



**NAVAJO AND
MEXICAN
RUGS
FROM THE
COLLECTION OF
DOCTOR W.B. SUTCH**

**AUCKLAND
ART GALLERY
MAY 22 TO
JUNE 14
1959**

INTRODUCTION

THE ARTICLES shown in this exhibition are part of a collection built up by Dr W. B. Sutch over a number of years, during his travels or official posts in Europe, the Middle East and America. The rugs shown here are, of course, from the southern and central parts of North America, bought there by Dr Sutch where they were woven. There are no true rugs — floor coverings — in this exhibition. Today's more sophisticated buyers of these rugs may use them to cover their walls or floor; but in reality their original very practical function was to cover or protect the body, human or animal.

TERMS USED

SERAPE — an all-purpose garment, used as a kind of cloak or as a bed covering. When not worn it is carried longitudinally folded over the shoulder.

PONCHO — a form of 'jacket' or short cape with a slit or hole in the centre for the head.

SADDLE BLANKET — folded and placed under the wooden saddle to protect the horse's body.

SADDLE THROW — folded and placed over the wooden saddle to protect the rider's body.

NAVAJOS — a sub-tribe of the Apache Indians of North America, mainly resident in New Mexico reservation.

REBOZO — a form of scarf or shawl, worn by women.

THE CATALOGUE

1 Navajo *serape* (woollen) in colours red, black, brown, grey and white, with stripes and corn theme; stitched at edges. Size (approximately) 10' x 6'

This rug is based on the size and shape of the *serape*, the design being a compromise between the traditional triangles and stripes, and a religious theme (ripe corn), adapted so that there is no sacrilege. Red and black are the only dyes used (note the different intensities of red with different dye batches). Other colours are straight from the sheep's back. Stitching at the edge is characteristic of Navajo work.

2 Navajo *serape* (woollen) in colours black, white, brown, red, blue, orange and green, in stripes with recurring theme of corn gods. Size (approximately) 3' 6" x 7'

This is based on, but about one inch longer than, the ordinary *serape*. The theme of corn gods recurs like the repetition of a prayer. The design is adapted from a religious sand drawing but is not a copy (to avoid sacrilege). Note variations in colour and 'weight' of stripes. The rug is in a combination of dyed and undyed wools.

3 Navajo *serape* (woollen): a copy of a ceremonial sand-drawing in various colours and with a theme of alternate gods and corn enclosed by a red and blue extension of the body of the god on an off-white background. Size (approximately) 6' x 3' 9"

This *serape* has a copy of a ceremonial design in the secret ritual at springtime planting and sowing. The original design was done by a 'priest' on the public square of the village, in sand of various colours, and destroyed the same day. The figures are gods representing hunting and harvest, with arrowheads, ceremonial dress — all surrounded by the symbol of the god of eternal life.

4 Navajo *serape* (woollen): traditional triangular design, separated by stripes, in colours dark and light brown, red and white. Size (approximately) 3' 8" x 5' 8"

The design is based on fir trees or perhaps mountains reflected in a lake. Stripes are in the oldest tradition.

5 Navajo rug (woollen) based on saddle blanket, in colours black, grey, light brown, and white. Size (approximately) 4' x 5'

This rug is based on, though larger than, the saddle blanket. The design is a triangular simplification of fir trees and mountains. The only dye probably used is in intensification of the back wool; the break in the grey colour shows where a different sheep's wool was taken by the weaver.

6 Navajo saddle throw (woollen): a simplified fir tree and mountain design with breaks in colour with use of different sheep's wool, in colours dark brown, grey-brown, red and off-white. Size (approximately) 1' 6" x 3'

7 Navajo saddle throw (woollen) with simplified tree and distant mountain design, in colours dark brown (black?), red and off-white. Size (approximately) 1' 5" x 3'

8 Mexican *rebozo* (silk): finely woven, with coarse woven ends and fringes, in colours black, pink, mauve, yellow and white, in stripe design. Size (approximately) 2' 6" x 8'

9 Mexican *serape* made from cactus fibre, in various shades — red, pink, green, yellow, orange, black, blue and off-white: a design of thin stripes with recurrent broad red stripes and coarse fringe at each end. Size (approximately) 4' 4" x 7' 3"

This Mexican *serape* from the Saltillo district is the only rug in the collection made not from wool but from cactus (maguey) fibre, and perhaps a little cotton. The pulp of the maguey yields alcohol and the fibre, used in textiles, takes brilliant dyes with good effect.

10 Mexican *poncho* (woollen) with thick fringe, in colours of dark brown, light brown-grey, black and off-white. Design is broad and narrow stripes and lines with two wide stripes containing fretted motif, and the diamond-shaped design in the centre. The *poncho* is sewn down the centre. Size (approximately) 3' 2" x 6'

This *poncho* comes from Mexico City. Note Greek-like 'fretted' design at sides, similar to embellishment of Aztec buildings. As in this *poncho*, there were no curves in original Mexican architecture. Colours are mainly those of washed wool – perhaps slightly intensified.

11 Mexican *rebozo* (woollen) in plain off-white, with open-work and fringe at each end. Size (approximately) 1' 9" x 6' 6"

This *rebozo* is woven in clean wool without any colouring material.

12 Mexican *serape* (woollen) with design in centre of eagle with snake, in colours of red, green, orange and blue. Central design is enclosed by broad and narrow stripes of black, grey-brown and off-white. There is a fringe at each end and the *serape* is sewn down the centre. Size (approximately) 5' x 7'

This Mexican *serape* (the eagle is worn at the back) in its design represents the theme of a fulfilled prophecy to wandering tribes that they would found Mexico City at a place recognisable by an eagle with a snake in its mouth, perched on a cactus or a rock in water. Note architectural designs and attempts at curves (built up by straight lines). The *serape* is sewn down the centre owing to limited span of loom. Green, white and red are Mexican national colours.

13 Mexican *serape* (woollen) with central design of pre-Christian Mexican gods, flanked by stair-like figures and enclosed by broad and narrow stripes in colours of purple, blue, yellow, green, red, black and white. Sewn down centre and fringed at ends. Size (approximately) 4' 3" x 6' 3"

This Mexican *serape* is from Oaxaca. Note architectural motif.

