5.5 Establish criteria to use in selecting works of art for a specific type of art exhibition.

### **SEVENTH GRADE - Visual Art:**

#### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

1.1 Describe the environment and selected works of art, using the elements of art and the principles of design.



### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

- 3.2 Compare and contrast works of art from various periods, styles, and cultures and explain how those works reflect the society in which they were made.

### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

- 4.2 Analyze the form (how a work of art looks) and content (what a work of art communicates) of works of art.
- 4.3 Take an active part in a small-group discussion about the artistic value of specific works of art, with a wide range of the viewpoints of peers being considered.

## **EIGHTH GRADE - Visual Art:**

### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

- 1.1 Use artistic terms when describing the intent and content of works of art.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

- 3.4 Discuss the contributions of various immigrant cultures to the art of a particular society.

### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

- 4.2 Develop a theory about the artist's intent in a series of works of art, using reasoned statements to support personal opinions.
- 4.4 Develop and apply a set of criteria as individuals or in groups to assess and critique works of art.

## **EIGHTH GRADE - History Social Science**

- 8.12.7. Identify the new sources of large-scale immigration and the contributions of immigrants to the building of cities and the economy; explain the ways in which new social and economic patterns encouraged assimilation of newcomers into the mainstream amidst growing cultural diversity; and discuss the new wave of nativism.

## **NINTH THROUGH TWELFTH GRADES - Visual Art - Proficient:**

### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

- 1.3 Research and analyze the work of an artist and write about the artist's distinctive style and its contribution to the meaning of the work.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

- 3.3 Identify and describe trends in the visual arts and discuss how the issues of time, place, and cultural influence are reflected in selected works of art.

### 4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

- 4.1 Articulate how personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and current social, economic, and political contexts influence the interpretation of the meaning or message in a work of art.
- 4.5 Employ the conventions of art criticism in writing and speaking about works of art.

## **NINTH THROUGH TWELFTH GRADES - Visual Art - Advanced:**

### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

- 1.8 Analyze the works of a well-known artist as to the art media selected and the effect of that selection on the artist's style.

### 2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

- 2.3 Assemble and display objects or works of art as a part of a public exhibition.

### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

- 3.1 Identify contemporary styles and discuss the diverse social, economic, and political developments reflected in the works of art examined.