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Note to editors: Images of Maximón available by request

Meet Maximón, Maya's dapper deity with attitude

VICTORIA, BC— In this season of all things supernatural, meet Maximón, aka St. Simón or “the dapper deity.” He’s the booze-loving, cigar-chomping Maya folk saint who likes to be spat on before granting prayerful petitions for good—and even evil—deeds.

When it comes to the spirit world, Maximón’s a big personality—and wannabe ghostbusters can meet him for themselves at the Royal BC Museum’s feature exhibition, [Maya: The Great Jaguar Rises](#).

In the exhibition he sits, appropriately, in a spot that marks the transition between ancient and modern Maya. In his dark suit and black hat, surrounded by candles, coins and quantities of cheap alcohol, he’s a brooding presence.

Maximón blends several historical, biblical and Mayan mythological figures—an example of religious syncretism, where different belief systems merge.

The modern deity is rooted in the story of a wise Guatemalan elder known as Ri Laj Mam—“the great grandfather”—who tried to protect his people and their traditions from the conquering Spanish in the 1600s.

He had a near-magical ability to elude the authorities. When he was eventually captured, his spirit energy remained behind in a *tz’ite* tree which was cut into four pieces and sent to protect the four corners of Guatemala.

Three centuries later, Ri Laj Mam’s story was linked with another protector-of-the-people—Don Francisco Zojbel, aka Ximon.

Born of a Spanish father and a Maya mother, Don Francisco was a cigar-smoking, hard-drinking ladies’ man—but also a fair and compassionate judge whose work on behalf of the poor and disenfranchised put him at odds with Guatemala’s rich and powerful: he successfully avoided several assassination attempts.

Modern Maximón is a saint with attitude: a trickster who represents humanity’s inherently complex nature. He contains both light and shadow and can deliver either good or evil, making him the only saint who is simultaneously adored



and feared by those who venerate him—with a puff of cigar smoke and a spit of liquor.

(But not at the Royal BC Museum, where this particular folk saint gets by without benefit of booze, smokes—or spitting!)

Meet Maximón at [Maya: The Great Jaguar Rises](#) until Dec. 31, 2019. Buy tickets at the door or [online](#).

About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province’s human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Located in Victoria on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations), we are a hub of community connections in BC—onsite, offsite and online—taking pride in our collective histories.

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