



CARVED NARRATIVE:
LOS HERMANOS CHÁVEZ MORADO

September 14, 2017, through June 3, 2018

Anne Rowe



THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION TRUST
AT SUNNYLANDS

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Detail of *La Gran Tehuana*, José Chávez Morado.
Photo by Lance Gerber, 2016
This page
Detail of *Tehuana*, Tomás Chávez Morado.
Photo by Lance Gerber, 2016

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Opposite
Detail of the column at Sunnylands.
Photo by Ken Hayden, 2014
Sunnylands Collection



CARVED NARRATIVE

The Annenbergs and Mexico

Carved Narrative: Los Hermanos Chávez Morado showcases the work of the two artist brothers who fashioned a stunning centerpiece for the entry court of Sunnylands. With the soaring San Jacinto Mountains as a backdrop, a monumental fountain in the shape of a column stretches 20 feet into the air and pours sheets of cascading water onto a bed of river rocks below. In a carved relief narrative, the column tells the story of Mexico.

The exhibition marks a series of firsts for The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. It is the first time that paintings and sculptures (37 pieces in all) by José and Tomás Chávez Morado of Guanajuato, Mexico, are being displayed jointly outside their native country. It is the first time that Sunnylands is curating an exhibition comprised of art outside the Sunnylands Collection. And it is the first time that an exhibition involves both the public Center & Gardens and the historic Annenberg estate, where visitors may view the Mexican column.

Given those milestones, the exhibition also reflects Walter and Leonore Annenberg's keen appreciation for cultural diplomacy, the use of art to enhance relations between people of different backgrounds.

In fact, it was the Annenbergs who set this path. In choosing a Mayan theme for their midcentury modern estate in California's dry Coachella Valley—to “relate the house more sympathetically to the desert

site,” as Leonore once put it—they integrated pre-Hispanic aesthetics to complement their home. They concluded that the enormous column the Chávez Morado brothers had created for the Museo Nacional de Antropología (National Museum of Anthropology) in Mexico City was a perfect fit, and they commissioned the artists to produce a half-scale version for Sunnylands.

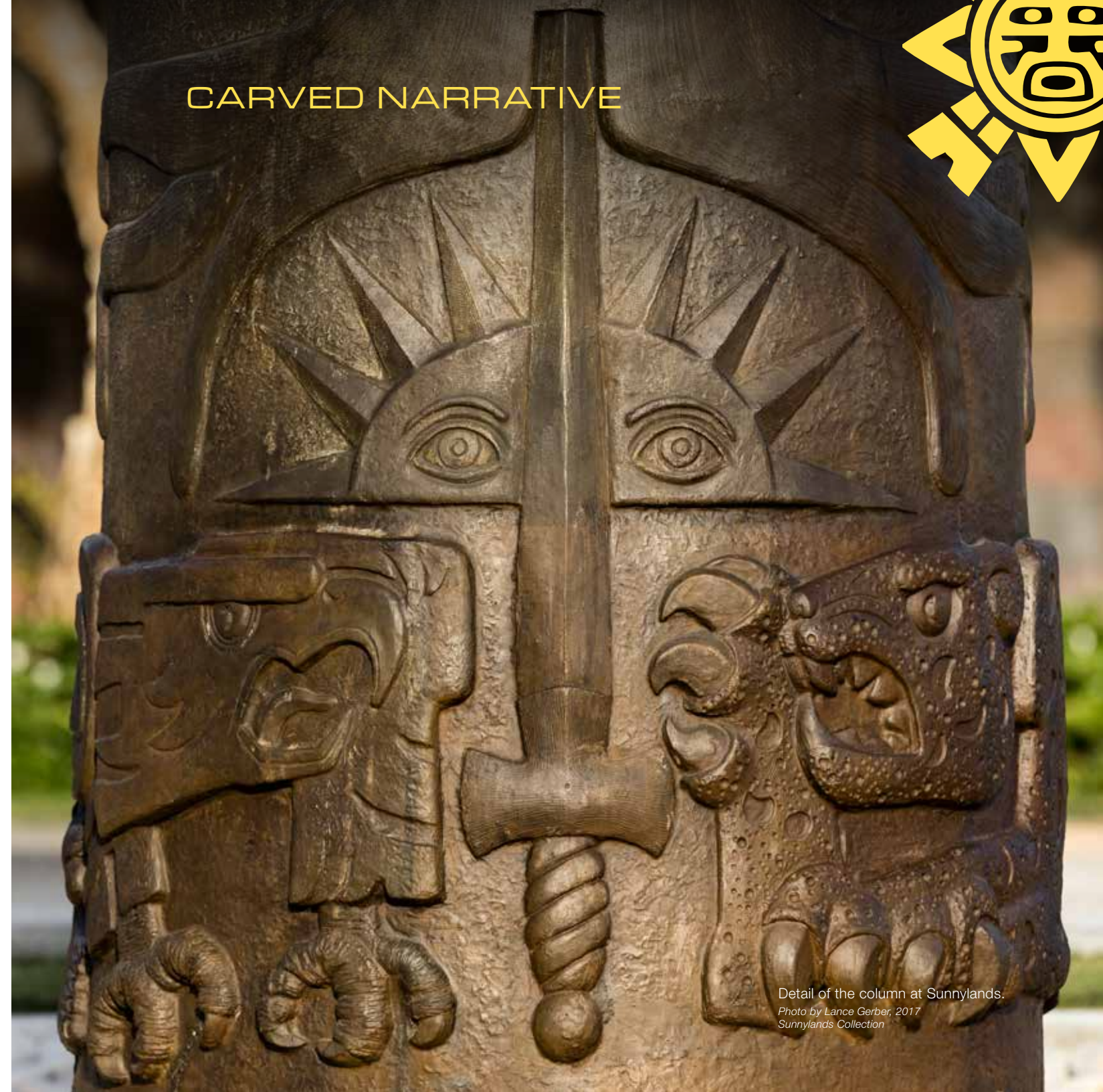
While striking to the eye, the column, along with much of the Chávez Morado brothers' work, is laden with the iconography of Mexico, both its pre-Hispanic past and its post-revolutionary present. Indeed, Walter said he wanted the brothers' column precisely because, “it depicts the history of Mexico.”

And so it is with *Carved Narrative: Los Hermanos Chávez Morado*. The exhibition provides the public insight into Mexico through the eyes of two brothers—one known primarily for his paintings (José), and the other for his sculpture (Tomás). The brothers were just children during the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), but their work is influenced by the master artists of that era. Through their individual studio work and through the cultural diplomacy programs the Mexican government initiated to unify and inspire its people, both brothers enjoyed storied careers.

Sunnylands is pleased to bring their powerful work to the United States.

Ambassador David J. Lane

President, The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands



Detail of the column at Sunnylands.
Photo by Lance Gerber, 2017
Sunnylands Collection

A FOUNTAIN FOR SUNNYLANDS

The timeless triumph of the Sunnylands estate is the result of a lively creative collaboration between Walter and Leonore Annenberg and their designers. The Annenbergs were deeply involved in every detail and developed the overall theme for the estate. They conceived the planning of a lavish 200-acre desert oasis drawing aesthetic direction specifically from what they called a Mayan influence. Walter wrote to the senior assistant editor of *National Geographic* in 1963 during the early stages of imagining what Sunnylands might be:

I am contemplating the construction and development of a home in the desert area of southern California and am planning this project in terms of the Mayan influence. I have taken the liberty of suggesting to my decorator, Mr. William Haines, of Beverly Hills, California, that he might communicate with your office to see if it is possible to secure reprints of any editorial material that would reflect the Mayan civilization and its influence.¹

Mesoamerican iconography made up part of the design vocabulary of the property such as the choice of a pyramidal roof to reference the pyramids at Chichén Itzá and the inclusion of volcanic stone quarried from Mexico. A year before the completion of the house in 1966, a Mesoamerican sun emblem was chosen as a symbol for Sunnylands. A defining and ubiquitous icon for the property, it was embossed on all paper goods such as stationery, coasters, napkins, menus, and guest lists; imprinted on golf balls; embroidered on guest robes, hats, and towels; and painted on golf carts.

Walter and Leonore drew inspiration for design features at Sunnylands from their research and from what they saw when they traveled. Their admiration of sculpture seen on trips abroad resulted in two outdoor art installations informing the arrival sequence to Sunnylands' front door. The first is *Birds of Welcome* by Canadian artist, Arthur Price. While passing through Gander International Airport in Newfoundland the couple saw a version of this aluminum and bronze sculpture, which is said to represent the welcome accorded by Canada to air travelers from abroad. The Annenbergs' curatorial eye was keen. It is no accident that the first sculptural expression on the approach to Sunnylands represents an international welcome expressed by modern sculpture.

The second art piece revealed on the approach to the house was also inspired by Walter and Leonore's travels. It is a monumental columnar bronze fountain soaring nearly twenty feet into the air. With an average circumference of five feet, the two-ton Mexican column is the bold centerpiece of the circular auto entry court. It features an intricate carved relief depicting the history of Mexico. The figures are arranged in four vertical sections symbolically organized by the four cardinal points of the compass. The column is installed precisely in alignment with the four points. Water cascades from the flared bowl at the top of the column into a circular bed of large Mexican river rocks. The bed of rocks is rimmed with a manicured circle of bright green grass.

The Sunnylands fountain provides an arresting conclusion to the pageantry of the drive from the estate's gate. The entrance into the entry court is western facing. When the column comes into view, the backdrop is not only the flamingo pink color of the house's roof but also the distant San Jacinto peak, which at nearly 11,000 feet, sets a stunning scene. The often snow-capped peak achieves the largest gain in elevation over the shortest horizontal distance in the contiguous United States. The arrival experience is stunning, and the star of the show is the Mexican column.

A TRIP TO MEXICO

Walter and Leonore were first besotted with the idea for their fountain on a trip to Mexico in 1967. A 40-foot-tall version, on which theirs is based, is installed on the patio of Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, which opened in 1964. Specifically seeking aesthetic inspiration for Sunnylands, the Annenbergs took photos of various fountains, murals, and integrated architectural building features on the trip. As early as 1964, two years before Sunnylands was completed, Walter had proposed to designer William Haines the idea of an inspirational trip to Mexico to inform design decisions: "Perhaps it would be sensible for us to contemplate, in August of this year, a trip to Mexico where we could see a far greater variety of pre-Columbian art."² It appears that this trip never occurred. Three years later, however, Walter and Leonore traveled to Mexico with his sister, Janet Annenberg Hooker, and they all saw the museum's bold column.

Below, left to right
Leonore Annenberg,
Walter Annenberg, and
Janet Annenberg Hooker
in Mexico City, 1967.

Sunnylands Collection



The museum's fountain is an imposing monument featuring water cascading from the top and crashing onto a patio below. The monumental scale and columnar shape of the fountain was specifically designed to suggest that it is singularly balancing a massive roof that soars over the central courtyard of the museum. The roof creates an enormous canopy shielding visitors from sun and rain. Although the original title of the work is *Imagen de México (Image of Mexico)*, it is commonly referred to as *El Paraguas (The Umbrella)*. Above eye level, the secret of the illusion is revealed. Walter commented:

Actually, at the Museum of Anthropology, they have what appears to be a cantilevered roof, which is not truly cantilevered. I was once above there in the palace on Chapultepec Heights, and you could look down and see the cables holding that roof ...³

THE COMMISSION

Immediately following the Annenbergs' return from Mexico, they telephoned the museum's principal architect, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez (1919–2013). The team responsible for the museum included Ramírez Vázquez along with Rafael Mijares Alcérreca (born 1942) and Jorge Campuzano (born 1931). In a letter to Alcérreca, Walter related Sunnylands designer William Haines' input on the placement of the column at Sunnylands:

Yesterday, my wife and I spent several hours with William Haines and his associates. They are our advisors in relation to interior decorating and have been working with us ever since the inception of "Sunnylands." While they were enthusiastic about the column for the courtyard, they were violently opposed to a copy in the interior of the house.⁴

After several conversations and written correspondence, an agreement was reached with Ramírez Vázquez to create a second column for the Annenbergs: a roughly half-scale version for installation at Sunnylands.

Opposite
José Chávez Morado
observes *Imagen
de México* with an
unidentified child, at
the Museo Nacional de
Antropología, Mexico City.
Date unknown.

Instituto Estatal de la Cultura
de Guanajuato



Ramírez Vázquez, a prominent architect and national figure, successfully re-enlisted brother artists Tomás (1914–2001) and José (1909–2002) Chávez Morado to recreate a version of the column for the Annenbergs. José drew the figures and Tomás carved the raised reliefs on the Sunnylands column just as they had for the museum column. In order for the Annenbergs to import artwork from Mexico they would have had the burden of proof to demonstrate that the bronze was contemporary rather than an antiquity. By law, all Mexican antiquities belong to the Mexican government and it is illegal to sell them or to export them out of Mexico. The Sunnylands column is authenticated as a collaborative Chávez Morado work because the artists are specifically named in the customs documentation.

Within the thick file of customs and shipping paperwork related to the Sunnylands fountain resides the transcript of a sworn testimony. Tomás Chávez Morado submitted a declaration of facts under oath with a notary public in Mexico on April 9, 1968. Proof was required that the bronze was not only new but also created by an acknowledged professional artist. This interview occurred one month ahead of the delivery of the crated column to Sunnylands which arrived at Sunnylands by truck.

In the sworn declaration, Tomás described his famous brother José as "...a painter of murals recognized as a professional in such speciality [sic] throughout the country and that said person is the author of the designs of the original sculpture that embellishes the central column in the courtyard of the National Museum of Anthropology of the city of Mexico." Tomás then described himself as "a sculptor and master of plastic arts, recognized professionally in this speciality [sic] throughout the country..." He explained that it was he who carved the José-designed reliefs for the original and now the reproduction column which would be "encharged [sic] by Mr. Walter Annenberg, a copy in bronze, at a scale of one half the actual size of said sculpture." He added that he "is a Mexican citizen by birth, born in Silao, Guanajuato, married, 53 years old, a sculptor."⁵

The process of creating the column was itemized in invoices the Annenbergs received from Ramírez Vázquez' office. The column was built in three horizontal sections in clay. Plaster, then wax forms, were cast, and finally, the sections were executed in bronze.

Three "in-progress" Polaroid photos were contained in the Annenbergs' files. In July 2015, the individuals were identified by Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano, Tomás' daughter. She elaborated that the two sculptors shown were two of up to fifteen that her father would employ for a monument of this size. These documentarian-style photos depicting the carving of the column in the clay stage were likely provided to demonstrate progress on the work for the client, and to support the dating of the column as a contemporary work of art. Posing humans by the clay stage of the work also provided illustrated proof that the column sections would

be too short to be the original *El Paraguas* but rather, a half-scale version as stated in the paperwork. The Polaroid photos provide support to the legality of exportation.

An appropriate scale, in relation to the height and distance from the house, as well as other entry court elements were considered in designing the column. The design of the capital bowl of the column was also fine-tuned by Ramírez Vázquez' office to provide two important considerations that were discussed in letters back and forth: (1) ensuring that a smooth "curtain" of water would flow over the edge of the capital, while (2) diverting the flow of water away from the bronze column in order to preserve the patina.⁶ After visiting the column in situ, Alcérreca thought the scale and placement sublime but made one important suggestion: that the water flow be exactly doubled via a stronger pump. The Annenbergs carefully considered this request and agreed. A new pump was installed.⁷



Right
Sculptor Salvador Soto Tovar,
Tomás Chávez Morado's assistant.
Date unknown.

Sunnylands Collection

COLUMN SYMBOLS

The column itself represents Mexico. The carved relief on the column depicts, in four vertical sections (east, west, north, and south), the history of modern Mexico. The east and west sides represent the coasts of Mexico where the primary events that shaped modern Mexico began. The north and south sides represent specific events that led to the freedom of the Mexican people.

East side: integration The east side of the column depicts the roots of modern Mexico, where in 1519 the Spanish landed on the eastern shores of what is now called Mexico. Portrayed from the base upwards, Mexico's indigenous people are represented by the eagle and jaguar—two important pre-Hispanic symbols. The jaguar, a jungle inhabitant, was venerated by the Olmecs and Mayas; the eagle represents the coastal and central plateau peoples including the Teotihuacans, Toltecs, and Aztecs. Moving upward from this literal and cultural “base,” the rising sun represents the Spanish arrival from the east. The sword reflects the Spanish conquest dividing the pre-Hispanic symbols while penetrating the base of the ceiba tree or “tree of life,” which is the Mayan symbol for the origin of people. Profiles of two men, one indigenous and one Spanish, represent the integration of the two principal bloodlines of the Mexican people. At the top of the tree, an eagle devouring a rattlesnake, the national emblem of modern Mexico, distributes its weight and strength equally atop both profiles.

Left
View of the east side of the column.

Photo by Lance Gerber, 2017
Sunnylands Collection



Left
Detail of the north side of the column.

Photo by Lance Gerber, 2017
Sunnylands Collection

West side: projection The first significant expedition after the Spanish arrived was a sixteenth-century westward voyage to the Philippine Islands. Again, the jaguar and eagle provide the base but now the talon of the eagle and the foot of the jaguar include human feet representing the synthesized culture between the coastal and central plateau pre-Hispanic populations. The setting sun over a water symbol marks the beginning of Mexico's international presence. The tree of life is crossed by a steel beam and a compass rose symbolizing the strength and significance of the expedition. The atomic symbol represents Mexico's participation in the scientific and technological modern world. The male figure exposing his organs and arms in a vulnerable stance, framed by a dove and olive branches, symbolizes a complete dedication to peace and an offer of Mexico's friendship to the world.

North and south sides: struggle for freedom Both sides depict three daggers piercing the column drawing blood. The three wounds represent significant events in the formation of modern Mexico: the War of Independence from Spanish rule, 1810–1821; the ratification of the Federal Constitution of the United Mexican States establishing individual rights, 1857; and the agrarian uprising and revolution, 1910–1920.

Right
View of the west side of the column.

Photo by Lance Gerber, 2017
Sunnylands Collection



A MASTERPIECE AT SUNNYLANDS

The column was installed in May 1968 and the Annenbergs visited the following month. In June 1968, Walter wrote to Alcérreca, who led the Sunnylands project and who made the site visit to evaluate the installation:

Dear Rafael,

Lee and I arrived yesterday afternoon and were thrilled with the column in the courtyard. It is a triumph by day and a fantastic sensation by night. In a sense you were right, as you indicated in your June 11 letter, that it would have been more exciting to have arrived by night; but do not worry, Rafael, the first impact was more than enough to satisfy me...May I tell you that I look forward to your returning sometime with brother Vázquez, so that he too, may have an opportunity to inspect and enjoy our total success.

*Warmly,
Walter Annenberg⁸*

Four years later, in 1972, Walter wrote again to the architect: “The Museum of Anthropology column in our courtyard continues to draw raves from our visitors and this obviously has been a real source of pleasure to us...Sincerely, Walter Annenberg.”⁹

In 1991, twenty-three years after its arrival at Sunnylands, Walter was asked in an interview about the column and was still rhapsodic about the work:

There is one unusual feature in the courtyard. I wanted to have a copy of the sculptured column that is in the center of the Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. I talked to the architect, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and we agreed that the copy would have to be reduced slightly in size for the courtyard...I did want that column because it depicts the history of Mexico.¹⁰

A true collector, Walter consistently acquired art based on his deeply contemplated personal interest: “If it moved me that was enough; being moved is what collecting is all about.”¹¹

The Chávez Morado brothers were and are nationally celebrated for their many iconic civic works throughout Mexico and for their own personal studio work. The Mexican column on the patio of Mexico’s national anthropology museum inspired Walter and Leonore’s interest in a second version, creating an everlasting connection between the brothers Chávez Morado, Mexico, and Sunnylands.

Opposite
Exterior view of the main
entrance of Sunnylands.

Photo by Ken Hayden, 2014
Sunnylands Collection



ARCHITECT PEDRO RAMÍREZ VÁZQUEZ



Pedro Ramírez Vázquez was a central figure in modern Mexican architecture. The significance of his high-profile building projects contextualizes the importance of the Chávez Morado brothers. He commissioned them to contribute two- and three-dimensional artworks for many of his projects. The Chávez Morado brothers were already renowned artists when José began creating murals for Ramírez Vázquez in 1953 at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (commonly known as UNAM), a public research university in Mexico City and the largest university in Latin America.

Left
Architect Pedro
Ramírez Vázquez at
the Museo Nacional de
Antropología, Mexico
City. Date unknown.

Archives of Architect
Pedro Ramírez Vázquez

As part of a larger building boom, many museums were built in the early 1960s throughout Chapultepec Park, the heart of Mexico City. Among them were three designed by Ramírez Vázquez' firm: Museo del Caracol, 1960; Museo de Arte Moderno, 1964; and Museo Nacional de Antropología, 1964.

José and Tomás Chávez Morado were major contributors to two of the three museum projects: Museo Nacional de Antropología and Museo del Caracol. In addition to the column at the Museo Nacional, José painted a fifteen-meter indoor mural titled *Expresión Cultural de Mesoamérica (Cultural Expression of Mesoamerica)* adorning the Mesoamerican Room. Tomás was enlisted to sculpt the national emblem for use as the frontispiece to the museum. Tomás' daughter, Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano, recently related the frenzy at the house and studio to create the emblem ahead of the museum's opening with Tomás working night and day. "Tomás was only given fifteen days to create the emblem and together José and Tomás had just fifty-one days to design and carve the reliefs for the monumental column."¹²

The Museo Nacional de Antropología was and remains a source of national pride for content, interpretation, and design. Paul Damaz wrote in *Craft Horizons*: "Anthropologists in all parts of the world owe a great debt to the Mexican government and to Mexican anthropologists. Probably no other single act has ever made the

citizens of a nation so aware of anthropology and its meaning to them. In architectural boldness, display imagination, and wealth of materials, standards have been set that will guide museum efforts in other countries for many years to come."¹³

It is likely that Ramírez Vázquez personally chose leading contemporary artists including the Chávez Morado brothers to adorn his buildings with art. According to Damaz:

Because public officials in most [Latin American] countries have an open-minded attitude toward modern art, architects enjoy a great deal of freedom in choosing the artists with whom they wish to work. This may explain why architects so often work with the same artists. They are likely, in fact, to be friends and consequently to know that they can work well together. This team work between architects and artists who are familiar with each other's creative conceptions is surely one of the most important factors in any attempt at art integration."¹⁴

One of the reasons there was a flurry of civic building projects in the 1960s was Mexico's successful bid to host the 1968 international Olympic Games. Mexico harnessed this opportunity to present the emergence of a contemporary nation to the world. Ramírez Vázquez was appointed president of the organizing committee for the Mexico Olympic Games in 1968 and co-designed the logo. He understood that hosting the Olympics offered Mexico City both challenges and opportunities when he said that the aim was "to demonstrate that even as a developing country Mexico could be as successful as Japan was in 1964 with more resources."¹⁵ In the prior decade, he had been responsible for almost all of Mexico's World's Fair pavilions. For Expo '58, the Brussels World's Fair, he designed the Mexican pavilion, which was a sensation and won the highest award at the Fair.¹⁶ José provided a prominent glass mural for that pavilion featuring similar elements later utilized for the national museum project. The pavilion was described as advancing "a young and vigorous country with deep, old roots" and as a "modernist box and mural."¹⁷

Ramírez Vázquez also designed the pavilions for the 1962 Seattle and 1964 New York world's fairs.

Olympic pavilions provide a powerful platform to define a national image through both architecture and exhibitions for an international audience: "[Vázquez'] work as head architect of Mexico City's National Museum of Anthropology and History, a commission

that led him to collaborate with intellectuals, exhibition designers, and politicians between 1961 and 1964, also proved to be a defining prelude to his Olympic tenure. Seen as part of a unified effort of state propaganda, these works constitute one of the largest such campaigns in post-revolutionary Mexico.”¹⁸

He was later appointed president of the organizing committee for the 1970 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup tournament held in Mexico. The final match was played in the Estadio Azteca (Aztec Stadium), which he designed in 1961. In 1952, Ramírez Vázquez designed a home for the future President of Mexico, Adolfo López Mateos, while Mateos was Mexico’s secretary of labor.

In 2011, Ramírez Vázquez was awarded the Medal of Fine Arts by the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura. In accepting the award, the famed architect alluded to the importance of reiterating cultural roots in architecture: “Our discipline can be original if it relies on its roots because they do not change over time...”¹⁹

Mexico’s symbolic dialog between its ancient past and utopian future was central to Ramírez Vázquez’ life’s work. One scholar wrote: “The centerpiece of this network was Mexico City’s National Museum of Anthropology and History...completed in 1964, this permanent space-age container of Mexico’s ancient treasures made a case for the country’s simultaneous ‘youth’ and ‘deep roots.’ The museum showcased images of national grandeur in much the same language as the pavilions.”²⁰

When Ramírez Vázquez died in 2013, the *Los Angeles Times* published:

*Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, an architect who changed the face of Mexico City by designing a number of landmark modernist structures, died on Tuesday, his 94th birthday...Vázquez was known for stunningly original designs that blended a European modernist sensibility with pre-Columbia [sic] aesthetics. His most famous modernist buildings, all in Mexico City, include the Basilica of Guadalupe, one of the country’s holiest shrines; the National Museum of Anthropology, distinguished by a vast, square concrete umbrella; and Azteca Stadium, open since the mid-1960s and home to Mexico’s national soccer team.*²¹

The *New York Times* obituary included:

*His architecture synthesizes the most archaic forms of the culture at the same time it exalts Mexico’s condition as the first Latin American country to modernize.*²²

LOS HERMANOS AND THEIR WORK

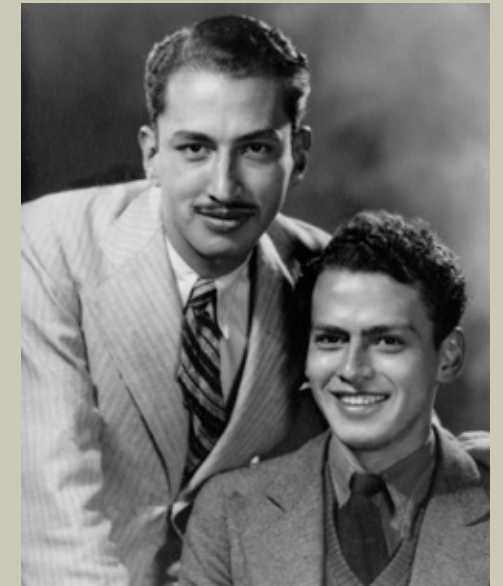
The Mexican muralist art movement and the Mexican architectural style of integrating art into buildings were major influences on the Chávez Morado brothers’ art and careers.

MEXICAN MURALIST MOVEMENT

Following the Mexican Revolution (when the brothers were young boys), a government sponsored mural program began in 1920. The resulting artwork defined a new Mexican aesthetic. The style, narrative, and symbols that were used in murals (including those appropriated from Mexican folk art and pre-Hispanic cultures) informed the brothers’ individual artistic vocabularies. This style is now referred to as the *Escuela Mexicana de Pintura y Escultura* (Mexican School of Painting and Sculpture).

The government sought to inspire and educate the public following more than a decade of revolutionary chaos. The best and most popular artists in the country were commissioned to create and integrate large-scale two-dimensional works on and in buildings. Incorporating social and/or socialist realism (public art with a socialist message), the works depict revolutionary struggles resulting in reunification: “In Mexico, the socialist period that followed the revolution of 1910–1920 was marked by a vast program of educational and health buildings and by the ‘social realism’ school of painting; it was intensely nationalistic...”²³ The unique blend of cultures and peoples were celebrated in this new art movement which gained international recognition.

Los Tres Grandes (The Big Three) artists of the muralist period were Diego Rivera (1886–1957), José Clemente Orozco (1883–1949), and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974). The government chose these artists for the program because they were already recognized and thus positioned to deliver a validated message to the general population. The murals venerated the working class whose revolt had successfully overthrown unfavorable leadership. Rivera and his contemporaries were personally politically motivated and with government patronage created groundbreaking work that became an international sensation.



Above, left to right José and Tomás Chávez Morado. Date unknown.

Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Through their pictures the muralists depicted post-revolutionary ideals to a then-mostly illiterate, developing nation. “They were ready to create a truly popular art in keeping with the new social order which they thought had been created by the revolution. Mural painting was the obvious way to bring art to the people...where it had been lacking since the stained glass days of the Gothic cathedrals, and to educate the masses and provide them with aesthetic standards. It was a great popular movement without equal in modern times.”²⁴

Rivera’s approach was rooted in personal passion. As a leader of the movement, and therefore an author of the new aesthetic, his motivations need to be understood to appreciate the work of José and Tomás who followed in his footsteps:

*After the Mexican Revolution, Rivera was concerned with two issues, and these determined his artistic themes: the need to offset the contempt with which the conquistadors had viewed the ancient Indian civilizations, and the need to offset the anti-mestizo [a person of mixed European and American Indian ancestry] and anti-Indian attitudes of the European-oriented ruling classes during the porfiriato (the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz)...early indigenistas [like Rivera] tended to glorify the Indian heritage and vilify that of the Spaniards as a means of rectifying a historical imbalance and advancing certain political ideas.*²⁵

The work in this genre is immediately recognizable for its exuberant tropical color palette and a rejection of the European school (to which José Chávez Morado, Rivera, Siqueiros and others were exposed during their European tours). The aesthetic and message embrace Mexican folk art, pre-Hispanic figures and style, complex designs of overlapping and intertwined figures, and overall composition. The muralists and later the brothers worked in tile, stone, tempera, paint, and fresco. “Fresco was the favorite technique of the Mexican painters of the nationalistic movement, partly because it had been used centuries before by the ancient peoples of Mexico.”²⁶

Mural art remained a robust channel of social marketing peaking between the 1920s and the 1950s. As the country became industrialized and less rural, the muralist movement slowed down in the 1960s: “After starting out with great convictions, the movement lost its originality and its raison d’être when the vitality of the revolution faded away.”²⁷

Although the political narrative in murals became less intense, the format, techniques and social commentary lived on in various forms. Throughout their careers, José and Tomás harnessed the narrative and figurative style of murals in their work whether the art was asserting a political point or not. José, in fact, is considered the most notable muralist in the second wave of the movement following in the footsteps of *Los Tres Grandes*.

To the uninitiated, mural imagery is appreciated for its beauty but is not always immediately recognized as political or necessarily nationalistic. To the informed, however, political symbols are recognized in the work. This sometimes subtle, or sometimes explicit, posture carried over into the brothers’ work. For example, both brothers repeatedly used a jaguar in their work. The use of this iconic pre-Hispanic symbol in modern work can be interpreted as an assertion of Mexico’s pre-Hispanic ancestors. Of course, the jaguar can also be an aesthetic choice—depending on the context. When inserted in a historic narrative, this acknowledgment of Mexico’s indigenous people references the underpinnings of the Mexican Revolution. The Mexican Revolution was a complicated class war which, simply stated, was a confrontation between those with indigenous and Spanish heredity, and the related issue of perceived social and financial inequities.

INTEGRATION OF THE ARTS

A second primary influence on the brothers’ work and careers was the result of Mexico’s response to the International Style in modern architecture. Notable Mexican modern architects (including Ramírez Vázquez) sought modes of expression to ground the impersonal nature of modernism in Mexico. Architect and historian Louise Noelle attributes Mexico’s approach to modernity, which was to incorporate Mexican art in the designs, as a direct response to criticism of the international style as faceless and placeless:

One such mode was integración plástica (integration of the arts), which united buildings with works by important visual artists; one of the most significant examples was perhaps that of UNAM’s main campus (1947–54), which...united many architects and artists [including Ramírez Vázquez and the Chávez Morado brothers] in a plurality of specific expressions. This magnum opus marked a decisive moment in the history of Mexican architecture, representing the pinnacle of one style of construction and the beginning of another...Other projects that employed integración plástica are the Museo Nacional de Antropología (1964), in Mexico City, by Vázquez with Jorge Campuzano and Rafael Mijares [Alcérreca], which combines archeological richness with contemporary art...²⁸

Because José and Tomás were masters of both two-dimensional works and monumental sculpture executed in the popular Mexican style, their aesthetic and skills were sought by modern architects. This was their niche in the modern building boom: incorporating the symbols of Mexico’s “ancient” ancestors into the “new” buildings. The Museo Nacional de Antropología incorporated numerous art integrations through sculpture and design. The interior courtyard in which the column resides references the nunnery

quadrangle in the ancient Mayan city of Uxmal. Pre-Columbian sculpture asserted strength, massiveness, and oversize scale—all elements considered in the column design. Noted architect Ricardo Legorreta called this Mexican phenomenon the convergence of “rootedness and innovation.”²⁹

Mexican architectural curricula supported the ancient and new philosophy: “We had a whole one-year course on the history of pre-Columbian architecture at the Polytechnic” recalled a noted architectural historian and theorist.³⁰ *Los Tres Grandes* muralist Siqueiros wrote, “We must come closer to the work of the ancient settlers of our valleys, the Indian painters and sculptors, (Maya, Aztecs, Incas, etc.); our physical proximity to them will help us to absorb the vigor of their work.”³¹

The ancient and new mash-up is not only evidenced in midcentury government-sponsored buildings but also in the architects’ own modern home designs validating the position that this design phenomenon was not a political hangover from the era of civic mural propaganda but rather aesthetically and socially popular.

COLLABORATIVE ARCHITECTURAL WORKS

The brothers’ work is almost always considered individually given that their careers were mostly independent of each other, particularly in their later careers. Because the Sunnylands column represents the work of both José and Tomás, other collaborative works were examined. Their opportunities to work together were infrequent, but according to family members, this was not indicative of a lack of interest in collaboration. They were sought-after artists for different kinds of projects and were both active in civic and academic life; hence, they were often pulled in different directions. These were close brothers who were supportive of each other’s work.³²

It is difficult to quantify how many projects they worked on together as one would help the other informally. The officially attributed collaborative monumental works include the frieze and classroom elements at Centro Médico de México D.F., 1958; the bronze doors of Museo del Caracol, 1960; the column at Museo Nacional de Antropología, 1964; and the column at Sunnylands, 1968.

Situated less than a mile from the Museo Nacional de Antropología, the Museo del Caracol presents the history of Mexico primarily for children. José and Tomás created a massive bronze entrance facade and doors for the Caracol. Themes and figures used for the doors were reused later on the Museo Nacional de Antropología and Sunnylands columns, such as the juxtaposition of Spanish and indigenous faces, and a man with

Below
Bronze doors on the
entrance of the Museo
del Caracol.

Museo del Caracol, 2015

his arms outstretched in an act of peaceful nonresistance. Like the columns, the door narrative depicts Mexico’s history in sections: one side depicts elements related to the Spanish conquistadors, and the other side features indigenous symbols. They named the doors, *Componentes Raciales y Culturales del México Moderno (Racial and Cultural Components of Modern Mexico)*.³³

The narrative is presented through photos, pictures, models, and dioramas in a spiral building. Ramírez Vázquez later described the museum’s mission: “where children were introduced in an attractive manner to the Mexican struggle for freedom.”³⁴ At the end of the chronological journey through the museum, the concluding symbol indicating the successful integration of a post-revolutionary Mexico is a massive eagle sculpture (the symbol of modern Mexico) sculpted by Tomás.

The museum website provides the following description for the museum’s signature doors: “The bronze door that frames the entrance to the museum, developed by José Chávez Morado, represents the fusion of western and Indian with the birth of miscegenation [integration].” Despite the attribution to José, we know from interviews with family members and photos that both brothers contributed to the doors.



Right
Detail of the frieze on the facade of
the Centro Médico Nacional Siglo XXI
building, Mexico City, c. 1957.

Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano



JOSÉ CHÁVEZ MORADO 1909–2002



José Chávez Morado, the most celebrated artist in the second generation of Mexican muralists, devoted himself to social causes and art education throughout his life. In 1933, he taught drawing classes in the public schools and was named Chief of the Fine Arts Section of the Department of Fine Arts of the Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Public Education) in 1935. In the 1940s he continued to teach drawing classes at the Escuela de Pintura y Escultura (School of Painting and Sculpture). He also was a professor of lithography at the Escuela de Artes del Libro (School of Liberal Arts). José is best remembered for his monumental murals depicting the socio-political aspects of the Mexican Revolution including its struggles and heroes. His art and teaching careers were established in the 1930s and his most prolific period was between 1955 and 1967.

In 1925, 16-year-old José traveled throughout the western United States. He visited Mexican muralist José Clemente Orozco (one of *Los Tres Grandes*), who was creating a monumental mural at Pomona College in California. It is said that this visit to Pomona cemented José's life's work. Forty-three years later, José's own work was installed 90 miles away at Sunnylands.

Following art classes in California and Mexico, José created his first mural, *Anti-imperialist Struggle in Veracruz*, in 1935. This occurred ten years after the Pomona visit. José's first solo exhibition was held in 1944. His civic engagement, political passions, and style perfectly aligned with communicating powerful stories through art. His art advanced his own political leanings. He was actively involved in the Taller de Gráfica Popular (Workshop of Popular Graphics), an artist's print collective founded in Mexico, which was primarily concerned with using art to visually communicate social issues.

José married Olga Costa (1913–1993) in 1935. She was a celebrated artist who had fled Nazi Germany for Mexico. She and José were part of an intellectual, politically motivated group of artists and writers in Mexico City. They both enjoyed successful artistic careers throughout their lives and were popular figures in their artistic circle.

His major works include three murals at the Ciudad Universitaria (the main campus of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM), 1952; the Secretaría de

Left
José Chávez Morado.
Date unknown.

Archives of Architect
Pedro Ramírez Vázquez

Right
José Chávez
Morado working on
a mural inside the
Museo Nacional
de Antropología, in
Mexico City, c. 1963.

Archives of Architect
Pedro Ramírez Vázquez

Comunicaciones y Transportes (Ministry of Communications and Transportation) building, 1953–1955; Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, 1964; as well as the monumental frescos in Guanajuato at the Alhóndiga de Granaditas (historic building which once was the town granary) that took him twelve years to paint, 1955–1967.

In 1952, José described *El Retorno de Quetzalcóatl* (*The Return of Quetzalcóatl*), his glass mosaic mural installed facing the Great Court of the Science Faculties of University City. This description provides insight into his narrative process:

First and fundamentally, the mural presents the universality of our culture. It attempts to explain how our ancient pre-Hispanic culture was intermixed with the basic cultures of Europe, Asia, Africa, and produced the modern Mestizo. The figures are shown sailing on the mythical boat of entwined serpents, each bearing the clear fire of his respective culture, and shown in the attitude of offering it to the New World. In the background, a pyramid, pierced with arrows, lances and swords, and crowned on the left by a light, signifies that culture survives the barbarism of war.³⁵

In addition to working to advance social causes, José taught art, promoted cultural programs and museums, and participated in government programs to promote art. José and Olga left significant collections to museums. Their former home is now a museum in the city of Guanajuato: Museo de Arte Olga Costa - José Chávez Morado.





Above
The mural *Expresión Cultural de Mesoamérica*
found inside the Museo Nacional de Antropología.
Date unknown.
*Photographer Rafael Doriz**

TOMÁS CHÁVEZ MORADO 1914–2001



Tomás Chávez Morado, five years younger than José, also earned a place in the Mexican art pantheon. Unlike José, whose prominence was in mural art, Tomás is more well-known for his sculpture and as a professor. Like José, Tomás was exposed to art at an early age and actively sought informal and formal educational and experiential opportunities to learn and make art.

In 1928, Tomás left Silao for Mexico City to pursue his artistic career against his father's wishes and to connect with José who was living and studying there. The brothers ended up sleeping at the Centro Popular de Pintura de Nonoalco (Popular Painting Center of Nonoalco) where they both took classes. As his skill increased, he began teaching modeling and drawing at primary and secondary public schools in Mexico City. At the same time, he was working in the department of museology at the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (National Institute of Fine Arts). In 1940, he accepted a four-year commission from the Department of Indian Affairs to lead an indigenous boarding school in the Sierra Tarahumara for the Tarahumara people, an experience that awakened his passion for indigenous causes. He graduated in 1948 from the Escuela Normal Superior (Top Normal School) with a master's degree in arts education in the Department of Fine Arts and later joined the faculty. One of his earliest

exhibitions was his participation in a group show called *Cincuenta Jóvenes Artistas Mexicanos (Fifty Young Mexican Artists)*, which was held at the Sal6n de la Pl6stica Mexicana (Gallery of Mexican Sculpture), in Mexico City in 1954.

Important civic installations include a 1960 commission of 260 monumental concrete eagle heads that mark the 715-mile route of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla from the city of Dolores Hidalgo in Guanajuato to Monte de las Cruces in Chihuahua. This national monument program celebrates the 150th anniversary of Mexican independence. Another large-scale commission involved creating the model for 493 busts of Ignacio Zaragoza, a famous Mexican army general, for the primary schools throughout Mexico. In 1964, Tomás created the national shield carving which adorns the main entrance facade of the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City.

Tomás was a devoted scholar and inspirational teacher. In 1968, after 33 years of teaching under the Secretaría de Educaci6n P6blica (Ministry of Public Education), Tomás moved back to Guanajuato to retire and dedicate himself to his studio sculpture. Many students sought out his advice during this time, which in 1984 led him to start teaching again at the Universidad de Guanajuato. Because the university did not have complete facilities, Tomás instructed his students in his own studio. Between 1994 and 1999, Tomás directed

Left
Tomás Chávez Morado.
Date unknown.
Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Below
Entrance to the Museo
Nacional de Antropología,
Mexico City. Date unknown.
John Mitchell / Alamy Stock Photo

the School of Plastic Arts, improved their studio facilities, and made needed changes that led to official approval of the visual arts bachelor's degree program. "His activity as a professor began at 22 and was interrupted just two years before his death in 2001. The University of Guanajuato had the privilege of having him as a professor for two different periods: from 1984–1990; and 1994–1999, the last period during which he served as Director of the School of Plastic Arts."³⁷

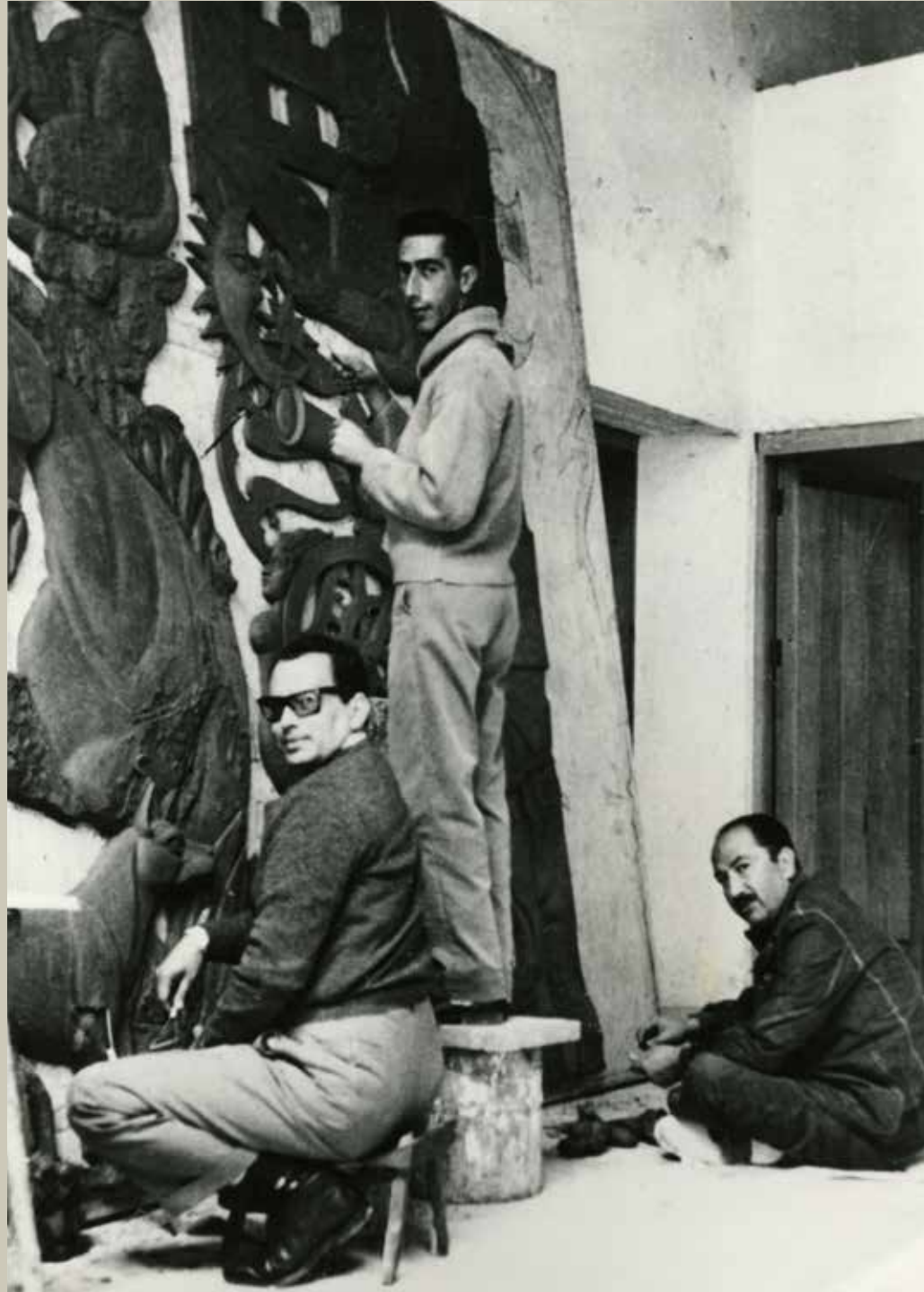
Family was at the center of Tomás' life. His wife, María Guadalupe Anguiano de Chávez Morado, and children, Tomás Chávez Anguiano and Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano, were reoccurring subjects and direct inspirations for his work. Tomás drew inspiration for his studio work through the lens of maternal love, romance, the pride of common people, and the innocence of animals and children. Some of his most powerful works are his exquisitely tender evocations of the maternal bond. Tomás was four years old when his mother passed away. Although Tomás' touching themes are drawn from the heart, the work is not manipulative. Depicting the basic essence of life without adding superfluous affectation results in sculpture worthy of deeper contemplation.

Tomás once said, "All work is noble, what you have to add is soul."³⁸



Right, left to right
Tomás, Jorge Bess, and José
working on the bronze doors
for the Museo del Caracol,
c. 1959.

Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato



Left
Eagle sculpture by
Tomás Chávez Morado at
the Museo del Caracol.
Date unknown.

*Archives of Architect
Pedro Ramírez Vázquez*

MUSEO JOSÉ Y TOMÁS CHÁVEZ MORADO

The José and Tomás Chávez Morado Museum is located in the town of Silao, Mexico in the house in which they were raised. Some of their work can be seen there and in museums in nearby Guanajuato.

Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano, Tomás' daughter, shared the family story of the brothers' path into the art world. Their father was José Ignacio Chávez Montes de Oca, a business owner. Their mother was Luz Morado Cabrera, a housewife and amateur painter. There were four brothers: José, Tomás, Gabriel, and Salvador (who died when he was a young boy). When their mother died in 1918 of the Spanish flu, the brothers were cared for by their paternal aunts, Chloe and Gabriela. "With them a taste for art awakened in José and Tomás, and later on their desire to develop themselves in art, one in painting and the other sculpture. Their interests were not well received by their father who ran a store called El Siglo XX (The Twentieth Century). Tomás tried working in the family store but found it tedious, enslaving, and boring. Their father remarried and started a new family. José and Tomás followed their vocations. Both brothers enjoyed great success as artists."³⁹



Left
Plaque found on the facade of the brothers' museum, Museo José y Tomás Chávez Morado.

Photo by Anne Rowe, 2016
Sunnylands Collection

ARTWORKS FROM MEXICO ON LOAN TO SUNNYLANDS

Carved Narrative: Los Hermanos Chávez Morado marks the world debut outside of Mexico celebrating both brothers' work. Thirty-seven works were generously loaned to Sunnylands by Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano and the Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato.

Detail of *El Rosario*.
Photo by Lance Gerber, 2016

Autorretrato de Tomás Chávez Morado (Self-Portrait of Tomás Chávez Morado) 1997

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Patinated plaster

31" x 22" x 5"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

This self-portrait is believed to be the last sculpture Tomás carved. It was privately created, tucked away in his studio, and discovered by his surprised family after he died in 2001. In Spanish, *Yo* translates to *Me*.



Autorretrato (Self-Portrait) 1973

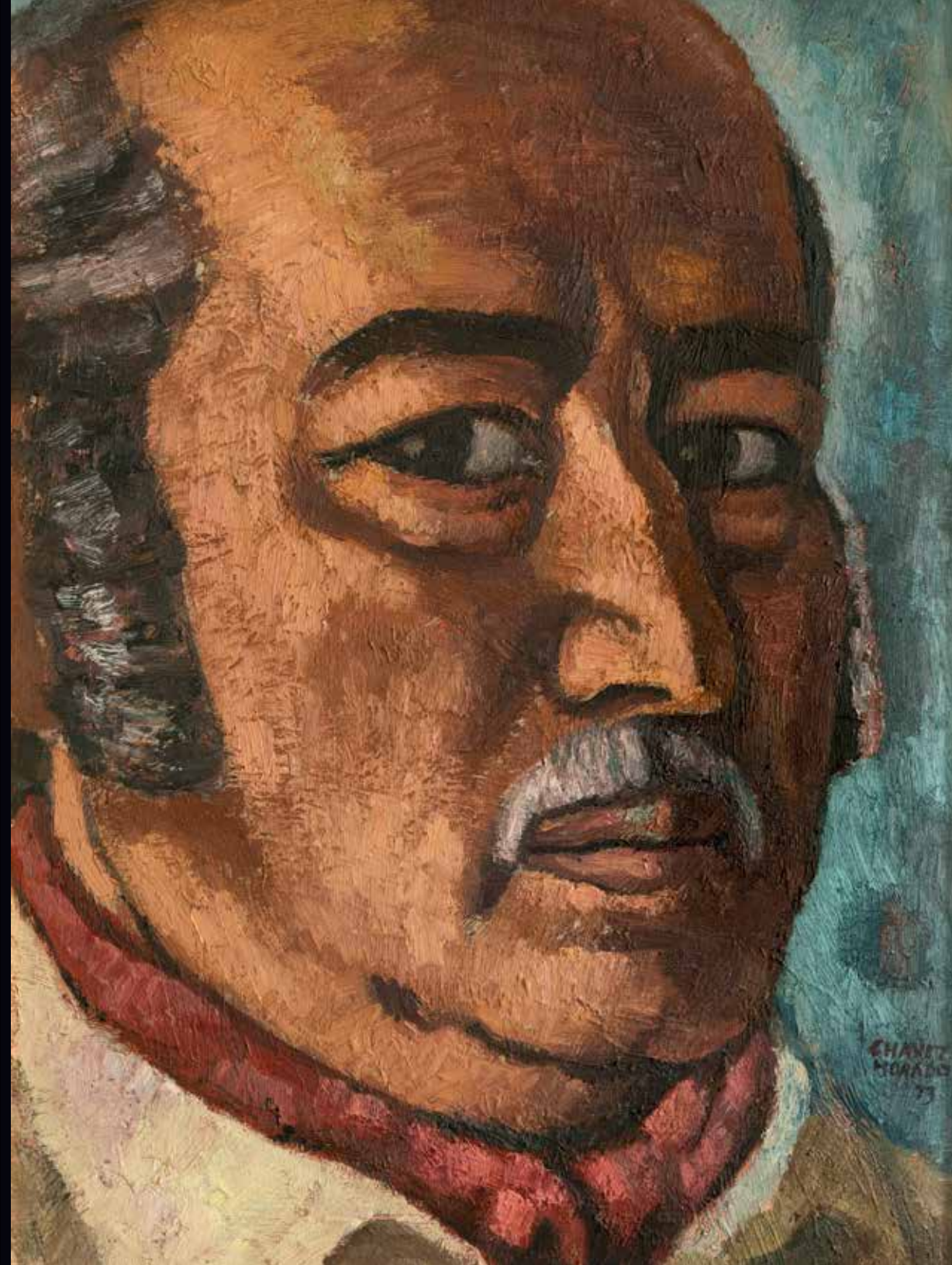
José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

40" x 32"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

A year following this self-portrait, José Chávez Morado was awarded Mexico's prestigious National Prize for Arts and Sciences.



Los Galeotes y el Símbolo
(The Galley Slaves and the Symbol) 1959

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)
Oil on canvas
48" x 63"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

José references a scene from the seventeenth-century Miguel de Cervantes book *Don Quixote* in which the title character frees a chain gang of galley slaves who were doomed to death rowing in the ships of war.



Carreta de Locos (Cartful of Madmen) 1950

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)
Oil on canvas
33" x 41"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

Also inspired by *Don Quixote*, in this work the title character encounters a troupe of actors in costume on their way to perform in a play. In José's version, each actor represents an art form: music, dance, literature, painting, and both comedic and tragic theater. Quixote is depicted as he behaves in the book: confused between reality and illusion.

Enamorada (Woman In Love) 1957

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Bronze

7" x 10" x 6"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Tomás lovingly depicts his wife, María Guadalupe Anguiano de Chávez Morado, in repose after the birth of their son.



Opposite

Escarmenándose (Untangle the Hair) 1958

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Bronze

14" x 12" x 11"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

A young woman detangling her hair in an intimate, private moment marks a departure in Tomás' depiction of women, which often explores themes of maternity, work, friendship, and religious devotion.



Retratando la Nación (Portraying the Nation) 1961

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

42" x 34"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

To create and sell souvenir photographs, photographers at tourist sites throughout Mexico provide costumes to travelers. An adult dressed as the Virgin of Guadalupe poses for a photograph while holding a baby. The exposed feet represent an Aztec deity, Tonantzin. In pre-Hispanic times, Tonantzin had a shrine near the present-day Basilica de Guadalupe.



Síntomas de Decadencia (Symptoms of Decadence) 1945

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

26" x 40"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

After the War of Independence (1810–1821), the city of San Miguel de Allende entered a long period of obscurity that made it look like a haunted ghost town. This surrealistic, dark composition is accentuated by the use of flying demons and a decaying, moldy bust of San Miguel Arcángel to whom the city is dedicated.





Sanjuanera del Camino (Sanjuanera of the Road) 1982

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Patinated plaster

16" x 23" x 14"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

A fatigued *Sanjuanera* (a female pilgrim heading to the Sanctuary of the Virgin of San Juan) takes a moment to rest before continuing her long journey.

Niña con Flor (Girl with Flower) 1985

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Bronze

12" x 14" x 12"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Sculpted in a kneeling posture reminiscent of the depiction of women in pre-Columbian hieroglyphs, a girl holds a flower.



La Pequeña Madrecita
(The Young Mother) 1986

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Bronze

23" × 18" × 16"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura
de Guanajuato

Tomás creates a tender and universal moment when a girl meets her new brother whom she looks at lovingly as if he were her own son.



Opposite

El Faunito (The Young Faun) 1962

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Ceramic

16" × 15" × 9"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Tomás playfully references the ancient Roman mythological half-human, half-goat figure in this whimsical depiction of his two-year-old son.





Opposite

Imploración (Pleading) 1959

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Stone

36" x 16" x 20"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

A kneeling mother looks to the heavens as her child innocently sleeps in her arms, wrapped and protected in her shawl. The composition references pre-Hispanic sculpture in which women were traditionally depicted on their knees.



El Rosario (The Rosary) 1984

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Patinated plaster

24" x 15" x 11"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Tomás achieves intense religious devotion in the face of this woman who is deep in prayer while holding her rosary beads. In Catholic religious tradition, each of the beads prompts a prayer.

Los Jubilados
(The Retirees) 1987

Tomás Chávez Morado
(1914–2001)

Bronze

22" x 14" x 14"

On loan from Adriana Marcela
Chávez Anguiano

An elderly couple,
accompanied by their
loyal dog, are shown
begging in the street
as a social indictment
of the Mexican national
pension system.



Opposite

La Tuerta
(The One-Eyed Woman) 1967

José Chávez Morado
(1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

42" x 42"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal
de la Cultura de Guanajuato

This depiction of an elderly
one-eyed woman, hunched
over and wearing tattered
rags for clothing, makes a
social statement highlighting
the Mexican majority who did
not benefit from the economic
boom of the 1960s.





Opposite

Niña Tehuana
(*Tehuana Girl*) 1986

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Patinated plaster

22" x 17" x 14"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

A young girl, sculpted in the form of a flower, is dressed in festive, elaborately embroidered clothing worn by *Tehuanas* (women from the city of Tehuantepec).



Niña con Cascabel
(*Girl with Bell*) 1959

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Bronze

15" x 14" x 10"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Indicated by her finely detailed clothes, a little girl of a high social class holds a toy bell which is commonly used to calm and entertain children.



El Secreto (The Secret) 1976
Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)
Patinated plaster
15" x 19" x 5"
On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Two *Tehuana*s share a secret. The earring and braided hair are distinct features of *Tehuana* style.



Las Matronas Chismosas (The Gossiping Midwives) 1987
Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)
Bronze
15" x 35" x 23"
On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

A baby sleeps in the arms of one woman as all three relax and share their gossip. Tomás often tenderly depicted women engaged in everyday life.



Cabeza del Toro (Head of the Bull) 1964

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Bronze

27" x 31" x 11"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

The impressive strength of the bull is captured through the details of the relief. Tomás once said, "Animals that have as much character as humans, their manners, and their attitude are very interesting and beautiful. Sometimes it is more difficult to capture the character of an animal than of a human being."



México Negro (Black Mexico) 1942

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

38" x 47"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

José criticizes religious fanaticism in this surrealistic scene of pilgrims heading to the Sanctuary of San Miguel Arcángel. He depicts the faithful as burdened by the weight of a fantastical animal corpse, empty of substance. He once said, "Certain traditions of an almost feudal religiosity, frequently cruel, and of popular beauty...were not attractions for tourists, but a vital part of village life."



Mujer con Alcatraces
(Woman with Calla Lilies) 1985

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Bronze

14" x 9" x 10"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

An indigenous woman carries a child and a bouquet of calla lilies. This flower is not native to Mexico but is now strongly associated with Mexican art following artist Diego Rivera's frequent use of bundles of the flower in his paintings.



Toldos (Umbrellas) 1941

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

35" x 43"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

On market days, vendors use rustic canopies to shield themselves and their products from the sun and rain. The vendors in this scene appear to be oblivious to the vigorous winds.



Homenaje a los Constructores de la Ciudad de México
(Tribute to the Builders of Mexico City) 1961

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)
Patinated plaster
10" × 12.5" × 7"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Three constructed layers of Mexico City are detailed here in historic order. The bottom layer represents the Aztec civilization; the middle layer represents a Spanish Colonial city, many of which were built on top of pre-Hispanic ruins; and the top layer represents a contemporary metropolis.



Réquiem para un Obrero
(Requiem for a Laborer) 1959

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)
Oil on canvas
49" × 61"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

A massive construction site towers over a valley and represents the midcentury economic and building boom in Mexico. The rising steel and the possible religious symbolism in the form of a trinity of crosses dwarf the almost-unnoticed laborers who worked long, perilous days to modernize Mexico.

Madre de Pueblo
(Village Mother) 1961

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)
Patinated plaster
20" x 7" x 8"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

A young, strong indigenous mother and her son gently embrace. Tomás once said, "Art is not a question of schools, nor of teachers, nor of critics of art. It's just a matter of feelings, of touching the soul of human beings."



Opposite

Autorretrato con Nana
(Self-Portrait with Nanny) 1948

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)
Oil on canvas
67" x 45"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

In this self-portrait, José recalls his childhood during the Mexican Revolution. His nanny protects him in the absence of his mother who died when he was a young boy.





Opposite

La Muerte de un Danzante
(The Death of a Dancer) 1952

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Watercolor on paper

23" x 23"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

An actor wearing a costume representing death and a dancer dressed as an Apache are just two of many characters who appear in the popular Mexican folkdance *Danza del Torito* (*Dance of the Bull*). The narrative involves a mad bull that gets loose and terrorizes the town during a festival. Various characters in masks and costumes try to subdue the bull but fail. In the end, Death enters the dance and kills all of the characters.

Nocturno en el Atrio
(Night in the Churchyard) 1941

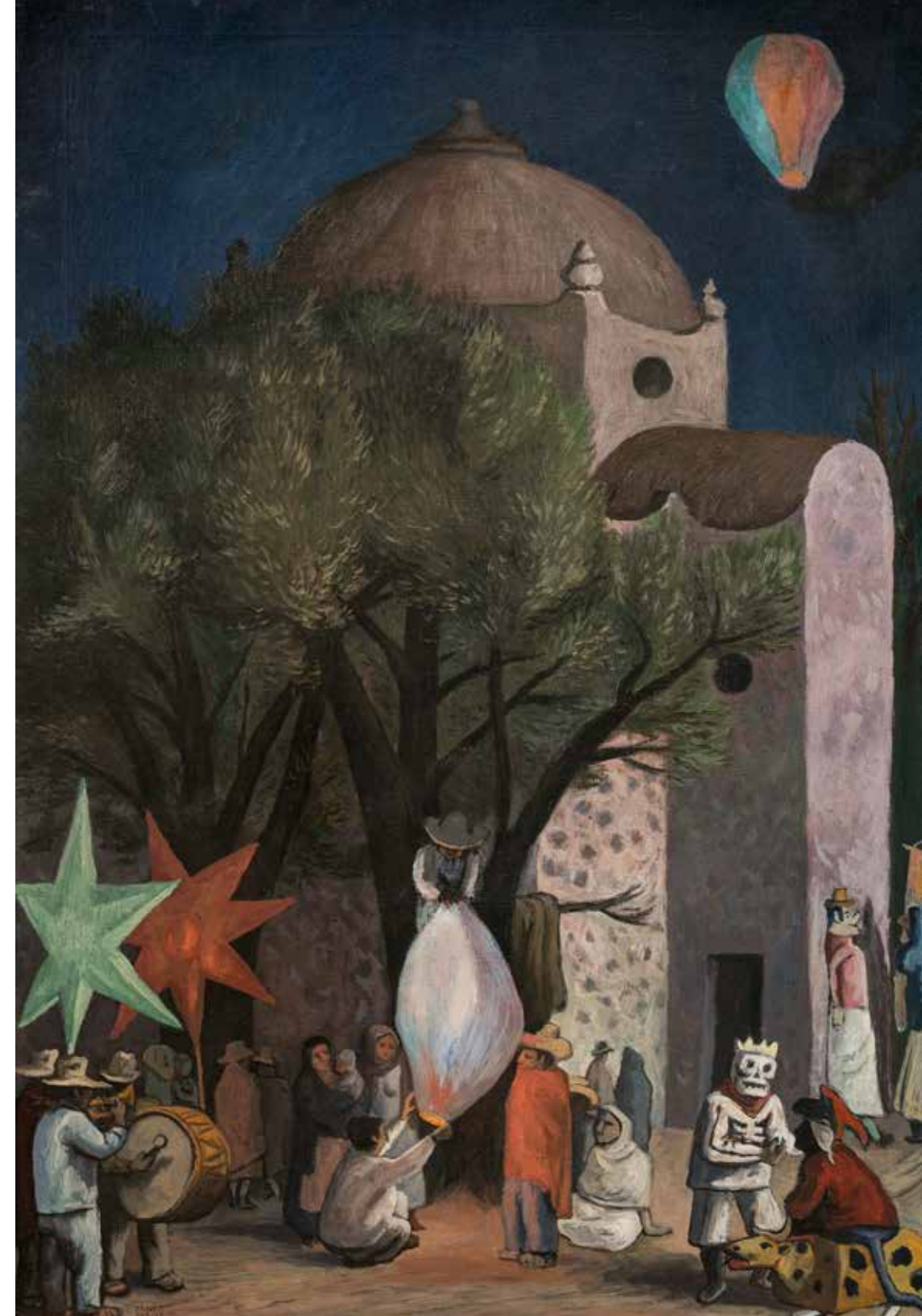
José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

39" x 29"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

A festive night scene depicts local villagers in a churchyard engaged in preparations for the *Alborada* (Dawn) festival in the city of San Miguel de Allende. Musicians fill the air with *tunditos*, a type of indigenous music played with drums and reed flutes. Decorative stars, hot air balloons, large puppets, and the traditional *Danza del Torito* (*Dance of the Bull*) bring this painting to life.



Personajes de la Pasión
(*Characters of the Passion*) 1960

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

32" x 36"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

Passion of Christ plays occur throughout Mexico during the Catholic Church's observance of Holy Week. These traditional performances combine theater and public worship. Village actors portray the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and, in this depiction, a Roman soldier in a hastily assembled modern military uniform.



Cáliz con Sangre de Cristo
(*Goblet with Blood of Christ*) 1996

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Polychrome plaster

21" x 18" x 4"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Blood from Christ's nailed hand turns into wine as it fills a goblet. Grapes and wheat, representing the body and blood of Christ, are topped by a crown of thorns—all important symbols in the Catholic religion.





Opposite

La Gran Tehuana (The Great Tehuana) 1963

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Oil on canvas

60" x 48"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

The city of Tehuantepec, in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, is known for having elements of a matriarchal society. Therefore, a *Tehuana* represents feminine strength and pride. *Tehuanas* are also known for their distinctive, striking style of dress which frequently includes a long skirt, an embroidered tunic, and a headdress.



Tehuana (Tehuana) 1964

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Patinated plaster

12" x 18" x 9"

On loan from Adriana Marcela Chávez Anguiano

Tehuanas have long been immortalized by artists who were impressed by the strength, pride, and sensuality of these matriarchs.

El Quinqué (The Oil Lamp) 1952

José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)

Watercolor on paper

19" x 21"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

A *Tehuana* is beautifully illuminated by the light and flicker of an oil lamp.



Opposite

Pensativa (Thoughtful) 1959

Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)

Stone

28" x 14" x 17"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal de la Cultura de Guanajuato

Tomás achieves remarkable emotion through the smooth delicacy of the stonework in this depiction of a young girl engrossed in her thoughts.



La Marcha
(*The March*) 1961

José Chávez Morado
(1909–2002)
Oil on canvas
63" × 53"

Courtesy of Instituto Estatal
de la Cultura de Guanajuato

Bureaucrats,
laborers, and farmers,
representing the
working class, march
together in search of
a more dignified life.
The red flag that they
carry represents their
struggle.



EPILOGUE

The canopied patio at Mexico's Museo Nacional de Antropología has become an important Mexican landmark. President Barack Obama visited the museum in 2009 for a dinner in his honor hosted by President Felipe Calderón. He visited the museum again in 2013 and delivered a public address under the canopy. He mentioned the museum in his opening remarks, "...this is my second visit to this museum and each time that I have come I've been inspired by your culture, and the beauty of this land, and most of all the Mexican people...And it's fitting that we gather at this great museum, which celebrates Mexico's ancient civilizations and their achievements in arts and architecture, medicine and mathematics."⁴⁰

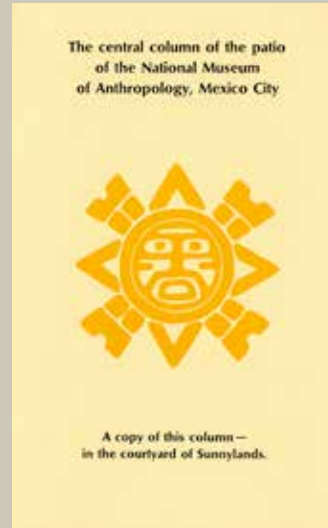
Walter and Leonore Annenberg were intellectually engaged art collectors. They were interested in art with a political message. The Mexican column they commissioned echoed the national unification message of the muralist movement. The carved relief broadcasts, at their front door, the universal message of peace. The Annenbergs no doubt responded to this narrative in a personal way. Both were appointed United States ambassadors during their lifetimes and so were uniquely attuned to the power of symbolic communication and advancing diplomacy through art.



Top
President Barack Obama speaking at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, May 3, 2013.
Official White House photo by Lawrence Jackson.

Above
Exterior view of the main entrance of Sunnylands.
Photo by Ken Hayden, 2014
Sunnylands Collection

COLUMN CARVINGS / PAMPHLET TEXT



While the column was being sculpted, Walter wrote to the architects eager to understand each symbol of the narrative. Ramírez Vázquez sent two versions of the official narrative of the column to Walter to enjoy and share with Sunnylands guests. One version was written by the respected Mexican scholar, Dr. Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico's Secretary of Public Education, who was among the core group who succeeded in shepherding the completion of Mexico's Museo Nacional de Antropología: "Although a new building for the Museum had been discussed for a generation, formal steps were taken only in August, 1962, when Dr. Jaime Torres Bodet, Secretary of Public Education, announced at the XXXV International Congress of Americanists that President Lopez Mateos had given orders to proceed with the new structure. Construction began early in 1963."⁴¹

Walter was also sent an interpretation of the carvings from Luis Aveleyra Arroyo de Anda, an anthropologist who worked in Ramírez Vázquez' office as a historic consultant. The Annenbergs printed

Anda's version of the narrative in an attractive pamphlet featuring the Sunnylands sun emblem on the cover. These were placed in guest rooms so that visitors could more deeply appreciate each figural element on the column.

Particular sentences were underlined by Aveleyra Arroyo de Anda for emphasis:

The bronze sculptural reliefs on this column represent the integration of the people and culture of Mexico and, at the same time, they project the message of friendship, peace, and culture that Mexico offers the world.

The eastern face of the column is oriented toward the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, from whence came the Spanish galleons that first discovered and later conquered Mexico (integration of people and culture).

The opposite side faces toward the Pacific Ocean, from which coast the important expedition commanded by Miguel López de Legaspi set sail in 1564, opening the Philippines. These reliefs symbolize the message of friendship, peace and culture that Mexico sends to the world.

The integration of the nation is portrayed, from the base upward, first by the eagle and the jaguar. Both embody human attributes that symbolize

Left
A pamphlet interpreting iconography on the column was provided to guests at Sunnylands.
Sunnylands Collection

the legacy of Mexico's pre-Hispanic past, one of the principal forces of which was the cultural interaction between the peoples of the coast and those of the central plateau. The symbol of these peoples was the eagle, especially among the Teotihuacans, the Toltecs and the Aztecs. The jaguar, an inhabitant of the tropical jungles, was venerated by the Olmecs and the Mayas.

The sword, representing the Spanish conquest, divides these pre-Hispanic symbols and, over the rising sun, buries its point in the roots of the "ceiba," a tropical tree which symbolizes the origins of the people. The clean and solid trunk of the tree personifies the strength of the ethnic mixture of races that forged the Mexican people; it is depicted above in two profiles, one Indian and the other Spanish.

In the upper part, the eagle, with outspread wings and devouring a serpent, represents the national emblem of an independent Mexico.

The western side of the column portrays the projection of Mexico toward the world. Over several pre-Hispanic symbols, including the Indian representation for water, the setting sun appears, evocative of the route of the sixteenth-century expedition to the Philippines and the beginning of Mexico's international involvement.

Here the tree appears, this time crossed by a steel beam and the compass rose, elements that exemplify the firmness and scope of this message.

On the same "ceiba" is found the symbol of the atom, expressing the scientific and technical progress of the modern world, which should serve the well-being of mankind. Above this nuclear design is shown the commanding figure of a man, with outstretched arms and exposed entrails. He is framed by two olive branches and crowned by a dove, who signifies complete dedication to peace and offers friendship to the world.

Finally, on the north and south sides of the column, three weapons draw blood from the body of the column. They represent three events of political and social character that have created the greatness of Mexico and have ordered its policy, justice and respect for the rights of men, among the brotherhood of nations. These events were the Independence of 1810, the Constitutional Reform of 1857, and the Agrarian Revolution of 1910.

Luis Aveleyra Arroyo de Anda Archaeologist

Mexico City, April 1968⁴²

Endnotes

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Right
The Annenbergs at
the front entrance of
Sunnylands.
Date unknown.
Sunnylands Collection





Acknowledgments

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project led to a new interpretation of the Chávez Morado brothers' work and its place in the artistic environment of its time. The exhibition and catalog are also the result of a collaborative effort among other professionals at Sunnylands: Ken Chavez, Deputy Director of Communications and Public Affairs; Michaeleen Gallagher, Director of Education and Environmental Programs; Susan Davis, Editorial Director; and Ashley Santana, Editorial Assistant. The Collections and Exhibitions department's valued efforts also included those of Kacey Donner, Collections Assistant; Frank Lopez, Librarian and Archivist; Mary Velez, Senior Art Handler; and historian Michael Comerford. Contributing to the canon of scholarship on the brothers' work, Kacey Donner and Zulma Trejo published the Tomás Chávez Morado Wikipedia page in English and Spanish.

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The Trust is grateful to Walter and Leonore Annenberg who dared to imagine and build a magnificent estate in the Sonoran desert. Their architectural and design inspiration was drawn directly from Mexico's pre-Hispanic civilizations. Now, forty-nine years after the Mexican column arrived for permanent installation at their home, Sunnylands is celebrating this collaborative work by the Chávez Morado brothers along with their individual studio work. We are honored that *Carved Narrative: Los Hermanos Chávez Morado* is affiliated with the Getty's initiative, *Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA*—an ambitious exploration of Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with the greater Los Angeles region.

Janice Lyle, Ph.D., *Editor*
Director, Sunnylands Center & Gardens

Detail of the column.
Lance Gerber, 2017
Sunnylands Collection