Cultural traditions, values, and beliefs are revealed in the objects people create and use every day. At the William Hammond Mathers Museum in Bloomington, Indiana University's museum of world cultures, artifacts from near and far are collected, preserved, researched, and exhibited to increase our understanding of those who have created them. Revolving exhibitions at the museum seek to explain, through the display of artifacts, how different peoples solve such common problems of daily life as how to keep warm, cure someone, or even build a home.

Among the exhibits at the Mathers Museum this Fall was one depicting how the Maya Indians of Chichicastenango, Guatemala, celebrate their major festival. The exhibit, Festival's Many Faces: A Look at Fiesta Santo Tomas, gave visitors an opportunity to experience the excitement of a traditional Guatemala fiesta through the media of sound and touch, as well as sight. The five-day fiesta, which takes place annually from December 17 to 21, was captured through photographs, music, and a variety of artifacts including costumes and masks worn during the celebration honoring St. Thomas, the patron saint of the Mayas of Chichicastenango. A central piece of the exhibit was the brilliantly dressed and masked figure of Conquistador Pedro Alvarado (pictured above), which greeted visitors at the entrance to the exhibition.

A highlight of the exhibit was the Saturday, November 19, performance by the Chicago-based Guatemalan Marimba Cultural Group, Oxib K'ajau, whose leader, Carlos Meija, is from Chichicastenango. In addition, Meija led a workshop on the traditional music and instruments of the highland Maya, and discussed the symbolic role of the marimba in the national consciousness of Guatemala.

The exhibition, which ended in December, was organized by Tom Kennedy, curator for education at the Mathers Museum. Most of the artifacts were collected by Kennedy and his wife Arleigh at the 1986 celebration of Fiesta Santo Tomas.