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<b>Published by:</b> <i>The American Federation of Arts</i>		
<b>Director:</b> <i>Otto L. Spaeth</i>		
<b>Assistant Director:</b> <i>G. Burton Cummings</i>		
<b>National Headquarters:</b> 1262 New Hampshire Ave., N. W. Washington 6, D. C.		
<b>Editorial and Advertising Office:</b> 22 East 60th Street New York City 22		

The MAGAZINE OF ART is mailed to all chapters and members of The American Federation of Arts, a part of each annual membership fee being credited as a subscription. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 4, 1921, at the Post Office at Washington, D. C., under the act of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions: United States and possessions, \$6 per year; Canada, \$6.50; Foreign, \$7; single copies 75 cents. Published monthly, October through May. Title Trade Mark Registered in the U. S. Patent Office. Copyright 1951 by The American Federation of Arts. All rights reserved. All Mss. should be sent to the Editor. Unsolicited Mss. should be accompanied by photographs; no responsibility is assumed for their return.

MAGAZINE OF ART is indexed in Art Index and Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature.

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This sound and scholarly book reads like a tale of adventure and of conquest. It concerns itself with colonial sculpture, and, beyond that, with *mexicanidad*—that elusive mode poised between Spanish and Indian, centuries old, yet permanent and substantial enough to have sparked in our time the Mexican renaissance.

No postulated theory impelled the author to sort and label the splendid material she presents. Her stylistic appraisal never transcends the limits set by the piece of sculpture itself. Yet, describing and comparing her specimens without preconceived ideas has nevertheless resulted in clarifying the concept of *mexicanidad* to a point where it constitutes an unobtrusive thesis.

As the plot develops, Elizabeth Weismann does not hide from the reader what flaws and uncertainties assail her as she opens a path no straighter than it should be through the faintly surrealist maze of colonial Mexico's complex of cultures and of esthetics. In doubtful cases, her eye remains too lucid, her mind too honest, to accept over-facile or devious justifications. Concerned as the book may be with problems of style, it never fails to communicate the author's innocent delight in unusual or meaningful pieces; and her cool way of writing, that rates short words over long ones, rises if need be to the level of a controlled lyricism wherein the reader may share in the esthetic delectation so rarely experienced except in front of the sculpture itself.

Mexicans no more thought of art for art's sake in sculpture than they did in painting. Like the frescoes, the sculptures took their pre-ordained place in the setting of an architecture; the artist submitted his work without qualms to its decorative and dogmatic function as part of a church façade, a public fountain or an altarpiece.

When, at the end of the nineteenth century, Manuel G. Revilla sought to praise Mexican colonial sculpture, he could, in good neo-classical faith, dismiss as unworthy centuries of baroque or primitive achievements. For him, the lone masterpiece of Mexican sculpture was *el Caballito*, the bronze horse cast by Tolsa around 1800, its rider a Spanish king disguising his paunch under the toga of Marcus Aurelius. Revilla viewed the baroque with all the horror that the seventeenth century had reserved for the gothic. As to the anonymous Indian craftsmen whose unacademic, direct carvings form the bulk of this

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new book, Revilla would have strictly forbidden them access to his sanctum of the Three Fine Arts.

Revilla held a simple faith in Nature and in Beauty envisaged as a Greco-Roman monopoly. Since his time, we have witnessed a reappraisal of the European "dark ages," the discovery of African and Oceanian sculpture, and watched the byplay between surrealism and flamboyant baroque. An appreciation of our own modern art has helped include within the range of our admiration the abstract and primitive factors that are an undoubted part of *mexicanidad*. This new approach is, in its way, as ruthless as the old. Whereas ultra-baroque was the *bête noire* of Revilla, neo-classicism is in its turn ostracized, and Elizabeth Weismann relegates Tolsa's undoubted masterpiece to the limbo of scarcely two lines in a note.

The presentation of the book falls short of its merit. Even university presses may make a play for the public at large, but, in this case, with a book as engrossing as it is well informed, there was no need to play so ruthlessly low the indispensable scholarly apparatus. The notes are compressed at the back of the book in a type so small as to resemble microfilms. The undaunted scholar will find their reading as trying on his eyesight as it is mentally rewarding. The baby-blue of the paper jacket all but belies the sturdy contents.

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MAY 10 1951