



# FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

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## A TODOS SANTOS TALE

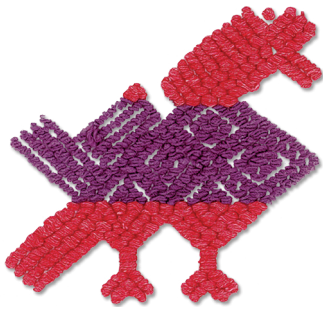
by Raymond Senuk

All collectors want their textiles to have a tale. Guatemalan textiles are mostly anonymous. They are bought in local markets or shops and any tale you are told should be taken with grain of salt. Forty plus years of collecting has taught me this.

This set of men's clothing from Todos Santos is an extraordinary find. This shirt and pants were made for everyday use. Given that they were made sometime in the 1920s, they are in remarkably fine condition. A few years ago I received a call from a friend in Santa Fe who asked if I would be interested in a men's shirt and pants from Todos Santos. I asked "do they have age?" She said yes, and sent a very bad photo. However, it was good enough for me to know that these were pieces I wanted. I made an offer and it was accepted.

Now for the tale! I cannot tell you who wove them, but I can tell you who bought/collected them. Oliver LaFarge was an anthropologist and novelist. He was quite accomplished at both, having won

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# IN THE MUSEUM



by Maya Fledderjohn

Left: Designer Juan Pablo Socarrás works with Violeta Gutiérrez (Museo Curator), Kim Pivaral (Museo Board), and weavers

Right: Colombiamoda runway model displays cape woven by project weavers

Page 3: María Isabel Pérez and Maya Fledderjohn (second row center) with designer Juan Pablo Socarrás and project weavers from Santo Domingo Xenacoj. María Isabel is the Executive Director of the Corporación Mundial de la Mujer, Colombia)

Earlier this year, the Museum started talks with a Colombian organization called Corporación Mundial de la Mujer (CMM) to discuss a project that would involve both organizations and work with Guatemalan weavers.

The result is a project with Santo Domingo Xenacoj, a community the Museum knows well and has access to thanks to years of field work, much of which was done with FOIM.

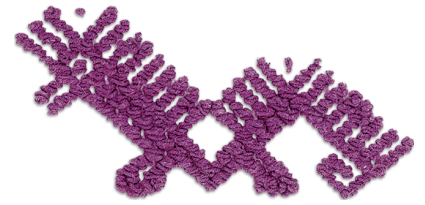
Thirty weavers were selected to work on the project. The very first step was a visit to the Museum. It was a very emotional encounter as the Colombians asked each and every woman there when she started weaving, what it meant to her, and who taught her how to weave. We heard all their stories. Many cried as they told us they had never been to the city or the Museum and had no idea there was a place where what they did was valued and appreciated by so many.

Later, we visited their homes and started training in quality control, pricing, and business tools...skills that will aid them long after the project is completed.

The designer, Juan Pablo Socarrás, says his mission is to make visible those who are invisible. He doesn't want to take credit for work done by artisans and weavers; instead, he wants to show their work, their faces, and their communities.

Juan Pablo was the designer opening the very prestigious Colombiamoda fashion show. Violeta Gutiérrez, our curator, and one of our board members made the trip to join him. He closed his show with a piece he had especially made by the Santo Domingo Xenacoj weavers participating in the project. It was a 6 x 4 meter cape made with backstrap looms and pieced together with "randas." It was not altered in any way, so he let the work of





the weavers shine. In this way, he honored ancestral traditional weaving, in keeping with the Museo Ixchel's mission.

Training for the weavers has begun with a fair pricing workshop. The project's goal is to revitalize weaving techniques, especially the backstrap loom. They will receive training and professional development to turn their skills into a profitable business.

In November their work will be shown in a fashion show in Guatemala.

We are very excited by all the possibilities that this kind of project offers the Museum and Guatemalan weavers.



## A TODOS SANTOS TALE

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

For an online article showing the current *traje* in Todos Santos, check out:

[globetrottergirls.com/please-dont-go-to-todos-santos/](http://globetrottergirls.com/please-dont-go-to-todos-santos/)

a Pulitzer Prize for 'Laughing Boy', published in 1929. As an anthropologist, he accompanied Frans Blom on a Middle American Research Institute expedition to Mexico and Central America sponsored by Tulane University in 1925. This expedition is chronicled in *Tribes and Temples* (1926). This expedition took him to the Cuchumatanes in Guatemala. It is a high plateau at 10,000 feet above sea level with surrounding mountains. As an ethnographer, he studied the cult of rain making and divination in villages on the altiplano. This research was documented in *The Year Bearer's People* in 1931. Sometime in this period, he collected this shirt and pants in Todos Santos. The reason I know all of this - his son from his father's second marriage, John 'Pen' LaFarge, sold them to me. They had been hanging in his closet for decades. How glorious

to have exact provenance for a textile close to 100 years old.

Now for the textiles, both are woven on a base cloth of handspun cotton. The amount of white is usually a good indicator of age. Dyestuffs were expensive. The brocade and warp striping are done in alizarin red, indigo, and a mustard yellow. Alizarin, which is a synthetic dye of madder, was the only red dyestuff available to Guatemalan weavers on cotton before 1930. The indigo and yellow are natural dyes. The warp striping is identical in both textiles, telling me they were meant to be a matching set. The warp stripes in the shirt are natural brown cotton. I do not know of an older set of Todos Santos *traje*.



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# YOU SUGGESTED...

Many thanks to those of you who responded to our recent survey! Your comments and suggestions were great. We are discussing and addressing them as we can. Some are for the Museo Ixchel to tackle – but others are in our purview.

Here are some of special impact or interest:\*

- Several of you seek information on East Coast lectures, upcoming video seminars (e.g. Penn), traveling exhibits on the West Coast, etc. We will increase focus on the EVENTS section of our website [ixchelfriends.org](http://ixchelfriends.org) and keep it rich and current. We could also use your help – if you encounter this kind of event/information locally, do let us know!
- “As I grow older, I am thinking of how to dispose of my collection of Guatemalan textiles” was also a refrain. You’d like information about museums, galleries, and experts who will do valuations for both paintings and textiles. We will try to address this in a future newsletter or on our website’s COLLECTOR’S CORNER.

Again, you can help us – please let us know of experts or locations/groups which are looking for textile donations.

- As a corollary, someone suggested we profile important pieces from Members’ collections, with a commentary. Creative! We’d be happy to hear from those who self-identify as serious collectors and have a special piece to highlight. Again, we could feature them in the newsletter, Instagram or website.

- A cluster of “Changes over time in women’s clothing”, “Usage in modern times”, “Modern trends in traditional dress” was a popular request which we explore in various ways. We funded Museo fieldwork on this topic, providing research and the basis for their Sala IV renovation (written up in a previous newsletter). Our traveling exhibit also contains comparisons over time. We’ll continue to support documentation of these changes.

- “Digitizing the collection” was referred to in several ways. This is a major Museo project which we have funded (with your donations) and supported for over 3 years. Significant progress has been made, but more remains to be done.

\*If you’d like a document with all the responses, including a full list of the verbatims, just let us know and we will send it via email.



## FRIENDS OF THE IXCHEL MUSEUM

15 Roszel Road, Suite 10, Princeton, NJ 08540

**Members receive free entrance to FOIM exhibits in the U.S.**

**Also entrance to the Museo Ixchel in Guatemala,  
with discounts on select purchases in its shop.**

Custodia	\$5,000	Faja	\$100
Huipil Ceremonial	\$1,000	Cinta Seda	\$50
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Corte	\$250		

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