



S E M

FUNDACIÓN
CISNEROSZbirka Orinoco
Orinoco Collection

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Discover the Indians of the Amazon Rainforest

The Slovene Ethnographic Museum and the Fundación Cisneros open a major exhibition of the Orinoco Collection

The exceptional objects from the Orinoco Collection bear witness to the traditions of the indigenous peoples who for centuries have inhabited the rainforest along the Orinoco River in southern Venezuela. This is the first time they will have been exhibited on such a scale at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. The exhibition ORINOCO, Indians of the Amazon Rainforest will be officially inaugurated on **April 20th at 7 p.m.** by the project's honorary patron, Majda Širca, the Republic of Slovenia's Minister of Culture. The ceremony will be attended by guests from the Fundación Cisneros.

Managed by the Fundación Cisneros, the Orinoco Collection which encompasses around 2,000 objects, 700 of which will be on display at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, is one of the largest and most beautiful ethnographic collections from Venezuela. In November 2000, the collection was awarded the Leone d'Oro di San Marco (Golden Lion of St. Mark), one of Europe's most prestigious cultural awards, in recognition of its exceptional artistic quality, historical significance and educational value.

A passion for the study and preservation of the cultures and objects of the ethnic groups of the Orinoco River Basin was the driving force behind the creation of this collection. The origins of the Orinoco Collection lie in the objects assembled over the course of some fifty years by the Venezuelan explorer Edgardo González Niño. These were acquired by Gustavo and Patricia Cisneros in 1988. Over the years, they personally added to the collection, including some objects from the collection of the ethnologist Walter Coppins, and a collection of extraordinary photographs by Charles Brewer Carías. They also established, through the Fundación Cisneros, a related program of collection study, conservation, publication, and education.

This exhibition is a result of a collaboration between the Slovene Ethnographic Museum and the Fundación Cisneros, who after presenting the collection in twenty exhibitions of various sizes around Europe, was delighted to bring this collection to Slovenia. The Fundación Cisneros and the Slovene Ethnographic Museum collaborated in the preparation and design of the exhibition.

The exhibition is part of the programme of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, a museum of cultural identities known for its long term promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. The museum's mission is to broaden and strengthen awareness of different values and ways of life that express themselves through cultural heritage and influence the world in different ways. The museum strives to communicative knowledge also about more distant and lesser known cultures, their ethnic identities and modes of artistic expression, which reveal the exceptional wealth of material, social and spiritual culture and wisdom of the indigenous peoples of the world, in order to contribute to greater dialogue between cultures and civilisations, conducted in a tolerant and respectful spirit.

Indians of the Amazon Rainforest represents the first opportunity for the Slovene public to experience these little known cultures.

The Slovene Ethnographic Museum thanks the Fundación Cisneros for their generosity and their help in realizing the exhibition, in the process of which first class support has been forthcoming from Rafael Santana, Assistant Director and the exhibition architect, and Andrés Ortega and Zuleima Jiménez, respectively the Curator and Assistant Curator of the Orinoco Collection.

Adriana Cisneros de Griffin, president of the Fundación Cisneros, states: "Indians of the Amazon Rainforest is central to the Fundación Cisneros's mission, which embraces both education and the creation of greater awareness of Latin America's rich and complex cultural heritage. The Orinoco Collection provides a vivid portrait of that heritage as embodied by the indigenous cultures of the Orinoco basin, each of them distinct yet sharing a common tie to the land in which they live. We are grateful to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum for recognizing the sophistication, beauty, and power of these diverse cultures, which are so rapidly disappearing."

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PRESS RELEASE

The exhibition *Indians of the Amazon Rainforest* tells of the sustainable lifestyle of twelve ethnic groups that have lived for centuries along the Orinoco River in southern Venezuela. The De'áruwa (Piaroa), Ye'kuana, Yanomami, Híwi (Guahibo), E'ñepa (Panare) and Hodi live in the Orinoco river basin in Amazonas. The Wakuenai (Curripaco), Baniwa (Baniva), Baré, Puinave, Warekena and Tsase (Piapoco) are from Guyana and the Rio Negro Amazon river basin in Brazil and Colombia. Placed in a rainforest ambience created through sounds and images, and divided into three sections – nature, everyday life, and systems of belief and rituals – the members of these different ethnic groups are shown in the forest, on the rivers and in their communal homes.

The exhibition includes a very wide range of objects from ritual items – masks, decorations made from feathers, shaman's tools, sacred sticks and weapons – to a rich selection of jewelry: bracelets, necklaces and earrings. There is also a wide array of pipes, flutes, rattles and other instruments; objects from everyday life – canoes, paddles, dishes and textiles; and a fine assortment of unique, hand-woven baskets. All these objects clearly express the complex relationship between their users and nature: everything that originates from the rainforest must return to it. While the artifacts are exceptionally diverse, they are all crafted from native vegetable and animal materials, including bird feathers, claws, beaks, skin, and animal teeth; plant fibers, bark, and pigment; wood, stones, cotton, and seeds. Frequently of a dazzling level of craftsmanship and originality, they reveal both how close the peoples who made them are to their natural surroundings, and the inextricable links between their material cultures and spiritual lives.

The exhibition at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana, Slovenia will be on show until April 2012. During this time a number of interesting activities and events are planned: from regular guided tours of the exhibition, creative workshops for children, lectures and film projections, to round table discussions and gatherings of experts on the destruction of the tropical rainforest ecosystem that poses a global threat to the world's ecological balance, as well as threatening the disappearance of the Indian peoples of the Amazon. There will also be an international meeting concerned with Slovenes in Venezuela.

A range of promotional material will be published as well as an exhibition catalogue. The exhibition is supported by the Ministry of Culture of Slovenia.

The exhibition is part of the Fundación Cisneros's ongoing efforts to promote broader understanding of the diverse and complex cultures of South America. Since 1999, exhibitions drawn from the Orinoco Collection have reached more than 3 million people, exposing them to the daily lives and belief systems of indigenous Amazonian cultures. Exhibitions have been presented at museums and other cultural institutions in Bonn (1999–2000), Hannover (2000), Frankfurt (2001), Biarritz (2001), Geneva and Zurich (2003–04), Prague (2003–04), Tampere, Inari in Finland (2004–05, 2006), St. Petersburg (2005–06), Gothenburg (2004–08) and Copenhagen (2009–10).

About the Fundación Cisneros

The Fundación Cisneros was founded by Patricia Phelps de Cisneros and Gustavo A. Cisneros, and its current president is Adriana Cisneros de Griffin. The Fundación Cisneros is a private, non-profit organization devoted to improving education throughout Latin America, and fostering global awareness of the region's heritage and its many contributions to world culture. The educational programs of the Fundación Cisneros are: the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Piensa en arte/Think Art, cl@se and Actualización de Maestros en Educación (Professional Development for Educators). Implemented through local and strategic partnerships, it is through these innovative programs that the Fundación Cisneros works to empower communities, promote freedom of speech, lay the foundation for stable democracies, promote economic development, and enhance understanding among nations. These initiatives are part of the Corporate Social Responsibility Program of the Cisneros Group of Companies, aimed at fostering sustainable development and building social capital in Latin America.

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