

Cultural Readings

Spanish Representations of the New World

Selected from the Collection
of the Jay I. Kislak Foundation

by Michael T. Ryan

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Martin Fernandez de Enciso (d. 1525).
*Suma de geographis que trata de todas las partidas y provincias del
mundo: en especial de las Indias.*
Seville: Andres de Burgos, 1546.

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FOREWORD

The most “American” of all genre of book collecting is surely “Americana.” This statement is more than a simple tautology. Early Americana – the literature of discovery and travel in the New World from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries – has been the area of choice for America’s major book collectors from the beginning. Collections of early Americana, in turn, have formed the core of some of the truly great collections in this country: in New York, Providence, Ann Arbor, and Minneapolis.

To this important tradition, Jay Kislak has brought his own compass. The collection that he has formed over the past thirty-five years and more does not imitate those of his predecessors. To be sure, he has acquired many of the highspots in the field: original printings of works by Columbus, Cortés, Las Casas, and others. But he has targeted three areas in particular: colonial Mexico, especially Maya culture and the recovery of its past; the discovery and colonization of Florida; and colonial America. He has superimposed on these areas his own commitment to materials with genuine scholarly value. Thus, he has been exceptionally astute in acquiring important documents, letters, and manuscripts from the period. It is these that underscore the collection’s uniqueness and its distinctive personality.

The present exhibit attempts to present books and manuscripts illustrative of the core of the collection. It looks closely at some of the ways in which the Spanish imagined and recorded their experiences among the peoples of the New World. In so doing, the exhibit also attempts to suggest ways in which the Kislak Collection opens up numerous research possibilities. However, what is on display represents only a small part of the collection as a whole.

The Penn community is fortunate to be able to sample some of the fruits of Mr. Kislak’s efforts over the years. This is the first time a major selection from his collection has been seen outside of Florida. The University Library is grateful to him, to his Director, Arthur Dunkelman, and to the Kislak Foundation for their openness to the idea of an exhibit at Penn and for their generosity and cooperation in working with us on it.

Michael Ryan
Director of Special Collections
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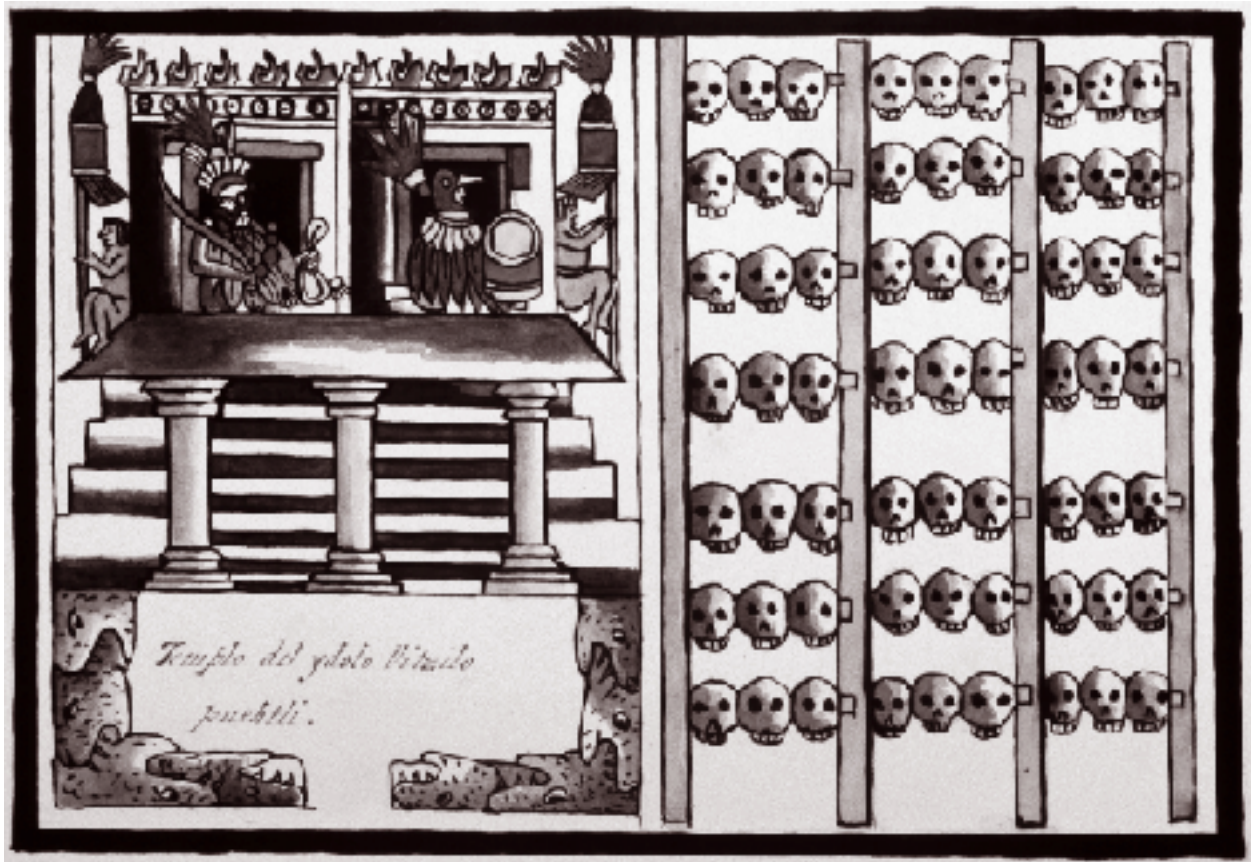
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Exhibit, “Cultural Readings: Spanish Representations of the New World,” is the culmination of more than a year of planning for the Jay I. Kislak Foundation, Inc. and the University of Pennsylvania Library. Like the discovery of the *New World*, our *first encounters* posed logistical as well as intellectual challenges. After visiting the collection and during subsequent discussions, Michael Ryan proposed a theme and framework that would utilize The Kislak Research Library to optimum advantage: the intellectual and moral impact of the *New World* on the *Old*. His scholarship and writing talent are wonderfully evident in this slender volume which is certainly more than a catalog for a temporary exhibit. The issues that Dr. Ryan explores and the insights he brings open numerous avenues for further research.

We credit Paul Mosher, the Director of Libraries, who initially suggested an exhibition based on our collection. Special thanks go to Greg Bear who designed the exhibit and this catalog. His careful attention to detail is surpassed only by his perseverance and good humor. Thanks also to John Pollack and Anne Lutun, the creators of the exhibition’s cyber-place on the worldwide web (<http://www.library.upenn.edu/special/gallery/kislak/index/cultural.html>). Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the support of the staff of the Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, which worked with diligence to realize “Cultural Readings: Spanish Representations of the New World.”

From beginning to end this has been an enlightening and thoroughly enjoyable adventure for all at the Jay I. Kislak Foundation.

Arthur Dunkelman
Director



Juan de Tovar (1540- ?).
Historia de los indios Mexicanos. [and] The Tovar Calendar.
Manuscripts in Spanish.
Spain and England, 1830-60.