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KNOWLEDGE OF THINGS:
REASSESSING THE INDIGENOUS
AMERICAN HERITAGE IN ITALY

Museo del Centro Studi Americanistici “Circolo Amerindiano”

Via Fratti 14, 06123, Perugia

Form compiled by Romolo Santoni and Paride Bollettin (curators), in collaboration with Anna Bottesi.

Introduction

The ethnographic collection of the Centro Studi Americanistici “Circolo Amerindiano” officially came into being in 1991, when, on the occasion of the exhibition *Teocuicatl: il canto sacro*, held in Terni in October of that year, it was decided to bring together in a single space the ethnographic objects assembled by members of the Centro Studi during their travels in the Americas.

Over time this initial nucleus of objects was enriched by a substantial corpus from the Andean, Amazonian and Venezuelan tropical areas, thanks above all to the archaeologist Mario Polia (Andean area), the ethnologists Gerardo Bamonte and Miguel Ángel Menéndez (Amazonia, Chaco, Huave) and the architect couple Leszek Zawisza and Chiara Cipiciani (Venezuela). These important contributions made it possible to gather a very interesting set of ethnographic objects of the material culture of those regions.

In 2002 this material heritage was further enriched with the acquisition of the Borruso Collection – more than two hundred ethnographic objects gathered over twenty years of research carried out from the late 1960s onwards by the anthropologist Nina Borruso in central-southern Mexico – and with another corpus of over sixty Amazonian, Mexican and Argentinian pieces from the ethnologist Bamonte, both acquisitions financed with funds from the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Perugia.

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On 19 November 2004 the new premises in Via Guardabassi were inaugurated and the collection was installed there in its then current form. From 4 May 2009 the collection was dedicated to the memory of the ethnologist Gerardo Bamonte, a key figure in its creation, who had died a few months earlier. With the acquisition of the Borruso Collection the small room in Via Fratti was becoming increasingly inadequate to house this heritage properly.

The arrival of new materials and, later, the imminent acquisition of the “Bamonte” holdings made the Via Guardabassi premises equally insufficient. The Municipality of Perugia therefore set about providing new, larger and more suitable premises. On 10 November 2023 the new premises in Via Fratti 14–20, Perugia, were inaugurated.

Cultural Areas

Arctic; Great Plains; Southwest/Oasisamerica; Aridamerica; Mesoamerica; Caribbean; Northern Andes; Central and Southern Andes; Amazonia; Gran Chaco

Collections

#01

<i>Name of the collection</i>	North America
<i>Collector</i>	Sergio Susani; Nina Borruso
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Arctic; Great Plains; Southwest/Oasisamerica; Aridamerica
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Inuit (Arctic) Sioux, Blackfeet, Hopi, Lakota, Innu (United States), Tarahumara, Casas Grandes (Mexico)

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<i>Description of the Collection</i>	<p>The collection consists of around forty artefacts of various types, some of which are replicas made by Sergio Susani specifically to enrich the museum's holdings. Among these latter are models of dwellings, moccasins, baskets, a drum and other ritual objects, a feathered headdress, a Kachina doll, two shields, a necklace, a tomahawk and a horsewhip. Among the other objects present we can mention a pipe, an anthropomorphic figurine, a fan, stone clubs, a leather quiver and a knife sheath. The objects from Mexico form part of the collection donated by Borruso and include a dress, a whip, a doll and some animals.</p>
<i>History of the collection</i>	<p>The replicas made by Sergio Susani were acquired in the 1990s. Some of the objects in this section of the collection were instead gathered by Nina Borruso in the second half of the twentieth century. They were originally intended to form part of a Museum of Comparative Peasant Traditions which, however, was never created. The objects therefore remained in the dark of boxes for almost twenty years, until the Centro Studi Americanistici acquired them in 2002.</p>
<i>Online Database</i>	<p>A complete digitisation project of the collection is under way which, by the end of 2024, will put online the records of all the objects in the museum so as to make them visible and accessible from all over the world.</p>
<i>Web page</i>	<p>http://www.amerindiano.org/collezione-etnografica/</p>

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Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rivista THULE
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#02

Name of the collection	Contemporary Mesoamerica
Collector	Romolo Santoni; Nina Borruso; Lourdes; Lucidi; Martínez; Quintana Gamboa
Cultural areas	Mesoamerica
Ethnic group / community / cultural context	Maya (Mexico: Yucatán, Chiapas, Lacandón; Guatemala: Quetzaltenango, Quiché); contemporary Mexican (Mexico: Highlands); Zapotec; Amuzgo; Mixe; Mazatec; Chinantec; Mixtec (Mexico: Oaxaca); Nahuatl (Mexico: Puebla, Guerrero); Huichol (Mexico: Nayarit, western Mexico, Jalisco); Tarascan (Mexico: Michoacán); Cora (Mexico: Nayarit); Mazahua (State of Mexico); Huave (Oaxaca, Isthmus of Tehuantepec); Huastec (Mexico: San Luis Potosí); Totonac (Mexico: Veracruz); Triqui (Mexico: Puebla); Maya-Tzotzil (Mexico: Chiapas); Lacandon (Mexico: Chiapas, Lacandon Rainforest); Quiché (Guatemala: Quiché); Otomí (Mexico: Querétaro).
Description of the Collection	The contemporary Mesoamerican collection consists of around 350 objects of various types: vessels, gourds and other containers, statues, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines and dolls, garments, dresses (huipiles) and other accessories (belts, sombreros, bags, footwear), woven sashes, fans, plaited mats, machetes,

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	musical instruments (a drum and various rattles), drawings, necklaces, animals, masks and objects connected with the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe and other religious ceremonies.
<i>History of the collection</i>	Most of the objects in this section of the collection were gathered by Nina Borruso in the second half of the twentieth century. They were originally intended to form part of a Museum of Comparative Peasant Traditions, which, however, was never created. The objects therefore remained in the dark of boxes for almost twenty years, until the Centro Studi Americanistici acquired them in 2002.
<i>Online Database</i>	A complete digitisation project of the collection is under way which, by the end of 2024, will put online the records of all the objects in the museum so as to make them visible and accessible from all over the world.
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<i>Bibliography</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Rivista THULE

#03

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica
<i>Collector</i>	Romolo Santoni; Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City; Museo Regional de Jalapa; Montiel
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Mesoamerica

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<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Olmec cultures (Mexico: Olman, Morelos, Valley of Mexico, highlands); Classic and Late Maya (Mexico and Guatemala: Quiché); Mixtec; Aztec; Teotihuacan culture; Valley cultures (Mexico: Highlands); Zapotec (Mexico: Oaxaca); Totonac (Mexico: Gulf Coast, Veracruz).
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Centro Studi's pre-Columbian Mesoamerican collection consists of vessels and anthropomorphic and zoomorphic sculptures, mainly in terracotta, along with some bowls and a mask. Almost all of the objects are contemporary reproductions of archaeological material datable between the sixteenth century BC and the sixteenth century AD.
<i>History of the collection</i>	Most of the pre-Columbian objects are reproductions made in the Taller de Reproducciones of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City. Others were gathered directly by members of the Centro Studi between the 1980s and 1990s or by other institutions such as the Museo Regional de Jalapa and the Mexican Embassy in Italy, which later donated them to the Centro Studi Americanistici. They entered the museum after 1991, the year of its foundation, and up to 1994, through donations from the Museo Regional de Jalapa and the Mexican Embassy in Italy and thanks to purchases by members of the Centro such as Santoni and Montiel.

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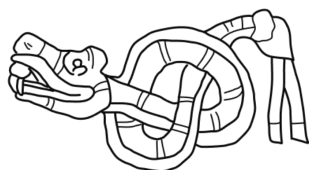
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<i>Online Database</i>	A complete digitisation project of the collection is under way which, by the end of 2024, will put online the records of all the objects in the museum so as to make them visible and accessible from all over the world.
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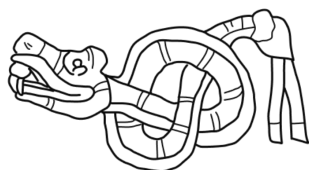
#04

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Amazonia
<i>Collector</i>	Miguel Ángel Menéndez; Aldo Lo Curto; Gerardo Bamonte; Nina Borruso; Paride Bollettin
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Amazonia
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Yanomami; Warao (Brazil/Venezuela: Orinoco); Txucarramaes; Kayapó; Mebengokré-Xikrin; Asurini; Kamayurá; Warmá; Kenzabi; Meinaco (Brazil: Xingu); Tukano; Matis (Brazil/Colombia: Vaupés); Sateré-Mawé; Wai-Wai (Brazil: central Amazon region); Iranche; Karajá (Mato Grosso and central Brazil); Tikuna (Brazil: Rio Solimões); Esse Ejja (Peru: Rio Madre de Dios).
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The Amazonian collection consists of around 70 objects, mostly from the Rio Xingu basin in central Brazil. Among the artefacts from this region are terracotta vessels, weapons, feather ornaments and other body ornaments (bracelets and necklaces), household utensils

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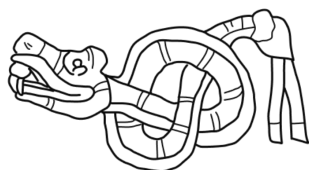
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	<p>and garments. Other artefacts of a similar nature, as well as baskets, zoomorphic figurines, stools and wooden cigar holders and tools for processing manioc, come from the regions of the Rio Solimões and Rio Vaupés. From the Orinoco River basin there are chiefly plaited baskets. Worthy of mention is also the collection of Karajá terracotta dolls. From the Peruvian Amazon come bows and arrows of the Esse Ejja people.</p>
<i>History of the collection</i>	<p>The objects from Amazonia are the result of collecting activities carried out by several members of the Centro Studi Americanistici during their research missions. The first pieces were acquired by Gerardo Bamonte through the mediation of the ethnologist Miguel Menéndez. Bamonte himself later contributed significantly to the enrichment of this part of the collection in the 1990s. Acquisition began in 1991 through donations from individual members of the Centro Studi Americanistici.</p>
<i>Online Database</i>	<p>A complete digitisation project of the collection is under way which, by the end of 2024, will put online the records of all the objects in the museum so as to make them visible and accessible from all over the world.</p>
<i>Web page</i>	<p>http://www.amerindiano.org/collezione-etnografica/</p>
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<i>Name of the collection</i>	Caribbean
<i>Collector</i>	Romolo Santoni
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Caribbean
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Afro-Cuban culture (Cuba); unidentified group from Venezuela.
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	The collection from the Caribbean region consists of three artefacts. Two of these are statuettes representing entities linked to the Afro-American cult of the Orishas: Elleguá, a major orisha, and Abakua endego, representing a bongo player. The third object is a shamanic helmet which is thought to come from Venezuela.
<i>History of the collection</i>	The collection was purchased between 1982 and 1983 at Havana airport and entered the museum in 1991.
<i>Online Database</i>	Internal museum database.
<i>Web page</i>	http://www.amerindiano.org/collezione-etnografica/
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<i>Name of the collection</i>	Contemporary Andes
<i>Collector</i>	Nina Borruso; Mario Polia
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Central and Southern Andes (Chile and Peru)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Campa; others not identified.
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	This section of the collection consists of around fifty objects, including vessels, gourds, a shamanic hood, a zampoña, a shirt, caps, masks in wood and other materials, and a baby carrier. Of particular importance is the “tijeras” shamanic dancer’s costume, acquired by Mario Polia.
<i>History of the collection</i>	Part of the collection was gathered by Nina Borruso in the second half of the twentieth century. The objects were originally intended to form part of a Museum of Comparative Peasant Traditions which, however, was never created. They therefore remained in the dark of boxes for almost twenty years, until the Centro Studi Americanistici acquired them in 2002. Other objects were brought together by the anthropologist Mario Polia in the course of his research in the Andes and were acquired by the museum in 1993.
<i>Online Database</i>	A complete digitisation project of the collection is under way which, by the end of 2024, will put online the

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	records of all the objects in the museum so as to make them visible and accessible from all over the world.
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#07

Name of the collection	Pre-Columbian Andes
Collector	Victor Gonzalez; Mario Polia
Cultural areas	Northern Andes; Southern Andes (Peru)
Ethnic group / community / cultural context	Mochica; Lambayeque; Paracas; Chimú
Description of the Collection	The pre-Columbian Andean collection consists partly of terracotta vessels, either bichrome or in black ceramic, and textiles. Here too, in some cases we are dealing with reproductions or pieces made specifically to form part of a museum collection rather than original pre-Columbian artefacts.
History of the collection	With the exception of one vessel, donated by Victor Gonzalez, the others were purchased in 1992 as imported material from Peru in the Republic of San Marino. The textiles, by contrast, formed part of the private collection of the anthropologist Mario Polia, who in 1993

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	transferred them to the Museo del Centro Studi Americanistici.
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#08

<i>Name of the collection</i>	Chaco
<i>Collector</i>	Gerardo Bamonte
<i>Cultural areas</i>	Gran Chaco (Argentina)
<i>Ethnic group / community / cultural context</i>	Mataco
<i>Description of the Collection</i>	From the Chaco region there are three baskets of the Mataco people: one circular basket made from plant fibres and decorated with stylised monkey motifs in black, and two others, one large and one small, both with lids.

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<i>History of the collection</i>	The objects were collected in 1989 and acquired by the museum in 2002.
<i>Online Database</i>	A complete digitisation project of the collection is under way which, by the end of 2024, will put online the records of all the objects in the museum so as to make them visible and accessible from all over the world.
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