

# MODERN ART COLLECTION

**Alfredo Ramos Martínez**  
***Reina Xóchitl (Xóchitl Queen)***

n.d.

Gouache on newsprint

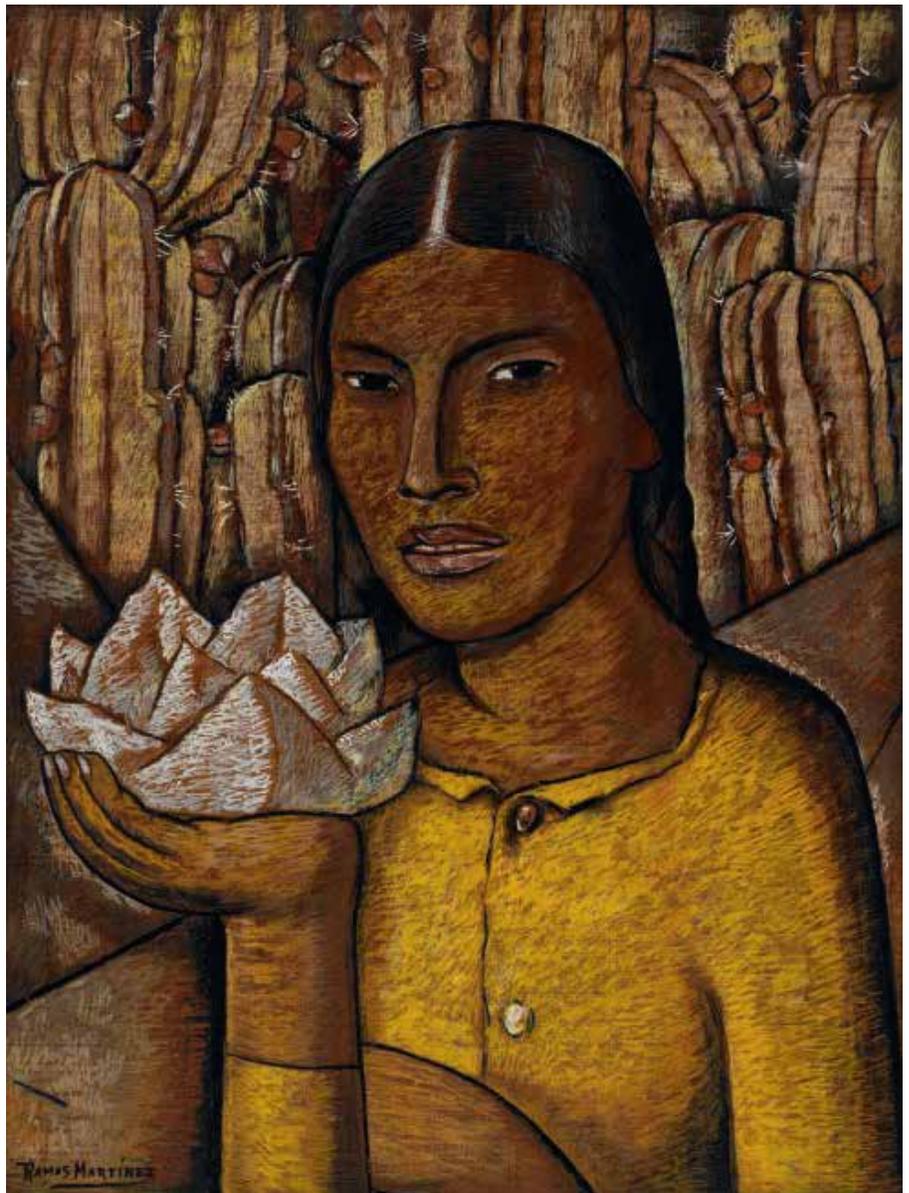
20 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 15 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (53 × 40.3 cm)

Gift of friends of the Harn Museum of Art  
2008.23.1

Alfredo Ramos Martínez is considered by many to be the founding father of modern Mexican art. He is renowned for his dramatic Mexican landscapes and images of humble yet monumental Indians, processions of indigenous women, and religious themes conveying fervent spirituality.

*Reina Xóchitl* is a striking example of his passionate interest in common themes of the Mexican renaissance, beautifully rendered in gouache and dramatized by the texture of his chosen medium of newsprint. The vertical symmetry and rhythm of the cactus plants in the background lend a solemnity and architectonic stability to the figure, recalling the timeless grandeur of ancient pre-Columbian sculpture. The warm tones of yellow and gold pay homage to the Aztec goddess Xochiquetzal, who rules over the day of Xóchitl on the ancient Aztec calendar. According to Aztec mythology, Xóchitl is a day for creating beauty and truth and reminds us that life, like the flower, is beautiful but quickly fades. As the ruler of Xóchitl, Xochiquetzal is the ever young and pretty goddess of flowers, love, pleasure, and beauty. She is also a patron of artists.

Born in Monterrey in northern Mexico, Ramos Martínez studied at the prestigious Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. This was followed by travel and a period



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of study in Paris from 1897 to 1910. It was during his time in Europe that Ramos Martínez began to paint on newsprint. While in Brittany, the young artist was preparing for a Salon exhibition and ran out of sketch paper. When Ramos Martínez asked his landlord if he could provide suitable paper, the landlord offered a stack of newspaper, which the artist gladly accepted.

Within three years of his return to Mexico in 1910, Ramos Martínez had forged his position as a leading artist and was appointed director of the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes, presiding over Mexico's artistic revolution of the 1920s. He soon opened a series of art schools, his Escuelas de Pintura al Aire Libre (Open Air Painting Schools), where he proved to be an innovative teacher. Among his students was David Alfaro Siqueiros, who would later become one of the most important Mexican muralists.

Ramos Martínez and his family left Mexico around 1930 seeking medical attention for his young daughter and settled in Los Angeles, where her condition was successfully treated. While living in the United States, the artist focused on Native American subjects and refined his style of clearly defined forms. He also began to explore the parameters of volume and space in large murals commissioned for several public buildings throughout the United States and Mexico. Following a period of residency in Mexico from 1942 to 1945, Ramos Martínez returned to Los Angeles to paint a mural more than 100 feet long in the Margaret Fowler Garden at Scripps College in Claremont, California. The artist died of a heart attack on November 8, 1946, leaving the mural unfinished.

