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Collecting and Constructing Classic Veracruz:  
Earl Stendahl, Guillermo Echániz, and the  
Market for Mesoamerican Stone Ballgame  
Objects

ABSTRACT

The role of the international art market in the looting, trafficking, and sale of Latin American antiquities has shaped the currently accepted canon of pre-Hispanic art to a degree that remains underrecognized. In the case of Classic Veracruz materials, Los Angeles-based Stendahl Art Galleries deftly exploited both a history of illicit excavations and an avant-garde collecting aesthetic to market archaeologically decontextualized objects. Beginning in the late 1930s, the Stendahls and their suppliers brought portable stone Mesoamerican ballgame equipment (*yokes*, *palmas*, and *hachas*) to the fore, which

not only perpetuated the looting in Veracruz that robbed scholars and descendant communities of knowledge about the cultures that made them, but also of the opportunity to document, study, and view traditions of monumental stone sculpture that, as a result, are now largely overlooked, or even erased. This article provides a brief history of the collection and classification of Central Veracruz materials; an examination of the Stendahls' entrance into this market via bibliophile and antiquarian Guillermo Echániz; and a consideration of the practices that shaped prominent institutional and private collections and, in turn, the art historical canon.

## Introduction

The looting and collecting of antiquities has had a profound but seldom acknowledged impact on modern conceptions of ancient peoples and the objects that they produced. In some instances, entire cultural traditions are represented by collections of objects that were trafficked in the art market and eventually donated to or purchased by museums, often without accompanying documentation that would clarify their places of origin or the conditions in which they were found. As objects change hands, such information may be lost or can be deliberately hidden or modified. Broader understandings of ancient material culture may be further skewed by the selectivity of looting and collecting, which disproportionately favors portable and marketable objects from places where conditions permit their clandestine removal.

During the mid-twentieth century, the marketability of pre-Hispanic objects largely depended on their recognizability as known types, and on their conformity to collectors' taste for the "primitive" and exotic, fashionably placed in dialogue with the European avant-garde. This study considers the role that looting and collecting has played in the construction of what is called the "Classic Veracruz" culture of pre-Hispanic Mexico, a tradition that is known primarily through portable stone sculptures. Though objects that have been grouped into this category were in circulation prior to the mid-twentieth century, the collaboration of Earl Stendahl, the most prolific U.S.-based dealer of pre-Hispanic art, and his associate Guillermo Echániz, a Mexican bibliophile and antiquarian, introduced large quantities of these objects to the art market as scholars were attempting to place them within known frameworks of Mesoamerican history.

Stone sculptures in the form of U-shaped "yokes" (fig. 1), paddle- or palm-shaped *palmas* (fig. 2), and thinly carved objects that usually take the form of a human head called *hachas* (so-named for their formal resemblance to ax blades and also referred to as "thin stone heads;" fig. 3) from Central Veracruz are among the most frequent Mesoamerican objects encountered in museum and private collections today. Collectors found the distinct and intricate scrollwork that often decorates the surfaces of these objects appealing (see fig. 2), while satisfying their taste for the exotic as forms that boldly deviate from Western sculptural canons. Yokes were generally believed to have played some role in human sacrifice until scholars noted their resemblance to padded belts worn around waists of figures,<sup>1</sup> particularly of players of the Mesoamerican ballgame.<sup>2</sup> Still, others doubted that heavy stone objects could be effectively worn by players during athletic competition.<sup>3</sup> Though they are commonly decorated with elaborate imagery or carved to resemble a frog or toad, stone yokes may have been representations of padded belts made of perishable materials, and *palmas* and *hachas* appear affixed to them in rep-

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1 Samuel K. Lothrop, Stone Yokes from Mexico and Central America, in *Man*, 23 (1923), 97-98.

2 Gordon F. Ekholm, The Probable Use of Mexican Stone Yokes, in *American Anthropologist* 48/4.1 (1946), 593-606.

3 J. Eric S. Thompson, Yokes or Ball Game Belts? in *American Antiquity* 6/4 (1941), 320-326.

resentations.<sup>4</sup> These findings also enhanced the allure of such objects among collectors, given popular notions that the Mesoamerican ballgame culminated in human sacrifice.



Fig. 1: Yoke in the form of a frog. Noted on verso as Stendahl stock book no. 6219, and from the Orizaba region of Veracruz, date unknown. Stendahl Art Galleries Records, 2017.M.38, b31, f6, Getty Research Institute.

Though yokes, *hachas*, and *palmas* were widely distributed across Mesoamerica, relatively few have been documented in controlled excavations. The majority of these objects, whether looted or excavated, have come from Central Veracruz.<sup>5</sup> Sites in Central Veracruz where stone ballgame equipment was produced and interred usually consisted of monumental earthen mounds, meaning that they were particularly vulnerable to

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4 Gordon F. Ekholm, Palmate Stones and Thin Stone Heads: Suggestions on Their Possible Use, in *American Antiquity* 15/1 (1949), 1–9.

5 José García Payón, Archaeology of Central Veracruz, in *Handbook of Middle American Indians, Volumes 10 and 11: Archaeology of Northern Mesoamerica* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 528; José García Payón, Exploraciones Arqueológicas en el Totonacapan Meridional (Región de Misantla, Ver.), in *Anales del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia*, 6/2 (1947), 73–111; Éric Taladoire, *Les Terrains de Jeu de Balle (Mésamérique et Sud-ouest des Etats-Unis)*. Études mésoaméricaines, Série II, no. 4. (Mexico City: Mission Archéologique et Ethnologique Française au Mexique, 1981), 380–385.

looting but not associated with better known sites with stone architecture. Though these sites were not bereft of large stone monuments, extensive looting shaped the course of studies within the region and placed emphasis on decontextualized objects. The result is that these objects are broadly associated with Central Veracruz as a region or with the Totonac culture, but not with any particular site.

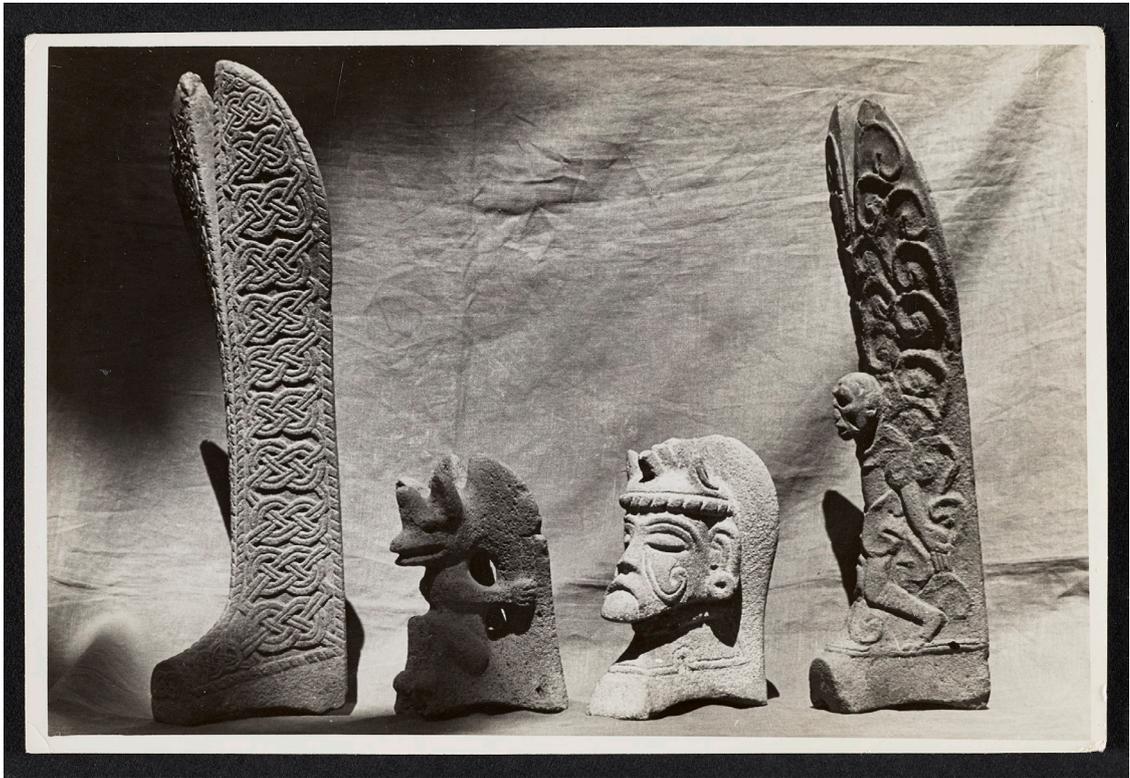


Fig. 2: Four *palmas*. Located with an envelope from collector-dealer Jorge Hauswaldt, dated 1951. Stendahl Art Galleries Records, 2017.M.38, b30, f3, Getty Research Institute.

## Collecting and Classifying Central Veracruz

For the most part, the collection of antiquities from Central Veracruz began in the nineteenth century. After Mexican Independence, exploitation of the area's natural resources and the introduction of a network of railways drew foreign venture capitalists, diplomats, tourists, and explorers to the area, who then built collections and sent them abroad from ports at Tampico (Tamaulipas) and the capital city of Veracruz.<sup>6</sup> An exceptional case is that of the diplomat Luigi Petich, whose extensive collection of objects from Central Veracruz was placed on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1893 to 1914.<sup>7</sup>

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6 Kim N. Richter, *Imperialist Ambitions, Black Gold, and Stone Figures: Collecting Huastec Sculptures before 1940*, in A. D. Turner and M. E. O'Neil, eds., *Collecting Mesoamerican Art before 1940: A New World of American Antiquities* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute Press, in press).

7 Joanne Pillsbury, 'American Antiquities for an American Museum': Frederic Church, Luigi Petich, and the Founding Decades of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1870-1914), in A. D. Turner and M. E. O'Neil,

Most of the stone ballgame objects that entered early collections were probably unearthed by local farmers or workers in oil and fruit industries. The earliest archaeological studies of Central Veracruz were aimed at classifying antiquities and building institutional collections. In the 1880s, Hermann Strebel, a German malacologist, undertook an archaeological survey of Central Veracruz through which he sent collections to German institutions and published two illustrated volumes that featured numerous whole and fragmentary yokes and *palmas*.<sup>8</sup> In 1891, Francisco Paso y Troncoso collected objects in

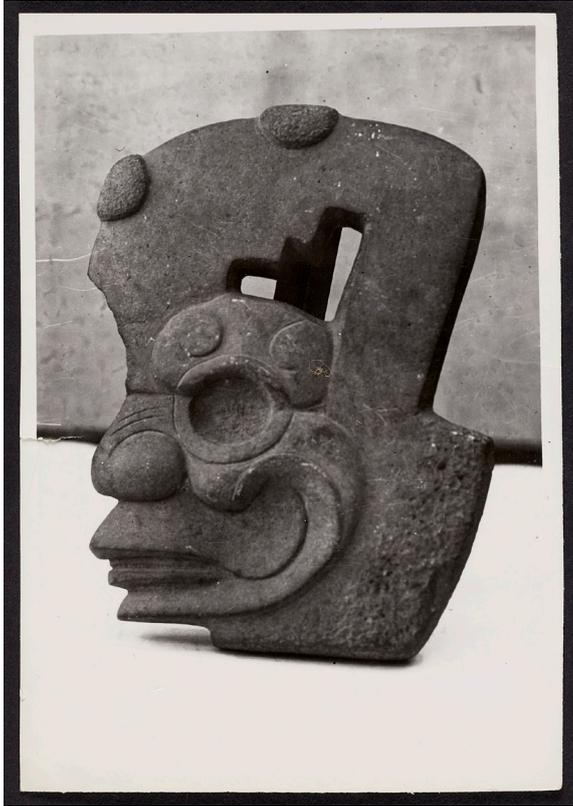


Fig. 3: *Hacha*. “Bliss Coll. from Dehesa” noted on verso, date unknown. Stendahl Art Galleries Records, 2017.M.38, b32, f4, Getty Research Institute.

Veracruz in preparation for a series of expositions in Madrid, Paris, and Chicago the following year, which marked the 400th anniversary of Columbus’ arrival to the Americas.<sup>9</sup> Another notable early study was that of Jesse Walter Fewkes of the Bureau of American Ethnology, who traveled to Veracruz in 1905 and analyzed objects in local private collections, including from the extensive collection of stone sculpture held by Teodoro Dehesa in Xalapa, then governor of Veracruz.<sup>10</sup> Though little is known about how Dehesa built his collection, his roles as Maritime Customs Inspector from 1876 to 1884 and as Customs Administrator from 1884 until his governorship in 1892 would have given him access to objects that were slated to be sent abroad. At the very least, in his role as governor, Dehesa would have had knowledge of objects found during works of private industry or state infrastructure.

Central Veracruz, as an archaeological unit of study, has been constructed and defined by ethnohistory and ethnography, and in part by study of looted artifacts. Cortés began his

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eds., *Collecting Mesoamerican Art before 1940: A New World of American Antiquities* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute Press, in press).

8 Hermann Strebel, *Alt-Mexiko: Archäologische Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte seiner Bewohner*, 2 vols. (Hamburg and Leipzig: Verlag von Leopold Voss, 1885–1889).

9 Philip J. Arnold, III, Christopher A. Pool, and Richard A. Diehl, Historical Currents in Classic Veracruz Research, in P. J. Arnold III and C. A. Pool, eds., *Classic Period Cultural Currents in Southern and Central Veracruz* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2008), 23–53; Francisco Paso y Troncoso, *Exposición Histórico-Americana de Madrid, Catálogo de la Sección de México*, Tomo I (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1892).

10 Jesse Walter Fewkes, Certain Antiquities of Eastern Mexico, in *Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, 1903-1904 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), 221–284.

entrada into Mexico in a part of Central Veracruz called Totonacapan, a tributary province of the Aztec Empire inhabited by the Totonac people. The scholarly tendency of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to attribute much earlier artifacts to the historical Totonacs, who are now generally understood to have inhabited the area after the decline of the traditions that produced objects such as stone ballgame equipment. A defining example is Walter Krickeberg's influential synthesis of Central Veracruz ethnography and archaeology,<sup>11</sup> which begins as an ethnographic study of modern Totonac people and practices, traces them through ethnohistoric sources, and then incorporates sculpture from the Classic period (600-900 CE). This would lead, by the 1930s, to an artificial division of the state of Veracruz into three ancient culture regions (northern, central, and southern), with the Río Czones defining the northern border of Central Veracruz and the Río Papaloapan defining the southern.<sup>12</sup> Northern Veracruz came to be associated with the Huastec culture, Central with the Totonacs, and Southern Veracruz with the Olmecs and their immediate successors.

More sustained archaeological investigation of Central Veracruz by Mexican archaeologists began in the late 1930s under José García Payón and in the late 1940s with Alfonso Medellín Zenil.<sup>13</sup> These investigations were often carried out in response to larger-scale looting activities that accompanied the establishment of an international market for pre-Hispanic antiquities.<sup>14</sup> Refinements in Mesoamerican chronology meant that each of the three recognized culture regions of Veracruz came to be implicitly associated with its own florescence during a different time period. Recognition of the antiquity of the Olmec tradition tied Southern Veracruz to the Formative/Preclassic period. Controlled excavations in Central Veracruz placed objects such as stone ballgame equipment within the Classic period. Northern Veracruz was the domain of the Huastec culture, firmly planted in the Postclassic period. In lieu of a view of Mexico's Gulf Coast that considers the dynamic and complex ebb and flow of diverse cultural traditions across its varied geographies throughout the pre-Hispanic past, the pole of civilization seemed to migrate from south to north across the state of Veracruz in three steps. The tripartite division of Veracruz and its conflation of geography, culture, and chronology was codified in the 1960s through permanent installations of the Sala del Golfo in the Museo Nacional de

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11 Walter Krickeberg, *Die Totonaken*, *Bäessler Archiv* 7 (1922), 1–55, and *Bäessler Archiv* 9 (1925), 1–75; Walter Krickeberg, *Los Totonaca: Contribución a la Etnografía Histórica de la América Central*, tr. Porfirio Aguirre (México: Talleres Gráficos del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1933).

12 S. Jeffrey K. Wilkerson, Cultural Subareas of Eastern Mesoamerica, in Merle Greene Robertson, ed., *Primera Mesa Redonda de Palenque*, Part II (Pebble Beach, Calif.: The Robert Louis Stevenson School, 1974), 89–102.

13 Annick Daneels, José García Payón y Alfonso Medellín Zenil, Pioneros de la Arqueología del Centro de Veracruz, in *Anales de Antropología* 40/II (2006): 9–40.

14 Alfonso Medellín Zenil, *Cerámicas del Totonacapan: Exploraciones Arqueológicas en el Centro de Veracruz* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana Instituto de Antropología, 1960); Alfonso Medellín Zenil and Frederick A. Peterson, A Smiling Head Complex from Central Veracruz, Mexico, in *American Antiquity* 20/2 (1954), 162–169; Alfonso Medellín Zenil, *Nopiloa: Exploraciones arqueológicas* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, 1987).

Antropología and by García Payón in the Museo de Antropología de la Universidad Veracruzana de Xalapa, and largely remains in the current iterations of both museums.<sup>15</sup>

The distinct decorative style of Central Veracruz ballgame sculptures, characterized by elaborate scrollwork but not associated with any well-known archaeological site, presented a conundrum for early investigators who sought to relate them to better-known traditions. Ellen Spinden,<sup>16</sup> noting the similarity of scrollwork in the relief-carved panels of El Tajín to yokes, *hachas*, and *palmas*, argued that the city was a Totonac capital and the source of the art style, despite its location at the northern extreme of the Central Veracruz culture region. She proposed that the style spread through emulation of El Tajín's artwork by visiting pilgrims.<sup>17</sup> Tatiana Proskouriakoff<sup>18</sup> rejected the designation of scrollwork-decorated sculpture as Totonac due to lack of evidence for cultural continuity between Classic and Postclassic periods, and argued that the style should be referred to as "Classic Veracruz." She considered the scrollwork at El Tajín to be a later stylistic variation of the tradition that produced yokes, *hachas*, and *palmas*. The sole examples of monumental artwork bearing Classic Veracruz designs that she mentions, beyond El Tajín, are a series of sculptures from the Misantla region (discussed below), although she expressed uncertainty whether they date from the Classic or Postclassic period.<sup>19</sup> Though "Totonac" no longer served as an overarching cultural framework through which to circumscribe the region during the Classic period, yokes, *hachas*, and *palmas*, mostly known from looted examples, acted as the primary bearers of a style that defined Classic Veracruz.

## The Stendahl-Echániz Partnership and the Business of Selling Yokes, *Hachas*, and *Palmas*

In 2017, upon the closure of the Los Angeles-based Stendahl Art Galleries, its third-generation owners, Ron and April Dammann, donated its records to the Getty Research Institute. The Stendahl Art Galleries Records are the most extensive available archive pertaining to the sale of pre-Hispanic art in existence, and consist of correspondence, photographs, invoices, and other materials related to the business. Of particular interest is correspondence between Earl Stendahl and his associate in Mexico City, Guillermo

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15 Daneels, *Pioneros*, 24, 30.

16 Ellen S. Spinden, *The Place of Tajin in Totonac Archaeology*, in *American Anthropologist* 35/2 (1933), 225–270.

17 Spinden, *Place*, 270.

18 Tatiana Proskouriakoff, *Scroll designs (entrelaces) of Veracruz*, in I. Bernal & E. Dávalos Hurtado, eds., *Huastecos, totonacos y sus vecinos*, *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Antropológicos* 13/I (Mexico City: Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología, 1953), 389–401; Tatiana Proskouriakoff, *Varieties of Classic Central Veracruz Sculpture*, in *Contributions to American Anthropology and History*, No. 58 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication 606, 1954), 61–121; Tatiana Proskouriakoff, *Classic Art of Central Veracruz*, in R. Wauchope, ed., *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, vol. XI (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 558–572.

19 Proskouriakoff, *Scroll*, 86; Proskouriakoff, *Classic*, 570.

Echániz (fig. 4), who was instrumental in the Stendahls' early involvement in selling Mexican antiquities, beginning in the late 1930s.<sup>20</sup> The stock books, which document a majority of the pre-Hispanic objects that passed through Stendahl Art Galleries from the late 1930s to the late 1960s, shed light on the scale and scope of their business, and include such information as pricing and names of customers, although few entries are dated. Careful corroboration between the stock books and complementary materials offers a rare glimpse at the inner workings of Stendahl Art Galleries, including the means through which they acquired and marketed objects.



Fig. 4: Earl Stendahl and Guillermo Echániz at the site of El Tajín, Veracruz, ca. 1944.

Stendahl Art Galleries Records, 2017.M.38, b32, f7, Getty Research Institute.

Though it may not be their first inventory of pre-Hispanic objects, the oldest complete stock book in the Stendahl Art Galleries Records<sup>21</sup> and related documentation offer a useful visualization of the family's inventory and practices during their entry into the market, roughly 1938–1944. So-called “Totonac” objects were initially outnumbered by objects from other cultures (particularly those described as “Mayan,” “Toltec,” “Aztec,” and “Tarascan”<sup>22</sup>), but they did count among the earliest

pieces in Earl Stendahl's inventory: stock book nos. 94, 97, and 98<sup>23</sup> – a stone phallic figure, yoke, and *palma*, respectively – may have been acquired, likely from Echániz, before the close of 1938, or early on in 1939.<sup>24</sup> All three were designated in February 1939 for purchase by Walter and Louise Arensberg of Los Angeles, a couple whose own collection

20 For a selection of annotated letters between Earl Stendahl and Guillermo Echániz (from here forward, ES and GE), and additional background information on their collaboration, see <https://getty.libguides.com/Stendahl>. For a more extensive biography on Stendahl, see April Dammann, *Exhibitionist: Earl Stendahl, Art Dealer as Impresario* (Los Angeles: Angel City Press, 2011).

21 Stendahl Art Galleries Inventory, undated, 2017.M.38, b91, f6, Getty Research Institute (hereafter, GRI). All stock book numbers cited in this paper relate to this particular stock book, unless otherwise noted.

22 Just as Stendahl records refer to Classic Veracruz material as “Totonac,” “Toltec” often refers to Teotihuacan and “Tarascan” to West Mexico.

23 Purchase agreement between Stendahl Art Galleries and Walter Arensberg, 27 Feb 1939, WLA\_B028\_F028\_004, Duchamp Research Portal, Philadelphia Museum of Art (hereafter, PMA). Only nos. 94 and 97 appear in the stock book, and they are both penciled in between more standard entries in ink, which is the type of evidence that suggests the existence of a stock book prior to this one.

24 This is based in part on their proximity to a series of urns, with stock book nos. between the mid-50s and mid-70s, which ES acquired from GE in late October 1938. GE to ES, 24 Oct 1938, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

served as a model and catalyst for other U.S. collectors' growing interest in pre-Hispanic art.<sup>25</sup> The content of this early purchase agreement foreshadows a lucrative stream of inventory for the Stendahls: the phallic figure and the *palma* were each marked at \$450.00; and the yoke, acquired at \$200.00 per its stock book entry, was priced for the Arensbergs (who generally received discounts) at \$700.00 – a 250% markup.

While the Arensberg purchase agreement provides detailed descriptions of the items, it simultaneously betrays a limited knowledge about the objects themselves on the part of both scholars and dealers. In this invoice, no. 97 reads, “Yoke (used in burials), Green granite rock. Frog – Totonac civilization. Papantla Veracruz,” and no. 98 reads, “Palm (use not known), Basaltic rock, grey. Totonac civilization. Pheasant found at Zempoala, Ver.” As noted above, scholars had not yet, in 1939, connected the yoke to the Mesoamerican ballgame, but solely to sacrifice and burials, despite identifying its position on the waist. Neither had they definitively associated yokes with *palmas* and *hachas*, beyond sharing a culture and some motifs. Further, despite the claim that the two objects were from Papantla (the largest city near El Tajín) and Cempoala (then a partially excavated monumental city), it is possible that Stendahl did not actually know where they were found, and that he or Echániz (or perhaps Echániz' source) attested that they came from well-known archaeological sites in order to improve their marketability. In short, researchers and curators were working to reconstruct these objects' archaeological context and establish their anthropological significance even as Echániz, Stendahl, and the Arensbergs were focused on confirming their aesthetic and commercial values in the international art market.

When Totonac objects from Veracruz next appeared in the Stendahls' inventory, at no. 382, they represented a significant portion of a broader shipment from Echániz, and between mid-February and mid-June 1940, the Arensbergs were invoiced for virtually every stone object in the lot, Totonac or otherwise.<sup>26</sup> In his descriptions of the objects,<sup>27</sup> Echániz attached two well-known names, Dr. Antonio Peñafiel and Gov. Teodoro Dehesa, to the source collections for three of the pieces, thus establishing their authenticity and import, and suggesting the same level of reputability for the rest of the objects. The Totonac objects included at least six *palmas*, four yokes, and three stone heads (likely *hachas*). In the case of the Totonac yokes, two of three—a closed yoke (no. 382) and a frog yoke (no. 383)—were purportedly from the collection of Governor Dehesa, which was

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25 Ellen Hoobler, Smoothing the Path for Rough Stones: The Changing Role of Pre-Columbian Art in the Arensberg Collection, in Mark Nelson, William H. Sherman, and Ellen Hoobler, eds., *Hollywood Arensberg: Avant-Garde Collecting in Midcentury L.A.* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2020), 343–398. See, especially, p. 379 for a discussion of the Arensbergs' interest in collecting Central Veracruz ballgame equipment.

26 Invoices from Stendahl Art Galleries to Walter Arensberg: 13 Feb 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_001; 15 Feb 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_002; 1 April 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_008; 11 June 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_009; and 15 June 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_010, Duchamp Research Portal, PMA.

27 Object/price list, beginning with “Cuauchicalli”, undated (two versions), 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI.

likely in the care of his son, Raúl.<sup>28</sup> The description of the closed yoke exploits the cultural and commercial capital of “Olmec influence,” and the description of the frog yoke claims that “Fewk[e]s wrote a note on this monolith expres[s]ing high opinion about it.”<sup>29</sup>

Still, perhaps the most useful descriptions, in terms of marketability, spoke to how collectors like the Arensbergs would envision and display these objects in dialogue with modern works from the masters of the avant-garde. Echániz tried his hand at this, noting, for instance, that one *palma* represented a “[s]acred monkey’s head, very beautifully stylised,” but he largely kept to more anthropologically-minded glosses, such as noting calendrical signs on a yoke, or local Gulf Coast fauna on *palmas*.<sup>30</sup> Stendahl’s renderings of Echániz’ descriptions necessarily evolved closer to the sales pitch necessary to harness collecting goals like those of the Arensbergs. In addition to the “stylized sacred monkey” *palma* (no. 389), a series of illustrative invoices addressed to Walter described the closed yoke (no. 382) as portraying a “highly stylized human form,” and another *palma* as featuring a “stylized human skull” (no. 496).<sup>31</sup> Most striking, however, is Stendahl stock book no. 385 (likely Echániz’s *palma* representing “a Warrior’s head with an interesting sort of helmet”), which began as “Warrior’s head – Totonac Palm,”<sup>32</sup> and later became “Stone Helmeted Head – Cubistic design – Totonac civilization.”<sup>33</sup>

Totonac objects continued to trickle in from Echániz, and found homes with the Arensbergs, and beyond.<sup>34</sup> By the end of October 1940, Stendahl and Echániz were negotiating prices on five unidentified stones purportedly from Papantla,<sup>35</sup> and Echániz requested guidance on what buyers were most interested in.<sup>36</sup> To this, Stendahl responded, “They seem to like the animals in stone and the snake. Also, if you can get ahold of any palms it would be swell.”<sup>37</sup> In December, Echániz reported that “Dehesa’s yoke is getting ripe to

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28 Teodoro Dehesa died in 1936. It is unclear how early Echániz established a relationship with Raúl Dehesa, but based on a preponderance of letters in the Stendahl Art Galleries records (2017.M.38, b11, ff7–9, GRI), he was buying directly from him by 1940.

29 Fewkes’ report (see footnote no. 9) did discuss frog yokes in general, and a Dehesa frog yoke in particular (255–257, 260).

30 These *palmas* are nos. 13–15 of GE’s list (with corresponding stock book nos. 389, 387, 400) and the yoke is no. 5 (stock book no. 384).

31 Invoices from Stendahl Art Galleries to Walter Arensberg: 1 April 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_008; 11 June 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_009; and 15 June 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_010, Duchamp Research Portal, PMA.

32 Invoice from Stendahl Art Galleries to Walter Arensberg, 13 February 1940, WLA\_B028\_F030\_001, Duchamp Research Portal, PMA.

33 See footnote no. 30.

34 These include a monkey head (no. 573), frog yoke (no. 588), plain yoke, (no. 589), and brown yoke fragment (no. 641), the latter also appearing on an Echániz price list: 2017.M.38, 19 June 1940, b11, f8, GRI.

35 ES to GE, 22 Oct 1940, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI; handwritten notes on GE, “Earl Stendahl’s account,” 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI.

36 GE to ES, 31 Oct 1940, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

37 ES to GE, 2 Nov 1940, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

fall in our hands,”<sup>38</sup> and in early January he sent photos of two *palmas* (and, possibly, an *hacha*).<sup>39</sup> This is to say that, by the start of the 1940s, the Totonac yoke had been identified as merchandise that could easily be sold to more affluent buyers, and the *palma* as an object-type with broad popularity and a more affordable price tag. This assessment was soon reflected in a large shipment of approximately 500 pieces from pre-Hispanic cultures across Mexico that arrived in Los Angeles sometime between March and June of 1941,<sup>40</sup> ranging from small jade beads, to variously sized clay figurines, to large stone sculptures. Included within these were fourteen *palmas* (stock book nos. 678, 680–681, 733, 869–878) and four yokes (nos. 674–676, 704), as well as nearly fifty other objects labeled as Totonac, with several listed as from Papantla.<sup>41</sup> At least seven of these Totonac objects were invoiced to the Arensbergs in late June of 1941.<sup>42</sup>

More acquisitions and discussions of stone Totonac objects appear in the first half of 1941, always integrated into broader shipments and conversations: repairs on an alabaster vase<sup>43</sup> and a request for a photo “of the small yoke with the grave;”<sup>44</sup> money owed on a lot from Papantla;<sup>45</sup> a letter from a collector seeking photos of yokes;<sup>46</sup> concern over *palma* prices possibly rising on the supply side;<sup>47</sup> and purchases from Echániz that included Totonac objects, mostly *palmas* and yokes.<sup>48</sup> Veracruz largely drops out of the extant Echániz–Stendahl correspondence mid-year, then reappears in August 1942 in a report from Echániz: a “young artist who lives beyond San Angel was in urgent need of money,” so he took a loan from Echániz and left a small lot with him as collateral, which Echániz could keep if he wasn’t repaid by a certain date.<sup>49</sup> This lot included many “Totonac” pieces – several *palmas*, a large ax (likely an *hacha*) “with Diego Rivera Profile,” an alabaster vase “with a deer,” and an alabaster head – as well as several other objects from various cultures. It seems that the young artist in question was Miguel Covarrubias, who lived in

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38 GE to ES, 18 Dec 1940, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

39 ES to GE, 2 Jan 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

40 A rare date in the stock book, placed at the start of the objects in this shipment, reads “March 1943,” and the Arensbergs were invoiced for objects in this lot in late June: Invoice from Stendahl Art Galleries to Walter Arensberg, 27 June 1941, WLA\_B028\_F031\_003, Duchamp Research Portal, PMA.

41 Object/price list beginning with “Stone Monoliths & Idols,” two versions, 2017.M.38, b11, ff8–9, GRI

42 See footnote no. 39.

43 ES to GE, 10 April 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

44 ES to GE, 14 April 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

45 “Extrac of Account,” GE to ES, 15 April 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, b9, GRI. This could refer to the five unidentified stones mentioned above.

46 GE to ES, 22 April 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI; GE to John Monski, 22 April 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

47 GE to ES, 5 May 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI.

48 Invoice, GE to ES, 22 May 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, f9, GRI; “List of Lot,” GE to ES, 30 May 1941, 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI; “This lot is ready...,” GE to ES, undated [1941], 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI; packing list, GE to ES, undated [1941], 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI.

49 GE to ES, 21 Aug 1942, 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI.

Tizapán, southwest of San Ángel, at that time. Subsequent letters,<sup>50</sup> an object list dated mid-October,<sup>51</sup> and related inventory cards<sup>52</sup> suggest that Stendahl, via Echániz, may have acquired at least some of those pieces.

Whether because other projects had cooled, or Mexico City collections were running dry, or Covarrubias' Totonac objects reignited his interest, in late October of 1942 Echániz put his boots on the ground in Veracruz. On 14 November 1942, Julieta, Echániz's wife, wrote to Earl:

Mr. Echaniz spoiled by your teachings, is leaving me quite often. Now he is trabel-  
ling arround that Papantla section. First, the end of the raining se[a]son did not  
make roads easy to travel. Now he moves a little faster and almost every week sends  
in a few new pieces. / He was here two weeks ago, rested for a few days, scratched  
money from every body and went out again. / I am expecting him at the end of the  
next week or at the begining of the other one. Then he will answer to your letter.<sup>53</sup>

Echániz indeed answered Earl on 25 November 1942, with tales of his journey, and a glance into his developing practices in “the field:”

After three consecutive hot baths, I have managed to get most of the ticks off from  
my skin. Now I can read your letter of November 6<sup>th</sup> [...] / [...] By regular mail I am  
sending you photos of the last adquisitions. While few guys do some digging, I go  
around the small towns in the chase of the wild goose. / You will see and judge the  
total product of a 28 days tour arround Papantla, Poza Rica, Los Venados, Aguilillas,  
etc. etc. Now I can say that I know how to cover the field and how to take the hard-  
ships of the vagabund life. [...]<sup>54</sup>

A photograph, likely sent to Stendahl from Echániz, reflects the spirit of Echániz's scout-  
ing ventures in Veracruz (fig. 5). The image, which seems meant to evoke a safari photo,  
shows a man with a rifle slung over his shoulder posed next to the trophy, a boulder  
carved as an animal. “Near Vera Cruz” (likely referring to the port city) is written on the  
back of the photo.

At the start of December Echániz prepared an object list with prices for Stendahl, and  
nineteen objects out of thirty were from Veracruz.<sup>55</sup> Several of these objects – seven in

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50 GE to ES, 26 Aug 1942, 21 Sept 1942, 2017.M.38, and 3 Oct 1942, b11, f8, GRI.

51 Object list, GM to ES, 16 Oct 1942, 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI.

52 The objects on these inventory cards include a 17” *palma* with a “cut out design,” 2017.M.38, b110, GRI, and a 9” *palma* featuring a “portrait of a King with beard & mustache,” 2017.M.38, b32, GRI, which represent nos. 2 and 3 on the above object list.

53 Julieta Echániz to ES, 14 Nov 1942, 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI.

54 GE to ES, 25 Nov 1942, 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI.

55 “Mr. Earl L. Stendahl...,” GM to ES, 2 Dec 1942, 2017.M.38, b11, f8, GRI.

total – were said to be from Papantla: four stone heads, one head of unspecified material, a duck, and a fragment of a *palma*. The other twelve, however, were from locations

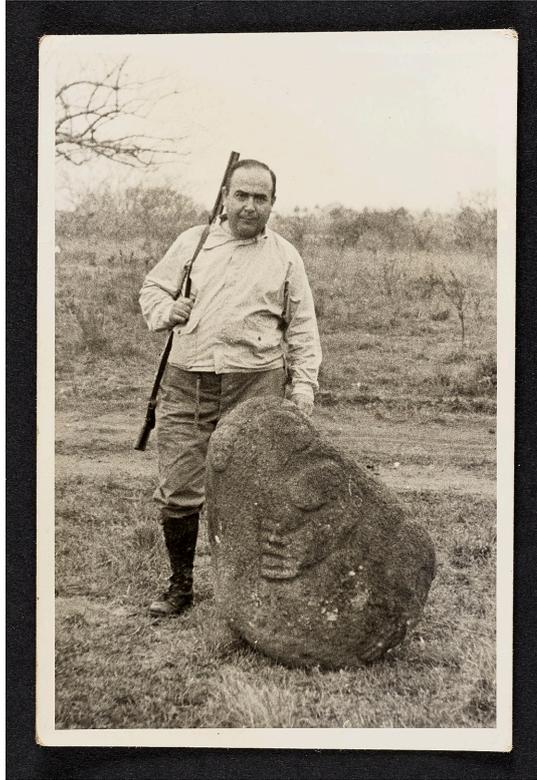


Fig. 5: Unnamed man standing next to a carved monument near the city of Veracruz, date unknown.

Stendahl Art Galleries Records, 2017.M.38, b35, f3, Getty Research Institute

further afield: Poza Rica (three stone birds), Cazadero (a stone sculpture with “leaves” and a “rope”), Los Huizaches (an “aerodynamic monolith” and a stone turkey), Las Vegas (a stone bird, a stone head, and a seated man in jade, the only “Olmec” object in the group), Amatlan de los Reyes (a stone “dead man’s head”), and El Hule (a stone “stylised” animal and a stone head).<sup>56</sup> Significantly, by the end of 1942, Echániz had scouted collections and sites in Veracruz, and even recruited “diggers” to work for him, meaning that he now had first-hand knowledge of, access to, and connections in the region, and no longer needed to rely on other collectors and dealers in Mexico City to bring Totonac objects to market in the United States.

But it is the Stendahl stock book that tells the most powerful story: sometime after Echániz’s trip to Veracruz, perhaps by the summer of 1943,<sup>57</sup> “Totonac” objects began to be inventoried in greater numbers than ever before. First came a series of objects, including eleven Totonac pieces, some of which appear to reflect parts of Covarrubias’ hocked collection (fig. 6). Then, after a brief pause (one stock book page), the Stendahls started documenting large quantities of Totonac stone sculptures, grouped together or very near each other. The most visually arresting of these stock book pages offer uninterrupted lists of a single object type, sometimes devoid of individual descriptions. Stock book nos. 1649–1655, for instance, are all described simply as “Yoke – Totonac Veracruz.”<sup>58</sup> While this lack of specificity may signal the importance of a consistently

56 While we have not yet definitively identified each location named in the list and the letter, Poza Rica, Los Venados, and Cazadero appear to be located along modern highways running north from Papantla; El Hule is still north, but further inland; and Amatlan de los Reyes is inland and to the south, near Córdoba.

57 The page (stock nos. 1573–1596) that begins this trend has July 1943 written at the top, and follows a long, independently numbered section of objects from Costa Rica. While this is not a definitive date, it fits the timeline that can be gleaned from the archive. The Arensbergs, whose invoices show a preoccupation with Costa Rican materials in 1943, began buying objects from this range of stock book numbers (1573 and higher) in 1944.

58 Here, a blue pen priced each yoke at \$200, and then a black pen added a 1 in front to make each read \$1200, likely representing the purchase price transformed into the sales price. Similar price-editing oc-

high-value object-type over its individual manifestations, the entries for twenty *palmas* found at stock book nos. 1721–1741 do include a one or two-word description following “Palm – Totonac – Veracruz.” *Palmas* represented the largest inventory among portable stone Totonac objects, but with their considerable diversity in shape and ornamentation, they arguably provided collectors an opportunity to tailor this requisite purchase to taste.

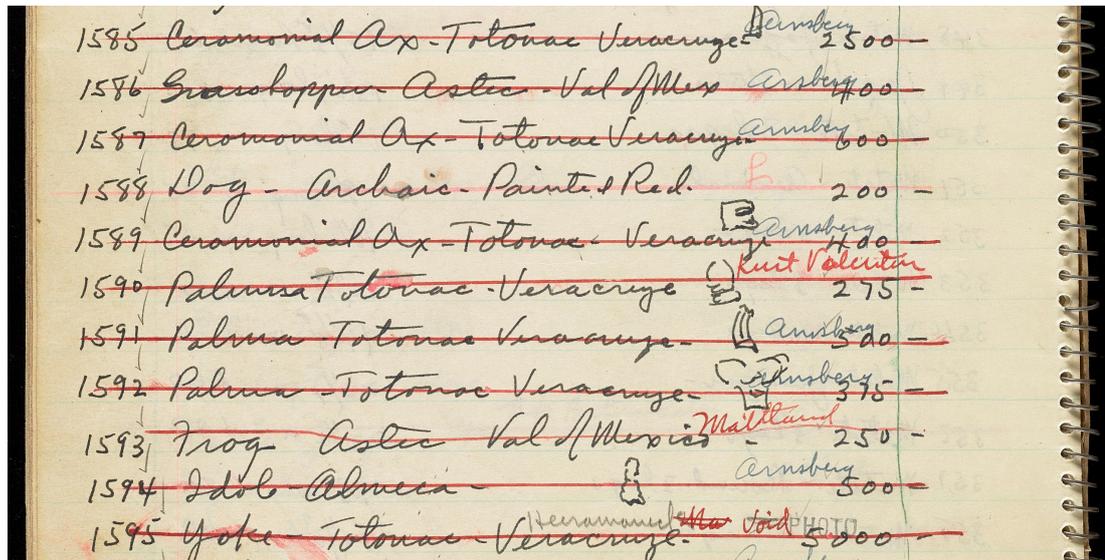


Fig. 6: Detail of a Stendahl stock book page containing “Totonac” material, with miniature sketches accompanying some objects, ca. 1943.

Stendahl Art Galleries Records, 2017.M.38, b91, f6, Getty Research Institute.

The Stendahls’ earliest extant stock book, then, closes with a flurry of Classic Veracruz material, including dozens of *palmas*, and large numbers of yokes, *hachas*, and other stone sculptures. Not only had the floodgates opened, but by 1944, the pre-Hispanic cultures of Classic Veracruz had been squarely defined in the minds of individual and institutional collectors, and even some scholars, by a very limited spectrum of its material legacy. Indeed, when Salvador Toscano published his widely respected survey of Mesoamerican art that year, his brief discussion of “La escultura totonaca” was limited to yokes and *palmas*, alabaster vessels, and relief sculpture at El Tajín, the latter of which he used to disassociate two famous Veracruz *lápidas* (those of Tepetzintla and Huilocintla housed at the Museo Nacional) from the Totonac culture.<sup>59</sup> Toscano lamented that, due to lack of historical knowledge, coastal Veracruz antiquities were “invariably attributed” (*invariablymente atribuidas*) to the peoples who inhabited the monumental cities of Cempoala or El Tajín; and that “hundreds” of unregistered Veracruz yokes lacked not only provenience, but also an account of their extraction.<sup>60</sup> Yet, he stopped short of suggesting that

curs with the other large groups of objects.

59 Salvador Toscano, *Arte precolombino de México y de la América Central* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1944; ed. 1970), 107–110.

60 Toscano, *Arte*, 107.

there were other traditions of “Totonac” stone sculpture yet to be discovered, or properly attributed.

## Missing Monuments

Given the vast quantity of Classic Veracruz portable stone sculptures that have been excavated or looted, the relative lack of stone monuments from Central Veracruz is surprising, especially because the Olmec and Huastec traditions to the north and south are largely defined by monumental sculpture. Within Central Veracruz, El Tajín is a notable exception. Though monumental stone sculpture does not seem to have been especially prominent in Classic-period Central Veracruz, there are nonetheless numerous examples. The discussion that follows considers the means by which Stendahl, Echániz, and other dealers were in some instances able to acquire stone monuments in Central Veracruz, and the role that looting and the art market have played in framing the region as rich in portable stone sculptures, but lacking monumental expression in the same medium.

The sole example of monumental sculpture that is representative of Classic Veracruz style but not from El Tajín illustrated in Proskouriakoff’s 1954 monograph is a relief-carved monolith claimed to be from “Cerro de Moreno.”<sup>61</sup> She notes that there are other sculptures from Cerro de Aparicio in the region of Misantla that share the monument’s diagnostic band of scrolls along one edge.<sup>62</sup> The monument in question differs, however, from the monuments from Aparicio in that it features a standing image of the rain deity Tlaloc instead of the usual seated decapitated ballplayer. The same monument featuring Tlaloc was reported earlier by García Payón,<sup>63</sup> who had seen it in 1940 in the town of Plan de las Hayas. According to García Payón, it had been brought to Plan de las Hayas by Emilio Armenta, director of the Banco Ejidal, from a nearby site called Cerro de La Morena (not Cerro de Moreno, as Proskouriakoff had mentioned). García Payón provides two photographs of the monument<sup>64</sup> that show it leaning against an empty fountain, presumably in Plan de las Hayas.

The La Morena Tlaloc monument was taken from Mexico no later than 1956. In 1958 it was given to the Yale University Art Gallery<sup>65</sup> by Connecticut-based collector Fred Olsen as part of a substantial loan and donation of pre-Hispanic objects. It is not clear whether Proskouriakoff’s illustrator, Miss Avis Tulloch, had seen the monument in the United States or had worked from García Payón’s photographs, as no source citation is given for the illustration, but the latter seems more likely. Proskouriakoff states that Tulloch “in

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61 Proskouriakoff, *Varieties*, fig. 9f.

62 Proskouriakoff, *Varieties*, 86.

63 García Payón, *Exploraciones*, 85–86.

64 García Payón, *Exploraciones*, photos 2-3.

65 Accession no. 1958.85.1.

many cases used photographs from several sources to develop a single design.”<sup>66</sup> However, a stela matching this description counts among a series of objects that the Stendahls sold to Olsen in the summer of 1956: they appraised a “Staela - Standing Priest (Tlaloc) - from Veracruz” at \$20,000 in July;<sup>67</sup> according to a letter dated 7 December 1956 from Al Stendahl to Fred Olsen, that same “Stone Staela - Rain god Priest - Veracruz” was invoiced at \$5,000;<sup>68</sup> and both the selling price and the appraisal stand side by side next to “Tlaloc St” on a handwritten worksheet.<sup>69</sup> Unlike the majority of the objects in this lot, the Tlaloc stela is never noted as having a Stendahl stock book number, perhaps because the monument’s acquisition and sale was a joint venture with the dealer Robert Stolper, as suggested by an undated letter from Al to his father Earl:

Enclosed is a photo of a staela of a Tlaloc from Veracruz – Bob Stolper was offered this for \$250. I had them send a negative up which I made into this shot. His man is anxious to know. Bob is flying east and will be in N.Y. Monday. If you feel we can use this for \$250 you can give him your check and he will send his to Mexico and have the piece packed and shipped.”<sup>70</sup>

The photo mentioned by Al has not been located in the archive to date but, as neither stelae nor representations of Tlaloc are common in Veracruz art, it is almost certain that Al is referring to the La Morena Tlaloc.

The Stendahls clearly kept eyes on the ground, including those of Echániz. In August of 1952, Echániz sent several photos of large sculptures (fig. 7) that he had scouted to Joe Dammann, Earl’s son-in-law, who, along with Al, was playing a more prominent role in the business. In the accompanying letter, Echániz states:

A new road has been finished and it goes to the heart of the Totonac section. / [...] / In the public garden you can see a rabbit, a shell a turtle, two “techcatl” or sacrificing stones and a tiger that did not come out. These are, as you can see, large stones. [...] / Near by, they say there is a river with lots of stones that will be carried out if they can get enough money to build up a Museum.<sup>71</sup>

The sculptures in question had been transferred to a park in Misantra from the nearby site of Los Ídolos in the late 1930s or early 1940s.<sup>72</sup> Though Dammann did not apparently

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66 Proskouriakoff, *Varieties*, 66.

67 “Worksheet for Olsen Appraisal – July 1956,” 2017.M.38, b16, f7, GRI.

68 AS to FO, 7 Dec 1946, 2017.M.38, b16, f7, GRI.

69 Handwritten worksheet for Olsen sales, undated, 2017.M.38, b16, f7, GRI.

70 AS to ES, undated, 2017.M.38, b105, f6, GRI.

71 GE to Joe Dammann, 3 August [1952], 2017.M.38, b11, f7, GRI. Earl responded that he was intrigued by the photos: 1 Sept 1952, 2017.M.38, b11, f7, GRI.

72 Raymundo Ramírez Marcos, *Catalogación e interpretación iconográfica de los monumentos escultóricas de Los Ídolos*, in S. R. Vásquez Zárate, J. O. Ruíz Gordillo, and A. Sánchez y Gándara, eds., *Los Ídolos, Mis-*

take the bait and most of the sculptures currently remain in Misantla, the letter shows that Echániz was carefully following infrastructure developments in Veracruz and was poised to remove threatened objects with the financial backing of the Stendahls before they could be moved to more secure locations.



Fig. 7: Three photos taken in Misantla, Veracruz, 1952. At top, a view of the cathedral that overlooks the public garden where sculptures from Los Ídolos were placed. At center, a monument carved in the form of a rabbit. Below, a sculpture in the form of a conch shell. Stendahl Art Galleries Records, 2017.M.38, b110, Getty Research Institute.

Many important objects, of course, did not escape the grasp of the Stendahl family. In 1955, Nelson Rockefeller purchased a boulder carved in the form of a feline from the Stendahls for the Museum of Primitive Art.<sup>73</sup> At the point of sale, the object was described as coming from La Venta, by then a well-known Olmec site in the state of Tabasco that predated the Classic Veracruz tradition by nearly a millennium. Robert Goldwater, Director of the Museum of Primitive Art, expressed uncertainty about the attribution of the monument to La Venta. In Al Stendahl's response to Goldwater, he states, "The former owner has always claimed that it came from La Venta... It is possible that a La Venta tag was placed on it because it seemed to relate to the large heads and also La Venta sounds good in reference to Olmec style pieces."<sup>74</sup> The monument in question bears a striking resemblance to a larger sculpture from Nopiloa (a Classic Veracruz site known primarily for looted ceramic figurines), documented by Medellín Zenil in 1950<sup>75</sup> and now in the collection of the Museo de Antropología de Xalapa.<sup>76</sup> Though Al Stendahl claimed ignorance, it seems that someone within the supply chain sought to enhance the sculpture's value by associating it with a better known archaeological site.

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*antla: Biodiversidad y cultura ancestral* (Mexico City: S y G editores, 2012), 139.

73 Now in the Met Museum, acc. no. 1978.412.22.

74 Al Stendahl to Robert Goldwater, 11 March 1957, 2017.M.38, b5, f4, GRI.

75 Medellín Zenil, Nopiloa, 13, fig. 1.

76 Registro s/n 089.

Other Stendahl acquisitions remain mysterious. A photograph from the Stendahl Art Galleries records shows a stone panel portraying a striding feline-headed being, shot in the Stendahls' back patio (fig. 8). On the back of the photograph, the dimensions are written ("42 ½ hi, 24 W, 9 T"), along with "Central Veracruz." Nothing more is currently known about the monument's origin or destination. This example, and those previously mentioned, illustrate some of the processes through which market-driven illicit looting obscures, at times intentionally, the origins of ancient works; deprives descendent communities of patrimony; and flattens scholarly and popular perceptions of ancient traditions.

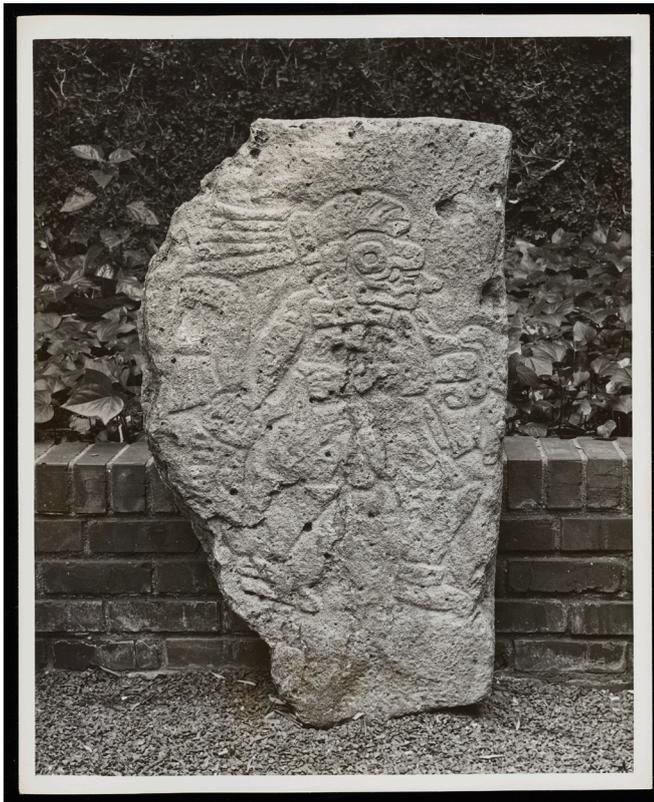


Fig. 8: Relief sculpture of feline-headed being, purportedly from Central Veracruz. Photo taken on the Stendahl family's patio, date unknown.  
Stendahl Art Galleries Records, 2017.M.38, b32, f1, Getty Research Institute.

## Conclusion

Modern conceptions of the ancient cultures that populated Central Veracruz during the Classic period have been shaped in no small part by looting and demands of the art market. The earthen mounds of south Central Veracruz and their contents were vulnerable to discovery through farming, oil extraction, industrial agriculture, and the development of the railroads and highways that supported these ventures. The portability of yokes, *palmas*, and *hachas*, and the convenient location of their findspots near port cities meant that ballgame objects were relatively easy to send abroad. Private collections of stone ballgame sculptures and other objects intrigued scholars, who used them to define Central Veracruz as a culture region.

The involvement of Stendahl Art Galleries with the looting and sale of pre-Hispanic objects coincides with the growth of the global art market for Latin American antiquities. Though Stendahl sold antiquities from across the Americas, this study of the joint venture of Earl Stendahl and Guillermo Echániz in the sale of Classic Veracruz ballgame objects reveals how the means by which they obtained objects for sale and their marketing strategies evolved, as well as the rise of value in the objects as they became more desirable to collectors. At first, Stendahl and Echániz scooped up objects that were already in circulation and, at times, had venerable collection histories and publication

records. High-profile art collectors such as the Arensbergs validated the aesthetic qualities of ancient objects and thereby “modernized” them, rendering origins and cultural meanings less relevant. At that point Stendahl, already a seasoned dealer of avant-garde artwork with an established clientele, was poised to capitalize on and cultivate a trend that reconfigured pre-Hispanic objects as *objets d’art*. As demand quickly outpaced supply, Stendahl and Echániz sought direct access to the sources of these objects by scouting and collecting them in the field.

In the case of Veracruz materials, the Stendahls did not rely solely on Echániz for long: by 1946 they had circumvented their partner to deal directly with Raúl Dehesa,<sup>77</sup> and by the mid-1950s they were working with other collector–dealers who kept them abreast of the market and close to “the diggers.”<sup>78</sup> Echániz, for his part, continued sourcing materials from the Gulf Coast.<sup>79</sup> While he has largely escaped the scrutiny of scholars for his role in the mid-century trafficking of pre-Hispanic art, his name is benignly attached to Veracruz via facsimiles of the Lienzos de Tuxpan;<sup>80</sup> a publication on pre-Hispanic stamps and seals discovered in Lerdo de Tejada;<sup>81</sup> and a collection bearing his name in the Museo del Fuerte de San Juan de Ulúa.<sup>82</sup>

Study of the global market for pre-Hispanic art reveals how the canon of Classic Veracruz art was formed through an interplay of collecting and scholarship. With few excavated examples, initial studies of Classic Veracruz ballgame sculpture were based on public and private collections of looted and decontextualized objects which, in turn, augmented their desirability and fueled further collecting. The increasing visibility of yokes, *hachas*, and *palmas* in publications and museum collections, clarification of their association with the Mesoamerican ballgame, and the definition of Classic Veracruz as an art style further enhanced the market value of these objects. By 1955, *palmas* sold for \$1200

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77 This is exhibited in a series of correspondence with Raúl Dehesa, 2017.M.38, b11, f1, GRI, as well as in numerous letters between Stendahl family members.

78 These included Alfonso Antuñano. AS to ES, undated, 2017.M.38, b105, f6, GRI; Joe Dammann to Stendahls, 16 Jan 1959, 2017.M.38, b105, f7, GRI. Antuñano was named alongside Echániz in a 1954 exposé on large-scale collectors involved in illicit activities. Mario Escurdia, “Saqueo de nuestras joyas arqueológicas,” *Mañana*, 25 Sept 1954, 97, Hemeroteca Nacional de México.

79 This is clear from the contents of several letters in the Stendahl archive, but also suggested by the existence of a Huastec stela referred to as the “Estela Echániz.” María Guadalupe Carreón, “Relieves,” in *Artes de México*, no. 187 (1976), 49–54. It was reportedly acquired through a 1967 exchange (two years after Echániz’s death) by the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin (Ident. Nr.: IV Ca 46141).

80 R.H. Barlow, *The Tamiahua Codices*, in *Notes on Middle American Archaeology and Ethnology* 64 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1946).

81 *Colección de sellos prehispánicos de barro cocido [...] en poder del Sr. Guillermo Echániz* (México: Museo de Artes Gráficas, 1959); Gaspar Mayagoitia Barragán, *Sellos arqueológicos veracruzanos* (México: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2021).

82 José Eduardo Novas Viveros, “Reseña de la Colección Guillermo M. Echániz,” Museo Fuerte San Juan de Ulúa, Lugares INAH. The description of this collection (which is largely composed of objects from West Mexico) claims that Echániz was a native of Córdoba, but as neither he nor his parents were born in Veracruz, further research is necessary to unpack this connection.

apiece and a yoke could fetch \$6000,<sup>83</sup> a considerable hike from the asking prices of \$450 and \$700 just 16 years earlier at the outset of the Stendahl-Echániz business venture. Meanwhile, increased looting obscured and destroyed the findspots and contexts of objects, leaving an incomplete picture of the broader material culture assemblages in which these objects circulated and the sites in which they were found, and redirecting the focus of scholarship to the objects themselves and their stylistic attributes. These objects came to partially define the cultural developments of the entire region and time period from which they are known.

Given the sheer quantity of pieces that entered museums and major collections during the mid-twentieth century, analysis of the art market has the potential to reframe or reorient the currently accepted canon of pre-Hispanic art, which was in no small part shaped by the taste and access of collectors and dealers such as Stendahl. The stylistic definition of Classic Veracruz art, based on portable looted objects, was limited in that it could only accommodate monumental expressions from El Tajín and a few other select examples. Other works from Central Veracruz that do not readily conform to the Classic Veracruz style have been ignored or overlooked by scholars, or, as in the case of the carved boulder purchased by Rockefeller, have been falsely attributed to other, better-known traditions to make them more appealing to buyers. Because the market was ultimately driven by the aesthetic sensibilities of collectors, and scholarship was based on their collections, the defined corpus of Classic Veracruz art is in some regards as modern as it is ancient.

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83 Invoice to Nelson Rockefeller, 18 April 1955, 2017.M.38, b5, f4, GRI.