

PREHISPANIC ANGELS OF MEXICO

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painters, sculptors and architects. Outstanding among their works is **Monte Alban**, a magnificent ceremonial group of pyramids and temples situated on the top of a mountain, where a large collection of gold and other precious objects was discovered in one of the tombs. Another notable archeological zone is **Mitla** where the walls of the buildings are covered with fretwork and other geometric carvings.

The head-dress of gold and feathers worn by the Zapotec angel is inspired in the designs found on the funeral urns. At the angel's feet stands a clay pot painted in Mixtec designs.

3. Angel of Teotihuacan. One of the most ancient and interesting archeological sites of Mexico is the ceremonial center of Teotihuacan, not far from Mexico City. The pyramids of the Sun and of the Moon, as well as many other structures, are all built along an axial path called "The Avenue of the Dead". The pyramid of **Quetzalcoatl** is the oldest and is richly decorated with images of the god of fertility in the form of a plumed serpent, and of **Tlaloc**, god of rain. Mural paintings are found on the buildings called **Tepantitla** and **Tetitla**. A recent archeological discovery is the "Palace of the Butterflies" which is covered with frescoes and reliefs. Also from the Teotihuacan zone is the colossal sculpture of **Chalchiuhtlicue**, goddess of the waters, which can now be seen in the

National Museum of Antropology in Chapultepec Park. The Teotihuacan culture flourished during the first nine centuries of our Era.

The angel of Teotihuacan follows the typical lines of that culture; the triangular upper garment is called a **quechquemetl**; the tripod receptacle is similar to those found in the area.

4. Angel of Colima Western Mexico is famous for its beautiful and interesting ceramic work, unusual in its composition and form. The objects usually represent human figures in different positions and activities with distinctive facial characteristics. Animal figurines, urns and other receptacles with lovely designs are also common. Most of the ceramic belongs to a period covering the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, and includes the States of Colima and Nayarit and parts south of these. The indigenous population of this region are called "Tarascos".

The angel of Colima wears a cloth and leather head-dress; around her neck is a shell necklace and in her hand, the figurine of a parrot. The urn is the typical ceramic of Colima.

5. Angel of Nayarit. In the rich archeological zone of the States of Nayarit and Colima, a great number of ceramic

PRE-HISPANIC ANGELS OF MEXICO

Ancient Mexico's art and history have come to occupy an important place in today's culture. In addition to the great archeological discoveries of recent years, translators have brought to light a wealth of ancient writings, both prose and poetry. Thus we have today a clear picture of the indigenous cultures of pre-Hispanic Mexico. Interest in the art relics -notable for their originality- has become world-wide. No one can deny that those ancient peoples had developed, over twenty centuries, a highly civilized way of life. This cultural evolution continued right up to the sixteenth century -the era of the Spanish Conquest which brought with it Western Culture.

A happy idea indeed, has been the publication of a collection of prints called "Pre-Hispanic Angels of Mexico", created by Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo and edited by Eugenio Fischgrund of Editorial Mexico. Basing his conceptions on the art forms of ancient Mexico, Rangel Hidalgo has painted a series of images of different cultures, each one in the symbol of an angel in feminine attire. Thus he has evolved an appealing aesthetic creation from a combination of history, art and a certain fantasy.

Eugenio Fischgrund has, in his previous publications, depicted various aspects of Mexican art, both old and modern. Now, through his Pre-Hispanic Angels, he continues his educational work, this time bringing ancient Mexico to life.

This series of charming little angelic figures by Rangel Hidalgo will undoubtedly have a sincere and merited popularity.

Justino Fernández

1. **Mayan Angel.** Among the many cultures of Ancient Mexico, that of the Mayas occupies a predominant place. The high degree of civilization they reached is exemplified in their groupings of pyramids, temples and palaces with their rich sculptures and mural paintings. The classic period of this culture developed between the fourth and the ninth centuries in the southern part of the country. The famous archeological zone of **Palenque**, where the tomb of a royal personage was discovered under the Temple of Inscriptions, is located in the State of Chiapas among rich tropical vegetation. Also in this region are the ruins of **Bonampak**, notable for their beautiful murals. During the tenth to the fifteenth centuries, a second flowering of the Maya culture took place in Yucatán; this is the Maya-Toltec period, a combination of the ancient traditions and the influence of the Central Plateau. **Chichen Itza, Uxmal** and other zones belong to this period.

The Mayan angel with her rich garments of cloth and leather, gold ornaments, jade beads and Quetzal feathers is typical of the costumes worn by the Mayan indians.

2. **Zapotec Angel.** In what is now the State of Oaxaca, the Mixtec and Zapotec cultures flourished during the first fifteen centuries of the Christian Era. The Mixtecs and Zapotecs were great gold and silversmiths, ceramists.

objects have been discovered, among them many clay figurines of humans and animals, notable for their simplicity of form and expression. The ancient Indian inhabitants of this region whose culture flourished between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, are known as "Tarascos".

The costume of the Nayarit angel, with its geometrical designs, is inspired in a typical one of the region. The head-dress is of cloth and leather.

6. Huasteco Angel. In the coastal region of the Gulf of Mexico, south of the Panuco River, lies the zone called the Huasteca, which comprises the States of Veracruz, Hidalgo and San Luis Potosi. The Huasteca culture which flourished in this region during the first centuries of our Era, is famous for its sculptured figures representing gods and high priests, unclothed except for magnificent head-dresses. One of the most charming of these figures is "El adolescente huasteco" which is found in National Museum of Anthropology in Chabultepec Parck.

Sculptured designs appear on the costume of the Huasteco angel. She wears a cone-shaped hat decorated with plumed fans and a wide **quechquemetl** over her bosom. A corn cob appears in her hand.

7. Totonac Angel. The Totonac culture flourished during the first centuries of our Era, in the Gulf region

in what is now the State of Veracruz. Many notable pieces of sculpture have been discovered in the coastal zone between Tuxpan and Coatzacoalcos, among them the "votive palms" and the "smiling faces", although the latter are considered as belonging to the Olmec culture farther south. It is doubtful whether the Totonacs built the pyramid of Tajin, but if this were so, they were indeed great architects.

The Totonac angel is inspired in one of the little "smiling faces"; her head-dress is of coral mosaic and in her right hand is a rattle. A painted centipede appears on the bowl at her feet.

8. Mixtec Angel. The Mixtec culture is a very important one; the more one knows about it, the more impressive it appears. Its influence was so great that it reached the Aztecs in the Central Plateau and, like the Zapotec culture, covered a long period of time -up to the fifteenth century. The Mixtecs were excellent gold and silversmiths, painters and ceramists. Their characteristic mode of expression is evident in their polychrome ceramics and their codices in hieroglyphics.

The Mixtec angel is inspired in the costumes of the region. Strands of yarn are wound around her head, and a gold ornament, similar to the ancient pectorals, hangs from her neck.

9. Toltec Angel. No other ancient Mexican culture acquired the prestige that the Toltecs did, especially in

the field of the arts. Tula, their principal city, is one of the most interesting archeological zones in Mexico. The Toltecs were the first to use great columns - the so-called "atlantes" - to support roofs over large spaces of ground. Many of the columns were built in the form of a serpent. The Toltec culture flourished from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries and later appeared in Yucatan mixed with the post-classic Maya period. It also exerted influence on the Aztec culture.

The Toltec angel wears a head-dress characteristic of the monumental "atlantes". The large pectoral has the shape of a butterfly.

10. Angel of Jaina. The isle of Jaina on the Gulf off the coast of Campeche, belonged to the classic Maya culture. A great part of the island was a cemetery and excavations have therefore produced innumerable ceramic figures outstanding in artistic quality and expression. These figures show a great range of form extreme simplicity to complicated design, and although they are small in proportion, they are monumental in feeling.

The sumptuous head-dress of the Jaina angel is of cloth, leather and vegetable fibers. The bead necklaces are made of jade and her body is covered with a filmy camisole and skirt. She carries a plumed tuft and a ceremonial shield of turquoise mosaic and other precious stones.

