

More Information on Helen Elaine Talle Collection

Construction of the Solis Dam in 1949 flooded much of the land in the Acombro, Mexico area and forced existing villages to relocate to a new site down-river which they named Chupicuaro Nuevo. Many sites were hastily excavated by local families prior to the flooding. The term Chupicuaro refers to the culture and peoples geographically defined by the land immediately associated with the village of the same name located in the heart of present day Mexico, northwest of Mexico City, along the Lerma River. Activity flourished in the area during the late Pre-Classic and Terminal Classic periods, roughly 300 BCE – 200 CE, during which time these pieces were made.

Ceramics from Chupicuaro are widely admired for their consistent craftsmanship. Pieces commonly display thick walls, which lent a functional durability to the wares. The clay body, or paste, is uniformly brown in color and quite coarse, and firings were done at moderate temperatures. Pottery pieces are broadly divided into black wares and red (or painted) wares, and are characterized by the standardization of vessel shapes, designs, and motifs. Clay figurines were also hand-modeled, and were typically decorated on the front only. Attention generally centered on the head in both modeling and decorating, a common feature on figurines made throughout Meso-America at that time.