

GILCREASE

JOURNAL



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¡México!



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Contents ¡México!



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After the Revolution of 1910, Mexican artists began a search for “Mexican-ness” — or *Mexicanidad* — in their art. Among the collectors from north of the border who found the exotic country to their liking was Thomas Gilcrease. In the 1940s he acquired a group of more than one hundred paintings, prints, and portfolios that capture the essence of Mexican art on the brink of the modern era.

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Ancient artists of the New World were consummate engineers and architects, artists and designers, metalworkers and sculptors. The Gilcrease collection contains beautiful examples of Mesoamerican art from before the time of Columbus.

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Dance masks have a long and vital tradition in Mexico. *Portfolio* takes a look at the vigorous and surprising masks from the Gilcrease collection.

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Thomas Moran came to Mexico in the winter of 1883 seeking visual riches — and he found them. During a trip along the newly opened railway line from Vera Cruz to Nuevo Laredo he made over one hundred field sketches “that furnished him with materials for a number of watercolor drawings & several oils of importance among his works.”

ANNE MORAND



58 The Printed Book in Mexico

One of the first two printing presses in the western hemisphere was established by the Spanish in Mexico by 1539, a hundred years before the first press existed in what would become the United States. Throughout the colonial period Mexico was the largest center of printing in Spanish America. The Gilcrease collection includes early and intriguing Mexican volumes.

SARAH ERWIN

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ILLUSTRATIONS: FRONTISPICE, Miguel Covarrubia, *Tehuana*, tempera on paper, Gilcrease Museum 0247.1475. CONTENTS PAGES, Juan Soriano, *Lassoing Bull*, detail, oil on canvas, Gilcrease Museum 0147.1511; Bat Mask, wood, paint, Gilcrease Museum 7347.597; Fray Ioan Baptista, *Advertencias*, Gilcrease Museum 5346.828 and 5346.829; FRONT COVER, Thomas Moran, *Sunday Morning* (detail), watercolor on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 0246.812 ISSN 1070-7808.

G U E S T A U T H O R S

CLAYTON KIRKING, Associate Curator of Latin American Art at the Phoenix Art Museum, holds a Master's Degree in Information Science from the University of Washington in Seattle. Since 1976 he has studied, written about and curated exhibitions of 20th-century Mexican painting. Currently he is evaluating the Mexican Collection of the Phoenix Art Museum in anticipation of its installation in a new museum facility.

DORIE REENTS-BUDET is Associate Curator of pre-Columbian art at the Duke University Museum of Art in Durham, North Carolina. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin and has special interests in pre-Columbian art and cultural history and Mayan iconography and epigraphy. She is a frequent lecturer and contributor to publications across the United States and is the curator of the upcoming exhibition *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period*, which will be seen in Denver, Boston, Los Angeles, and Baltimore following its opening at the Duke University Museum of Art in January 1994.

BRAMBILA
Mexican Costumes
Watercolor on cloth on paper
Gilcrease Museum, 0247.1739

One of the pleasures of producing and, we hope, reading the *Gilcrease Journal* is discovering previously unexamined dimensions of the collection. In this issue we make those discoveries in a southerly clime, focusing on aspects of the Gilcrease collection from Mexico and Mesoamerica.

The idea for this focus grew out of a comment by Gilcrease curator Anne Morand, a respected Thomas Moran scholar and the person most familiar with Gilcrease's vast collection of Thomas Moran paintings and sketches. "People know and love Moran's paintings of the American West," she said, "but how many people know about his work in Mexico?" Moran's Mexican sketching trip of 1883 became the basis for Anne's article. The collection contains such a wealth of Moran's work from this trip that space allowed only a fraction to be shown, but those images are richly evocative.

Once the current issue began to take form, Sarah Erwin, Gilcrease's archival curator, brought her extensive background and characteristic intensity of focus to the museum's rare book collection, isolating and researching a number of unusual and beautiful Mexican volumes from the 16th century, when Mexico, heir to the Spanish tradition, was well ahead of the New World colonies and even of many European nations in the art of bookmaking. Again, had space allowed we could have presented much more, but the present sampling suggests the depth of museum holdings.

We were delighted when Clayton Kinking agreed to write about Gilcrease's little-known modern Mexican paintings and prints — one of the few bodies of modern works at the museum. This group of over 100 pieces was acquired by Thomas Gilcrease during collecting trips to Mexico in the 1940s and has seldom been seen or discussed. In examining the paintings, Kinking was excited to find a work by the Spanish Colonial artist Juan Correa, *Death of a Priest* (page 30), whose existence had long eluded the community of Mexican art historians. It is now under research. Dorie Reents-Budet also met with a surprise when addressing Gilcrease's pre-Columbian collection. Two beautifully carved jadeite plaques brought into the collection as pre-Columbian artifacts were instead assessed by Reents-Budet as unusually fine examples of the Aztec design revival in American art and architecture of the 1940s. She puts forth an interesting argument for this finding in her article, "Pre-Columbian Art of the New World."

Rounding out this issue is a brief look at the Mexican masking tradition, introduced by Gilcrease curator Dan Swan. Condensed in these vital and dramatic objects is much of the fascinating Mexican spirit seen elsewhere in the collection. We hope you enjoy the trip south of the border.

CLH





Mexicanidad

MODERN MEXICAN ART AT GILCREASE

The history of modern art in Mexico begins after the Revolution of 1910 when Mexican artists moved away from European influences and began to explore their “Mexican-ness” or *mexicanidad*. The Gilcrease collection includes over one hundred works of modern Mexican art collected by Thomas Gilcrease during trips to Mexico in the 1940s.

RUFINO TAMAYO
Vendedora de jitomates, 1940
Watercolor on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM 0247.1473

PHOTOGRAPH ABOVE: PAUL STRAND
Woman, Patzcuaro, Mexico, 1933
Platinum print

COLLECTION OF THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, MALIBU, CALIFORNIA



From the end of the Mexican revolution throughout World War II, interchange between Mexico and the United States was at an all-time high. Commercial relations between the two countries were healthy and the North American tourism industry aggressively promoted travel in Mexico. Roads and railroads were improving and expanding, making travel easier and governments of both countries invested a great deal of time, effort, and money cultivating receptive audiences on both sides of the border. In much of the world this was a period of great financial and political instability. With the Depression in the States and war brewing abroad, both business and pleasure were cheaper and more rewarding in Mexico than in western Europe, the U. S.'s traditional partner in economic and cultural affairs.

The 20s, 30s, and 40s saw the great florescence of the Mexican mural movement and the emergence onto the international art scene of painters like

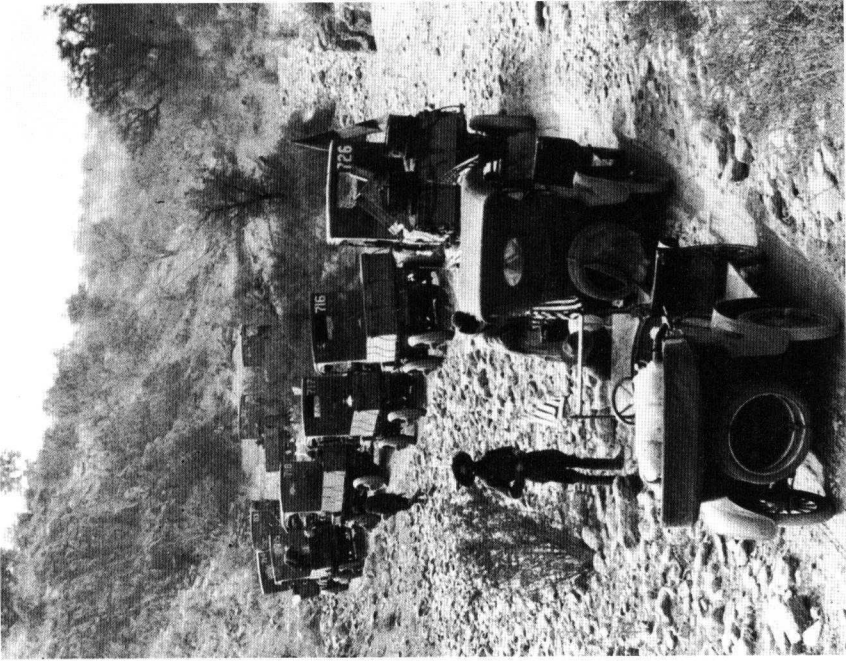
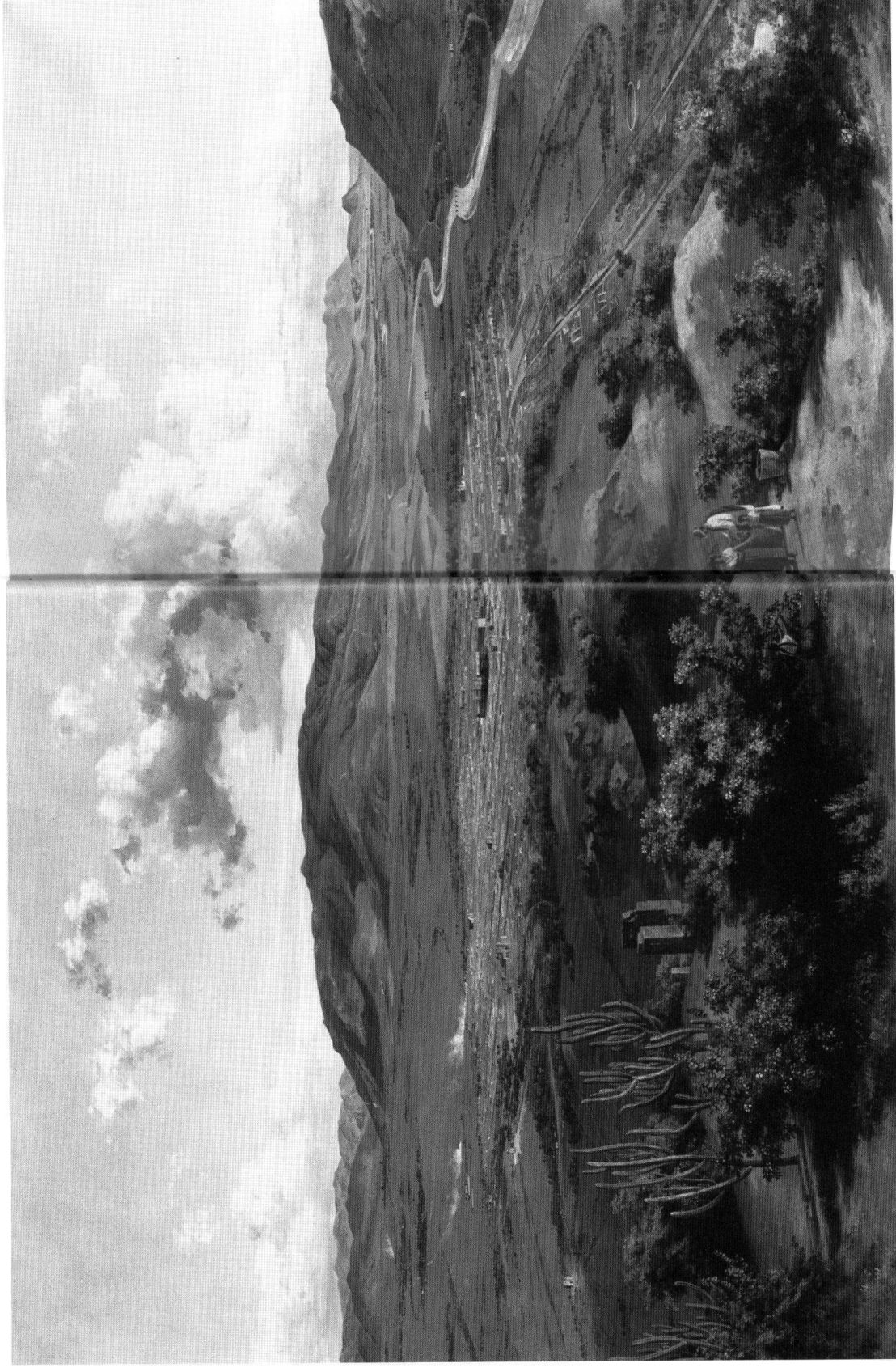
JOSÉ MARIA VELASCO
El Valle de Oaxaca, 1888

Oil on canvas

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART, given by
the Mauch Chunk National Bank

The Royal Academy of San Carlos of New Spain, chartered in 1785, was the first formal academy of fine arts in North America. Its European administrators and instructors brought to the New World a neo-classical point of view. The mission of the Academy challenged and questioned the existing colonial style of the vice royalty and it essentially precluded any influence of pre-hispanic Mexico. In spite of this increasingly unpopular position, the Academy existed with more or less the same structure, through years of political and social upheaval, until 1915. Pre-revolutionary artists such as José Maria Velasco, Saturnino Herrán, Gerardo Murillo (Dr. Atl), and José Guadalupe Posada were first to begin to break away from Academy strictures based on European philosophies, laying the foundation for modern Mexican art.

Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, the three great muralists of the 20th century. Americans looked toward Mexico through a romantic haze¹, charmed by what they perceived as "simpler" life styles, crafts, and customs. The largely figurative art and its frequently exotic subject matter had a strong appeal for the Depression-stressed intelligensia of the United States. Artists and collectors were not unaffected by this allure and many traveled frequently and extensively in Mexico. Artists Marsden Hartley, Edward Weston, and Milton Avery traveled and worked in Mexico. Collectors Nelson Rockefeller, Charles August Ficke (founder of the Davenport Museum of Art in Iowa), and Thomas Gilcrease bought Mexican art enthusiastically.



U.S. Army Motor Truck Train in Mexico, 1916

SOUTHWEST COLLECTION, EL PASO PUBLIC LIBRARY

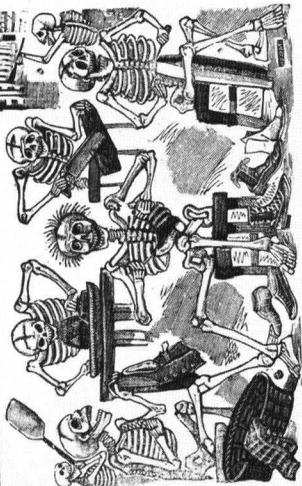
The Spanish Conquest, carried out by Hernando Cortés and his men in the years 1519 to 1521, placed Mexico under colonial rule that would last 300 years. A battle for independence begun in 1810 ended in 1821. The mid-19th century was a period of enormous turbulence. Porfirio Diaz became dictator in 1876, and his despotic rule from 1876-1911 resulted in 85 percent of the rural population becoming landless while fewer than 1,000 families owned 90 percent of Mexico. The Revolution of 1910 was a violent and confused struggle with many leaders, often at odds. Modern Mexico may be said to date from 1921, when Alvaro Obregón took the first steps toward carrying out the social program of the Revolution as set forth in the Constitution of 1917.

CALAVERAS DE ARTESANOS.

Y en su larga existencia, desdénados
sólo son esqueletos asquerosos.



que van a florar también el hueso.



Se prestan al San Lunes sempiterno
 Llorando que irán pronto al infierno.

Hoy el albañil planchado
Se marcha para el panteón,
A beber pulque curado
De sus peones en unión.

Y el carpintero que tiene
Trabajos en el taller,
A llover el hueso viene
Con muchísimo placer.

Los batijeros ¡carachol!
Después del *dale que dale*,
También se vienen un *carcho*
Al panteón con samo afiel.

Hay doradores que doran
La pildón en este día,
Y que el hueso tristes lloran
En vinilla ó pulquería.

Pero los que más me encantan
Son los tisnados herreros.
Que desde que se levantan
Van al pontón casi en cueros.
Relojeros que contrahían
Y plateros que se enristran
Al volverlos tristes brillan;
De pulque hasta reventar.
Tabalateros que al cuero
Dedicaban en el pontón
Su más cariñoso esmero
Nacido del corazón.
Los impresores no tienen
Por hoy la psicología,
Y en Dolores se mantienen
Con chingurre todo el día.
Y ojalá que bojalatero
Yo fuera para tener
De bores un gran requero
Y el pulque en ellos beber.

Lloran sus muertos positivos.

México.—Imprenta de Adolfo Limón y Compañía

JOSÉ GUADELUPE POSADA
Calavera Broadside

Ink on paper

COLORADO SPRINGS FINE ARTS CENTER

Mexican artists have a long tradition of using the print medium to make political statements. The pre-revolutionary artist Posada illustrated popular satirical songs in broadsides like this one which could be economically printed and widely distributed. The art of printing arrived early in Mexico, and its first appearance was already associated with the dissemination of passionately held ideas, religious ones. See the article “The Printed Book in Mexico” in this journal for a brief history.

The exchange of information and

objects was often mutual. Many Mexican artists came to the U.S. to study, travel and complete important commissions. Each of “*Los Tres Grandes*,” Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros, produced important murals in the United States. The most infamous of these, commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller from Diego Rivera for Rockefeller Center, was begun in 1932 but never completed. *Man at the Crossroads* was ultimately destroyed after a long and much publicized controversy over its content, which included a portrait of Lenin and a scene from a Communist May Day celebration.² Many other Mexican painters visited and worked in the U.S. Certainly the best known of these was Frida Kahlo, the wife of Rivera, who has in recent years been posthumously elevated to the stature of an art superstar.

Mexican-U.S. cultural interchange was not limited to visual artists. Writers, dancers, filmmakers, poets, and thinkers were all well represented in this vanguard. Large and important exhibitions organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Brooklyn Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art effectively established

parameters of taste for Mexican art in the United States to the present day.³ Likewise, exhibitions of art from the United States were acknowledged back and forth across the border left and right.⁴ Mural painting most directly benefited from the exchange, as it was encouraged by numerous murals in post offices and schools, and by the Works Projects Administration's mural program in the 1930s. In this context, the Mexicans may have had a more direct influence on U.S. artists than they had in Mexico. Nonetheless, interest in American muralists in Mexico, among them Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and Rufino Tamayo, was well established long before the 1960s. The *Juggle Against War and Fascism* in the Regional Museum of Art in Monterrey, Coahuila, and the murals of Marion and Grace Rodriguez market in Mexico City.

Thomas Gilcrease traveled to Mexico at least four times between 1944 and 1947. He frequented the most important galleries of Mexico, in particular the Galería de Arte Mexicano in Mexico City. In 1940 the Galería inaugurated the first International Exhibition of Surrealism,

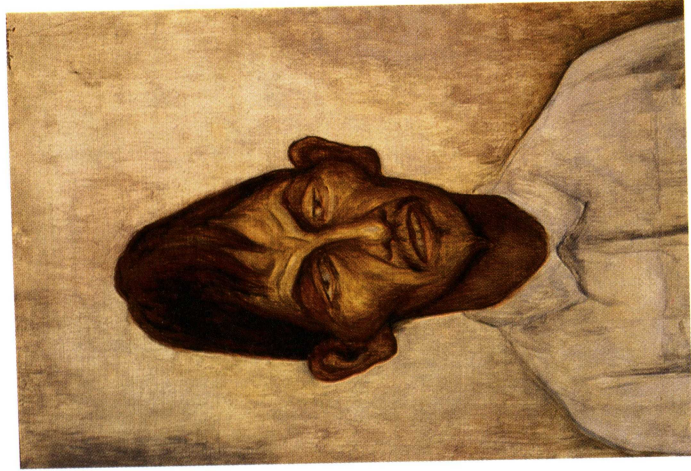
A black and white photograph of a person, likely a woman, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a dark, patterned garment. She is holding a small object near her face, possibly a cigarette or a small cup. The image is oriented vertically on the page.

can be viewed as a cross section of a very narrow but important period in the history of art in Mexico, with over 100 paintings, prints, mixed media, and limited-edition portfolios representing the years between approximately 1937 and 1947. The works form a fascinating image of U.S.-

PAUL STRAND
Milpa Alta, Mexico (top)
Boy, Uruapan, Mexico (bottom)

Platinum prints
COLLECTION OF THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM,
MALIBU, CALIFORNIA





DIEGO RIVERA
Cabeza de Indio, 1937

Oil on board
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0147.2022

Diego Rivera and Mary Austin in Cuernavaca, Mexico, 1930.

THE HUNTINGTON LIBRARY, SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA



Zalce, and Raúl Anguiano, three artists whose work was collected by Thomas Gilcrease. Méndez, in particular, is represented by a large suite of impressive, highly politicized woodcuts. The portfolios give this portion of the museum's holdings a depth that would not otherwise be possible in a group of this size.

Because Gilcrease, like Rockefeller, was a North American collecting in Mexico, it is appropriate to consider the objects he chose from the point of view of a foreign observer. In the years before World War II, Mexico was looked on as an exotic alternative to other popular tourist destinations. There was a tendency for casual travelers to develop a somewhat paternalistic or colonial attitude toward the country and its people. The many traditional arts and crafts adapted for the tourist trade often mirrored this point of view. Even significant artists took advantage of the trend. Diego Rivera painted numerous portraits of doleful-eyed peasant children that especially appealed to his U.S. audience and provided him with a healthy income. Illustrating this phenomenon are two cloth-and-paper collages from the Gilcrease collection in which fatherly and protective Uncle Sam figures embrace peasants (*see page 4*). While these are not of great importance artistically, they graphically summarize the climate in which they were produced and in which Gilcrease and others were collecting in Mexico. They also comment on the *kitsch* quality often found in products targeted for a specific audience.



f the artists sought after by Gilcrease, by far the most important was Diego Rivera. Although the Rivera works in the collection are not the most important paintings, they are significant and strongly indicate the popularity of this artist among U.S.

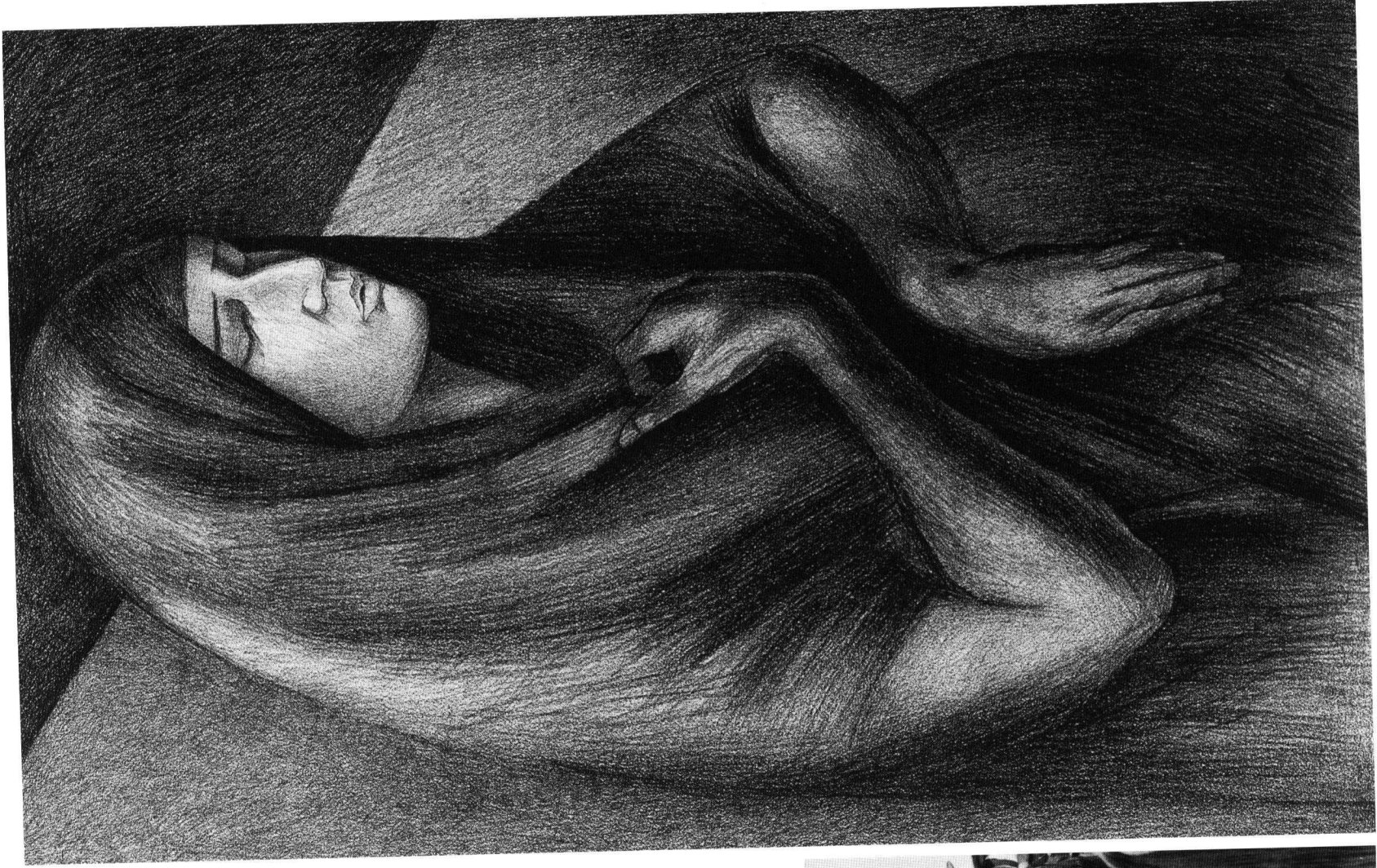
collectors. *Cabeza de indio* (Head of an Indian), purchased in 1947, typifies Rivera's works made for sale to visiting tourists. Its most startling characteristic is the elongated shape of the sitter's head. Real or imagined, this is probably a reference to the pre-hispanic custom of shaping the heads of children shortly after birth, a practice comparable to the binding of feet in some Chinese cultures or to head shaping traditions among some native American peoples. Gilcrease's most important Rivera is *Plantas del desierto* (Desert Plants) or *Raíces* (Roots). Painted in watercolor on silk, it is part of a series done in 1937. In these paintings, another example of which is in The Brooklyn Museum, the artist has manipulated plant forms into animal or human like shapes.

A second member of *Los Tres Grandes* or The Three Greats, José Clemente Orozco, is represented at Gilcrease by a number of important graphic works. All lithographs, they were purchased in 1944 from the Librería Central in Mexico City. During his long, distinguished, and productive career Orozco made only twenty-nine lithographs. These have the same potent satirical effect as his great murals but in a format that is much more accessible. *Soldadera* from 1926 shows one of the women who followed their husbands and lovers throughout the revolution of 1910. In this beautifully



DIEGO RIVERA
Plantas del Desierto, 1937

Watercolor on silk
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0247.1478



JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO
Soldier's Wife
Lithograph on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1447.153

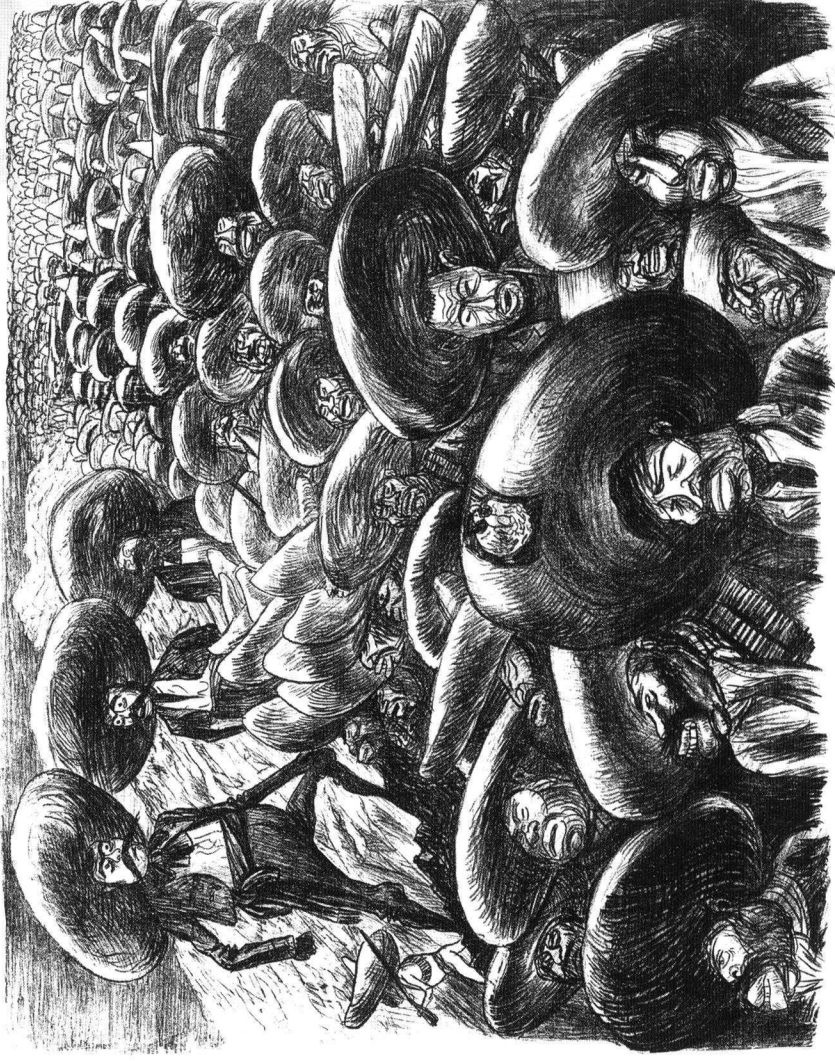
Una Revolucionaria
SOUTHWEST COLLECTION, EL PASO
PUBLIC LIBRARY



drawn work Orozco is at his most sympathetic. *Zapatistas* (Leaders), 1936, depicts the revolutionary leader Zapata looking over a crowd of exhausted volunteers. *Leones y Aztecas* juxtaposes wealthy tourists with less well-heeled Mexicans, perhaps street performers.

The artists of this period, in the best tradition of artists everywhere, were international in their points of view and their training. Most traveled and studied in Europe, the United States and South America. Before the establishment of the Academy, a common practice was to study abroad for several years, usually in Spain, Italy, or France. In this century all the great artists of Mexico studied in other countries. Diego Rivera, for instance, spent most of the period between 1907 and 1921 in France, Spain, Italy and elsewhere where he studied cubism, producing a large body of work in that style. He returned in 1921 at the request of the Mexican government to begin work on his first murals.

Leopoldo Méndez, one of the founding members of the *Taller de Gráfica Popular* and the *Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios* (The League of Revolutionary Authors and Artists), was an accomplished artist and social critic. His prints consistently dealt with important social issues. The events with which the artists of the *Taller* grappled were not limited to exclusively Mexican problems. Méndez's work is often very political, treating



JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO
Zapatistas
Lithograph on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1447.157

Emiliano Zapata
SOUTHWEST COLLECTION, EL PASO PUBLIC
LIBRARY



JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO

Soldier's Wife

Lithograph on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1447.153

Una Revolucionaria

SOUTHWEST COLLECTION, EL PASO
PUBLIC LIBRARY



I 4 G I L C R E A S E

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I M É X I C O ! I 5

JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO

Zapatistas

Lithograph on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1447.157

Emiliano Zapata

SOUTHWEST COLLECTION, EL PASO PUBLIC
LIBRARY

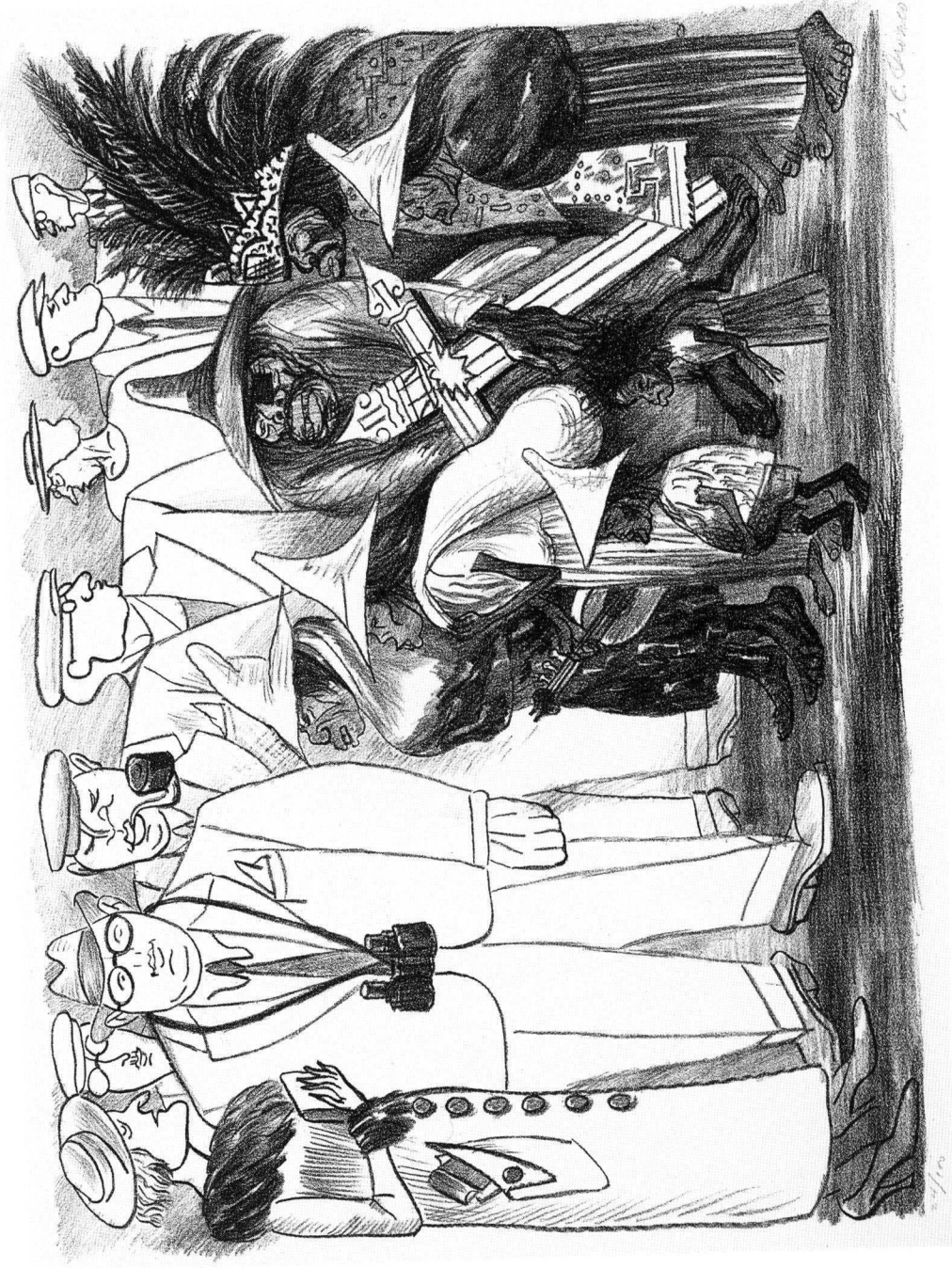
social ills and the plight of the worker. The portfolio of prints in the Gilcrease collection was published in 1943. Entitled *25 Grabados de Leopoldo Méndez* it contains tightly composed black and white woodblock prints the subjects of which cover a wide range of topics. *Accidentes de trabajo* (Work Accidents) shows a grimacing worker falling from a high scaffold while his fellow worker looks on. Aside from the fine drawing and printing technique, the artist has used elements of the picture to emphasize the horror of the fall and the height of the scaffolding. *¿Pos pá' que luchamos?* (So why are we fighting?) a woodcut from 1934, shows an aristocratic family, complete with a chauffeur, next to a poor family walking by on the street. A third striking print from this set, *Venganza del pueblo* (People's Revenge), done in 1942, treats the subject of the war in Central Europe. A man (the father?) is about to sink an ax into the back of Hitler, seen strangling a child with each hand. In 1952, Méndez traveled to the Soviet Union where he exhibited in an international exhibition. He died in 1969 in Mexico City.

A contemporary of Méndez, Miguel Covarrubias, was also known for his work on paper, although he completed many important works in other

JOSÉ CLEMENTE OROZCO
Leones y Aztecas

Lithograph on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1447.156

Orozco's prints comment on the political and social situation in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Mexico. This print juxtaposes wealthy, presumably American, tourists with *campesinos*, most likely street performers. In Mexico, social and political criticism often manifested itself in prints that could be widely distributed. Great printmakers used the medium to reach further and deeper into the fabric of contemporaneous society.



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media, including murals in San Francisco. From 1923 to 1936 he was the official caricaturist for *Vanity Fair* magazine in New York. Covarrubias also taught anthropology in Mexico and published highly regarded books on ethnology as well as volumes on art and collections of caricatures. The caricatures of Miguel Covarrubias do not have the angry edge of much of the work that came out of the Taller, but his comments were no less poignant. Covarrubias traveled extensively and in 1936 received a Guggenheim fellowship which took him to Europe, India, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Gilcrease purchased four works by the artist, among them a Balinese scene and a Mexican street scene. Of most interest is a gouache on paper depicting a Tehuana Indian woman from southern Mexico wearing traditional dress (see the *frontispiece*, page 1). The subject was frequently painted by other artists including Frida Kahlo.



MIGUEL COVARRUBIAS
Street Scene

Lithograph on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1447.159

LEOPOLDO MÉNDEZ
The People's Revenge
Woodblock print
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1747.49.25

17 MEXICO

CARLOS MÉRIDA
Estampas del Popol Vuh
Color lithograph, plate 10
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1747.6.10

The ancient classic called the *Popol Vuh* is both myth and history, beginning with the creation myths of the Mayans and ending with the story of the Mayan leaders who founded the Quiché kingdom in the Guatemalan highlands. Originally in Mayan hieroglyphs, it was rewritten in a Latin alphabet adaptation of the Quiché language in the 16th century.

*“Now it still ripples, now it
still murmurs, ripples, it still
sighs, still hums, and it is
empty under the sky . . .
There is not yet one person,
one animal, bird, fish, crab,
tree, rock, hollow, canyon,
meadow, forest . . .*

*Only the Maker, Modeler
alone, Sovereign Plumed
Serpent, the Bearers,
Begetters are in the water, a
glittering light. They are
there, they are enclosed in
quetzal feathers, in blue-
green.”*

FROM THE *POPOL VUH*,
TRANSLATED BY DENNIS TEDLOCK



During his collecting trips south of the border, Gilcrease bought three important portfolios by Carlos Mérida. Mérida was born in Guatemala City in 1891. He traveled and studied in Europe, where he spent time with both Picasso and Diego Rivera, then lived in New York for two years before settling permanently in Mexico City. He was acquainted with Paul Klee and Joan Miró and his work often reflects sensibilities similar to theirs.

Mérida's contribution to contemporary art is considerable, particularly his work with geometric abstraction. He died in 1984; in 1992 he was the subject of an important retrospective exhibition held at the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Palace of Fine Arts) in Mexico City before it traveled on to Monterrey, Nuevo Leon.

Apart from major paintings, murals, and commissions, much of the work of this artist was published in the form of portfolios. It was these that Gilcrease added to his collection. Mérida's portfolio of Mexican costumes illustrates traditional dress from the various regions of the country. *Carnival in Mexico* illustrates customs of celebration in Mexico and *Estampas del Popol Vuh* (Prints of the *Popul Vuh*) are drawings inspired by the ancient Mayan

religious text the *Popul Vuh*. The folios, published in limited editions, are important documents in the history of printing in Mexico.

In 1947 the Galería de Arte Mexicano recorded the sale of a group of thirty watercolors by the Oaxacan artist Francisco Gutiérrez to Thomas Gilcrease. Like Mérida's portfolio of Mexican costumes, these paintings illustrate dress from various regions of Mexico. They were commissioned from Gutiérrez by the National Institute of Anthropology and History and were produced shortly before the artist's death in 1945. Gutiérrez came to Mexico City in 1925. He taught printmaking and painting and was associated with the popular print movement of his time.

Artists whose work is represented in the Gilcrease collection fall loosely into two categories. The first treated subjects of magic, supernatural power or surrealism. The second created works with a strong sense of nostalgia or longing for another time and place. Just as the Americans visiting Mexico sought a simpler, more spiritual lifestyle, the artists of the early part of the century sought their place in the contemporary world. They were involved, too, in a quest to identify and refine their nature as Mexicans, their *mexicanidad*. This process has counterparts in many cultures and is often repeated in cycles as subsequent generations reexamine and redefine their place in society. While U.S. tourists were buying these works of art, the artists were examining their history, looking for ancient clues to their modern culture which was in a dynamic state of change. In the years that followed the Mexican revolution the muralists covered the walls of Mexico with affirmations of Mexican heritage, accomplishments, and events. The country as a whole was in the throes of establishing a new identity.

Two painters from Guadalajara, capitol of the state of Jalisco, are included in the first category of paintings, painters of magical subjects, as is José Chávez Morado from Guanajuato. In *El Volcán* (The Volcano), 1943, Raúl Anguiano turns his attention to the

extraordinary landscape of his native country. The specter of volcanoes is a common sight in Mexico. Mexico City is scooped out of a great valley which is formed by towering mountains. Two of these peaks are the famous volcanos personified as Popocatepetl and Ixtacihuatl, sleeping lovers who have made their way into popular imagery of today. Anguiano's work isolates the smoking crater in an arid, dark desert. The image is an accurate portrayal of a volcanic eruption and does not differ markedly from scenes of the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in Oregon in 1980. The observer must stand in awe of the power of Mother Nature. This painting also brings to mind the volcano

*While U.S. tourists were
buying these works of art, the
artists were examining their
history, looking for ancient
clues to their modern culture
which was in a dynamic
state of change.*



Soldiers of the Revolution
SOUTHWEST COLLECTION, EL PASO PUBLIC
LIBRARY



RAUL ANGUIANO
El Volcan, 1943

Oil on canvas
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0147.2012

CARLOS OROZCO ROMERO
Cautivos, 1940

Oil on board
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0147.2008

scenes painted earlier in the century by Dr. Atl.

Carlos Orozco Romero from Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco deals with actions frozen in time. In his *Cautivos* (Captives) we see two beasts, perhaps goats, captured in a small circular pen. Large enough to escape easily, the animals are nonetheless held by some external force. This small painting is similar in style to others done about the same time. The Phoenix Art Museum, for instance, has in its collection a work called *La Danza* (The Dance) which is composed of a larger than life puppet frantically dancing in a small, confining room at the mercy of an unseen puppeteer. Both pictures were purchased from the same Mexico City gallery in the early 1940s. And both offer a kind of subliminal surrealism that causes a sensation of uneasiness and lack of control, one of Orozco Romero's interpretations of life in the 20th century.

The paintings of José Chávez Morado, who was also an important graphic artist, often deal with themes of country life and folk customs. His pictures are nearly always possessed of a sense of malevolence. Born in the state of Guanajuato, where he still lives, he puts down on canvas a disquietude like that expressed by Orozco Romero, but with a more



José Chávez Morado has captured here part of the allure that brought (and brings) so many visitors to Mexico, an element of mysticism, a feeling that maybe this culture is a little closer to its sources.

nightmarish quality. The scene in *Caballos* (Horses) is not an unusual one. A young boy has herded a group of horses into a corral and stands near a bare tree to which the fence is anchored. There is a disturbing sense of impending danger as two of the horses race across the painting toward the boy. This disquieting presence is much more graphically seen in *Annunciation del Nagual* (The Annunciation of the Nagual). The Nagual, a kind of witch with roots in the pre-hispanic past, transforms itself into an animal at night and goes about creating mischief. The Nagual may steal, move, or hide small objects.⁵ Morado's Nagual is much more menacing as it approaches a sleeping or entranced woman. It must be assumed from the title that the scene is taken from the Christian subject of the Annunciation to the Virgin. José Chávez Morado has captured here part of the allure that brought (and brings) so many visitors to Mexico, an element of mysticism, a feeling that maybe this culture is a little closer to its sources.

The preeminent artist of the second group, painters of nostalgic pictures, is Rufino Tamayo. Tamayo may be called the most important



Mexican painter of the late 20th century. For many he was the definition of painting in Mexico. In any case, his fame and popularity were well deserved. Tamayo was a master colorist, whose compositions, especially his early still lifes, evoked all the best characteristics of American modernism. Later in his career, after living for many years in the United States and France, he turned to the saturated colors and simpler compositions which are most readily identified with him. Tamayo spent much of his life appraising his place in the complicated structure of Mexican society and its arts. The country of his birth was never far from his mind nor from his art. It was its essence that he wished to express on canvas. He moved away from muralism as a didactic vocation and instead developed his art as an author develops a very personal vocabulary and style. His works were first works of art, second tools which taught intuitively, implying their message (unlike murals, whose order was to present information).

Tamayo's 1940 watercolor *Vendadora de jitomates* (Tomato vendor, page 6) is a simple image of a woman selling tomatoes in the street or in a



JOSÉ CHÁVEZ MORADO
Caballos, 1947
Oil on canvas

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0147.2009

JOSÉ CHÁVEZ MORADO
Annunciation of the Nabuat
Oil on canvas

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0147.2021

The search for roots or the longing for place are not uncommon motivations for painters anywhere. Nostalgia for a homeland left behind, memories of childhood, or the reach beyond the present are all powerful stimulants to the creative urge.

PAUL STRAND
*Man with Hoe, Los Remedio,
 Mexico, 1933*
 Platinum print
 COLLECTION OF THE J. PAUL GETTY
 MUSEUM, MALIBU, CALIFORNIA

FACING PAGE
 ALFREDO ZALCE
Coscomate, 1946
 Tempera on paper

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0247.1477

This gouache, done in 1946 in the state of Morelos near Mexico City, is most remarkable for its brush work and skillful draftsmanship. The farmer stretches up from his right foot, an action that is perfectly observed and painted with an economy of brush strokes. Looking at a painting like this, it is easy to imagine a moment in the past when life was more simple. This artist too has imbued the subject with a great deal of dignity and respect, an attitude that was very close to the philosophies of his contemporaries.



market—a scene he had undoubtedly observed many times. The shapes are reduced, and it is primarily a composition of circles in a rectangular setting. The mood of the piece expresses a profound respect for the vendor and her trade. The colors are reminiscent of his earlier work, but the uncomplicated structure is prescient of his work after 1960.

The search for roots or the longing for place are not uncommon motivations for painters anywhere. Nostalgia for a homeland left behind, memories of childhood, or the reach beyond the present are all powerful stimulants to the creative urge. Several of the paintings at hand can be better understood when examined with these concepts in mind.

Alfredo Zalce was born in the state of Michoacán and still lives in Morelia. Michoacán is a state rich in art, architecture, and crafts and Zalce often draws upon the people, landscape, and architecture of the region in his work. However, in his painting in this collection he has portrayed a farmer climbing up a ladder into his *coscomate*, a granary commonly used to store corn. *Coscomates*, with their adobe bases and heavily thatched protective roofs, are not necessarily typical of Michoacán. Jalisco is the birthplace of many of Mexico's most prominent artists and artists from the state are well represented in the Gilcrease collection. Anguiano, Orozco Romero, and José Clemente Orozco have already been mentioned. Gilcrease also bought the works of Jalisco artists María Izquierdo, Juan Soriano, and Jesús Guerrero Galván.

For reasons of content it is appropriate to look first at the work of María Izquierdo and Guerrero Galván. Izquierdo is certainly one of the most interesting artists of 20th-century Mexico although she has been obscured by the massive reputations and popularity of her contemporaries Frida Kahlo and Rufino Tamayo. From 1906 until 1923 she lived in San Juan de los





MARÍA IZQUIERDO
How Now Spotted Cow
Watercolor on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0247.991

MARÍA IZQUIERDO
Ballet Backstage
Watercolor on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0247.992



Lagos, the town in which she was born. Many of her paintings are inspired by scenes from this period of her life, among them bucolic landscapes, the circus, dance, personal altars and child portraits.⁶ Izquierdo was a close friend of Tamayo and his influence can be seen in her work, particularly her still lifes and urban landscapes. She developed, however, an impressive and unique style. Her pictures often have a feeling of intimacy, as though the viewer is peering, unseen, from just “off camera”. In some cases, her altars are actually painted to place the onlooker behind the altar looking out into the room.

Tulsa is fortunate to have two Izquierdos, something few communities in the States can boast. Both are watercolors on paper although the pigment is applied in such a way as to resemble gouache or even oil. The colors are intense and as fresh if they painted only recently. In fact *How Now Spotted Cow* was done in 1938 and *Ballet Backstage* the following year. The spotted cow is set in a richly colored and somewhat “Tamayo-esque” landscape. A board laying on the ground cuts a sharp, angular line across an otherwise soft and curvilinear surface. One is forced to wonder just what this board is doing there and what the cow is thinking about it. The ballet scene is larger,

JESUS GUERRERO GALVÁN
Laundry Day
Watercolor on paper
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0247.996

There is a feeling of a greater presence or a foreboding in many Galván paintings even when, as here, the sight portrayed would not have been atypical — it is common to see clothing drying on bushes in rural Mexico. It is interesting to consider this painting in the context of those of María Izquierdo, shown on the facing page, with which it shares similarities in mood, situation, and scale.





JUAN SORIANO
La Niña Muerte, 1944
 Oil on board
 GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0147.2006

approximately twenty by sixteen inches, and could have easily been inspired by a trip to a circus or traveling show. Here the colors are simple, nearly primary, and intense. The mood, while chaotic, has the inner stillness of a moment from an early Fellini film. Some of the figures appear to be portraits and it is possible that the most remote of these, near the top of the canvas, is a self-portrait. These two extraordinary pieces were certainly one of the collector's wisest buys!

The Gilcrease watercolor by Guerrero Galván is a very good example of his work and evokes, as many of his pictures do, a great feeling of longing or melancholy. Galván frequently placed his portrait subjects in a desolate, nearly lunar, landscape from which they directly confront the observer. His monumental scale imparts a solidity that firmly roots the figures to earth. Without a doubt the most arresting picture in the collection is by Juan Soriano, a firsthand participant throughout the period of modern painting in

Mexico. Soriano was born in 1920 in Guadalajara whose rich artistic heritage he absorbed as a youth. There he saw the work of the great colonial and 19th century painters in the Museum of Guadalajara. In 1935 he moved to Mexico City where he worked, studied, and taught. Though he has lived in Rome and Paris as well as Mexico City since 1951, Soriano has always found time to travel within his own country. Although his work is never as self-consciously Mexican as that of some of his contemporaries, it is "more intimately Mexican than that of many artists who consciously cultivate scenes of peasants and landscapes with magueys."⁷ Soriano is Mexican by intuition rather than intent.

The subject of *La Niña muerte* (Dead Girl) is a young girl, elegantly dressed, lying on a draped platform, laden and surrounded by flowers. Looking on are a solitary woman and a curious child, perhaps a sister, peeking from behind a curtain. Hovering to the right are two baroque angels, also children. Although at first jarring and difficult to comprehend, the image makes a great deal of sense historically and in terms of folk traditions. The 19th-century custom of acquiring portraits of dead relatives and friends originated in Europe and was transplanted to the New World. Later in the century the paintings were supplanted by quicker, cheaper, and more realistic photographs and by the early 1900s post-mortem images had fallen out of

style altogether. However

Soriano would have been familiar with such portraits from his boyhood in Guadalajara. The angels in the painting suggest another folk tradition, *El Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead). This traditional celebration honors the souls of the dead who are believed to return to their homes, families and villages for a visit on November 1 and 2. The little angels in the painting remind us of the souls of children, called *angelitos* or little angels, who are welcomed back during the Day of the Dead.

When the artist was informed that this painting was in the Gilcrease collection he spoke of the subject.

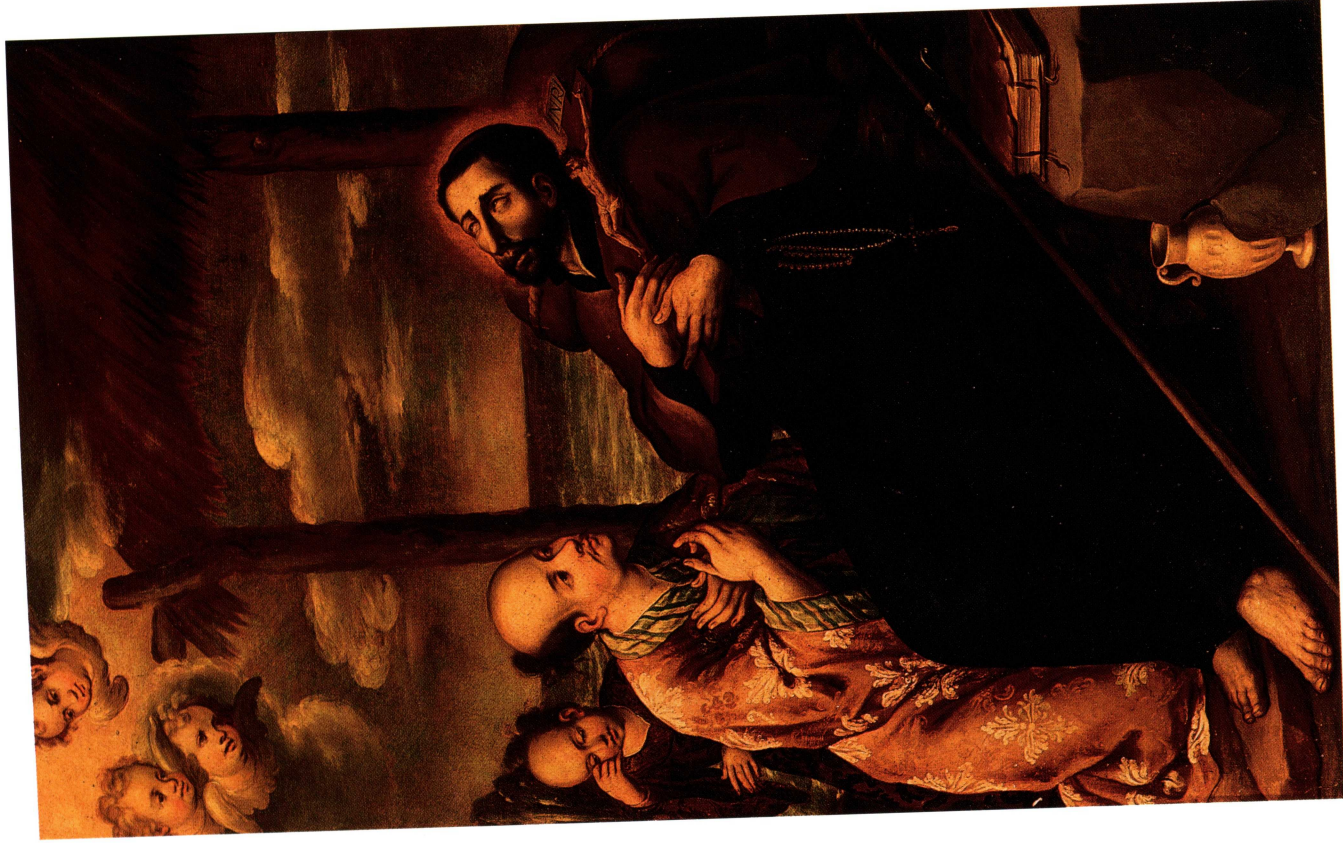
*Where are we bound?
 We have come here only to be
 born.
 Our house is elsewhere
 in the land of the fleshless.*

ANCIENT NAHUATL SONG

MANUEL ALVAREZ-BRAVO
Burial in Metepec, 1932
 Gelatin silver

COLLECTION OF THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM,
 MALIBU, CALIFORNIA





JUAN CORREA
Death of a Priest
Oil on board
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0146.2041

José María Estrada as well as Hermenegildo Bustos painted dead children in the 19th century. Thereafter, this custom disappeared in Mexico. When I was very young I saw the portraits of dead children in the Museum of Guadaluajara by Estrada.

Between the years of 1938 and 1945, I was many times very impressed to see, in the small villages of Veracruz and Mexico [state], dead children surrounded by flowers and candles, laid out in the open windows of their homes so that people on the street could see them. I painted four oils on this theme along with various preparatory drawings. One of these four works is in the Philadelphia Art Museum. The painting from the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa was inspired by a scene of a little dead girl in Alvarado, Veracruz.⁸

P O S T S C R I P T

Juan Soriano's *La Niña muerta* is one of two very important paintings formerly lost or unknown which have come to light during recent research on works bought by Thomas Gilcrease. Another, much earlier painting, by Juan Correa, a Spanish Colonial artist who was active in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, was unknown and is presently being researched by Mexican scholars. The subject of this painting, San Francisco Javier, died in the mid-16th century in China. With San Ignacio de Loyola, he was one of the founders of the Jesuit Order.⁹ The artist's principal historian, Elisa Vargas Lugo, and others already agree that this is an important painting. As research continues, this collection will certainly take its place alongside those that are more well known.

Collections of Mexican art in the United States are limited in size and number. While there are significant numbers of Spanish Colonial works in various locations, including those at the Denver Art Museum, the Davenport Museum of Art, the New Orleans Museum of Art and the The Brooklyn Museum, collections of 20th-century art are generally less than comprehensive. This is certainly due in part to the fact that the collecting of Latin American art in general has been marginalized by museums and the art

world in general. Most collections were formed in more or less the same manner as that of Gilcrease: through the keen, albeit short lived, interest of an avid collector.¹⁰

The international art community—museums, galleries, and collectors—is now paying much closer attention to the arts and cultures of Latin America. During the last five years very large exhibitions of Mexican art have toured both in the United States and Europe. The biggest exhibition of 20th-century Latin American Art ever arranged, *Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century*, organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, began touring last August in Seville in conjunction with Expo '92 and closed in New York in September 1993. Mexican art is a prominent part of the exhibit. In this climate it is appropriate that American fine arts institutions reevaluate the Mexican and Latin American objects in their care.

Research will further document the collecting patterns of Americans in Mexico during the 1940s. Additionally, it will add understanding and depth to the personality and habits of Gilcrease himself. The Gilcrease Museum and the city of Tulsa should be very proud of this portion of the collection of the strong-willed and eclectic Thomas Gilcrease.

1. See James Oles in *South of the Border: Mexico in the American Imagination, 1914-1947*, Washington, D. C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993.

2. Laurance P. Hurlburt, *Mexican Murdists in the United States*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1989, p. 163.

3. The historical and academic interpretation of this period, currently the topic of much discussion, shares many traits with the recent revisionist discourse surrounding 19th- and 20th-century art of the western United States.

4. C. Espejel, *Las artesanías tradicionales de México*, SEP, Mexico, D.F., 1972. Cited in Inzúa Canales, V., *Artesanías en papel y cartón*, FONART, Mexico D.F., 1982, p. 11, footnote number 6.

5. See Linda McAllister, in *Arte Vivo, Living Traditions in Mexican Folk Art*, James R. Ramsey, editor. Memphis, Memphis State University, 1984.

6. See Erika Billeter in *Images of Mexico: The Contribution of Mexico to 20th Century Art*, Dallas, Texas; Dallas Museum of Art, 1987.

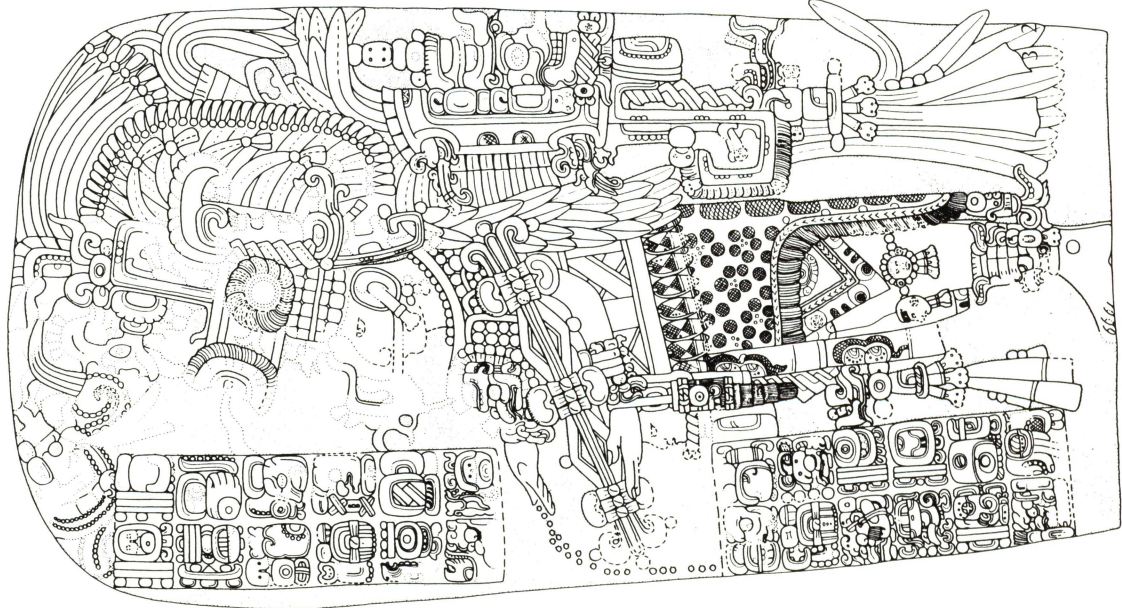
7. See Edward J. Sullivan, *La Esencia expresiva: retratos y esculturas de Juan Soriano* in *Juan Soriano, retratos y esculturas*, Mexico City, Grupo Azabache, 1991.

8. Juan Soriano, letter to author, July 22, 1993.

9. Elisa Vargas Lugo, *Juan Correa, su Vida y su Obra*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, D.F., 1985, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 314.

10. New York's Museum of Modern Art and the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery at the University of Texas in Austin are the sites of the largest collections of contemporary Mexican art in this country. The Huntington has had a full time curator in this department for many years. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has purchased important work from the 70s, 80s and 90s, but its holdings are not comprehensive and there is not a curator dedicated to this portion of the Met's vast numbers of possessions. In the West, the Phoenix Art Museum has collected Mexican work for over thirty years and early in 1992 the museum created a curatorial position to further develop and refine its Latin American Collection. Still, its collection is incomplete. From this point of view the Gilcrease collection is not atypical.

PRE-COLUMBIAN ART OF THE NEW WORLD



Long before the voyages of Columbus, the cultures of the Western Hemisphere were producing art objects in a range of uniquely expressive styles. The ancient artists of what Europe called “the New World” mastered many media, were consummate engineers and architects, and lived as full members of the intelligentsia of their respective societies. The pre-Columbian peoples who made the objects in the Gilcrease collection represent a history of more than 2,000 years and cultures that checkered an expanse of over 8,000 miles stretching from Mexico to Peru. For centuries Western civilization looked at these cultures as primitive or exotic. Only in recent decades have we begun to see these ancient peoples not as “the other” but instead as marvelous representatives of humanity with the same capacities found anywhere, at any time, in the history of humanity.

DRAWING BY WILLIAM R. COE. COURTESY OF THE
TIKAL PROJECT, THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF
ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY, PHILADELPHIA.

G I L C R E A S E



Maya polychrome plate

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 5445.1710

This Maya plate from the Classic Period (A.D. 250-850) comes from Campeche in eastern Mexico. The bold patterns created by the individual motifs against fields of red and orange are typical of the region. A standing male figure decorates the center of the plate. He wears an elaborate backrack and headdress atop which perches a saurian creature and his loins are wrapped in a jaguar pelt. He grasps a tall staff

comprised of three diamond-shaped bars tied by three double knots. Atop the staff is a halved “eccentric” shell. Around the plate’s rim are eight motifs alternating between a stack of three symbolic knots like those on the staff and a frontally-depicted human face. These two motifs are associated with war and sacrificial rites among the Classic Maya.

The staff shown on the plate is of a type best known from the Early Classic (A.D. 250-550) carved stone stelae of Tikal, Guatemala. Carved in stone for public display, stelae are

monumental portraits of Maya rulers. Most also bear hieroglyphic texts recording historical events and names of rulers and their ancestors. On the stelae from Tikal many rulers are depicted holding staffs which exactly match the one held by the figure on the Gilcrease plate. The earliest renditions of this staff date from the reign of Lord Jaguar Paw-Skull who ruled Tikal during the last decade of the 5th century A.D. (ca. A.D. 488-A.D. 498). Interestingly, this ceremonial staff was so important to the Maya rulers of Tikal that it reappeared in the site’s Late Classic royal monumental art after a hiatus of 200 years, here seen on Stela 22 which records the *katun* ending ritual by Lord Kan-Chitam on 9.17.0.0.0. in the Maya calendar (or January 24, A.D. 771). A *katun* is roughly 20 solar years. On both the earlier stela and the later one, the hieroglyphic texts and figures’ costumes imply that part of the rituals performed by the depicted rulers included blood sacrificial offerings. Associations with the stelae from Tikal strongly imply that the image on the Gilcrease plate represents a royal male person.

i M É X I C O ! 3 3

Artifacts are the material remains of ancient beliefs and historical events, and it follows that these objects are the direct reflections of the people who made and used them. For us, then, these artifacts open the curtain of the ancient cultural stage on which these pieces performed. At the same time, it is equally valid for the modern viewer to consider the aesthetic merits of these objects, judging each according to one's own ideals of technical mastery, formal beauty, and emotional appeal.

Of the many media used by ancient artists of the New World, earthenware pottery is the most ubiquitous. Pottery was hand modeled (the pottery wheel was not in use) and was fired at temperatures of 700° to 1200° F. High-fired ceramics such as porcelain and glazed stoneware were not known in the New World. Vessel-forming and sculptural techniques varied vastly from north to south and through the millennia, and we can witness some of these highly creative approaches to the clay medium in the ceramics from Mesoamerica (Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and parts of Honduras and El Salvador). Mayan pottery from the Classic Period (A.D. 250-850) in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize consistently is thin-walled and symmetrical. Decorative techniques include incising into the leather-hard clay and polychrome painting.

Mayan jar

GILCREASE MUSEUM,
5445.2069

This vase from Mexico is decorated with a horizontal and two vertical bands in which are carved motifs making reference to stars and other "sky" signs.



Flowstone Figure

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 5445.2070.A

Flowstone figures were placed in caves and few such ceramic pieces with wood as the core form have survived from Classic Maya times. This figure represents the deity Xbalanque who was associated with the Maya underworld.

Mesoamerican ceramicists also created outstanding human figural sculptures in clay, most made by free-modeling techniques. These range from realistic portraits to highly stylized representations of the human figure. The pre-Classic Olmec culture of the first millennium B.C. in the Gulf Coast region and neighboring highlands south of the Valley of Mexico is renowned for its enigmatic sculptures of infantile-adult seated figures. These sculptures are called "Olmec babies" but certainly are not simply representations of infants. Their meanings and function in Olmec society continue to elude us although a number of hypotheses have been proposed. Among these are the possibility that they represent a noble physical manifestation of the supernatural (the gods) on earth. The figures' well-developed heads and facial features and controlled body positions suggest either a supernatural combination of an adult and infant or the celebration of what we know as congenital defects such as Down's Syndrome. Another hypothesis is that these "babies" represent shamanic transformation.

Narrative sculpture in clay is characteristic

of the pre-Classic cultures of West Mexico (ca. 400-100 B.C.), in particular the pre-Columbian people who inhabited the modern state of Nayarit. Modeled on top of a flat platform of clay are scenes of village life, dances, the Mesoamerican ballgame, and the important rituals of Nayarit society. A splendid Nayarit pictorial narrative in clay is the funeral procession (page 36). Here the ancient artists have provided us a rare view

of their funerary rites. More than twenty figures accompany the bundled body of the deceased to a round building with the typically pointed thatched roof. A decorative "roof comb" embellishes the central beam. This building may be a religious structure. The figures flanking its entrance are receiving the funeral procession which includes musicians and others bringing funerary offerings in bowls. The body is wrapped in many layers of cloth, the profuse decoration of the outer textile giving us some idea of the impressive weaving traditions of the Nayarit fiber artists whose works have not survived.

Although no true glaze wares are known from pre-Columbian America, the Maya of the Pacific Coast of Chiapas, Mexico and adjacent regions in Guatemala developed a semi-glazed ware we call plumbate. Plumbate is recognizable

by its shiny surface and bright orange to gray slip coloration. This unique slip is comprised of high amounts of alumina which act as a flux and cause the slip nearly to melt during the firing process, thus forming a hard glaze-like surface. Plumbate originated and developed during the Late Classic Period (ca. A.D. 600-900) and is characteristic of the early post-Classic Period (ca. A.D. 900-1250). It was traded widely throughout Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and even as far south as Costa Rica.

Olmec Seated Human Figure

GILCREASE
MUSEUM,
5444.7749



Nayarit Funeral Procession

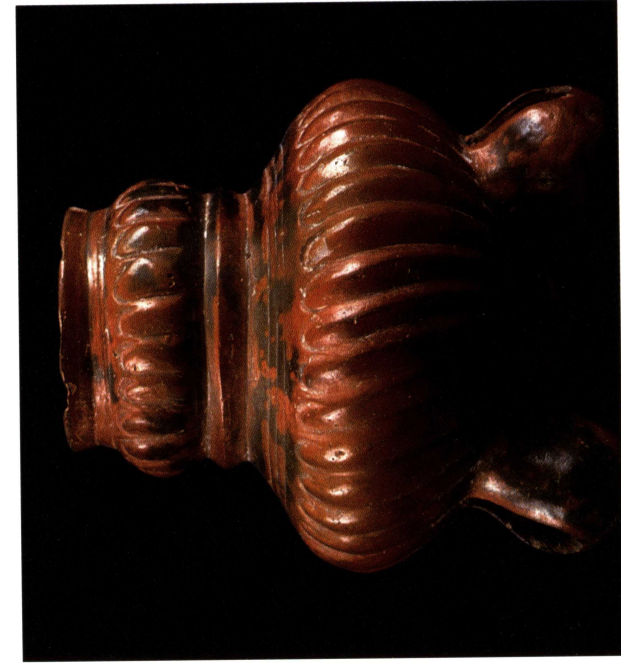
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
5444.7888

Hand-modeled narrative sculpture depicted occurrences in village life.

Maya jar

GILCREASE MUSEUM,
5444.2064

The shape of this plumbate jar recalls that of squashes, a primary food from the Americas, and gourds, which have functioned as vessels for food from pre-Columbian times to today.



Mesoamerican cultures developed a highly advanced lithic technology, that is, the ability to make and use stone tools to create objects. The stone sculptural traditions of the different cultures are aesthetically and thematically as varied as is each society. These artists and architects were master stoneworkers on both the monumental and minuscule scales. They built impressive pyramidal platforms of earth and stone on which they constructed sacred buildings of carved stone. These creations are replicas of the sacred mountain where the gods first created humanity and from which the first human beings emerged onto the face of the earth. Natural caves inside mountains, and their symbolic counterparts on top of the pyramidal platforms, were that numinous zone between the world of humans and the supernatural realm. Here humans and gods came face to face during important rituals so that the priests, shamans, and rulers could engage the assistance of the deities to maintain the cosmic balance and help their people.

Stone sculptures on a smaller scale include the famous masks of Teotihuacán. It has been suggested that the larger masks were the stone faces of monumental sculptures of deities created in wood and placed outside the ritual buildings along the misnamed "Avenue of the Dead" at Teotihuacán, the main ceremonial street through the heart of this great city which

flourished from 200 B.C. to A.D. 750. The smaller masks may have been tied onto mummy bundles to represent the faces of the deceased. If the masks functioned in both these ways, possibly the deceased's wearing of the mask of a deity created a like-in-kind relationship and suggested the deification of the soul of the dead person. The aesthetic and cultural importance of Teotihuacán masks is underscored by their having been found in later Aztec ritual caches (ca. A.D. 1480) excavated from the main temple of the Aztecs in their capital city Tenochtitlán (modern-day Mexico City).

The tradition of stone masks goes back at least to Olmec times during the first millennium before Christ. Olmec facial representations are immediately recognized by the down-turned mouths and Asian-like eyes. Few of these masks have been excavated under controlled conditions and thus we have little archaeological information from which we can infer social function. More than two dozen of these masks were found in a natural spring in southern Veracruz a few years ago. They appear to have been thrown into the spring as part of a ritual offering during Olmec times. Whether these masks had other functions among the Olmec must await further archaeological research and the scientific excavation of masks whose context will provide critical details for their interpretation.

Pre-Columbian peoples of Andean South America and Central America developed amazing technological and artistic skills in the working of precious metals. They also independently discovered the formula for bronze from which they made different kinds of utilitarian tools. Metallurgy developed during the first millennium B.C. in Ecuador and Peru, and then spread throughout lower Central America where precious metals replaced jadeite as the primary high status medium from which to make body adornment for the elite. Gold and copper objects first were imported into Mesoamerica sometime after A.D. 500 but did not become relatively common and of local manufacture until well after A.D.1000.

In Peru, objects made from precious metals were used by the ruling elite to signal and enhance their social and political status. In addition, we know that among the Inkas of the 15th century A.D., precious metals also had religious connotations: silver was associated with Mama Oclla, the moon goddess, and gold with Inti, the deified sun. The supreme leader of the Inka empire, called The Inka, was believed to be the human manifestation on earth of Inti. During important rituals, The Inka and his close associates drank chicha (beer made from corn) from gold cups called *keros*. The Inka people are a late manifestation in ancient

Stone mask

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 6144.1100.515

Although none has been found in its original context and thus their functions remain speculative, holes drilled along the sides of the masks indicate that they were tied onto something else. The masking tradition has a long history throughout the world and certainly in Mesoamerica. The Portfolio feature in this journal, page 44, illustrates 20th-century dance masks from Mexico.





Peru. Their amazing political ascendancy took place in less than 200 years, during which time they absorbed into their empire most of the independent states and individual cultures from northern Chile to Quito, Ecuador. Prior to the Inkas, the archaeological record from this region tells a detailed story of the varying fortunes and histories of such peoples as the Chimú who lived along the northern coastal plain of Peru (ca. A.D. 1100-1470). The Chimú were extraordinary metalsmiths who dressed their rulers in tunics emblazoned with gold sequins.

At death, the rulers went to the afterlife wearing funeral masks and gloves of gold, golden headbands and elaborate pectorals made from thousands of tiny beads of gold, turquoise and shell. These funerary customs and artistic knowledge had been inherited by the Chimú from the antecedent cultures throughout Peru and Bolivia. Unfortunately, the supreme artistry in precious metals of these ancient cultures is represented by only a paucity of their original creations. Most were melted down by the Spanish during the 16th

century, the metal now adorning the altars and ceilings of European cathedrals.

The knowledge of metallurgy and the use of metal objects as tools and especially as markers of status spread into northern South America. The peoples of Ecuador—and especially Colombia with its gold, silver, and copper deposits—adopted and adapted the metalworking technologies. The artists used many production techniques including cold-hammering, lost-wax casting, casting in clay and stone molds,

false filigree, annealing and repoussé. Separate parts of a work were joined in various ways, sometimes combining several on a single piece: hammer-welding, soldering, brazing, pinning, stapling or lacing, and diffusion bonding, the latter technique only recently rediscovered by modern

metalsmiths. To enhance the golden surface of the completed work, metalsmiths burnished and gilded their creations (using standard gilding and depletion gilding techniques).

The legend of “El Dorado” originated in Colombia where early Spanish seekers of fame and fortune were told of



Pectoral

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 5645.223

Pectorals were commonly produced among the Coclé culture of western Panamá. The majority are oval in shape and worked in repoussé with images from Coclé religion and mythology. This pectoral is embellished with a mirror-image of a standing crocodilian supernatural with a human body.

Although the mythology of this supernatural is now lost, the being must have been central to Coclé beliefs because his image is found on many gold objects and is painted on the distinctive Coclé polychrome pottery. Shamanic transformation was an integral part of many pre-Columbian religions and it is possible that this anthropomorphic crocodile springs from this important aspect of the ancient beliefs.

the accession rites of the Muisca people. The designated ruler-to-be, ritually covered with fine gold dust and jewelry, took a ceremonial dive into Lake Guatavita (near the present-day capital of Bogotá). Many 16th-century Spanish and their Colombian descendants have attempted to drain this volcanic crater lake with limited success in finding golden riches. Only in 1965 did the Colombian government step in to protect this beautiful lake and the treasures still hidden below its waters.

Metal objects first appeared in Panama and Costa Rica during the first 500 years of the Christian era. The earliest pieces were created in Colombia, but local artists soon learned to make their own metal objects. The majority of these are different kinds of body adornments from earflares to pectorals to elaborate beads, bands, and similar small objects to be worn.

In addition to gold, silver, platinum and copper, jadeite and similar greenstones were the most precious of materials in the eyes of many pre-Columbian peoples. Three factors supported the preciousness of these jadeite objects, including the symbolic associations of the varying green colors with water, fertility, and the continuance of earthly life. Jadeite is not plentiful and thus its scarcity contributes to its status. And last, incredible amounts of human labor and artistic expertise were required to create even the simplest of jadeite beads.

Therefore, when an elite person wore jadeite jewelry, she proclaimed her elevated social and economic status because ownership of these items directly implied she had command over the natural, supernatural and human resources, either directly or indirectly.

Jadeite is an extremely hard stone which is very difficult to carve. To overcome the technical challenge of working one of the hardest stones in the world, the artists developed abrasion techniques using crushed minerals (garnet was one) in combination with a sticky liquid such as animal fat and/or plant juices. The artists then applied astonishing amounts of human “elbow grease” to abrade the surface and carve or incise the imagery. Tough plant fibers, bamboo-like drills and possibly animal sinews were primary cutting tools.

The Gilcrease pre-Columbian collection includes three jadeite plaques — two are shown at on page 40—that resemble the belt plaques worn by Classic Maya rulers and their counterparts among the Gulf Coast and Oaxaca



Gold bell bead

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 5645.35



Gold pendant

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 5645.232

Golden objects were often worn by the local elite to signal their prestige and power. Not surprisingly, many works were fashioned in the forms of the most powerful animals from the natural environment, whose ferociousness and cunning were transferred to those who wore their images. A fine example of such adornment is the bell bead above, cast in the shape of a snarling jaguar’s head. The jaguar is the strongest and most feared of predators in Central American. The eagle, aerial counterpart of the jaguar, is a predominant theme in the art of ancient Panamá and Costa Rica. Not surprisingly, the eagle’s image is reproduced in gold as pectorals to be worn by the movers and shakers in Costa Rican and Panamanian societies. The pendant above, made in the Chiriquí style from western Panama and the adjacent areas in Costa Rica and dating from A.D. 1000-1500, depicts the eagle in the instant before he grabs his prey.





Plaque with Kneeling Figure
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 5545.222



Plaque with Standing Figure
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 5545.235

cultures of México. The most famous example of a belt plaque is one called the Leyden Plaque (see the drawing at right). The Leyden Plaque is incised on the front with the portrait of a ruler who may be from Tikal, Guatemala, and on the back with an inscription recording the depicted ruler's accession to the throne. The king is presented in his royal regalia which includes an elaborate belt embellished on the front and back with two heads. Hanging from each of these are three belt plaques.

The Gilcrease examples, however, come from another plaque tradition unlike any from Classic Period Mesoamerica. Their uneven shape is unique. Further, pre-Columbian plaques were hung from bars and all known examples have single suspension holes at their top center points through which the connecting strings were tied. The Gilcrease examples either lack the hole or have two small holes drilled near the upper edges of the plaque. All known Classic Period plaques are either plain or have incised imagery on them. The Gilcrease examples, however, have carved imagery that is three-dimensional.

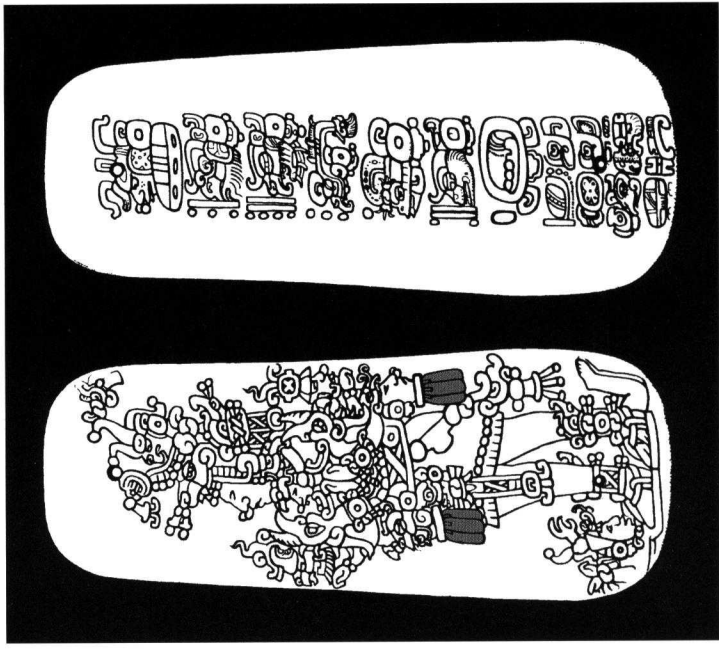
The figural images on the Gilcrease plaques are highly unusual in formal elements and iconography although the inspiration for these figures can be found on the monumental stone panels from the site of Palenque located in the southern state of Chiapas, Mexico. Gilcrease's jadeite Plaque with Kneeling Figure depicts a person who holds in her(?) outstretched hands a glyph-like oval object which may be a jaguar head. This figure recalls the ruler's mother depicted on the Palace Tablet (*page 42*). Note the similarities in the costumes worn by the royal woman on the Palace Tablet and the figure on the Gilcrease plaque, particularly in their long tresses and beads hanging down their backs. The unusual circular motif and tassel hanging at her waist suggests the clothing worn by the ruler Pacal in depictions of him on the tablets of the Cross Group at Palenque. The figure in the Gilcrease plaque kneels on three hieroglyphs which are rough depictions of three daysigns from the Maya calendar. The use of daysigns as ground markers is not found in Classic Maya art and makes no literary, linguistic, or semantic sense.

The Gilcrease Plaque with Standing Figure combines the standard Classic Maya dance pose (note the slightly bent and up-raised right leg) with the ubiquitous Maya gesture of submission of arm across the chest and hand resting on the opposite shoulder. The Classic Period model for this plaque may be the largest captive figure from the

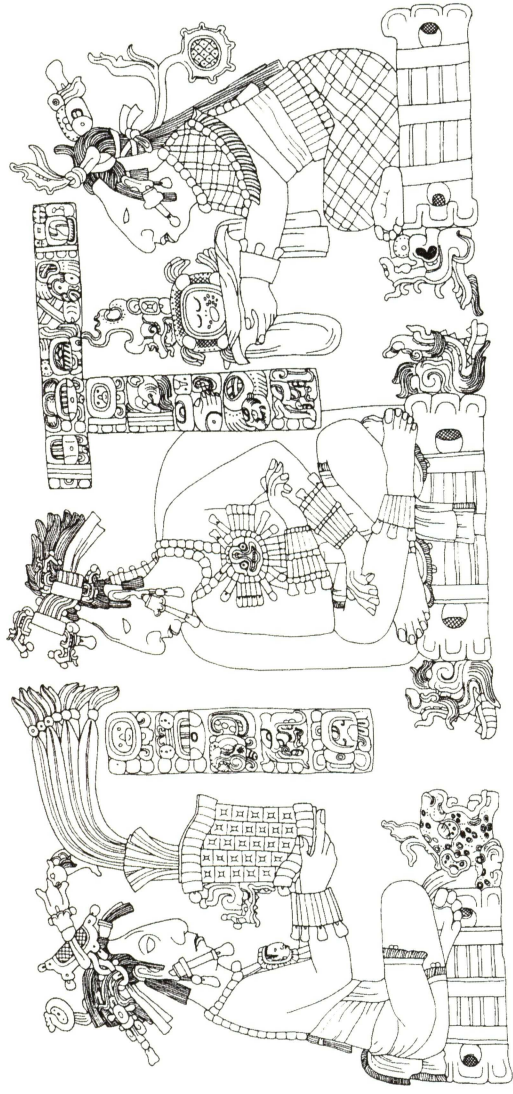
carved stone monoliths found in the East Court of the Palace at Palenque. The small skull carved next to the figure may have been inspired by very similar beads made by Mixtec artists of Oaxaca although bead representations of human crania also are found in Maya art and artifacts.

The combined evidence of iconographic and epigraphic irregularities as well as the unusual forms of these plaques all point to their being exceptionally fine 20th-century reproductions of Classic Maya jadeite plaques. The highly sophisticated reproduction of pre-Columbian imagery and the amazing quality of the artistic work are unknown in the corpus of modern reproductions. As such, these three plaques are an important part of the continuum of Classic Maya artistry in stone and certainly are the creations of a fine artisan.

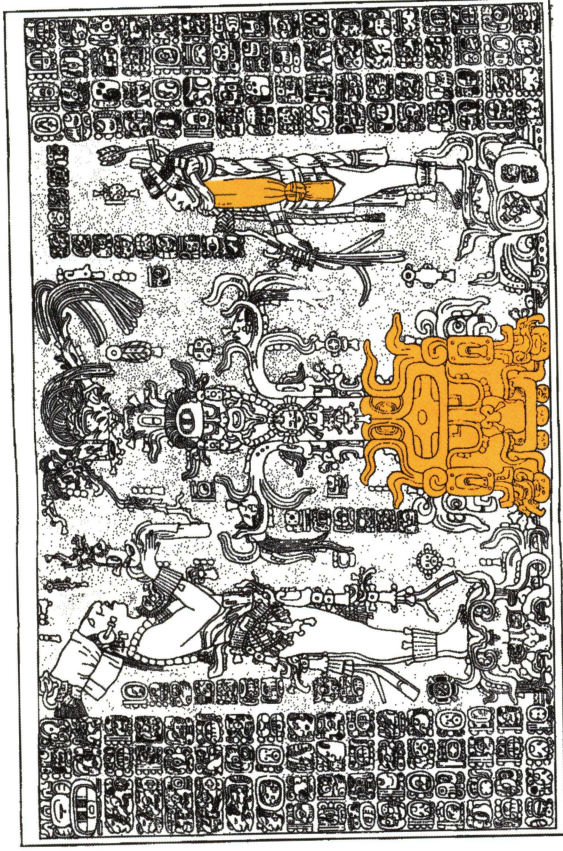
These plaques' history is mysterious, however, because of their unusual quality and the lack of known similar plaques. It is possible that they were created during the late 1920s and early 1930s as part of the Mayan Revival architectural movement in the United States,



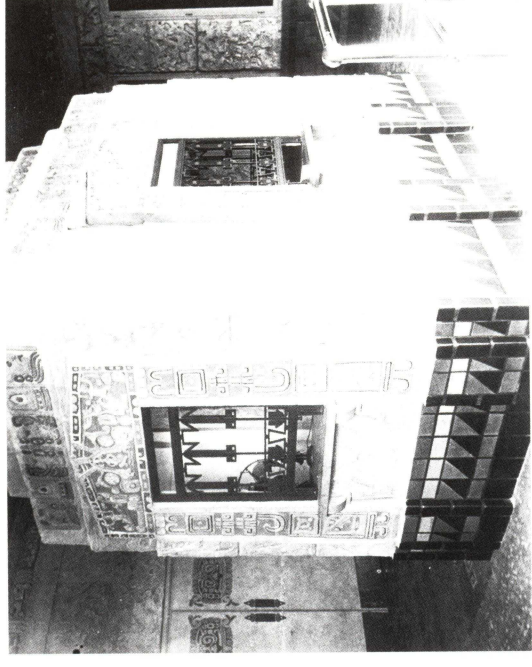
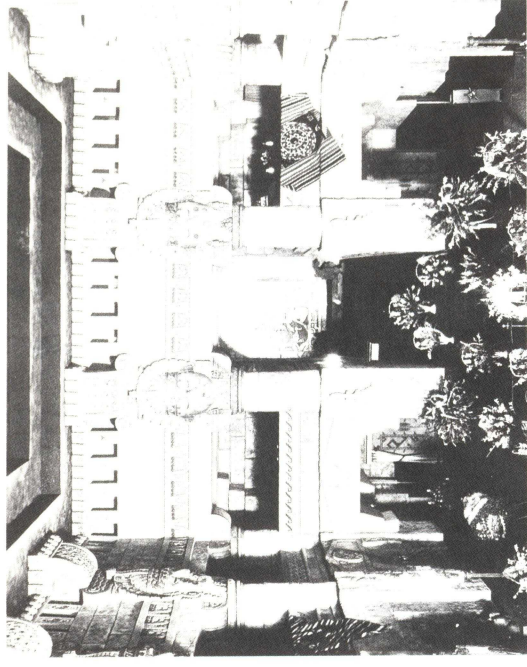
Schematic drawing of the Leyden Plaque from *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, vol. 3. Courtesy of University of Texas Press. The colored area designates the belt plaques worn by the figure.



Above, the Palace Tablet. The ruler's mother is seated on the ruler's left and extends to him a plate in which sits the unwrapped sacred bundle of rulership. Below, the Tablet of the Foliated Cross. Note the clothing of the ruler Pacal with its unusual circular motif and tassel. These jadeite plaques may have been inspirations for the Gilcrease jadeite plaques. Drawings by Linda Schele.



masterminded by various architects including Robert Stacy-Judd who wanted to create the first true American architectural style. To do so, he borrowed forms from pre-Columbian art and architecture, especially that of the Classic Maya. Some of the more famous and extant of the Mayan Revival buildings include the Aztec Theater in San Antonio, Texas, the Mayan Theaters in Denver and Los Angeles (the latter is now a discotheque and the location of a concert scene in the recent movie *The Bodyguard*), the old entrance of the Southwest Museum, the Aztec Hotel in Monrovia, California, the Inner Courtyard of the Pan-American Union Building in Washington, D.C. (headquarters of the Organization of American States) and the Sutter Building in downtown San Francisco. Private homes also were built in the style in Los Angeles and, surprisingly, in Ashiya, Japan (the latter designed by Frank Lloyd Wright).



Interior views of the Aztec Theater in San Antonio, Texas, 1926. Photographed by Arthur Scrivens. Courtesy of the San Antonio Conservation Society.

Decorative ironwork, bronze panels, and ceramic tiles were made to embellish the Mayan Revival buildings, using motifs from central Mexican and Maya art. Furniture and other decorative art objects, including dinnerware, bathroom fixtures, cigarette dispensers made in the shape of the main pyramid at Chichén Itzá, Mexico, flower vases and men's ties, were created especially for use in these buildings and by their inhabitants. Many of the architectural renderings and decorative arts objects combined Mayan/Mexican forms and motifs with the style of Art Deco. The melding of these two design movements are seen in the three Gilcrease jadeite plaques. Their fine carving also is consonant with the decorative objects from these two important design movements of the early 20th century in the United States. Therefore, although no jadeite plaques are known to have been created as part of the Mayan Revival movement, it is possible that the three Gilcrease plaques come from this design tradition. If true, these are unique and important pieces of the history of design in the U.S.

Pre-Columbian objects from the collection of the Gilcrease Art Museum are fine representatives of the creative spirit and technical accomplishments of the ancient American artists from Mexico to Peru. These objects are the material reflections of the social rituals, political constructs, economic systems, and the most fundamental religious and philosophic beliefs of the remarkable and unique cultures who created them. For the 20th-century person, these objects open a window on the ancient American societies and allow us at least a glimpse of their impressive aesthetic, technical, and intellectual accomplishments. Here we can experience and celebrate both the remarkable distinctness of these New World cultures and also the commonalities of the human experience.





MASKS OF MEXICO

The Mexican masks at Gilcrease were created for use in a wide range of social and religious observances throughout Mexico. Most originated from villages in the Mexican state of Guerrero, a region with a long tradition of mask making. In Mexico, masks are only one part of elaborate costumes that men, women, and children wear as they participate in the dances and pageant-like performances held in association with village festivals and religious celebrations. Just as we can appreciate the artistic and technical abilities of the individuals who carved the masks, so too can we listen to the music that accompanies the dances or recognize the contribution of those elders who spend patient hours teaching the steps and meanings of the dances to a younger generation of participants.

ABOVE, TIGRE MASK

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 6347.656

TThis mask was hammered from a single sheet of copper in a rare style that dates to before 1910. The two sets of ears are common features of masks created by craftsmen of Chiapetepec, Guerrero.



BEARDED ONE MASK
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 6347.451

Masks of the Bearded Ones were used in dances that documented the often violent contact between Europeans and the Indian people of Mexico. Today, masks of this design are used in contemporary forms of the Dance of the Moors and Christians, first reported in 1524 when it was performed for Cortés. This mask, dating to around 1900, is hammered from a single sheet of copper and decorated with elaborate repoussé. The crab and turtle on the forehead are ancient water symbols in Mexico.

DEATH MASK
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 7347.605

The use of the human skull in Mexico to represent death predates European contact and continues its popularity today through the observance of the annual “Day of the Dead” celebration. During Dias de los Muertos, the Days of the Dead, in early November, the markets brim with small toy skulls made of paper maché and candy skulls made of sugar. Bread and pastries are also decorated with skull designs.

PELVIC MASK
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 84.2596

Masks constructed from the pelvis bones of large mammals such as deer, oxen, or cattle are of considerable antiquity in Mexico. This style of mask is used in the Mojiganga Procession, an event in which men, women, and children use noisemakers to announce the beginning of the annual fiesta and its associated dances.

TIGRE MASK
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 7347.687

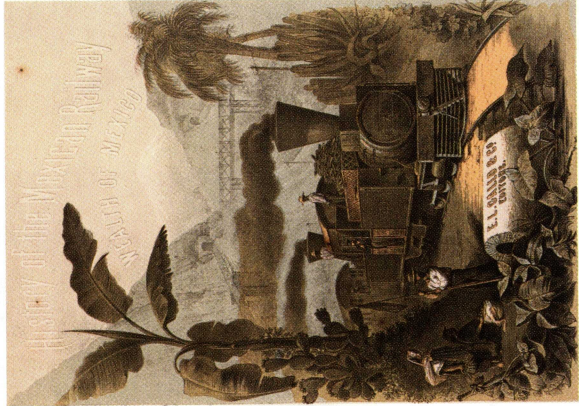
This fine lacquered mask is carved in the unmistakable style associated with the village of Olinala in Guerrero, Mexico. Masks from Olinala are highly valued throughout the region. Tigre (Spanish for jaguar) masks may represent a continuation of the symbolic association of jaguars with warfare, which predates European contact. In 1631 the Dance of the Tigre was prohibited by Spanish colonial law but it continues today as a means of invoking supernatural protection from real jaguars and to insure abundant crops.

DEVIL MASK
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 7347.607

Devils are one of the most widespread mask subjects in Mexico and are rendered in wide range of styles and media. Early European missionaries often added horns to indigenous masks in an attempt to denigrate these symbols from native religions as “works of the devil.” Masked devil figures appear in many Mexican dance performances and are often used to provide comic relief in serious religious dances.

"Everywhere it is a picture."

MORAN IN MEXICO



Of all the many places Thomas Moran visited and painted during his career, none was so enigmatic as Mexico — a land of many aspects, at once ancient and modern, beautiful and barren. It was a land that drew 19th-century American and European speculators to seek riches almost as fervently as had the 16th-century Spanish conquistadores. Moran came to Mexico in the winter of 1883, seeking his own riches, visual ones, recorded in over 100 field sketches, which would prove as

satisfying to him as gold or silver.

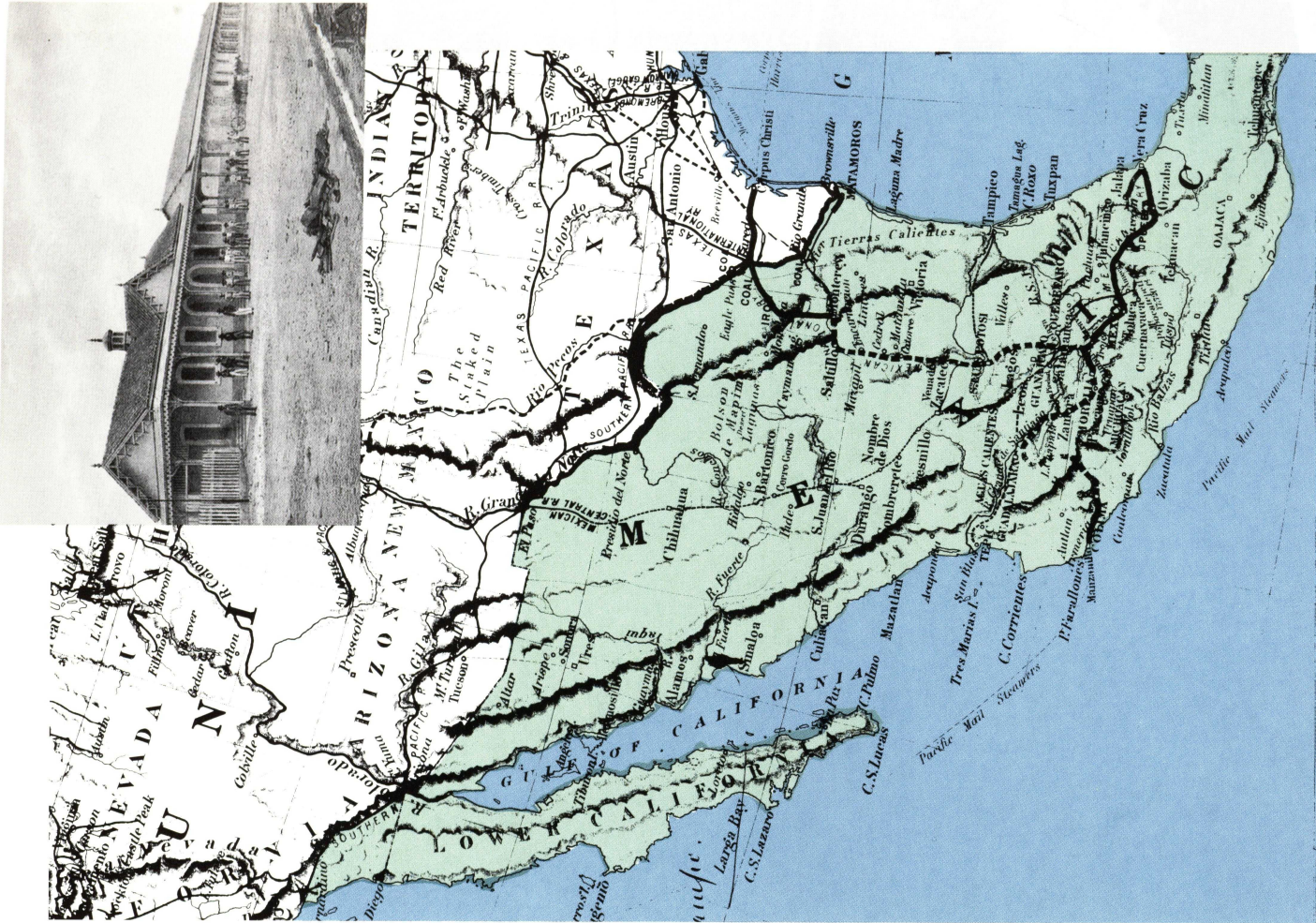
In 1883 Moran was forty-six years old and a veteran of numerous sketching journeys throughout America and Europe. Much of his travel took place during the summer months, with the rest of the year dedicated to studio work. This year he altered his usual practice when the opportunity came for a tour of Mexico between late January and mid-March.

Moran probably made his 1883 trip to Mexico in connection with promotion of the Mexican National Railroad. In 1837, the year Thomas Moran was born in Bolton, England, the Mexican government awarded its first concession for a rail line to connect the port city of Vera Cruz with the capital Mexico City. This was the beginning of a long-range plan to access the various regions of Mexico and connect them

with the United States (which had its first commercially viable railroad in 1827). While political and economic setbacks delayed the completion of the Vera Cruz-Mexico City route until 1872, by Moran's first visit to Mexico it had been running successfully for a decade. Moran's itinerary took him from Vera Cruz to Nuevo Laredo along the path of the established railroad and the path that would eventually extend to link with a northern route that connected Nuevo Laredo with Saltillo.

Before he went to Mexico, Moran had achieved a successful working relationship with American railroads, utilizing the rather young mode of transportation to reach points of visual and commercial interest. As early as 1864 he had traveled and sketched along the scenic line of the Pennsylvania Central along the Juniata and Conemaugh Rivers. By 1881 he had followed the route of the Baltimore and Ohio and the Denver and Rio Grande Railroads to complete commissions to provide images of the scenery for J.G. Pangborn's *Picturesque B. & O.* and Ernest Ingersoll's *The Crest of the Continent*.¹ As a result of his success in these endeavors, Moran was probably invited to tour Mexico to do the same. General William J. Palmer, a co-founder of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, was prominently involved in the Mexican National Railroad.

In 1880 Palmer and James Sullivan, operating as the Mexican National Construction Company, received a concession (a lease for a specific period granted for construction using private funds) from Mexico's president Porfirio Diaz to continue work on Mexican railroads. One of their routes, and the one Moran followed, was to extend from Mexico City through Toluca, Acambaro, Celaya, San Luis Potosi, Saltillo, and Monterrey to



This detail from an 1882 map of the Mexican National Railway shows the route Moran took on his sketching trip through Mexico. Inset above is a view of Veracruz Station from Gustavo Baz and E. L. Gallo's HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN RAILWAY. (Map reproduced from the collections of the Library of Congress.)



SUNSET, GULF OF MEXICO, watercolor on paper, Gilcrease Museum
0296.814.

Nuevo Laredo. Palmer was also the president of the operating company, the Mexican National Railway, which was incorporated in Colorado. As sections of construction were completed, the operating company took control of the line. The first section to open was the short line between Mexico City and Toluca, in 1880. The section from Laredo to Monterrey opened in 1882 and extended to Saltillo in 1883. In light of Palmer's involvement, it is interesting to note that his initial plans for the Denver and Rio Grande included a southern terminus at Mexico City that was never realized.

Moran may have been acquainted with Palmer even before the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad commission in 1881, through two patrons, William Blackmore and William A. Bell. Blackmore, a British industrialist, was the

principal financier of the Denver and Rio Grande, for whom Moran had completed a watercolor commission in 1872 of scenes of Yellowstone (now at Gilcrease). Dr. Bell, who had purchased Moran's celebrated painting *The Mount of The Holy Cross* (1875, The Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum) in 1880, was the other co-founder of the Denver and Rio Grande.

It is reasonable to believe that in his desire to promote the Mexican rail line, Palmer may have hired Moran to create romanticized views of the countryside. Although Palmer's plans would have had less to do with encouraging tourism than bolstering commercial use of the railroads in the mining areas of Mexico, he, like many frontier entrepreneurs, may have wished to cite the beauty as well as the natural resources of this unsettled country as reason for its economic development.

The precedent was established with books such as *History of the Mexican Railway: Wealth of Mexico*, written by Gustavo Baz and E.L. Gallo.² High-

quality lithographs illustrate bird's eye views of towns, details of railroad engineering, and scenic points, while the text extols the under-exploited resources and pleasant climate. Images such as that of the train station at Vera Cruz (page 47) also served to assure would-be investors and travelers that Mexico was modern and safe.

Moran traveled with a British representative of the Mexican National Railroad, Arthur G. Renshaw, and a mining engineer identified only as Mr. Hahn. Renshaw and Moran had become acquainted at least the year before; Moran recorded in one of his ledgers that together they presented Moran's watercolor *Hot Springs of Gardner's River, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming Territory* (1872) to the Geological Society of London.

They sailed from New York in late January, taking the traditional water route to Vera Cruz by way of the Bahamas and Cuba. When the boat docked at Havana, Moran took the opportunity to visit the port city, which he found striking. In a letter to his wife, written several days after the visit, Moran remarked on the beauty of Havana, "Everywhere it is a picture." He also commented in his letter that he made no

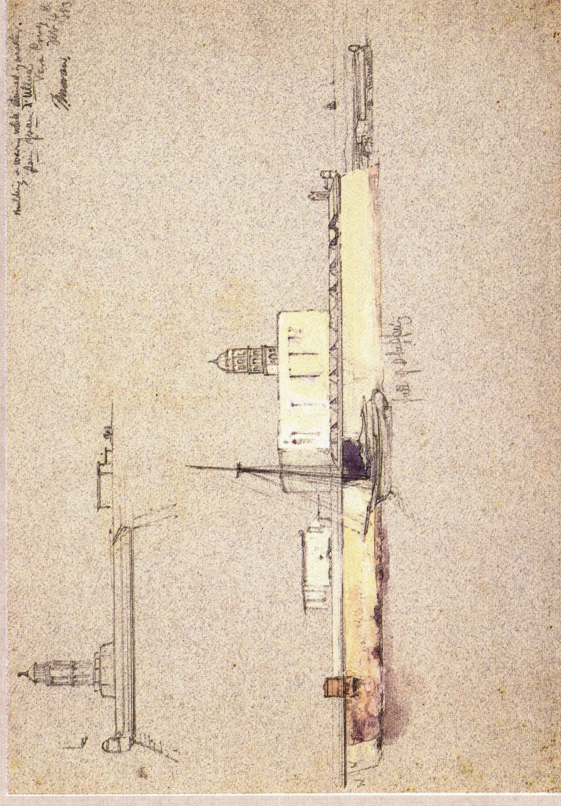
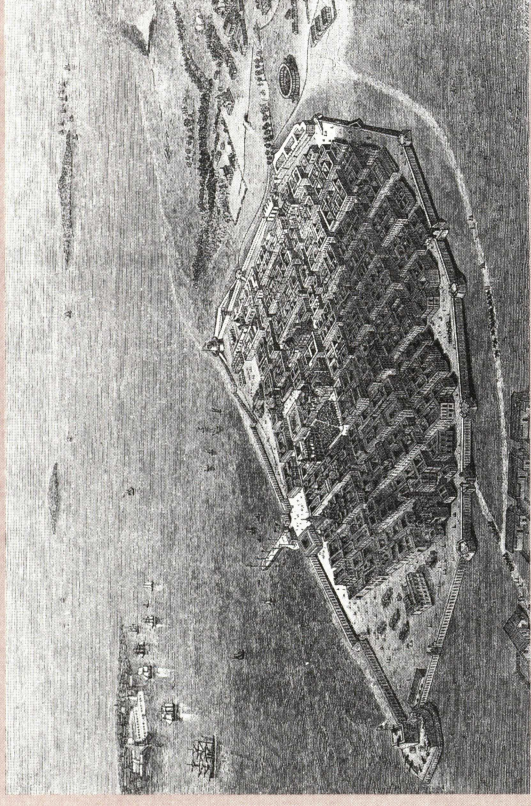
sketches in the city itself, due to the press of time.³ However, he was able to make six color sketches from the boat, two of which are at Gilcrease.

Made at sea, *Sunset, Gulf of Mexico (facing page)* is quite unusual, executed strictly in watercolor, without defining pencil line. The result is much more impressionistic than most of Moran's watercolor sketch work. *Sunset, Gulf of Mexico* illustrates the spectacular skies that Moran experienced while on board ship, and is one of the few sketches Moran made that exclude geological reference.

On February 3, Moran arrived at Vera Cruz, the site of the commencement of the Mexican National Railroad. While Moran made several sketches of the monumental ports, none was so informative as the bird's eye view of the town published in Baz's book. Moran's sketches singled out specific aspects.

Moran detailed the venerable island fortress off Vera Cruz, San Juan d'Ulloa in a precise pencil drawing overlaid with opaque yellow and white which shows the artist's interest in the architectural elements.

Subsequently, this interest does not appear in a painted version, which presents the fortress enshrouded by haze (left). Completed two years after Moran's visit, the



TOP, a "Birds-eye View of Vera Cruz, Thomas Brocklehurst, MEXICO TO-DAY, Plate III. BELOW, Moran's SAN JUAN D'ULLOA, VERA CRUZ, watercolor on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 0246.826.



CLOCKWISE: VERA CRUZ, oil on canvas, Gilcrease Museum, 0126.1109, IXTACHIHUATL AND POPOCATEPETL, pencil on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 1346.804, ORIZABA, pencil on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 1346.628, THE PEAK OF ORIZABA, FROM ESPERANZA, watercolor on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 0296.827.

painting *Vera Cruz* exhibits a spectacular sky, based not on Moran's experience in the harbor city but on an event that would occur later in the summer of 1883. On August 27 and 28 the volcanic island of Krakatoa erupted, spewing debris into the atmosphere and creating pyrotechnical sunsets that were especially obvious near the sea for years afterward. Moran's home on Long Island, New York was an especially suitable location to view the phenomenon that he often incorporated to heighten the sublime quality of his paintings.

Moran was pleased to leave the heat of Vera Cruz for the cooler mountainous region to the west. Ascending by rail 100 miles, he reached Orizaba, a town beautifully situated at the foot of Citlaltépetl, Mexico's tallest mountain. Orizaba was long a haven for travelers, and Moran, like many, remained there overnight to acclimate to the altitude. While waiting, Moran made several sketches. *Orizaba*, an energetic outline of the cathedral in the city square, indicates Moran's ability to succinctly capture the character of a site. Then, from the train Moran sketched *The Peak of Orizaba, From Esperanza*, using watercolor sparingly but effectively; pure white gouache on the snow-covered summit contrasts vividly with the pale blue sky.

Continuing from Orizaba, the 200-mile journey descending to Mexico City bored Moran. He observed in a letter to his wife, "Between Esperanza and the City of Mexico I saw nothing that was particularly striking as the country seems very barren and we passed no towns of any consequence." His arrival in the capital was a relief: "I wandered about the town and found it very interesting and pictorial. . . ."⁴ Moran sketched not only the town, but

Ixtachihuatl M.



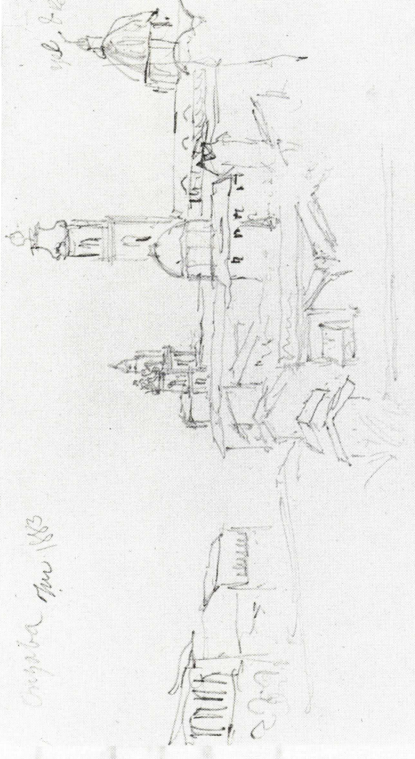
also the two majestic volcanoes, Popocatepetl and Ixtachihuatl, which tower above it. On a narrow strip of paper Moran sketched their profiles, again using opaque white to distinguish the snowy tops.

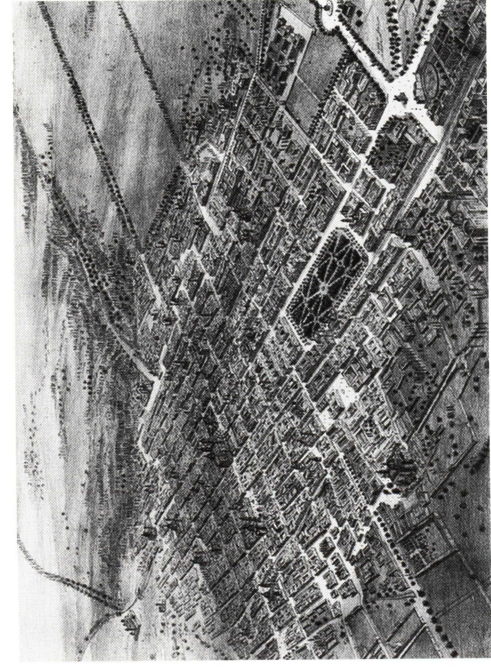
In Mexico City, Moran discovered more to intrigue him artistically than majestic mountains and impressive architecture. *Mexico (overleaf, at top)* is a beautiful color study of a modest dwelling situated on a canal. The humble motif may have appealed to Moran's sense of the picturesque. While Moran strove to imply the character of a place, he did not often supply specific information such as that available in Baz's lithographed layouts of Mexico City and Orizaba (*overleaf, below*).

Up to this point Moran had traveled from New York to Mexico City with both Renshaw and Hahn. Moran wrote to his wife,

Today Renshaw told us that he could not leave the city for some days yet and that we had better start westward to Toluca and some other place with an unpronounceable name near the mines that Mr. Hahn is going to inspect. The road is a branch of the Mexican National and was just opened to travel yesterday. . . . The place is about 200 miles west of Mexico City.⁵

Toluca, about forty miles west of Mexico City, rated a quick sketch from the train. Concentrating on the cone of the extinct volcano





of the same name, Moran barely acknowledged the presence of the town at its base. He apparently also had little artistic interest in the incredible engineering accomplishments that created the railroad trestle outside town (pages 46-47), illustrated in a contemporaneous photograph.

Moran next sketched at Maravatio, the town with the “unpronounceable name” which he found extremely inviting. He produced more sketches here than in any other town in Mexico, and it became the subject of finished paintings such as *Cathedral of Maravatio*. The composition of the sketch *Maravatio* (right, at top) is typical of Moran’s views of Mexican towns — buildings are profiled against mountains. Moran added broad washes of color to the landscape in the middle distance and background of this drawing, rendering the town in rather skeletal fashion. By contrast, Moran fully developed a detail of Spanish colonial architecture in *Sunday Morning, Maravatio* (page 54). He executed the cathedral entrance with extraordinary panache and his rendering of the robed, kneeling worshippers gathered in front of the cathedral is also remarkable for its painterly economy of means. Moran deftly captured the demeanor of the figures with a minimum of strokes.

After he was left alone in Maravatio, Moran had additional opportunities to encounter more modest



FACING PAGE, MEXICO, watercolor on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 0246.813. Below it are a panorama of the City of Mexico and a view of Orizaba in the State of Veracruz, with a mountain in the background, from Baz and Gallo’s *HISTORY OF THE MEXICAN RAILWAY*.

THIS PAGE, MARAVATIO, watercolor on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 0246.809, and OTO DE AGUA, SALTILLO, Gilcrease Museum, 0246.818.



SUNDAY MORNING,
MARAVATIO,
watercolor on paper,
Gilcrease Museum,
0246.812.

FACING PAGE,
MORELIA, MEXICO,
watercolor on paper,
Gilcrease Museum,
1346.805.

subjects. Renshaw had not arrived and Hahn had been sent on to inspect the Trojes silver mine. Within a few days, Moran received a request to join Renshaw at Acambaro, located thirty miles to the west, and at that time the end of the rail line. From there they would proceed to the town of Morelia by wagon and finally the Trojes silver mine.

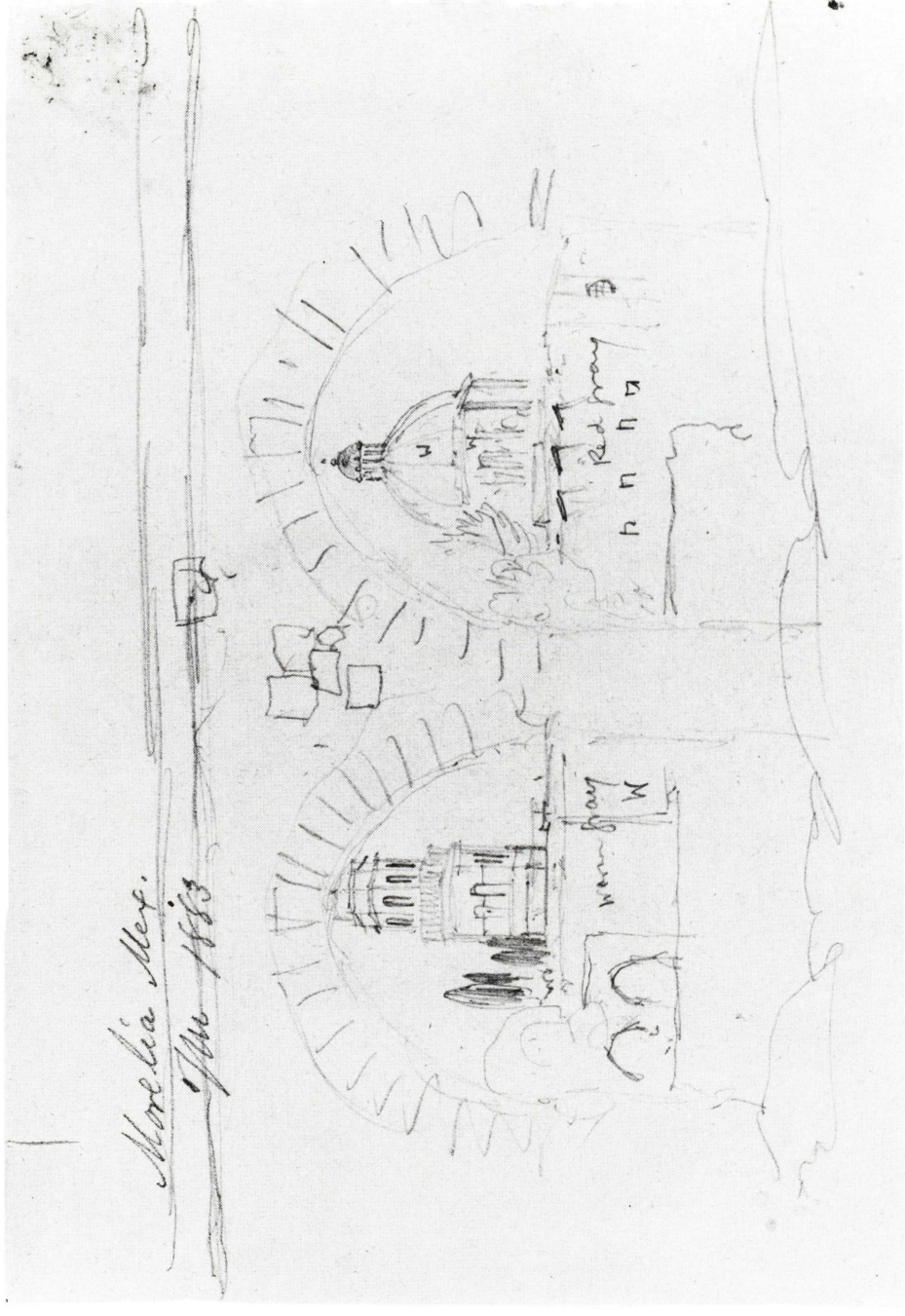
Morelia, another sixty miles of travel to the southwest, was a city that offered perhaps the most diverse scenery he had yet experienced. A quick pencil sketch (*below*) reveals the tasteful composition of two prominent buildings framed by arcs of the aqueduct. Outside of Morelia, Moran also sketched the vast Lake Cuitzeo, noting the great agricultural hacienda Andocutin at its border. Enormous farms numbered millions of acres of land under cultivation and the owners desired better commercial routes from the interior to the coasts. Once the rail lines came near them, the production increased and was opened to foreign markets. This was detrimental to local consumption; residents could not complete with

prices offered by foreign consumers.

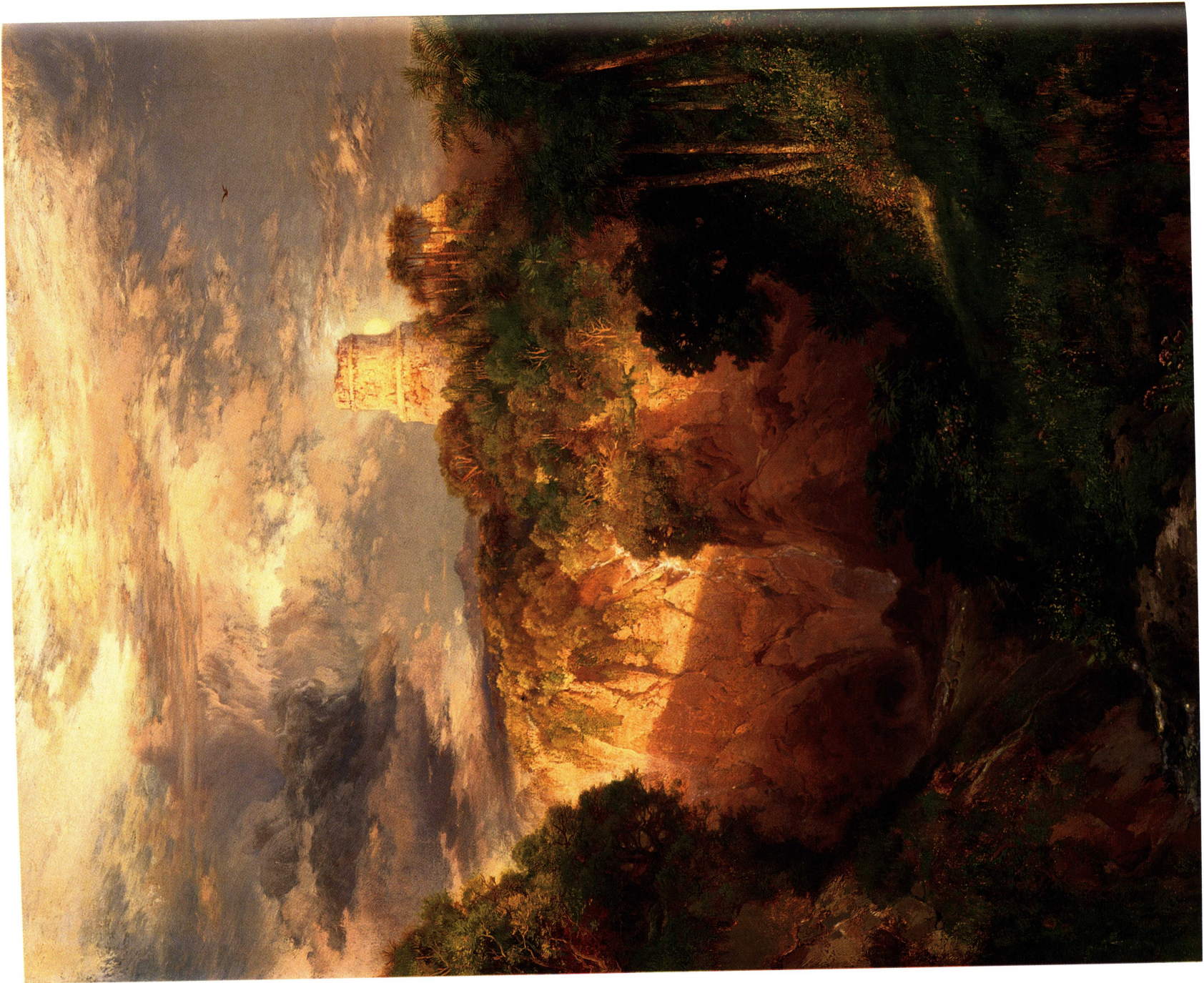
The Trojes silver mine, located in this region, was the goal of this part of the trip. In the late 19th century, silver was Mexico's principal export and Mexican mines produced nearly one-seventh of the world's supply. Access to the silver mines was the main objective of the railroad-builders.

Since Renshaw desired that Moran make documentary drawings of the *hacienda de beneficio*, the silver processing facility at Trojes, Moran made uncharacteristic, minutely detailed sketches. *The Trojes Silver Mine, Near Maravatío* shows the mining works and its outlying buildings, which hugged the side of a mountain. Moran faithfully detailed the buildings with an extremely sharp pencil. More characteristic of Moran are the freely rendered trees, clouds, and mountains.

Moran returned to Acambaro, then went north to the town of Celaya and on 400 miles to Saltillo by wagon. The construction of the rail line between Celaya and Saltillo

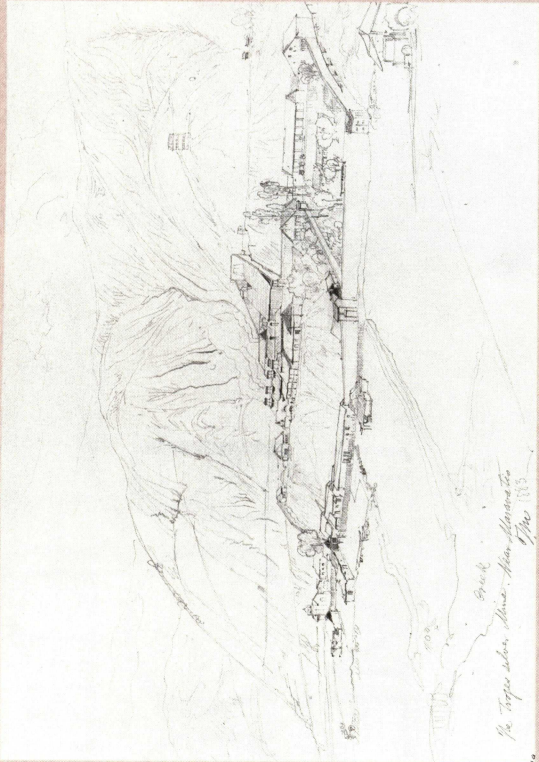


CORTÉS
TOWER, oil on
canvas,
Gilcrease
Museum,
0126.2346.



would not begin until 1886 and was completed two years later. He reached Saltillo, about fifty miles southwest of Monterrey, the second week in March. He sketched actively, making a series of drawings on the blue-fibered paper that he used extensively in Mexico. In Mexico, Moran made much greater use of opaque color — pinks and yellows, as well as white — than he had in earlier fieldworks, as evidenced by *Ojo de Agua, Saltillo*, (page 53). He may have used these brilliant colors to suggest the unrelenting strength of the desert sun. Touches of gouache contrast with the soft blue of the paper as well as the transparent color. In addition, he often applied gouache to adobe and stone buildings; perhaps he felt its opacity imparted a greater feeling of density and weight to these earthbound structures.

Moran made his final Mexican sketches of 1883 in Monterrey. The frieze of buildings disposed across the middle ground of *Monterrey, From the Hotel Roof* is resplendent in its dazzling pastel hues. Foreground elements are indifferently sketched; some are hastily washed with earth colors. In this composition, Moran seems to mimic actual vision, in which the eye focuses on one portion of a scene while elements at the periphery remain indistinct.

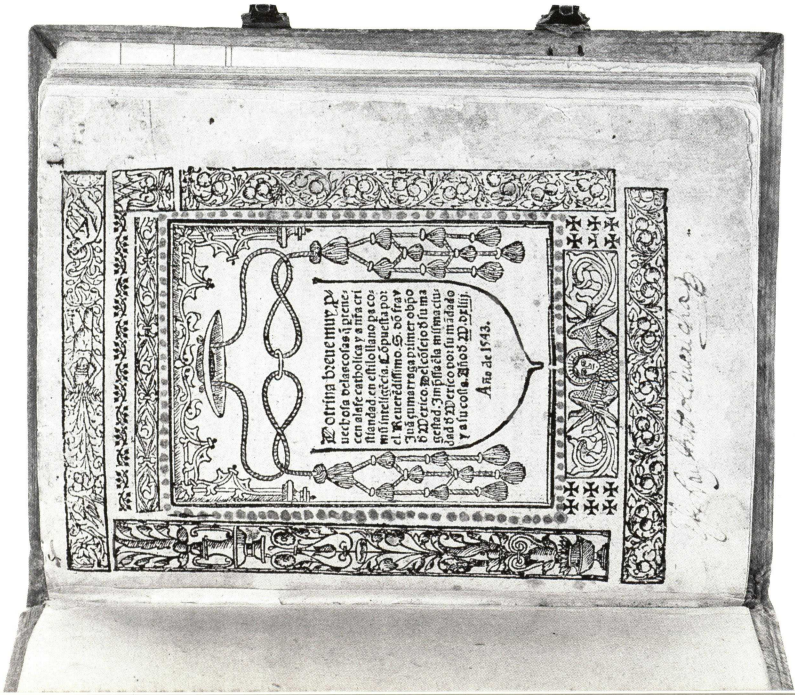


T O P , THE TROJES SILVER MINE NEAR MARAVATIO, pencil on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 1346.1033, BELOW, MONTERREY FROM THE HOTEL ROOF, watercolor on paper, Gilcrease Museum, 0246.819.

Though the last sketches record Monterrey, Moran traveled on to Laredo and probably Corpus Cristi by rail, and from there went home to New York by ship. He returned with his treasure of nearly 100 sketches, most of which he kept and used during the remaining forty years of his career. Although no promotional publication on Mexico seems to have resulted using Moran's images, he began work immediately on paintings such as *Cortés Tower, Mexico* (right). These radiant paintings recall the work of Moran's earliest artistic hero, the English painter J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851).

That this trip was important to Moran is revealed in one of his many handwritten autobiographical statements. These statements are short catalogues of the important events in Moran's life and he included the trip to Mexico among them, commenting that his trip "was exceedingly difficult but furnished . . . materials for a number of watercolor drawings & several oils of importance."⁶

1. Chicago: Knight and Leonard, 1882 and Chicago: R. Conelly and Sons, 1885, respectively.
2. Mexico: Gallo & Co. Editors, 1876.
3. Bassford, p. 61. Most of Moran's correspondence with his wife has not survived. Fortunately, much of it was published in this book.
4. Bassford, p. 65.
5. Bassford, p. 66.
6. Moran archives, 4026.3920.



DOCTRINA CRISTIANA BY JUAN DE ZUMARRAGA, PUBLISHED 1543-44.

Gilcrease Museum, 5345.822. This is believed to be the earliest extant volume published in the Western Hemisphere. Working with limited materials, the printer appears to have placed together odd pieces to form the border of the title page.

Although Juan Pablos was the printer, the work was credited to the house of Juan Cromberger. It is interesting to note that Mexico City is still identified as Tenochtitlán of Mexico.

THE PRINTED BOOK IN MEXICO

It is an extraordinary fact, and one that provides insight into Spanish colonial expansion, that there was a printing press at work in Mexico within fifty years of the first voyage of Columbus and within 100 years of the invention of movable type. In fact, printing arrived in Mexico before it was introduced into some European countries.

By the end of the 15th century, printed material made possible by the mechanized press spread the news of Columbus's landfall to the west, and brought an invasion of explorers and colonists into a world previously unknown to Europeans.

History of Printing

In the 15th century a rapidly growing number of literate Europeans set the stage for the invention of a book manufacturing method to replace expensive hand copying. When that invention came, it had a greater influence on the development of mankind than had any previous leap of technology. The key to the invention was movable type, the first form of mass production. Movable type consists of individual letters, each cast in metal, that can be configured in any combination for printing. The first volume printed with movable type, known as the Gutenberg Bible, was completed in 1455 or early 1456.

Because the casting of type was an exacting art, many

early printers were goldsmiths — men who were already highly skilled metalworkers. Early type was cut in imitation of handwriting, so the writing used by scribes became the basis for many type fonts. The printing press, which provided the means of transferring letters, was developed through a modification of the winepress.

In some fifty years, prior to which the intellectual world had held its recorded knowledge in manuscripts written by scribes and decorated by illuminators, the printed book emerged. Within those years, books acquired their modern format. Included in the format were the title page, numbered leaves, woodcut or metal engraved initial letters and ornaments, illustrations, and an index that provided page references to the text.

Early Printing in Spain

The Gothic style of printing, characterized by bold round type and large format, was used in Spain until the middle of the 16th century, far later than in other countries. Although there were regional variations, most Spanish books printed during the first quarter of the century bore heavy black woodcut initials. Borders, often made up of separate pieces that could be fitted together in a variety of ways, were popular. These decorative borders were used around woodcut illustrations and on title pages. Title pages were also focal points. A woodcut on the title page—finer than those in 15th century books—might depict a coat of arms, the author, or the hero of the book. As the century progressed, the composition of the title page gradually was altered. Information, including the name of the publisher as well as the name of a now separate printer, was recorded and less space remained for illustration.

After the first quarter of the century, Spanish books began to lose their distinctive national style and to decline in quality. While the number of printing presses and publications increased, the supply of good quality paper and the number of trained artisans did not grow rapidly enough to meet demand. The influences of other countries—Renaissance borders and ornaments—began to be reflected in Spanish books. By the end of the 16th century, volumes produced in Spain were quite similar to those produced throughout Europe.

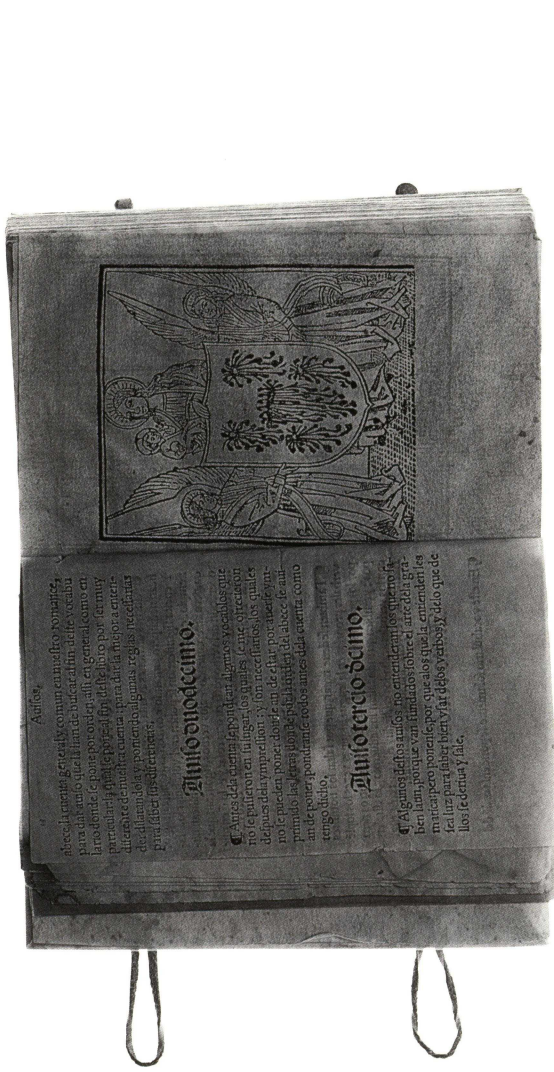


TRIPARTITO DEL CRISTIANISMO BY JUAN GERSON, published in 1544. Gilcrease

Museum, 5345.823. This decorative woodcut, “Adoration of the Virgin,” is the first illustration used in an American volume. The full page woodcut is unrelated to the text of the volume and was used to fill an otherwise blank page. It occupied the verso, or back, of the title page.

The use of a colophon (a body of information about the book and its manufacture sometimes appearing at the end of the book) dates to the middle ages, when a scribe would add the finishing stroke to a volume as a copy was completed. Early printers used this final paragraph to credit the writer, as well as record where, when, and by whom the volume was printed.

The book was published after the author's death in Mexico. Gerson, a prolific writer, worked primarily between 1363 and 1429. He was also the Chancellor of the University of Paris.



Printing in Mexico

The 16th century opened with Spain still seeking a passage to the Orient and exploiting newly acquired island colonies. Within a few years both interests were eclipsed by the conquests of Mexico and Peru, and books throughout Europe soon related tales of fabulous wealth and wonders of America.

The first two printing presses in the Western Hemisphere were established by the Spanish in Mexico by 1539 and in Peru by 1584 — well before colonization by other European nations. It would be another 100 years before the first press in the English colonies began operation in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1639.

Printing in Mexico was initiated not to document the growth of a Spanish empire, but in response to religious motivation. Although not the primary reason for the American conquest, one of its major goals became the conversion of native populations to Christianity. Seven hundred years of conflict with invading Moors established in Spain an overwhelming zeal for winning Christian converts. The program of conversion necessitated numerous publications such as catechisms, small primers, and grammars in native languages.

The name first associated with printing in the Spanish colony of Mexico is Esteban Martín. A memorial dated 1533-1534, just fifteen years after the Hernán Cortés's conquest of Mexico, mentions Martín as a printer. An enigmatic figure, Martín may have arrived in Mexico in 1532. Little is definitely known about him and none of his work is known to have survived.



SPECULUM CONIUGIORUM BY ALONSO DE LA VERACRUZ, PUBLISHED IN 1556. Gilcrease Museum, 3245.241. Veracruz, an Augustinian priest who arrived in Mexico in 1536, was one of the most prolific writers of the period. Veracruz founded the College of San Pablo and was a Professor of Arts at the University of Mexico. While the printing press operated by Juan Pablos reached Mexico by request of a high official of the Church, the output of the press was not entirely ecclesiastical. The *Speculum Coniugiorum*, which included a treatise on marriage by Alonso de la Veracruz, was printed in 1556; the following year Veracruz authored a work on physical science. Each volume by the celebrated scholar was the first of its kind in the Western Hemisphere.

By 1539 the establishment of printing in Mexico is somewhat better documented. The Archbishop of Mexico, Juan Zumárraga, requested the publication of a catechism in Spanish and the native language of Nahuatl to assist in the conversion of the endemic population of Mexico. Juan Cromberger, of German origin and the foremost printer in Seville, was given the task. The difficulties, however, of printing in an unknown language soon became evident.

Cromberger, with the encouragement of Zumárraga and the Viceroy of Mexico, Don Antonio de Mendoza, then elected to establish a printing house in Mexico City. Juan Pablos (originally Giovanni Paoli), an Italian printer working in Seville, was selected to operate the new press.

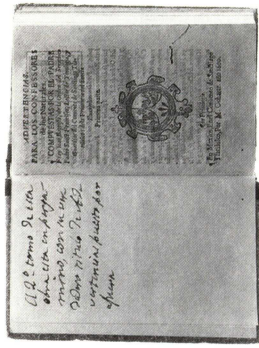
The legal document of June 12, 1539, between Cromberger and Pablos, which sets out the rather harsh terms of the contract, has been preserved. According to the agreement, Pablos was to act as manager and printer for Cromberger for a term of ten years. During that period, Pablos and his wife would receive only basic living expenses and at the end of the term a settlement was to be made in which Pablos was to receive one-fifth of the net profits. Fortunately for Pablos, Cromberger died before the expiration of the contract. Pablos continued the operation of the press—later under his own name—and remained to print thirty-seven extant books before his death in 1560.

IN QUO QUATVOR PASSIONES CHRISTI DOMINI BY FRAY JUAN NAVARRO, published in 1604. Gilcrease Museum, 5346.824. Father Navarro set the four passions of Christ to music. The text is taken from the four Gospels and includes excerpts from Lamentations. This example of early 17th-century music, printed in Latin, was for liturgical use. It was probably used in special services during Lent.

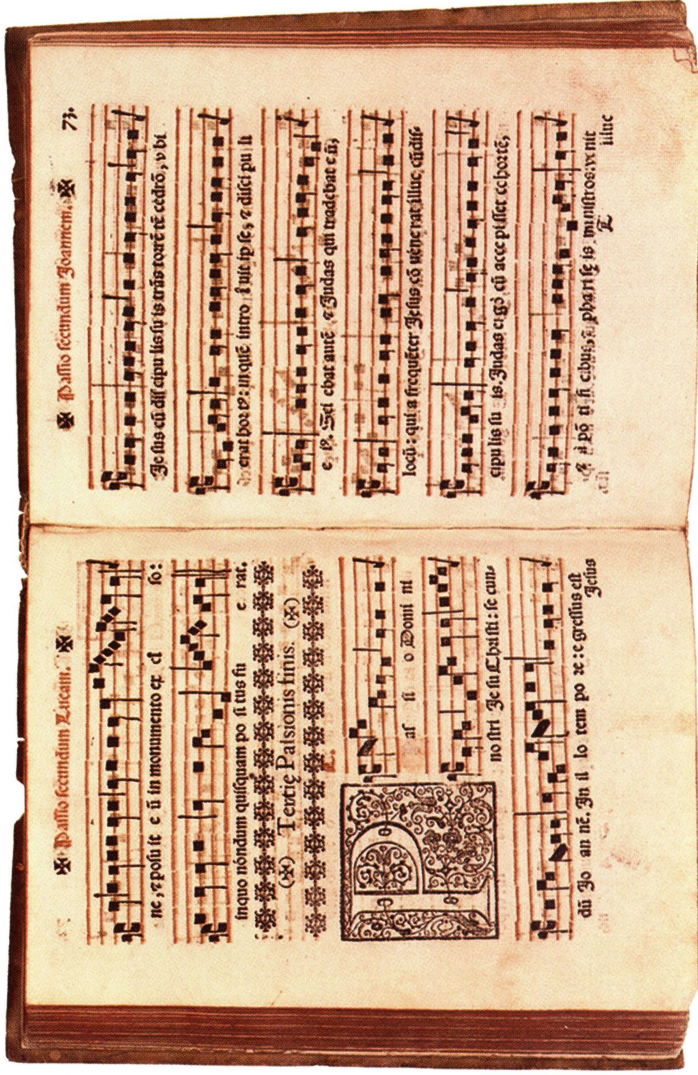


VOCABULARIO BY ALONSO DE MOLINA, published in 1555. Gilcrease Museum, 4945.424. Molina arrived in Mexico as a child. He soon learned several native languages, and as a member of the order of St. Francis, devoted his life to increasing knowledge of the languages of the region.

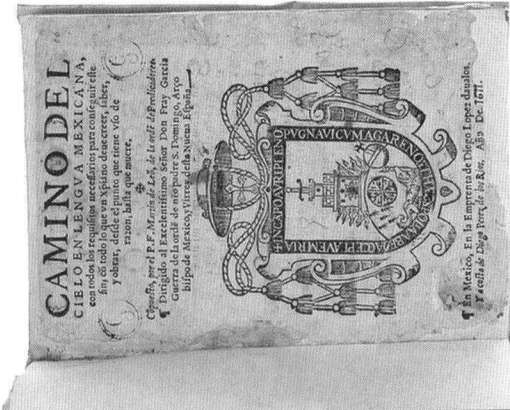
This binding is typical of early Mexican work. Made of sheepskin, it was inexpensive, durable and utilitarian instead of decorative.



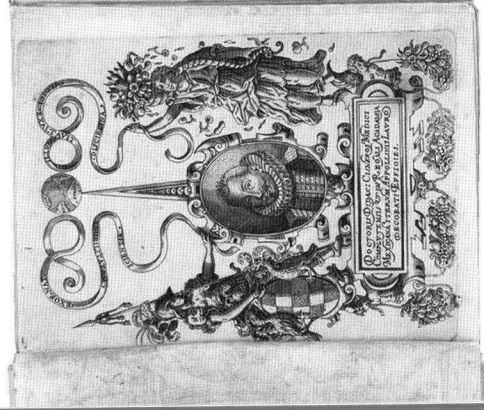
ADVERTENCIAS BY FRAY IOAN BAPTISTA, published in 1600. Two volumes. Gilcrease Museum, 5346.828 and 5346.829. In 1563, after Juan Pablos died, control of Mexico's first press passed to his son-in-law, Pedro de Ocharte. In 1572, Ocharte was brought before the Inquisition. The proceedings, which lasted for seven years, probably related to the printer's French nationality and were aggravated by trade rivalry.



CAMINO DEL CIELO EN LENGVA
MEXICANA BY MARTIN DE
LEON, published in 1611.
Gilcrease Museum, 5346.825.
Missionary priests from Spain
arrived in the Western
Hemisphere soon after
conquest. The Franciscans were
first, followed by the
Dominicans, the Augustinians,
and the Jesuits. An important
accomplishment of
missionaries was the systematic
study of many of the native
languages and the production
of books in these languages
from which local population
could be instructed.



SITIO NATVRALEZA Y
PROPIEDAD DES, DE LA CIUDAD
DE MEXICO, published in
1618. Gilcrease Museum,
2546.3525. The University of
Mexico was created by royal
decree in 1551 and opened two
years later. The University
curriculum was dominated by
theology, but also included
law, medicine and Indian
languages. Universities became
the intellectual centers of
colonial life and by the end of
the period, there were about
twenty-five established within
the Spanish colonies.



Many but not all of the volumes are religious in content. Others are scientific books printed for the newly founded University of Mexico. Both types of publications served local needs. Small primers, pamphlets really, believed to have been the first publications in Mexico, were prepared for the religious training of the native inhabitants and used until worn out. A fragment remains of *Manual de Adultos*, which carries the date 13 December 1540. The colophon reads: "In the great city of Mexico by order of the reverend bishops of New Spain, and at their expense in the house of Juan Cromberger."

By 1544, there is no uncertainty about four volumes that came from the first Mexican press. Each is a sizable book and all are of a religious nature. They are the *Doctrina Cristiana* of Don Fray Juan Zumárraga, the *Tripartito Del Christianissimo* of Sr. Juan Gerson, the *Compendio Breve* of Dionisio Richel, and the *Doctrina Cristiana* of Friar Pedro Córdoba.

Early Mexican Books

In establishing a printing house in Mexico, the Spanish transplanted many traditional materials into New Spain. For several centuries, printers in Mexico and South America continued to use the same paper. It was a very white, thin, opaque and durable product primarily made in Spain (although paper was occasionally imported from Italy or Holland). The application of large heavy-faced type in strong, black ink altered the surface of the paper, making it appear rough.

Pablos brought from Spain a supply of semi-Gothic rounded letters, also characteristic of Spanish printing of the 16th century. These he utilized for ten years. In 1550 Pablos employed a type founder from Seville, Antonio de Espinosa. Espinosa made new types and thereby improved the quality of Pablos's productions. During the years that Espinosa worked for Pablos, the variety and appeal of the letters used in Mexican printing greatly increased. The heavy, rounded Gothic letters were supplemented by several sizes and faces of roman and italic letters. At this time, Mexican books achieved a finer character of design and became more ornamental.

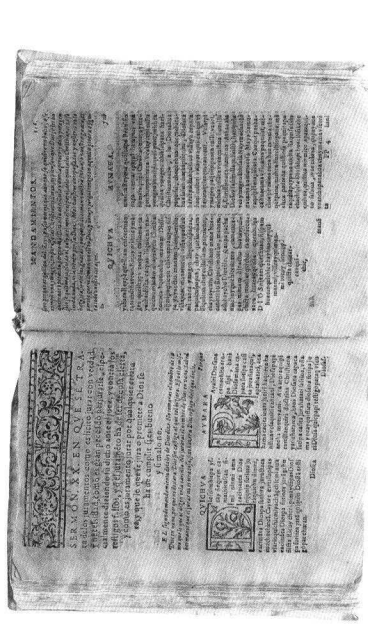
Illustrations were extremely popular in early Mexican volumes. Title pages were designed to accommodate the use of woodcuts and any blank pages were decorated with large images. In keeping with this convention, printers

maintained a supply of woodcuts of Madonnas, saints and devotional subjects to be used in books intended for popular reading.

Book bindings, however, remained utilitarian. Mexican bindings, as had the earlier Spanish, reflected the belief that a binding was to protect, not decorate, a volume. Simple coverings, lightweight and flexible, were made of vellum, from sheep skin. This skin was cheaper to process than leather and more durable, due to the retention of natural oils.

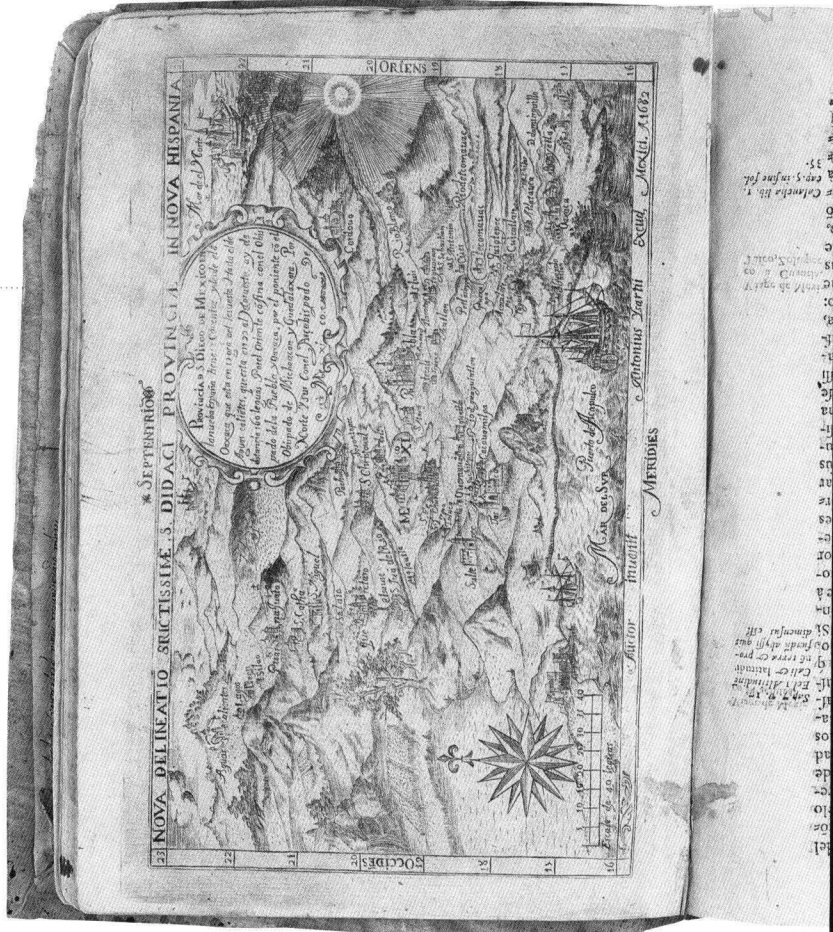
Until 1559, Juan Pablos remained the only printer in Mexico. But in that year Antonio de Espinosa, his former employee, secured permission to open a rival press. Then in 1560 Pablos died and was succeeded by his son-in-law, Pedro de Ocharte, a Frenchman. As a result of their industry, printing in Mexico continued to increase, so that Mexico became the largest center of printing in Spanish America with seven presses in operation.

Throughout the colonial period, Spain placed stringent legal restrictions on all importations, including books, into the colonies. Manuscripts offered for publication were also subjected to rigid censorship, which held colonial literature to specific channels. Volumes describing the physical geography of the Western Hemisphere were approved, if they did not divulge information that might be advantageous to Spain's many enemies. Grammatical works written in or concerning

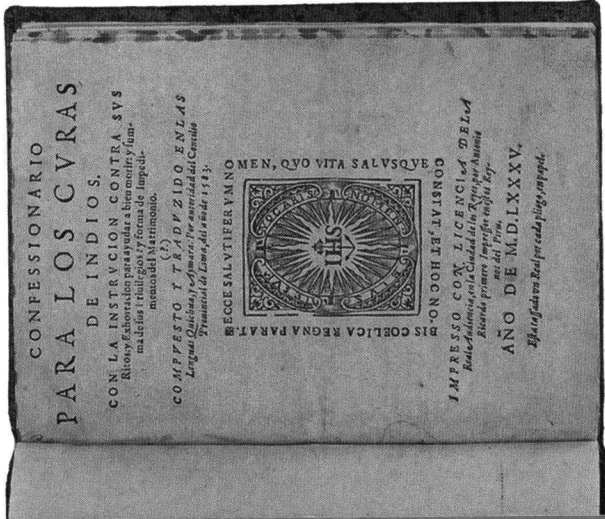


TERCERO CATHECISMO Y EXPOSICION DE LA DOCTRINA
CHRISTIANA POR SERMONES, published in 1585. Gilcrease
Museum, 5355.8256. Printed by Antonio Ricardo, this is probably
the first complete volume produced in South America.
Publication was interrupted to print a brief royal proclamation
ordering a change in the calendar.

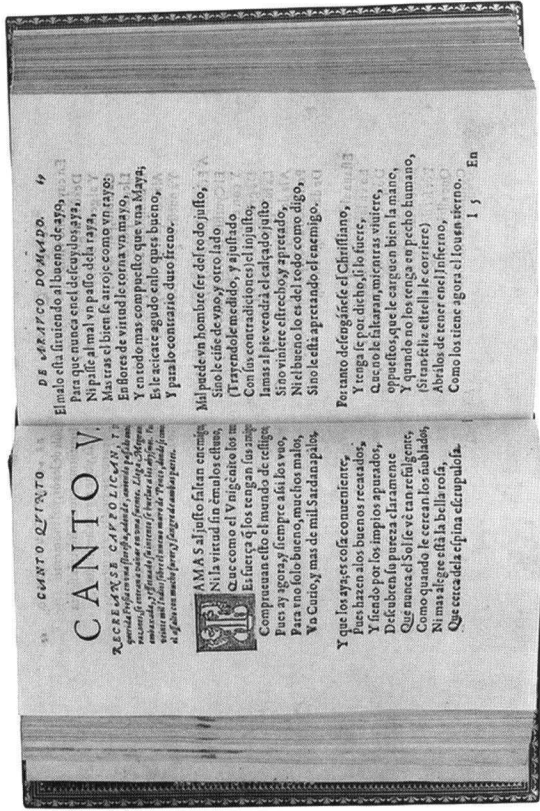
CHRONICA DE LA SANTA PROVINCIA DE SAN DIEGO DE MEXICO
BY BALTHASAR MEDINA, published in 1682. Gilcrease Museum,
2546.1091. This map of the province of San Diego is believed to
be the earliest copperplate engraving done in Mexico. The
Pacific coast port of Acapulco is at the bottom of the map and
the Gulf of Mexico is included at the top right.



PRIMERA PARTE DE ARAUCO DOMADO BY PEDRO DE OÑA, published in 1596. Gilcrease Museum, 2455.151. Oña's writing is of historical importance. Details are provided of the Araucanian wars, which took place during the conquest and colonization of Chili, that are not found in other sources. The work labels Englishman Sir Francis Drake and his followers as pirates. Considered the first epic poem written in South America, *Arauco Domado* was composed by the native poet Pedro de Oña. The lyricism and special scheme of rhyming verses within octaves are noteworthy. Although this volume is entitled as the first part, a second never appeared.



CONFESIONARIO PARA LOS CURAS DE INDIOS, published in 1585. Gilcrease Museum, 5355.827. This Catechism is believed to be the second volume printed in "The City of the Kings" — Lima. It was probably prepared by Jesuit teachers, and the text is in the native languages of Aymara and Quichua.



native languages were also approved by the censors. Legal documents relating to the laws of the Indies, as well as reports and petitions were printed. Religious works, including biographies of important figures within the Church, and mystical writings on the saints received approval.

In spite of Spain's numerous restrictions, more than 1,700 works were printed in Mexico City between the establishment of the press in 1539 and the end of the 17th century. Also by the end of the 17th century, the presses in Lima produced about 700 works after the first press was founded in 1584. Despite the strong connection to Spain, international influences were still present in New Spain. A printer of German origin contracted with a printer of Italian origin to operate the first press in Mexico. The first printer in South America was also a man of Italian origin. And one of the first four books printed in the Western Hemisphere was written by a Frenchman. This cultural diversity emphasizes that printing in the New Spain was not just the replication of earlier Spanish printing and possessed an international character. The transplanted society required volumes concerning issues relevant to the colonies. The early printers responded by producing works with elements of great decorative quality as well as establishing the art of bookmaking in the Western Hemisphere.

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