

The Quixote Iconographic Museum

There are moments when the flats of this beach become the plateaus of La Mancha, and I see Don Quixote and Sancho riding their mounts as if they were real. I touch them, I hear them, they are here with us. Cervantes created them to be immortal. Oh, what a relief to read Quixote! To read it in a concentration camp, like the minute hand of the human clock, like the discovery of the ideals that justify the madness of genius in calling for a government of reason.

EULALIO FERRER
BARCARÈS, FRANCE, JULY 16, 1939.



Spanish painter Antonio Quiroz, *This Is How I See Don Quixote*, 145 x 114 cm (oil).

Photos reprinted courtesy of the Eulalio Ferrer Cervantes Foundation

He has been riding for the more than four centuries since Cervantes' pen immortalized him. His exploits triumph over the barriers of language and are recognized the world over. Don Quixote, the knight of sad countenance, comes alive in every time, in every generous man true to himself who risks his own safety and takes the side of the oppressed.

El ingenioso Hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha (Don Quixote), translated into practically all written languages, almost obsessively critiqued and annotated, with a bibliography so large it is surpassed only by the Bible, is an image that goes beyond typeset and takes human form, a figure recognizable through all time. Very few people are unaware of what Quixote looks like; no one would confuse him with anyone else. Recreated by the knowing hand of a craftsman, the expert brush of a painter or the sculptor's chisel, in all times

and all places, Quixote always brings to mind only one thing: Quixote.

Of this, the city of Guanajuato offers us proof. Here, on a November day 10 years ago, hundreds of Quixo-

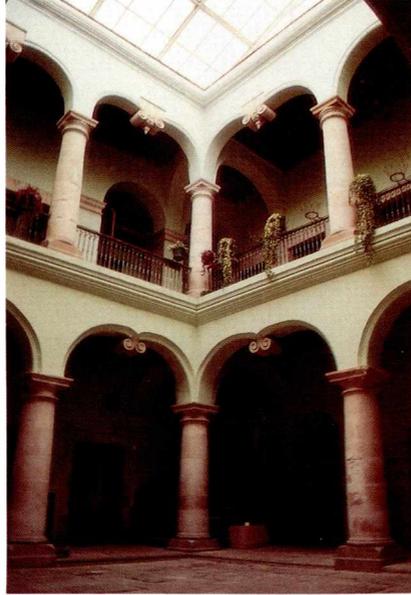
tes from all over the world took over a house-cum-museum to reveal themselves as their creators saw them.

The Quixote Iconographic Museum is the only one of its kind in the world, not only because it con-

tains more than 600 versions of a single figure done in painting, sculpture, engravings and crafts from a myriad of places, but because of the richness and quality of the works themselves. Its uniqueness also flows



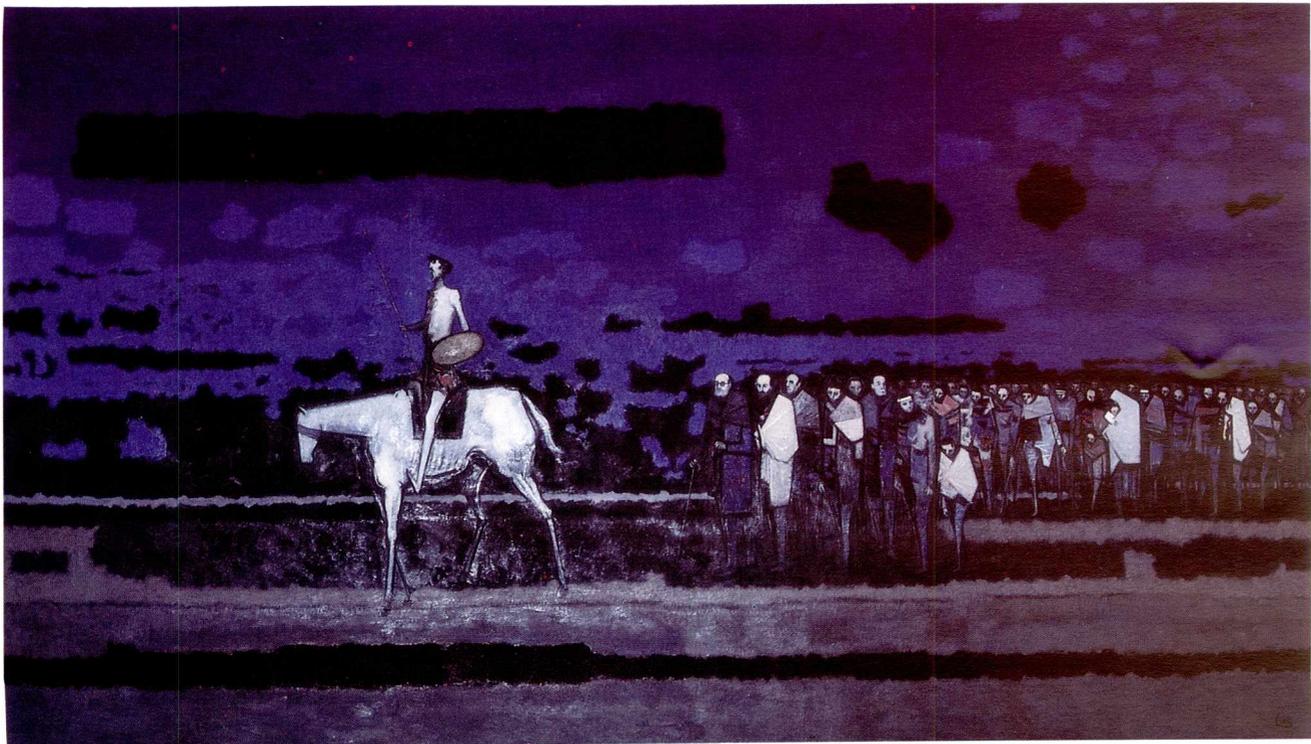
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Spanish painter Antonio Rodríguez Luna, *Don Quixote in Exile*, 200 x 350 cm (mural in mixed techniques).

from the passion and care with which the pieces were gathered by their collector, Don Eulalio Ferrer Rodríguez.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE COLLECTION

The first Quixote that Spaniard Eulalio Ferrer ever knew lived in the verses penned by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. It was his constant companion, read ceaselessly, during the months he spent in the French concentration camps at Argelès and Barcarès in 1939. After burying himself in its pages, the sea became the plains of La Mancha,

and he could see Don Quixote and Sancho approaching, real people, and share with them a single song to freedom.

When he got his liberty, Don Eulalio came to Mexico in the great Spanish exodus that settled here in the early 1940s. His passion for Quixote became a collector's zeal. On his travels through the world, Ferrer acquired any and all interpretations of Cervantes' character that he thought had value: paintings, sculptures, engravings, ceramic pieces. The fecund Quixote characters are represented in their multiplicity of forms, figures and colors, without ever exhausting their creative possibilities. To enhance his collection, Ferrer invited important Mexican and



Mexican painter Alberto Gironella, *After Dore*, 80 × 100 cm (oil).



Mexican painter Pedro Coronel, *Cosmic Quixote*, 355 × 851 cm (mural in acrylic and other techniques).

foreign painters to put their own interpretations of Quixote on canvas. Different sized paintings and moveable murals soon invaded the walls of his home and the vaulted ceiling of his "chapel-library." Six hundred Quixotes, alone or accompanied by the faithful Sancho, riding or hand-in-hand with his beloved Dulcinea, turned his home into a munificent museum. Then, Ferrer decided to part with them all and donate them to the people of Mexico.

The collection was established in Guanajuato, one of Mexico's most beautiful colonial cities and host for the last 25 years of the International Cervantes Festival. Since then, the knight errant from La Mancha and his universe can be accompanied on their unending march by all who visit it.

A VOYAGE IN TIME AND SPACE

A collective interpretation, the collection of Don Quixotes and other characters from the piece is exceptional. Ensclosed on walls, tables, glass cases and pieces of furniture through the two-story building's 10 rooms, or guarding the corners and recesses of its central patio, they offer a free interpretation of his wanderings.

The character's conception in the author's mind,

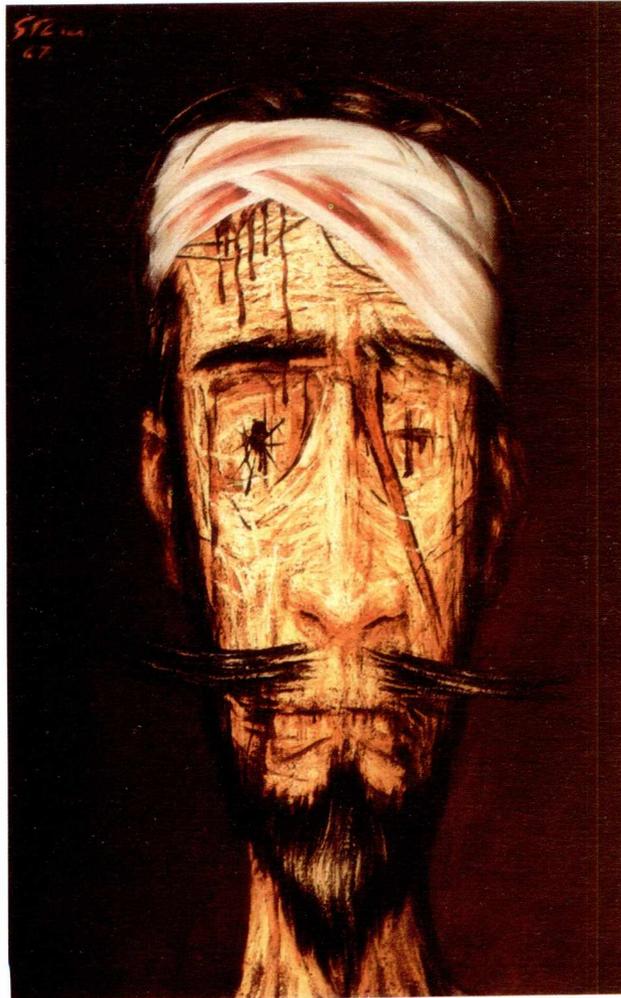
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the birth of the Hero in the mind of Alonso Quijano, the character himself, the influence of the novels of chivalry which incited to adventures and fed an unbreakable will, or Quixote's inseparable companions Rocinante and Sancho can all be seen in Gabriel Flores' mural and the paintings of Alberto Gironella, Alfredo Palmero de Grigori, Montoll and Alvaro Delgado.

The dramatic and representative sides of Quixote's idealism burst from the brushes of Spaniards Eduardo Pisano and Francisco Moreno Capdevila and Mexican José Chávez Morado. José Guadalupe Posada, Mexico's engraver famous for transporting the living to the kingdom of the dead, brings us an original Quixote skeleton that, even in the beyond, takes up the sword unflinchingly against skeletal giants.

Dalí, Picasso, Alfredo Zalce, Raúl Anguiano, Mario Orozco Rivera, Antonio Rodríguez Luna, Benito Messguer, Arnold Belkin, Francisco Corzas, Pedro Coronel: the list is endless. All united in a visual paradox whose interpretative power produces images evoking Quixote at once challenging and fallen, discrete, audacious, combative, serene, contemporaneous, historical.

Many of the Quixotes are outstanding, but none outshines the others. The viewer's gaze wanders over the paint-



Mexican painter Gabriel Flores, *The Martyrdom of Don Quixote*, 75 x 50 cm (oil).

ings, the statues, the engravings, the porcelains, the pitchers, the medallions, the stamps, the platters, the miniature ivory carvings or the chess set on whose board Sancho-pawns, Rocinante-knights, windmill-rooks and, of course, Quixote-kings and Dulcinea-queens face off.

A fiesta of techniques, styles, forms, sizes, materials and visions,

all to please a single character who, as Agustín Yañez would say, deserved to be revered because, “The cult to our lord Don Quixote is the cult of Man’s everlasting prowess and the exaltation of basic values: goodness, beauty, justice, liberty.”

After wandering through the rooms of this very special museum,

your only option is to take the lesson to heart and get up into the saddle of the renowned knight to hear him proclaim, “For liberty... and for honor, life itself can and must be ventured.” ❧

Elsie Montiel
Managing Editor



Dante Barrera

Of the world’s approximately 40,000 museums, only one is dedicated to art whose theme is the work of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra: the Quixote Iconographic Museum, housed in a beautiful, restored, three-story eighteenth century home in the city of Guanajuato, Mexico.

The Quixote Iconographic Museum boasts almost 1,000 pieces in different styles, techniques and tastes: a very up-to-date version of *Don Quixote* and its characters. Several murals grace the museum walls, among them *Cosmic Quixote* (463 sq.ft.), by Pedro Coronel; *Work and Its Inspiration* (420 sq.ft.), by Gabriel Flores; *Quixote Between Life and Death* (344 sq.ft.), by Raúl Anguiano; *Don Quixote in Exile* (301 sq.ft.), by Antonio Rodríguez Luna, whose work is considered exemplary of the Spanish exile commu-

nity. Among the many other pieces are works by Dalí, Picasso, Carbonero, Rafael Coronel, Vela Zametti, Alvaro Delgado, Gregorio Prieto and Francisco Corzas, as well as crafts and historical items.

Then-Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid and Spanish Head of Government Felipe González inaugurated the Quixote Iconographical Museum on November 7, 1987. The works themselves were donated by the Cervantes Foundation of Mexico, headed up by Eulalio Ferrer Rodríguez, as a grateful homage to the people of Mexico for its generosity to the Spanish exile community.

Every year the museum receives 200,000 visitors, among them historians and researchers from the world over who come to study what only this collection can offer, a visual reading of *Don Quixote*.