

Of Earth and Fire

Pre-Columbian and Contemporary Pottery
from Nicaragua



De tierra y fuego

Cerámica precolombina y contemporánea
de Nicaragua

May 15-July 3, 1996
Cultural Center Art Gallery
Inter-American Development Bank

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The Inter-American Development Bank is an international financial institution created in 1959 to help accelerate the economic and social development of its member countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Bank is today the principal source of external public financing for most Latin American countries.

TDB Cultural Center

In 1992, as part of the Quincentennial celebrations, the Bank created the Cultural Center at its headquarters in Washington, D.C. as a gallery for exhibitions and a permanent forum to showcase outstanding expressions of the artistic and intellectual life of its member countries. Through the Center, the Bank contributes to the understanding of cultural expression as an integral element of economic and social development. In addition to exhibitions, other Center activities such as conferences, lectures, and concerts stimulate dialogue and a greater knowledge of the culture of the Americas.



El Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo

El Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo es un organismo internacional fundado en 1959 para promover y acelerar el progreso económico y social de América Latina y el Caribe. Hoy el Banco es la principal fuente de financiamiento público externo para la mayoría de los países latinoamericanos.

El Centro Cultural

El Centro Cultural fue creado por el BID en 1992 en su sede de Washington, D.C., como parte de las celebraciones del Quinto Centenario, con el propósito de establecer una vitrina y un foro permanente desde donde difundir las manifestaciones más destacadas de la vida artística e intelectual de sus países miembros. El Centro contribuye a realzar la expresión cultural como un elemento integral del desarrollo socioeconómico. Además de las exposiciones, otras actividades del Centro tales como conferencias y conciertos estimulan el diálogo y un mayor conocimiento sobre la cultura de las Américas.



Introduction

The month of May commemorates the fourth anniversary of the Cultural Center of the Inter-American Development Bank. It gives us great satisfaction that this event coincides with our most recent exhibition, "Of Earth and Fire: Pre-Columbian and Contemporary Pottery from Nicaragua." The exhibition contrasts the ceramic works of pre-Columbian cultures of Central America with those of contemporary craftworkers in Nicaragua. It is hoped that this exhibition will contribute to projecting a broad and positive image of Nicaragua internationally, as well as to stimulating artistic expression through ceramics. In this way, the exhibition serves to help both the country and its artists realize their potential.

Ana María Coronel de Rodríguez
Director of the Cultural Center



Presentación

El Centro Cultural del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo conmemora durante el mes de mayo su cuarto aniversario de existencia.

Es motivo de satisfacción para el Centro presentar, en coincidencia con esta celebración y como parte de su programa de exposiciones, la muestra titulada "De tierra y fuego: cerámica precolombina y contemporánea de Nicaragua", la cual contrasta manifestaciones artísticas en arcilla provenientes de las culturas precolombinas que habitaron esa zona de Centroamérica, con otras expresiones actuales realizadas con el mismo material por artesanos y artistas nicaragüenses.

Es de esperar que esta presentación contribuya positivamente a proyectar una imagen más completa de Nicaragua en el ámbito internacional, y a estimular la expresión artística que utiliza el barro como su medio, la cual denota poseer para el país y sus artistas posibilidades inusitadas.

Ana María Coronel de Rodríguez
Directora del Centro Cultural



The Early History of Nicaragua: An Archeological Perspective

When examining the first societies to inhabit Nicaragua, there is a tendency to confine the analysis to groups described by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century: the Chorotegas, the Nicaraos, and the Chontales. This has led to the

mistaken impression that these were Nicaragua's original peoples, when in fact the country was settled much earlier and had given rise to developed societies of long standing.

Although archeological research in the region during the second half of this century has thrown some light on this matter, much research remains to be done. We will endeavor here to review what we know about the pre-Columbian societies of Nicaragua.



ANBAL VIVAS

*Ceramic lid of incense burner
(Tapa de incensario)
500 to 1350 A.D.
Museo Nacional de Nicaragua*

Cultural Evolution

Like most of Central America, Nicaragua belongs to what is called the "intermediate" archeological area, which includes Costa Rica, Panama and most of El Salvador and Honduras. The country was occupied from the very beginning by numerous ethnic groups, through a succession of cultures.

Ecological conditions allowed different natural resources to be exploited, setting the

stage for self-sufficient, but not isolated, societies. Indeed, influences found in pre-Columbian ceramics of the area indicate clearly that early inhabitants were constantly interacting with their aboriginal neighbors. This did not, however, prevent development of forms of expression specific to Nicaragua, as shown by this exhibition.

In general, development of the “intermediate” archeological area has been divided into six periods, which are described below.

Periods I, II and III (to 2000 B.C.)

The first groups to enter America through the Bering Strait did so during Period I. These hunting and gathering communities are thought to have lacked the rudiments of agriculture and pottery techniques.

Between the Paleo-Indian Period (10,000 to 7000 B.C.) and the time of the first agricultural settlements (circa 3000 B.C.) came an intermediate era known as the Tropical Archaic Period. This period has been identified in various parts of Central America and is therefore thought to have existed in Nicaragua as well, although there is no evidence to support this as yet. Generally, the period was characterized by certain changes in subsistence patterns. Although hunting, fishing and gathering continued to predominate, evidence has been found of agricultural activity, such as burning forests to clear land for corn and root vegetable cultivation.

Period IV (2000 B.C. to circa 500 A.D.)

A ceramic complex from this period was discovered recently on the shores of the Tiscapa Lagoon in Managua. Although little information is available on this culture, an analysis of its artifacts shows that these groups were proficient in pottery techniques.

There are many similarities in ceramics from sites in Los Angeles, Ometepe, Managua and other Central American sites, particularly Costa Rica’s Tilaran Mountains, San Juan River region and Atlantic coast.

Information on the later part of this period (500 B.C. to circa 500 A.D.) suggests it was a time of considerable development for aboriginal societies, but not in isolation. Cultural and ecological homogeneity can be observed along Nicaragua’s Pacific coast with the Guanacaste-Nicoya area of Costa Rica. This area, referred to by archeologists as “Great Nicoya,” contains quite distinct regional patterns. The culture of the central area, particularly Chontales, appears to be related to that of the Atlantic area, especially in ceramics techniques.

This same period is called “Tempisque” in the Pacific region of Nicaragua, based on evidence from sites at Ometepe Island, Granada and Managua, as well as graveyards excavated along the coast near the Costa Rican border. The discoveries suggest that three kinds of offerings were deposited in graves: jade pendants, tripod *metates* (ceremonial stone tables), and bichrome ceramic plates



*Polychrome low
tripod ceramic bowl
(Cuenco trípode policromo)
800 to 1550 A.D.
Museo Nacional de
Nicaragua*

called “Rosales Sgraffito.” These items have also been found in Guanacaste-Nicoya, Costa Rica, pointing to a robust cultural pattern during the period.

The ceramic plates, in particular, have been the subject of considerable archeological study. The upper portion of the plates is decorated with two black zoomorphic figures and a black circle motif with four emerging conical points. The lines outlining the motifs were made after the clay had been fired and were later filled with white coloring. Red paint in a woven pattern covers all of the plate except for the background, which has a rectangular clay-color motif.

Archeologist Alice Tillet of the University of Texas recently analyzed some of the Rosales plates and suggested a religious interpretation for these ceramics. According to Tillet, the shape of the plates suggests a circular cosmos with a rectangular world within. Based on Grider’s “three levels”—whereby circles and rectangles in association within a whole are presumed to represent an entire cosmos encompassing heaven and earth—the figure on the upper part represents the guardian of the underworld and the black circle motif is the entrance to the bottom of the earth. The rectangular part represents the end of the journey to the world of the dead.

Period V (500 to 1000 A.D.)

This period was characterized by population growth and greater social stratification throughout the country. Regional exchanges increased, though contacts remained scattered between some groups, mainly in the Atlantic region. In the Pacific part of the Great Nicoya region, existing traditions appear to have persisted during the first half of the period. After the year 500, however, pottery making changed dramatically, especially the designs influenced by Honduran polychromes. These changes may be interpreted as the result of greater interaction

with that area through increased commercial exchanges. It has been noted that ceramics for daily use in Nicaragua showed strong stylistic similarities with Honduran ceramics, especially with the Cajón archeological zone. Many ceramics of the “polychrome Ulua” and “red delirium on white” types have been found in the central-northern region of Honduras.

Period VI (1000 to 1600 A.D.)

In the Great Nicoya area, a wide variety of white-finish ceramics were introduced during this period—an innovation possibly linked to the arrival of Chorotega groups from Soconusco in Chiapas. These years also saw the emergence of a type of monumental sculpture, particularly on the Zapatera, Ometepe and Panzacola Islands on Nicaragua Lake, on Momotombito Island on Managua Lake, and on the plains of León. The sculptures depict people accompanied by a small number of animals such as lizards, monkeys and snakes. Most of these works are associated with funeral mounds, particularly Zapatera.

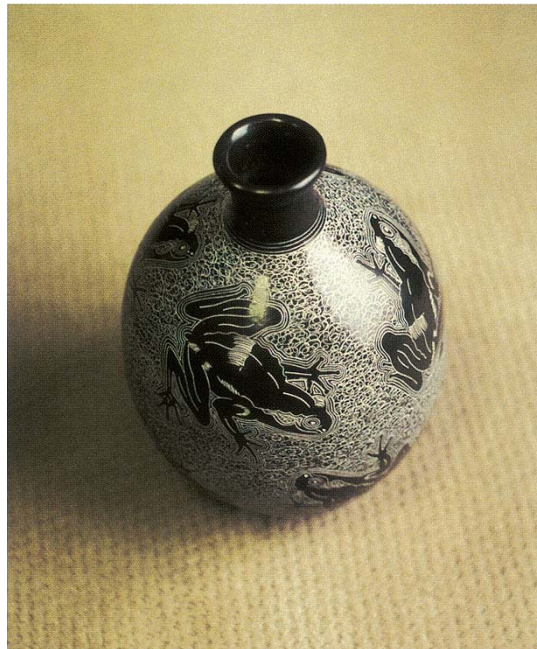
Certain cultural changes occurred toward the middle of the fourteenth century as new population groups settled in the Pacific region of Nicaragua. Along parts of the coast, ceramic motifs began to include some Mexican deities. While in the Chontales region ceramics continued to be decorated with traditional incisions, more ceramics were imported from the Pacific region, especially polychrome vessels known as “Nicoya ceramics.” This could be attributable to the changes in social structures that followed the arrival of Chorotega groups.

Between 1400 and 1600, polychrome ceramics virtually disappeared from the Pacific coast, giving way to poorly fired ceramics with incised decorations. Archeological sites tended to be larger, with several subdivisions. It has been conjectured that these changes were due to the arrival of other cultures, perhaps from the Atlantic, that occupied these territories and displaced the earlier settlers.

Edgar Espinoza Pérez
National Museum of Nicaragua

Contemporary Ceramics in Nicaragua

Popular ceramics in Nicaragua has seen a resurgence in the past 15 years of an intensity unparalleled since pre-Columbian times. The boom is attributable largely to the promotion of



*Bottle with
incised decoration
(Botella decorada por
incisión)
Miguel Maldonado*

handicrafts during the 1980s by the former National Handicrafts Agency. After a decade of social strife and natural disasters, Nicaraguan artisans, like the rest of the country, began to rebuild their lives. Craftworkers started to take courses in ceramic design and learned to use materials previously unknown to them, such as chrome oxide to obtain shades of green.

As in ancient times, most of today's ceramic work is found in the Pacific region, in San Juan

de Oriente (on the road to Granada, also known as San Juan de los Platos), and in La Paz Centro (on the road to León). There is activity in other regions as well, such as the Estelí region in the north and on Zapatera Island.

Distinct formal and technical elements characterize ceramics production in each of these locations. In San Juan de Oriente, perhaps the most developed area, craftworkers sometimes use a potter's wheel as well as a variety of oxide-based solutions that can be purchased at the local cooperative. The decoration of the pieces is polychrome, with a wider range of colors than in La Paz Centro or Estelí, where colors are basically those derived from the area's natural clays. Although in almost all cases shapes are quite simple and

functional—especially in San Juan de Oriente—La Paz Centro shows a preference for figurative ceramics for strictly decorative purposes. This is true of the works of María Amanda Guzmán Guerrero, who made the archangel and other pieces included in this exhibit.

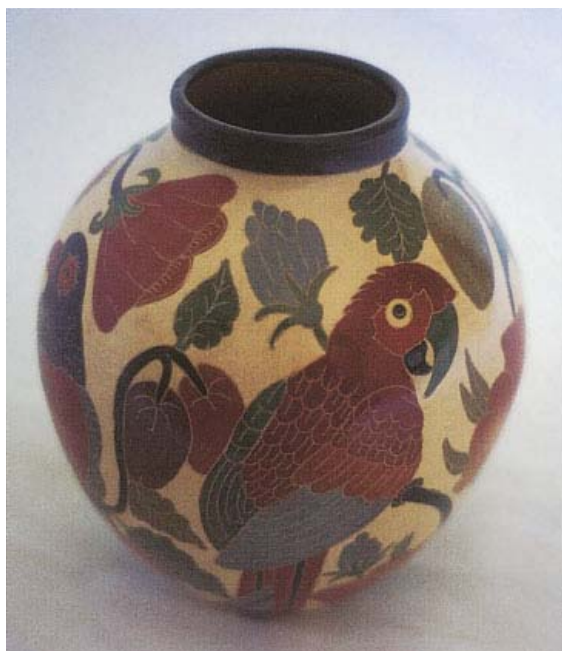
The variety of decorative design in today's popular ceramics in Nicaragua has many origins, but it essentially flows from the imagination of the artists. The proximity of production centers to the capital of Managua has definitely had an impact, in terms of the circulation of periodicals and printed matter as well as the private commissions given to craftworkers, often with an illustration in hand. It is the artist, however, who must transform and adapt the design. It is not surprising, then, to find some finishes that recall the area's pre-Columbian traditions and others that bear no relation to them. It is clear from a visit to the San Juan de Oriente cooperative that the range of designs has now broadened to include motifs such as the image of John Paul II, who recently visited Nicaragua.

An exceptional though not unique case is Helio Gutiérrez, a potter from San Juan de Oriente. Descended from a line of artisans, Gutiérrez—who never completed elementary school—has reintroduced a series of long-forgotten techniques that have since been adopted by his colleagues in the area. One is the use of shallow incisions which, after application of a white-finish base and further firing, give the piece its characteristic linear finish. The influence is clear upon comparing the two pieces with frog designs, made in the same workshop and included in this exhibit; one (coffee-colored, No. 34) signed by Gutiérrez and the other (black, No. 62) by Miguel Maldonado. Gutiérrez also seems to have an innate sense of composition, combining volumes that are generally symmetrical (bowls and jugs) with surface designs that are asymmetrical, achieving an admirable balance, as seen in the two spherical pots (Nos. 38 and 39).

Gutiérrez has earned a number of awards at prestigious international events, including an honorable mention in 1992 at UNESCO's International Craft Competition in Tenerife, Spain. A piece by the artist similar to the one recognized by UNESCO has been included in this exhibition (No. 46). Gutiérrez still lives and works in his modest home located on the *camino del mamey*, a road named for a tree native to the area and described in the address he inscribes on his pieces beside his signature.

Agustín Amador exhibits a less orthodox imagination both in the conception of volume and in the treatment of decoration. At present he favors figurative themes relating to descriptive elements from nature, such as birds and fruits (Nos. 50, 51 and 52).

Excellent pieces stand side by side with others of lesser quality in cooperatives and in the central markets of Masaya and Managua. In fact, some of the pieces included in this exhibit—such as those of Freddi Lumbi, Teódulo and Felipe Potosme, Elías Boza Téllez, José Andrés Jiménez and José Dolores Salazar—were found at various stands in the Roberto Huembes market in Managua. Some pieces are unsigned, such as the lidded container with a deer design. Craftworkers explained that unsigned pieces are easier to sell, particularly to buyers from neighboring countries like Honduras and Costa Rica, where pieces are labeled and sold as having been produced nationally.



*Jug with parrot and macaw designs
(Jarrón con decoración de
loros y guacamayas)
José Andrés Jiménez*

Comparing the pieces by Gutiérrez and Amador with those of other potters in the same area poses the need to differentiate between the craftworker and the popular artist, although such a distinction is difficult. The difference unquestionably lies in their respective contributions to popular expression. While some enrich it from a formal, expressive and technical standpoint, others (with essentially manual skills) tend to make a specific piece and repeat the same design over and over again. Also, as in any discipline, standards emerge in practice and over time. All of these considerations are deliberately reflected in this exhibit, which includes diverse selections that span the gamut from craft to art.

Popular ceramics produced by today's Nicaraguan potters bear features that are both unique unto themselves and linked to a pre-Columbian past. A series of suspended traditions blend with an interpretive sense of first-hand experience. Just as volcanos erupt after a prolonged dormant period, an artistic sensibility long dormant has awakened with unexpected power and potential. The vitality of pre-Columbian ceramics appears to have remained latent within the sensibilities of certain individuals. Its sudden reemergence is important to us all, because it represents the transformation whereby human beings constantly reinvent their experiences to enrich the spirit. It is to be hoped that the artists, together with the Nicaraguan people, will be nurtured by an expression that, however tenuously, echoes lost voices while raising hopes for the future.

Félix Angel
Exhibition Curator

La primera historia de Nicaragua: una perspectiva arqueológica

Al abordarse el tema de las primeras sociedades que habitaron Nicaragua, hay la tendencia a limitar el análisis a los grupos que los españoles describieron en el siglo XVI, como los Chorotegas, los Nicaraos y los Chontales. Esto ha llevado a la conclusión errónea de que estos

grupos fueron siempre los habitantes autóctonos, cuando en realidad el territorio nicaragüense fue ocupado desde tiempos mucho más remotos, dando lugar a largos procesos de desarrollo social.

Si bien las investigaciones arqueológicas que

se han llevado a cabo en la región durante la segunda parte de este siglo han arrojado un poco de luz sobre este campo, todavía persisten grandes vacíos de información. Seguidamente intentaremos reseñar lo que se sabe acerca de las sociedades precolombinas de Nicaragua.

La evolución cultural

Al igual que la mayor parte de Centroamérica, Nicaragua pertenece al área arqueológica denominada “Intermedia”, que incluye casi todo El Salvador y Honduras, y la totalidad de Costa Rica y Panamá.

Las condiciones ecológicas permitieron la explotación de diferentes recursos naturales, dando lugar a sociedades autosuficientes que mantenían contactos de intercambio con otros



ANTHONY M. VAS

Jarrón trípode
[Low tripod bowl]
800 to 1350 A.D.
Museo Nacional de
Nicaragua

pueblos aborígenes. Sin duda la cerámica prehispánica denota influencias expresivas que permiten concluir que las gentes precolombinas de Nicaragua estuvieron siempre en constante interacción con sus vecinos, razón que por otra parte no impidió el desarrollo de formas de expresión particulares de la zona, como bien puede apreciarse en la presente muestra.

El proceso de evolución de la región que ocupa Nicaragua ha sido dividido en los seis períodos que se describen a continuación.

Períodos I, II, III (Hasta el 2000 a C.)

El período I se corresponde con los primeros grupos que entraron a América a través del estrecho de Bering. Se piensa que estas comunidades, dedicadas a la caza y la recolección de frutos, desconocían aun los rudimentos de la agricultura y la alfarería.

Entre el período Paleoindio (10.000-7000 a C.) y los primeros asentamientos agrícolas (que comienzan alrededor del año 3000 a C.), está enunciada la existencia de un período intermedio conocido como “Arcaico Tropical”. Este período ha sido identificado en varias zonas de Centroamérica y debido a ello se supone que también existió en Nicaragua, pero hasta el presente no hay pruebas de esta ocupación. En general el “Período Arcaico Tropical” se caracteriza por algunos cambios en los patrones de subsistencia. Aunque los grupos continúan sustentándose de la caza, la pesca y la recolección, se han encontrado evidencias de actividad agrícola, como la quema de bosques para cultivar maíz y tubérculos.

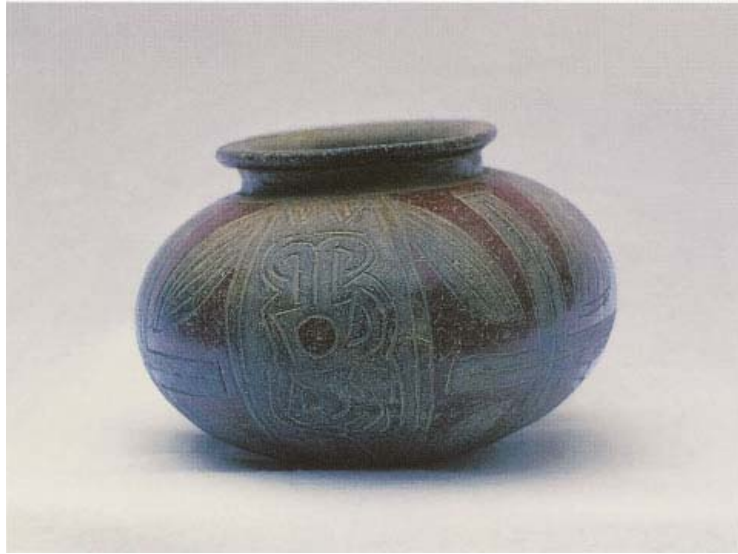
Período IV (2000 a C. hasta el año 500)

Recientemente, en las orillas de la Laguna de Tiscapa en Managua se descubrió un complejo cerámico perteneciente a este período. Si bien no hay mucha información sobre esta cultura, el análisis de las piezas halladas demuestra que estos grupos dominaban bien las técnicas de alfarería.

Existen muchas similitudes cerámicas entre los sitios de Los Angeles, en Ometepe, y los complejos tempranos de Managua con otros lugares de Centroamérica. En particular, se han observado muchas afinidades con Costa Rica, especialmente sitios de la cordillera de Tilarán, el corredor del río San Juan y la costa atlántica.

Los datos existentes para la última parte del Período IV (desde el año 500 a C. al 500 de la era cristiana) permiten inferir que durante el mismo se desarrollaron sociedades autóctonas, pero no aisladas. En la costa del Pacífico puede observarse una homogeneidad cultural y ecológica con la zona de Guanacaste-Nicoya en Costa Rica. Dicha área es denominada por los arqueólogos como “Gran Nicoya”, en cuyo interior existen patrones regionales muy marcados. Al parecer las culturas de la zona central, en particular Chontales, y la zona atlántica se relacionan, especialmente en el tratamiento de la cerámica.





*Vasija globular
[Globular
ceramic vessel]
500 B.C. to 500 A.D.
Museo Nacional
de Nicaragua*

En la región del Pacífico nicaragüense, a este período se le denomina Tempisque, según información proveniente de algunos sitios en la isla Ometepe, Granada, Managua, así como de cementerios excavados en la costa del Pacífico, cerca de la frontera con Costa Rica. Los hallazgos sugieren que en la sepultura se depositaban ofrendas, constituidas de tres elementos: pendientes de jade, metates trípodes y platos de cerámica bicroma conocida como “rosales esgrafiado”. Estos elementos han sido hallados también en Guanacaste-Nicoya, Costa Rica, lo cual indica un fuerte patrón cultural en esa época.

Los platos de cerámica, en particular, han sido objeto de considerables estudios arqueológicos. El rosales esgrafiado está decorado por dos figuras zoomorfas en color negro, ubicadas en la parte superior, más un motivo circular negro del cual salen cuatro puntas cónicas. Las líneas que trazan los motivos se realizaron cuando la arcilla ya estaba cocida y posteriormente fueron rellenadas de color blanco. Una pintura roja (tramado) cubre toda la cerámica, a excepción del fondo, que presenta un motivo rectangular del color del barro.

Recientemente la arqueóloga Alice Tillet, de la Universidad de Texas, Estados Unidos, analizó algunos platos del tipo rosales y sugirió que esta cerámica encierra manifestaciones religiosas. Tillet señala que la forma de los platos representa un cosmos circular, donde se encuentra un mundo de forma rectangular. Basándonos en los “Tres niveles” de Grieder, donde se propone que cuando en un conjunto se asocian círculos y rectángulos se está expresando un cosmos completo que comprende el Paraíso y la Tierra, la figura de la parte superior representaría el guardián del inframundo y el motivo circular negro, la entrada al fondo de la tierra. La parte rectangular sería el final del viaje hacia el mundo de los muertos.

Período V (500-1000)

Este período está marcado por un aumento en la población y una mayor estratificación social en todo el país, además de una ampliación de los intercambios regionales, aunque entre algunos grupos, principalmente en el Atlántico, los contactos continuaban dispersos. En la zona del Pacífico perteneciente a la región de Gran Nicoya, en los primeros siglos parece darse una suerte de continuación de las tradiciones anteriores. Después del año 500, empero, se observan muchos cambios en la elaboración de la cerámica, principalmente en los diseños, que denuncian una influencia de policromos hondureños. Estos cambios se interpretan como una mayor interacción con esta zona, a raíz de que las redes comerciales en general se intensificaron. Se han encontrado muchas cerámicas conocidas como “ulua policromo” de la parte central-norte de Honduras, así como cerámicas del tipo “delirio rojo sobre blanco”.

Período VI (1000-1600)

En el área Gran Nicoya este período se caracteriza por la introducción de una gran variedad de cerámicas de engobe blanco, innovación posiblemente ligada al “arribo” de grupos Chorotegas provenientes de Soconusco, en Chiapas. Por esta época comienza a surgir un tipo de escultura monumental, particularmente en las islas Zapatera, Ometepe, Panzacola en el lago de Nicaragua y Momotombito en el lago de Managua, así como en las planicies de León. Estas esculturas representan a seres humanos acompañados de un grupo reducido de animales tales como lagartos, monos y serpientes. La mayoría de estas obras están asociadas a montículos funerarios, principalmente de Zapatera.

Hacia mediados del siglo XIV tuvieron lugar algunos cambios culturales debidos a la influencia de nuevos grupos de población que se asentaron en el Pacífico de Nicaragua. Estos cambios, que no abarcaron toda la costa, se observan principalmente en la cerámica, la cual incorpora entre sus motivos algunas deidades mexicanas.

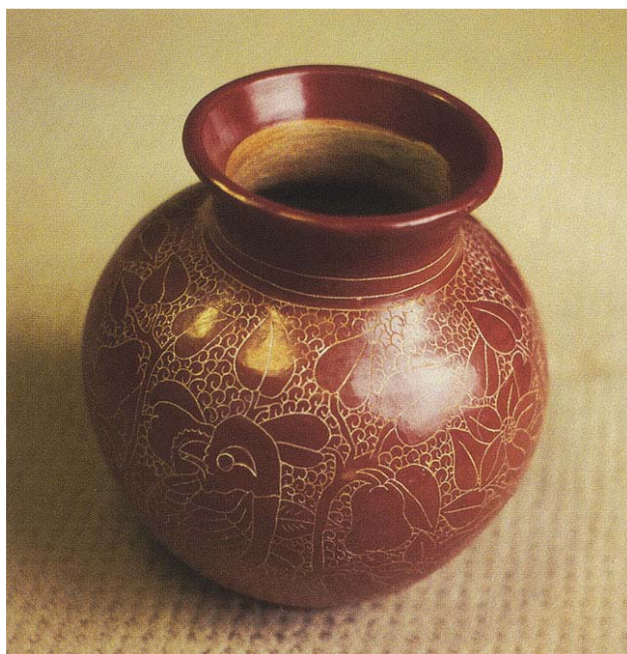
En la región de Chontales la cerámica continúa la tradición de decorarse con incisiones, pero se observa un aumento en las importaciones de cerámica del Pacífico de Nicaragua, especialmente en vasijas policromadas conocidas como “Cerámica Nicoya”. Esto podría deberse a las transformaciones que se están dando en las estructuras sociales con la llegada de grupos Chorotegas.

Entre los años 1400 y 1600 la cerámica policromada casi desaparece de la costa pacífica, dando paso a una cerámica mal cocida con decoración incisa, en tanto que los sitios arqueológicos tienden a ser más grandes, con varias plazas. Se ha conjeturado que estos cambios podrían deberse a la llegada de otras culturas, especialmente del Atlántico, que ocuparon estos territorios desplazando a los antiguos pobladores.



La cerámica popular actual en Nicaragua

En los últimos 15 años, la práctica de la cerámica a nivel popular ha resurgido en Nicaragua con una intensidad posiblemente comparable a la de los tiempos precolombinos. Este auge se debe en gran parte al estímulo que



*Jarro pequeño con incisiones
de pájaros y flores
[Small jug with incised birds
and flowers] Anonymous*

las artesanías recibieron en el país durante los años ochenta, a través de la ya desaparecida División General de Artesanía. A lo largo de esos años y después de una década particularmente agitada por convulsiones políticas, sociales y geológicas, los artesanos nicaragüenses, al igual que el resto del país, comenzaron a reconstruir sus vidas. Entre otras actividades, los alfareros

participaron en cursos sobre diseño cerámico y uso de materiales hasta el momento poco conocidos por ellos, como el óxido de cromo para obtener verdes.

Al igual que en el pasado remoto, la mayoría de las manifestaciones artísticas que en Nicaragua utilizan el barro se encuentran localizadas en la zona del Pacífico, en San Juan de Oriente (cerca de Masaya, sobre la carretera a Granada, conocida también como San Juan de los Platos), y en La Paz Centro (sobre la carretera a León). Hay otras sin embargo, como la región de Estelí y la isla Zapatera.

Existen elementos formales y técnicos que diferencian la producción cerámica de cada uno de estos lugares. Por ejemplo, en la zona de San

Juan de Oriente, tal vez la más desarrollada, no es infrecuente encontrar entre los artesanos el uso del torno, además de una gran variedad de engobes a base de óxidos que pueden adquirirse en la cooperativa local. Por lo mismo, la decoración de las piezas es policroma, en una gama más amplia que la de La Paz Centro o la de Estelí, que básicamente utilizan colores derivados de las arcillas naturales de la zona. Aunque en casi todos los casos la forma del volumen es bastante simple y proviene de una función utilitaria —sobre todo en San Juan de Oriente—, en La Paz Centro existe una preferencia por la cerámica figurativa, con fines estrictamente decorativos, como es el caso de María Amanda Guzmán Guerrero, la autora del arcángel y otras piezas incluidas en esta muestra.

La variedad en el diseño aplicado a la decoración que se observa hoy en la cerámica popular de Nicaragua, si bien proviene fundamentalmente de la imaginación de sus artistas, se origina en muchísimas fuentes. La cercanía de los centros de producción con la capital Managua ha tenido un impacto definitivo, sobre todo por la circulación de revistas y material impreso, pero también por las comisiones que los particulares encargan a los artesanos, muchas veces con una ilustración en mano. Sin embargo, cabe a estos creadores populares transformar y evolucionar dichos diseños. Por ello no es sorprendente encontrar a veces acabados que recuerdan las piezas prehispánicas de la zona, como también otros que no tienen nada que ver con ellas. Una visita a la cooperativa de San Juan de Oriente basta para darnos cuenta de que la naturaleza de los diseños es ahora tan amplia que aun se incorporan motivos como la imagen de Juan Pablo II, quien no hace mucho estuvo de nuevo en Nicaragua.

Un caso excepcional, aunque no único, lo constituye Helio Gutiérrez, artesano de San Juan de Oriente. Perteneciente a una familia de artesanos, Gutiérrez —quien no terminó todavía la escuela elemental— ha introducido una serie de recursos antiguos, casi olvidados, que han sido adoptados por colegas suyos en el área, por ejemplo, el uso de la incisión poco profunda, suficiente para recoger en su interior otro engobe, por lo general blanco, que al quemar de nuevo la pieza imprime al diseño su característico acabado lineal. Dicha influencia puede apreciarse al comparar las dos piezas con diseño de rana que incluye la exposición: una (la café, No. 34) firmada por Gutiérrez y la otra (la negra, No. 62) por Miguel Maldonado, aunque no queda duda que fueron hechas en el mismo taller. Gutiérrez además parece tener un innato sentido de la composición, combinando volúmenes que por lo general son simétricos (en vasijas y jarros), con diseños asimétricos, logrando un balance admirable sobre la superficie curva, como puede apreciarse en las dos ollas esféricas (Nos. 38 y 39)

Gutiérrez ha desarrollado una carrera sobresaliente que le ha valido, por ejemplo, para obtener un buen número de distinciones en certámenes internacionales, incluyendo una mención de honor en el Premio Internacional de Artesanía, patrocinado en 1992 por la UNESCO en Tenerife, España. En la lista de obras (No. 46) figura una pieza similar a la que fue distinguida en aquella ocasión, elaborada por Gutiérrez especialmente para la presente muestra.

No obstante, este artista todavía vive y trabaja en su modesta casa, localizada sobre el “camino del mamey”, tal como describe su dirección colocada sobre las piezas, al lado de su firma.

Un caso similar es el de Agustín Amador, quien demuestra una imaginación menos ortodoxa tanto en la concepción del volumen como en el tratamiento de la decoración, inclinándose en el momento por temas figurativos relacionados con elementos descriptivos de la naturaleza, como aves y frutas (Nos. 50, 51 y 52).

No es difícil encontrar en las cooperativas de las poblaciones o en el mercado central de Masaya, o Managua, piezas excelentes mezcladas con otras de menor calidad. En efecto, algunas de las piezas incluidas en esta exposición, por ejemplo las de Freddi Lumbi, Teódulo y Felipe Potosme, Elías Boza Téllez, José Andrés Jiménez, y José Dolores Salazar, fueron halladas en varios de los puestos de venta del mercado Roberto Huembes, en Managua. Igual sucedió con otras que no tienen firma, como es el caso del recipiente con tapa y diseño de venados. Al preguntar la razón de esta inconsistencia, algunos artesanos manifestaron un total desinterés por identificar sus piezas, mientras otros dieron como razón el hecho de



Recipiente con diseños que imitan cloisonné
[Lidded container with designs in imitation cloisonné]
Anonymous

que, sin la firma, la pieza es más fácil de vender, sobre todo a comerciantes de países vecinos como Honduras y Costa Rica, donde una vez trasladada se marca como producida en el país, vendiéndose como artesanía autóctona.

Al comparar las piezas de Gutiérrez y Amador con las de otros ceramistas de la misma zona, se torna irremediable la necesidad de establecer, así sea en forma un tanto inexacta por la cercanía de ambas caracterizaciones, la

distinción entre el artesano y el artista popular. Indiscutiblemente la diferencia radica en el aporte que uno u otro pueden introducir en la expresión popular. Mientras algunos la enriquecen en lo formal, en lo expresivo y en lo técnico, otros, cuya habilidad es básicamente manual, se concentran en la manufactura de una pieza específica, repitiéndola una y otra vez. Además, como en toda disciplina, la práctica establece niveles, y ello intencionalmente aparece reflejado en la selección realizada para esta presentación, la cual tiene ejemplos diversos que van de lo meramente artesanal a lo artístico.

La cerámica popular producida hoy por los alfareros nicaragüenses posee todas las características de una expresión única, consustanciada con su pasado precolombino. Como sucede a menudo con los volcanes, la expresión artística ha despertado de un prolongado letargo con una fuerza e intensidad inesperadas. La vitalidad de la cerámica prehispánica parece haber permanecido latente en la sensibilidad de algunos individuos. Su surgimiento abrupto reviste gran importancia para el mundo del arte, dado que representa una transformación en cuanto a las maneras con que el hombre desdobra y reinventa constantemente su experiencia para enriquecimiento del espíritu. Es de esperar en este caso que los artistas y todo el pueblo de Nicaragua puedan nutrirse de una manifestación que hace eco, así sea débilmente, de voces perdidas, planteando al mismo tiempo numerosas posibilidades de progreso para el futuro.

Félix Angel

Curador de la Exposición



Pre-Columbian Pottery

1. Vessel

Zoned bichrome (500 B.C. to 500 A.D.)
Globular vessel with short neck,
incisioned red decoration on cream
geometric designs.
Height: 25 cm. Width: 29 cm.

2. Ceramic vessel

Early polychrome (500 to 800 A.D.)
Monochrome globular vessel, chocolate-
colored ceramic modeled from clay and
polished. Globular body with pointed
base, short neck and rim folded outward.
Decoration in the form of a human head
applied to the shoulder of the body with
punctated hair and stylized arms modeled
onto body. Ceremonial use.
Height: 19 cm. Width: 25.5 cm.
Donated by the Managua Fire Department

3. Ceramic pouring vessel

Formative (1500 B.C. to 500 A.D.)
Globular vessel with double lip, rounded
bottom, natural grey color. Decoration
consists of four horizontal lines from
which broadly incised vertical lines
extend over the entire body.
Height: 24.5 cm. Width: 27.5 cm.

4. Ceramic figure

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)
Modeled figure representing a seated
woman with swelling belly with arms held
toward legs. Deformed head, red and
black body decoration on white engobe.
Height: 14.5 cm. Width: 10.5 cm.

5. Globular ceramic vessel

Late polychrome (1350 to 1550 A.D.)
Globular vessel, polychrome with
zoomorphic figures on the upper portion.
Blue and orange colors predominate.
Cream-colored engobe with black, blue,
orange and brick red. Decoration is
arranged in panels and consists mainly of
incised plumed serpent figures.
Height: 10.5 cm. Width: 15.2 cm.
Donated by Mr. Roberto Martínez R.

6. Cylindrical ceramic drum

Description matches several periods.
Tall, hollow cylindrical drum, everted
ends with flanges. Red engobe.
Height: 28 cm. Width: 18 cm.

7. Low ceramic bowl

Low ceramic bowl with round base, red-
painted incurved rim. Orifice distributed
horizontally over the middle portion and
base (sieve).
Donated by the Instituto de Cultura

8. Double-bottom wide bowl

Late polychrome (1350 to 1550 A.D.)
Decoration executed in black and red on
white, with a red band around the inside
edge. The exterior is decorated with
seated jaguars all around the vessel.
Similar motifs decorate the pedestal.
Height: 12 cm. Width: 14 cm.
Donated by the Instituto de Cultura

9. Globular ceramic vessel

Zoned polychrome (300 to 500 A.D.)
Globular vessel with short neck and
everted lip. Decorated with black and
white paint on red. Motifs are executed in
white lines filled with black. Principal
decoration around neck, followed by three
bands of black lines converging with
ground.
Height: 33 cm. Width: 34 cm.

10. Low bowl

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)
Low bowl with rounded base, flat lip,
slightly incurved rim. Decoration
executed in step-frets in orange, black and
red paint on a cream engobe; two red
bands decorate the inner rim. On the
exterior, a black line followed by two red
bands. Unpainted ground.
Height: 11.5 cm. Width: 20.5 cm.
Donated by Mr. Jaime Balcazar, United
Nations Representative in Nicaragua



11. *Ceramic vessel*

Late polychrome (1350 to 1550 A.D.)
Effigy vessel, black monochrome, globular, rounded lip, inverted rim, convex base. Decoration modeled of two zoomorphic heads with extremities juxtaposed and decorated with sgraffito on a panel of horizontal and parallel sloping lines, small triangles on the parallels and inverted hanging lines emerging from the horizontal line. Four orifices on each side of extremities. Polished.
Height: 7.8 cm. Width: 11.7 cm. Length: 17.5 cm.

12. *Globular ceramic vessel*

Early polychrome (500 to 800 A.D.)
Globular vessel with short neck, flat base, everted rim and rounded lip. Decorated on the outside with white paint and modeled. A tortoise is depicted in relief at each end.
Height: 17 cm. Width: 28.5 cm.

13. *Bichrome ceramic vessel*

Zoned bichrome (500 B.C. to 500 A.D.)
Orange color bichrome effigy vessel. A seated human figure with crossed arms forms the body of the piece. Nose, eyes and ears executed with incisions. The back portion has an orifice that may have held a handle. Ceremonial use.
Height: 21.5 cm. Width: 12 cm.
Donated by Miss Crisanta Chávez

14. *Globular ceramic vessel*

Early polychrome (500 to 800 A.D.)
Bichrome globular vessel with human face modeled onto body. Flat base, short neck. Modeled of clay and polished. Decoration painted in black sgraffito on red engobe. A black band above the face represents a trophy head. Ceremonial use.
Height: 8 cm. Width: 13 cm.
Donated by the Managua Fire Department

15. *Ceramic funerary figure*

Early polychrome (500 to 800 A.D.)
Female figure in seated position. The head bears a braided headdress. The arms are pointing backwards. White paint brings out the features of the face and feet, as well as the pelvic area.
Height: 12.5 cm. Width: 9 cm.

16. *Low ceramic bowl*

Early polychrome (500 to 800 A.D.)
Low bowl with rounded base and slightly lengthened neck. The decoration is executed in white on red. The exterior is decorated around the edge with geometric lines followed by two white lines. The middle portion bears stylized monkey motifs with long tails ending in a white horizontal line.
Height: 11.5 cm. Width: 15 cm.
Donated by the Instituto de Cultura

17. *Ceramic effigy vessel (incense burner)*

Early polychrome (500 to 800 A.D.)
Bichrome bird-shaped vessel with globular body, everted edge and horizontal handle (representing the bird's tail) with slit. Red engobe with color and applications.
Height: 6.5 cm. Width: 8 cm. Length: 27 cm.
Donated by Dr. Carlos Pérez Alonso

18. *Ceramic lid of incense burner*

Early to middle polychrome (500 to 1350 A.D.)
Lizard effigy figure in seated position, arms extended downward. In addition to principal motif, the piece is decorated with vertical incisions.
Height: 34.5 cm. Width: 24 cm.

19. *Trichrome ceramic vessel*

Early polychrome (500 to 800 A.D.)
Trichrome vessel modeled of clay in semispheric shape with neck, slightly everted rim and rounded base, in black and white on a red ground. On the outside, a black band encircles the neck and the body bears vertical and horizontal white lines on each side with a grooved protuberance that appears to be a mouth. Ceremonial use.
Height: 14 cm. Width: 17.5 cm.
Donated by María José Buján Quiñonez



20. *Globular ceramic vessel*

Zoned bichrome (500 B.C. to 500 A.D.)
Globular vessel with short neck and bichrome decoration in black and red with natural clay color. The decoration is executed in broad incisions on the surface, and the motifs depict opposing abstract figures with crosses.
Height: 14.5 cm. Width: 21 cm.
Donated by the Instituto de Cultura

21. *Ceramic vessel*

Late polychrome (1350 to 1550 A.D.)
Polychrome globular vessel, everted rim, ring-shaped base, with red and black decoration on a cream-colored engobe. Presents two-headed zoomorphic and geometric motifs around the rim with horizontal lines.
Height: 18 cm. Width: 31.5 cm.

22. *Wide ceramic bowl*

Zoned bichrome (500 B.C. to 800 A.D.)
Wide bowl with pedestal base, black on red decoration. Decoration in the form of an inverted triangle carved on base. The inside is decorated with geometric lines ending in a central motif in the shape of a cross.
Height: 11 cm. Width: 18.5 cm.

23. *Low tripod bowl*

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)
Low tripod bowl of spherical shape, decoration painted in orange, red and black on cream engobe. Supported by three hollow zoomorphic (jaguar) feet. The inside near the rim is ringed with a band depicting a large-nosed man, repeated three times. Also, a flower or sun is followed by a band of step-frets. The ground of the vessel bears a crab motif. The outside bears an orange-colored band. A band circles the legs and the base. Ceremonial use.
Height: 11.5 cm. Width: 20 cm.

24. *Tripod ceramic vessel*

Early polychrome (500 to 800 A.D.)
Vessel in the form of an effigy seated on a *metate*, holding a large tripod offering dish with carved legs. The head bears a braided headdress adorned with earpieces. Prominent gluteus and abdomen.
Height: 17 cm. Width: 16.5 cm.

25. *Low ceramic bowl*

Late polychrome (1350 to 1550 A.D.)
Low ceramic bowl with rounded base, slightly everted rim, red and black on white. The black paint outlines the decorative motifs and the red paint is used for fill. A red band circles the inside rim. The outside bears a principal design of two faces surrounded by orange color.
Height: 14 cm. Width: 20.5 cm.

26. *Globular ceramic vessel*

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)
Monochrome black globular vessel modeled of clay, round base, straightrimmed neck, incised and punctated decoration near rim of geometric shapes, modeled spout defining the neck and bearing four small projections with a series of punctations near them. Polished.
Height: 13.5 cm. Width: 17 cm.
Donated by the Managua Fire Department

27. *Polychrome low ceramic bowl*

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)
Low ceramic bowl with round base, flat lip, slightly incurved rim. Decoration executed in red, orange and black paint on white engobe, in addition to incised decoration. Decorated inside with two red bands around the rim. The outside around the rim bears alternating red and black step-frets, separated by a black line. Two bands on the middle portion, one black and one red. Incised decoration, underneath the slip between the frets and the bands, bears plumed serpent motifs.
Height: 11.5 cm. Width: 20.5 cm.

28. Polychrome low tripod ceramic bowl

Late polychrome (800 to 1550 A.D.)

Polychrome low tripod ceramic bowl modeled of clay and polished, semispherical shape with round base.

Hollow, nearly conical carved feet.

Polychrome decoration in red, orange and black on white engobe. Inside, a black band with white animals similar to rabbits or jaguars and orange circles. Around this band, bands and lines of orange, red and black. Along the edge, step-frets in black and red on orange. White ground. The outside bears only two horizontal red bands. Ceremonial use.

Height: 14 cm. Width: 23.5 cm.

29. Ceramic jug

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)

Polychrome effigy jug modeled of clay in oval shape, slightly everted rim, round base, tripod support (forming the jaguar's legs and tail). A jaguar's head and human arms are applied to the body of the vessel. Black and red on a creamy yellow engobe. Inside, around the rim, a black band.

Outside, a band around the rim with panels, followed by another band, each with plumed serpent stylizations.

Returned on May 26, 1983 by the Government of Peru pursuant to the 1970 Paris Convention.

Height: 31 cm. Width: 24 cm.

30. Tripod ceramic jug

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)

Tripod globular jug with hollow feet. High neck, everted rim. Decoration executed in black and red on white. Inside, a red band followed by a black line. The neck is decorated with three stylized jaguar figures, the middle part bears decorations of red and black lines ending in a black line decorated in a keyhole pattern around the vessel.

Height: 19.8 cm. Width: 15 cm.

*All pre-Columbian pottery in this exhibition
belongs to the collection of the
Museo Nacional de Nicaragua.*

Contemporary Pottery

San Juan de Oriente (Masaya)

Helio Gutiérrez

31. *Bottle* with spattered finish in coffee, ochre, green and red engobe, with geometric incised linear decoration, signed.

Base: 8.9 cm. Diameter of mouth: 4.2 cm.

Height: 40.7 cm.

32. *Jug*, finished in black clay with geometric incised linear decoration, white engobe, signed.

Base: 8.2 cm. Diameter of mouth: 10.8 cm.

Height: 24 cm.

33. *Bottle* with spattered finish in coffee, ochre, green and red engobe, leaf decoration in low relief, and linear incision on white engobe, signed.
Base: 8.6 cm. Diameter of mouth: 3.5 cm.
Height: 33 cm.

34. *Irregular double-necked vessel*, spattered finish in coffee, green, ochre and red engobe, decorated with incised frogs, white engobe, signed.
Base: 10.2 cm. (maximum axis) Diameter of mouths: 6.3 cm. (each) Height: 21 cm.



35. *Long-necked vessel*, red slip engobe, geometric decoration by linear incision on white engobe, signed.
Base: 7.3 cm. Diameter of mouth: 8.5 cm.
Height: 25.4 cm.
36. *Vessel with neck*, spattered finish in coffee, green, red and ochre engobe, geometric decoration by linear incision and leaf texture, signed.
Base: 7 cm. Diameter of mouth: 6.3 cm.
Height: 23.5 cm.
37. *Spherical pot*, red engobe finish, incised geometric decoration, white engobe, signed.
Base: 7.6 cm. Diameter of mouth: 8.3 cm.
Height: 18.4 cm.
38. *Spherical pot*, coffee engobe finish, incised geometric decoration, white engobe, signed.
Base: 5.4 cm. Diameter of mouth: 5.4 cm.
Height: 11.4 cm.
39. *Spherical vessel* with green and sepia engobe finish, decorated with linear and curvilinear snake pattern, signed.
Height: 24 cm. Width: 17 cm.
40. *Spherical vessel* with red engobe finish and incised fish decoration, white engobe, signed.
Height: 18.5 cm. Width: 9 cm.
41. *Stylized wide-mouth vessel* finished with green, sepia and grey engobe, decorated with incised linear and curvilinear pattern, signed.
Height: 40 cm. Width: 14.5 cm.
42. *Cylindrical jug* finished in black engobe with linear grid decoration, signed.
Height: 23 cm. Width: 12 cm.
43. *Irregular-shaped vessel* in the form of a shoe, finished with black engobe decorated with frogs executed in incised lines and sgraffito, white engobe, signed.
Height: 20 cm. Width: 27 cm.
44. *Vessel*, in black and white, with linear, cubist-like designs in the shape of fish, signed.
Height: 19 cm. Width: 39 cm.
45. *Anthropomorphic vessel*, in the shape of an amphibious man in brown finish, signed.
Height: 23 cm. Width: 17 cm.
46. *Vessel*, with openwork surface and decoration of two intertwined snakes, signed.
Height: 13.5 cm. Width: 22 cm.
47. *Vessel*, with two mouths, with grey background finish and linear decoration in the shape of fish, signed.
Height: 19 cm. Width: 45 cm.
48. *Globular vessel*, with grey finish and geometric decoration, signed.
Height: 26.5 cm. Width: 18 cm.
49. *Globular vessel*, with frog and “yin-yang” design against green background, signed.
Height: 6 cm. Width: 18 cm.

Agustín Amador

50. *Semi-globular vessel*, with decoration of hummingbirds, tropical fruits and flowers against a green background, signed.
Height: 31 cm. Width: 8 cm.
51. *Globular vessel*, with decoration of birds and flowers against a green background, signed.
Height: 31 cm. Width: 18 cm.
52. *Gourd-shaped vessel*, imitating the nest of a woodpecker, and decoration of the same bird, mango fruit and tree branches, against a green background, signed.
Height: 36 cm. Width: 26 cm.

Ezequiel Membreño

53. *Globular vessel*, with short neck, in red clay, and linear exagonal decoration, signed.
Height: 20 cm. Width: 24 cm.
54. *Globular vessel*, with black, red and ocre linear decoration, signed.
Height: 13 cm. Width: 22 cm.

Felipe Potosme

55. *Deep plate*, with polychrome decoration in engobe and glazes and geometric designs, some incised, white engobe, signed.
Base: 13.9 cm. Upper diameter: 25.4 cm.
Height: 8.6 cm.
56. *Tall vessel*, with decoration of orchids and toucans in ochre, black, green and red, signed.
Height: 32 cms. Width: 15 cms.

Teódulo Potosme

57. *Vessel* with polychrome decoration of engobe and glazes, geometric designs, some incised, white engobe, signed.
Base: 10.8 cm. Diameter of mouth: 10.8 cm. Height: 11.4 cm.

Freddi Lumbi

58. *Three-necked vessel*, finished with black engobe, mixed decoration with macaws and geometric figures incised on white engobe, signed.
Base: 8.2 cm. Diameter of mouths: 3.8 cm. (each) Maximum height: 31.7 cm.

Elías Boza Téllez

59. *Long-necked vessel*, finished with red and black engobe, decoration inspired by plumed serpent motif, signed.
Base: 6.3 cm. Diameter of mouth: 8.8 cm.
Height: 25.4 cm.

José Andrés Jiménez

60. *Jug* decorated with parrots and macaws with polychrome engobe and glaze finish, signed.
Base: 7.6 cm. Diameter of mouth: 8.8 cm.
Height: 22.8 cm.

José Dolores Salazar L.

61. *Small jug* with polychrome decoration of engobe and glazes, designs inspired by pre-Columbian forms, signed.
Base: 8.2 cm. Diameter of mouth: 8.8 cm.
Height: 15.2 cm.

Miguel Maldonado

62. *Bottle* with incised frog decoration, white engobe on black engobe, signed.
Base: 7 cm. Diameter of mouth: 4.4 cm.
Height: 24.1 cm.

Anonymous

63. *Lidded container* with polychrome decoration of engobe and glazes, with deer and other designs in imitation cloisonné, incised.
Base: 8.2 cm. Diameter of mouth: 8.2 cm.
Height without lid: 13.3 cm. Height with lid: 17.7 cm.
64. *Small jug*, finished with red engobe and decorated with incised birds and flowers, white engobe.
Base: 8.8 cm. Diameter of mouth: 10.8 cm.
Height: 17.1 cm.
65. *Spherical pot with salver (separate base)*, with polychrome decoration of pre-Columbian inspiration based on engobe and glazes, incised.
Salver (base): Diameter: 9.5 cm. Height: 3.8 cm.
Pot: Diameter of mouth: 7 cm. Height: 15.2 cm.
66. *Small pot*, with polychrome decoration of pre-Columbian inspiration based on engobe and glazes.
Base: 6.3 cm. Diameter of mouth: 8.2 cm.
Height: 10.2 cm.
67. *Lidded container*, with polychrome decoration of pre-Columbian inspiration based on engobe and glazes.
Base: 5.4 cm. Diameter of mouth: 6 cm.
Height (without lid): 7.6 cm. Height (with lid): 10.8 cm.
68. *Vessel with lid*, green colored and linear design by incision.
Height: 14 cm. Width: 15 cm.
- La Paz Centro (León)*
- María Amanda Guerrero Guzmán*
69. *Archangel*, clay sculpture executed with a combination of hand modeling, cast and applications.
Height: 72 cm. Width: 24.5 cm.
70. *Sweet Fifteenth*, clay sculpture executed with a combination of hand modeling, cast and applications.
Height: 72 cm. Width: 26 cm.



Ducuale Grande (Esteli)

Temasa García

71. *Zoomorphic vessel*, in the form of a rooster, with decoration of red clay engobe and sgraffito, a lightly etched texture.
Height: 23 cm. Width: 28 cm.
72. *Zoomorphic vessel*, in the form of a hen, with decoration of red clay engobe and sgraffito.
Height: 23 cm. Width: 28 cm.
73. *Vessel*, with lid and three handles decorated with curved lines and tree branches and fruit.
Height: 26 cm. Width: 30 cm.
74. *Vessel*, with wide mouth in red, and decorated with leaf design.
Height: 34 cm. Width: 28 cm.

Noncatalogue Works

By way of additional reference, the exhibit includes four pre-Columbian stone *metates* for their iconographic value. Elements of their design, such as macaws and parrots, appear to be echoed in the decoration of some of the contemporary pieces. Included as well are four photographs of various scenes relating to the exhibit.

Metates are lithic objects whose function is not entirely clear; they are thought to have been used as tables or chairs for ceremonial use, or perhaps for grinding corn. Metates generally have three supports (tripod metates) and may be classified in two categories: undecorated tripod metates with rectangular supports, and decorated tripod metates. The motifs are geometrical figures in the form of step-frets, interwoven motifs in a guilloche pattern and cross-hatching suggestive of plaited straw. Some are further adorned with a sculptured animal head.

Metate

Late middle polychrome (800 to 1550 A.D.)
Tripod metate depicting a zoomorphic figure. Triangular feet.
Height: 25 cm. Width: 20.7 cm. Length: 51.3 cm.

Metate

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)
Lithic tripod metate of rectangular shape made of a single block of stone. Long, flat triangular feet. Bears a macaw figure (*Ara Macao*) with eyes in relief and a downward curving beak. The upper part of the edges in front and behind bears frets worked in incised shapes forming rectangular patterns, as does the head. The front foot is pierced in two places.
Height: 24 cm. Width: 24 cm. Length: 55 cm.

Metate

Late polychrome (1350 to 1550 A.D.)
Lithic tripod metate of rectangular shape with three long, finely worked feet forming frets that give snake head shapes and two heads to the front portion. Also bears engraving on the lower front part and a strip of incised frets on the upper front part with a cross-hatched pattern. The back part is worked in frets of incised continuous lines forming various designs.
Height: 27.5 cm. Width: 27.5 cm. Length: 58 cm.

Metate

Middle polychrome (800 to 1350 A.D.)
Lithic tripod metate with concave dish and zoomorphic figure on front portion.
Height: 15 cm. Width: 20.8 cm. Length: 34 cm.

Photographs

Helio Gutiérrez at his home in San Juan de Oriente with two of his pieces included in the exhibition.

María Amanda Guzmán Guerrero outside her home in La Paz Centro, teaching local girls the craft of hand pottery.

An assistant to Agustín Amador gives the last polychrome touches to one of the artist's pieces before the next firing.

View from the top of the crater of the Masaya volcano.

May 15, 1992 –1996
Fourth Anniversary of the
TDB Cultural Center



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The Cultural Center wishes to thank Mr. Martín F. Stabile, Representative at the IDB Office in Nicaragua, and the staff members of the same office, for the cooperation given to the Center during the preparation of this exhibit.

**Inter-American Development Bank
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