

ment) are just about the only two oases as far as radio is concerned in the Valley of Mexico.

Mexico has a total of 703 radio stations, out of which only 27 are cultural ones; 2.5 per cent are AM, 2.96 per cent are FM and 36 per cent are short wave.

Alva de la Selva says "the university radios, with Radio UNAM in the lead, have shown us their importance when it comes to spreading culture through different sorts of musical, literary, historical and political programs, all of which have contributed greatly to Mexican transmissions. They have also made clear how useful they can be for furthering social causes and how vital it is to work in an atmosphere of freedom and respect whatever one's political point of view may be".

This attitude towards radio transmissions has always existed in Radio UNAM during critical moments. Beatriz Barros gives a few examples:

— The programs transmitted during the U.S. invasion of the Cuban Bay of Pigs which included interviews with people from the university and with well-known experts on Latin America.

— Radio UNAM's presence in the 1968 student movement in Mexico. Important aspects of this

were the recordings of Rector Javier Barros Sierra's speeches and the account of the famous silent march in which thousands of teachers and students took part.

— Covering the consequences of the September 1985 earthquake. Telephones were set up in the transmission booth to provide help and information. Radio UNAM received a number of distinctions for this.

— Last February, when the student movement pressed university authorities to grant a number of reforms Radio UNAM transmitted the ongoing negotiations between the student organization and the officials.

Radio UNAM has had its ups and downs, its good moments and its bad; nevertheless it has managed to overcome all sorts of difficulties during these fifty years.

Arias insists the radio should carry on as it has up to now. He also says "One mustn't forget that Radio UNAM is paid for by the Mexican people both to help them and to defend their identity which is becoming more endangered each day. In this it differs radically from many other radios which are a constant source of foreign influence".

E.V.A.

Books

Ancient Meso-American Artists

Crónicas de barro y piedra by Jacqueline Larralde de Sáenz, UNAM, México, 1987.

Perhaps the most interesting reflection to be derived from a perusal of "*Crónicas en barro y piedra, Arte Prehispánico en la colección Sáenz* (Chronicles in Clay and Stone, Prehispanic Art in the Sáenz Collection) (The Formative Period) by Jacqueline Larralde de Sáenz, is that the idea and the role of art have undergone as many transformations as man himself in order to reach what we now understand as civilization.

This book, published by the Institute of Research in Aesthetics, of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (U.N.A.M.), dedicates itself to 789 pieces from the Sáenz Collection from the Formative or Pre-Classical Period (1800-100 B.C). It has the specific purpose—in contrast with many texts or catalogs—of rescuing the value of the work of art and the particular perception of these ancient artists in one precise historic situation.

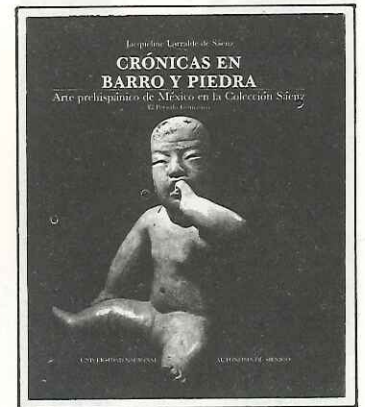
Mrs. Sáenz takes as her starting point the idea that our concept of art is different from that in more gregarious societies where the individual, as we now understand it, did not exist: "More often than not the representation of objects with their own aesthetic significance was not the immediate intention of the artists. That is, art produced by the ancient Mexicans was a means of achieving magic and religious results." Nevertheless Jacqueline and Josue, her husband, offer us objects imprinted with the force and vitality of artists who are permanently preoccupied by their need for expression, given their formal

odds and ends

possibilities and technical progress. We do not know who these anonymous creators were but we have their work, objects that have far more than mere archaeological value.

Chronicles in Clay and Stone is a happy mixture of art, anthropology and archaeology. The first of a series of four—the other three will deal with the Proto-Classical, Classical and Protohistoric and Historic Periods—it is an amazing tale, a sort of conversation, that revives approximately 15 centuries of art from the agricultural communities of Mexico's lake district, the valleys of Puebla and Morelos, the Olmecs of the cities and the country, Guerrero, Guanajuato and Michoacan,

Jacqueline Larralde de Sáenz



makes a close-knit synthesis of the origins of American man and recovers studies such as those of the Tehuacan valley to explain how civilization came to the vast cultural zone that we now call Mesoamerica: the cultivation of grains, and the improvement in diet, the networks of communication, the social organization of work and the specialization in production, demographic growth, the appearance of a central power, etc.

In what Mrs Sáenz defines as the Initial Formative Period, we find pieces of great expressiveness, such as the female figures with elaborate hairstyles, from El Arbolillo; or the singular *Venus Esteatopigida*, from the early Huasteca culture. Also coming from this period is a little female head, from the findings in El Opeño, Michoacán, where an ancient sculptor achieves the expression of the eyes, the mouth, and the pupils through his skilled handling of tools and strips of clay.

From the Middle Formative period there are outstanding Olmec sculptures from Tabasco and Veracruz. Pieces representing felines or monkeys show the different roles played by these



odds and ends

creatures in Mesoamerican iconography. Those human figures with Olmec features, impregnated with feline characteristics, originate perhaps from the millenarian myth of a jaguar copulating with a woman. Also from this period are the impressive 'pretty women' of Tlatilco.

Among the pieces that illustrate the Late Formative Period we find sculptures representing ball players and pregnant women from Pánuco, Veracruz, or the funeral statues and multi-colored pottery from Chupicuaro, Michoacán.



Art from the Formative period is rich in facets of daily life and full of symbolism: twin-headed dogs or bodies, animal-shaped or shaman vases, act as chroniclers of times when the ancient Mexican understood reality by expressing it.

The Sáenz, like the Egyptian Pharaoh Hatshepsut or the Emperor Moctezuma II, assume the role of 'collectors for love', along the lines of Diego Rivera or Carlos Pellicer, in order to share with us a legacy of incalculable value.

The Sáenz Collection, which is intended to be a substantial part of a museum in the city of Puebla, consists of 2,500 archaeological pieces brought together between 1944 and 1968 and "was formed through our interest in associating art with the history of ancient Mesoamerica. From this comes the title, *Chronicles in Clay and Stone*."

This magnificent book constitutes the first issue of one of the principal cultural patrimonies of Mexico. I should like to emphasize the great capacity of the author to present with sensitivity the enormous artistic wealth of our country in the aforementioned period which made possible the flowering of a civilization as awesome as any of the most important the world has seen.

Chronicles in Clay and Stone achieves yet one more objective implicit in the loving collectionism of the Sáenz: "to plumb the essence of the objects that reflect life and animation through inanimate matter, that is the creative intention of the artists."

Luis Alberto Barquera



The "Pretty Young Ladies"

Las niñas bien (The Pretty Young Ladies) by Guadalupe Loaeza; Editorial Océano. México, 1987.

During the last few years Mexico has lived through a severe crisis. Because of this the middle class has become more and more impoverished. Also, the gap which separates two sectors of Mexican society: the small privileged minority—the "nice" people— and the enormous

majority of dispossessed has grown wider. Plenty has been written on this subject from the point of view of those who don't have a bank account in dollars nor the possibility of going to Vail on vacation. Cristina Pacheco, for example, in *Sopita de fideo* (Noodle Soup) (1984) and in *Zona de desastre* (Disaster Area) (1986) has constantly stressed the anguish of those who can hardly manage to survive. Elena Poniatowska, another well-known writer, has become very much involved with the problems of the seamstresses affected by the 1985 earthquake and with the troubles of many other women, many of whom don't normally even earn the minimum wage. What we didn't have was a book written from the point of view of that "other Mexico" both opulent and elitist, of that sector whose attitude towards life and whose gigantic shopping-sprees abroad contributed and still contribute to the crisis. Loaeza provides us with this vision we were lacking.

This book is really a collection of articles which appeared in two Mexico City newspapers, *Unomásuno* and *La Jornada*, and in the weekly *Punto* between 1982 and 1986. The first ones materialized shortly after the state take over of the banks on September 1, 1982. They reveal the malaise which prevailed among the middle class because of this presidential decree. The articles haven't been arranged in chronological order, but are grouped

together according to what they are about. The book begins with a section about the "nice young ladies", and in it these young girls are classified depending on which category they belong to, for they don't all fit into the same group. There is another section which describes how a lady from *Las Lomas*, an upper class residential area, becomes politically-conscious on the eve of elections in July 1985.

Loaeza, with a sharp, often even caustic sense of humour, outlines the feelings of this class that apparently doesn't know about—or pretends not to—the extent to which their way of life affects the crisis the country is going through. These people, who used to travel abroad—usually to the U.S.— eight times a year and would come home loaded with things they had bought there, who own houses in Coronado, Houston or Florida and go to Veil and Epcott on vacation, believe (an easy way to keep one's conscience clear) that this decapitalization is simply the result of corruption, faulty administration or the world crisis. The élite is not, however, unaware of the crisis and Loaeza in her articles tries to show that they are becoming more conscious about all this. Nevertheless, simple things like buying a pair of stockings at the local store and finding them acceptable are not all that easy for them.

The articles are written from a woman's point of view, general-

