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Bullock Museum celebrates traditional dresses of Mexico with new exhibit

Bilingual exhibition features outfits that represent traditions and culture of each Mexican state

SEPTEMBER 27, 2022 (AUSTIN, TX) — *Hilos de Tradición: Dresses of Mexico*, an exhibition created in collaboration with the Brownsville Historical Association, opens at the Bullock Texas State History Museum this Saturday, October 1. The exhibition is presented in Spanish and English and features outfits that represent the traditional textiles, art, dance, and culture of every state of Mexico.

“We’re very excited to bring this beautiful collection from Brownsville to the Bullock,” said Bullock Museum Director Margaret Koch. “Given the rich Mexican heritage of the State of Texas, we look forward to our visitors connecting with the artistry and heritage represented.”

The collection on which *Hilos de Tradición* is based was formed by the Brownsville chapter of the Pan American Round Table (PART), established in 1932 by Bessie Kirkland Johnson. Johnson encouraged the women in the Brownsville PART to begin collecting textiles as a way of learning more about Pan American countries and the women who lived there. Their collecting efforts, along with Johnson's own extensive collection of Mexican textiles, became the core of the Costumes of the Americas Museum. Today, now under the care of the Brownsville Historical Association, the collection has more than 3,000 unique pieces and is one of the largest collections of North, Central, and South American textiles.

Hilos de Tradición presents Mexican textiles as living traditions with roots that can be traced back thousands of years to the earliest peoples of Mesoamerica. The tools, patterns, materials, and techniques have evolved, with European influences and modernization contributing to the changes. Each piece of clothing in the exhibition speaks to the unique heritage of each Mexican state.

The exhibition begins with an exploration of Indigenous and European influences on textiles and the ways in which they have changed. The outfits are organized by themes that help visitors appreciate the weaving and embroidery traditions on display and how the dresses are used in dance, fiesta and ceremonies. Visitors of all ages will also have the opportunity to touch and examine cloth, embellishments, embroidery and woven designs, and try out basic embroidery stitches through interactive elements within the exhibition.



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Dresses in the exhibition include a vibrant fiesta gown from the state of Chiapas, a dress embroidered with an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe from Colima, an intricately woven dress from the village of Acaxochitlan in Hidalgo, a festival ensemble from Oaxaca, a bright dress designed for dancing from the state of Sinaloa, and more.

"Hilos de Tradición: Dresses of Mexico showcases the nature of the multifaceted Mexican identity. Some outfits were woven in the millenary indigenous back strap loom tradition; some embellished with Spanish and Flemish style lace; others amalgamated Asian embroidery techniques brought through the colonial trade. Through their varied shapes, materials, embellishments and motifs the dresses allow us to discover the climate, geography, history, industries and resources, beliefs and festivities each Mexican state has. To some, the exhibition will bring longing for a homeland, to many a desire to travel, and to others an admiration for the creativity and craftsmanship of the women who made the dresses," said Bullock Museum Deputy Director of Interpretation Josefa González Mariscal.

The public is invited to explore the exhibition during its opening weekend at H-E-B Free First Sunday on October 2. Exhibition admission is free from 10 am until 5 pm, and family activities will take place from 10 am to 2 pm. Museum members will celebrate the opening of the exhibition with an exclusive reception on Thursday, October 6 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm, and events highlighting the regional food, drink, music, and dance of Mexico will be offered throughout the run of the exhibition.

Hilos de Tradición is on view at the Bullock Museum October 1, 2022 through February 26, 2023. For more information, visit TheStoryofTexas.com.

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Hilos de Tradición is made possible in partnership with the Brownsville Historical Association.

Hilos de Tradición is sponsored by Univision Austin.

H-E-B Free First Sundays presented by H-E-B.

The Bullock Museum, a division of the Texas State Preservation Board, is funded by Museum members, donors, and patrons, the Texas State History Museum Foundation, and the State of Texas.

ABOUT THE BULLOCK MUSEUM

The Bullock Texas State History Museum, a division of the State Preservation Board and an accredited institution of the American Alliance of Museums, illuminates and celebrates Texas history, people, and culture. With dynamic, award-winning exhibitions, educational programming for all ages, and an IMAX® theater with the largest screen in Texas, the Museum collaborates with more than 700 museums, libraries, archives and individuals across the world to bring the Story of Texas to life.

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