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Maya enthusiasts providing public education for 44+ years

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Panoramic photo by Todd Fry. All photos submitted by James Callaghan.

On a day in the mid-1800s, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, John L. Stephens, explorer, and Frederick Catherwood, artist, “entered a dense forest and came suddenly upon the casa real at ‘Kewick Rancho’... the only habitation in sight”, which was to serve as their lodging. They had been traveling over six hours on horseback from Labna to reach their destination, and were there to investigate and make drawings of the ruins.

Kaxil Kiuc (place of gathering in the forest), as it is called today, lies about 95 kilometers (59.3 miles) from Merida, the capital of the state of Yucatan. When Stephens and Catherwood stopped there, it was known as Rancho Kewick and was owned and operated by a Maya man who was raising cattle and corn. It is now the

site of a 4,500 acre private reserve of semi-evergreen tropical dry forest. Owned by Millsaps College of Mississippi, it shelters distinct and exotic animal and plant species and is legally known as Kaxil Kiuc Bio-cultural Reserve. James Callaghan, a resident of Yucatan for more than 45 years, is the director.

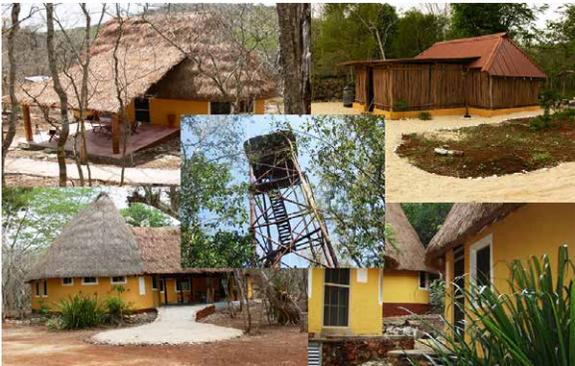
The reserve is also the home of the archaeological site of Kiuc, which has been the focus of study by INAH and Millsaps College for almost two decades. The research program at the reserve is overseen by Dr. Tomás Gallareta (INAH/Millsaps) and Dr. George Bey (Millsaps).

Vestiges of the Casa Real, where Stephens and his entourage sought shelter, now lie adjacent to the Education and Research Center. Well water is extracted by a solar-powered pump and used for the sanitary system, as well as the seed bank and plant nursery. The seed bank/nursery project is currently being supported by the Nature Conservancy through funds from Arbor Day-USAID.

The Reserve is certified by Mexico as a Unit of Environmental Management, which permits the development of numerous environmental programs dedicated to education and research for conservation. Since its founding, the Education and Research Center has hosted professors and students



“Kewick Rancho” from Incidents of Travel in Yucatan; by John L. Stephens; engraving by Frederick Catherwood, 1843. The New York Public Library digital collection; used with permission. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>



The reserve facilities, which include cabanas, dormitories, classroom, laboratory, kitchen, dining room and a gazebo, are powered with photovoltaic installations.



Jim Reed,
Editor

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Were Domesticated Insects Part of Maya Civilization?

by Dr. Nicholas M. Hellmuth, FLAAR Reports, Guatemala

Three or so years ago I saw my first “lacquer insect”. I have long known that lacquer in Asia comes from two sources: sap from a tree and from the lac insect. But I had no idea there was a “lacquer insect” in Guatemala. This insect is called the *Niij* in local Achi Mayan language.

The lacquer insect is similar to the *cochinilla* in local Spanish, cochineal in English. The cochineal is a smaller related insect which is a primary source of red dye (for some lipstick and rouge, among other modern industrial uses). *Cochinilla* insects are tiny (the size of the head of a pin or pen). *Cochinilla* insects are found on *Opuntia* cactus plants. The area around Antigua was a major production zone after the Spanish conquest. But today most *cochinilla* insects are raised in Oaxaca, Mexico, and in the Canary Islands.

The present article is on the larger lacquer insect of the Achi Maya people of Rabinal, Baja Verapaz. This is an update of an article I did a few years ago for *REVUE* magazine in Guatemala. We can justify the update because we drove the long drive to Rabinal about two months ago to do more close-up photography.

Several scale insects have a fat that can be used as a varnish:

- *Llavea axin* is the Mesoamerican Precolumbian lacquer insect,
- *Dactylopius coccus* is the Mesoamerican Precolumbian red dye insect,
- *Kerria lacca* is the Asian insect that produces lacquer.

With the Mesoamerican lacquer insect, it is the female that produces the fat that is ground with a pestle to produce the liquid.

With the red dye insect, it is also the female that produces the red dye. With the varnish insect, the outside shell is orange in color, but the insect does not produce usable color when pressed.

The varnish insect looks very similar to the red dye insect, except the lacquer insect is over a centimeter in length and thus has a correspondingly visible body. The red dye insect is very small.

In Asia, in addition to the lac insect, there is also a “lacquer tree.” So, Chinese and Japanese artists had plenty of sources of lacquer for their handicrafts.

The lacquer insect of Guatemala lives on the *jocote* tree. While in Rabinal,



Above) Two close-up views of the lacquer insect of the Achi Maya. At right) The close-ups were taken of this mass of specimens within a calabash bowl in a home in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz. Photos by Erick Flores.



we also photographed the *niij* clinging to a *jocote* tree. See images on page 6.

It was absolutely fascinating to see the insects. Most live under a “tent” of white powder-like material. When you harvest the insects, you clean off the white surface layer and you then see that the insects are a nice light orange color. But this is not a color that produces an orange or red dye colorant: these insects are used more as lacquer-like material than as a colorant. For a colorant insect, that is the cochineal scale insect, a close relative (but which lives primarily on *Opuntia cactus, nopal*).

The *niij* do not bite or sting, nor are they otherwise aggressive. I hold

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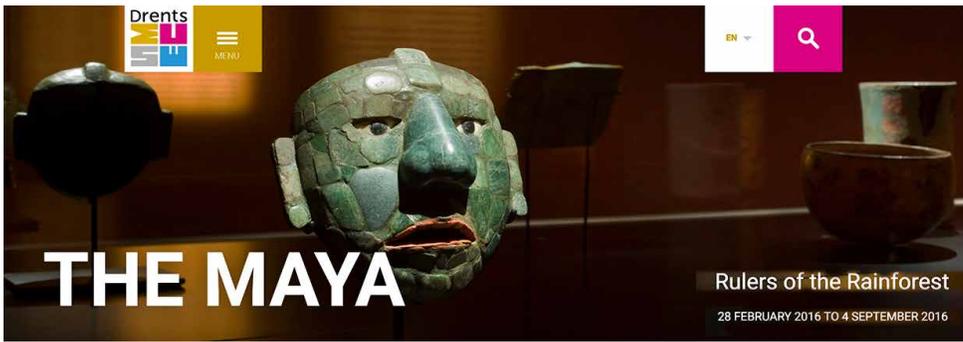
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them in my hand with no hesitation (but then, I also hold tailless whip scorpions in my hand; these even wander around our office at night, and are common in cave entrances).

While we were in Rabinal several years ago, Gustavo Gallegos made HDSLR video of the insects and preparation of the varnish. Camila Morales did a report on the trip, with comments on the manner of preparing the insect fat and then applying it to the gourds. These reports will be available at no cost on www.maya-ethnozoology.org.

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“The Maya: Rulers of the Rainforest” at Drents Museum, by Andrew Mossberg

The Drents Museum, located in Assen, Netherlands, has been hosting an exhibit entitled “The Maya: Rulers of the Rainforest” since February 28 and continuing through September 4. I had an opportunity to visit the exhibit courtesy of Maya expert and author T.P. Van Dyck Pallandt, whose book *The Solid Figurines of Colima* was just released.

The exhibit largely consists of artifacts on loan from the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología and Fundación La Ruta Maya, both in Guatemala City, along with a number of pieces from existing collections in Europe, including from the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin and the Rautenschrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne.

Upon entering the exhibit, you are greeted with explanatory text regarding the Maya and their place in Mesoamerican cultures, along with a handful of small figurines. Rounding the corner into the main exhibit space, one immediately comes across an exceedingly well-executed mural

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Seated figure incense burner with large earplugs, and striking ornaments, including a necklace, bracelets and anklets. Two serpents are represented in his headdress, and he is holding plants in his hands. Provenance unknown, 250-900 CE (La Ruta Maya Foundation).



Above left: The Drents Museum works closely together with the Historisches Museum der Pfalz in Speyer, Germany, that will be hosting the exhibition after it has been on show in Assen, and with the German professor Nikolai Grube, a leading international expert on the ancient Maya culture and the Mayan hieroglyphic script. Above right: A view of the exhibit space, showing some of the larger works. The exhibit presents a unique mixture of objects: beautiful jade and shell ornaments, remarkably detailed limestone carvings, polychrome pottery and stelae covered with hieroglyphs.



Only 1,000 of Jaina Island’s estimated 20,000 graves have been archaeologically excavated, most revealing exquisitely carved ceramic figurines, that have given Jaina its fame.



In addition to the monumental works, a large selection of pottery, jade and stone work are also in the exhibit, for instance this incense burner lid, covered in cacao beans. This lid is modeled in the form of a young woman who holds a small bowl filled with cacao pods. South Coast, Guatemala, 250-450 CE (Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología).

This miniature jade mask, featured in the museum’s website masthead (above), probably served to decorate a belt or a headdress. When a deceased king was buried in a tomb, the Maya would often cover his face with a large jade mask. His body was also accompanied by all kinds of other valuable grave goods to enable him to live in dignity after his resurrection. Guatemala, 250-900 CE (Sofia Paredes Maury of La Ruta Maya Foundation).



L) Jaguar (*Panthera onca*) 1/18/2015 at 8:54 am. C) Ocelot (*Leopardis pardalis*) 8/8/2015 at 4:13 pm. R) Cougar (*Puma concolor*) 7/4/2103 6:02 pm.



L) Brocket deer (*Venado temazate*) 6/6/2013 9:32 am. R) Ocellated turkey (*Pavo ocellado*) 3/29/2016 8:02 am.



A Forest in Transition, by Aline B. Callaghan

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including a female jaguar, ocelot, margay and puma. The efforts of Tellkamp, Callaghan and Millsaps College were highlighted in National Geographics' *Voices* series in 2013. This motivated the Reserve director and Tellkamp into working with a group of Merida expatriates to raise funds to purchase more cameras in a permanent campaign.

The combination of resources from Millsaps College and Merida donors allowed Tellkamp, Callaghan and field biologist Ricardo Pasos to implement the Puuc Jaguar Conservation Project in 2014. Camera traps were set up in a 240 sq. km. (92.7 sq. mile) grid, stemming out from Kaxil Kiuc across the Puuc landscape. The four-month-long field season recorded the presence of 5 jaguars (3 female and 1 male), 12 pumas, 2 jagarundi, 7 ocelot and 3 margay. A large list of the cats' prey was also developed.

The Reserve's first monitoring effort was recently noted by a group of conservationists who have joined together under the title of Alianza Itzincab. Funding by the Fundación Claudia y Roberto Hernández, Fundación Alfredo Harp Helú, The Nature Conservancy and USAID,

will help support a peninsula-wide monitoring project that will give the group greater insight into its estimated 2,000 jaguars. The jaguar monitoring project will be followed by an intensive survey of bird species that have been chosen as "indicator species" for quality of habitat and populations dynamics, among other important aspects.

The indicator species project is part of a larger Alianza Itzincab initiative which focuses on creating a network of property owners to steward new private and community-based reserves throughout the Yucatan Peninsula. With the premise of increasing the number of forested properties under conservation by two million hectares in the next decade, this initiative will also encourage the protection of fragile ecosystems that support important animals and provide environmental services to growing communities in Yucatan.

Kaxil Kiuc Reserve has also joined forces in a five-county venture for the sustainable development of the unique region known as the Puuc Hills. As a result of the newly decreed Puuc State Bio-cultural Reserve, public and private sectors

have formed a Puuc Inter-municipal Bio-cultural Council (JIBioPuuc) to promote organic farming, low-impact tourism and the conservation of natural and cultural resources in the region.

The dense forest where Stephens and his attendants stayed over one-hundred years ago is still a healthy forest. It is also a "place of gathering" for research and dissemination of knowledge of the region's biological, archaeological, and cultural wealth. In a sense, Millsaps College's Kaxil Kiuc Bio-cultural Reserve has become a forest in transition and part of an increasing number of individuals and institutions which strive to create a better environment for present and future Maya and non-Maya inhabitants of this ancient land.

Help Support Our Efforts:

To donate to our projects in the Yucatan from the U.S., please contact Millsaps College via one of the methods below. It is important to specify which beneficiary you are interested in supporting, i.e.,

- Jaguar Conservation Program,
- Forest Conservation, or our
- Archaeological Research Program

Wire to/Account Name (Beneficiary):

- Millsaps College General Fund and Federal Funds
- Beneficiary Bank: Regions Bank
- Routing Number: 062005690
- International Swift Code: UPNBUS44
- Account Number: 500-2010612

If the funds are sent via ACH Transfer, the routing number is different: 065305436, but use the same account number.

From Mexico, one can simply make an e-transfer through:

- Kaxil Kiuc, A.C.
- Cuenta: 50001020500
- Clabe: 036910500010205006
- Banco Inbursa, Mérida Altabrisas 🏠

Note: Dr. George Bey will speak at the IMS on Nov. 16.

Were Domesticated Insects Part of Maya Civilization?

by Dr. Nicholas M. Hellmuth

FLAAR Reports, Guatemala

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Biologists indicate other host trees in Rabinal that can support the life cycle of *nijj* insects to be *Jatropha curcas* trees (physic nut) and various species of *Acacia*. There are several articles on these insects by Thomas MacVean:

- *Ixcanal*, *Acacia* of various species
- *Palo de piñón*, *Jatropha curcas*
- Physic nut, *Jatropha curcas*

Many places in Oaxaca raise the dye insect, but the *cochinilla* for red color is rare in Guatemala. As soon as we can find domesticated *Dactylopius coccus* in Guatemala we will write an article on this red relative of the orange varnish insect. Although the lacquer insect is not everywhere, you can easily find it by visiting the families in Rabinal who raise them.

We have found wild native cochineal insects on cactus plants in the Rio de los Esclavos valley of Guatemala. But there are almost no more plantations in Guatemala of cochineal insects; almost all this colorant nowadays is bought and brought from Oaxaca (where cochineal insects are a major business).

Insects in Maya Diet and Daily Life

The leaf-cutting ant was unlikely domesticated, but the queen of these common insects are eaten, by the bag full. Other insects of note, in Maya mythology, are the lightning



While in Rabinal, we photographed *nijj* clinging to a *jocote* tree. Photos by Nicholas Hellmuth.

bugs which created a faux cigar for the Hero Twins in the myth of the *Popol Vuh*. These are probably a species of *Elateridae*.

If you are grossed out by the number of insects raised and eaten by the Maya, the Aztecs were even more into insects.

Sharing our experiences with flora and fauna in Maya utilitarian use, hieroglyphics, iconography, religion, diet, and mythology is one of the goals of the FLAAR Reports. We hope this introduction to lacquer insects in Maya culture was a topic that is completely new to you.

You can see the insects by visiting the Achi Maya families in Rabinal who harvest, prepare, and decorate calabash as handicrafts.

Summary

It is so often said that the Maya had few domesticated animals except for the dog and perhaps ducks and doves. The turkey was domesticated by the Maya, long before the Conquest.

Yet the Maya had several forms of domesticated insects, with the lacquer insects the most obviously

domesticated. And you can still see the Maya raising *Llavela axin* today. Cochineal for red dye would be considered a second domesticated insect. And the stingless honeybee is usually also on the list.

So, the Maya may have had as more domesticated insects than they had domesticated animals!

Bibliographies

Our bibliographies of plants and animals of Maya culture are found in two FLAAR Reports, one covers the 400 plants used by the Maya; the second report covers the roughly 100 animals used by the Classic Maya. These reports are now on: www.maya-ethnobotany.org, and www.maya-ethnozoology.org. Additional information is available on our "Maya bibliography website" at: www.maya-art-books.org.

Note: Condensed by the editor from the full version of this FLAAR Report. See the complete report, including the Acknowledgements and an extensive Bibliography on the *Nijj* in Guatemala; *Llavela axin*; and *aje* in Michoacán, Mexico, when it is available on the IMS website. 🏠

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“The Maya: Rulers of the Rainforest” at Drents Museum *continued from page 4*



L) Polychrome vessel shows two painters preparing ritual masks, perhaps the Hero Twins. The cylinder was probably used for drinking cacao. The text along the rim reads: *alay tz'ibil jich y-uk'iib ixim?teel? kakaw? ...-n? ti'*, “This is the vessel bearing an inscription for *Iximte'el?* cacao belonging to ...-n *Ti'*”, Guatemala Lowlands, 600-800 CE. LC) Bearded-man Urn, Jutiapa, Guatemala, 950-1150 CE. RC) Large Teotihuacan-style incense burner. Excerpt from museum brochure: “this exceptionally large incense burner betrays the influence of the Central-Mexican metropolis Teotihuacan. The headdress was made in a mould, indicative of mass-production”. South coast of Guatemala, 250-600 CE. R) This exquisite artifact was found southeast of Lake Peten Itza, Peten, while a well was being dug. It depicts a man with a jaguar mask, dressed lavishly with jaguar skin and ornaments, arms and right leg bent in an attitude of moving silently on the floor. Editor Jim Reed notes that some scholars believe it is possible that this piece is not authentic. All pieces above are on loan to the Drents from La Ruta Maya Foundation collection.

of Mayan painted glyphs that leads into the rest of the displays and several monumental works.

I was truly awed by the incredible figure of a warrior, wearing a jaguar mask, crawling on the ground as if approaching to pounce on an enemy (above right). The large sculpture, perhaps 7 feet in length, was found in 1990 in Guatemala and had been separated into two pieces and sold on the illegal art market. The piece was recovered and the halves reunited. The sculpture was previously featured in the *IMS Explorer*, November 2015 issue.

This exhibit will run through September 4 at the Drents Museum in the Dutch town of Assen. See: <https://drentsmuseum.nl/en/exhibitions/maya>



L) This wall panel from La Corona, describes the marriages between the daughters of the Kaan Dynasty of Calakmul and the rulers of La Corona. (Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología). R) Jade plaquette, showing the Jester-god. Topoxte, Guatemala, 600-900 CE (La Ruta Maya Foundation).

This exhibit at the Witte Museum in San Antonio, TX, is the largest traveling exhibition about the Maya ever to be toured in the United States. It uses a combination of authentic artifacts along with multimedia and interactive, hands-on activities to reveal our deep ties to this astonishing civilization.

“The Maya: Hidden Worlds Revealed”

The Witte Museum is going big with the first exhibit in its new Mays Family Center. This exhibit features 230 artifacts, 27 unique interactives, 7 different environments, displays and explanations in both English and Spanish. The artifacts include clothing, pottery, carvings, jewelry and items used for a variety of rituals. There are also a number of reproductions,



L) The extensive exhibit features more than 200 artifacts, including these two stelae. R) This bilingual interactive screen lets visitors get a glimpse into how the Maya calendar works.

including an altar, codices and two stelae which are large carved columns that offer a lot of encrypted information about Maya rulers.

The show fills 10,000 sq. ft. and includes more than half a dozen hands-on activities. They include:

- An area where they can use

reproductions of tools to get a sense of how Maya dentists drilled holes in their patients' teeth to inlay stones.

- A spot where visitors can hoist a rubber ball, illustrating the heft of the ball used in a game.

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An Artist with Maya Cosmic Vision: Reinhard Zink of Speyer, Germany

Editor's note: As an added treat for our online "Green" subscribers, I present this beautiful composition by accomplished artist and Facebook friend Reinhard Zink. He posted this recently finished painting to my home page on June 30. The entire image portrays the three main vibrational levels of existence – the Underworld, Middleworld

and Upperworld of Maya cosmology. All of the characters are either from painted Maya vessels or the *Popol Vuh*.

Reinhard wrote: "Hello, Jim. My latest painting is of the Maya Underworld – mythic sea, sky and world crocodile. It is a 120 x 120 cm watercolor. Next year, I will show about 75 watercolors at a gallery in Speyer. It is a city of about 50,000

habitants and a history of more than 2000 years, beginning with the Romans. It has the largest church of Europe built during the 11th century. In the fall, they will show an exhibition here of more than 200 Maya artifacts that will be on display through the spring of 2017. As part of the event, I will exhibit many of my works. Come to visit Germany soon!" 🏡



L) The exhibit includes a room dedicated to the painted murals of Bonampak. R) Like billboards, stucco friezes wrapped around the sides of the pyramid known today as El Castillo which served as the spiritual heart of Xunantunich, a site in western Belize.

“The Maya: Hidden Worlds Revealed”

continued from page 7

- They also can use touch screens to swipe their hands to brush away dirt hiding remains and artifacts found at a real-life archaeological dig, to create a Maya name for themselves and to create selfies sporting a range of virtual Maya headdresses.

Shell and jadeite mosaic belt mask, Cahal Pech, Belize.



The museum also offers a lecture series that coincides with the exhibit. Famed archaeologist Dr. Jaime Awe spoke during the opening weekend in May and Dr. David Stuart lectured in June. Dr. Arlen Chase will present on July 20 and Dr. Jennifer Mathews along with Dr. Bryan Bayles will speak on August 17. The exhibit runs through September 5. Check out their website at: mayasa.wittemuseum.org/

According to epigrapher David Stuart, the glyphs on this vessel refer to K'ul Ahaw K'ak Tiliw Chan Chaak, a powerful king of Naranja.

Upcoming Events at the IMS:

IMS Programming Note:

In our Maya studies, we have learned that the Maya (ancient and modern) adapted well to change in order to survive and transcend. In that spirit, we will sync our monthly schedule with that of Miami Dade College, and we will suspend our public lectures for July and August. We shall resume in September!

Sept. 21 • 8 pm: *IMS Feature Presentation*
A New Look at Stephens and Catherwood – with IMS Webmaster **Keith Merwin**.

October 9 • 8 pm: *IMS Feature Presentation*
What's New at Homul – with **Dr. Francisco Estrada-Belli**, of Tulane University.

Nov. 16 • 8 pm: *IMS Feature Presentation*
Kaxil Kiuc: Turning a Maya Site into a Center of Studies – with **Dr. George Bey**, of Millsaps College.

All IMS events will take place in Room K-413 at Miami Dade College – Kendall Campus. That's Building K-4, Room 13. See map on www.mdc.edu

Upcoming Events and Announcements:

September 17: *Mind of Maya Series Lecture*
Presenting Master Builders – Dr. Arlen Chase from the University of Nevada – Las Vegas, architectural historian Edward Burian and visual archaeologist Leah McCurdy, take an in depth look at ancient Maya architects. At the Witte Museum, San Antonio, TX. Info at: <http://mayasa.wittemuseum.org/visit/events/>

September 17: *PCSWDC Annual Symposium*
Divine Kingship: The Political Ideology of Precolumbian Rulers – Theme of the 2016 Symposium of the Pre-Columbian Society of Washington, D.C. Explore the important connections between the sacred and political manifestations of ancient rulership. Speakers include Simon Martin and Takeshi Inomata. At the U.S. Navy Memorial and Naval Heritage Center, Washington, D.C. See: www.pcswdc.org/symposium2016/

Ongoing: *LACMA Museum Exhibit*
Revealing Creation: The Science and Art of Ancient Maya Ceramics

This exhibition considers ancient Maya ceramic production as both art and science and highlights how artisans worked to emulate acts of primordial creation through their labor of shaping, painting, and firing clay. At the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA. Get more info at: <http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/revealing-creation>



Oct. 28–Nov. 6: *IMS Group Adventure!*
Day of the Dead in the Yucatan – Join us for an exciting 10-day excursion through the Yucatan in search of Day of the Dead celebrations. We'll visit Merida, Izamal, Valladolid and other towns that are known for their festivities and rituals. Maximum 16 adventurers; sign up now! Contact Marta Barber at: info@instituteofmayastudies.org



Photo courtesy of Georgeann Johnson.

IMS EXPLORER

Join the **Explorer-ation!** Scholar or not, we welcome submissions from IMS members and other Maya enthusiasts. Share what interests you with others. All articles and news items for the **IMS Explorer** should be forwarded to the newsletter editor at: mayaman@bellsouth.net