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KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

Museo Civico e Gipsoteca Bistolfi

Via Camillo Benso Cavour 5, 15033 Casale Monferrato (AL)

Form compiled by Alessandra Montanera (curator)

Introduction

The Museo Civico of Casale Monferrato was founded on 25 February 1910. In the decades that followed, its collections were enriched thanks to new donations, bequests and purchases by the Municipality of Casale Monferrato. Since 1995 the heterogeneous civic collections have been displayed in the rooms of the former Augustinian convent of Santa Croce: the first floor houses the Art Gallery, the ground floor contains the Bistolfi Plaster Cast Gallery – recently enlarged thanks to an important bequest from the sculptor's last heirs – and, finally, in an underground room the ethnographic collection of Count Carlo Vidua is preserved. Vidua, a native of Casale, travelled almost continuously across the five continents from 1818 onwards, dying in an accident in Indonesia. The numerous objects and finds of various kinds that he gathered are to be considered a unicum at both national and international level, on account of the rarity and heterogeneous nature of the materials.

More specifically, the American collection consists of the material gathered by Carlo Vidua during his second journey in the North and Mesoamerican territories. His travels in the United States began on 9 April 1825 with his arrival in New York (after forty-three days of sailing across the Atlantic) and ended on 6 February 1826 in New Orleans. Shortly afterwards his journey in Mexico began: on board the vessel L'Antoinette, Vidua

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went down the Mississippi and reached Pueblo Viejo de Tampico on 14 February 1826, then departing from Veracruz on 22 February 1827 to return to Europe.

When Vidua died in 1830, the materials gathered during his travels passed first into the hands of his father and then of his sister. Before her death in 1838, she designated Count Luigi Leardi Angelieri di Terzo as her universal heir. However, he too died prematurely, and it was therefore Carla Leardi, Luigi's mother and also Vidua's cousin, who donated the collection to the museum in 1854.

Cultural Areas (tags)

Eastern Woodlands; Mesoamerica

Collections

#01

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Carlo Vidua collection
<i>Collector</i>	Carlo Vidua (1785–1830)
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Eastern Woodlands; Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The ethnographic collection of Count Carlo Vidua is highly varied and reflects the route of his travels across the five continents. Part of it consists of artefacts from North and Central America (around forty objects), among which are moccasins, necklaces, pipes, spear

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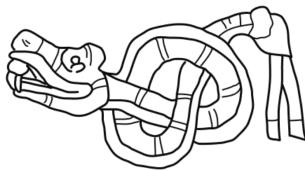
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	points, a belt, spurs, a man's chest ornament (North America) and some wax and cloth figurines from Mexico.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was gathered between 1825 and 1827 during Carlo Vidua's journeys around the world.
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bessegini, D. 2023. "Global Change: Carlo Vidua and the Age of Revolutions in the Hispanic World." In <i>ATLAS HISTÓRICO DE AMÉRICA: Nuevas miradas en la huella del americano, siglos XIX y XX</i>, ed. J. Ortiz Sotelo, 37-62. Lima: Aleph Impresiones SRL.• Coaloa, R. 2001. "Le ricerche su Cristoforo Colombo e l'interesse per l'America di Ignazio De Giovanni, Pio e Carlo Vidua." <i>Atti del Congresso Internazionale "Cristoforo Colombo, il Piemonte e la scoperta del Venezuela"</i>, Torino 27 marzo 1999-Cuccaro Monferrato 28 marzo 1999, 73–102. CE.S.CO.M.• Coaloa, R. 2002. <i>Carlo Vidua e Alexis de Tocqueville. Il viaggio nell'America della democrazia</i>. Torino.• Coaloa, R. 2003. <i>Carlo Vidua, un romantico atipico</i>. Casale Monferrato: Assessorato per la Cultura.

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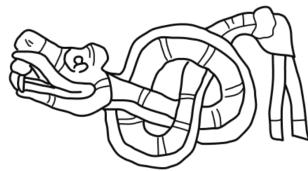
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