

# The National Museum of Anthropology

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INAH-CNCA-Mex

*Umbrella.*

**T**HE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY is Mexico City's point of rendez-vous for Mexicans and foreigners alike. They meet in an extraordinary building which is home to more than three thousand years of history. This cultural and ecological mosaic projects the image of Mexico, asserting its part in universal history.

More than fifty million people have visited the Museum since it was opened in 1964. It was built by the well known architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, who assembled a team of anthropologists, archaeologists, engineers, educators, artists, emissaries from indigenous groups and hundreds of laborers for the project. Together, they created the building that stands in the heart of Chapultepec Park. Its 30 thousand square meters (322, 920 square feet) blend harmoniously into the green surroundings, complementing the black and white of the spacious stone and marble plaza leading to the entrance hall.

Visitors are welcomed by *Tlaloc*, a *Coatlinchan* monolith from the *Teotihuacan* culture, who lords over the *Paseo de la Reforma*, Mexico's equivalent of the Champs Elysées. The entrance lobby leads to the temporary exhibits hall, the Jaime Torres Bodet Auditorium that proudly

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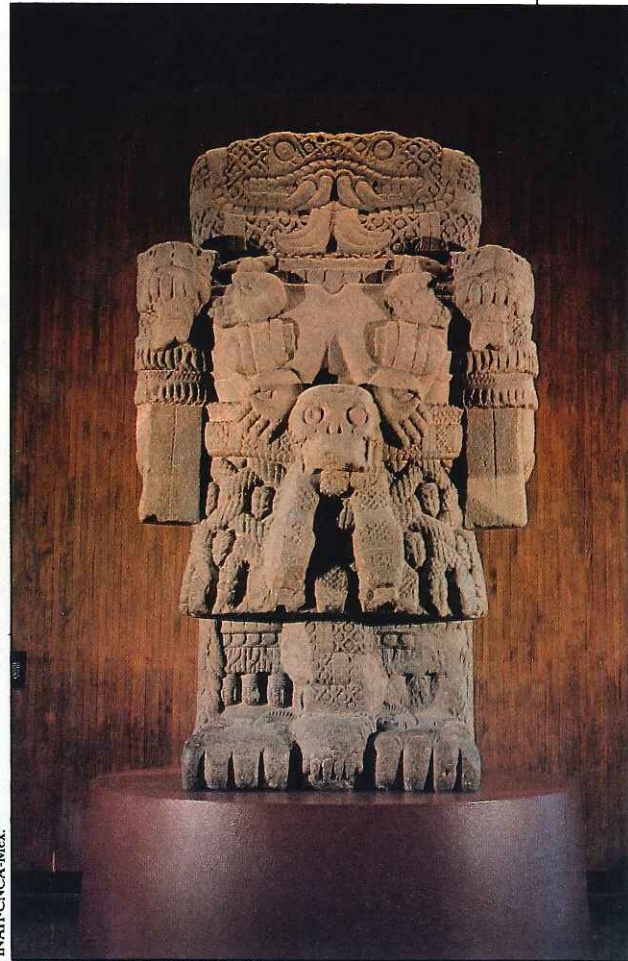
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*Teotihuacan deity known as Tlaloc.*



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*The stone of the Sun.*



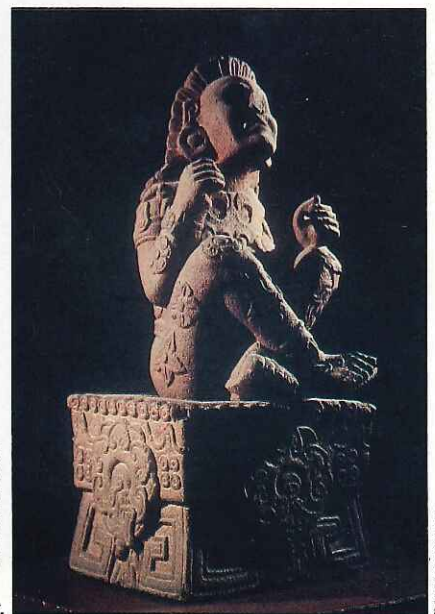
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*The monolithic figure of Coatlicue, a Mexican deity.*



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*A Mayan mask of the Sun God.*



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*Xochipilli, the Flower God of the Mexicas.*



displays a spectacular Tamayo mural, the Museum shop, as well as to the Information, General Services and administrative offices.

Facing the entrance is a large glass wall, and beyond a grand courtyard surrounded by exhibition rooms. A thirty meter high carved column supports the umbrella which makes up the water fall, creating a delicate screen. The fountain was designed by José and Tomás Chávez Morado, well-known artists, who fashioned symbols that evoke the fusion, the *mestizaje*, of that which is contemporary with the early, native Mexican heritage.

The ground floor displays archaeology from the Pre-Hispanic world. The north wing introduces the visitor to Mesoamerica, displays which present the historical context of the peoples of the central valleys of

Mexico. We see early discoveries of prehistoric people and the first agricultural settlements. Later we see the monumental urban development of Teotihuacan, a prototype of the Classical period in Mesoamerica. Walking on we come to the early Post-Classic period represented by the militaristic development of the city of *Tula*.

The culmination, facing the entrance lobby, includes an extraordinary sample of the art created by the *Mexica* people. This hall is adjacent to a pond, which emphasizes its importance as the main exhibition of the museum, while recreating a small sample of the ecological environment where the culture evolved.

When the Spaniards arrived, the *Mexica* people were the leading political and economic power

among the Mesoamerican nations. *Tenochtitlan*, the capital, was later transformed into a blooming new Hispanic city, the origin of today's impressive Mexico City.

The exhibition halls on the south wing display the regional development of the following cultures: *Zapotec* and *Mixtec* found in Oaxaca, *Olmec*, *Huastecos* and *Totonacos* from Veracruz, lowland and highland *Maya* and the groups from the North and West of Mexico. Each hall is organized in chronological order.

The second level presents the ethnology of Mexico. This realm of anthropology deals with the observation and analysis of particular groups of people, and the lifestyle and habits of living communities are recorded as accurately as possible. The indigenous population of Mexico has roots in two



Main entrance and esplanade of the museum.



cultures. On the one hand it has retained and developed elements of the Pre-Hispanic cultures, and on the other it has assimilated traits from Europe, Asia and Africa since the 16th century.

The indigenous groups are organized by geographic area or by cultural heritage, so the visitor can obtain a global vision of the specific traits in each group. We meet the *Cora* and *Huichol* people from the West of Mexico, the *Tarascos* from the state of Michoacán and the many groups of *Otomi* scattered over several states. There are also presentations of the way the *Totonacas* and *Huastecos* lived in Veracruz, as well as the *Maya* on the high and lowlands of the south of Mexico.

Our visit comes to an end at the *Nahua* Room which displays the customs of the largest group of indigenous people in Mexico, widely distributed throughout the country.

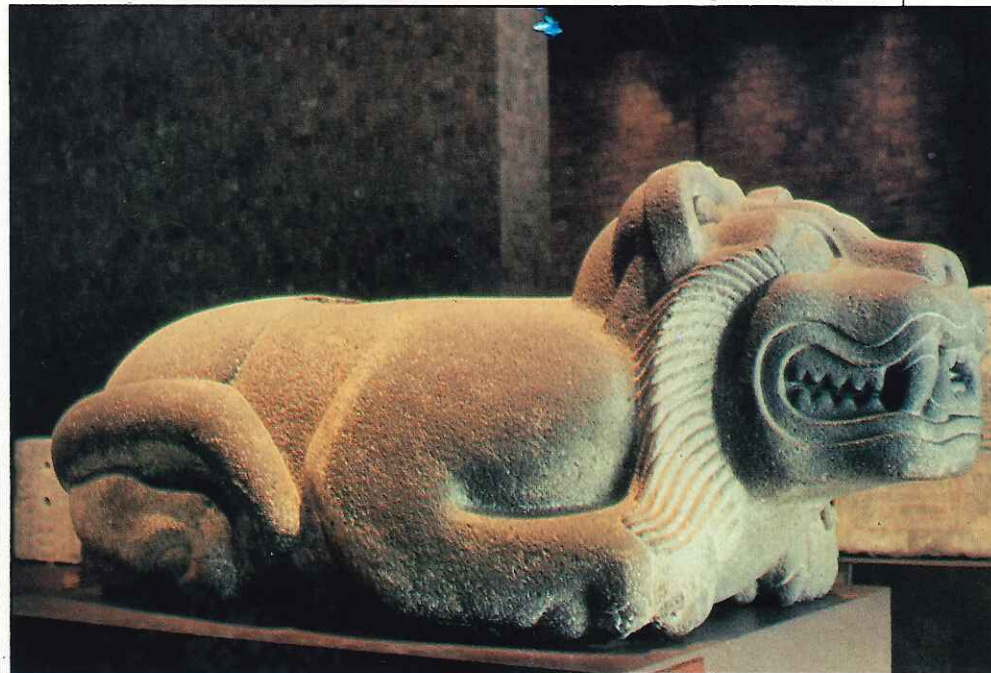
The Museum of Anthropology not only protects, conserves and promotes the invaluable treasures within the museum, but educates as well. The most important mission is accomplished by sponsoring programs for children, young people and adults. Cultural events, such as dancers travelling to perform at the Museum, musicians who play and record Pre-Hispanic music, academic courses on religion and history complement the key goal of illustrating Mexican culture as a whole



*Mayan jade mask.*

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*Mexica ocelot Cuauhxicalli.*



*Mexica roll of years.*

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