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THE GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE PRESENTS IMAGES OF PRE-COLUMBIAN OBJECTS, RUINS, AND MANUSCRIPTS

*Obsidian Mirror-Travels: Refracting Ancient Mexican Art and Archaeology*

The Getty Research Institute at the Getty Center

November 16, 2010–March 27, 2011

LOS ANGELES—Celebrating the bicentennial of Mexican independence and the centennial of the Revolution, *Obsidian Mirror-Travels: Refracting Ancient Mexican Art and Archaeology* on view at the Getty Research Institute from November 16, 2010 through March 27, 2011, explores representations of Mexican archaeological objects and sites from the Colonial era to the present. Featuring images of ancient Maya and Aztec ruins by archaeologist explorers such as John Lloyd Stephens, Desiré Charnay, and Augustus and Alice Le Plongeon, the exhibition showcases depictions of the Aztec Calendar Stone and other Mexican antiquities, as well as panoramic visions of Mexico—in the context of the Spanish conquest, the 19th-century French intervention in Mexico, and the lengthy presidency of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1910).

*Obsidian Mirror-Travels* gathers images of Pre-Columbian objects, ruins, and manuscripts, including the Hernán Cortés map of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec Calendar Stone, and

- more -
the ruins of Palenque, Chichén Itzá, and Mitla. The Lienzo de Tlaxcala manuscript, a late-16th century Mexican codex, was produced to memorialize the Tlaxcalan version of the Conquest of Mexico. The papers and photographs of Alice and Augustus LePlongeon document Maya monuments and ruins in Yucatán. Illustrated journals with scenes of Mexico, originally penned by French officers during the Maximilian Empire, later became travel souvenirs. “Some of the works are accurate, while others are completely fanciful; each portrays a distinct vision of Mexico,” says Khristaan Villela, exhibition co-curator and professor at the University of New Mexico.


Beth Guynn, senior collections cataloguer for the Getty Research Institute and exhibition co-curator adds, “Smithson’s work explored reflection and refraction, conjuring the ways that Aztec and other Pre-Columbian rulers used semi-opaque obsidian mirrors as objects of power and divination. Obsidian mirrors were seen as a threshold between the earthly world and the realm of the gods. In much the same way, the Getty Research Institute objects stand on their own as individual artworks and illuminate their times and their subjects.”

*Obsidian Mirror-Travels* is co-curated by Khristaan Villela, University of New Mexico, and Beth Guynn, senior collections cataloguer for the Getty Research Institute. Accompanying the installation is an illustrated GRI publication, *The Aztec Calendar Stone*, edited by Khristaan Villela and Mary Ellen Miller. Related events include film screenings, point-of-view talks, and curatorial lectures.

*Obsidian Mirror-Travels* is part of Los Angeles’ citywide celebration of the bicentennial of Mexico’s independence and the centennial of the Mexican Revolution.

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