



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

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EL DÍA DE LA MUJER

Clockwise from top left:

Irma Bajan, Patzun; Maria Elena

Ramirez, Suchitepequez; Jesus

Rocché, San Pedro Cutzan; Modesta

Chile, San Pedro Sacatepequez;

Miriam Novichoc, Solola

El Día de la Mujer is a joyful occasion at the Museo Ixchel. Held each year on a weekday in March close to International Women's Day, the event brings weavers from all over Guatemala for a day of seminars, speeches, presents and a festive lunch held outside on the plaza in front of the museum. The women come dressed in their finest apparel, combining huipiles, skirts, sashes and headdresses in brilliant colors. For a few hours, the Ixchel is truly a living museum.

It is an opportunity to get to know some of the 200 women who participate in the Pro-Teje project, which provides natural cotton thread to them and buys the

weavings that they create. Pro-Teje sells their products in their own store in the basement of the Museo Ixchel, in the museum's shop upstairs and in retail outlets in Guatemala and Antigua. These women are vivid proof of United Nations Development Programme studies that show that women, given an opportunity to earn their own money, spend their earnings on bettering the lives of their children, opening their purses for notebooks, pens, uniforms and school fees as well as food and health care.

Unfortunately, the world economic crisis has made its way into the smallest villages. The women noted sadly

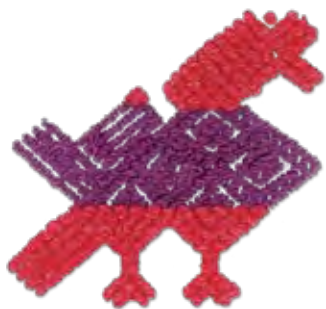
that they are now receiving supplies of thread every two months instead of monthly, in response to dwindling sales and tourism. Thelma de Willemsen, who runs the program, confirms the downturn and says that the bi-monthly arrangement is designed to save the weavers money on bus fares to the capital.

Irma Bajan, 38, lives in Patzun and has been participating in Pro-Teje for 15 years, spending four hours a day at her backstrap loom. "I spend the money on books and fees, and my three daughters are all studying well, thank God."

Modesta Chile, 42, has been weaving for Pro-Teje for twelve years, working eight hours a day. Her five children range in age from nine to 20, and she says, "I've spent all the money on keeping my kids in school."

Miriam Navichoc, 27, one of Pro-Teje's youngest weavers, has used her money to raise her two younger brothers, saying proudly that one of them will be going to university next year. She has them well-trained: "I weave eight hours a day, and they do the cooking."

Continued on back...



MUSEUM NEWS

The Museo Ixchel is located on 6a Calle final, zona 10, on the grounds of the Universidad Francisco Marroquin in Guatemala City. The museum is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday. Admission is 35 quetzals for adults, 15 quetzals for students and 8 quetzals for school-children. For further information on library access and holiday closings and other matters, please visit museoixchel.org or telephone 502 2331 3622

As always, the museum's staff has been performing miracles with limited resources. Among their achievements is the signage project, financed by FOIM, to make the lobby more welcoming and informative. Bright hanging banners, a hanging textile sculpture by David Ordoñez and colorful signs have transformed the experience of entering the museum.

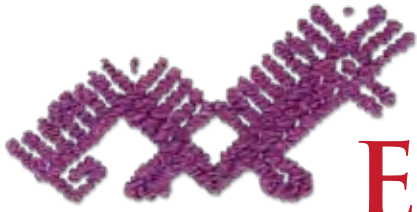
Education director Fabiana Flores de Sáenz continues to inform Guatemalan children about their heritage. She recently introduced a workbook in Kaqchikel, Spanish and English which allows children to use colored paper strips to weave six different designs for multipurpose cloths called su'ts. In addition, she has created a bingo game featuring color photographs of huipiles from the museum's collection.

Barbara Knoke de Arathoon, former Director of Research now on sabbatical, has completed the catalogue for the museum's current embroidery show. Thanks to a generous grant from Annette Merle-Smith, the catalogue will be longer and richer, with more color photos, than originally planned. In addition, Barbara has created information sheets on the textile traditions of twenty towns. The sheets are on sale individually or as a collection in a handsome folder.

The museum has hired its first development director, Ana Rosa de Mendez, who will begin her work with a membership campaign.



Photo: Joan Chatfield Taylor 2009



EMBROIDERY EXHIBIT

The current exhibit at the Museo Ixchel focuses on textiles that make use of embroidery, such as the designs around the neck opening on woman's blouses, huipiles. Another often-seen use of embroidery is the application of elaborate designs on women's belts or fajas. Embroidery sometimes replaces supplementary weft brocade on various kinds of ceremonial cloths. Examples of all of these are in the show and its catalogue, written by Barbara Knoke de Arathoon.

The textile shown above is one of the most beautiful and rare examples in the Ixchel's collection. It is a pair of ceremonial/cofradia man's pants from the town of Almolonga, dating to the first decade of the 20th century. They are interesting for the quality of the dyes and the unique embroidery technique used.

All the red cotton thread is dyed with alizarin, an early synthetic form of madder that fell out of use in Guatemala in the 1930s. The alizarin-dyed threads are used

in both the warp and weft stripes of the base-cloth and the supplementary weft patterning. Silk threads in the embroidered lower section of the pants are dyed with cochineal, obtained from the body of a dried insect. The purple dyed cotton threads in the weft and embroidery are obtained from a mollusk (species – purpura, genus – murex) from the Pacific and the Caribbean. This ancient dye is often referred to as Imperial or Royal Purple.

The embroidery technique that produces a line of circles on the pants appears in no other village weaving tradition in Guatemala. It is a complicated process that requires the use of a sticks to be placed in the shed (the space between the warp threads) to preserve an open area in the warp. The real work begins after the textile is finished on the loom, when additional weft threads are added using a needle. Wrapping the warp and weft threads with cochineal-dyed silk and murex-dyed cotton creates the circular designs.

Story by Raymond Senuk



Emroidered ceremonial pants from Almolonga

STAMPS HONOR MAYA

A set of eight stamps celebrating Guatemala's traditional costumes was introduced by the national postal service on April 14. The illustrations were selected from the Ixchel Museum's collection of watercolors by Carmen Pettersen (1900-1991), who painted them between 1970 and 1975 in response to her observation of the rapid changes in the Maya traditions of weaving and dress. Mrs. Pettersen was a talented member of a prominent coffee-growing family in Guatemala.

Each set of stamps is accompanied by a handsome brochure with detailed descriptions of each village and its costumes. The text, based on Carmen

Pettersen's book, *Maya de Guatemala*, was written by Tessa Fitzgerald, a new member of the museum's Guatemalan board of directors.

Friends of the Ixchel Museum will give sets of stamps as thanks to our generous donors. The postal service will issue two additional sets in the series over the next two years.

Postage stamps of beautiful watercolor paintings by Carmen Pettersen representing indigenous dress from communities across Guatemala.





EL DÍA DE LA MUJER (CONTINUED)

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Friends of the Ixchel Museum is an American foundation and donations are deductible by the donor for U.S. general income tax purposes.

Miriam is also typical of young Guatemalan women who have expanded their wardrobes beyond the boundaries of their villages, a phenomenon known as pan-Mayanism. She lives in Solola, but she was wearing a silver-striped, dark blue cotton skirt from Escuintla.

“Pro-Teje has helped me a lot, thank God,” said Maria Elena Ramirez, who has been in the program for ten years. She has nine children, ranging in age from seven to 24. In addition to keeping them in school, her weaving money has helped the family buy a house and pay for health care.

Jesus Rocchè, from the village of San Pedro Cutzan, is the mother of a flock of 11 children. All of them, thanks in part to the five hours a day she spends weaving, have completed six years of school. She was one of the women who expressed concern over the lack of younger weavers, saying, “Only older people weave. We need classes to teach the others.”

Not all of them agree. Modesta Chile and Irma Bajan have both taught their daughters to weave and embroider. One Of Irma’s daughters recently said to her, “I want to study, I want to weave, I want to go to another country. This is my dream.”



A NOTE TO FRIENDS

Friends of the Ixchel is beginning the process of going electronic, as many people prefer to receive information via the Internet. If you would like to receive the newsletter via the Web, please send us your e-mail address at FOIMinfo@gmail.com. Your contact information will not be sold or shared with any other organization.

During 2008, the Friends of the Ixchel Museum began a transition from New York to Delaware corporate status. Although we believe that the process was smooth, please let us know if you did not receive an acknowledgement of your 2008 donation or if your check was never cashed. Contact us at FOIMinfo@gmail.com. Our mailing address remains PO Box 545, Blue Bell, PA 19422. Please continue to send donations there.

For up-to-date information on the museum, to shop at the on-line store and to listen to some delightful Guatemalan music, go to www.museoixchel.org.

Our growth is only possible through your generosity! Join Us Now!



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

PO Box 545
Blue Bell, PA 19422 USA
foiminfo@gmail.com

Members receive free entrance to exhibitions of FOIM in the U.S. and to the Museo Ixchel in Guatemala City and discounts on purchases in the Museum Shop.

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Checks should be made payable to Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc.

Please mail this form with your donation.

For more information e-mail foiminfo@gmail.com