

I can remember when I first read Bernal Diaz  
and Prescott's writings descriptions of Tenochtitlan

~~I felt~~ I felt obliged to ~~live~~ contemplate building  
a model

Ever since I first read the eyewitness accounts  
of the Conquest of Mexico by Cortez and Bernal Diaz

It is impossible for me to describe the many emotions  
I felt that day, <sup>when</sup> we first visited the great Temple of  
~~Mexico~~ <sup>Mexico</sup> ~~Mexico~~ <sup>Mexico</sup>. There were so many things to see so many  
that we had not seen before, ~~even~~ <sup>that</sup>, although we had been  
travelled ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> many parts of his kingdom for many  
months and had seen great cities and towns  
still nothing ~~quite~~ <sup>quite</sup> ~~like this~~ <sup>like this</sup> had <sup>quite</sup> prepared us  
for what ~~met~~ <sup>lay before us</sup> ~~lay before us~~ <sup>lay before us</sup>  
~~for what we now saw~~

About fifty of his Chiefs had  
accompanied us <sup>to the great gate</sup> ~~as well as~~ <sup>as well as</sup> ~~as well as~~ <sup>as well as</sup>  
four of their priests who ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> the respect they were  
shown by these Chiefs appeared to be men of some  
importance. We lingered outside the gate, the  
one with the great <sup>stone</sup> ~~eagle~~ <sup>on it</sup> ~~on it~~ while these Chiefs  
and the priests talked in ~~low~~ <sup>low</sup> ~~voices~~ <sup>voices</sup> in that  
quiet <sup>quiet</sup> ~~quite~~ <sup>quite</sup> pretty sounding way we were ~~already~~ <sup>becoming</sup> used to.

After ~~some~~ <sup>some</sup> the sun was high, apparently midday  
for while we were waiting, ~~the~~ <sup>many</sup> horns began to sound





of being alert to the possible defenses of the place, when ~~they kept~~ <sup>was</sup> their ~~rooms~~ should there be trouble.

In certain places I could see the shapes of the stones, <sup>from which it ~~was~~ built</sup> beneath the thin plaster surface which even at this time of day was very white. I should see as well that at its base this wall varied with the unevenness of the ground <sup>which in its</sup> and ~~that~~ <sup>presented</sup> the general softness of <sup>on this place</sup> ~~the stone~~ here must have ~~been~~ a constant problem to the builders of this place. <sup>I thought at that time that</sup> It would not be too difficult to pull the whole ~~wall~~ <sup>thing</sup> down should the need arise.

As for the gate itself, ~~although~~ <sup>would have</sup> as I remember that it did not seem as large as I expected for so grand a temple, only two rows of four rather tall columns had to be passed upon entering. ~~the~~ <sup>for the form of the gate, that</sup> was rather simple and heavy although it was lightened <sup>somewhat</sup> by some <sup>in places</sup> very colorful decorations ~~in places~~ including some rather large sculptures such as they ~~to~~ make here.

Since I had been <sup>officially</sup> charged by the Captain general with the duty of taking note of every possible defense this place could ~~and~~ offer the natives, I was especially alert to everything I saw although <sup>even now I must say that</sup> much of it was too strange and new to my understanding.

There was movement up ahead and before long we were ascending the four steps and passing through the colonnade. We descended

four more steps and were finally inside only to be delayed again as many priests and acolytes approached ~~us~~ in great clouds of smoke with hand fragriers. When they reached us they began to throw ~~hand~~ <sup>small</sup> handfuls of their aromatic resins on some hot coals filling ~~the~~ the entire air around us with great clouds of smoke. ~~These~~ <sup>their</sup> incensors rattled <sup>as they</sup> moved them back & forth ~~as they performed~~ <sup>performing us</sup> us from head to toe.

Their ~~chanting~~ <sup>voices</sup> were almost <sup>whispers</sup> and ~~as it seemed~~ <sup>chanting</sup> ~~each priest~~ <sup>each priest</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>chanting</sup> ~~chanting~~ something different. They were a strange looking lot. We hadn't seen anything like them in the rest of the city. ~~When~~ <sup>When</sup> ~~upon asking~~ <sup>upon asking</sup> we were told that these priests never left this place until a certain time had passed when they were allowed to cut their hair which was very long and horribly matted with the blood that kept oozing from the <sup>self-inflicted</sup> wounds in their ears. They were all very thin, their actions slow deliberate and feeble owing to ~~human~~ <sup>human</sup> nature of their penance. I remember also that during the entire time ~~they~~ we were among them ~~we~~ never once did they look at us in the face.

When this incensing was done I had my first chance to look around me.

On both sides of this gate and on a platform which seemed to me 9 or ten steps high were two large buildings which we were told contained ~~the~~ sacred weapons blessed by the gods and sanctioned by the ancestors that here



were also the personal insignia and arms of illustrious  
and famous men. We couldn't find out from them  
if these ~~tools~~ were the weapons of living or <sup>the</sup> dead. The  
way they answered us seemed to indicate both, but what  
they really wanted us to know was that there was a strict  
<sup>Custom</sup> ~~law~~ in this city, that no man could bear arms within  
its limits except by the permission of the sovereign and  
then only at certain times of the great festivals. ~~They~~  
~~It & really~~ <sup>surprised</sup> ~~the~~ ~~displeasure~~ ~~of~~ ~~their~~ ~~look~~  
~~expressed on our~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~moment~~ ~~of~~ ~~that~~

It was then <sup>that</sup> ~~that~~ <sup>Suddenly</sup> I realized why they looked at us with such subtle displeasure.  
Most of us were dressed in the native quilted cotton armor  
and wore ~~carved~~ <sup>wood</sup> sword and dagger. I could have  
ordered their removal but it was to our purpose  
to show these people that we were different, ~~that~~  
always alert and always prepared.

Next to these armories and on the same high  
~~extended~~ platform which seemed to go all  
the way around the square (although <sup>from</sup> where we  
stood we couldn't see this) there ~~was~~ was a  
row of buildings, ~~not~~ <sup>about</sup> 12 or 15 ft  
high with their ~~alemanas~~ and all gleaming white  
with beautiful decorations <sup>differing</sup> ~~varying~~ from one set  
of houses to the next. Some were like halls with  
~~rows~~ rows of pillars facing the square. Others ~~were~~  
were entered by small doors in rows. They said  
that these were places of penance, that the powerful  
of this land retired here on the eve of the great

Celebrations to purify themselves.

Activity resumed <sup>now that</sup> ~~once~~ the gods had been incensed. All along <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ row of buildings, ~~and~~ that part we could see, there were young men and boys ascending and descending the stairways ~~with~~ some with firewood others with many other kinds of burdens. We could see that they did not enter these ~~buildings~~ <sup>houses</sup> from the front but by a long alleyway that separated the rear of these buildings from the great Crenellated wall. This gave to some of us the mistaken impression that the square was surrounded by a great double wall when in ~~the~~ truth what we saw convinced us that, ~~this corner~~ <sup>it</sup> place was not built for defense.

A ~~small~~ short distance from the entrance we stopped at the base of what they called a <sup>some thirty feet on the side and</sup> divine brazier - a platform ~~some~~ twelve feet high with stairs on all four sides. It was brightly painted in several colors, but mostly a bright red in many strange and pretty designs. If one stood far enough back from it the bright blue celadinas that surrounded the <sup>central</sup> fire pit could be seen but there was no fire <sup>burning here</sup> ~~there~~ on ~~that~~ day. They said that when the sun was in this part of the ~~land~~ <sup>temple</sup> ~~square~~, the fires would be kept going night and day.

There were ~~so many things to see and~~ <sup>what we saw</sup> ~~and~~ much of it ~~so~~ had a kind of frightening ugliness.



very purpose was to  
about it as if its ~~size~~ <sup>by its very size</sup>  
make all men feel small. ~~The~~

~~The~~ A very tall platform on our right  
hand supported a great colonnade running  
north and south the whole construction towering  
some thirty to thirty five feet above us and very  
impressive. The <sup>space</sup> columns were elaborately <sup>carved</sup>  
and brightly painted and ~~behind them~~ and  
~~at the back of the arcade~~ <sup>the arcade was backed by a very thick wall</sup> ~~was a wall~~ beautifully  
painted with hundreds of <sup>small</sup> figures. It was penetrated  
by a single entrance.

~~The day~~

This they said was the house of their great god  
Tezcatlipoca who among so many other <sup>antiquities</sup> things guarded  
<sup>the city and the Aztec land</sup> ~~the~~ everything that could be seen and that he was constant  
in his vigilance. Our guide said that if we wished to  
see it better we could walk to the other side of the sacred  
road and view it from there, that as it faced the  
west and <sup>as</sup> ~~since~~ the time of day was right we could  
see the sun in the great mirrored panel over his  
doorway. And so we could - the sun in a black sky  
glittering and sparkling as it hit parts of the slightly  
uneven obsidian stones that made up the great  
mosaic panel. White stone skulls <sup>spaced</sup> in vertical and  
horizontal rows completed the ~~decoration~~ <sup>decoration</sup> of this  
part of the decoration. <sup>There</sup> were panels on each side  
of the upper story and the top of the building itself was  
topped by beautiful almanacs ~~and~~ intricately carved

and like so much else here brightly painted.

This building, <sup>on top of its pyramid</sup> was very high and large. In fact from where we stood it looked even higher than the great temple which stood in the middle of this vast place. We could see but not quite make the individual many sculptures in the narrow space between the top of the stairs and the doorway <sup>columns</sup> and complicated wall carvings and stucco work and many colorful banners of cloth <sup>paper and</sup> and feathers moving in the ~~considerable~~ <sup>both handsome and pretty</sup> winds at that height. The effect was one almost of prettiness.

Down below at our feet in front this colonnade were placed <sup>a great number</sup> ~~ten~~ <sup>a little</sup> ~~hundreds~~ of little food offerings each in its own painted dish and on its own palm reed mat. ~~Dozens~~ <sup>my</sup> of tiny braziers barely larger than a hand gave off their ~~smokes~~ <sup>smoke</sup>. Sweet smelling smoke, perfuming the air and mingling with other odors, ~~some~~ <sup>very</sup> strange <sup>ones</sup>, such as that given off by the native rubber which they burn in the form of small black balls like the lively ones they use in their ~~ball~~ games only much smaller. These gave off a thick black smoke of a sour smell. This they said was most pleasant to their gods of rain and to this great god above us who ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup>, as they said <sup>was</sup> like their shadow. There was another smell ~~it~~ <sup>there too!</sup> in the air there like that of a dead dog, <sup>some far away</sup> but not strong, <sup>my</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>but rather</sup> drifting in and out of ~~my~~ <sup>the</sup> nostrils ~~on the~~ <sup>as the light breeze</sup> as the light winds changed. And everywhere we went that day ~~we~~ <sup>the</sup> could ~~smell~~ <sup>smell</sup> there was a ~~light~~ <sup>light</sup> but pervading smell (on black



There is a principle in art which in the temple  
arrangement of things is a principle in art which in the temple

of cedar ~~wood~~ and other aromatic woods, these people use in the building of their more important houses. And I must not forget the perfumes of the many kinds of flowers they used in adorning the stairs, landings, doorways and insides of their buildings. These were often mixed with the bright green <sup>of</sup> leaves and branches of <sup>golden</sup> plants and trees in many shapes and forms each <sup>we were told,</sup> with its own meaning and purpose. There were long garlands which framed the steps of their temples or outlined the doorways. Others stood <sup>arrangements</sup> by themselves like statues only made with flowers <sup>entirely</sup> on a <sup>fixed to</sup> kind of bamboo frames. I asked if there was some great festival taking place that they should adorn these places so and was told that in the proper seasons it was always thus that here in the great plaza ~~their~~ gods were everything was stone or adobe and paved <sup>this place</sup> and white washed that the gods could only look beyond to the green places and that because there were only a few trees here mainly by the large ball court that it was the responsibility of the people to make the gods houses congenial and more like the natural places they preferred and so it was done.

We had seen these same things in <sup>many of</sup> the towns and cities ~~where~~ we had passed through, but never on our march inland ~~nor~~ but never in such profusion <sup>grand</sup> as ~~and~~ in the grandness of these, as these

There is a principle in art which in its simple  
vagueness ~~encompasses~~ <sup>as an art student</sup> all the perceptual changes  
an artist may encompass in his lifetime.

My teacher, John McCay, was the first to confront  
me with it when, <sup>as an art student</sup> on a painting field trip in Pennsylvania  
I had begun a watercolor of a rather complicated  
scene



primary  
purpose  
whose purpose is to serve

essentially

This small volume is ~~primarily~~<sup>visually and</sup> one of conclusions <sup>both for myself and for others</sup>  
~~serve~~ as a supplementary ~~source~~ for students  
of the great ceremonial square of Tenochtitlan.  
It is part chronicle in that <sup>it</sup> records the insights and  
discoveries ~~and~~ made during the lengthy <sup>as the result of</sup> process  
of ~~revisualizing~~ <sup>of synthesis and growth</sup> ~~what this~~  
of search and conjecture <sup>growth and synthesis and</sup>  
finally of realization of <sup>itself</sup> this critical place in the  
form of a working model created to serve  
as

It is my belief that a credible reconstruction  
of the Ceremonial Square of Tenochtitlan  
as it appeared to the Spaniards

This small volume is essentially a notebook  
of conclusions about the arrangement, ~~and~~ purposes  
of the buildings of the <sup>and</sup> appearances of the structures  
that made up the principle religious square of  
Tenochtitlan as it existed ~~in its last phase~~ at  
the time of the Conquest, by the forces of the <sup>Spanish</sup>

<sup>Although</sup> Since it has always been my primary aim, to create a  
model from which <sup>a series of</sup> paintings could be made, which  
would capture the flavor <sup>and convey</sup> of this place in what  
~~is~~ <sup>it</sup> ~~basically~~ an artistic aim, there is that other side of  
me that <sup>has sought</sup> ~~seeks~~ as deep an understanding of the subject  
as possible as well as a fundamental need to portray  
its appearance as ~~regularly~~ accurately as possible.

I realize that

seems

This is a kind of Don Quixote quest considering the fact that for all practical purposes that final phase of the <sup>city</sup> great square was utterly ~~erased~~ obliterated in the first few decades after the fall of the City. Only fragments of those <sup>native</sup> ~~phase~~ earlier phases covered over by the ~~sicums~~ themselves, exist today to hint at some of the looks and ~~placements of~~ <sup>the</sup> later constructions.

It all is not lost yet. There exists a rich <sup>body</sup> ~~store~~ of written commentary, many by eyewitnesses ~~was~~ both native and Spanish, ~~in many~~ which when read and reread with a sympathetic understanding opens up areas of possibility not evident at first. <sup>It</sup> that really do ~~up~~ expand as ~~and~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>as</sup> they really do. The more one comprehends the subject the more <sup>insights</sup> these sources offer, so much so that ~~it~~ is now believe that what I am trying to do is not just an ~~old~~ exercise, that a credible even if hypothetical, reconstruction of this most important place can be made not only to serve my purposes but which ~~is~~ simultaneously, exist, as a <sup>reality</sup> supreme teaching ~~and to any~~ source for the comprehension of the Mexica Cosmic view <sup>where ever possible</sup>. It ~~is~~ is my decision, therefore to let the original sources describe and comment on what I do here.

include Sahagun  
here



A reading of the famous Sahagun list of the seventy eight structures in the ceremonial square ~~reveals a~~ ~~com~~ reveals at once an area far more complex than any model has shown.

Not since Ignacio Marquina's ~~small~~ pamphlet describing his model of the great square has any penetrating work been done on this subject and not even his attempted to reconcile the Sahagun list <sup>the surviving and other Aztec descriptions of the place</sup> ~~with the subsequent model or for the many~~ with any kind of reconstructed equivalent.

A student trying to find his way through the present museum models by the use of <sup>these ancient</sup> the actual Aztec descriptions of this place - both ~~Spanish~~ <sup>just</sup> and native, would be find it impossible to know where he was. ~~He is to promptly~~ <sup>the discrepancy</sup> ~~lose track that this aspect of~~ ~~any what was really an artistic project~~

Even though the project may bother and have a situation both frustrating and ultimately discouraging.

It has been three decades since Marquina's work <sup>with and not only the archaeological</sup> years that have seen dramatic ~~the~~ discoveries of the great temple itself ~~and~~ those of Pino Suarez and further explorations of Tlatelolco, but have seen as well the publication of many first <sup>life and thought</sup> ~~rate~~ books on the amazing interrelated complexities of Aztec ~~religion~~ <sup>religion</sup> and other aspects of ~~of world view and daily life~~ world view. Many of the primary sources are now available <sup>for the first time</sup> in translation ~~as well~~ and even the ~~conclusion~~ <sup>results</sup> of entirely new disciplines such as





✱

Some thirty years ago Ignacio Marquina published a small pamphlet to serve as a guide book for a large model he and his associates built of the great Aztec Ceremonial Square of Tenochtitlan.

Although from time to time there have been serious efforts to

In spite of <sup>the</sup> various plans and museum models of the <sup>great temple present</sup>  ~~sacred square~~ of ancient <sup>Mexico</sup> Tenochtitlan <sup>of this very important site</sup> no really penetrating study has ever been made <sup>Not even the above mentioned attempt</sup>  ~~of this heart of the empire~~. None of  ~~these~~ even <sup>efforts</sup> even begin to convey the complexity and add, enough the real glory of the place <sup>nor, do they</sup>  ~~and~~ <sup>any of them</sup>  ~~make~~ attempt to reconcile <sup>available</sup>  ~~the primary~~ the  ~~best~~ primary source material with their results.

- ① thirty years since Marquina time for new assessment because of more & better information review of primary sources
- ② My aim

Temples at Teotihuacan  
and of Cihuatlan both  
contain many idols —

They are earth containers  
like seed pods  
one in the east  
and one in the north



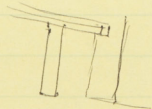
The model described and explained in  
this small volume is, as far as I am aware, the first  
and only ~~only~~ <sup>comprehensive</sup> first truly comprehensive attempt  
at a reconstruction of the great ceremonial square of  
Mexico-Tenochtitlan as it appeared on the eve of the  
conquest in 1520.

Fundamental to this effort has been the desire to  
reconcile the original eyewitness accounts and the  
later descriptions <sup>given by</sup> <sup>informants</sup> of the native survivors given to such  
chroniclers as Bernardino de Sahagun, Fray Diego Duran  
and others.

However in order to apply this information, <sup>we need</sup> requires  
in a profound and sympathetic knowledge of the  
entire Aztec Cosmic view, their visual and symbolic  
languages. The functions and purposes of their  
ceremonial life. The influences of the stars and  
planets upon their sense of the time space connection  
their intricate social structure and the meanings  
of the stages of their lives from birth to death.

Then there is the ~~further connection~~  
Then we must know how the Aztecs <sup>expressed</sup> ~~expressed~~

has placed within the continuum of Mesoamerican  
thought





The model pictured and described on the following pages represents one of the intermediate stages of an ongoing effort to capture in a series of paintings some of the magnificence and mystery of the Aztec Capitol of Tenochtitlan as it appeared to the Spaniards ~~on~~ the eve of its Conquest in 1520.

Although my aims <sup>are one</sup> ~~have always been~~ basically artistic ones, I realized <sup>early</sup> in the project that <sup>it</sup> I was going to satisfy <sup>my</sup> ~~my~~ <sup>additional</sup> relentless demands for visual accuracy I was going to have to work from a series of subject models in order to solve the <sup>technical</sup> many problems of ~~lighting~~ <sup>obtaining from measurements and</sup> scale and relative distances presented by shifting viewpoints as ~~I moved around the subject~~ viewpoints, scale and lighting etc.