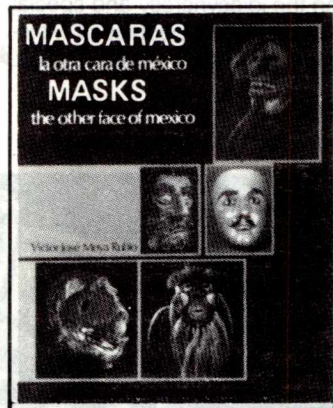


Bilingual Edition on Mexican Masks

Máscaras: La otra cara de México (*Masks: Mexico's Other Face*), by Victor José Moya Rubio. Third bilingual edition (Spanish-English), UNAM, Mexico, 1986.



That other face, the mask, has existed as a cultural expression throughout time. There are masks of all sorts: ceremonial, ritual, for funerals, for war, for use in magic as practiced by the peoples of Africa, India, Polynesia and by American Indians, including Mexicans.

"The look that looks and doesn't see," as Mexican writer Octavio Paz described masks, has been used as a symbol by man to transform himself and as a magical instrument to help him achieve his desires.

Masks: Mexico's Other Face was put together by Victor José Moya using his own magnificent collection, acquired over the years, from all parts of Mexico, and which forms part of his assemblage of masks from five con-

tinents. A sample of the complete collection consisting of 750 masks, was exhibited in museums in Mexico, the United States, England, Germany, France, Poland and Japan, among other countries.

This bilingual edition is illustrated with black and white and color photographs and includes an interesting study on the subject of masks. Overall, it presents an excellent description of Mexican masks, covering several different regions, peoples and traditions, providing valuable insight into the wealth and peculiarities of the nation's culture.

We have here the history of masks from pre-Hispanic times to the present, both in graphics and in text. We learn that in pre-Hispanic times masks carried special importance, and both their social and artistic implications have been extended and superimposed among the practices of contemporary ethnic groups.

Throughout history and today, masks have been an important factor in the lives of Mexicans. They are used in dances, carnivals and religious *fiestas*, and in addition to their symbolic quality, masks are an art form practiced by people of all ages.

Sacred dances appeared among the earliest inhabitants of what today is Mexico, and were dedicated to the Moon and Sun. The martial, mystical and ritual dances that are still enacted today in many religious *fiestas*, developed at later dates. In all of them masks are an important component of the costume. Among the dances carried out in different parts of the country we can cite the *Archareros*, or archers. This is a variation of the Moors and Christians dance developed during the colonial period, and three types of masks are used: Señor Santiago, Captain Savario and the *Archers*, who represent the heretics. In the

weighted down by the "resonance of disenchantment," at a time when the "red hope has become a reality that has little to do with the illusion of paradise," and "the proletarian paradise is collapsing."

Yet the sources cited throughout this essay reveal that rather than being skeptical about the individual's subjective role in life, she aims to bring out a demand being voiced strongly in Mexico today: autonomy for popular cultural expression *vis a vis* the State, even though officialdom has made such extensive use of Rivera.

Diego Rivera lost a legal battle at Rockefeller Center, but the point is that the infringement of an artist's rights cannot be forgotten, nor is the past or present supremacy of monopoly over the artist admissible, says the author, since the artist can exert his moral right to create, complete and protect his work.

It was impossible to silence the Rockefeller affair. The Detroit Institute of Art houses a mural painted during those same years

Irene Herner believes that when Rivera arrived in the United States in 1930 he saw himself as the artist with a redemptive mission. This in turn made him influential among U.S. intellectuals anxious to find the popular artistic forms that went with "America for the Americans."

Once in the United States, the Mexican muralist proved "capable, in the first place, of surrounding himself with people who, even in a time of world crisis, could pay for and promote the creation and sale of works of art," and this despite the criticism of his communist detractors. Rivera moved into this world to express the beauty of industrial progress through "a human dream that was more mythical than political and historical." Diego Rivera's artistic authority survived the controversy with the Rockefellers, bolstered by defense committees set up by North American students and painters and by political groups who shared his concept of art.

The author recognizes Rivera's skill at mass propagand-

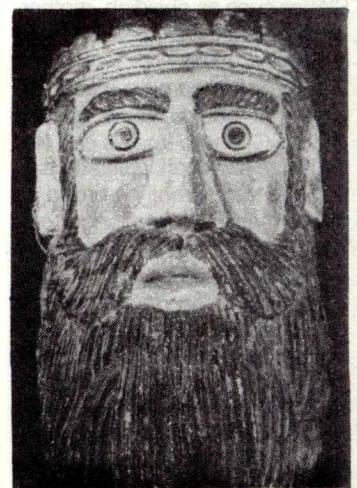


and was also hounded for political reasons. And Rivera conquered a space for another mural on the same theme, this one in Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes.** What did prove impossible, though, was to settle the differences between his committed school of art and the pictorial current of so-called pure art, defended against Rivera mainly by French painter Henri Matisse.

* Rejecting what is national and admiring all that is foreign.

** Palace of Fine Arts.★

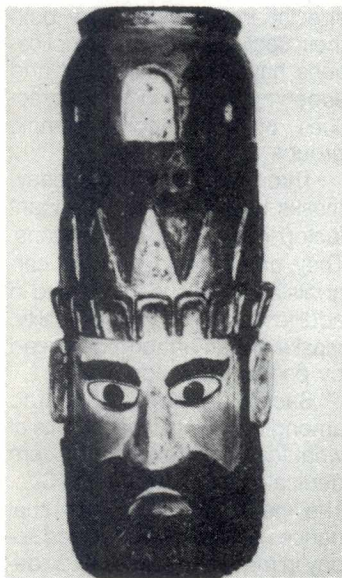
Tania Palencia



odds and ends

Nayar mountains, dancers cover their faces with masks representing deer, bulls, wild boars, iguanas and lizards, in designs that combine monstrous and human features.

Masks are a central feature, sometimes even the most important one, in religious fiestas honoring patron saints, virgins or other Christian holidays, as well as in regional and patriotic celebrations. Children also don masks that turn them into scary devils, happy clowns or traditional Mexican *Calaveras*, the gaily decorated skulls and skeletons typical of All Saints' Day celebrations. Such is the case of the widely used masks of Celaya, Guanajuato, made of pressed



cardboard, shaped and moulded by hand.

Because of Mexico's vast cultural and climatic mosaic, the materials used to make masks vary greatly. Sometimes soft pine wood is used, while others employ hard woods; the wood can be natural, polished, polychromed or covered with fabric and painted with oils, as is the custom in the state of Guerrero. Stones such as obsidian, mother-of-pearl and turquoise are broadly used in some areas, whereas in Jalisco, for example, masks are made of cooked and painted clay. In Guerrero, masks can also be made of woven, painted palm.

There is currently a broad array of masks that no longer correspond to the characters traditionally portrayed in rites, ceremonies and dances. This is mostly due to the fact that mask-makers, whose Indian communities used to be quite isolated, are now being influenced by mass media. The ancient masks and their ritual force are losing ground and becoming han-

dicrafts made out of industrial materials such as rubber. Even though these masks are mainly for decorative purposes, they're made with great skill and imagination. The Linares family of mask-makers in Mexico City, for example, produce fantastic animal figures made of wire and paper called *alebrijes* ("ugly things"), which are famous world-wide.

This book on masks is a valuable work for anyone interested in the surviving expressions of age-old myths and in understanding the idiosyncrasy and special features of the peoples of Mexico, another face of our identity.★

R.C.



The Artist Who Loves Cooking

Martha Chapa: *La cocina mexicana y su arte*. Editorial Everest Mexicana, S.A., Leon España, 1983.

Mexican Cookery and Its Art (*La cocina mexicana y su arte*) is no ordinary recipe book. Its author Martha Chapa is a well-known painter, and *Mexican Cookery* is a synthesis of both her callings: cuisine and art. Martha says she dreams of recipes and paintings. For her, cookery

serves as effectively as painting to express her inner being and the myths that nourish it: Eve; the serpent; and the coveted apple which constitutes the obsessive subject-matter of her art and which she has depicted in a variety of astonishing representations — with butterfly wings; enclosed in a shell, bearer of the secrets and the moisture of the sea; with serpent's skin, eye open to desire.

In cookery as in painting, Martha is concerned with texture, with unity of color and taste, with harmony of spaces and colors, with the search for the word that will express such harmony. According to Faustino Gordon, so Martha tells us, "Cookery illumi-



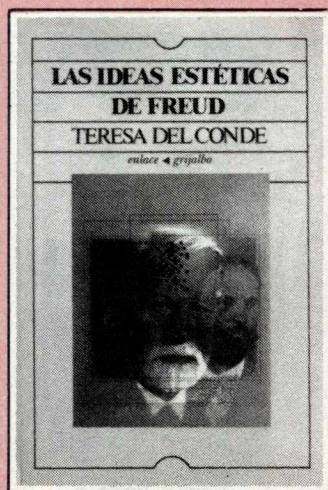
nated the word". The poets and painters who have been guests at her dinner table have expressed their delight in poems and sketches which the author jealously saved for inclusion in her book. Thus Javier Wimer's *La carta* (The Menu), Andrés Henestrosa's *El prólogo* (The Prolog), Alejandro Córdova's *La interpretación del Tótem y Tabú* (The Interpretation of Totem and Tabu), Horacio Cerutti's *La utopía por la cocina* (Utopia Through Cookery) and Salvador Elizondo's *El antojo* (The Craving), all retain a flavor of those dinner conversations in which Martha, surrounded by beloved objects, has been photographed by Paulina Lavista.

In *Mexican Cookery*, the recipes are not remote, impersonal lists of instructions. Martha writes in the first person: "The first thing I do is chop up the onion, fry it in oil, and then add the flowers, which I've already cleaned and cooked in their own juice." To Martha, her dishes are as harmonious, and as much her

Art and Psychoanalysis

Teresa del Conde. *Las ideas estéticas de Freud* (The Aesthetic Ideas of Freud).

Editorial Grijalbo S.A.; Mexico, 1986, 258 pp.



This is probably one of the first works by a Latin American to deal specifically with Sigmund Freud's commentary and analysis of art, creativity and literature. Its great contribution lies in having brought together materials scattered throughout Freud's works and organized them by topics and chapters. The study critically reviews ideas by other authors on Freud, develops his artistic vision through a continuum, and most importantly, tries to provide the reader with a complete knowledge of Freud's thinking on art.