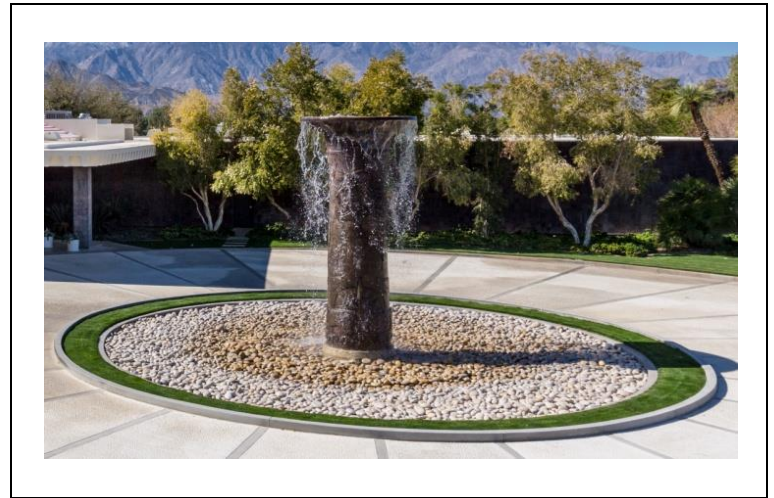


José Chávez Morado (1909–2002)
Tomás Chávez Morado (1914–2001)
Imagen de Mexico, 1968
Cast bronze veneer over concrete
Height: 20'
Diameter: 5'
Sunnylands Collection 2009.1.185

Condition:

The column was coated with a brown-tinted wax in 2011 to protect it from the mineral-rich Rancho Mirage water which cascades over the rim.

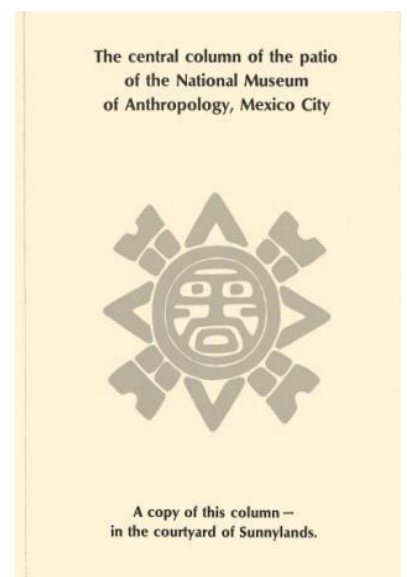


Description:

This is a 20-foot, half-scale replica of a columnar fountain installed on the patio of the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City (Museo Nacional de Antropología). The carved reliefs depict some aspects of the history of modern Mexico. This column is an example of the Annenbergs pursuing, directly from the artists, an artwork that they admired and wished to have at Sunnylands.

Travel Inspires Commission:

As art collectors, Walter and Leonore drew aesthetic inspiration from various influences, such as what they saw when they traveled. Following a trip to Mexico in 1967,¹ they commissioned a half-scale version of a monumental fountain seen at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.² The Annenbergs contacted the architect of the museum, Pedro Ramirez Vazquez, who contracted the same artists of the museum fountain, José and Tomás Chávez Morado.³ José, primarily a muralist, and Tomás, primarily a sculptor, did not often collaborate on works,⁴ but this is one of a few examples where José's political figurative imagery merged with Tomás' sculpting experience to form a work that speaks to the integration, growth, and advancement of Mexico. In a 1991 publication, Walter explains, "I did want that column because it depicts the history of Mexico."⁵ At Sunnylands, the fountain fits within a Mesoamerican theme which the Annenbergs suggested to the designers of Sunnylands in 1963.⁶ Other Mesoamerican influences at the Sunnylands estate include the sun emblem, the Chichén Itzá-inspired roofline, and the Mexican lava stone. To help guests better understand the meaning of the column, special Annenberg-designed pamphlets explaining the iconography were placed in the colored guest suites.⁷

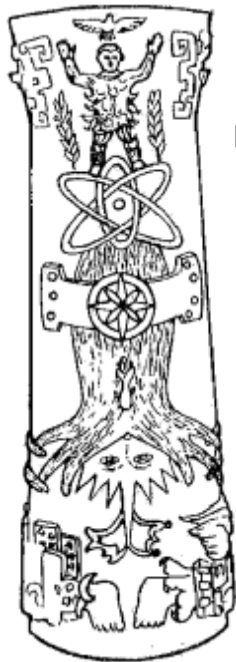


Column Symbols⁸:



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 of column: integration. The east side of the column depicts the roots of modern Mexico because the Spanish discovered what is now called Mexico in 1519 landing on the eastern shore. Portrayed from the base upwards, Mexico's indigenous people are represented by the eagle and jaguar—two important Mesoamerican 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 the Aztecs. Moving upward from this literal and cultural base, the rising sun represents the Spanish arrival from the east. The sword represents the Spanish conquest dividing the Mesoamerican people 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, top the tree representing the integration of the two principal bloodlines of the Mexican people. Above, an eagle devouring a rattlesnake, the national emblem of modern Mexico, distributes its weight and strength equally atop the heads of both men.



West side of column: projection. The first significant Mexican expedition 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 integrate 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 projection. The atomic symbol represents Mexico's participation in the scientific and technological modern world. The male figure exposing his organs and arms in a stance of non-resistance, framed by the 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 and drawing blood. The three wounds represent significant events in the formation of modern Mexico: the war of Independence from Spanish rule, 1810; the ratification of the Federal Constitution of the United Mexican States establishing individual rights, 1857; and the agrarian uprising and revolution, 1910.

¹ Sunnylands Collection. Photograph Album 1967–1968. S:\Collections\COLLECTIONS PHOTOS - SCANNED BUT NOT CATALOGED IN PAST PERFECT\Box E4C Family Photo Album Book_8 1967-1968 Complete

² Invoice, May 2, 1968. The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. 2009.1.185.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Vázquez Figueroa, María De Jesús. *Tomás Chávez Morado: El Maestro Escultor*. Guanajuato: Universidad De Guanajuato, 2014.

⁵ "Interview of Walter H. Annenberg by Fritz A. Frauchiger, Beverly Hills Hotel, August 1991." *Rancho Mirage*. Fall 1991: 30-37. Print.

⁶ William Haines correspondence. September 18, 1963. The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands. 2009.1.3930.

⁷ "Re: Entry court fountain." Interview of Michael Comerford by Kacey Donner. E-mail interview. 7 July 2016.

⁸ "The Museum Forty Years Ago." *National Museum of Anthropology, Mexico City*. Comp. Felipe Solis. Ed. Adriana Konzevik and Gerardo Jaramillo. New York: Harry N. Abrams in Association with CONACULTA-INAH, 2004. 39-43. Print.