

# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

VOLUME SIXTEEN

NUMBER ONE

JUNE 2005



Girl from Santo Domingo Xenacoj with a friend; dance of the conquest in San Pedro Carchá; the dance of the bull in Santo Tomás Chichicastenango.  
*Photos by Anne Girard 2005.*

## FOLKLORIC DANCES AND FESTIVALS

Folk dances will be the theme of the 2006 Ixchel Museum calendar. The calendar will be dedicated to the late Luis Luján Muñoz, an anthropologist who loved the culture of his country and did research in folkloric masks and dances, Colonial art and ethnology. The calendar will show the variety and richness of the folk dances of Guatemala, most of which are of Colonial origin but some of which date from Pre-hispanic times.



# IN THE MUSEUM

Museo Ixchel del Traje Indígena  
6a. calle final, zona 10  
Guatemala City, Guatemala

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

**ROSEMARY DE BARILLAS** was elected President of the Ixchel Museum at the May 5th annual meeting. The other officers are Thelma de Willemsen, Vice-president; Virginia de Pfister, Treasurer; and Susan de Riojas, Secretary.

**THE ANNUAL FUNDRAISER AT FINCA EL ZAPOTE** in March drew more people than ever before. Each year the Pettersen-Leonowens clan opens its family farm, the lovely lake-studded finca where museum founder Carmen Pettersen lived and painted.

**SYMBOLS PLANTED IN TEXTILES** opened March 3rd. The exhibit, funded by Friends of the Ixchel Museum, highlights the symbolic language hidden in textiles. The catalogue was funded by Pro-Teje.

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY** was celebrated with a lunch given for the weavers of Pro-Teje. The Minister of Culture, Lic. Manuel de Jesús Salazar, spoke on Maya values. There was a presentation of the Onil stove, a stove which uses 1/4 the firewood of a regular one, and a talk on how to use worms to make organic fertilizer. Each woman was given a canister of worms!

**THE JASPE CATALOGUE** has been translated into English thanks to the generosity of the Friends. It is available at the museum store.



Acting curator Barbara de Arathoon inaugurating "Symbols Planted in Textiles."

Mother and son of Soledad Icu to whom the exhibit was dedicated.



Two huipiles showing symbols of the tree of life, turkey and deer in the new exhibit.

**8 NEW INFORMATIVE PAGES**, funded by Friends, have been published with pictures and facts about 8 highland villages noted for their weaving.

**THE EDUCATION PROGRAM** is taking new exciting turns--and is blossoming. See article on page 3.

## 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., 8 Christian Hill Road, Higganum CT 06441-4030*



# YOU SHOULD SEE THEIR FACES



*Children  
from  
Santa  
Avelina,  
Quiché.*

Fabiana de Sáenz is an educator with a doubly remarkable gift. Not only can she reach children--really communicate with them--she can also create materials that help them learn. An attractive mother of two boys, she graduated in 1983 from Guatemala's Universidad del Valle with a degree in psychology and expertise in special education.

In 1999 she came to the Ixchel Museum to produce "Un Poco de Todo Sobre el Tejido Maya," an activities book that has opened the world of textiles to children who had previously paid scant, if any, attention to them. How did she make the breakthrough? Her answer is characteristically modest: "I see what we want to teach and then the children and I figure out how to do it."

In the beginning, Sáenz hewed to the Museo Ixchel's proven program of inviting schools to visit the museum and then of tailoring the visits to the age of the children who come. They would be given a tour of the museum, for example, and then encouraged to participate in activities in the Alberto Habie Children's Museum. The kids enjoyed the day, but Fabiana felt the museum could do better.

Teaming up with the institutions's enthusiastic technical staff--curator Barbara de Arathoon, curator emeritus Rosario de Polanco, registrar Violeta de Gutiérrez and photographer Anne Girard--Fabiana has greatly expanded the program. For starters, the team created new activities for children within the exhibition galleries. In one, the children are divided into manageable groups of about five kids each and taken to the Carmen Pettersen room, where her 61 watercolors of indigenous people hang. The children are given a textile and told to find it in the paintings. The game never fails to captivate them.

"Our children do not know the general history of Guatemala," Fabiana notes, "and they do not connect

the classic Maya with the present-day Maya. We use the back-strap loom, which they have to find depicted on Mayan codices, to connect the Maya through history. The concept of continuity really opens the eyes of the children."

She and her team came up with an even bigger idea. Over the years, it became obvious that although children visit the Ixchel Museum from urban public schools, their rural counterparts could not afford to follow suit, and grants to pay for such visits were hard to get. Fabiana found the solution: "We could take the education to the kids in the country. We could go to the people from whom all these traditions had come and yet where the children were losing the traditions. The museum has the knowledge and the textiles. So we began our rural weaving projects with a grant from the International Development Bank."

Palín, San Pedro Cutzán, Chillaní and Santo Domingo Xenacoj were the villages where they began. The team went slowly, using maps and books, among other materials, to show the children that they are part of a rich weaving tradition. Fabiana tells a story she wrote, "La Cinta Que Vuela," which exposes kids to the ideas of cultural diversity, tolerance and mutual respect.

So far, about 100 fourth and fifth graders from each of four towns have completed the course. They were also invited to a session in the Ixchel Museum that was specifically planned for their weaving region. "You should see their faces," says Fabiana, "even the faces of their teachers, when they see a huge museum dedicated just to weaving, and then particularly when we show them the beautiful old weavings of their own communities."

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# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

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**EMILIE DE BRIGARD** was elected President at the annual meeting held in Guatemala in early March. Ana María Zaugg is Vice-president; Joe Borgatti, Secretary/Treasurer.

**NEWLY ELECTED TO THE BOARD** of the Friends were Loa Traxler, Monika Snodgrass, Annette Lingnau, and Susan de Riojas. Loa is Research Assistant at the University of Pennsylvania Museum; Monika lived in Guatemala in the 1970s and now resides in France; Annette Moore Lingnau grew up in Guatemala and now lives in New Jersey. Susan Moore de Riojas lives in Guatemala and will act as a liaison with the board of the museum.

**AMONG THE NEW PROJECTS** that received funding from the Friends: the museum's website in English, more

informative pages, a Canon EOS 20 digital camera; the digitalization of the huipiles of the collection; the continuation of the educational project in Tecpán; research on Mayan stories and myths in Nebaj; a new module for the children's museum; research and field work for the embroidery exhibit; and capacity building -- long term planning and grant writing.

**GENEROUS DONATIONS** of weaving collections to Friends of the Ixchel Museum were made by John Schaper in memory of Nancy Taillon Schaper and by the Berkowitz family. Sol de Berkowitz collected during the 1970s.

**A SECOND WEAVING TRIP** will be led in July by the expert Vivian Harvey; it will also offer an add-on visit to the beautiful Mayan city of Copán.



*continued from page 3*

Finally, about 25 children, those who choose to weave, begin three months of weaving instruction with a qualified weaver from their town. "We are not creating weavers, but rather putting people in touch with their own traditions," says Fabiana. In some cases grandmothers have taken out their looms and shared them with their grandchildren. In the town of Cutzán, the change was even more marked: the weavers teaching the children began to wear their hand-woven huipiles instead of machine-made blouses.

Another indication of the project's success has been the team's ability in finding grants. A Dutch non-profit organization, Fundación Guacamaya, has funded a weaving course in the town of Sumpango. Helps International has sponsored a workshop for Santa Avelina, Quiché. Much more aid is needed, however, and individual contributions are welcome (see box).

Fabiana never stops trying to improve the program she invented. Her newest idea for the workshop is a visit to an ancient Mayan site. For the children of Santa Avelina, it was Iximché. "We chose the ball courts to show the kids their culture and had them play ball as the Maya did," she recounts. As Fabiana says: "The idea is to reinforce their own cultural identity."

At the end of the course, the children return to the Ixchel Museum to exhibit their weavings and to be presented, as graduates of the weaving program, with diplomas. If you happen by, you would not fail to note their joy. The

fourth graders from Santa Avelina danced to celebrate their feat. Fabiana of course had anticipated their delight. She knows how exciting it is for the children to learn a lot about the weaving tradition and, through it, a lot about themselves.

\* \* \*

Another project dreamed up by Fabiana de Sáenz came to fruition this past April with the display in the Museo Ixchel of brilliantly colored art works made by the children of the Colegio Julio Verne in Guatemala City. The exhibition was merely a small expression of Fabiana's accomplishment. She has designed art activities based on 19 indigenous communities and, helped by a grant generously provided by the French Embassy, put them all on a CD Rom to be used as a teaching aid by art teachers throughout Guatemala.

Next step: the CD Rom will be translated into two Maya languages, Kaqchikel and Achi. "I hope we can eventually do it in Ixil so "that the people of Santa Avelina can enjoy it," she says. "That is the town we really focused on. It serves as a model for all our next projects."

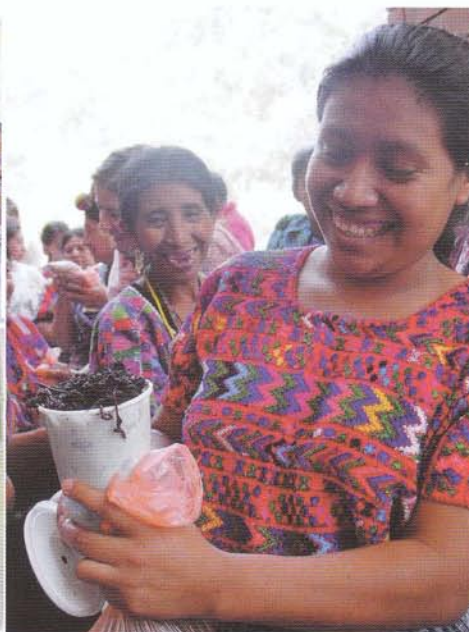
## DO YOU WANT TO HELP?

The cost of this outreach program for about 100 fourth and fifth graders is \$1,200 per community. If you would like to make a contribution to the program, please send your check to Friends of the Ixchel Museum indicating your wishes. Donations of any size are gratefully received and are tax deductible.



## SUNDAY AT EL ZAPOTE

Views of the farm; children in line to swing into the water; Louis and Sylvia Pettersen de Leonowens.



## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Minister of Culture; lunch on the plaza; weavers in full traditional dress; the Onil stove; the can of worms !

The educators who worked with Fabiana Flores de Sáenz on the CD Rom: Sylvie Dupuis Breton, Ana Luisa Santizo de Chang, Pascale Dementhon De la Roca, Fabiana with Julien Frey, the French cultural attaché.

## CD ROM PRESENTATION

Art projects of the children from Colegio Julio Verne.





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Return Service Requested



Dance of  
the deer,  
San Pedro  
Carchá.

Photo  
Anne  
Girard  
2003.