

*Printed*

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 7-7471

Release, Sunday, April 30, 1933.

Direct from the ruins of an ancient civilization in the tropical lowlands of Guatemala, from the site of Piedras Negras, which was a great center of Maya culture of central America 1400 years ago, the Museum of Modern Art will receive a large stone stele for its Exhibition of American Sources of Modern Art, opening to the public on ~~March~~ <sup>May</sup> 10th. The Stele, one of the best extant examples of ancient American art/ <sup>which</sup> has never been seen outside Guatemala before will now be seen by the American public for the first time.

This sculpture, called by Dr. Herbert J. Spinden one of the finest works of the best period of the Maya comes to the Museum of Modern Art through the courtesy of the Pennsylvania University Museum of Philadelphia, which has secured it on extended loan from the government of Guatemala. The stele, which weighs over a ton, represents a Maya sowing corn, probably a priestly figure or a god.

When this stele, called "Number 13" was put in place in the temple of the Mayas, the civilization of this great people artistically, intellectually, and scientifically, had already reached a high level equalled by few civilizations in the world. The Mayas enjoyed extraordinary mastery of the carver's art, a remarkable achievement because, lacking iron, their sculptors worked even in the hardest stone with tools of stone, jadeite, or soft bronze. Despite this handicap they had a perfect control of technique, and were master draftsmen. Their use of perspective and the perfection of a system of mathematics and of a calendar from a study of astronomy, mark a highly developed culture.

Other examples of the art of the Maya will be included in the Exhibition of American Sources of Modern Art, together with work of Aztec, Toltec, Peruvian, and other artists who lived before the coming of Columbus. About two hundred objects, including pottery,

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sculpture, painting, ornaments in gold and jade, textiles, and feather ornaments, from Mexico, Central America, and Peru, will show a mass of material not only modern in spirit but which has had a direct influence on modern art.

The Museum of Modern Art is borrowing for this Exhibition from the following museums: The Peabody Museum of Harvard University, the Pennsylvania University Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, The United States National Museum, Washington, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Private collectors will also contribute.

Some of the pieces will be shown to the public for the first time. The Museum of Modern Art is placing this material on view with emphasis on its significance as art rather than purely as archaeological records. The inspiration which modern art has derived from the work of these ancient artists will be illustrated in the exhibition, which will include examples of the work of modern artists who have sought the inspiration of America's ancient tradition.

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