



# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM



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## JASPE - MYSTERY AND MAGIC

In the mineral world, *jaspe* is the name of a semiprecious speckled stone. In the Mayan textile tradition of Guatemala, the word refers to something even more striking--a resist-dye technique for decorating fabrics. This same process is known in other parts of the world as *ikat* (from the Malay *mengikat* or tying). Groups of either the warp yarns, the weft yarns, or both, are tightly wrapped and tied at intervals, according to the pattern that will be created. Then, before the actual weaving begins, they are dyed. The tightly wrapped sections resist the dye and remain white.

When the threads are woven, the motifs which emerge lack a closely defined outline, because adjacent colors flow into each other slightly. In a very real sense, it is through magic and mystery that the skillful hands and minds of the artisans bring this complex and labor intensive process to stunning fruition.

Old photographs prove that this technique has been applied in Guatemala since the end of the 19th century. Today *jaspe* is mainly used in weaving *cortes* or skirts; in fact, the *cortes jaspeados* have grown so popular in recent decades that they have replaced most of the predominantly solid-colored skirts that represented the traditional style of specific villages. *Jaspe* is also seen in *perrajes* or *rebozos* (shawls), *su'ts* (multipurpose cloths to carry children or goods), *huipiles*, sashes and fabric for men's shirts and pants. In most cases only the weft threads are dyed for a very understandable reason: it is easier since they are shorter.



Women from Sololá wearing jaspeado textiles  
Photo by Anne Girard de Marroquín  
2003 Ixchel Museum Photo Archive

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# IN THE MUSEUM

[www.museoixchel.org](http://www.museoixchel.org) [amparolopez@museoixchel.org](mailto:amparolopez@museoixchel.org)

**"Jaspe--Knots Creating Designs"** opened October 21st in the Alfredo S. Clark gallery in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Ixchel Museum. The exhibit catalogue has been funded by Pro-Teje.

**The Plocharski Collection**, of over 500 textiles collected by doña Julia de Plocharski, was formally donated by her family to the Ixchel Museum. "They are truly magnificent pieces and form the heart of the museum collection," said curator Rosario de Polanco.

**Fundación Guacamaya**, a Dutch non-profit, will fund a weaving program in Sumpango for 4th, 5th and 6th graders. Fabiana Flores de Sáenz will direct the program as she did with three similar BID weaving projects last year.

**Prensa Libre** will print 125,000 reproductions each of 32 watercolors of indigenous costumes by doña Carmen de Pettersen to insert in their papers as a public service.

**Pro-Teje**, the museum's natural cotton weaving project, has a store at the Mercado de Artesanías and its own website: [www.textilesproteje.com](http://www.textilesproteje.com)

**The Ethnographic Museum of Antwerp** opened an exhibit in May of 55 Mayan costumes and 100 individual textile pieces, from five private European collections and four ethnographic museums. Ixchel Museum Curator Rosario de Polanco and Exhibit Designer Barbara de Arathoon co-authored an article in the catalogue and were invited for the opening.



Lorena,  
Kati  
and  
Teddy  
Plocharski

**After the exhibit opening** Barbara and Rosario travelled to Spain to see curators at museums: Museu de les Arts Decoratives, Museu Barbier-Muller and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; Museo Nacional de Antropología in Madrid; Centre de Documentació i Museu Textil in Terrassa.

**Finland** funded the conservation of a Momostenango blanket. Of natural wool and dyed with indigo, the blanket is woven in a tapestry technique that is no longer used. The restoration included repair of damaged areas, reweaving, and removal of stains.



colored  
jaspe  
textiles



# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

[www.ixchelfriends.org](http://www.ixchelfriends.org)   [foim@ixchelfriends.org](mailto:foim@ixchelfriends.org)

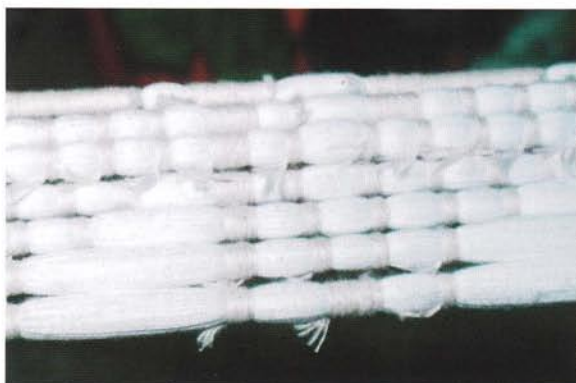
**An August Meeting** of Friends of the Ixchel Museum was held in New York to discuss projects to help the museum. High on the list was the possible opening of an exhibit in Antigua which is in the planning stages.

[www.museoixchel.org](http://www.museoixchel.org) is being upgraded with funds from Friends.

**A Weaving Trip** to Guatemala during Easter week is being organized by Friends of the Ixchel Museum in coordination with the museum.

**A Santiago Atitlán costume** was donated to Friends by Anita Aparicio, in memory of María Luisa de López-Mayoral. The huipil is from 1900, the rest of the pieces from the 1930's.

*knotted  
threads*



*dyed  
threads  
partly  
un-  
knotted*



*jaspe  
design*



*jaspe  
skirt  
from  
Cobán*



## DONATIONS TO FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

*Please help Friends of the Ixchel Museum sponsor weaving projects, fund traveling textile exhibits, translate textile research, and support projects to enrich the Ixchel Museum. Friends of the Ixchel Museum is an American foundation and donations are deductible by the donor for U.S. general income tax purposes. Checks drawn to the name of Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc., may be mailed to:*

*Friends of the Ixchel Museum, Inc., P.O.Box 8055, Radnor PA 19087-8055*



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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The main *jaspe* producers of Guatemala have long been the towns of Salcajá (in the department of Quetzaltenango), Totonicapán (Totonicapán), Quetzaltenango (Quetzaltenango). Other centers include San Pedro Sacatepéquez (San Marcos) and Rabinal (Baja Verapaz), where the *cortes* used by the women of the area are woven, and where some of the weavers take charge of the dying process as well. To make the characteristic red *cortes* that prevail in the Huehuetenango area and several Quiché towns, weavers buy *jaspe* yarn dyed in Totonicapán. In Santiago Atitlán, weavers have been dying weft threads for local use since the 1960s.

The new exhibition traces the process of *jaspe* and shows many of the breathtaking *jaspeado* textiles in the Ixchel Museum's collection. To design the show, curator Rosario Miralbés de Polanco and exhibit director Barbara de Arathoon joined forces with the artist/architect David Ordóñez. His input has a special meaning since it was he who mounted the Ixchel Museum's first show in 1974. An accompanying illustrated catalog by Rosario Miralbés de Polanco will be published in Spanish (20 pages; \$8.00). In the preface, Humberto Ak'abal, a K'ich'e poet and onetime weaver of *jaspe*, makes a point that will be obvious to anyone who visits the museum. *Jaspe weavings* transcend mere decoration: They are works of art.

