

FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

VOLUME NINETEEN • NUMBER TWO • DECEMBER 2008



Living Art, Living History

For collectors, the textiles of Guatemala's indigenous people are both wearable art and wearable history, a visible ribbon of continuity between the ancient Maya and their descendants.

Archaeologists exploring the ruins of Maya cities in Central America and Mexico expect to find pottery, jade ornaments, wall paintings, carvings, bones and shells. Much more rarely do they find textiles, the least likely of ancient artifacts to survive centuries of dampness and decomposition in tropical climates. When a trove of intact fabrics is found, such as the 100 fabrics found four years ago in a royal tomb in Copán in Honduras, it not only makes news but inspires concentrated research into each bit of cloth. Each fragment bears witness to the technological skills of the maker, whether it reveals something about the Maya's knowledge of dyestuffs or the weaver's degree of skill and sense of design. Colors and design motifs are clues to social hierarchies, religious beliefs and the identity of communities.

It's not necessary to go back hundreds of years to derive information from textiles. A huipil woven last year in a tiny village in the Guatemalan highlands gives much the same information, identifying the wearer as a member of a specific community, incorporating symbols of spiritual beliefs, reacting to outside influences. Just as an ancient fragment may hint at changing techniques or the influence of neighboring communities, the use of rayon and silk, the adoption of chemical dyes and



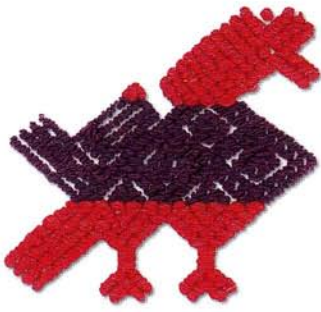
The Ixchel Museum's 2009 calendar, filled with pictures of Guatemalan children, charmingly confirms that traditional costumes are still part of daily life

the mixing of contemporary and traditional designs indicate freer communications, both physical and intellectual, in modern-day Guatemala.

For collectors, the textiles of Guatemala's indigenous people are both wearable art and wearable history, a visible ribbon of continuity between the ancient Maya and their descendants. The Ixchel Museum is similarly devoted to both the past and the present. On the one hand, the museum is dedicated to preserving and researching history, in the form of old textiles lovingly gathered from the country's villages. On the other, the Ixchel Museum is vitally involved with the support and revitalization of the weaving tradition as it exists today.

Our field trips, usually involving a research associate, photographer and translator, research the state of traditional weaving in some of the country's most isolated regions. The museum's

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THE MUSEUM

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 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, and from 9 am to 1 pm on Saturday.

Admission is 35 quetzals for adults, 15 quetzals for students and 8 quetzals for schoolchildren. For further information on library access and holiday closings and other matters, please visit museoixchel.org or telephone 502 2331 3622

The museum's 2009 calendar, "A Mosaic of Smiles," is vivid proof that Guatemalan weaving remains a living art. The calendar features enchanting photographs of Guatemalan children dressed in traditional costumes. The introductory text was written by Otilia Luz de Coti, a Maya activist who has served as Minister of Culture.

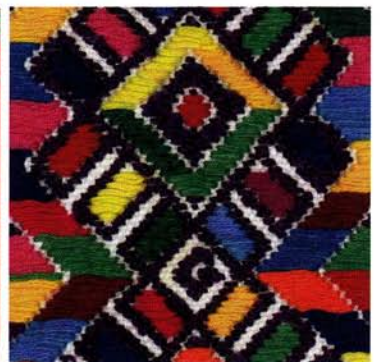
Photographs of textiles in the museum will also appear in the 2009 calendar issued by the European Union in Central America. Captions for the photographs were written by curator Barbara Knoke de Arathoon.

The newest exhibit at the Ixchel is titled "Needlepoint: Stitches that Unite Cultures," which opened in September. The show presents samplers from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as the thimbles, darning eggs and patterns that were part of a girl's education. The work includes both European and Mayan motifs. Accompanying the exhibit, workshops provided the opportunity to learn traditional stitchery techniques.

The United States embassy in Guatemala awarded a \$5000 grant to the Ixchel to support Barbara Knoke de Arathoon's research on textiles and costumes in several villages around Lake Atitlán.

UNESCO has given a \$10,000 grant to Fabiana Flores de Sáenz, the Ixchel's education director. The grant will support her work in three villages near Antigua, San Miguel Dueñas, Magdalena Milpas Altas, and Alotenango, where Fabiana will organize programs to teach weaving to fifth-graders, in addition to bringing master weavers to Antigua to provide instruction to adult weavers from these villages.

The museum has become a popular site for corporate parties and temporary art exhibits, which now make an important contribution to the institution's operating budget. Adding to the festivity, Guatemalan artist David Ordonez is collecting textiles to create a colorful art piece that will hang in the central rotunda where most of the events are held.



Bright textiles from the museum's collection are featured in the 2009 calendar issued by the European Union in Central America

Guatemala has chosen details from seven of the watercolors to appear on postage stamps. The first seven will be issued early in 2009, with more to appear in 2010 and 2011.

The paintings of Guatemalan traditional dress by artist Carmen Pettersen are one of the highlights of a visit to the museum. They will now go further afield, as the Philatelic Commission of

The Friends of the Ixchel Museum received a grant of \$2500 from the Robert Lehman Foundation in New York. The foundation's mission is to support the visual arts "in any fashion that seems likely to enhance the appreciation, knowledge and enjoyment of this central aspect of our culture."



FRIENDS OF IXCHEL

Baysis Hempstead is pictured, left, with her hands on the shoulders of Cheri Pancake, the museum's first curator, surrounded by members of the team that helped her during the Ixchel's early years; at right, Baysis at a recent birthday party



Baysis Hempstead: In Memoriam

Her enduring memorial is the Ixchel Museum and its active support of the Indigenous people of her beloved country

Lucie G. Hempstead, a founder of the Ixchel Museum, died on April 26 at her home in Guatemala City. Baysis, as she was known (the name was short for Baby Sister), the daughter of an English father and American mother, was born in 1919 and grew up on a coffee plantation on the Pacific Coast. Following her marriage she moved to Alta Verapaz.

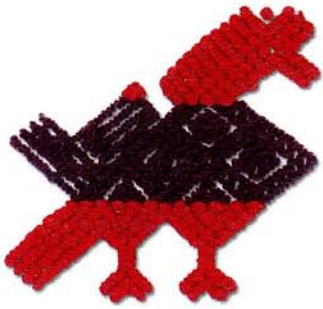
As early as 1947 she became aware that Guatemala's unique weaving tradition was threatened by modernity. She and several friends created a textile committee within the Tikal Association, a private group dedicated to Guatemala's archeological heritage. In 1974 the textile committee became the founding members of the independent Museo Ixchel and took on the daunting tasks of acquiring a museum-quality collection of textiles and building a home for them in Guatemala City. With boundless energy, this handsome woman charmed, coaxed and occasionally coerced people to help the museum and the women weavers of the country.

One of her most important achievements was to create the museum's store to sell authentic Guatemalan textiles and other craft items. The store became – and has remained -- the museum's principal source of revenue. As she became involved in fund-raising, she realized that the museum needed a support group in the United States to raise money and awareness. Thus, the Friends of the Ixchel Museum came into being in 1983, allowing United States citizens to make tax-deductible donations.

Baysis's support of the Museo Ixchel went far beyond fund-raising. She tirelessly found ways to raise awareness of the museum and its mission, organizing exhibits of Mayan textiles at museums and universities in the United States, translating the Ixchel's research material into English, producing videos and enthusiastically supporting Pro-Teje, the project that furnishes materials and markets to hundreds of weavers.

Her enduring memorial is the Ixchel Museum and its active support of the indigenous people of her beloved country.

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LIVING ART LIVING HISTORY (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.

Pro-Teje program, by providing 270 weavers a market for their work, has helped women support themselves and their families. Educational programs have not only taught hundreds of fifth grade boys and girls to weave but have encouraged them to stay in school and built a respect for their Maya culture.

The Friends of the Ixchel Museum help to fund these projects. The Friends also build awareness of textiles through their participation in such events as the Gran Día Chapín in Washington, Maya Weekend in Philadelphia and the

International Folk Art Market in Santa Fe. A future project is the creation of a multi-faceted exhibit combining textiles, photographs and video that will be available to museums and exhibit spaces.

Your contribution to the Friends of the Ixchel supports both the history and art of Guatemala's uniquely vibrant textiles, by contributing to the museum's exhibitions and research and to the talent and industry of the country's Maya citizens.



PHILIP HERRERA

Philip Herrera, a longtime board member of the Friends of the Ixchel Museum, died May 7 in New York City. Born in Paris, Phil was a member of one of Guatemala's leading families and was an active supporter of both FOIM and the Universidad del Valle in Guatemala City. He went to Guatemala regularly to visit family and attend board meetings. Before his retirement, he worked as an executive editor of several magazines, including Town and Country and Connoisseur.

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



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

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