



# MEXIQUE

1500 a.C - 2015

MUSÉE DE LA CÉRAMIQUE D'ANDENNE ASBL

EN • PARTENARIAT • AVEC  
LES • MUSÉES • ROYAUX  
D'ART • ET • D'HISTOIRE  
ET • LA • BIENNALE • DE • LA  
CÉRAMIQUE • D'ANDENNE

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# Remerciements

## MEXIQUE 1500 a.C. – 2015

Du 22 mai au 15 novembre 2015

### Commissaire

Cédric Piechowski, Conservateur-Directeur

### Réalisation

L'équipe du Musée de la céramique d'Andenne Asbl,  
avec le soutien de Florian Purser et une scénographie de Marine Grailet

### En partenariat avec

Les Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire de Belgique  
La Biennale de la Céramique d'Andenne  
Le Musée Franz Mayer (Mexique)

### Remerciements

Athénée royal Jean Tousseul d'Andenne, section infographie (3,4 TQ info - 5,6 TQ info); Centre culturel d'Andenne; Innovando la Tradición (Mexique); Service des Relations extérieures du Mexique; Province de Namur; Céline Albert; Idris Bicak; Sophie Calonne; Sylvie Cazzoli; Mathieu Cwiklinski; Frédéric Delespesse; Philippe et Claudine Deltour-Levie; Noémie Drouguet; Guillaume Gaubert; Laurent Gayet; Renaud Glotz; Mathilde Kervyn; Serge Lemaître; John Liem; Paul Louis; Georges Meguerditchian; Bernard Mélard; Eric Mindling; Jonathan Molina; Alberto Montero; Adán Paredes; Sylvie Peperstraete; Gustavo Pérez; Ricardo Perez; Sergio Purini; Sylvia Reyes; Hector Rivero; Valérie Rousseau; Valentin Stellings; Beatrix Torma; Marthe Vanhoutte.

► Avec le soutien de l'Ambassade du Mexique

Le Musée de la céramique d'Andenne Asbl organise cette année une exposition dédiée à la céramique du Mexique, pays invité de la Biennale de la céramique. Elle se veut un trait d'union entre les autres expositions mexicaines de l'événement afin d'établir un décodage des références culturelles et un lien de transmission entre la tradition et la modernité. Synthétiser 3000 ans d'histoire a donc été un véritable défi dans nos espaces. L'exposition « Mexique [1500 a.C - 2015] », au sein du Musée, est en réalité un ensemble de 3 expositions, intégrant l'œuvre sculpturale « Cactus columnar » du céramiste contemporain mexicain Adán Paredes et l'exposition photo-ethnographique de la photographe hongroise Beatrix Torma, tombée sous le charme de la richesse humaine et culturelle du pays en 2013. Nous remercions chaleureusement l'ensemble des étudiants et bénévoles qui ont soutenu le projet, ainsi que les Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, le Musée Franz Mayer, l'équipe de la Biennale de la Céramique et l'Ambassade du Mexique pour avoir consenti à ce partenariat et s'y être énergiquement impliqués.

► par Cédric Piechowski

# Ecoles

Les travaux présentés en accueil de l'exposition ont été réalisés par les étudiants de 4<sup>ème</sup>, 5<sup>ème</sup> et 6<sup>ème</sup>, section Infographie, de l'Athénée royal « Jean Tousseul » d'Andenne. Les papiers découpés-colorés réalisés par projection de dessins vectorisés, les masques en argile, les deux panneaux didactiques visibles dès l'entrée dans la salle d'exposition et les motifs décorant la borne vidéo et les tabourets ont été une opportunité pour leurs professeurs de mettre en pratique les connaissances théoriques vues en cours dans un cadre professionnel.



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# L'évolution des références culturelles

Les objets archéologiques, issus des réserves des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire de Belgique, vous ont montré la richesse des cultures précolombiennes et la pérennité de ses codes culturels entre 1500 avant J.-C. et 1521 après J.-C. L'arrivée des Espagnols a ensuite transformé les sociétés mésoaméricaines. Comme dans la plupart des cultures, c'est notamment à travers la céramique que ces changements nous sont encore visibles.

Les Espagnols ont apporté avec eux des savoirs techniques. En sont les caractéristiques: le travail au

tour, alors inconnu dans ces contrées; l'application d'un émail blanc, à base d'étain, sur le corps de l'objet pour cacher la couleur de la terre ; et l'utilisation d'émaux colorés pour la décoration. En Europe, l'art de la faïence était à cette époque à son apogée, prisée par la noblesse. Il s'établit dès lors deux traditions. La première sut préserver les savoir-faire ancestraux. Cela s'observe encore aujourd'hui, comme dans le village zapotèque de San Marcos-Tlapazola, garant d'une tradition remontant à 150 générations de potiers. La deuxième sut préserver un savoir-faire européen, à Talavera (Puebla) par exemple, un village fier de produire de la faïence traditionnelle sans interruption depuis le 16<sup>ème</sup> siècle.



**I. Buste de personnage avec une tresse**

Mexique, Période coloniale (1521-1821)(?), H. 8 cm  
MRAH, inv. AAM 4625



**II. Plat bleu et blanc à décor de caravelle**

Mexique, f. 18e-19e s., D. 25,5 cm  
MRAH, inv. ETAM 3545



**III. Carreau de faïence**

Mexique, 19e-20e s., L. 9 cm  
MRAH, inv. ETAM 50.71.68

Mais comme pour tout échange culturel, forcé ou volontaire, l'histoire n'est pas monolithique. Il se produit une acculturation: l'apport européen va progressivement se mexicaniser et la tradition mexicaine s'européaniser. La plus grande force du Mexique est sans doute sa capacité d'évoluer en vivant son histoire tout en intégrant et en préservant un maximum de ses références culturelles.



**IV. Croix en faïence**

Talavera - Puebla, 2014, H. 26,5 cm  
Coll. Privée



**V. Faïence fine à décor de visage**

Mexique, marque Ollivier & Co, 19e s., D. 21 cm  
MRAH, inv. ETAM 3519

# Réappropriation & transmissions

L'accès à ces références n'a pas été continu dans le temps, d'autant que de nombreux vestiges ont été détruits ou mutilés au cours des invasions, guerres, ou de la christianisation. Citons la perte désastreuse pour la culture maya de ses codex, les gardiens du savoir écrit à l'aide de glyphes.

Depuis le 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle, les découvertes archéologiques se succèdent. Elles ravivent l'intérêt pour les modèles anciens et reconnectent le Mexique à son passé. L'indépendance du pays en 1821, après des siècles d'occupations, n'est sans doute pas étrangère à ce mouvement.

Les faux archéologiques sont ainsi un témoignage précieux d'une réappropriation à destination d'un public d'érudits-voyageurs, à visée commerciale certes mais qui, au-delà des reproductions, des copies, des compositions, etc., en disent long sur cette époque où la connaissance des civilisations anciennes de Mésoamérique se construisait, au même titre que les collections privées.

Les formes anciennes ont inspiré les faussaires. Des artisans se les sont également appropriées. On trouve des vases de formes européennes avec un décor peint de façon moderne de motifs précolombiens ; ou un vase tripode de type « Teotihuacan » avec un décor peint du même genre, probablement de Guadalajara. Ces productions de bonne facture devaient vraisemblablement être achetées tant par les touristes que par la population locale.

L'orientation pleinement touristique d'une production céramique apparaît plus tard, dans les années 1950. Cependant, le vase «Made in Mexico» présenté ici, arrivé dans les collections des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire de Belgique en 1936, ainsi que de nombreuses miniatures de la même époque, invitent à penser que l'activité touristique s'intensifiait déjà dans les années 1930. Le Dr. Atl, dans son livre «Las artes populares en Mexico», mentionnait en 1922 une «dégradation des savoir-faire» dont il trouvait déjà la cause dans l'industrialisation et le commerce hors contexte de l'artisanat.

Il voyait d'un mauvais œil l'appauvrissement de cet art populaire et comme un danger culturel la perte des savoir-faire. La réussite de la vente



**Vase faux Teotihuacan à décor mexicain**

Mexique, 1821-1930, D. 23 cm

*MRAH, inv. ETAM 5811*

des objets, indissociable du goût des acheteurs, assure pourtant des revenus aux familles et participe à la (sur)vie des artisans. Encore dans les années 1980, de nombreux villages ont dû modifier leurs formes ancestrales pour être plus attractifs sur les marchés des villes et répondre à des usages contemporains. Aujourd'hui, un soutien de l'artisanat par l'Etat du Mexique, des privés et des associations permet de relayer la transmission des références culturelles, tout en favorisant l'adaptation aux besoins actuels, qu'ils soient utilitaires ou artistiques. Sans cet intérêt pour la qualité de sa propre culture, le Mexique perdrait une part majeure de son identité.

► par Cédric Piechowski



**Vase «Made in Mexico»**

Mexique, c. 1930, D. 19 cm

*MRAH, inv. ETAM 36.22.26*



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# Acknowledgements

## MEXICO 1500 a.C. – 2015

From May 22nd to November 15th, 2015

### Exhibit coordinator

Cédric Piechowski, Directeur & Curator

### Produced by:

The Team of the Ceramic Museum of Andenne ASBL with the support of Florian Purser and stage design by Marine Grailet

### In partnership with

The Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium  
The Biennial of Ceramic of Andenne  
The Franz Mayer Museum (Mexico)

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### ► With the support of the Mexican Embassy

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### EDITORIAL

This year, the Ceramic Museum of Andenne ASBL organizes an exhibition dedicated to the ceramics of Mexico, guest country at the Ceramics Biennial. Its purpose is to link the event's other Mexican exhibitions to decode cultural references and to create a transmission link between tradition and modernity. To summarize 3000 years of history in our facilities was a real challenge. The exhibition «Mexico [1500 a.C. – 2015]», held at the Museum, is made of three exhibitions put together. They include the sculptural work «Cactus columnar» by the Mexican contemporary ceramist Adán Paredes and a photo-ethnographic exhibition by Beatrix Torma, who fell under the spell of Mexico's human and cultural richness in 2013. We warmly thank the student and volunteer groups that supported this project, as well as the Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium, the Franz Mayer Museum, the Ceramics Biennial Team and the Mexican Embassy for agreeing to partner with us and for engaging vigorously in this project.

### ► Cédric Piechowski, Director & Curator

## The Museum and the Athénée royal “Jean tousseul” of Andenne

The works presented at the exhibition’s reception area were done by the students of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade of the Infographics Section of the secondary school Athénée royal «Jeann Tousseul» of Andenne. The cut-colored papers made by projection of vectorized drawings, the clay masks, the two educational boards visible upon entering the exhibition hall, and the motifs decorating the video terminal and the stools were an opportunity for their teachers to put the theoretical knowledge acquired in class into practice in a professional setting.

© Beatrix Torma

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ended up in the reserves of the Cinquantenaire Museum. It is worth mentioning that these fake antiquities were created by reproducing figures from authentic molds. Most of them were produced in the Tlatilco zone, which became one of the Preclassic figurines production centers.

Later, another of these enthusiasts, Auguste Genin, collected more than 10,000 archaeological, ethnographic and folkloric objects. He was born to a French father and a Belgian mother, and he was a magnate. He donated his collection to France, Belgium and the Czech Republic. In his collection, are also a number of authentic pieces, several fake ones and, especially, Zapotec funerary urns. These vessels, created in the early 20th century and in the 1930s, are notable for having details inspired by Art Nouveau (for those created in the early 20th century) and by Art Deco (for those created in the 1930s). From the early 1960s, the appeal of pre-Columbian art and some of the pieces' exorbitant price increased the supply of fake pieces, whose design was improved every time by counterfeiters.

► **By Sergio Purini**

## Themes

### Animals

Animals play an important role in Mexican cultures. Naturally, they are raw material sources (e.g. meat, fur, and feather). However, they also very often play religious roles. For instance, dogs are thought to be the guides that lead the souls of the deceased to the afterlife, deers represent the metaphor of the prisoner and the sacrificed victim, coyotes that of the High Priest, etc.

► **F. P.**

### Gods

The best-known Mexican gods are the Aztec and the Mayan gods. The Mayans invented a writing system that has been deciphered to a great extent. In their writings (codices and epigraphics), Mayans talk about their gods and their attributes, fields of action, etc. The Popol Vuh is a mythological compendium of their gods and culture. As for the Aztec gods, information about them has been obtained, on the one hand, through the Aztec codices (at least the ones that have been found) and, on the other one, thanks to the Spaniards, in particular to the missionaries. In fact, the missionaries' purpose was to convert the people regarded as godless natives, barbarians, and demon worshipers by the Catholic Church. In order to achieve their goal, the missionaries first studied carefully the Aztecs' rites in order to get to know their religion better to later destroy it efficiently. There are two very important missionaries among the many of them who arrived to the New World: Diego Durán, a Dominican

friar, and Bernardino de Sahagún, a Franciscan friar. These missionaries wrote the most comprehensive and detailed texts about Aztec religion and society. It is important to know that when the Spaniards arrived to the New World, Central Mexico was controlled almost entirely by the Aztecs, who had added new gods to their pantheon with every civilization they conquered. Their pantheon had more than 2000 gods! There was a god for almost everything: water, fire, death, Sun, war, pregnant women...

► **F. P.**

### Copal

Copal is a resin that was burned by priests to be used as incense, for its smoke and scent, during rituals. Copal found several time in hidden places of the Templo Mayor in Mexico City.

► **F. P.**

### Daily life

The many daily life scenes portrayed by pre-Columbian ceramists definitely carry a symbolic meaning. Their work was often part of the grave goods. For example, a portrayal of a trivial-looking dance may actually represent a ritual dance, a maternity scene may refer to a fertility cult, a house may symbolize life on Earth, and so on. Unfortunately, due to the lack of written sources created before the Spanish conquest and to looting in certain regions of Mexico, we can only suggest hypotheses that we will never be able to confirm.

► **F. P.**

## Evolution of cultural references

### Daily life

The archaeological objects, which belong to the Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium's reserves, have shown you the richness of pre-Columbian cultures and their cultural codes' sustainability between 1500 B.C. and 1521 A.D. Mesoamerican societies were later transformed with the arrival of the Spaniards. As with most cultures, ceramics is the main way we can see the changes that took place.

The Spaniards brought technical knowledge including lathe work (not known in Mesoamerica back then), the application of tin-based enamel on objects' bodies to hide the earth color, and the use of colored enamel for decoration purposes. By that time, the art of faïence was at its peak in Europe, highly valued by nobility. Two traditions were then established. The first one preserved the ancient know-how. It can still be seen in places such as Zapotec village San Marcos-Tlapazola, where pottery tradition has been living for 150 generations. The second tradition preserved the European know-how. It is still practiced in places such as Talavera (Puebla), where faïence

tradition has been living continuously since the 16th century.

But as with any cultural exchange, whether forced or voluntary, the story is not monolithic. There was an acculturation: European contributions were gradually mexicanized, and Mexican tradition was europeanized. Undoubtedly, Mexico's greatest strength is its ability to evolve in living history while incorporating and preserving as many of its cultural references as possible.

### Rabbit

In ancient Mesoamerican religions, rabbits were mainly known as the symbol for the moon, because people thought they could see this animal on the visible part of the moon. There are representations of the Moon Rabbit in pre-Hispanic Central Mexico in the Classic Maya area and in the Mimbres ceramics of Southwest America.

During the Postclassic period in central Mexico, rabbits were also closely linked to pulque, a low-alcohol beverage made from agave leaves. This association is extensively documented.

It is worth noting the continuity of this motif in this Mexican-produced, English technique fine faïence. Its decoration consists of colored glaze made with European techniques contributions on color, mixed with Spanish and pre-Columbian traditions.

► F. P.

### Reappropriation & Transmissions

Access to these references was not continuous in time, especially because many relics were destroyed or mutilated during invasions, wars... or Christianization. These include the Mayan culture's unfortunate loss of its codices – guardians of knowledge written in glyphs.

Since the 19th century, archaeological discoveries have been following one another. They rekindled the interest in ancient models and re-linked Mexico to its past. Mexico's independence in 1821, after centuries of occupation, is undoubtedly related to this movement.

Archaeological fakes are also valuable testimonials of an appropriation oriented towards scholars and travelers. They certainly have a commercial purpose, but aside from reproductions, copies, compositions, etc., they prove to be highly informative about the time when the knowledge of ancient Mesoamerican civilizations was being built as well as private collections.

Ancient forms inspired counterfeiters. They also appropriated artisans' work. For instance, there are European-shaped vases with decoration painted in a modern way with pre-Columbian motifs, or a "Teotihuacan" type tripod vase with painted decoration of the same style, probably from Guadalajara. Both tourists and locals probably purchased these good quality productions.

Pottery production targeted for tourists started later in the 1950s. However, the "Made in Mexico" vase presented here, which arrived to the Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium in 1936, and many other contemporary miniatures suggest that tourist industry had already increased in the 1930s. In 1922, Dr. Atl mentioned in his book "Las artes populares en México" that "deterioration of know-how" was caused by industrialization and trade of handicrafts out of context.

He looked askance at the depletion of this popular art and considered that the loss of the know-how jeopardized culture. However, the successful sale of objects, inseparable from the taste of purchasers, provided income to families and contributed to improve their modest livelihood. In the 1980s, many villages were forced to change their ancestral forms in order to make them more attractive to city markets and meet their contemporary usage needs. Today, craftsmanship support by the State of Mexico, individuals and associations relay the transmission of cultural references, while fostering adaptation to current needs, whether commercial or artistic. Without this interest for the quality of its own culture, Mexico would lose a major part of its identity.

► by Cédric Piechowski

### Day of the Dead

The theme originates from pre-Hispanic cultures, for which death meant evolution towards eternity. For this reason, ancient Mexican sculpture, architecture and pottery include closely linked life and death scenes, which suggest that death is necessary to be reborn with greater strength.

It is possible to find the skull motif on pyramid and temple walls, on the low reliefs, in the pottery and jewelry workshops, as well as in the codex or the magnificent monument – masterpiece of Aztec art – which represents Coatlicue, goddess of earth and life, carrying a skull mask.

Today, the Day of the Dead in Mexico has a festive character. It is a celebration held by the living to honor the deads, who supposedly gave life to them. This is the reason why there are offerings or altars in many places, which vary according to each region's natural resources and to what the deceased used to like.

With regard to offerings made to dead children, popular artisans give free rein to their imagination and propose "games for the dead". These are elements made out of carton or candy-shaped sugar, skulls and animals.

Famous engraver and illustrator José Guadalupe Posada (1852-1913) gave "skulls" a whole variety of postures, jobs and daily life situations. He is thought to be the creator of the famous Catrina – a satire of the elite class of indigenous origin who imitated European fashion during Porfirio Díaz's presidency.

► After the Museo de Arte Popular (Mexico)



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DESIGNED BY CRISTIAN BARRERA