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Art: 'Interventions,' On U.S. Latin Role

By GRACE GLUECK

Also of interest this week:

"Reconstruction Project" (Artists Space, 105 Hudson Street): Another response to Artists Call, this collaborative show — organized by Sabra Moore, an artist — contains work by 20 women, commemorating four Mayan manuscripts that survived a series of book burnings in the Yucatan in the late 16th century. The destroyed manuscripts recorded — in pictographs and hieroglyphs — details of Mayan history, art and religion; their destruction was undertaken by Spanish priests, among them the Franciscan missionary Diego de Landa, a Mayan scholar and later Bishop of Yucatan, who campaigned against such unnerving Mayan customs as the sacrifice of children.

As an homage to Mayan culture, the 20 artists have "reconstructed" one of the surviving manuscripts, a largely astronomical treatise known as the Dresden Codex. Theirs is a copy of the original format, a folded gessoed book 8 inches high by 11¾ feet long, with each artist allotted two pages for her own interpretation. The resulting creation is displayed flat, page sewn to page, on a long, narrow table. Some of the work is beautiful, some very lively, in particular Frances Buschke's charred-looking tablets in a collage with bits of paper; Colleen Cutschall's intricate composition of two Mayan gods (Rain and Death) surmounted by an American eagle, on a close-hatched ground that cleverly suggests bead work, and Holly Zox's poem about a Jewish grandmother (honest!) illustrated with Mayan symbols.

Each artist has also contributed a larger work, relating in color to one of the four directions in the Mayan cosmology — red for east, white for north, black for west, yellow for south — with each work hung on a wall facing the direction that corresponds to its color. Oddly, none is as inspired or interesting as the small-format pages. (Through Feb. 18.)