

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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TWENTY CENTURIES OF MEXICAN ART BEING ASSEMBLED FOR THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Nelson A. Rockefeller, President of the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, announces that early in May the Museum, in cooperation with the Mexican Government, will open to the public Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, the largest and most comprehensive exhibition of Mexican art ever assembled. The exhibition will be of particular importance in that it will trace the development of the artistic culture of the country for twenty centuries from Pre-Columbian through Colonial, to Modern Art, with a large section on Mexican Folk or Popular Art which runs through all periods. The exhibition will fill the three gallery floors of the Museum and a considerable part of the garden. For the benefit of World's Fair visitors to New York it will remain open throughout the summer.

Dr. Alfonso Caso, Director of the National Institute of Anthropology and History of Mexico, has been appointed Commissioner General of the exhibition. Dr. Caso, the world's leading authority on Pre-Columbian art, is giving general supervision to the assembling of the entire exhibition and his personal supervision to the selection of the Pre-Columbian art. Manuel C. Toussaint is directing the section of Colonial art; Roberto Montenegro the section of Popular Art; and Miguel Covarrubias the section on Modern Art.

At present John E. Abbott, Executive Vice-President of the Museum, is in Mexico as the Museum's representative. With him are John McAndrew, Curator of the Museum's Department of Architecture, who will install the exhibition, and Monroe Wheeler, Director of the Museum's Publications Department, who is preparing the catalog which will be printed both in English and Spanish. The Honorary Committee sponsoring the exhibition will be announced later.

Mr. Rockefeller went to Mexico last fall to arrange for the exhibition with the Government. Mr. Abbott recently completed the

negotiations and signed the contract with General Eduardo Hay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Mexico City. In announcing the exhibition Mr. Rockefeller said: "In assembling and presenting the exhibition Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, in cooperation with the Mexican Government, the Museum of Modern Art is attempting to do something that has never been done, even in Mexico, on so comprehensive a scale. There have, of course, been previous Mexican exhibitions. In 1931-32 the Museum itself presented a large exhibition of the work of Diego Rivera, and a year later it showed Pre-Spanish Mexican sculpture in its exhibition of Incan, Aztec and Mayan Art. The Museum's Permanent Collection includes a large group of paintings by the greatest modern Mexican artists. But Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art will give the American public an opportunity to see and study Mexico's art of today against the background of its cultural past.

"The exhibition, as a whole, will telescope both time and space. Many centuries and many thousands of miles will be brought within its scope. The exhibition will trace the growth of Mexico's culture through twenty centuries of evolution: showing first the greatness of its Pre-Columbian or Pre-Spanish periods, then the splendors of the Colonial era, and, finally, the strength and vigor of the Modern period. The Popular or Folk Arts of all these periods will be well represented because they form so persistent and colorful a part of the life of the Mexican people.

"To know the arts of Mexico is to know and understand the Mexicans themselves, for the two are so inseparably interwoven. One cannot come to know and love the arts of this country without developing a great warmth and affection for the people themselves. They are truly an extraordinary people with a genuine understanding and appreciation of beauty-- a depth of religious feeling dating back to Pre-Spanish days; gentleness and a love of fun and play, together with remarkable imaginative gifts.

"These characteristics, coupled with almost universal skill in craftsmanship, have made possible Mexico's brilliant artistic history and have given it such extraordinary power

and continuity during these twenty centuries of development.

"The tremendous and continuous impacts of European culture during the Colonial and Modern periods did not overwhelm the native Mexican culture. The foreign influences were absorbed and given fresh vigor so that a new and rich art emerged.

"This exhibition of Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art will be not only for those who have come to know and admire the great art of Mexico, but for future visitors to Mexico it will serve as an introduction and guide to the country's artistic treasures.

"On behalf of the Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, as well as for myself, I want to express our appreciation to those whose enthusiastic cooperation has made possible the assembling and presentation of this great collection, and to the people of Mexico, our gratitude for their generosity in permitting us to see so many of their masterpieces.

"The exhibition should contribute to a better understanding of the people and the cultural life of Mexico at this time when there is such widespread interest throughout this country in our Latin-American neighbors."

The exhibition will consist of the four following sections:

1. PRE-COLUMBIAN ART, under the direction of Dr. Alfonso Caso. This will bring together the most important group of Mayan, Aztec, Tarascan, and Toltec sculpture and pottery ever shown at any time in one place. It will also include models of the ancient temples. The Monte Alban treasure, the collection of fabulous prehistoric jewelry and ornaments excavated from Mixtec tombs at Monte Alban near Oaxaca will also be shown.
2. COLONIAL ART (1520-1820), under the direction of Manuel C. Toussaint. Three centuries of painting, sculpture and architecture.
3. POPULAR or FOLK ART, under the direction of Roberto Montenegro. This will include a wide variety of objects--pottery, toys, lacquers, weaving, masks, carvings, costumes, embroideries, porcelain and festival objects and decorations of straw, tin, clay, etc.
4. MODERN ART, under the direction of Miguel Covarrubias. This will include paintings by Mexico's most famous modern artists, Rivera, Orozco, Siqueiros, Covarrubias and others, together with sculpture and architecture.

The Exhibition of Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art will open in May and continue throughout the summer.