



The Aztecs

15 October 2020 to 22 June 2021

THE TEMPLO MAYOR PROJECT

First ever displays of recent finds

In 1978, the famous archaeologist Eduardo Matos Moctezuma discovered the remnants of Templo Mayor in the middle of Mexico City, opening up a new era of research into the Aztec empire. The Templo Mayor project was born: an archaeological research project with the objective to excavate the ceremonial district of what was then the capital city Tenochtitlan and thereby learn more about life in the imperial centre. Since then, archaeologists have been making new discoveries that have provided us with new assessments of our image of the Aztecs. Up until this point, that image had been drawn up by the Spanish conquerors.

In preparing the special exhibition *The Aztecs*, the Linden-Museum collaborated closely with the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexiko (INAH) and especially with the renowned archaeologists Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, Leonardo López Luján and Raúl Barrera Rodríguez. Recent and hitherto unpublished discoveries can therefore be shown for the first time, and the most recent research and excavation finds presented. These include gold earrings, a pendant in the shape of a heart and sacrificial knives decorated with faces.

One important source for these discoveries and the resultant newest insights that have influenced the shape of this exhibition has been the discovery of what became known as *ofrendas*. These sacrificial depots appear to be miniature depictions of the cosmos. The offerings reflect the natural abundance of Mesoamerica. A multifarious collection of animal bones, plants and cultural objects was buried for the gods. Most of these had been imported into the capital city by trade or tribute. They reflect the Aztec empire as a whole, its expanse and its concept of divinity.

The Proyecto Templo Mayor team has so far located 240 ritual offering depots over the course of four decades of scientific excavations. These include caverns, ashlar chests and stone urns put in place by priests during rituals at particular places in the course of the extension of Templo Mayor. As the empire grew, so did the number of offerings included inside a ritual sacrificial depot. The depots are numbered in the order of their discovery; number 126 contained thirteen thousand objects in four layers. Including maritime animals, sacrificial tools and the figure of a deity, these represented the universe, the oceans, terrestrial animals and the god it was dedicated to.

Despite the break-through success that has been the discovery of Templo Mayor, research into the Aztecs is still in its early stages. The exhibition will be accompanied by the publication of a comprehensive catalogue containing essays by international experts on the most recent research findings on Aztec culture.

CATALOGUE

The publication of a catalogue in German and in English supplements the exhibition.

360 pages, 21.5 × 27.5 cm, hardcover

€ 30