

The Amparo Museum, Puebla

Lourdes Cruz González Franco*



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Mixteco lintel, Post-Classical.

Puebla is one of the most outstanding colonial cities in Mexico. Its monuments, its churches, its museums, and the surrounding countryside make it highly attractive to tourists. At the beginning of last year, the Amparo Museum was opened, and has since become one of the major attractions offered by this beautiful city.

The museum was built by the Amparo Foundation, set up in 1979 by Manuel Espinosa Iglesias in memory of his wife, Amparo Rugarcía de Espinosa Iglesias. This institution has made important contributions to Mexico's social welfare efforts in the fields of health and culture.

The aim of this cultural center is to make known the riches of our Pre-Hispanic, Colonial, and Republican past through its collections, its library, its Center for Historical and Cultural Research, and its courses on Mexican art. Its main

objective is "the encounter with our roots," as Director Angeles Espinosa Rugarcía said on the day of its inauguration.

Located in downtown Puebla at No. 708 Dos Sur, at its intersection with Avenida 9 Oriente, it occupies

the colonial building which once housed the San Juan de Letrán Hospital and the 19th century home of the Espinosa Iglesias family. The outside of the two buildings were painted in one color, thus lending the ensemble a certain unity.



Patio, Amparo Museum, Puebla.

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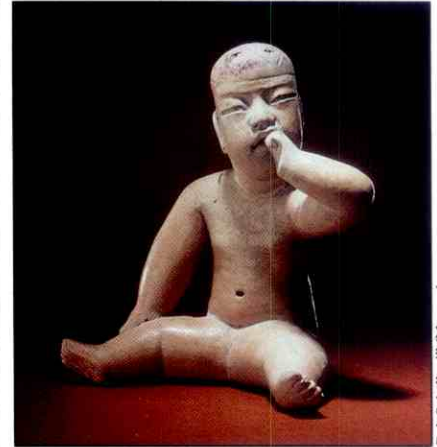
Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo

Figure of seated man, earthenware, 1000-800 B.C.

The entrance to the museum is through what was once the Espinosa Iglesias home. From the outset visitors are surprised by the extraordinary way in which the

museum is organized. It was designed by the architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, who also adapted the buildings to their present use. Pedro Ramírez is well known in the world of architecture for his many world-famous buildings, such as the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City.

The materials used in the remodelling -marble, aluminum, glass, stone, and peach-colored surfacing- are handled with great dexterity in the two old houses. The colonial atmosphere has not been lost, but rather transformed into a museum incorporating contemporary technological innovations, such as the security controls, the specialized lighting, and the information system available to visitors.



Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo

Figure of an infant, earthenware, 1000-800 B.C.

This system, unique in the world, consists of monitors located in every room with interactive compact discs -available in Spanish, English, French and Japanese- which provide detailed information on the exhibits.



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Exhibition room, Amparo Museum, Puebla.

Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo



Tripod vase, earthenware, XII-XIV cent. A.D.

Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo



Yoke, porphyry, 800-1000 A.D.

Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo



Anthropomorphic vessel, earthenware, Post-Classical.

Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo



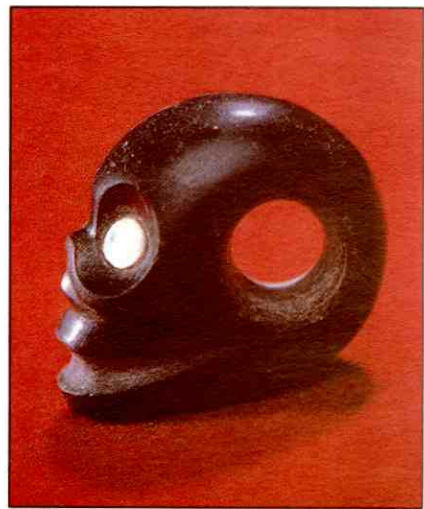
Bearded "chinesco" man, hollow clay and red paint, 100-500 A.D.

Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo



Person, hollow clay, 400-600 A.D.

Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo



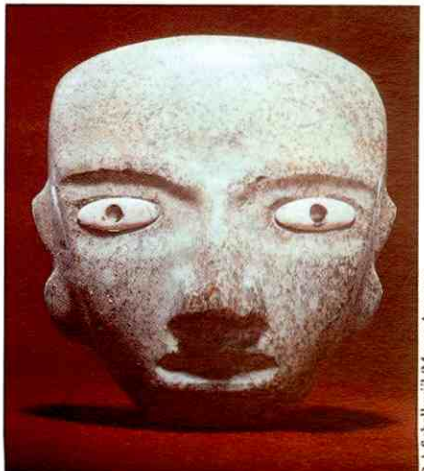
Carved bead, in the form of human skull, basalt, 1000-1519 A.D.

Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo



Breastplate, jade, 1000-800 B.C.

Bob Schaik wijk/Museo Amparo



Flattened head, serpentine, 100-800 A.D.



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Exhibition hall, Amparo Museum, Puebla.

The Amparo Museum consists of two large areas. In the first there is an important collection of Vice-Regal and Republican art from Mexico City and Puebla, with notable sculptures, paintings, furniture, wood-carving, jewelry and embroidery, all of which can be found on the upper floor of the 19th century building that serves naturally and gracefully as a frame for such pieces.



Bob Schalkwijk/Museo Amparo

"Spider-type" monkey, hollow clay and black asphalt, 400-600 A.D.

The second, larger area contains various collections of Pre-Hispanic art displayed in seven rooms intended to exhibit the customs, styles, and evolution of Mesoamerican culture. In the first room we see the production techniques of Pre-Hispanic artists in sculpture, painting, ceramics, pottery and wood-work, among others. In the second and third rooms, the styles and tendencies of different Mesoamerican communities' art is displayed.

In the following four rooms, which are on the upper floor, works from the Pre-Classic, Proto-Classic, Classic and Post-Classic periods are exhibited. This section of the museum culminates in a special room where extraordinary archeological pieces from what was formerly the Sáenz Collection are shown. The most outstanding among them are a large altar, several Mayan steles, and some Teotihuacan murals. Here, visitors are dazzled by the use

of lights and color which bring out the full beauty of these treasures. Over 1,700 Pre-Hispanic pieces are exhibited in these rooms, among which we find the Olmec *The Thinker* from Bocas, Puebla.

In another area reproductions of rupestrian paintings from Europe, Australia, and the Americas are shown. The reproductions are very successful in the way they convey the feel of the original locations. There is also a room for provisional exhibitions of contemporary art.

In addition, the museum has an auditorium for films and video, a library, offices, a cafeteria and a book store. After visiting the whole museum the visitor will certainly appreciate the excellent combination of advanced technology and magnificent art, which together create one of the best museums in Mexico, worthy of being visited time and again 🍷