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**1940 LUIS JIMENEZ 2006**

## **Sculptor created Houston artworks**

**By PATRICIA JOHNSON**  
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Luis Jimenez, a major American sculptor whose piece *Vaquero* welcomes visitors to Houston's Moody Park, died Tuesday as a result of injuries suffered in an accident in his studio in Hondo, N.M. He was 65.

He had been working there on one of the monumental fiberglass sculptures of mustangs commissioned for the Denver airport.

Jimenez is renowned for his public sculpture *Vaquero*, a brilliantly colored fiberglass sculpture, 16 1/2 feet tall, depicting a Mexican cowboy on his rearing horse. The sculpture became the center of heated debate, as some residents said they thought the gun-wielding cowboy sent a poor image to and about the predominantly Hispanic area.

The sculpture was the first in a long roster of public works that welcome visitors on the steps of the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. and into Houston's Moody Park.

Born in El Paso in 1940, the artist grew up in the Second Barrio of the border city. His father and grandmother had crossed the border from Mexico in 1924. The senior Jimenez made neon signs that the artist said "were individual works of great imagination."

"Working with my Dad was very important," the artist told the Houston Chronicle in 1983. "I was groomed to take over the company and his feeling was that it was important for me to learn those skills as well."

Jimenez received his bachelor of science degree in art and architecture from the University of Texas at Austin, followed by studies at the Autonomous National University in Mexico City and as assistant to sculptor Seymour Lipton in New York City.

Jimenez is represented in the permanent collections of prestigious institutions across the country.

Among Jimenez's survivors are four children: Elisa Jimenez, of New York; sons Orion Jimenez, Adan Jimenez, and Xochitl Jimenez, all of Hondo, N.M.; brother David Jimenez, of Los Angeles, and sister Irene Branson of El Paso. Funeral arrangements are pending.