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KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

Tesoro dei Granduchi

Palazzo Pitti, Piazza de' Pitti, 1, 50125 Firenze

Form compiled by Valentina Conticelli (coordinator of the Tesoro dei Granduchi) in collaboration with Davide Domenici

Introduction

The Tesoro dei Granduchi, formerly the Museo degli Argenti, preserves a small but important nucleus of pre-Hispanic Indigenous artefacts from Mesoamerica (Aztec, Maya and Mixtec cultural spheres), together with a number of colonial-period objects from New Spain. All of them come from the Medici collections and bear witness to the keen interest that various members of the Medici family took in collecting artefacts of American origin. The detailed inventory records constitute an archival corpus of great significance, documenting one of the most important episodes of Italian collecting of Indigenous American artefacts in the early modern period.

Cultural Areas

Mesoamerica

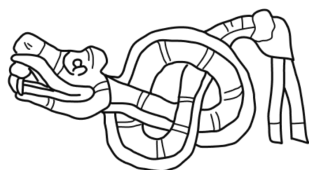
Collections

#01

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Greenstone sculpture representing a bird with a long beak
<i>Collector</i>	Cosimo I de' Medici (1519–1574)

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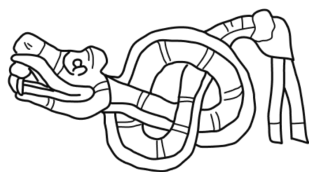
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<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Nahua or Mixtec
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	Small greenstone sculpture (25 × 40 mm) representing a bird with a long beak, perhaps a hummingbird.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The small sculpture was recorded, together with two others now in the Museo di Mineralogia e Litologia of the Università di Firenze, in the Medici Guardaroba as early as 8 November 1554, when they were returned to the Guardaroba by Benvenuto Cellini, who had had them on loan (ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 28, c. 47r; ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 30, c. 19s; ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 31, c. 13s). In 1559 they were sent to adorn the Writing Room (Scrittoio) of Cosimo I de' Medici in Palazzo Vecchio (ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 37, c. 14r). In 1921 the piece was transferred to the Museo degli Argenti (today Tesoro dei Granduchi) (Inventario delle gemme 1921, no. 846), where it is still preserved after a period on loan to the Museo di Antropologia.
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	

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#02

<i>Name of the collection</i>	New Spanish miter with feather mosaic
<i>Collector</i>	Ferdinando I de' Medici (1549–1609)
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica

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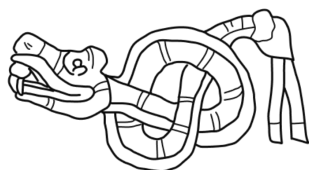
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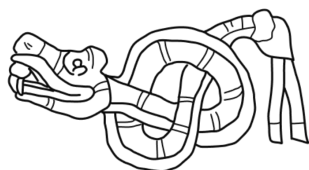
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<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	P'urhépecha or Nahua (New Spain)
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The feather miter—made by Indigenous artists of New Spain using hummingbird feathers and those of other birds glued onto agave paper, textiles and gold thread—depicts the monogram of the Holy Name of Jesus and Mary, accompanied by images of the Crucifixion and of the Mass of Saint Gregory on one side, and of the Sconficcatione on the other. The infulae show the Ascension of Christ and the Assumption of Mary, together with the Holy Name of Christ. The miter resembles two others preserved in the Musée des Tissus et des Arts Décoratifs in Lyon and in the Escorial in Madrid, the latter having belonged to Philip II.
<i>History of the collection</i>	Sixteenth century. The miter is mentioned in an inventory compiled between 1571 and 1588 (ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, vol. 79, c. 49), which records the goods sent from Rome to Florence by Ferdinando de' Medici (among them the Florentine Codex), in connection with his move to take up the title of Grand Duke. The sending of the miter is recorded twice, with different dates (21 November 1586 and 26 November 1587), probably because of an error. The miter was sent together with another one (depicting the Trinity with Saint Peter and the Assumption of the Virgin) which was later transferred to the Giardino dei Semplici in Pisa and

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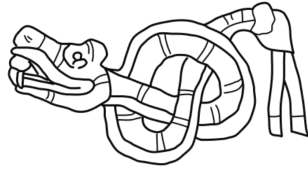
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	<p>lost after 1686. Both miters are listed in an inventory entry of 1588 (ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 132, c. 271). At least one of the two was sent to Ferdinando by Giulio Battaglini, his secretary in Madrid, who refers to it in a letter of July 1586 (ASF, MP 5103, insert. 9, c. 70). The miter was subsequently recorded in Medici inventories in 1597 (ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 190, c. 126r), 1640 (ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 572), 1744 (ASF I. e R. Corte, 1288, A58), 1770 (ASF I. e R. Corte, 1288) and 1782-? (ASF, I e R. Corte, 1289), which state that it was kept in a wooden case covered with red velvet.</p>
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Callegari, G.V. 1924. “Mitria e manipolo a mosaico di penne nel Museo degli Argenti a Palazzo Pitti,” Dedalo: 500-513.• Gallori, C.T. 2013. “Collecting Feathers: A Journey from Mexico into Italian Collections (16th–17th Century)”, in Collecting East and West, ed. S. Bracken, A.M. Gáldy, A.Turpin, 61-82. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.• Gallori, C.T. 2015. “From Paper to Feathers: The Holy Names of Jesus and Mary from Europe to Mexico”, in Images Take Flight: Feather art in Mexico and Europe, 1400–1700, ed. A. Russo, G. Wolf and D. Fane, 311-319. Munich: Hirmer.

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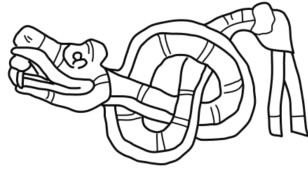
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	in Florence”, <i>Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture</i> 1(2): 99-106.
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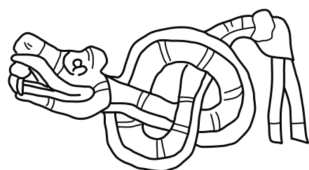
Name of the collection	Turquoise mask in silver mount
Collector	Ferdinando II de’ Medici (1620–1671)
Cultural areas	Europe?
Ethnic group / community / cultural context	
Description of the Collection	Small turquoise mask with diamond eyes, set in a mount of gilded and enamelled silver in the form of an oak tree, perhaps an allusion to Vittoria della Rovere, wife of Ferdinando II de’ Medici. The mask itself measures 4.1 cm, while the entire object measures 8.2 cm. The mask is included here because it has often been described as a Mesoamerican artefact or as a European imitation of a Mesoamerican artefact. In reality, the shape of the mask, the concave rear surface and the facial features make attribution to the Indigenous American world highly improbable. It would instead appear to be a European production and nothing suggests that it was created with the intention of imitating Mesoamerican works.

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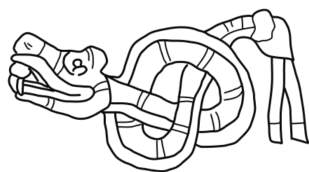
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<i>History of the collection</i>	The mask entered the Medici Guardaroba on an unknown date, probably during the reign of Ferdinando II de' Medici. In 1781 (SGF, Filza 14, doc. 82) it was moved from the Guardaroba Medicea to the Uffizi (where it was also recorded in a later inventory of 1784). In 1921 it was transferred to the Museo degli Argenti (today Tesoro dei Granduchi) (Inventario delle gemme 1921, no. 707), where it is still preserved after a period on loan to the Museo di Antropologia.
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Callegari, G.V. 1932. "Suppellettile precolombiana del Museo Nazionale di Antropologia ed Etnologia di Firenze", <i>Le Vie d'Italia e dell'America Latina</i> 6. • Du Crest, S. 2011. "Fluidity of Meaning: The Elusive "Aztec" Mask in the Medici Collection," <i>Fragmenta</i> 5: 184. • Heikamp, D. 1972. <i>Mexico and the Medici</i>. Firenze: Editrice Edam. • Heikamp, D. 1982. "Mexico und die Medici-Herzöge." In <i>Mythen der Neuen Welt</i>, ed. K.-H. Kohl, 126-146. Berlin; Frölich & Kaufmann. • Markey, L. 2008. <i>The New World in Renaissance Italy: A Vicarious Conquest of Art and Nature at the Medici Court</i>. PhD Thesis, The University of Chicago.

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#04

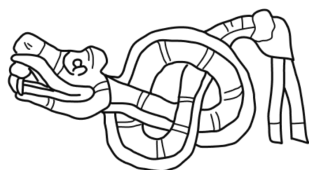
<i>Name of the collection</i>	Stone mask from Teotihuacan
<i>Collector</i>	Leopoldo de' Medici (1617–1675)
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Teotihuacan
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	Anthropomorphic mask in green travertinite (15.8 × 17.3 × 5 cm), originating from Teotihuacan and dating to the fourth–sixth centuries AD. The ears bear perforations intended to hold ear ornaments, while further perforations for attaching the mask are located on the sides. Until the second half of the twentieth century the mask also had inlays of shell and obsidian in the eyes, now lost, probably applied in the Late Postclassic period (c. 1350–1521 AD) in an Aztec context. The teeth are painted white. A vertical perforation in the centre of the rear surface is probably European and was made to allow the mask to be hung.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The mask is mentioned in the inventory drawn up in 1675 on the death of Leopoldo de' Medici, after which it was moved to the Medici Guardaroba (ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, vol. 741, c. 143v; ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, 826). In 1723 it passed to the Uffizi and in 1921 it was finally transferred to the Museo degli Argenti (today

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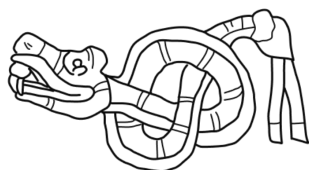
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	Tesoro dei Granduchi) (Inventario delle gemme 1921, no. 824), where it is still preserved after a period on loan to the Museo di Antropologia.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mosco, M. 2002. “12. Mask”, in <i>Aztecs</i>, eds. E. Matos Moctezuma, F. Solis Olguín, 404. London: Royal Academy of Arts.
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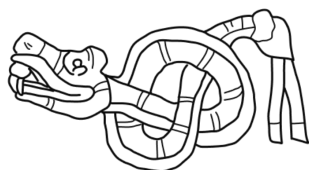
#05

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Bucchero vases from Tonalá
<i>Collector</i>	Cosimo III de' Medici (1642–1723)
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	New Spain
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	Four “bucchero delle Indie” vases, between 83 and 102 cm in height, produced in the region of Tonalá, Guadalajara (Mexico). All four display painted decoration featuring the Habsburg double-headed eagle, in two cases flanked by rampant lions.
<i>History of the collection</i>	According to Lorenzo Magalotti, in 1693 at least two of the four large “bucchero delle Indie” jars produced in Tonalá (Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico) and decorated with the Habsburg double-headed eagle, now in the Tesoro dei Granduchi, entered the Porcelain Room in the Uffizi.
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	

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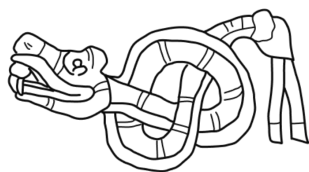
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heikamp, D. 1972. Mexico and the Medici. Firenze: Editrice Edam. • Heikamp, D. 1982. "Mexico und die Medici-Herzöge." In <i>Mythen der Neuen Welt</i>, ed. K.-H. Kohl, 126-146. Berlin; Frölich & Kaufmann.
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#06

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Colonial artefacts (bucchero ware and coconut cups)
<i>Collector</i>	
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	New Spain
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	One bucchero vase from Tonalá (Guadalajara, Mexico) with silver mounting and two coconut cups with silver mounts, one of which bears a depiction of the double-headed eagle. All three artefacts date to the seventeenth century.
<i>History of the collection</i>	
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	

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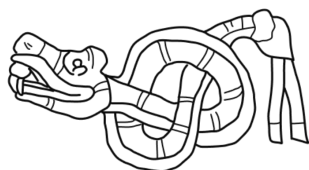
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heikamp, D. 1982. "Mexico und die Medici-Herzöge." In <i>Mythen der Neuen Welt</i>, ed. K.-H. Kohl, 126-146. Berlin; Frölich & Kaufmann.
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#07

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Anthropomorphic figurine in greenstone
<i>Collector</i>	Mario Piccolomini (1651–after 1725); Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici (1667–1743)
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Maya
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	<p>Anthropomorphic figurine in greenstone with brownish striations, representing a figure wearing a loincloth and a pectoral in the form of the sign Ik', "wind" or "breath". The head shows the hair and a crest-like element. It may represent a person affected by dwarfism. A perforation running through the neck indicates that it was used as a necklace pendant. The figure stands on an oval agate base (overall height 8 cm; height of figurine 5.5 cm). The perforated ears are decorated with metal and ruby pendants. On the top of the head a metal mount originally housed— as historical photographs show— a crescent-shaped ruby, while around the neck the figurine wore a gold chain with a ruby pendant. The figurine,</p>

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	<p>which belongs to the Maya cultural sphere, can probably be dated to the Late Classic period (c. 600–900 AD), since, as noted by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, it resembles similar figurines found in the Cenote at Chichén Itzá (Yucatán, Mexico). All the metal elements and rubies were added to the figurine by Mario Piccolomini, as attested by Scarfò; the agate base too is a European addition dating to the eighteenth century.</p>
<i>History of the collection</i>	<p>The figurine formed part of the collection of Mario Piccolomini (1651–after 1725), a member of a renowned Sienese family. Its subsequent passage into the collection of Anna Maria Luisa de’ Medici (1667–1743) is attested by an inventory recording the objects that she transferred to the Guardaroba Medicea on 6 August 1732 (ASF, Guardaroba Medicea, vol. 1288, ins. 2, fasc. 58, c. 162r), where the object is described as an “idolo cinese” (“Chinese idol”). In 1736 an image of the figurine (an engraving by Arnold van Westerhout) was published—as an Egyptian idol—in Antonio Borioni and Ridoflino Venuti, <i>Collectanea antiquitatum romanarum...</i>, pl. 5. In 1739 the figurine was described and illustrated again in the volume <i>Lettera nella quale vengono espressi colle figure in rame e dilucidati colle annotazioni dal P.D. Giancrisostomo Scarfò</i> (Venice, 1739), where Scarfò explicitly mentioned its provenance from the Piccolomini collection. The figurine, once more illustrated by means of the engraving by Arnold van Westerhout, was again described by Scarfò as an “Idolo</p>

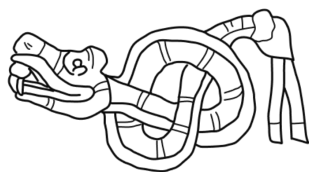
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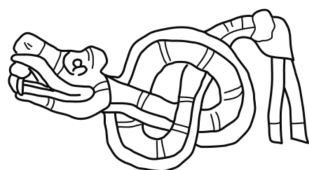
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	<p>Egiziaco in plasma di smeraldo” (“Egyptian idol in emerald paste”) and tentatively identified with the Egyptian goddess Isis because of the lunar symbol on its head.</p> <p>From 1753 its presence is documented in the Galleria degli Uffizi and then in the Gabinetto delle Gemme (BdU, ms. 95, 1753, no. 2439; BdU, ms. 98, 1769, no. 1732; BdU, ms. 113, 1784, no. 100; BdU, ms. 183, 1825, vol. XI, Classe VI, Gemme, no. 303). In 1921 it was finally transferred to the Museo degli Argenti (today Tesoro dei Granduchi) (Inventario delle gemme 1921, no. 693), where it is still preserved after a period on loan to the Museo di Antropologia (from 8 May 1927 to an unknown date). A photograph taken in the 1960s in the Museo di Antropologia still shows part of the gold chain and the gemstone on the head, now lost.</p>
Online Database	
Web page	
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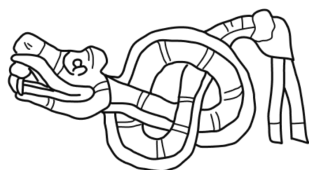
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#08

Name of the collection	Anthropomorphic figure (penate) in greenstone
Collector	

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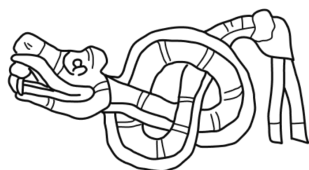
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<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Mixtec
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	Anthropomorphic figurine 71 mm in height, representing a human figure with hands placed on the abdomen. It is a typical Mixtec household deity (penate), probably a representation of an ancestor associated with fertility.
<i>History of the collection</i>	In 1921 the object entered the Museo degli Argenti (today Tesoro dei Granduchi) (Inventario delle gemme 1921, no. 868), where it is still preserved after a period on loan to the Museo di Antropologia.
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Heikamp, D. 1972. Mexico and the Medici. Firenze: Editrice Edam. ● Heikamp, D. 1982. "Mexico und die Medici-Herzöge." In Mythen der Neuen Welt, ed. K.-H. Kohl, 126-146. Berlin; Frölich & Kaufmann. ● Markey, L. 2008. The New World in Renaissance Italy: A Vicarious Conquest of Art and Nature at the Medici Court. PhD Thesis, The University of Chicago.

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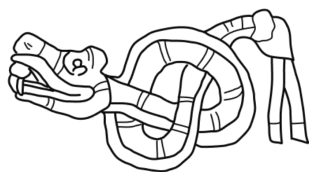
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#09

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Human face in greenstone
<i>Collector</i>	
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Mixtec
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	Human face in dark greenstone (3.7 × 3.1 × 2.2 cm) with large almond-shaped eyes and ear ornaments made by circular perforation. It wears a diadem on the head. The style and carving technique identify the small sculpture as a Mixtec work dating to the Late Postclassic period (c. 1250–1521 AD).
<i>History of the collection</i>	In 1921 the object entered the Museo degli Argenti (today Tesoro dei Granduchi) (Inventario delle gemme 1921, no.

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	866), where it is still preserved after a period on loan to the Museo di Antropologia.
<i>Online Database</i>	
<i>Web page</i>	
<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heikamp, D. 1972. Mexico and the Medici. Firenze: Editrice Edam. • Heikamp, D. 1982. "Mexico und die Medici-Herzöge." In Mythen der Neuen Welt, ed. K.-H. Kohl, 126-146. Berlin; Frölich & Kaufmann. • Markey, L. 2008. The New World in Renaissance Italy: A Vicarious Conquest of Art and Nature at the Medici Court. PhD Thesis, The University of Chicago. • Markey, L. 2016. Imagining the Americas in Medici Florence. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press. • Laurencich Minelli, L. 1980. "308. Piccola maschera", in Palazzo Vecchio: committenza e collezionismo medicei. 166-167. Firenze: Edizioni Medicee. • Laurencich Minelli, L. 1992. "1079. testina", In Due "mondi" a confronto. I segni della storia, ed. A. Rigoli, 559. Genova: Edizioni Colombo.

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