



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

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**Support
The Ixchel**

Members of the Friends of the Ixchel Museum (FOIM) are proud supporters of the museum's curatorial, conservation and research achievements and of its handsome building in Guatemala City.

They are also supporters of Guatemala itself, with a profound interest in this jewel box of a country, with its vivid cultural heritage, dramatic landscape and sad reality of poverty and violence. Their support of the museum focuses on the Maya people, the indigenous population who comprise more than fifty per cent of the nation. The Ixchel Museum's projects, many subsidized by specific grants from the United States-based Friends of the Ixchel Museum, directly touch this population.

Thanks to the museum's energetic and imaginative education director, Fabiana de Saenz, many projects are designed to appeal to children. One of the most successful has been the teaching of weaving to fourth and fifth-graders in several villages. In Santiago Sacatepequez, the project was so successful in its first year of teaching girls

Photos Anne Girard

that the boys asked to participate. In addition to teaching a skill and raising self-esteem, the classes made the history of their community come alive and encouraged communication between the children and their grandparents. The students' enthusiasm is especially gratifying in a country where too many children drop out of school at an early age.

Fabiana has also designed teaching tools around the tradition of weaving. These include books such as *La Cinta Que Vuela*, and *Un Poco de Todo sobre el Tejido Maya*, cards that challenge children to match up textiles with indigenous languages, a book that enables children to weave in paper, and material designed to enhance specific exhibits in the museum.

Through their work for Pro-Teje, the museum's enterprise to sell contemporary textiles, hundreds of women have been able to buy houses, furnish their children with uniforms and textbooks and to obtain health care. Currently, 270 women are participating in the program, obtaining natural brown, green and white cotton thread and pro-



**Support
Guatemala**



ducing bags, place mats and other useful and decorative products that incorporate traditional techniques and motifs.

These and other projects are designed to install pride in the Maya community itself, in a country where the wearing of traje, traditional dress, can be a controversial political statement and the government has few Maya faces. FOIM also has a mission to make people outside of the country, Guatemalan and non-Guatemalan, aware of the rich tradition of the Maya. Participating in events like the Gran Día Chapín, an annual gathering of Guatemalans in the Washington, D.C., Maya Weekend at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market, is one of the ways that FOIM educates and informs the public about the contemporary Maya.

Your contribution helps to meet the needs not only of the museum but of the people it celebrates. Your gift of \$65 purchases the rulers and scissors needed by each school hosting a weaving course, \$85 buys a workshop in the museum for sixty children, \$100 buys seven looms for the village programs.





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 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 schoolchildren. For further information on library access and holiday closings and other matters, please visit museoixchel.org or telephone 502 2331 3622

During the long years of civil war, the Ixchel Museum's staff was unable to travel very far from the capital. Now they are beginning to venture further afield. Barbara Knoke de Arathoon and photographer Anne Girard de Marroquin traveled 370 kilometers from Guatemala City via narrow, twisting dirt roads to visit San Juan Atitán, one of Huehuetenango's most isolated villages. When they finally arrived, they were greeted by several of the town's volunteer policemen, sitting on a bench knitting morales, the shoulder bags carried by many Maya men. The extreme isolation made the field trip "heaven, for an anthropologist," Barbara said later. The research team spent six days in San Juan Atitán, one of the few highland towns where every woman is a weaver. They returned with hundreds of photographs and interviews. The field trip was funded by a grant from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation of New York.

In April the Museo Ixchel was the setting for Los Todos Santeros, an exhibition of the Guatemalan photographs of Hans Namuth. Namuth is best known as the chronicler of the New York art scene in the 1950s and 1960s, when he made unforgettable portraits of Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko and many other Abstract Expressionists. The exhibit at the Ixchel featured his less well-known but equally powerful photographs of the people of Todos Santos Cuchumatán. The Ixchel's director, Barbara Knoke de Arathoon, photo archive director Anne Girard de Marroquin and registrar Violeta Gutierrez made a field trip to Todos Santos



Photos Anne Girard. Top to bottom: Policemen on a bench in San Juan Atitán, town of Todos Santos Cuchumatán, man from Todos Santos Cuchumatán, crowd in San Juan Atitán

or to the exhibit. Their trip was funded by the Namuth family and FOIM.

The museum received a grant of \$10,405 from Harvard's David Rockefeller Center for Latin America's Program for Latin American Libraries and Archives. The money is designated for the conservation and digitization of some 5000 slides in the Ixchel's photo archive, including acid-free storage materials. In addition to funding additional work by the museum's own photographer, Anne Girard de Marroquin, the grant provides for an expert to come from the United States for three days to consult on the best ways to work with the slides. The photo archive is a crucial element in the museum's mission to record changing textile traditions in hundreds of Guatemalan villages.

Pro-Teje recently gave the Museo Ixchel new computer equipment worth \$19,000. Pro-Teje sells the work of some 270 talented weavers at the museum and at the Mercado Artesanías in Guatemala City. Many of them put on their most beautiful traditional dress to attend the museum's annual celebration of El Día de la Mujer (International Women's Day) in early March. The event included a talk on nutrition and a luncheon on the plaza in front of the museum. Each woman received a colorfully-wrapped cooking pot as a souvenir of the occasion.

The weavers were interested in an ergonomic weaving bench created for backstrap loom users by Synergo Arts, an Arizona-based, non-profit organization that designs ergonomic solutions for artists and artisans in the developing world. Synergo's CEO, Karen Piergorsch, developed the wooden bench as an alternative to the traditional kneeling position that causes pain and fatigue. She worked with indigenous weavers in Guatemala to create the adjustable design.

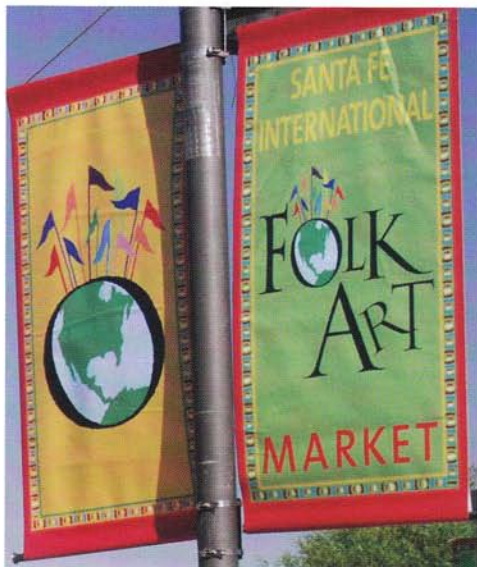
About 400 people, many of them families with children, enjoyed a day in the country March 2 when they attended the Museo Ixchel's annual picnic at El Zapote, the lovely finca of the Petersen family. While the children swung from a rope into a pond, their families strolled through the gracefully landscaped gardens designed by Carmen Pettersen (whose watercolors of Maya people are one of the museum's most popular attractions) and picnicked on the broad lawns. This happy event is the Ixchel Museum's biggest fund-raiser of the year, this year bringing in 45,000 quetzals.



FOIM IN SANTA FE

On July 12 and 13, 2008, FOIM will present a dazzling array of contemporary Guatemalan textiles at the fifth Santa Fe Folk Art Market, the largest such event in the United States. Last year the fair attracted some 17,000 visitors, who spent \$1.7 million for folk art from 40 countries, with most of the money going directly to the artists. FOIM was chosen to represent Guatemala from 400 applicants.

Master weaver Sabina Ramirez, a Guatemalan from Nebaj currently living in Washington, D.C., will be one of FOIM's two featured artists.



In 1989 Sabina represented the Ixil nation as their princess. The following year she was chosen as the Rabin Ajau princess, representing all the Maya nations at national and international events. Her textiles will be among the fine contemporary weavings on sale at the booth. The brilliantly-colored painted wooden boxes of Don Jesus Manuel Garcia Xuruc of Totonicapán will also be available.

Friends of the Ixchel Museum will also be showing antique textiles from the collection of Sylvia and Guillermo Sanchez at Shiprock Santa Fe, one of the city's leading galleries, from July 10 through August 4. Board member Raymond Senuk, who has been collecting Maya textiles since his first trip to Chiapas in 1977, will curate the show.

"Given our venue in Santa Fe, the audience will be used to seeing fine examples of native Southwestern art, tribal art and Western art. They should see the quality represented by fine historic Maya textiles from the first half of the twentieth century," Ray explained.

The fair and the gallery exhibit will give even neophyte textile enthusiasts a chance to appreciate not only the beauty of Maya work but the changes in colors, materials and techniques that Maya weavers have brought to their dynamic art form over the past century.

For further information about the fair, go to www.folkartmarket.org



Featured artist and master weaver, Sabina Ramirez.

QUEEN SOFIA



In Madrid Queen Sofia, center left, awarded the prize to Thelma de Willemsen, center right, and Barbara Knoke de Arathoon, at far right.

One day last November the entire staff of the Museo Ixchel was seen jumping up and down, yelling, dancing and hugging one another. They had just received official word that the museum had won one of the world's most prestigious cultural prizes, the Premio Reina Sofia, awarded for historic preservation and restoration of cultural patrimony in the Ibero-American countries.

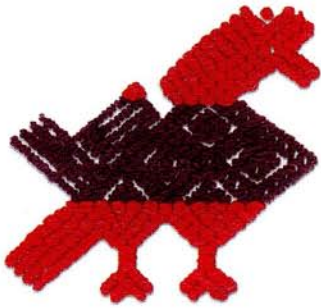
For the first time in the five-year history of the competition, two prizes were given. The Ixchel's award was for the preservation of the country's intangible patrimony; the city of Havana won the award for tangible heritage for its preservation of historical buildings. They were chosen

from 23 candidates representing a dozen Latin American countries.

The jury noted the museum's conservation and documentation of its "exceedingly complete" collection of indigenous textiles, its research and educational programs. In addition, they commented on "the role played in the maintenance of traditions, which contribute in an outstanding way to the integration of all Guatemalans and to the fight against exclusion."

Asked whether the contest had required a major effort by the museum's staff, director Barbara Knoke de Arathoon explained that the museum

continued on back...



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QUEEN SOFIA (CONTINUED)

received an announcement of the contest just a few days before the application was due.

"We did it in a rush. We put together a very short application, but I put passion into the document, and with passion good things happen. We were lucky because all the members of the jury had visited the museum, and the museum sells itself."

Once the exuberant yells and hugs died down, Barbara and Thelma de Willemsen, representing the museum's Guatemala-based board of directors, hastened to organize their trip to Madrid to receive the award from Queen Sofia on December 19. In her acceptance speech, Barbara paid a special tribute to the Maya "who have been the bastions of support in the preservation of the forms of weaving traditional

clothing." The presentation was followed by a cocktail reception and a dinner at Madrid's Museo de Traje.

"It was the most beautiful experience," Thelma recalls. "The queen communicates so beautifully, and she had been here at the museum two times and was very fond of it."

The award was accompanied by a \$44,000 grant, as well as a sculpture by Spanish artist Gustavo Torner; but Barbara and Thelma also emphasized less tangible benefits of winning such a distinguished prize. "We have more international prestige now," said Barbara. In addition to making contact in Madrid with other cultural institutions, the museum received extensive press coverage, both in Guatemala and abroad.



FOUNDER BAYSIS HEMPSTEAD

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Lucie Smith Hempstead on April 26, 2008, at her home in Guatemala City. Baysis (which stood for baby sister), as we all knew her, was a founder of the Museo Ixchel and of the Friends of the Ixchel Museum. She cajoled and persuaded many people to serve on boards and to work tirelessly for the Ixchel. She will be very much missed. A longer story about this vibrant woman and her achievements will appear in the next newsletter.

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



FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

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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.

Benefactor	\$1,000	Contributor	\$100
Patron	\$500	Family	\$50
Sponsor	\$250	Individual	\$25

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

Please mail this form with your donation.

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