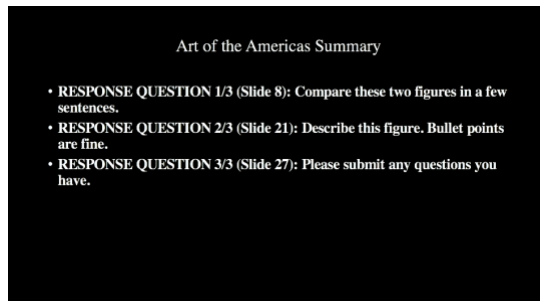


Response questions due 4/16/2020 at 9:30 AM by email (anna.carroll@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Slide 1: Summary



RESPONSE QUESTION 1/3 (Slide 8): Compare these two figures in a few sentences.
RESPONSE QUESTION 2/3 (Slide 21): Describe this figure. Bullet points are fine.
RESPONSE QUESTION 3/3 (Slide 27): Please submit any questions you have.

Slide 2



For Stonehenge, one needed to talk about post and lintel construction. The Basilica of St. Denis used pointed arches and groin vaults. This is not a domed structure; the most common mistake was to discuss pendentives. There are no domes and no pendentives on the basilica. The best comparison also talked about the use of these buildings, both of which were religious and political.

Slide 3



This is a comparison of the Doryphoros and Menkaure and his Queen. The major things we discussed for these objects were idealism, canons of proportions, and contrapposto (or a lack of it). A good response needed to include these three concepts.

For comparisons, it's important to discuss the major elements of each work that we cover in class. When studying for the final, think about the major themes for each work. What makes each work important and innovative?

There was no set element that needed to be discussed in the essays. The best responses combined formal analysis with historical contexts, discussing the structure and use of the works. Please email me about specific questions.

Slide 4



We're taking a detour today and moving away from Europe, travelling across the Atlantic to think about the Art of the Americas. We're going to focus on two cultures, in Mesoamerica, which is a historical and geographical region that covers modern day central Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and northern Costa Rica. It's in this area where pre-Columbian societies, like the Aztec Empire, thrived. Pre-Columbian means before the arrival of Columbus in the Americas in 1492. This term poses some issues because it's a modern term used by scholars to talk about the Americas before the arrival of the Europeans, which makes it seem like there wasn't a lot going on in the Americas before the Europeans got there. But, there were extremely advanced societies in Mesoamerica well before the arrival of Columbus.

Slide 5



The Olmecs were the earliest known civilization in Mesoamerica, based in south-central Mexico. The culture emerges around 1600-1500 BCE, so was contemporaneous with the Law Code Stele of Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE).

Slide 6



Olmec society was centered around the Coatzacoalcos River Basin. So, just like the Tigris and the Euphrates and the Nile were important to Mesopotamian and Egyptian culture, the Coatzacoalcos river is important to Olmec Culture. People began to concentrate around the river and social hierarchies began to form. With social stratification came luxury objects, and jade was a particularly important luxury material. The Olmecs also started trading with other societies, and we find Olmec goods in other areas up to 250 miles away. Around 900 BCE, La Venta became the main Olmec City center, and it enjoyed this position of prominence for nearly 500 years.

Slide 7



We see a lot of religious sites and artifacts at La Venta, such as the Great Pyramid.

Slide 8



The Olmec Culture is very famous for about 17 colossal heads. No written sources survive to tell us what these are, but the current theory is that they represent rulers. All of these heads are individualized; no two look the same. They were carved all over the Olmec region. Some were intentionally destroyed, some were re-carved, and some were buried, so perhaps they had ritual uses.

A quick note on these two; they are the same material. The drastic color difference is because of lighting. Monument 1 is outside in natural lighting and Monument 4 is inside in a museum setting.

RESPONSE QUESTION 1/3: Compare these two figures in a few sentences.

Slide 9



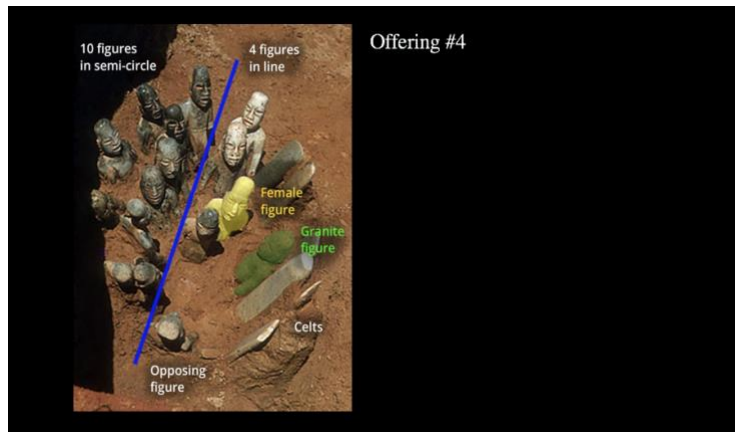
These monuments were absolutely massive. While we don't know how these were originally viewed, try to think about what the experience of seeing what of these would have been like. If they are in fact ruler portraits, they certainly would have been intimidating. Perhaps they emphasize power and authority.

Slide 10



The Olmecs also produced smaller scale works, such as offering #4 found at La Venta. This is a group of 17 figures that were found buried in this arrangement, and when they were found they were all standing upright.

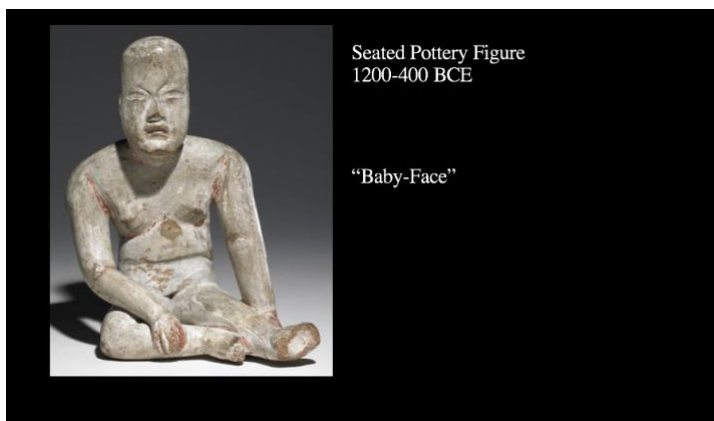
Slide 11



There are a few standing stone slabs, called celts. There is a female figure watching a procession of four figures approaching a single opposing figure. 10 figures in a semi-circle seems to view this procession. Most of these figures were green-stone; Green-stone includes all green and blue stones, including jadeite, which was highly prized in the culture and used for luxury and ritual good. So, these are figures, seemingly arranged in a ritual act, made of an expensive and highly valued material, which were intentionally buried.

All of these figures are individualized, so they were probably made by multiple artists and not made as a group. They are all in a style that scholars have called “baby-face” for the slightly rounded cheeks. They also have long heads, downturned mouths, and almond shaped eyes. They stand with their knees bent and legs in a V shape, with their arms slightly bent. As for the celts, some have inscriptions while others don’t. This suggests that, like the figures, the celts were not made as a group. This suggests recycling- these objects were perhaps originally made for other contexts but were group together and buried in this particular arrangement. This might show a ritual event, a historical event, or perhaps a mythological scene. Perhaps the celts are meant to be stele. (Remember that a stele is an upright standing stone often covered in relief sculpture). While we don’t know what this arrangement represents, we do know that these were carefully buried and then covered with a platform, so we know that these were significant.

Slide 12



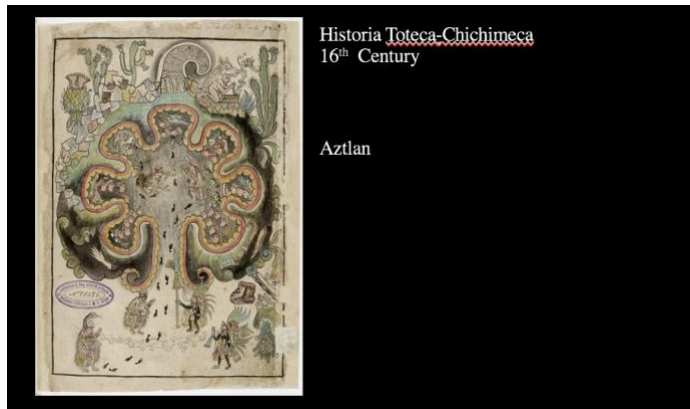
Here is a seated pottery figure also in the “baby face” style.

Slide 13



We're now going to think about the Aztec Empire, which is founded by a people who called themselves the Mexica, who create an empire with its capital at Tenochtitlan, which is today Mexico City.

Slide 14



The Mexica have a complex founding narrative. They come from a mythical homeland called Aztlan, where they were told by their patron god, Huitzilopochtli, to go establish a new home. The people were told that they were to see a sign, an eagle on a cactus, where they were meant to settle, and they saw that sign in the Valley of Mexico. So they leave Aztlan and travel around and eventually see the eagle on a cactus on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco in 1325. They move to the island and construct causeways to connect it to the mainland. The city grows more and more powerful and forms an alliance with the neighboring peoples, and this alliance forms the Aztec Empire. The Aztecs had an extremely powerful army and so were frequently at war and conquered much of the surrounding area. The Empire became extremely wealthy because they collected tributes from conquered areas, including luxury goods that were used in religious practices, like jade, textiles, and feathers from special birds.

Slide 15



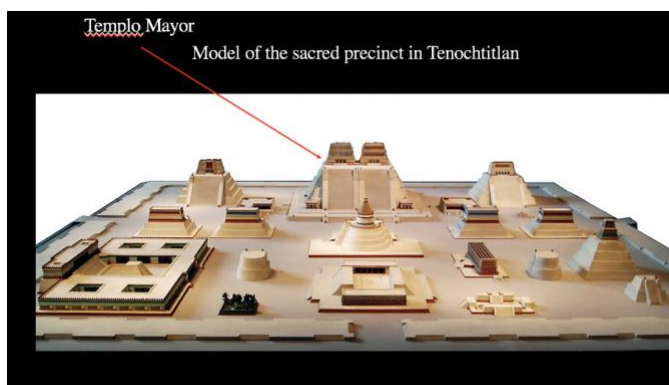
This is the flag of Mexico, where you can see an eagle on a cactus, which is a reference to the sign from Huitzilopochtli.

Slide 16



The Aztec religion was polytheistic. The most important gods were Huitzilopochtli (the patron god, and the god of the sun and war) and Tlaloc (the god of water and agriculture). The Templo Mayor, the excavated ruins of which we see here, was a major religious monument where people worshipped these two gods. There was one side dedicated to Tlaloc and one to Huitzilopochtli.

Slide 17



Here is a model of what the Templo Mayor would have looked like in the sacred precinct. The Templo Mayor is not the entire precinct, which had multiple temples, but is the double-temple in the back center.

Slide 18



The decoration of the temple is to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli. This chacmool is on the Tlaloc side. A chacmool is a type of sculpture used for burnt offerings, so you would burn offerings in the little bowl on his stomach. The chacmool predates the Mexica, and is associated with the rain god. So this decorative object serves a ritual purpose by being a stage for burning offerings.

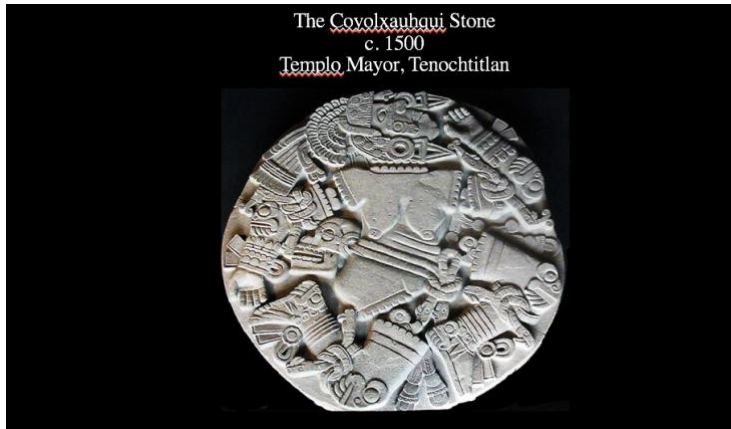
Slide 19



The temple was built in 1325 and expanded in 7 phases through 1519. The temple was expanded each time a new ruler came to power or when it was damaged in natural disasters like flooding. The sacred precinct was in the sacred of the city, and represented the center of the empire and the center of the universe. Notice the neat grid-like arrangement of the precinct. The precinct and the Templo Mayor were an axis mundi (center of the universe. Recall this term from the Great Stupa at Sanchi).

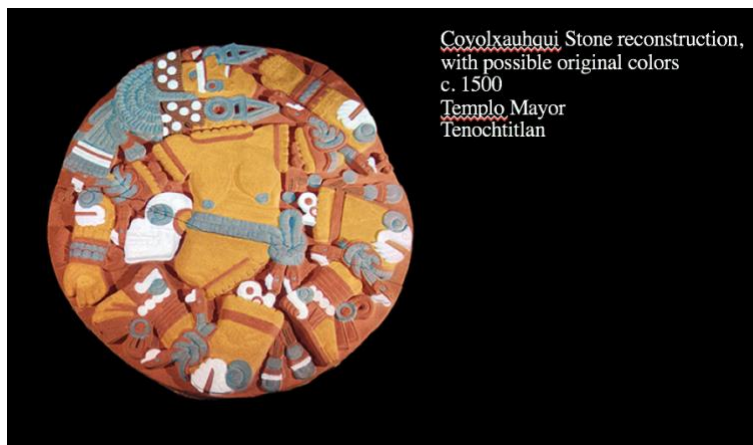
Two massive staircases lead up to the two twin temples to Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli. This temple is about warfare, which was an important component of Aztec culture because the Empire relied on conquering to get tribute.

Slide 20



At the center of the Templo Mayor was this massive sacrificial stone, called the Coyolxauhqui Stone. It was discovered by electrical workers working in Mexico City in 1978, which led to the discovery of the temple complex. As the story goes, Coatlicue was Coyolxauhqui's mother, and Coatlicue became pregnant with Huitzilopochtli through immaculate conception. Coyolxauhqui was very angry that her mother had become pregnant, and she persuaded her 400 brothers to attack and kill their mother. But at the moment of the attack Huitzilopochtli was born. He was born fully armed, ready to protect his mother. He beheaded his sister Coyolxauhqui and threw her down a mountain where her body broke apart. The stone shows the culmination of this story, with Coyolxauhqui's broken at the bottom of the mountain. It was on this stone that war captives were sacrificed; Aztec religion did involve human sacrifice, which we will discuss in greater detail shortly.

Slide 21

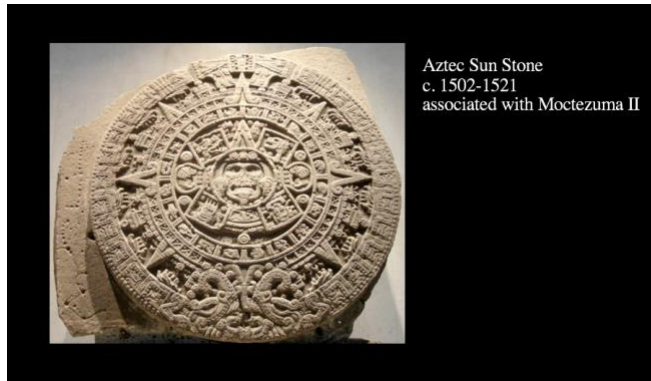


Here is the stone with its possible original colors.

RESPONSE QUESTION 2/3: Describe this figure. Bullet points are fine.

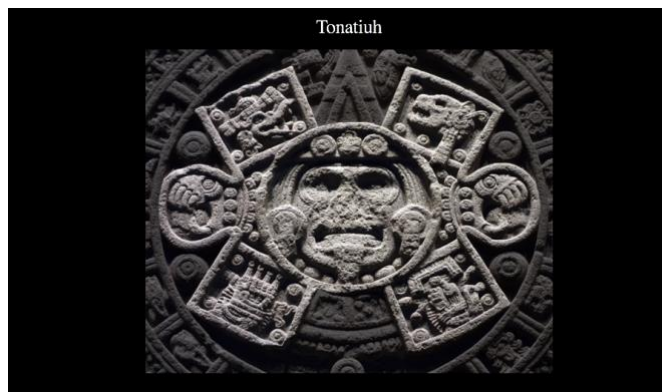
This is a relief sculpture that depicts a single moment of the story without going into the full narrative. Crucially, Coyolxauhqui's body conforms to the circle of the stone perfectly.

Slide 22



Another important Aztec monument is the Sun Stone which was associated with the King Moctezuma II. This is a very complicated stone. Let's go through the iconography.

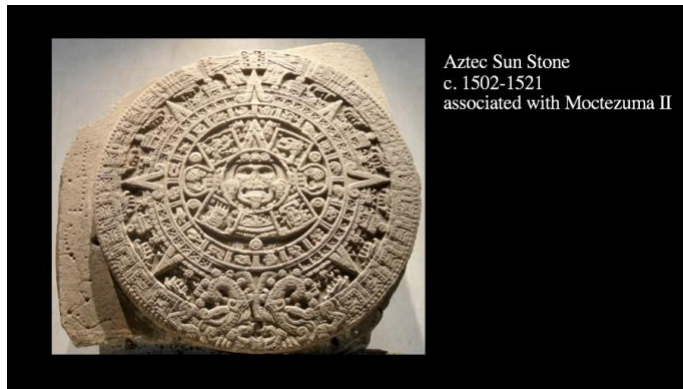
Slide 23



At the center we have Tonatiuh, the sun god, who we see as a head with clawed hands holding human hearts. He has these circles next to his face, which are ear spools, which were part of elite dress. The four squares with symbols here represent the four movements. The stone tells the origin of the cosmos, which is repeatedly destroyed and created in Aztec mythology. Each era has a new sun, and each era is called a movement. We are in the 5th movement, so those 4 symbols tell of the previous suns. We have 4 past movements where the universe was destroyed by jaguars, wind, fire, and water. According to legend, the 5th movement will end with earthquakes.

In Aztec religious, sacrifice maintains the universe. For each movement gods are sacrificed to great the sun and set the movement of the universe in motion so sacrifice powers the universe. There were multiple times of sacrifice, including animal sacrifice, human sacrifice, and blood letting. Aztec sacrifice took place for religious and militaristic purposes. There is in popular culture an idea that Aztec human sacrifice happened very frequently and in huge numbers. Prisoners of war were sacrificed but not in the large numbers previously thought. Religious sacrifice also happened in frequently and being sacrificed was considered an honor. The chosen person would be celebrated for a year, given honors and a life of luxury, to be sacrificed in an elaborate festival, which was necessary to maintain the universe.

Slide 24



This creation and maintenance of the universe is what is depicted in the Sun Stone. At the center we see the movements and they sit upon a frame that culminates at the bottom center with two snake-like heads meeting. These are the fire serpents that carry the sun across the sky and make time happen.

Slide 25

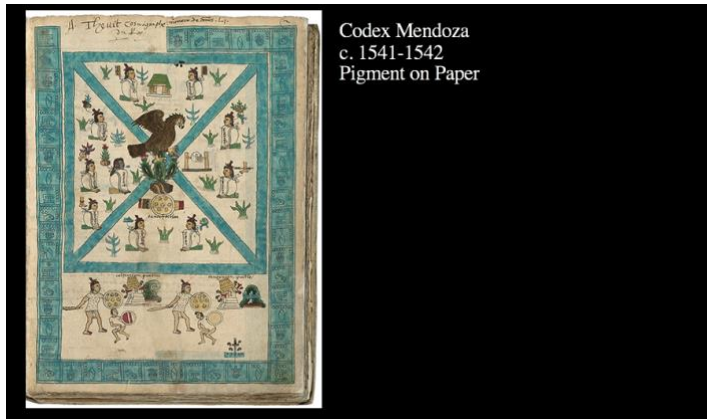


When Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas in 1492, it set off an era of European conquest in North and South America. Hernan Cortes sailed to Cuba and then to Mexico and encountered peoples that had been conquered by the Aztecs, but were unhappy with Aztec rule. The Spanish teamed up with these conquered peoples to defeat the Aztecs and then conquered the whole region in 1521. This was a very violent conquest that spread a lot of disease. The Spanish called this newly conquered region New Spain. They set up what is called a viceroyalty (essentially a Spanish territory) and made Tenochtitlan the capital. A major goal of the Spanish conquest was to spread Christianity, so much of the art is about conversion to Christianity. Another major theme is the gathering of knowledge for the Spanish about the Aztec Empire.

We have here the Codex Mendoza. A codex is a book. It was composed in 1541 by the first viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza, who decided that he needed to know more about the Aztec Empire if the Spanish were going to effectively rule the area. So, he commissioned a manuscript on the history of the empire and it's called the Codex after him. He did not make the manuscript though, he just paid for it. It was made by Mexica (not Spanish) artists and the images were accompanied with text written by a Spanish priest who spoke Nahuatl, the language

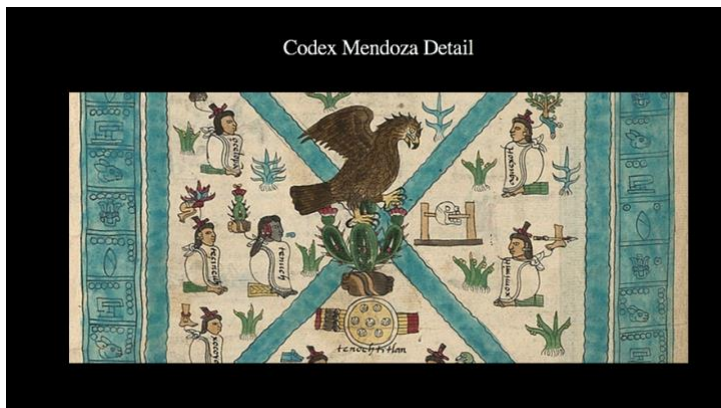
spoken by the Mexica. The codex was meant to be sent back to Emperor Charles V of Spain, but on its way back to Spain the ship was attacked by French pirates and the manuscript was stolen.

Slide 26



Let's look at the **frontispiece**- the illustration facing the title page of the book. Do you recognize anything in this image? In the center of the page is the eagle on a cactus, the sign from Huizilopochtli that the Mexica people had reached their destined homeland. This is actually a map of Tenochtitlan, with the eagle in the center. And this is in many ways an accurate map. The entire topography of the city isn't shown, but the city was in fact divided into 4 quarters, as the image is here.

Slide 27



Let's look closer. In the quadrants are a number of seated figures. These are the 10 leaders who led the people from Aztlan to Tenochtitlan. This codex is telling the founding myth of Tenochtitlan so that the Spanish are familiar with it. We even know who some of these people are. In the left quadrant, closest to the eagle, is a man seated on a woven mat who looks grey. This is an Aztec priest named Tenoch. His read ear symbolizes bloodletting. He is grey because he is covered in ash, which was typical of Aztec ritual. And the mat shows his status because he is not seated directly on the ground. The curving line next to his mouth is a symbol of speech; he is speaking to his people.

RESPONSE QUESTION 3/3: Please submit any questions you have.