

BENITO JUÁREZ AND THE MAKING OF MODERN MEXICO

The Exhibition

Co-curated with the National Museum of Mexican Art, *Benito Juárez and the Making of Modern Mexico* is an introduction to the president of Mexico from 1858-72. Over 25 national treasures from Mexico never before exhibited in the United States will be on display, including a bronze death mask of Juárez, an oversized painting of Juárez by Jorge Gonzalez Camarena, and his signature top hat and suit. These artifacts have been loaned to this exhibition by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH)) and the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público de México (Mexican Secretariat of Property and Public Credit (SHCP)). The Museum also recognizes CONACULTA (National Council for Culture and Arts) for this unique opportunity.

The Story

Juárez was devoted to making Mexico a modern Republic with just laws, equal citizenship rights, and economic development, similar to Lincoln's efforts in the United States. Juárez, a Zapotec Indian, became Governor of Oaxaca in 1847 and president of Mexico in 1858. A member of the Liberal reform movement, Juárez strove to establish a modern Republic but Conservative forces strongly opposed him. During his presidency, Juárez and the Liberals fought a bitter civil war with the Conservatives followed by a lengthy war against France. After French forces withdrew from Mexico in 1867, Juárez held the presidency until his death in 1872.

Juárez Facts

- Juárez was imprisoned on more than one occasion due to his opposition to the Conservative government.
- Juárez was exiled from 1853-55 along with other Liberal party leaders. He relocated to New Orleans where he worked with other Liberal exiles on a new social agenda for Mexico.
- Juárez spent most of his five terms as president governing from his horse-drawn carriage as it was too dangerous to stay in one place during constant war.
- Unlike his predecessors and opponents, Juárez never wore royal apparel or a military uniform. He wore civilian clothes as he was the first civilian president of Mexico.