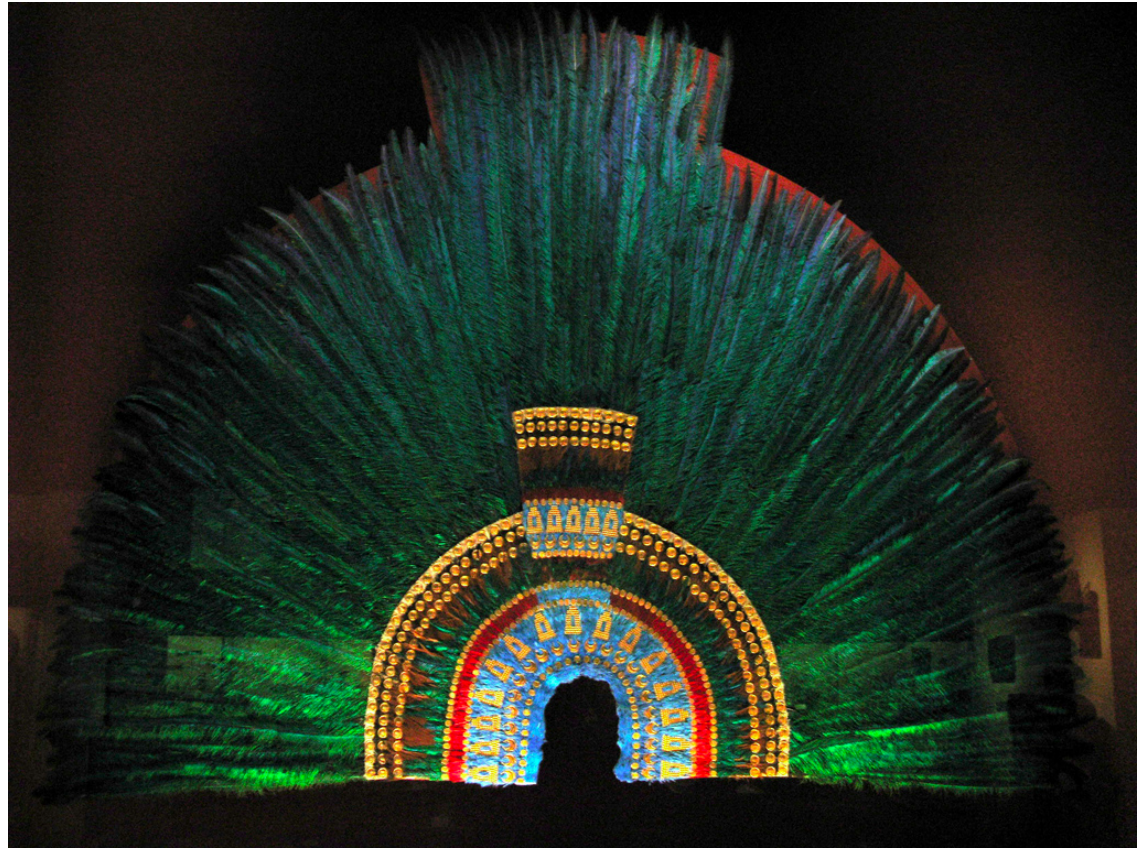


MIRA WILEY & OMARI SHABAZZ

AP Art History

RULER'S FEATHER HEADDRESS

- Probably belonged to Montecuhzoma II
- Mexica (Aztec Peoples)
- 1428–1520 CE
- Feathers (quetzal and cotinga) and gold



Although there is little to no written record of the headdress, it is rumored to have originally belonged to Montecuhzoma II (Montezuma), the ruler of the Aztec Empire.



MATERIALS & TECHNIQUES

- One tail feather harvested from each bird, took an extremely long time to make, shows dedication and power
- Birds lived in the Yucatan peninsula, feathers must have been obtained through extensive trade
- Gold and other precious metals used (valuable)
- 450 feathers total (that's a lot of birds)



CONTEXT

- Thought to be included in the many gifts given to Hernan Cortes by the Aztecs
- Then given to Charles V, which is how it ended up in Austria in 1596
- Currently resides in the Ethnological Museum in Vienna.



FUNCTION

- Does not match any historical representations of what Montezuma's headdress looked like
- Therefore, it was thought to be ceremonial.
- Believed to be carried on a large stick and paraded through the town during a procession
- In this society, feathers were used to represent a person's status



MEANING

The use of vibrant colors, rare materials, and the overall size and grandeur of the headdress symbolize status, wealth, and importance.



CROSS CULTURAL

- Mexico has claimed ownership and has been demanding the return of the headdress since 1991
- In 2011, Austria offered a replica instead, protesting that the headdress would be ruined in transport
- Nationally renown in Mexico as the “Penacho de Moctezuma,” marking the History of Ancient Mexico.
- According to Bussel, (museum curator) 5% of the museum’s attendees are Mexican nationals, who don’t have to pay admission. “It’s our little gift to Mexico.”



<http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/lifestyle/2014/11/14/symbol-mexicos-pre-colonial-grandeur-fades-out-sight/>

Content

Montecuzomas headdress signified the power and status of a person. This piece dates back to Mesoamerica (around the time when Europeans first came in contact with the indigenous people) and was acquired in 1519 by Hernan Cortez.

Form

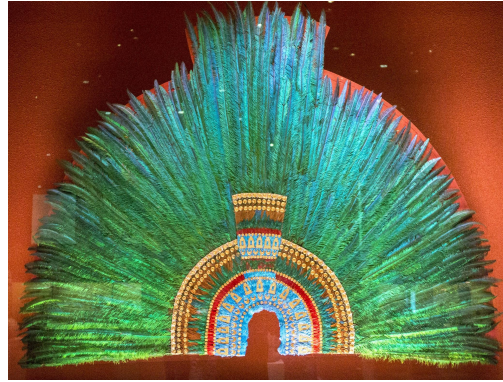
450 layered feathers formed in a semi-circle with small plates of gold. It is 116 cm (46 in) high and 175 cm (69 in) across.

Context

It is believed that this headdress originally belonged to Montezuma, but was later given to Hernan Cortez in 1519 as a gift. It was later given to Charles V which is how it ended up in Austria. In 1878, it was restored and in the beginning of the 19th century, it was brought to a museum in Vienna.

Materials & Technique

Made of 450 feathers of rare birds. 400 of which are of the Quetzal bird. Also includes precious stones as well as gold



Montecuhzoma Headdress

1428-1520 CE, Aztech people,
Tenochtitlan

Intended audience

The Aztec people as well as the Spaniards.

Meaning/ Message

Feathered objects represent the status of a person.

Function

Head piece designed and made for someone of great importance

Cross Culture

This headdress first belonged to the Aztecs, but was later acquired by Hernan Cortez who gave it to King Charles V who maintained it in Austria but Mexico wants it back.