

Las Artes de México
January 30 – April 11, 2010
Woodson Art Museum

When delving into Mexican history something quickly becomes apparent – there is so much!

Given Mexico's long, rich, and diverse history, *Las Artes de México* presents an exciting dilemma: what to focus on?

This pre-visit packet equips teachers with a classroom introduction, online resources list, and a selection of informational sheets.

If you'd like additional guidance preparing your students for their upcoming visit or if you'd like to schedule a bilingual visit, please contact Erin Narloch, curator of education, at enarloch@lywam.org or 715.845.7010.

Las Artes de Mexico Classroom Introduction

Mexican History

Use the talking points below to introduce concepts to students.

- The region of modern day Mexico has been home to highly developed cultures and urban civilization for over 4,500 years.
- The story begins with the Olmec culture in the Preclassic period (2500 BC – 300 AD).
- The Classic period that followed (300 AD – 900 AD) was the time of Teotihuacan and the Mayas.
- In the militaristic Postclassic period (900 – 1521 AD), the Toltec and Aztec empires rose.
- The Spanish arrived in 1517. Within a few years they overcame the Aztec and established Nueva España, which would continue for the next 300 years.
- Mexico was born in 1821, at the end of an eleven-year struggle for independence from Spain.
- Following nearly a century with three dominating political leaders (Antonio Lopez de Santa Anne, Benito Juarez, and Porfiro Diaz), the Great Revolution of 1910 began as a revolt to dispose Diaz and redistribute the country's wealth and land.
- After seven years of war and uprising, and more than 1.5 million casualties, a new Mexican constitution was adopted in 1917.

Mesoamerica Influences

- Is a region that extends from present day Mexico into Central America.
- Mesoamerica encompasses a variety of native tribes and nations (including the Maya, Aztecs, and Incas).
- The Spanish colonization forever changed Mesoamerica's cultural landscape, creating a new landscape that grew out of Indian and Spanish traditions
- Technologies, language, art, music, plants, animals, and religion from diverse cultural and historic roots (including Native Mesoamericans) combine in Mexico today.

Las Artes de Mexico **Pre-Visit Online Resources**

Maya and Aztec Civilizations

Yale Peabody Museum *Las Artes de Mexico* Curriculum PDF

http://www.peabody.yale.edu/education/pdfs/ypm_LasArtesdeMexico.pdf

Downloadable PDF of high school curriculum for *Las Artes de Mexico*.

The Sport of Life and Death: The Mesoamerican Ballgame

<http://www.ballgame.org/>

An online journey into the ancient spectacle of athletes and gods. Interactive website for students with a classroom connection component.

Discovery Education Ancient American Artifacts Lesson Plan

<http://school.discoveryeducation.com/lessonplans/programs/ancientartifacts/>

Complete lesson plan focusing on artifacts from the Mayas, the Aztecs, and Incas.

Art World: Resources for Teaching in World Art: Americas

http://artworld.uea.ac.uk/teaching_modules/americas/welcome.html

Background material on early American art and its meaning.

America's Stone Age Explorers

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/stoneage/>

The companion website for a NOVA program exploring the arrival of the first people into the Americas as well as the tools they used to make their life there.

Lost King of the Maya Teacher's Guide

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/teachers/programs/2804_maya.html

The companion website for a NOVA program includes classroom activities, ideas from teachers, and an interactive section for students.

The Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya

<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2004/maya/lifeatcourt.htm>

A National Gallery of Art exploration of the Maya culture and how we have developed our knowledge of it through art, architecture and the heritage of modern Maya people. Examine Maya artworks to draw conclusions about their seasons, gods, foods, roles of women, and government.

World Myths and Legends

<http://www.artsmia.org/world-myths>

World myths organized by theme (creation myths, god myths, hero myths and myths with animals) or by culture (African, ancient American, Greek and Roman, Asian, and Native American) using artworks at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Field Museum All About Chocolate: History of Chocolate

http://www.fieldmuseum.org/Chocolate/history_intro.html

Introduction materials exploring chocolate's rich history, which started with the Maya and Aztec.

Mexican Masks and Celebrations

Paper Mache Masks – Three Lessons

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/larry-mask.htm>

Three lesson plans that explore mask making. Great resource links included.

Crayola Mexican Mask Lesson Plan

<http://www.crayola.com/lesson-plans/detail/mexican-masks-lesson-plan/>

Step-by-step lesson plan for grades 4 – 12.

4 2 Explore Masks: Resource Site

<http://42explore.com/mask.htm>

A complete resource website focusing on masks, including activities, lesson plans, and web quests on masks of the ancient and modern worlds, masks throughout various cultures, and the meanings of masks.

Social Realism: Mexican Painters

José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera: The Murals

http://www.mamfa.com/exh/oroz1996/hh_article.htm

Unpublished lecture given by Hayden Herrera on 11/16/90 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Social Realism VS Socialist Realism

<http://www.huntfor.com/arthistory/C20th/socrealism.htm>

Introductory essay on the difference between the two movements.

Mexican Art-at-Large

Texas Council for the Humanities

Humanities-Interactive Border Studies – Mexico: Splendor of Thirty Centuries

<http://www.humanities-interactive.org/splendors/index.html?collectionVar=BorderStudiesStop&pageVar=1>

Interactive website exploring the histories and cultures of people dwelling in the lands along America's borders.

The following materials are provided courtesy of the Gilcrease Museum's Education Department. Artworks comprising *Las Artes de México* come from the Gilcrease Museum's collection.

Animal Glyphs

Animal glyphs were used by ancient Mayan writers to symbolize many deities and concepts. When certain animals were inscribed next to or as a headdress for a human figure, they provided information about that person.

Toads and frogs represented gods linked with agriculture and the planting of seeds. Their croaking was believed to be a prediction of the coming of rains. Mayans also believed that rubbing one's hands over the skin of a toad was the best way to become a good tortilla maker, since the animal's belly was probably full of grain.



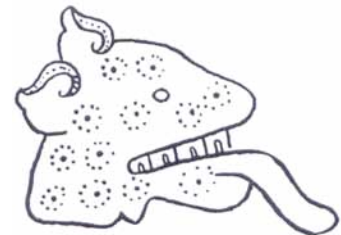
Dogs were used as the symbol of death and were thought to be the bearers of lightning. When a dog's master died, the animal was left at the grave to serve as a guard and companion to guide the spirit of the dead to its home in the underworld.



Snakes were one of the most common and important animals to the Mayans. Those gods who were thought to have created the civilization, built the cities, caused the rains, and controlled both night and day were shown accompanied by a snake.



The most important animal to this culture was the ferocious **jaguar**. When it appeared in temple, altar and throne carvings it symbolized strength and courage. The Mayans believed that, at sunset, the sun traveled through the underworld and transformed itself from the sun god into the jaguar god.



Mayan Months

The Mayan calendar consisted of eighteen months. At the end of the last month was a period of five days, called Uayeb, which was considered a time of bad luck. Several of the month names have corresponding colors, or a god who was considered patron of the particular month.

Pop **Mayan month 1**

The word Pop means “straw mat” in almost all Maya languages and dialects. A mat pattern is suggested in the braided symbol. Another meaning is “chief” because the mat was a symbol of authority. Patron deity was the jaguar. It is thought this month began the Maya year, coinciding with our month of July.



Uo **Mayan month 2**

This glyph is made up of symbols for planetary bands and the color black. Patron deity is the jaguar god of the underworld, known as the night sun and associated with the number 7.

Zip **Mayan month 3**

Zip is the name of the deer god who is the patron deity for this month. The symbolic glyph looks similar to the month Uo but is combined with the picture image for red. An important festival in honor of the gods of hunting was held during this month.



Zotz **Mayan month 4**

The leaf-nosed bat is represented by this glyph as well as the word zotz. There is a possibility the word also carried the meaning of winter or that period when the days are shortest. Patron deity is the mythical Xoc fish.





TZEC

Tzec Mayan month 5

The glyph represents the earth and sky. Beekeepers held a festival in honor of the gods of the bees, especially the god Hobnil, during this time. Patron deity is the youthful god of the number 11.



XUL

Xul Mayan month 6

The glyph head of an animal is generally recognized as a dog. Its face markings are similar to Xolotl, the Mexican canine god who led the sun into the underworld each evening. Patron deity has not yet been identified.

Yaxkin Mayan month 7

Yaxin means “new sun” or “green sun” or “first sun” or “dry season” depending on how it is used. Most likely it is the name applied to the morning sun, who, refreshed by the sacrifices offered to him at night, emerges from the underworld with renewed energy. Patron deity is the sun god, also associated with the number 4.



YAXKIN



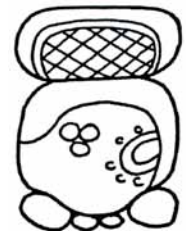
MOL

Mol Mayan month 8

This symbol surrounded by small circles is identified with jade or water. It is highly probable the month name refers to the gathering of clouds or rain. In Mol, Utensils were painted the sacred color of blue, and all children were given nine light blows on the back of their hands to help them become skillful in their trades.

Ch'en Mayan month 9

This glyph symbolizes rain storms, the color black, and the direction west. Ch'en, in nearly all Maya languages, signifies a hole in the ground such as a cave or well and sometimes means the opposite, such as a rock or crag that pushes out of the ground. It was thought the moon retired to a well when it disappeared from sight. Patron deity is the moon goddess.



CH'EN



Yax Mayan month 10

The Venus monster, who is also the patron deity for this month, is represented in the glyph head symbol. Yax means new and strong and is the color word for green. Its glyph may also symbolize the direction south.



Zac Mayan month 11

Zac is the color name for white. The glyph is that of a frog or toad deity, which is also the month's patron. There is evidence that this god represented a constellation or planet. When it appears in a planetary band inscription, the frog symbolizes the direction north.

Ceh Mayan month 12

Ceh is the color name for red. The word also means deer. It is possible there is some connection with a hunting ceremony held during this time. When it appears in a planetary inscription, the deer is part of the "sunrise" glyph representing the eastern sky. Patron deity is the sky god.



Mac Mayan month 13

The main element in this glyph is the head of the Xoc fish, meaning "count." The word mac means "to enclose" or "to cover." At the end of this month, 260 days of the year have been counted – the length of the sacred almanac, which is a special time period within the 365-day year. Patron deity is the god associated with the number 3 and with rain.

Kankin Mayan month 14

The symbolic form for this month is represented either as a dog or certain other recorded glyph associated with death or the underworld. Patron deity is most likely the earth monster.





MUAN

Muan Mayan month 15

This glyph of the Moan bird, with a prominent beaked nose, is connected with vegetation, new growth and rain. In Yucatec, moan or muan means clouds and drizzle. It is also the name of the screech owl. It is thought by some that muan represents the 13 layers of clouds, which were said to compose the sky. Patron deity is the god of rain and clouds.

Pax Mayan month 16

This glyph features the tun sign, meaning jade or water, with stalks growing from its center. It is suggested the image represents vegetation nourished by water. Patron deity is a cat with jaguar-like features that are similar to those of the sun god but symbolize the night sun. In Pax, warriors held their ceremonies in the temple of Cit-Chac-Coh, meaning “great puma.”



PAX

Kayab Mayan month 17

The glyph is the head of a tortoise or turtle with a cross in the eye symbolizing water and also a sign for yellow. In Maya legend, the turtle is connected to the sun because when the sun fled the moon each day, he escaped destruction by putting on the shell of a turtle. Patron guardian is the young moon, earth and maize deity who is also the goddess of childbirth and the number 1.



KAYAB



CUMKU

Cumku Mayan month 18

This glyph consists of two images: the bottom representing ripe maize, and the top, with its four dots representing a section of a conch shell, symbolizing the earth and the underworld. The word cumku means oven or corn bin. Patron deity is a sky dragon in the form of a crocodile.

Who are the Huichols?

The Huichol Indians are native to the Sierra Madre region of Nayarit and Jalisco, Mexico. They live together in small, secluded communities. Corn, which they grow themselves, is the main part of their diet, although some members of the community might own cows for milk and cheese.

Huichol Symbolism

Find the Huichol Nearika (Yarn Painting) in the exhibition (<http://www.lywam.org/exhibitions/imagepop.cfm?image=Yarn%20Painting.jpg>) and look for some of the symbols on this page. Use the meanings to understand the stories presented in the paintings.

Caves are special places used by shamans for rituals and ceremonies. The secluded spot separates the shaman from the outside world.



Candles provide light, the sacred gift of the sun and fire deities. They are used as offerings.



Fire provides light and warmth. The fire deity is honored in all Huichol religious ceremonies. Fire is considered a sacred blessing from the gods.



Healing Wands are part of each shaman's medicine basket. The feathers are from eagles and hawks. Wands are also used in rain making ceremonies.



Father Sun is master of the heavens, bringing light and warmth. The Sun provides abundant crops and power.



Shamans are religious leaders who are in contact with the spirit world. They lead ceremonies to bring good health, strong crops and successful hunts.



Spirit Guides assist younger shamans as they gain their religious knowledge. They are teachers and helpers. Spirit guides often take the form of deer-people.



Prayer Arrows are important ceremonial objects that are used to gain blessings from the deities. They are also used to express gratitude to the gods.



Peyote is important in many Huichol religious ceremonies. This cactus appears in almost all Huichol yarn paintings. Peyote symbolizes life, health and success. Peyote is a source of power for the shamans.



Musical Instruments

Music in Mexico is diverse and reflects the various indigenous and post-conquest cultures of the peoples from many regions. Musical instruments are an important part of these traditions. Two instruments that were played in ancient times and are still used in contemporary Mexican music are the flute (or whistle) and the drum.

Flutes may be made from reed, such as those used by the Tarahumara and the Voladores. Flutes may also be made of clay, as in the Mayan tradition.



Drums also vary according to region or cultural tradition. The Tarahumara drum is made of wood and boar's skin. The design, made with earth pigment, represents a star. In fact, all such Tarahumara drums contain a star design, which varies from drum to drum. The Teponaztli, or Aztec horizontal drum, is sometimes called a tongue drum because the sound is produced by striking the carved "tongues" on the top of the drum. In ancient times, the sticks used to strike a teponaztli were rubber-tipped. Each horizontal drum is decorated with either figurative or abstract carving.



Rattles and Rasps are instruments of pre-conquest origin, which are recognizable in contemporary Latin music played throughout the world. Rattles were originally made from gourds, wood or moth cocoons. Both moth cocoon rattles and rasps are used in the deer dance of the Yaqui Indians of Mexico and the United States.



Music and Dance

Dances are a major part of Mexican festivals, religious ceremonies and national holidays. Music accompanies a wide variety of dances in which colorful costumes are worn. Some dances may be performed on several occasions throughout the year. Traveling dance troupes such as the Ballet Folklórico demonstrate Mexican dances in other countries.

Danza de la Bruja (Dance of the Sorceress) from the state of Veracruz.



Music and Masks

Mexican masks are part of costumes. Costumes are worn by dancers who portray historical or mythical figures during festivals. The figure represented is crucial to understanding the meaning of each dance. Music at festivals often incorporates both indigenous and Hispanic elements. Masks are but one part of the rich dance celebration. Music, drama, history and mythology provide the context for the use of Mexican masks.

Danza de los Vietos (Dance of the old men) from the state of Michoacan.



Tigre (Spanish for Jaguar) masks may represent a continuation of the symbolic association of jaguars with warfare, which predates European contact. The Dance of the Tigre continues today as a means of invoking supernatural protection from real jaguars and to insure abundant crops.



Masked Carnival dancers in Mexico City. These types of masks are used in a variety of ceremonies and festivals throughout the year.



Textiles

Contemporary Maya textile designs take four basic forms: diamonds, which symbolize the earth and sky as a unity; undulating forms, like snakes, which symbolize the fertile earth; shapes with three vertical lines, which symbolize the foundation of the world, the community, and its history; and representational figures, such as toads and patron saints.

At the heart of the diamond is a butterfly, symbol of the sun and center of the Maya universe. Diamond designs may cover the entire surface of a garment, form only the border, or be cut in half to form a horizontal band along the bottom of brocade.

Modern Mayan Weaving

Throughout the centuries, the Maya have maintained their cultural integrity. They still live within the rhythm of the seasons, continuing the annual round of celebrations. In this culture, the tools and materials with which clothes are made are considered holy, along with the designs that adorn them.

The costume of each village strengthens communal solidarity and beliefs. Although the textiles within each community may appear uniform at first glance, each piece expresses the weaver's personal vision of the world and her place in it. Women weave, as they have since the beginning of time, as a sacred duty, and the designs they weave sustain the Maya history.

The treadle loom, also called the foot loom or upright loom, was introduced into Mexico by the Spanish. It is usually operated by men rather than women in small, family-run workshops in towns. Such looms are strung with wool rather than cotton and are used to produce larger and heavier pieces of fabric for clothing and blankets. The treadle loom was especially popular in the northern part of Mexico, around the area of Saltillo, Coahuila, and is believed to have given rise to the Saltillo serapes, which were known for their bright patterns.

Weaving in Oaxaca

The village of Teotitlán de Valle is located in a high mountain valley in the state of Oaxaca. The town is famous for the weavings produced by modern Zapotec Indians. Traditional Indian designs and dyes have been combined with the treadle loom and wool, introduced by the Spanish, to create fine rugs and wall hangings for the tourist market.

Timeline

1500-900 BC	Early farming villages cultivate maize, chilies, squash, and avocados.
1150 BC	The Olmecs build trade and ceremonial centers and carve massive monuments of stone.
450 BC	Monte Albán becomes the capital and ceremonial center of the Zapotecs.
100 BC	The Maya develop a system of writing.
150 AD	The Pyramid of the Sun is completed at Teotihuacan. It requires 1,175,000 cubic meters of brick and fill and is 215 feet tall.
600 AD	Teotihuacan is the sixth largest city in the world, at its height home to 200,000 inhabitants.
840 AD	A new observatory is dedicated in the Mayan city of Chichén Itzá to chart the movements of the stars and planets.
850 AD	Metalworking is introduced to Mexico; craftsmen use the new skill mostly for intricate jewelry.
1325 AD	The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan is founded at the site of present-day Mexico City; the warlike Aztecs subdue rival city-states to amass a powerful empire.
1519-1521 AD	Spaniards under the command of Hernán Cortés conquer the Aztec empire using horses, firearms, and cannon.
1821 AD	Mexico declares independence from Spain.
1910 AD	Mexico slides into chaos and civil war as the Mexican Revolution begins.
1917 AD	New constitution adopted.