



By Roma Stocks

Chalchiuhtlicue - 1200-1521 A.D.- Sculpture - Gray basalt, red ochre. 2009.33

This sculpture was created by one of the natives of present day Mexico, the Aztecs.

Depicted here in their classic monumental style, Chalchiuhtlicue, "She of the jade skirt" Aztec goddess, played an important role in the Aztec belief system. Wife of the rain god Tlaloc, she was the goddess of lakes and streams, embodying water's gentle and restorative aspects. She is often carved from green stone as befits her name.

Please take a moment to look at this sculpture. What type of expression is depicted on her face?, If you could lift it, how heavy might it be?, What representations embodying water might we see in today's artworks?

Key points to consider for this piece:

1. Women experiencing pregnancy and childbirth prayed to Chalchiuhtlicue for her protection.
2. She was also connected to agricultural fertility and maize, a staple crop of the Aztec. The hands of this altar figure would have held corn stalks or other elements related to this role.
3. The vertical incisions on the goddess's face, marking her high status and association with water, would have contained shell or precious stone, as would have the cavity in her chest, symbolic of her heart.
4. Stone figure with red pigment stands on black wood base with hands touching index finger to thumb; face incised on either side with rectangular markings; headdress crowns figure with large ear ornaments; small drill hole in center of chest.
5. In the complex Aztec calendar, Chalchiuhtlicue is one of the nine Companions of the Night, who were believed to have created the world. She was also considered one of the thirteen Companions of the Day. She is the patron Goddess of the 5th day of the calendar. She was "universally revered by the Nahua peoples and even into the time of the Spanish conquest.