Aztec Exhibition, Melbourne Museum – video transcript 2/6/14

Suzi Macbeth:

The exhibition of Aztec artefacts is a once-in-a-lifetime event, and it’s on here at the Melbourne Museum. Just inside are relics from an ancient world – the Aztec civilization that flourished from the 13th to 16th centuries in what is now modern-day Mexico.

Narrator:

Dr Ralph Newmark and his colleagues at La Trobe University’s Institute of Latin American Studies will be sharing some of their expertise with the Melbourne public during the exhibition.

Dr Ralph Newmark:

We have looked I think to Europe and more recently obviously to Asia, but there is a whole region of the world that really is not covered, and that’s the Americas, and particularly in our case Latin America, which has an absolutely rich and dynamic history.

Dr Barry Carr:

Latin America is merging as a really powerful region politically as well as economically. And for the first time in the last say 20-25 years, people who speak Spanish and Portuguese are emerging in Australia as a pretty significant group in the population.

Narrator:

Latin American history goes back thousands of years, and the Aztecs were only the last in a long line of civilisations that were changed forever by the arrival of the Spanish in 1519.

Dr Ralph Newmark:

I think Mexican identity is very much tied in with the fact that they really are the inheritors if you like of a series of glorious civilisations, which of course culminated with the Aztecs prior to the conquest.

Narrator:

While the presence of the Aztec artefacts in Melbourne might be a rare event, the study of Latin America has been underway at La Trobe University since 1976.

Dr Ralph Newmark:

There’s a lot to learn from the Aztecs; I think we can see that there civilization that they lived in harmony with the environment. It can teach us a lot about sustainable development in the future. Many of the civilisations that preceded them got out of kilter.

Dr Barry Carr:

Those people that really know about Frida Kahlo for example, or Diego Rivera, the Aztecs mean something very different for them because that world, the world that finds the Day of the Dead, the Calavera Skull, the Skeleton.

These great powerful symbols that have passed into everything from cooking, to music and into film, they are also part of the heritage of the Aztecs.

Suzi Macbeth:

The Aztec civilisation is just one element of the rich historical tapestry that makes up today’s Latin America. This exhibition is a testament to that.

END