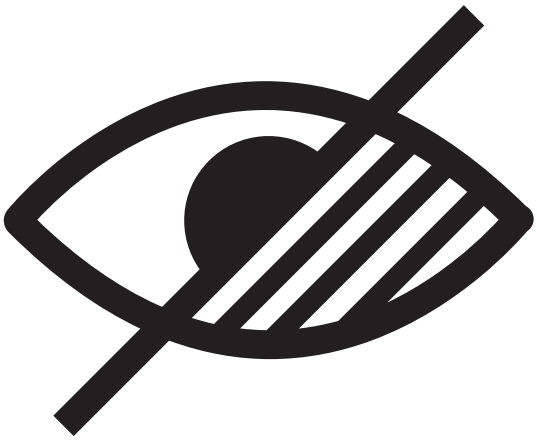
Stories from
Mesoamerica

12

Exhibition texts in large format



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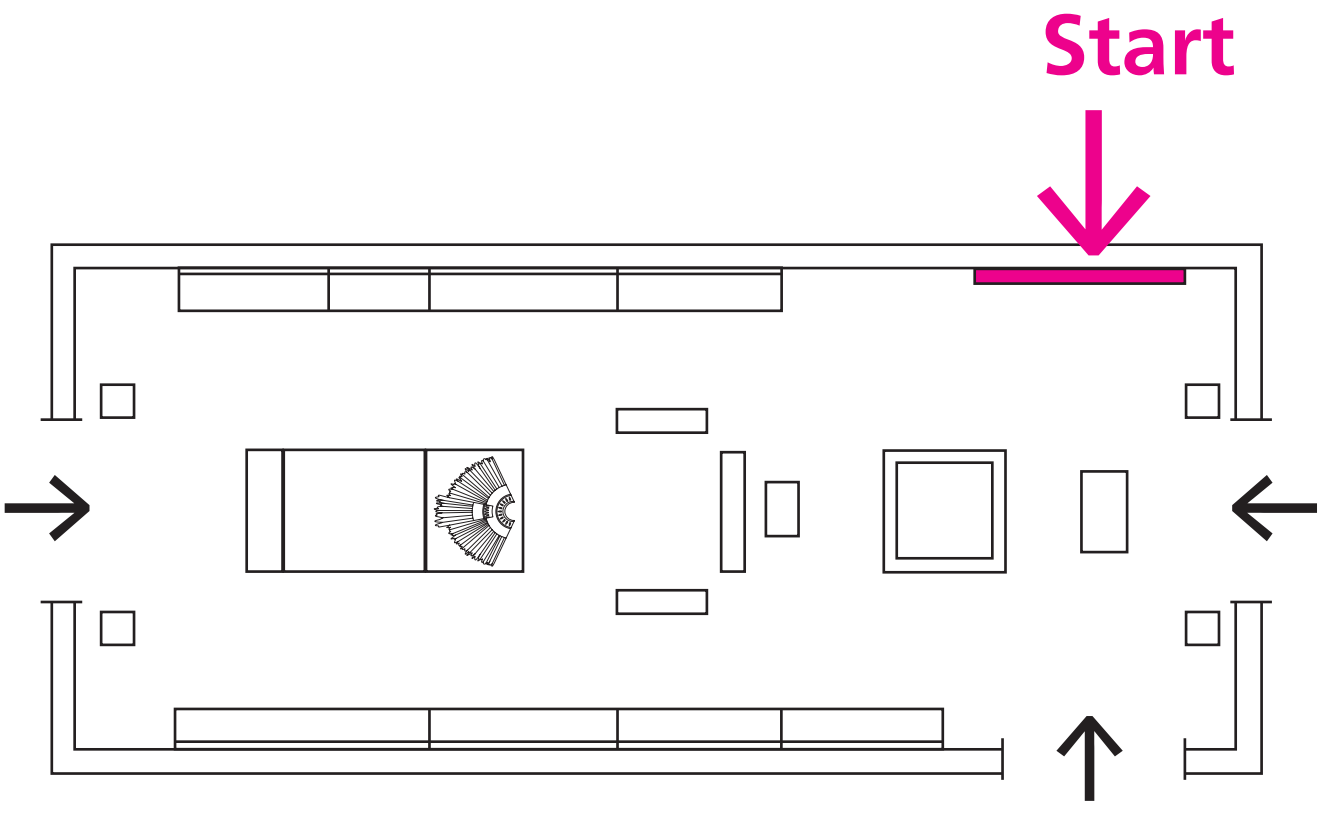
We hope you enjoy your visit to the Weltmuseum Wien!

Vienna, December 2024

Room 12



Stories from Mesoamerica

Prior to the events, grim omens warned the Aztecs of approaching calamity: a comet, a flood, the main temple in flames.

Finally in 1519 Spanish troops led by Hernán Cortés landed on their coast. History took its course. Cortés led the expedition into the heartland of the Aztec state.

With the help of tens of thousands native of allies as well as European weapons, the mighty Aztec Alliance was defeated within two years. The temples were destroyed, countless numbers of people died in battle or as a result of newly introduced diseases. The majority of the indigenous population gradually reduced to the margins of society in spite of their prominent role in the Spanish victory.

After the destruction of the Aztecs, Spanish military expeditions were mounted against additional states in Mesoamerica, the cultural region between Central Mexico and Costa Rica. The devastating battles led to a rupture in the millennia-long development in the region.

Nonetheless, much survived, and something new emerged from the encounter between America and Europe. Themes such as Our Lady of Guadalupe, All Saints' Day, and traditional women's costume illustrate this singularity of the modern states of Central America.

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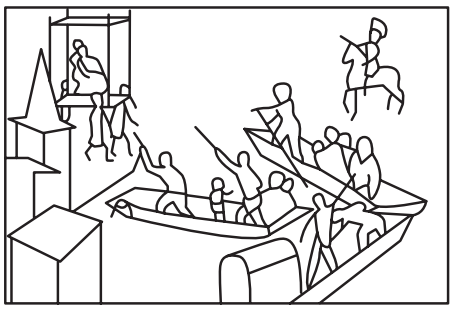
The objects are thematically arranged and originate from three periods: pre-Columbian/pre-Spanish period, Colonial period/Viceroyalty of New Spain, and the modern period.

The museum acquired pre-Columbian collections in the 19th century from the bequest of three individuals: Maximilian von Habsburg, Emperor of Mexico, Dominik Bilimek, named by the emperor as curator of the National Museum, Mexico, and Philipp J. Becker, a merchant in Puebla, Mexico.

Objects from the Colonial period stem from the treasure chambers and cabinets of wonders of the Habsburgs in Ambras, Graz, Vienna, and Prague. These were the first Mexican objects in the Austrian hereditary lands.

Collections of folk art and female costume from Mexico and Guatemala in the modern period arose under the initiative of the former Director of the Museum, Etta Becker-Donner.

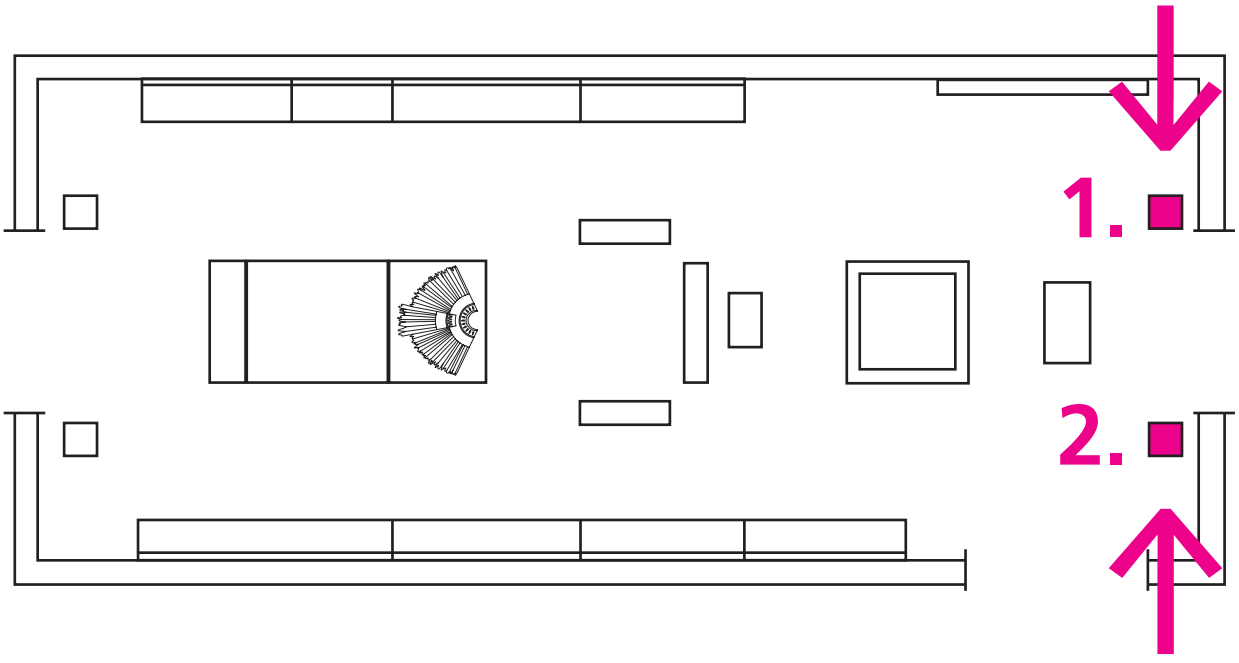


The first encounter between Moctezuma and Hernán Cortés

On 8 November 1519, Spanish-Indian forces moved in over a causeway to the Mexican-Aztec capital city Tenochtitlan, located in a lake. Curious onlookers observed the event from numerous canoes. The ruler Moctezuma (here with European crown) approached them in great splendour. A few days later his Spanish guests took him hostage. For a short period of time, Moctezuma reigned together with Hernán Cortés, and half a year later he died under unexplained circumstances.

Eduard von Orel; oil on canvas
Miramare Castle, Italy, 1874–1892

Room 12



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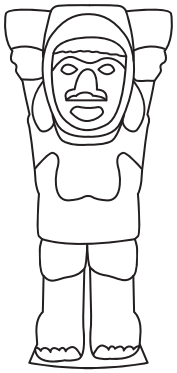

Supporting figure

A slab, perhaps an altar or a bench, once lay on his upraised hands. The nose jewellery indicates his extremely elevated rank. Supporting figures were known from Tula, capital city of the Toltecs and residence of the legendary ruler Quetzalcoatl. The Aztecs, Tlaxcaltecs and their contemporaries revered and collected objects from this preceding culture. They also created artefacts in Toltec style. A statue from Tula was worshipped in Tlaxcala.

Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1000–1500; stone

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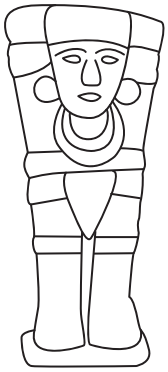

Warrior as supporting figure

The confederation of Tlaxcala contributed substantially to the Spanish victory over the Aztecs. Today's Mexican State of Tlaxcala continues to emphasise its former relationship to the Spanish crown and the Habsburgs. Monograms of Spanish kings and the golden banner with a black eagle are depicted in the state's coat of arms. According to the viewpoint of the inhabitants of Tlaxcala, their ancestors defeated the Aztecs with the support of Spain. Later Tlaxcala took part in the Spanish conquests in northern Mexico, Guatemala, and the Philippines.

Tlaxcala, Mexico, 1000–1500; stone

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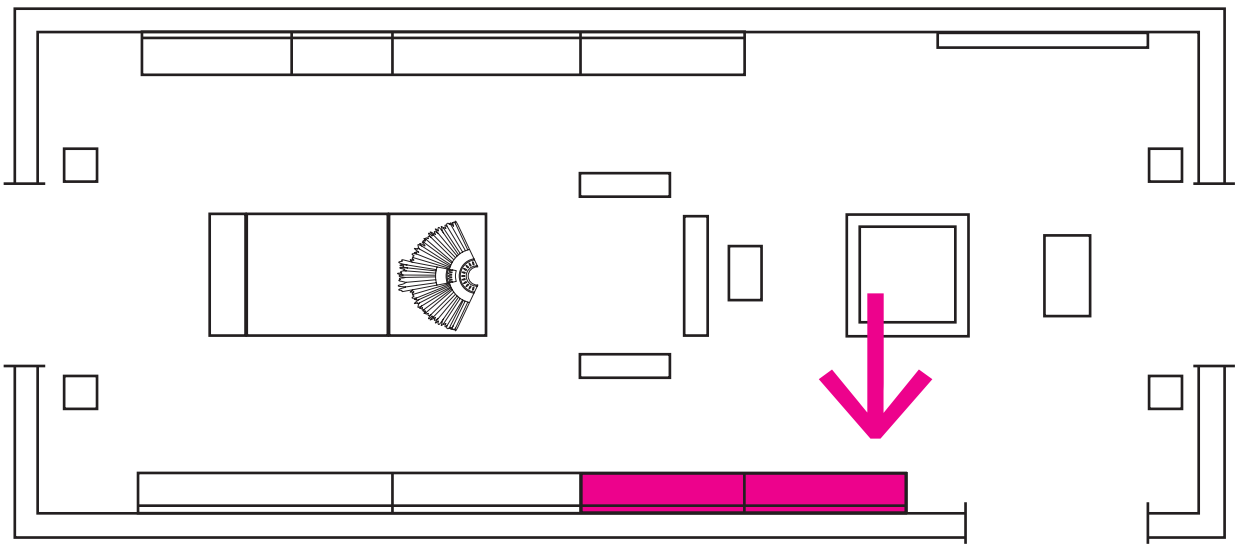

Gods and Men – Veneration and Nourishing

At the beginning of creation the gods sacrificed their own blood in order to awaken mankind to life. Therefore men were obligated to do the same. They sacrificed their blood, their fellow men, flowers, incense, cocoa, and other precious objects. Religious ceremonies and festivals took place all year round.

For the inhabitants of Mesoamerica, the earth as well as the upper and underworlds were all populated by religious powers or divinities. They were worshipped in temples, often at the top of stepped pyramids.

The spiritual conquest followed the military conquest. The Catholic Spaniards opposed the Mesoamerican religions, their priesthoods and the faithful. This process resulted in the loss of knowledge regarding these religions. The temples were destroyed, although some were replaced by churches. Ancient religious sites thereby ritually remained alive.

Archaeological Centre Teotihuacan, Mexico, 1991

Fertility Gods

Rain is a blessing, while floods and droughts can be devastating. Gods who control water are amongst the most important in Mesoamerica. The fertility god of rain, Tlaloc, with his temple on their main pyramid, was a focal point of worship by the Aztecs. Mother-, earth- and maize-goddesses, who equally ensured life, were frequently represented. Humans were dependent for their food production on the gifts of the gods, while the gods relied on the sacrificial offerings made by men for their nourishment.

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2, 3, 7

Chicomecoatl (7 Serpent), Maize Goddess
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

4 **Mother Goddess or Maize Goddess**
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500, stone

5 **Mother Goddess or Maize Goddess**
Teotihuacan?, Tzicatlacoyan, Puebla,
Mexico, 50–650; stone

6 **Owl with jewelry of Tezcatlipoca on its back**
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

8 **Venerated ancestor, in headdress Cocijo, God of Rain, Lightning and Thunder, and maize**
Ben`zaa (Zapotec, People of the Clouds),
Oaxaca, Mexico, 350–600?; ceramic

9 **Macuilxóchitl (5 Flower), God of Music, Games and Dances**
Nahua?, Tehuacan, Puebla, Mexico, ca. 1500; wood, pigment

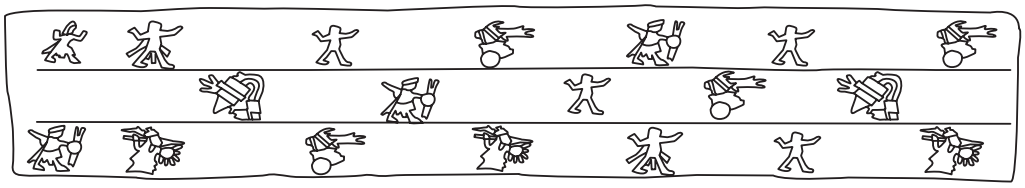
10 **Tlaloc, God of Rain, Water and Fertility**
Nahua, Puebla, Mexico, 15th–16th century; stone

11 **Vessel, Cocijo, God of Rain, Lightning and Thunder**
Ben`zaa (Zapotec, People of the Clouds), Oaxaca, Mexico, 600–800?; ceramic

Manuscripts – Illustrating and Recording

The Mesoamerican writing systems consisted of signs and pictures. Since the images were not connected with a specific language, people who spoke different languages were able to read them. Using these symbols, historical, religious and calendrical information was recorded on wall paintings and pottery as well as in manuscripts (codices). Additional books contained details about administration and economics. The books were carefully looked after and often consulted.

After the conquest and the introduction of the alphabet, pictographic writing fell out of use. Knowledge about the content of the codices was thereby lost. In addition, many of them were burned on bonfires by the Spaniards as the work of the devil, due to their religious subject matter. These book-burnings destroyed parts of the literary heritage of these cultures. Approximately a dozen codices are preserved from the pre-Spanish period.



1 Codex Becker I (Codex Iya Nacuaa), Fragment

Epic drama about Lord 8 Deer
(Iya Nacuaa, 1063–1115).

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Through conquests, marriage alliances as well as the help of the gods and deceased rulers, he became the lord of a great state. From the Toltec ruler Quetzalcoatl in Cholula he received the prestigious turquoise nose jewellery as a mark of his acknowledged royal dignity. The authority of later rulers of the Mixtecs was based on their descent from 8 Deer. This codex, together with the Codex Colombino in Mexico, was part of a larger manuscript.

Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec, People of the Rain God),
Yucu Dzaa (Bird Mountain)/Tututepec?,
Oaxaca, Mexico, ca. 15th century,
seven strips of deerskin, agave fibres, gesso, paint

Lord 8 Deer (Iya Nacuaa) on a raid,
Codex Becker I, Page 13

Gods

Many gods were worshipped locally in Mesoamerica, others over a wide area, such as for example the gods of sun, rain and maize. Their appearance is known to us from statues amongst other evidence.The religious system functioned for thousands of years. When the Spaniards arrived, the Mesoamericans were mostly willing to offer worship to the Christian god as well. The sole claim of this god and of the Christian foreigners was an unreasonable demand on them.

12 Rain and Thunder God with serpent
Téenek (Huastec, People from here),
Álamo Temapache, Veracruz,
Mexico, 900–1521; stone

13 Lid, venerated ancestor as Cocijo, God of Rain, Lightning and Thunder with maize
Ben`zaa (Zapotec, People of the Clouds),
Oaxaca, Mexico, 600–800; ceramic

15 Huehueteotl (Old old God), Fire God
Teotihuacan, Tlaxcala,
Mexico, 350–650; stone

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16 Dzaui, Rain God
Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec, People of the Rain God),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

18 Xiuhtecuhtli (Turquoise Lord), God of Fire and Time
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

20 Vessel (Funerary urn?)
Toltec (People from Tollan), Tula,
Hidalgo, Mexico, 950–1150; ceramic

21 Rattlesnake
Santo Tomás Hueyotlipan, Puebla,
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

Quetzalcoatl

As the wind, he brought the clouds with their fertile rain, and as a creation divinity he was worshipped in many parts of Mesoamerica. Quetzalcoatl is represented here in his aspect as the wind god Ehecatl and as a plumed rattlesnake. His name derives from two concepts. Quetzal refers to the Quetzal feather and indicates that he is plumed, yet it can also be understood as radiant or precious. Coatl is generally translated as serpent. As a plumed serpent he combines heaven and earth within himself.

14 Ehecatl-Quetzalcoatl, Wind God
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

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17 Quetzalcoatl as Plumed Serpent
Aztec (People from Aztlán)/Nahua?,
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

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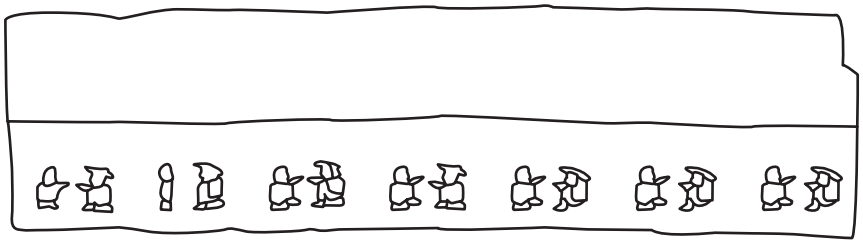
19 Insect with breast jewelry of Quetzalcoatl
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

Santa Cecilia Acatitlan Pyramid, Mexico, 2015

Calvary Church on top of pre-Columbian pyramid, Mitla, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1991



22 Codex Becker II, Fragment

The married couples depicted constitute a ruling dynasty. Lines connect each individual with his/her hieroglyphic name. Footsteps downwards indicate where the wife of the ruler comes from; footsteps upwards, where a daughter is married. Marriage alliances were recorded up until the colonial period. The codex is therefore evidence of the lineage and ancient rights of a prominent family. It was presumably part of a larger manuscript, together with the “Fragmento de Nochistlan“ in Hamburg.

Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec, People of the Rain God), Mixteca, Mexico, 16th century; two strips of deerskin, gesso, paint

Fragmento de Nochistlan
© Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg, Foto: Brigitte Saal

23 Vessel, K'inich Ahau (Sun-eyed Lord), Sun God
Maya, Zapotitán, El Salvador, 600–900; ceramic

24 Sculpture formed as a slit drum (Teponaztli)
Tlaxcala, Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

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25 Vessel with head of the Pulque Goddess Mayahuel
Aztec (People from Aztlán), Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

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26 Figure with sacrificial bowl
Ben`zaa (Zapotec, People of the Clouds)
Oaxaca, Mexico, 600–800; ceramic

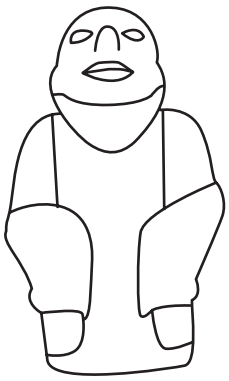
27 Vessel (Funerary urn?) with sacrificial scene and feather serpent with deities
Mexico, 1200–1500; ceramic

28 Xipe Totec (Our Lord the Flayed One), God of spring, renewal and war
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

29 Cuauhxicalli (Eagle bowl), sacrificial bowl
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

30 Vase, Maize God or Hero Twins in canoes
Maya, Guatemala, 650–750; ceramic

31 Figure with sacrificial bowl
Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone



32 Nanahuatl, Sun God of the 5th Creation

After the destruction of the last 4th creation, everything was shrouded in darkness. The gods assembled, and the hunchbacked god Nanahuatl became the sun of a new creation. So an Aztec myth relates. Both the sun and the moon stood above the earth, but they had no motion. Therefore the gods sacrificed themselves, so that Nanahuatl and the moon could move. Subsequently, the wind god actually caused both of them to move. Each went his own way: the sun worked by day, the moon by night.

Aztec (People from Aztlán),
Mexico, ca. 1500; stone

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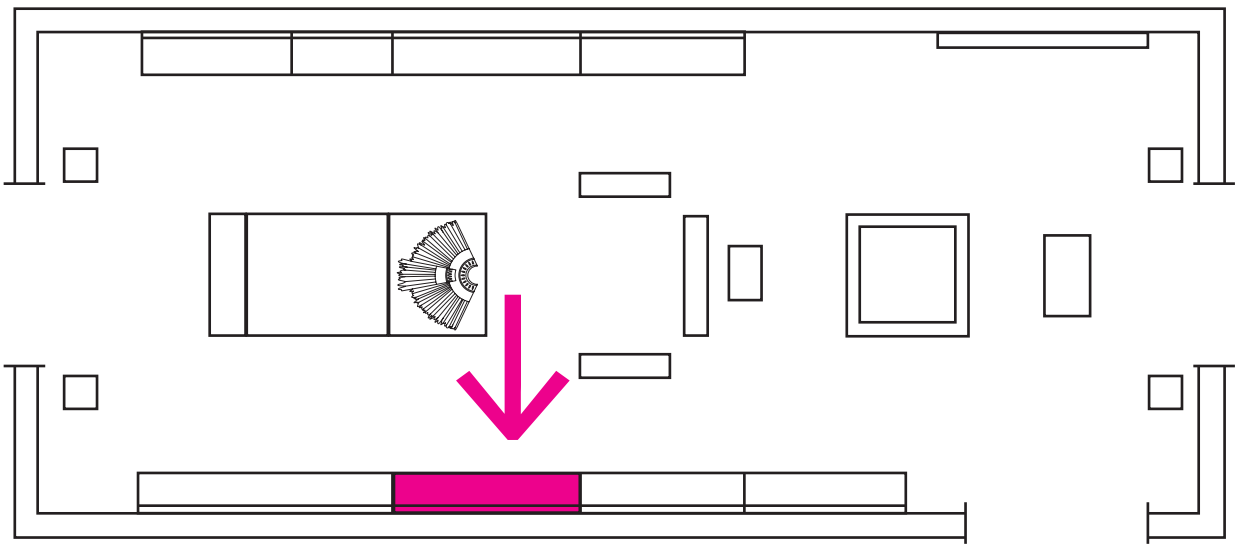
Room 12



Ball Games – Sport and Ritual

The high bouncing ability of the rubber balls astounded the Spaniards. The rubber material, unknown at that time in Europe, lent great speed to the balls and to the games.

The manner of playing, in which the ball was hit with the hips, was widespread in Mesoamerica. Points were won when the ball flew through a ring or when it landed in areas marked out by stones on the playing field.

This ball game is perhaps the oldest team sport in the world. It extended from a simple pleasurable pastime to an element of religious ceremonies with sacrifices to secure fertility. After the Spanish conquest, the game came under threat due to its religious aspect.

Hip-ball playing almost completely disappeared. It survived only in a remote corner of Mesoamerica. Today the ball game is becoming increasingly popular again.

Ball courts

Spectators surrounded the playing field, cheered their team on, and betted on the outcome. Ball games took place on the street or in an open field. Large cities had walled ball courts. These consisted of a narrow playing field, bordered on two sides by sloping or vertical walls. Players from two teams let the ball bounce off these walls. Points were scored by aiming the ball at stone markers in the field or on the walls, or by shooting the ball through a stone ring.

Ball court in Copán, Honduras, 1993

Southern ball court in Xochicalco, Morelos, Mexico, 2010

Ball game in Tikal, Graffito, Temple 5D-43, Room 1
Sketch after: Trik und Kampen, 1983; Schele und Mathews, 1998

Yugos

The hip- and impact-belt (Yugo) of the ball player protected against collision with the massive, heavy rubber ball. Some view these stone belts as ritual objects, which at most were worn for ceremonies and not during the game. Today's ball players, equipped with stone copies of these belts, were however impressed by their effect on the trajectory of the ball. The depicted toad species are symbols of fertility due to their many spawn and their loud proclamation of rain.

614 615

1 Yugo with heads on outer ends
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

2 Yugo
Veracruz?, Mexico, ca. 600–90; stone

3 Yugo with head and arms
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

4 Yugo with heads
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

5 Yugo with heads and volutes
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

6 Yugo with heads and arms
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

7 Yugo with toad imagery, heads and skeleton arms
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

8 Yugo with heads and volutes
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

9 Yugo with toad imagery
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

Ball Player

The players played the ball game using special equipment which also protected them against injuries. The Huastec player wears the belt typical for the hipball game, and protective gear for the hand, knee and lower arm. The player jumped up high to catch the ball, or supported himself on the ground with his knee-protector, to hit the ball back rapidly with the hitting surface of the belt. In 1528 Hernán Cortés journeyed with ball players from Tlaxcala to Spain, where they demonstrated the game at the court of Charles V.

10 Hip-Ballplayer
Téenek (Huastec, People from here), Gulf Coast, Mexico, 0–300; ceramic

11 Plate with ball player
Maya, 600–900; ceramic

12 Tripod with kneeling ball player
Tiquisate, Escuintla, Guatemala, 400–700; ceramic

13 Tripod, Ball players with rubber ball
Tiquisate, Escuintla, Guatemala, 400–700; ceramic

14 Ballplayer
Tlapacoya, Mexico, 1000–800; ceramic

15 Hacha shaped as a monkey`s head
Region of San Salvador, El Salvador, ca. 600–900; stone

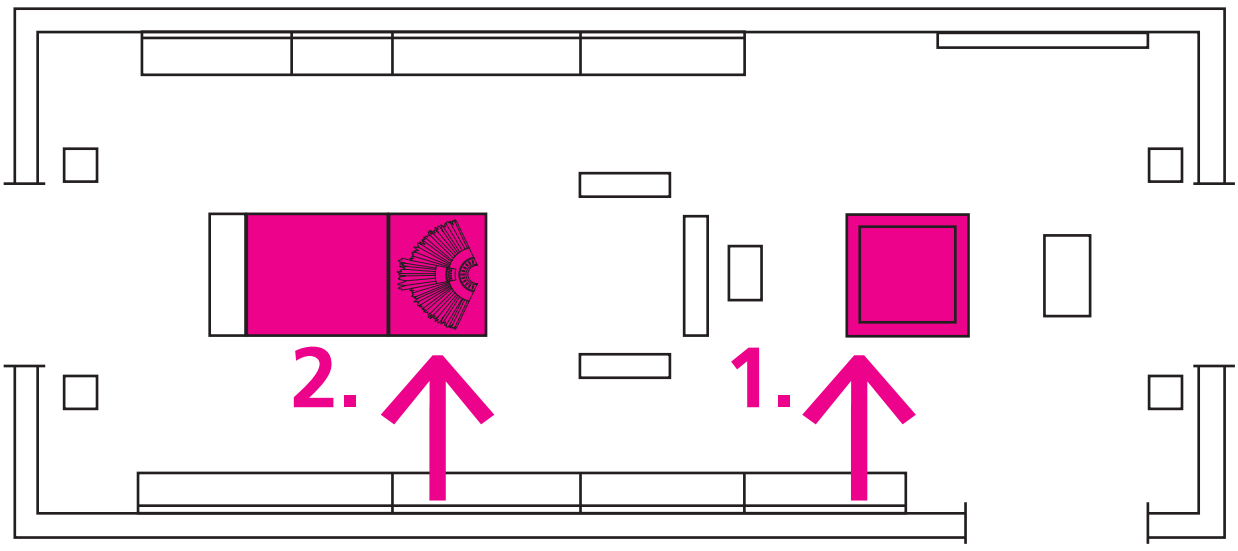
16 Hacha or marker
Veracruz, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

17 Palma or marker?
Zacatlan, Puebla, Mexico, ca. 600–900; stone

18 Manopla (Handstone)
Maya, Cantel, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, 600–900?; stone

19 Hacha or marker
Veracruz, Mexiko, ca. 600–900; stone

Room 12



1.
Otherness – gold, feathers and turquoise

Since the Renaissance, the nobility, clergy and the bourgeoisie cultivated an interest in exotic and curious objects. Perhaps the most famous collection of its time was the Chamber of Art and Wonders of Archduke Ferdinand II (1529–1595) at Schloss Ambras in Tirol. The collection fascinated visitors from near and far.

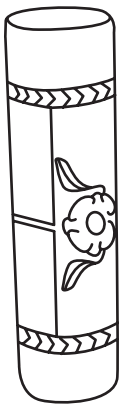
Sold or given as gifts, rare objects changed hands in an international network: shimmering pictures made of feathers, strange lip ornaments, enigmatic turquoise mosaics, mysterious black mirrors of obsidian, or dragons' heads worshipped by "heathens".

Numerous articles from the former private collections have disappeared. Many of those which are preserved entered museum collections. The Weltmuseum Wien looks after rare objects from the Habsburg Chambers of Treasures in Ambras, Vienna, Prague and Graz.

Bishop's mitre

The Spanish conquest brought to an end the tradition of making ritual feather objects for native rulers, warriors, human sacrifices, statues of gods, and priests. The ritual feather tradition was continued in the colonial period with the production of Catholic priestly robes, mitres, and sacred images. As with the Quetzal feathered headdress, the gleaming and glowing of the feathers of the mitre would have been very impressive in the bright sunlight. Throughout the world, only seven feather mitres are preserved.

Michoacán, New Spain (Mexico)/Spain,
1530–1550; bast paper, feathers, satin, gold braid



Slit Drum (Teponaztli)

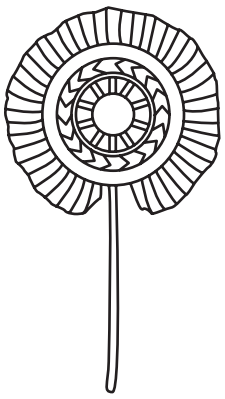
The horizontal, Mesoamerican slit drum or Teponaztil is hollowed out and open at the bottom. The three slits at the top constitute a carved “H“ and therefore two tongues. Played with beaters, the vibrating tongues create a variety of tones. The drum was originally played at celebrations, chants, and the recitation of poems, as well as at sacrifices. The decoration is influenced by European forms.

Nahua, Mexico, 16th century; wood

Saint Jerome

A devotional image of Saint Jerome made out of feathers glued on to amatl paper. Evil powers who lead people into temptation reside in the wild nature surrounding the saint. The saint kneels in front of a crucifix. Through self-mortification with a stone he attempts to tame the wild nature in himself. The subdued lion stands as an allegory of tamed savagery. Figuratively, the lion symbolises the capability of the “wild Indian“ population to convert to Christianity.

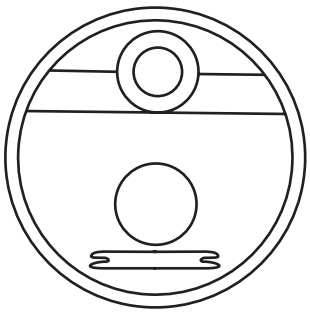
New Spain (Mexico), 16th century; feathers, wood, paper, glass, gilding



Insignia or fan

Interpreted in 1596 in Schloss Ambras as a windmaker, in the 18th century briefly as a parasol, yet mostly viewed as a fan, this was identified as Mexican at the end of the 19th century. The feathers are glued on to bark paper and partly dyed. In Mexican pictographic manuscripts, such objects are illustrated as insignia or standards of gods, messengers, emissaries and travellers. This is the only example of its kind preserved from the Mexican tradition of feather-working.

Mexico, 16th century; feathers, cane, pigments



Ceremonial shield or dance shield

Recorded as a round mosaic without provenance in the inventories of Schloss Ambras, this was identified at the end of the 19th century as a Mexican shield. Today the stone mosaic takes up slightly less than half of the outer surface. The approximately 10,000 stones counted indicate that a total of about 22,000 stones once decorated the original mosaic. The impression of the missing stones is still recognisable in the dark resin. The representation is interpreted as the sun, moon and earth. Remains of 24 figures are visible.

Mixtec-Nahua, Mexico, ca. 1500; wood, turquoise, green stone, resin

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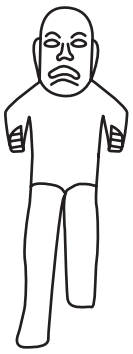
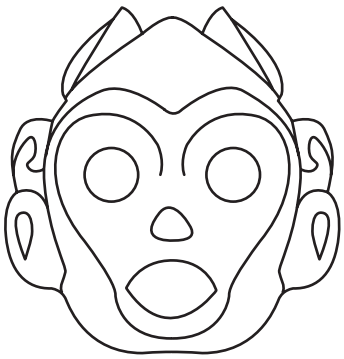


Standing figure

Jade was the most valuable material in Mesoamerica for over 2,000 years. It was reserved for religious purposes and as a gemstone for the elite. Such figures were found as offerings. Their meaning is not yet clear.The figure comes from the private collection of Gustav Jurié von Lavandal, chief physician of the Order of the Knights of Malta, company partner, connoisseur and collector of art (1841–1924). Although the earliest finds of the Olmec people were indeed known in the 19th century, they belonged to a culture which at that time was still unknown and enigmatic.

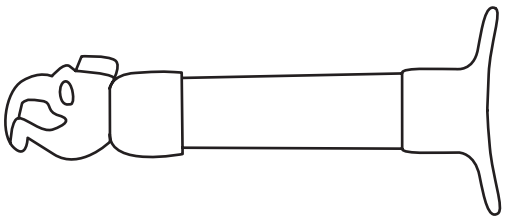
Olmec, Mexico, 900–500; jadeite



Mirror frame as monkey’s head

Head with monkey’s mask placed on it. The eyes were inlaid, and the cavity on the reverse contained a mirror. Holes allowed it to be suspended. The lively monkeys were associated with the god Xochipilli (flower prince) and other divinities of games, dance and song as well as the ”whirling” wind god Ehecatl.
Ritual objects and jewellery were made out of the volcanic glass obsidian, as were weapons and tools due to the material’s sharp edges.

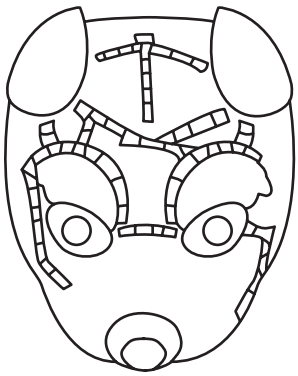
Huexotzinco, Puebla, Mexico, ca. 1500; obsidian



Lip ornament

This ornament for men was worn through an opening below the lower lip, with the bird's head facing forwards. The rock crystal has been hollowed out, reducing its weight and making it easier to wear. Lip- and nose-jewellery were viewed as signs of honour and were exclusively reserved for dignitaries, rulers and distinguished warriors. Based on the material and size of the jewel, the owner of this lip ornament belonged to the highest level of society.

Nahua, Coxcatlán, Mexico, ca. 1500;
rock crystal, gold



Mirror frame as animal head

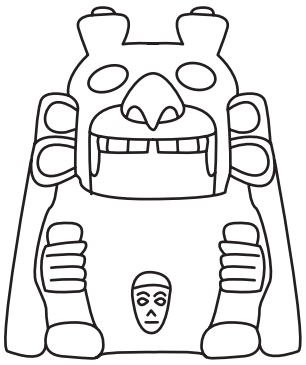
In the early inventories from Schloss Ambras this was described as an animal head made of coloured stone, and also as a dragon‘s head which was worshipped by ”heathens”. In fact it is a mirror frame. The wooden body is decorated with inlaid work of jade, turquoise, glass and shells. The tongue is affixed with a metal wire and is movable. If the materials do not in fact originate from a later restoration, the employment of European glass and iron might point to a continuation of pre-Columbian handicraft techniques after the Spanish conquest.

Mixtec-Nahua, Mexico, 16th century;
wood, turquoise, shells, green stone,
glass carbon, leather, glass, iron

The Virgin with child

Images played an important role in missionary work. The facial features, the shading, the fingers, the entire representation of this picture is created by means of feathers. The colours of the feathers in the upper portion are preserved, while the iridescent effect of the hummingbird feathers in the lower part has greatly suffered. The chemise of the mother of God originally was gleaming yellow, and her overdress green, com-parable to the dress and mantle in the miraculous image of Virgin Mary of Guadalupe.

New Spain (Mexico), 16th century; wood, feathers, paper



Ñuhu

This sculpture probably arrived in the Viennese Chamber of Treasures from the Graz Chamber of Treasures. Earlier it was designated as a “Moor’s face“ and also briefly as coming from New Zealand. The figure served as a mirror frame and represents a Ñuhu. Ñuhus are holy creatures which live in the earth, rivers, stones, maize, fire, and wind, revealing themselves at holy sites and as honoured ancestors. Their role in the religion of the Mixtec people is significant. Up until today, Ñuhus are called upon to protect fields and harvests.

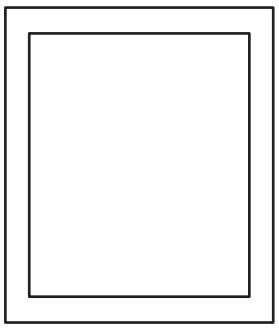
Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec, People of the Rain god), Mexico, ca. 1500; wood, snail shells, turquoise, silver, gold

Feather shield with coyote

In 1788 this was named in the inventory of Schloss Ambras as a Chinese parasol, yet it has always been interpreted as a shield and after 1882 it was identified as being a Mexican antique. The animal was once thought to be a blue dragon or a monster. In front of the jaws of what is probably a coyote, the symbols for water and fire refer to war and its destructive consequences. Four antique Mexican feather shields are preserved. Two are in Stuttgart and one was given as a gift from Vienna to Mexico by Maximilian von Habsburg.

Mexico, ca. 1500; feathers, gold plate, cane, leather

620



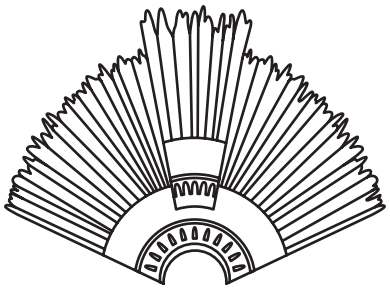
Mirror or portable altar

Mirrors of black obsidian offered Mesoamerican seers a view into a parallel world. They were attributes of the all-seeing god Tezcatlipoca (smoking/shining mirror), the patron of soothsayers. The mirror (from the Vienna Chamber of Treasures, and perhaps formerly from the Chamber of Treasures in Prague) was initially thought to be Chinese.

John Dee, scholar and mystic at the English court of Elizabeth I and briefly at the imperial court of Rudolf II, employed a similar obisidian mirror for magical incantations.

Mexico, 16th century, colonial period;
obsidian, wood

2.



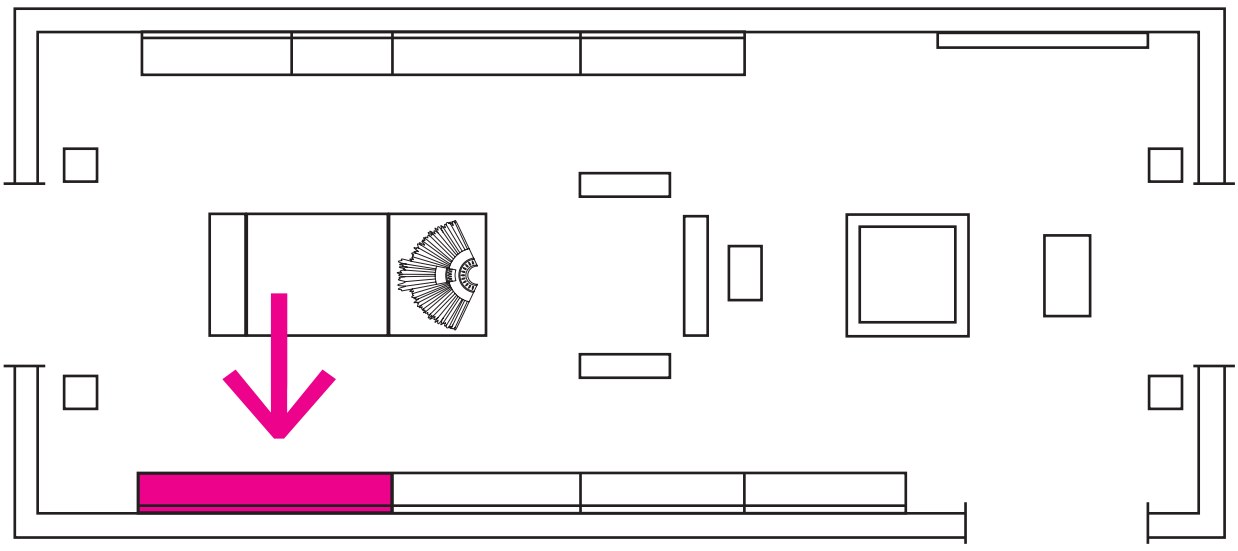
623 624

Quetzal feathered headdress

The first known reference to this feathered headdress occurs in 1596, as “Moorish hat“ in the inventory of the collection of Archduke Ferdinand II of Tirol at Schloss Ambras. The headdress arrived in Vienna in the early 19th century. During a restoration in 1878, feathers and metal elements were supplemented. Since at that time it was assumed that the object was originally a type of standard rather than a three-dimensional piece of headgear, the flat presentation resulted. Its fragility does not allow any further interventions.

Mexico, ca. 1515?,
feathers of the quetzal, cotinga, roseate spoonbill, Squirrel Cuckoo, kingfisher;
wood, fibres, paper, cotton, leather, gold, brass

Raum 12

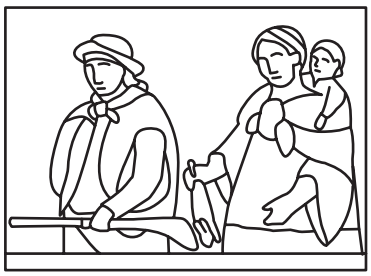


Castas – Birth, Skin Colour and Origin

Marriages within the uppermost classes were common in the pre-Spanish period. This situation did not change with the arrival of the Spaniards. High-ranking local women entered into relationships with leading Spaniards.
In the absence of European women, Spaniards formed bonds with Indian women; later, also with women from Africa.

The ethnically diverse population was classified according to hierarchy: the Castas (castes). These castes confirmed differences and the supremacy of the Spaniards. Criteria for segregation were birth, skin colour and origin. The more European forefathers one had, the more important was one's social position.

After independence, Mexico introduced the principle of equality and brought the class system to an end. For the majority of the Indian population, social exclusion continues to belong to daily life.



20 De Español è India, produce Mestizo
From Spaniard and Indian woman, Mestizo

The Spaniard demonstrates his right to carry firearms. His wife wears her traditional costume and holds his prey. The children of European and Indian parents were known as Mestizos. The generic term “mestizaje“ (miscegenation) for ethnic and cultural interaction was derived from this word. People with a multiple cultural and geographic background constitute the majority in the states of Mesoamerica.

New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800; oil on canvas, wood, gilded

Casta Paintings

Parents from two different population groups and their child: together, three Castas. A lower status is connected with a derogatory Casta-name: Wolf (Lobo) or Savage (Jíbaro). These are the ones who work, fight, get drunk. Their wives, mostly bare-headed, wear native costume and simple jewellery. The well-to-do Española, Mestiza and Morisca wear European clothing, veils on the back of their heads, hairnets, silver earrings, and frequently broad necklaces.

617

21 De Negro y Español, produce Mulato
From African and Spanish woman, Mulatto (Mixed ancestry, mule)
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

22 De Mulato y Española, produce Morisco
From Mulatto and Spanish woman, Morisco (Moorish)
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

23 De Mestiza y Mulato, produce Campamulata
From Mestizo woman and Mulatto, Campamulatta (Fieldmulatress)
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

24 De Mestiza y Español, produce Castiza
From Mestizo woman and Spaniard, Castiz (almost Spanish)
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

25 De Barcino y Sambaiga, produce Genizaro
From Barcino (Reddish-brown, with colored spots) and Zambaigo woman (African, knock-kneed), Jenízaro (Janissary)
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

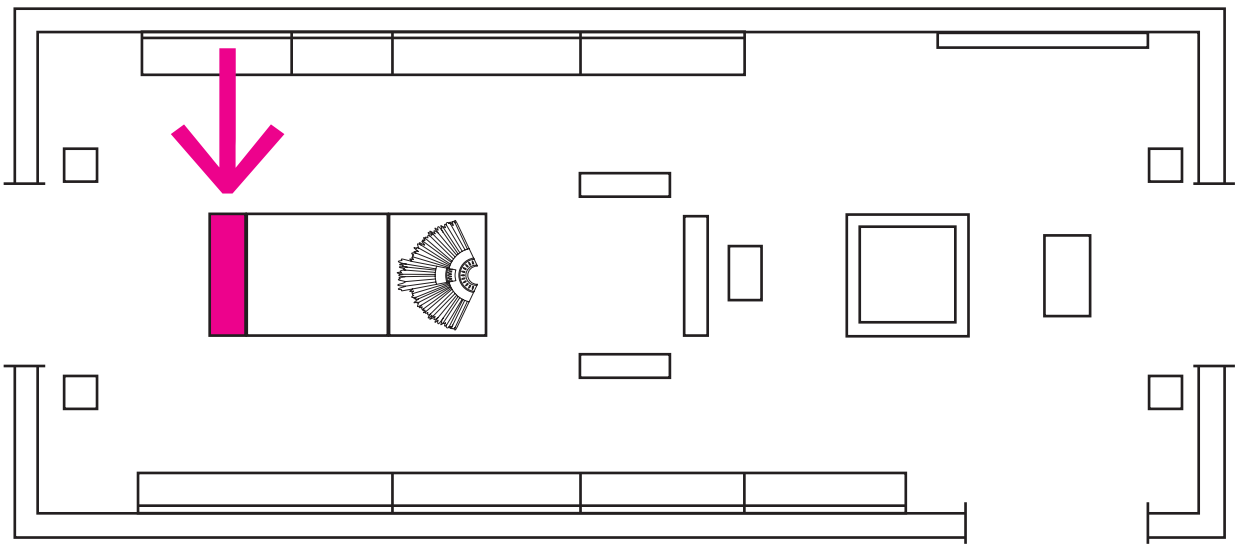
26 De Español y Morisca, produce Alvino
From Spaniard and Morisco woman, Albino
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

27 De Indio y Lova, produce Sambaigo
From Indian and Lobo woman (She-Wolf), Zambaigo
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

28 De Gibaro y Lova, produce Barcino
From Jíbaro (raw, wild) and Lova, Barcino
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

29 De Sambaigo è India, produce Albarrasada
From Zambaigo and Indian woman, Albarazada (with white spots, mixed colour)
New Spain (Mexico), ca. 1800;
oil on canvas, wood, gilded

Room 12



Mary – Mother, Queen and Empress

Austria possesses nearly 300 pilgrimage churches dedicated to Mary; Mariazell is the most important. Its counterpart in Mexico is the Basilica of Guadalupe.

In 1531, the dark-skinned and Aztec-speaking Mary appeared to Juan Diego at the ancient site of veneration of the mother goddess Tonantzin. Mary combines Mesoamerican and Christian aspects in herself, and is occasionally called Tonantzin.

When Juan Diego brought the bishop roses from the place where Mary appeared, the portrait of the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared on his robe. This miraculous image hangs in the basilica in Mexico, while a reproduction is displayed in the Votive Church in Vienna.

The church's recognition of this Marian apparition encouraged the Christianisation of the population. Mary offered hope in a world which was devastated and bewildered after the conquest. In 2002 Juan Diego was sainted.

Basilica de Guadalupe, Mexico City, 2014

Mary in daily life

Mary of Guadalupe is present everywhere: in churches and processions, on façades and T-shirts, on dashboards of buses and cars, as a picture in one's own wallet, and as an amulet and piece of jewellery. Her picture is offered for sale as mass merchandise. She is omnipresent and very important. The 12th of December is the day of commemoration of her appearance.
Latin American immigrants to the USA brought her north as a meaningful symbol of their own identity.

1 **Bendito hogar**
Blessing, “I bless this house“
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City,
Mexico, 2014; textile, plastic

2 **Virgen de Guadalupe, Ruega por Nosostros**
Image of the Virgin within a cross:
“Virgin of Guadalupe, pray for us”
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City,
Mexico, 2014; plastic, fibres

3 **Our Lady of Guadalupe**
Gabriel Olay Olay (1923–2006),
Tlalpujahua, Michoacan, Mexico, 1980;
feathers, paper, fibres

4 **Marian apparition to Juan Diego**
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City,
Mexico, 1999; plastic, glass, paper

5 **Mi Vida Esta En Tus Manos**
Flag, “My Life is in Your Hands“
Los Angeles, USA, 2007; plastic, metal

6 **Papá no corras, tus hijos te esperan**
Devotional image for a car: “Dad, don`t drive too fast, your children are waiting for you”
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City,
Mexico, 1999; plastic, paper

7 **Reina de México, Emperatriz de América**
Image of Mary with blooming roses of wonder. “Queen of Mexico, Empress of America“
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City,
Mexico, 1999; plastic, wood

8, 9
Reina de México y Emperatriz de América
Candle with image of Mary. “Queen of Mexico, Empress of America“
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City,
Mexico, 1999; glass, wax

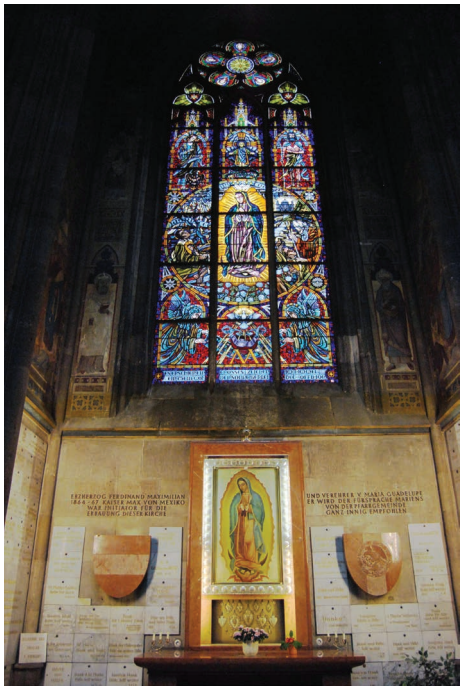
10 **„Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre”**
Candle with image of Mary
Mexico City, Mexico, 2006; wax, glass

11 Marian apparition to Juan Diego
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; plaster

12 Madonna
Tonalá, Jalisco, Mexico, 1999; ceramic

13 Our Lady of Guadalupe, bottle with holy water
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; plastic

Basilica de Guadalupe, Mexico City, 1999



Side altar of the Mother of God of Guadalupe and church window by Hans Schweiger, 1954 and 1963.
Votivkirche, Vienna, 2015

14 **The Virgin of Guadalupe surrounded by the red roses of wonder**
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 2014; wood, glass, cardboard, paper, gold glitter, lamp with cable

15 **Marian apparition to Juan Diego**
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; wood

16 **The Virgin and Juan Diego. Tepeyac and the Basilicas of Guadalupe**
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; wood

17 **The Virgin and the Last Supper, Jesus on the cross**
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 2014; plastic, wood, lacquer

18 **Painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe**
Los Angeles, USA, 2008; cotton

19 **Marian apparition to Juan Diego**
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; plaster

20 Our Lady of Guadalupe, Man of Sorrows and St. Anthony of Padua
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 1981;
wood, cardboard, glass, paper, textile, foil

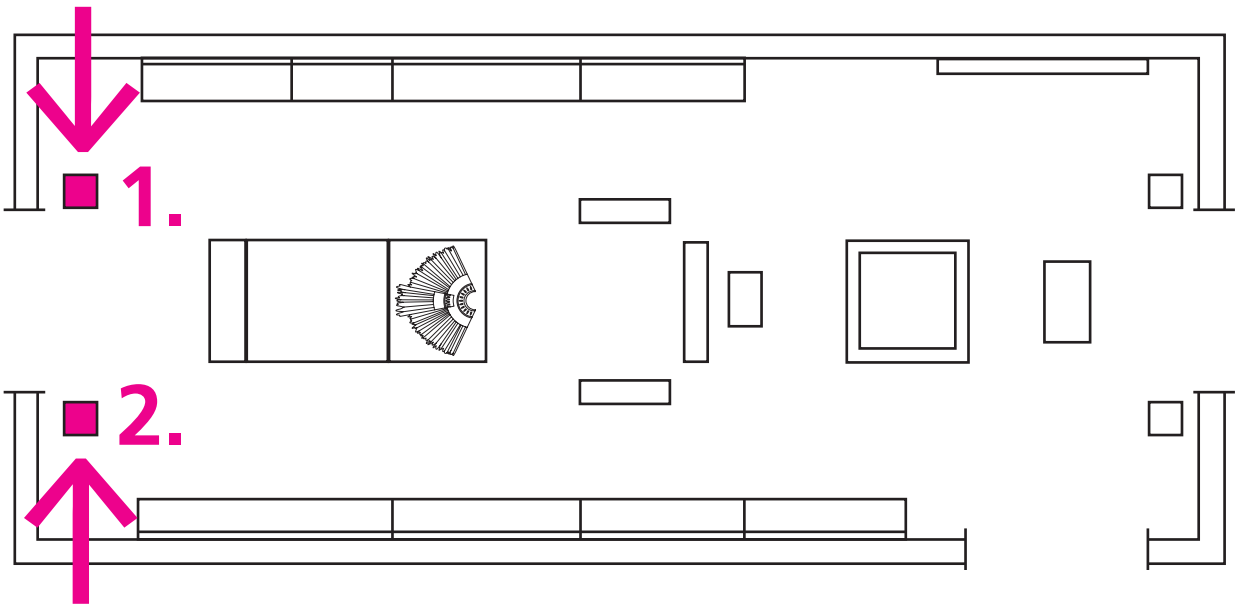
21 „¡Virgen Santísima de Guadalupe Madre de Dios!"
Prayer. Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe, Mother of God
Villa de Guadalupe, Mexico City, Mexico, 2014; textile, plastic, wood

22 Madonna clothed in the Sun
Oaxaca?, Mexico, before 1975; straw, reeds

23 Madonna
Oaxaca?, Mexico, before 1975; straw, reeds

24 Madonna
Teodora Blanco Núñez (1928–1980), Santa María Atzompa, Oaxaca, Mexiko, 1972; ceramic

Room 12



1.

Quetzal bird

The bird was not indigenous to the Aztec heartland, yet its feathers were highly treasured and coveted. The Aztec system of long-distance trade and the military obtained the valuable feathers of the quetzal in the cloud forests to the southeast. Every year, many tufts of quetzal feathers arrived in the Aztec centres as tribute imposed on the subjected city states.

The quetzal is threatened by deforestation and hunting. It decorates the flag and coat of arms of Guatemala, and the appellation of the national currency is based on its name.

Mexico/Guatemala, 19th century?

2.

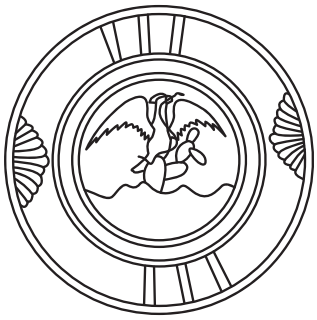


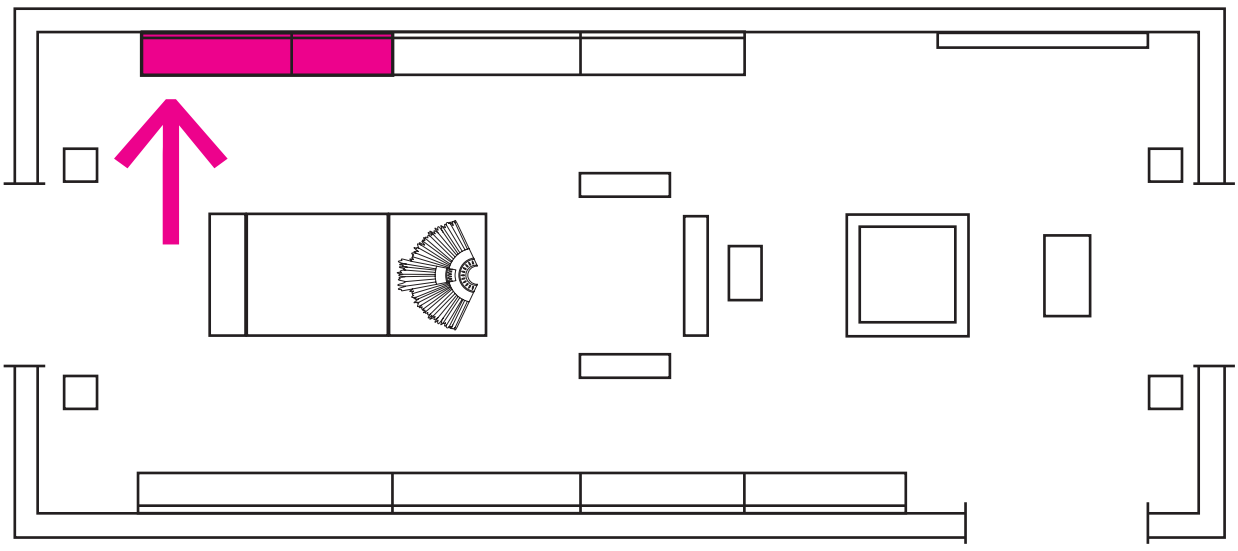
Plate with an image of the founding myth of Mexico City

The Mexica or Mexicans were one of the many peoples of Mesoamerica. When they witnessed an eagle sitting on a prickly pear, they took it as a sign to settle there. The City of Mexico is located here today. The legend is represented in the coat of arms of Mexico.

After the conquest, these people continued to be called Mexica (Mexicans) for 300 years. Since the indepedence of Mexico, all inhabitants of the new state are referred to as Mexicans. For the original native Mexica, the name Aztecs has come into wide-spread use.

Tonalá, Jalisco, Mexico, 1959; ceramic

Room 12



Day of the Dead – Honouring and Celebrating

„Death must be a Viennese!" – or a Mexican. On All Saints' Day/All Souls' Day, Mexico is dedicated to the symbolism of death.

The custom is based on Catholic and pre-Spanish traditions. In both cultures, ancestors were periodically commemorated. During these days of the dead, altars are set up both at home and in public spaces. Cemeteries and graves are cleaned and decorated, as in Austria. The souls of the dead come to visit, and receive nourishment and gifts; Mariachis play their favourite music. The living and the dead encounter each other anew.

At the same time, a certain secularisation takes place. People dress up and put on make-up for commemorations. Death's authority is taken away. In Mexico, Todos Santos is an internationally known holiday.

At the historical cemetery Pantéon de Belén, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, 1999

Tzompantli (skull rack), Templo Mayor, Mexico City, 2014

Death

New life arises from death, as ancient wisdom has it in Mesoamerica. Representations of skulls were widespread. Today around the 1st of November images of skeletons and skulls are found throughout the country. Historical personages, athletes, a wide variety of occupational categories and situations of daily life are all represented as dead figures. People make fun of death, they look at it squarely in the face. In this manner everybody is confronted with their own mortality.

627

1 Death
Tzintzuntzan, Michoacán, Mexico, 1979; straw, reeds, cotton

2 Skateboarding Death
Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; papier maché

3 Death playing basketball
Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; papier maché

4 **Death God**
Maya, 600–900; ceramic

5 **Head**
Mexico, ca. 1500; obsidian

6-8
Three skulls
Pedro Linares López (1906–1992),
Mexico City, Mexico, 1972; papier maché

9-11
Three brightly-coloured skulls
Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; ceramic

12-14
Three skulls with flowers
Mexico City, Mexico, 1999; ceramic

17, 18
Two skeletons making music
Metepec, Mexico, 1975; ceramic

19 **Death as a violin player**
Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, 1978;
ceramic, plastic, metal

20, 21

Two unpainted skeletons making music
Metepec, Mexico, 1979; ceramic

22 Skeletons as wedding couple
David Moctezuma, Mexico City,
Mexico, 1999; papier maché, fabric

La Catrina

The society lady Catrina is ubiquitous during the Day of the Dead in Mexico. She was created by José Guadalupe Posada (1852–1913). With her the privileged Mexican upper classes are criticised and reminded that even the better off cannot avoid death. This social mocking was also directed towards the desire prevalent in the capital city to adopt foreign cultural expressions instead of presenting oneself as Mexican.

15 Candelabrum with Catrina and skulls in branches
Metepec, Mexico, 1975; ceramic, metal

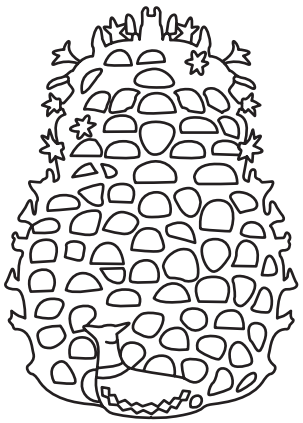
16 Catrina
Mexico City, Mexico, 1999;
papier maché, plastic

Folk Art – Exhibition and Marketing

Pottery is one of the most traditional art forms of Mexico.

This sculpture stands in the tradition of the Mesoamerican tree of life: symbol for the centre of the cosmos. Under the influence of Christianity, this was configured as a biblical scene around the tree of paradise. Herón Martínez from Acatlán developed his own language of images, sought new forms with decorative representations and non-religious themes: here, a market on a church plaza. His wife Olivia Guzmán painted the ceramic works. The white pieces with bright colours belong to their earliest works.

This market tree was part of the first large-scale exhibition “Folk Art from Latin America” in 1972. This show not only offered an overview, but was also intended to create a European market for handicrafts from Latin America.



Market tree

A wedding couple leaves the church. In front of them, more than 60 market stalls display their wares: poultry, fruit, pottery or hats. A child eats a slice of melon, his dog jumps up at him. Men empty their bottles, elsewhere a woman is grinding corn grains into flour on a metate (ground stone). Tortillas and salsa are being prepared. A crying child is having its hair washed, while somewhere else a squealing animal is being slaughtered. Daily life at the markets in Mexico and Central America.

Herón Martínez Mendoza (1918–1990) and Olivia Guzmán,
Acatlán de Osorio, Puebla,
Mexico, before 1972; ceramic

626

Herón Martínez Mendoza,
Acatlán de Osorio, Mexico, 1976
Photo: Ted J. J. Leyenaar

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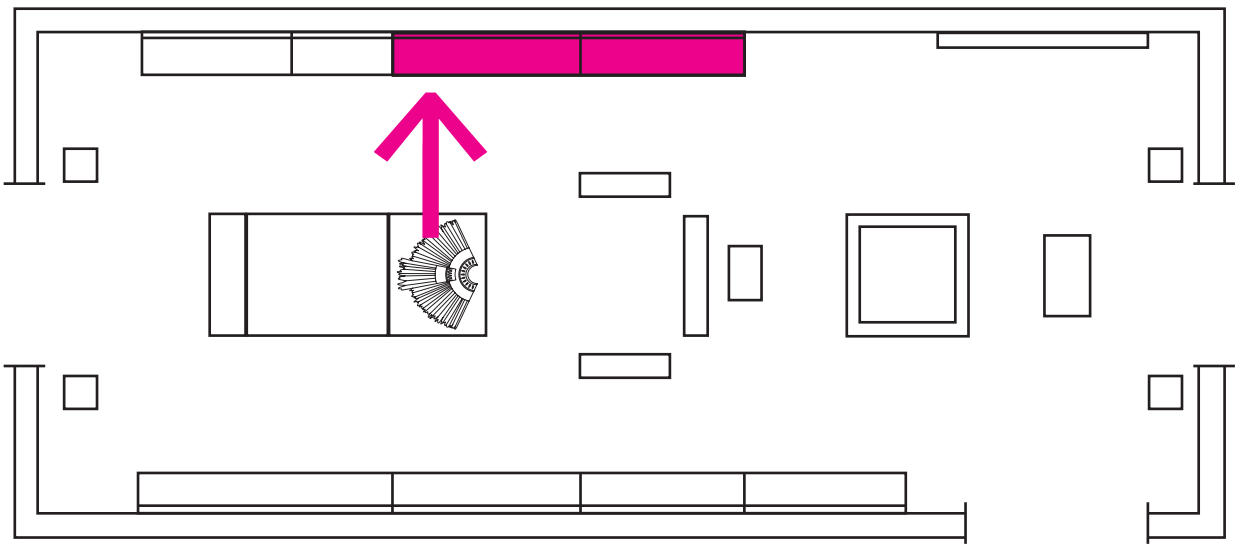
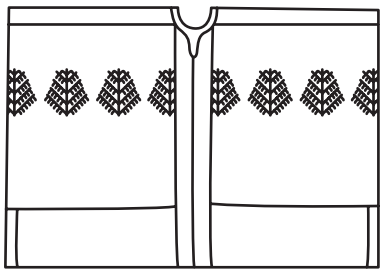
Room 12



Women's Costume – Clothing and Identity

The Huipil and the Quechquemitl are the traditional female articles of clothing of Mesoamerica. They are worn with a wrap-around skirt. Such garments are still in use today. Men more quickly exchanged their native costume for European clothing, in part under compulsion.

Huipiles are sewn together out of two or three woven widths of material. The hip looms that are used are of pre-Columbian origin, as are the garments. Some Huipiles are open at the side. Ceremonial examples are most luxuriously decorated with inwoven (brocade tech- nique) or embroidered patterns. Form and pattern are characteristic for the individual community. More and more, treadle looms, industrial threads and synthetic colours instead of natural dyes are employed.



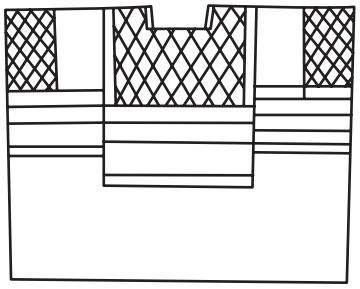
1 Open huipil with floral and bird motifs

For the Maya, the world tree stands in the centre of the cosmos, represented as a ceiba tree. This tree is depicted on the clothes of the Kaqchikel Maya and, as “Tree of Life“, symbolises regeneration and long life. Here a relationship between the restorative powers of vegetal and human life is presented. Just as the tree periodically bears blossoms and fruit and renews life, so does a woman regenerate the community by bearing children, securing its continuity.

Kaqchikel Maya, San Pedro Chuarrancho, Guatemala, before 1982; cotton

625

Market in Xecam, Cantel, Guatemala
Photo: Etta Becker-Donner



3 Ceremonial huipil

Verónica Ruíz Santíz worked for eight months on this Huipil. The patterns are woven in with handspun sheep's wool dyed with vegetal dyes. The lozenges reflect the cosmology of the Tzotzil Maya, with the sun in the centre. The decoration, with front and back, constitutes a cross, symbol of the universe. The wearer of the Huipil stands symbolically in the centre of her community and of the cosmos. Ceremonial Huipils are worn by the statue of Mary Magdalene in the town, and by the wives of religious offcials.

Verónica Ruíz Santíz, Tzotzil Maya,
Santa Maria Magdalena(s) Aldama, Chiapas,
Mexico, 1992; cotton, wool

Maya Women and the Austrian
Etta Becker-Donner, Xecam, Quetzaltenango,
Guatemala, 1968
© Photo: Weltmuseum Wien

2 Huipil for feast days
Tzeltal Maya, Santo Tomás Oxchuc,
Chiapas, Mexico, before 1975; cotton, wool

4 Older wedding huipil with tree and bird motifs
Mam Maya, San Marcos, San Pedro
Sacatepéquez, Guatemala, before 1968;
cotton, lace

5 Huipil with floral and bird motives
Amuzgo, Xochistlahuaca, Guerrero,
Mexico, before 1978; cotton

6 Female figure with huipil and wrap-around skirt
Teotihuacan, Mexico, 350–650; stone

7 Female figure with glyph for maize as headdress
Ben`zaa (Zapoteken, People of the Clouds), Oaxaca, Mexico, 600–800; ceramic, paint

8 Female figure with quechquemitl and wrap-around skirt
Mexico, ca. 1500; calcite

Tzeltal Maya weaver at the hip-loom, Santa Tomás Oxchuc, Chiapas, Mexico
Photo: Etta Becker-Donner

Etta Becker-Donner (1911-1975)

75% of these textiles were collected between 1962– 1975 by Etta Becker-Donner, the former Director of the Museum. She had a great interest in preserving Mesoamerican textiles. In her opinion, the weavers ought to continue to use the traditional hip-loom (still widespread in Mexico and Guatemala), as well as the old decorations. These practices, and the founding of cooperative societies, would save the high-quality craft and guarantee a market for the textiles.

9 Huipil for feast days
Mam Maya, Colotenango, Huehuetenango, Guatemala, before 1968; cotton

10 Huipil with tree and Quetzal-bird motifs
K`iche` Maya, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, before 1968; cotton, silk

11 Huipil
Ixil Maya, Santa Maria Nebaj, El Quiché, Guatemala, before 1968; cotton, silk

12 Wedding huipil
Tzotzil Maya, San Lorenzo Zinacantán,
Chiapas, Mexico, before 1975;
cotton, feathers

13 Quechquemitl
Otomí, Hidalgo,
Mexico, 1981; wool

14 Quechquemitl for feast days
Nahua, Cuetzalan, Puebla,
Mexico, before 1975; cotton

15 Older quechquemitl
Ñuu Dzaui (Mixtec, People of the Rain god),
Oaxaca, Mexico, before 1963;
cotton, natural dye

Weaver at the hip-loom, Guatemala City
Photo: Georg Sarac, 1975

16 An open day-to-day Huipil
Maya, San Pedro Sacatapéquez, Guatemala, before 1962; cotton

17 Huipil with Quetzal birds on branches
Mam Maya, San Marcos, San Pedro Sacatepéquez, Guatemala, before 1968; cotton

18 Huipil for feast days with images of flowers
Tsa ju jmí (Chinantec), San Lucas Ojitlán, Tuxtepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, before 1975; cotton

19 Open Huipil with floral and bird motifs
Kaqchikel Maya, San Juan Sacatepéquez, Guatemala, before 1982; cotton

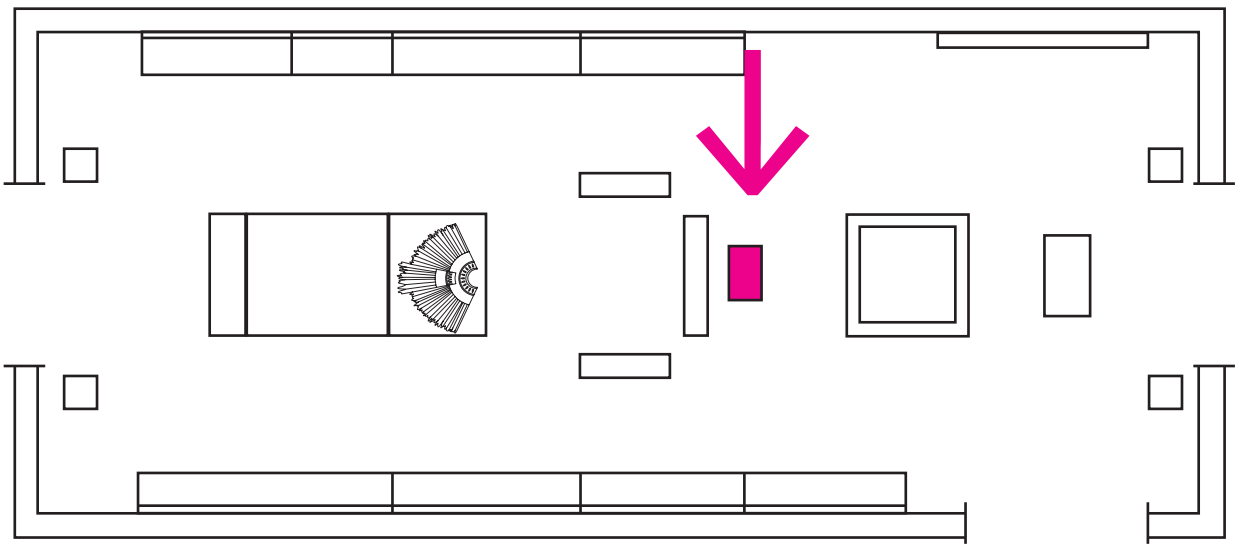
20 Huipil
Tz`utujil Maya?, San Juan Laguna, Sololá, Atitlán See, Guatemala, before 1972; cotton, wool, silk

21 Huipil for feast days with blossom and Quetzal-bird motifs
Mam Maya, San Marcos, San Pedro Sacatepéquez, Guatemala, before 1969; cotton, silk

22 Old ceremonial huipil (?) with double-headed birds (Habsburg?)
Poqomam Maya, Palín, Escuintla, Guatemala, before 1966; cotton

Market in front of the church in San Martin Jilotepeque, Guatemala
Photo: Ilse Pillwein, 1966

Room 12



623 624

Film program

1. Ulama. The game of life and death
   From: Ulama. El juego de la vida y la muerte, 1986

2. The Ancient Mexican Quetzal Feathered Headdress: The History
   From: El penacho de Moctezuma. Plumaria del México Antiguo, 2014

3. The Ancient Mexican Quetzal Feathered Headdress: The Conservation
   From: El penacho de Moctezuma. Plumaria del México Antiguo, 2014