

The Legacy of the Plumed Serpent in Ancient Mexico: A Review

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A pair of imposing sandaled feet (see photo at left) greet visitors to the Dallas Museum of Art's current exhibit, *The Legacy of the Plumed Serpent in Ancient Mexico*. The rest of the Atlantid warrior is missing, but it's not hard to imagine his larger-than-life-sized square, thick body standing guard near the gates of a long lost city or temple.

Quetzalcoatl, the mythical ruler who was driven out of the city of Tula, then wandered throughout the southern part of present-day Mexico, is the inspiration for the exhibit.

According to the DMA's press release for the exhibit, "these rare artworks, which are more than five centuries old, trace the development of an extensive trade network that resulted in a period of international entrepreneurship and innovation that spread across ancient Mexico, the American Southwest, and Central America during the Postclassic (AD 900–1521) and early colonial periods."

While the exhibit is not extensive, what is on display is stunning in scope and layout. The pieces range from the sculpture of a serpent, done in the same, square-like style of the sandaled feet, to delicate pottery used as religious vessels, hammered gold pendants and colorful weavings.

The focus of the exhibit is a book called "codex nuttall," a small volume of symbols painted onto 47 leaves of deerskin that supposedly contains a history of the ancients and their religion. The images are almost too small to see, but an interactive iPad next to the glass-encased book helps the tiny figures stand out.

We went on a Tuesday afternoon. The crowd was light, allowing for easy movement from piece to piece.

Pay close attention to the exquisite mosaic discs scattered throughout the exhibit rooms. While they're not as intricate as those of ancient Rome and Greece, they are impressive. It took several minutes before I realized one of the discs was actually a depiction of seven fierce warriors, delicately laid out in pastel chips of semi-precious stones and twinkling pieces of mica.

For hours/ticketing/parking information, visit the museum's website, www.dm-art.org.