

De Insulis nuper in mari Indico repertis



De Insulis nuper inuentis

Epistola Christofori Colom (cui etas nostra multum debet: de Insulis in mari Indico nuper inuentis: ad quas perquirendas octavo antea mense: auspiciis & gre inuictissimi Fernandi Hispaniaru Regis missus fuerat) ad Magnificu domini Raphaelis Sansis: eiusdem serenissimi Regis Thesaurarium missa: quam nobilis ac literatus vir Aliander de Cosco: ab Hispano ideomate: in latinum conuertit: tertio Kalendas Maii. M. cccc. xliij. Pontificatus Alexandri Sexti Anno primo.

Quoniam susceptae prouinciae rem perfectam me consecutum fuisse: gratum tibi fore scio. has constitui exarare: quae te vniuersumque rei in hoc nostro itinere gestae inueteque admonerit. Tricesimo tertio die postquam Ciuitibus dilectis: in mare Indicum perueni: ubi plurimas Insulas: innumeris habitatas hominibus reperi: quarum omnium per felicissimo Rege nostro: praerogatio celebrato: & vexillis extensis: contradicente nemine possessione accipit. primoque earum: diu Saluatoris nomen imposuit: cuius fretus auxilio: tam ad hanc quam ad ceteras alias peruenimus. Eam vero Indi Guanahatyn vocant. Alias etiam vnaquaque nouo nomine nuncupauit. Quippe aliam Insulam Sanctae Mariae Conceptionis: aliam Fernandianam: aliam Hysibellam: aliam

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS. DE INSULIS NUPER IN MARI INDICO IN CAROLUS VERARDUS, IN LAUDEM SERENISSIMI FERDINANDI HISPANIARUM REGNUM...
BASIL: J.B. (JOHANN BERGMAN DE OLPE), 1494. JAY I. KISLAK FOUNDATION, INC. (CHECKLIST 16).

MYTHS AND DREAMS

Exploring the Cultural Legacies of Florida and the Caribbean

BY CAROL DAMIAN, CURATOR

This exhibition traces the evolution of American culture in Florida and the Caribbean from the first encounter of native inhabitants with European explorers to the present day and beyond. Through a selection of cultural artifacts, the myths and dreams that drove exploration, and continue to encourage immigration to Florida, are brought to life. Each map, document and object becomes the record of a continuous process of encounter, adaptation, success and failure. Together these artifacts are a reflection of how traditions meet, are absorbed, re-

formed and exported, and whether myths and dreams ever become reality. The exhibition examines themes of exploration, contact, religious conversion, the intertwining of cultures and the ongoing process of settlement in these lands of dreams and opportunities.

The Lucayans, a subgroup of the indigenous Caribbean people known collectively as the Taíno, were the first indigenous people to see Europeans. When Columbus sailed into their territory in the West Indies in 1492, he found large villages



THREE-POINTED ZEMI, AD 1000–1500. TAÍNO. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.
JAY I. KISLAK FOUNDATION, INC. (CHECKLIST 2).

governed by a chief, or *cacique*. He immediately demanded gold, as he had “seen a few natives who wear a little piece of gold hanging from a hole made in the nose and that by going to the south, or rounding the island to the south, I can find a king who possesses a lot of gold and has great containers of it.”

Although Columbus wrote that the Indians said there were mines of gold and pearls, fabulous riches eluded him, and never were to be found in Florida or the Caribbean. Tragically, within 100 years of contact with the Europeans, the Taíno were decimated by foreign disease against which they had no immunity, and by the hardships associated with forced labor. It is only fitting that this exhibition should begin with the artifacts of these indigenous people, and the myth and reality of their encounter with Europeans.

The Taíno were experienced potters, weavers, and sculptors of stone, wood, bone and shell. Archaeologists have discovered utilitarian and ritual artifacts with distinct markings, some of which may relay a symbolic language involving the spirit world and ancestor worship focusing on deities known as *zemis*. The term *zemi* applied to idols and to the fetishes that represented them. They were made from the remains of the ancestors and other natural materials believed to be inhabited by these spirits.

The Taíno played a complex form of competitive ball on specially designed rectangular courts, called *batey*. Ritual artifacts associated with the ballgame were made of stone; probably other ritual objects made of wood and fiber have disappeared. The persistence of the ball game in contemporary culture is an example of the important role of

sports and games through the centuries, and is just one of many cultural legacies of indigenous New World peoples.

In 1513 the explorer Ponce de Leon, wealthy ex-governor of the island of San Juan, now Puerto Rico, named Florida. He arrived on its Atlantic coast and then sailed southward around the Florida Keys and up the Gulf coast about as far as Charlotte Harbor in the area of Fort Myers. He thought he was sailing around an island and called it La Florida, for the feast of flowers or *flores* celebrated during Easter, the time of his arrival.

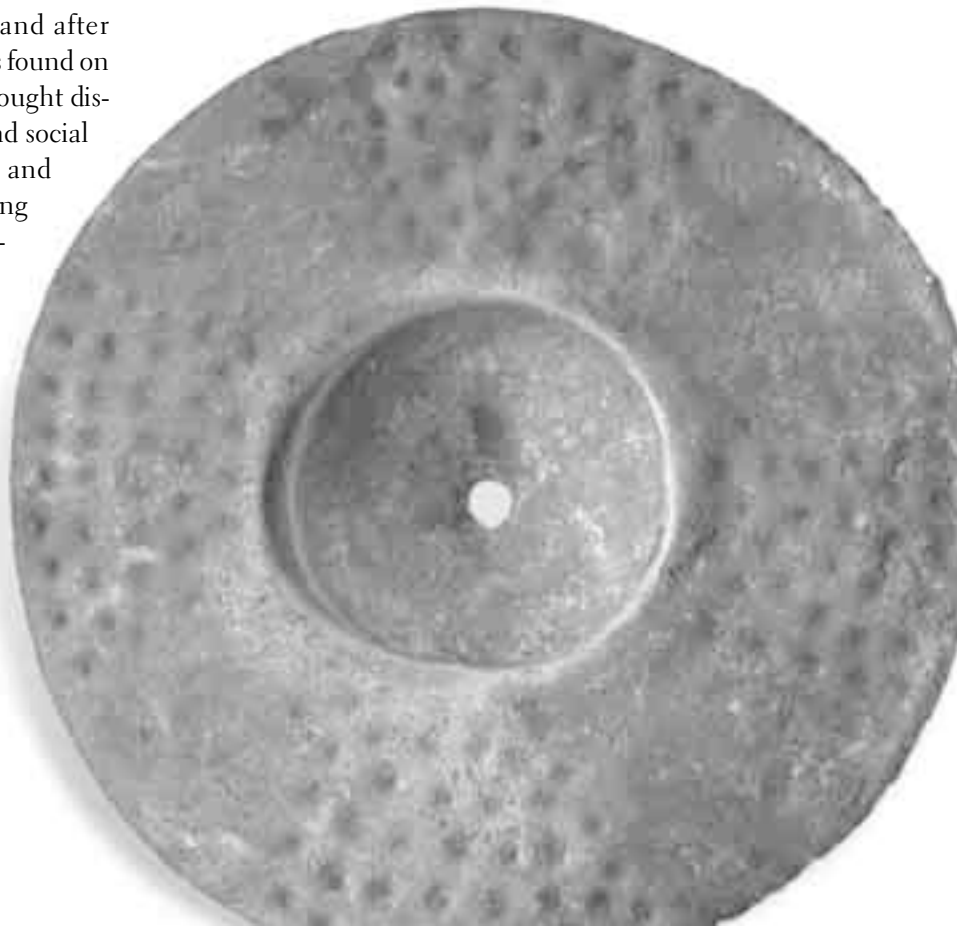
Florida was home to a number of indigenous groups of people living in chiefdoms with complex religious beliefs and well-organized social hierarchies. Their ancestors probably arrived in the area around 12,000 years ago. Like their Caribbean neighbors, the people demonstrated fine skills making weapons, tools, pottery, stone, wood, bone and shell carvings, and small metal ornaments with a rich array of religious symbolism. Artifacts from Weeden Island in Northern Florida, Tatham Mound on Tampa Bay, and Marco Island are among the many that demonstrate the native people's skills. Effigy pottery featured figurative human or animal representations and was made for ritual use and often buried with the dead as offerings. People still lived at Weeden Island after European contact, judging from artifacts found on an upper mound. However, contact brought diseases and the destruction of religious and social traditions, and eventually the Weeden and other native cultures disappeared, leaving only the legacy of their artistry in the archaeological record.

Since the time of the voyages of Christopher Columbus and other "first encounters," Europeans have been fascinated with the "New World" and formed a mental picture of "The Indies" that was alternately idyllic and horrific. Some artists and writers created a vision of vast forests full of exotic creatures and beautiful birds, delicious fruits, and naked inhabitants who wore only feathers and a few gold trinkets. Others portrayed pagan lands where savage people

committed brutal atrocities that proved them incapable of Christian salvation. In reality, indigenous groups of people living in the New World for thousands of years before Columbus arrived were as diverse in their relationships with nature, religious beliefs, and political and social systems as Old World people.

Some of the most popular images of this world were engravings published in 1591 by Theodore De Bry as in Part II of his Great Voyages series the *Brevis Narratio eorum quae in Florida Americae Provincia Gallis acciderunt, secunda illam Navigatione, duce Renato de Laudoniere classis Praefecto*. (*The brief history of those things which befell the French in Florida, a province of America, on the second voyage to that land, under the command of René de Laudonnière, admiral of the fleet in 1564*.) It contained the earliest published illustrations of Florida Indians, presumably the Timucua tribe of the northeast coast. The engravings may have been adapted from original watercolors made in 1564 by the French artist, Jacques Le Moyne,

GORGET-DISC, CA. AD 1500.
PRE-COLUMBIAN FLORIDA.
HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA (CHECKLIST 32).



who had accompanied the explorer René de Laudonnière in that year to paint scenes of America. Laudonnière, in an attempt to escape the religious persecution of Protestants, established the French Huguenot settlement at Fort Caroline, Florida, near present-day Jacksonville.

The Spaniards were as zealous in the quest for gold to replenish depleting coffers as they were for souls to convert to Christianity. Priests and missionaries were important participants in the process of subjugation and resettlement into Christian zones. The arrival of three orders of mendicant friars, Franciscans (1493), Dominicans (1511), and Augustinians (1533), facilitated widespread conversion through the establishment of missions. The largest was located in the Florida panhandle; the Franciscans built San Lu s de Jinayca Apalachee in the mid-seventeenth century as the spiritual and administrative center of Apalachee province. The mission, one of more than one hundred established between the 1560s and 1690s, was home to almost 2,000 people before British and Creek allies destroyed it in the first years of the eighteenth century.

Interpretations of colonial Indian-Spanish relations have been influenced by the “Black Legend,” promulgated as a result of the commentaries and letters of Father Bartolom  de Las Casas. In the early sixteenth century, he pointed an accusing finger at Spain for her cruel treatment of the native population. Spaniards were declared guilty of misconduct and responsible for the demise of the indigenous people and their religion and culture. The Black Legend proposed that Spaniards slaughtered thousands of Indians and subjected the remainder to exploitative forced labor. Spain’s response, called the “White Legend,” claimed the reverse was true. Spain brought Christianity to the Indians, eliminated human sacrifice from their society, and offered them draft animals, plows, and other material benefits. Both legends are based on historical facts, but biased. Nevertheless, they underscore the significant role religion played in the settlement and re-settlement of the Americas from the time of Columbus.

This role was not entirely antagonistic. Some religious concepts were so similar in both European and indigenous belief systems that they became interchangeable in the native worldview. The

aboriginal earth or fertility goddess shared aspects of the Virgin Mary. This Christian image was the first to be venerated in the New World and she continues to be revered today under many different titles. The Catholic patroness of the seas and navigators was the Virgin Mary. Christopher Columbus flew her banner proudly.

Our Lady of Milk and Good Childbirth (*Nuestra Se ora de La Leche y Buen Parto*) is a devotional image that has been worshipped in her sanctuary outside the walls of the presidio of Saint Augustine since 1760. Now reproduced in numerous copies throughout the Americas, Our Lady of Milk and Good Childbirth is the center of the oldest cult to the Virgin in United States. The British destroyed the original image in 1728 and a second image was enthroned to replace it. This image was transported from St. Augustine to Havana in 1763 by Spanish emigrants who left when Florida was ceded to Great Britain, and was subsequently lost. The third and present image was brought to St. Augustine in the beginning of the twentieth century. It now resides in the Regional Museum of Anthropology and History at Campeche, Mexico. How it arrived in Campeche, and who the artist of the original image was, are mysteries. Like so many other traditions, this Virgin came from somewhere else, but was embraced by new believers who adopted her and made her their own.

Land and sea provided new sources of bounty and new potential for both Native Americans and European settlers. The Spaniards brought a vast array of new weapons, utensils, clothing, ornaments and foodstuffs that fascinated the indigenous people. Artifacts from Contact Period (ca. 1500-1600) sites provide a record of the rapid adoption and adaptation of new materials by indigenous people. Spanish metals and glass beads were used as ornaments and for other utilitarian functions. Native people created unique objects from a variety of metals they salvaged off shipwrecks during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

After the rush for gold and social status, travelers to the New World promoted the agricultural bounty of the land and the myths of Paradise, the Fountain of Youth, and exotica of all descriptions. The Americas’ wide variety of produce was immediately exported overseas. In Europe, dietary staples came



CROSS, 17TH CENTURY, CONTACT PERIOD FLORIDA, FIG SPRINGS, SAN MARTÍN DE TIMUCUA, SILVER, FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (CHECKLIST 51).



NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA LECHE Y BUEN PARTO (OUR LADY OF THE MILK AND GOOD CHILDBIRTH). REPRODUCTION, COURTESY MIGUEL BRETOS, INSTITUTO DE ARQUEOLOGÍA E HISTORIA, MÉXICO (CHECKLIST 55).

BELOW:

"NATIVES POURING GOLD DOWN THE THROATS OF THE SPANISH." THÉODORE DE BRY (1528–1598) AFTER JACQUES LE MOYNE. *BREVIS NARRATIO EORUM QUAE IN FLORIDA AMERICAE PROVINCIA GALLIS ACCIDERUNT, SECUNDA ILLAM NAVIGATIONE, DUCE RENATO DE LAUDONIERE CLASSIS PRAEFECTO*. FRANKFURT, 1591.



to include maize or corn, potatoes, beans of all descriptions, seasonings including chili peppers and vanilla, cacao and pineapples, and one of the most popular New World crops: tobacco. While indigenous people adapted Spanish tools, utensils, costume ornaments, and glassware, Spaniards learned native ways to prepare foods and enjoy chocolate and tobacco. Even with this new bounty, the Spaniards remained intent on virtually duplicating their European lifestyle. Thus, they imported everything from horses, pigs and cattle, to wheat, olive trees, grapevines, watermelons, casks of wine, sugar and coffee. The Spaniards were also determined to maintain their lifestyles with familiar clothing and luxury goods. Lace, damask, and majolica earthenware were imported for domestic use.

The amount of travel to the New World was extraordinary, considering the difficulty of the Atlantic crossing and the lack of true understanding of what would be found in these strange exotic lands. The myths of great riches and fertile lands with willing native workers persisted, and adventurers pushed onward in their search for new lands and opportunities. Rivalry for control was intense. Spanish masters extracted Indian labor by force. As the burden upon the Indians became more severe and populations plummeted, Africans were imported as slaves to work the plantations, mines, and other labor-intensive areas of production. Africans underwent the largest forced migration in history. Seemingly in biological revenge, they brought tropical diseases of their own from the African continent. Yellow fever, malaria, and other diseases would haunt New World ports for centuries.

The Africans who were sold for the transatlantic slave trade arrived possessing only their lives and their memories. Documents and objects record the harsh realities of the slave trade. Despite such hardships, the slaves brought their dignity and a legacy of cultural traditions, contributing greatly to life and productivity in the New World. Through oral traditions, music and ritual, they resurrected much of their African heritage. African musical instruments, clothing, and domestic and ritual objects survived in the memories of the African slaves and were replicated in the Americas. They continue to be used today, representing generations of tradition and adaptation.

In 1693, Charles II of Spain decreed that all run-aways to Florida, men and women, would be considered free if they converted to Catholicism. The first free African community in America was established at Fort Mose, near St. Augustine, in 1738. Africans enslaved in British colonies fled southward and found safety at Fort Mose and the Mose militia helped defend St. Augustine against the British. Spain was defeated and control of Florida was transferred to Great Britain in 1763, ending sanctuary in the Spanish colony. Loyal Spanish residents of all colors moved to Cuba.

The harsh conditions experienced by the majority of Africans throughout the Americas encouraged escape and revolt. Numerous communities of mixed races hid away from their Spanish masters in safe havens on Caribbean islands. Some Africans merged with the remnants of indigenous populations to forge new communities. In Florida, escaped slaves took refuge in the swamps with the Seminole inhabitants and fought by their side during the Seminole Wars.

Other Africans, who refused to submit or hide, revolted against their masters. The first successful black uprising began in 1791 in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (Haiti) on the island of Hispaniola. In 1801, the rebellion's leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, successfully led an invasion of the Spanish section of the island, Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic). He proclaimed liberty for all slaves and established a constitution, incurring the wrath of France, Spain and the United States. Jean-Jacques Dessalines and his army of blacks and mulattos defeated an army sent by Napoleon Bonaparte to end the rebellion. In 1804 Dessalines established the first black republic of the world and called it Haiti. After the United States, Haiti became the second republic in the Americas to declare independence.

New British settlers in Florida imported enslaved blacks from Carolina, Georgia, and Africa to work the plantations. During Reconstruction, newly freed blacks began to establish homes and businesses in the white communities. In 1887, Eatonville became the first black incorporated municipality in Florida. African descendants continued to move into Florida throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT:

GOURD INSTRUMENT, COLLECTED BETWEEN 1960–1973. AFRICA, FANTE PEOPLE, WINNEBA, GHANA. LOWE ART MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI, GIFT OF PROFESSOR AND MRS. ROBERT R. FERENS (CHECKLIST 88). PHOTO: DON QUERALTO.

MAJOLICA CANTARO, 17TH CENTURY. CONTACT PERIOD FLORIDA CERAMIC. FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (CHECKLIST 75).

SPIDER TABLET, AFTER AD 1500. CONTACT PERIOD FLORIDA, FORT CENTER. FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (CHECKLIST 66).





TITLE PAGE: PORTRAIT OF MICO CHLUCCO THE LONG WARRIOR OR KING OF THE SEMINOLES, WILLIAM BARTRAM. TRAVELS IN GEORGIA AND FLORIDA, EAST AND WEST FLORIDA, THE CHEROKEE COUNTRY, THE EXTENSIVE TERRITORIES OF THE MUSCOGULGES OR CREEK CONFEDERACY, AND THE COUNTRY OF THE CHACTAWS (CHECKLIST 70).

Great numbers of people involved in migration to Florida and the Caribbean intermingled and relocated many times over the years. From early contact to treaties to wars, the area repeatedly changed hands and character. People came from many places to settle in Florida, considered a land of opportunity as early as the sixteenth century. They settled in small towns and agricultural communities and found an abundance of fish, game and plant foods. They raised some of their food and often kept cattle. Life was harsh. Yellow fever and other maladies were a constant threat, as were violent territorial confrontations with competing European powers and conflicts with indigenous populations.

Florida’s pioneers included rural white settlers of Celtic heritage. They came from Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas and were known as “Crackers.” They adapted to the different regional environments of the state, developing unique ranching traditions, growing cotton, sugar cane and citrus, and becoming skilled hunters and fishermen. Also, there were large plantations where the rural gentry lived in comfort and splendor. The economic devastation following the Civil War necessitated a renewal of agriculture activity and diversification, and cotton, tobacco, citrus, and cattle provided new economic stability. The Florida frontier continued to offer opportunity for the industrious individual. Migration continues to



MAP OF EAST FLORIDA, JOHN BARTRAM. FROM: A DESCRIPTION OF EAST-FLORIDA WITH A JOURNAL, KEPT BY JOHN BARTRAM OF PHILADELPHIA, BOTANIST TO HIS MAJESTY FOR THE FLORIDAS; UPON A JOURNEY FROM ST. AUGUSTINE UP THE RIVER ST. JOHN'S, AS FAR AS THE LAKES, LONDON, 1769. JAY I. KISLAK FOUNDATION, INC..

this day, with each group contributing something of its own culture and traditions to create something new.

Newcomers to Florida also included indigenous people from other parts of the Americas. The Seminole, Miccosukee, and Creek Indians who live in Florida today are descendants of various Southeast Indian groups. As early as the eighteenth century, Indians moved into north-central Alachua County looking for cattle pasture. Many members of the Creek confederacy fled Georgia and Alabama fearing forced relocation under Andrew Jackson's removal policies in the early nineteenth century. First labeled *cimarrones* by the Spaniards—non-Christians living apart from the missions—then

“Seminole” or “runaways,” they fought valiantly in three Seminole Wars against Jackson and the United States. They never surrendered.

Some Seminole and Miccosukee retreated deeper into the wilderness of Florida and the Everglades; others maintained villages in the Hollywood/Miami area. The Florida Creek remained in the northern panhandle. Today these people continue to live independently and successfully in these same areas. Legal gambling has brought new prosperity and new contact with the rapidly growing cosmopolitan communities of the South Florida area. Florida has become their new bridge of opportunity, as it has for so many immigrants and exiles over the years.



ART DECO MINIATURE: BREAKWATER HOTEL, 1990S.
HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA (CHECKLIST 229).

From the earliest voyages of exploration, the people of Florida and Cuba have floated back and forth across the narrow passage with the tides of history. Under Spanish colonial administration, Florida came under Cuba's governmental and religious jurisdiction, and Cuba provided supplies and settlers to the Florida frontier. Cubans brought the cigar industry to Key West and Tampa in the mid-nineteenth century, and tourists from the United States soon traveled to Havana, which became one of the most fabulous resort destinations in the Caribbean. Castro's revolution in 1960 ushered in the beginning of a massive exodus off the island, with the majority of émigrés settling in Miami. The Cubans in Miami have contributed to the transformation of the city from a beach resort into a dynamic cosmopolitan center with its own flavor of *café cubano* and *salsa beat*.

The legend of Florida and the Caribbean has been sold for centuries. Explorers, settlers, immigrants and tourists shared the same dreams of living in paradise. By 1912, the extension of Flagler's railroad to Miami and Key West finally allowed visitors to travel south and coastal Florida rapidly developed. Money was invested to attract visitors and new residents through unique advertising campaigns, some with personal statements from prominent citizens. Orators and architects descended on the state to extol its beauty and potential and people arrived to enjoy the wonders of the state. Landowners, industrialists and businessmen banded together to promote Florida worldwide and rapid growth attracted a stable immigrant workforce. In 1971 Walt Disney transformed acres of wilderness into one of

the world's greatest tourist attractions. The fantasy continues.

People have long dreamed of Florida as the perfect location for fantastic architecture and attractions. Many of those dreams have come true in planned cities, waterfront mansions, retirement communities, golf courses and places as diverse as Disney World and Cape Canaveral, South Beach and St. Petersburg. Architects have combined visions of the Mediterranean, Venice, coral castles, Arabian Nights, Art Deco and island design to create astonishing houses and other structures throughout the state.

Current demographic studies indicate that more than 800 people a day relocate to Florida to share the economic opportunities, beautiful climate and natural attractions. Florida has become so popular that communities of Europeans, Canadians, Mexicans, Asians, Greeks, Central Americans, Caribbeans and others, are now well established throughout the state. Immigrants from around the world have joined residents to create one of the most international and cosmopolitan areas in the United States. Today's immigrants share the dreams and legacies of the past. The last 50 years have seen remarkable development, and the histories of Florida's people and their cultural legacies continue to be told. What will the future hold for this rapidly growing state? What myths and dreams will lure the next generations?

Carol E. Damian is associate professor and chairperson in the visual arts department at Florida International University. She is the author of *The Virgin of the Andes: Art and Ritual in Colonial Cuzco* and a specialist in the art of Latin America and the Caribbean. Dr. Damian is curator of this exhibition.