



# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM



VOLUME FOURTEEN

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Cut maguey  
leaves  
Aldea  
Tituque,  
Chiquimula.  
Photo by  
Kathy  
Rousso.  
2002



TEJIENDO NUESTRAS TRADICIONES  
**30**  
años

## MAGUEY

Look beyond the rainbow colors of Mayan clothing to the natural color of ropes, nets and maguey bags and you will see the oldest woven fabrics of the Mayan world. Archaeological evidence of clothing fragments and oblong pounding stones confirms that maguey fibers were used as early as 6500 to 4800 B.C. in Mesoamerica, long before cotton was known. Native to the Western hemisphere, maguey or agave grows in most climates and at most elevations, and is unique in that its fibers were woven by all the indigenous people of Mesoamerica.

Near San Juan Chamelco, Alta Verapaz, the legend goes that the first fibers were noticed when a bolt of lightning struck a maguey plant, searing away the outer pulpy flesh and exposing the white interior. This led to the invention of extraction and spinning methods to make a strand

suitable for the creation of rough textiles and ropes.

Today bags, ropes, cargo nets, tump lines and hammocks are still made from maguey and there are many different techniques for fiber extraction, spinning and weaving. Bags are woven on horizontal and vertical looms in Guatemala, a technique unique to the country.

However, fewer and fewer people are working with maguey because synthetic materials are common and the younger generation prefers to use knapsacks. In some villages the youngest maguey weavers are in their 70s!

Kathy Rousso curated the maguey exhibit which opened in March at the museum. She has an M.A. in textile arts from UC Davis and was in Guatemala researching maguey on a Fulbright grant. After the exhibit opened, Kathy held a slide lecture and a workshop for textile enthusiasts.

- by Barbara de Arathoon and Kathy Rousso



# IN THE MUSEUM

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

**THE MAGUEY EXHIBIT** opened as a celebration of Kathy Rousso's research on this ancient weaving process. Rousso also gave a talk and workshop on the special techniques used in extracting, spinning and weaving maguey fibers.

**TWELVE PAINTINGS BY HILARY ARATHOON** were donated to the museum by his family; five are hung at the entrance to the maguey exhibit.

**THREE COMPUTERS** were donated to the museum: two by Pro-Teje, one by Canella, S.A.

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY** was celebrated by Pro-Teje weavers at the museum with a luncheon. Anthropologist Luz Marina Delgado gave a workshop "Manos de Mujer" emphasizing their value as women, and discussing women's health, nutrition, education, families and rights.

**THE 30th ANNIVERSARY** of the Museo Ixchel is been celebrated in all the events of 2003.



Inauguration of the maguey exhibit.

*Left to right:*  
Kathy Rousso,  
Lucy Arathoon  
de Rios, Lucía  
Olivero and  
Rosario Polanco

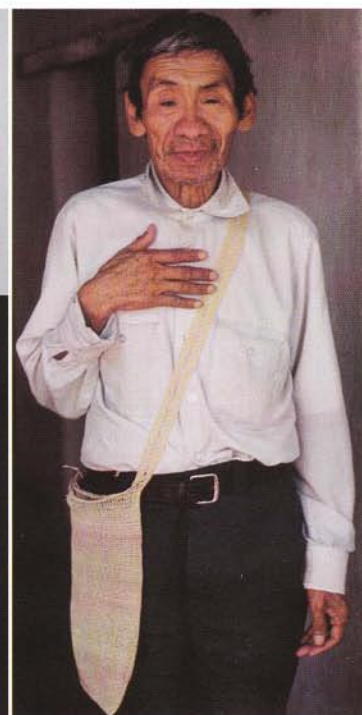


*Todos Santos Cuchumatán*  
Painting by  
Hilary Arathoon

*Left:*  
Maguey fibers ready for spinning  
Aldea Canaparé Abajo, Jocotán, Chiquimula.

*Center:*  
Maguey bags from the museum collection.

*Right:*  
Man with a net bag he made by "knotless netting" or "looping"  
San Marcos la Laguna, Sololá  
Photos by Kathy Rousso. 2002





# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

[www.ixchelfriends.org](http://www.ixchelfriends.org)

[foim@ixchelfriends.org](mailto:foim@ixchelfriends.org)

**THE ANNUAL BOARD MEETING** was held in Guatemala City, February 16th and 17th. Three new members were elected: Terri Shaw, Emilie de Brigard, and Wendy Murdock. We welcome their expertise and enthusiasm. Funds were voted for more photographic field trips to enrich the photo archive, for a museum web page, and for the museum endowment to strengthen museum educational programs.

**MAGUEY PHOTOS** taken by Kathy Russo to supplement the exhibit were funded by Friends.

**A FIBER OPTIC CONNECTION** for the museum was funded by Friends. Pantaleon Sugar Holdings, S.A., donated the time and expertise of their technicians to make the installation.

**AN EXHIBIT OF JASPE**, or the weaving of tie-dyed threads, is planned for September. Friends funded photographic trips to jaspe weaving villages and will fund the exhibit.

**A WEAVING TRIP** to Guatemala will be sponsored by Friends in 2004.



Girls from  
Santo  
Domingo  
Xenacoj.  
Photo  
Archive  
Museo  
Ixchel.  
Anne Girard  
de  
Marroquín.  
2002

## ***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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"Colors of  
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Anne  
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2003

