

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2010

CONTACT: Martha Ehringer, 619-239-0003, x 113

### VISIT MINGEI INTERNATIONAL TO DISCOVER CEREMONIAL ART FOR HOLY WEEK, EASTER AND PASSOVER

Among the diverse objects gathered for the exhibition RITE AND RITUAL – Ceremonial Art across Cultures at Mingei International Museum in Escondido are examples of traditional objects used to celebrate Holy Week and Passover in South America, Africa and Europe.

A three-foot high, five-level *retablo* (portable shrine), made in 1994 in Ayacucho, Peru is a folk art marvel depicting a grand *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) procession winding through the streets of a Peruvian town. There are some 500 human figures in traditional dress: women wearing shawls and head coverings and men wearing serapes and broad-brimmed hats or pointed caps with ear flaps. Church officials wear ecclesiastical robes, and other people carry banners or are costumed as angels.

Crowds surround tiered stages, white with silver trim and ablaze with candles like immense wedding cakes. Atop these, however, are figures of Jesus: entering Jerusalem on a donkey, fallen under the cross, hanging on the cross and being carried in a glass-covered coffin to the sepulcher, and on the topmost level, Jesus rises from the tomb.

A collection of lacey, silver crosses and a Coptic Bible from Ethiopia elegantly represent the iconography of that ancient civilization.

A central object of the Passover feast is a Seder Plate. A late nineteenth century example of this special serving piece is in the exhibition. Made in Europe of hand-painted porcelain, the plate from a private collection is still used to serve the six traditional foods at the ceremonial meal — *maror and chazeret* - bitter herbs, *charoset* - a sweet brown pebbly mixture, *karpas* - a vegetable other than bitter herbs, *z'roa*- a roasted lamb or goat shank bone or a chicken wing or neck and *beitzah* - a hard-boiled egg. Accompanying the seder plate are brass candlesticks from Russia and a ritual oil lamp from Germany, all made in the early eighteenth century. These would have been lit in a synagogue during Passover, once every few years when the feast fell on the Sabbath.

These objects, appropriate to this season, invite viewers to look with fresh eyes at the ceremonies and rituals in their lives; and at the objects they use for them.

Mingei International Museum is located at 155 West Grand Avenue in downtown Escondido. For information call 760-735-3355. . Hours are Thursday - Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Second Saturday hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. featuring family programs during the day and free admission between 4 and 8 p.m. Admission is complimentary on the First Thursday of each month. Admission prices of \$3 for adults and \$2 for seniors, youth (6-17), students and active duty military with ID.

Mingei International Museum exhibits folk art, craft and design from all eras and cultures of the world. Its two museums – in Balboa Park and downtown Escondido – feature Southern California's largest and richest collection of mingei – art of the people.

Mingei International Museum is funded in part by The City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture and The County of San Diego Community Enhancement Program.

Retablo  
Peru, 1994  
Wood, mixed media

