Pyramids of Giza And Pyramids Of The Aztecs

The Aztecs were known for and are still popularly remembered for their brutality and violence towards their neighbors and enemies. Aztecs are the name that western society has placed on them, but they actually referred to themselves as Mexica's, which is where the name Mexico came from. The Aztecs were interested in architecture, music, sculpture, and pottery. It's capital, Teotihuacan, was one of the most advanced cities of it's time. Despite the popular image that is painted on the Aztecs, they were actually a very artistic society.

If you would consider the largest pyramid to be the best, then it would have to be the Great Pyramid of Cholula which is located in the city of Cholula, Puebla, Mexico. In the article, Great Pyramid of Cholula: World's Largest Pyramid by A. Sutherland, Sutherland states, "Located in Cholula, Puebla, Mexico, the pyramid stands 55 meters (180ft) above the surrounding plain, and in its final form it measured 400 by 400 meters (1,300 by 1,300) (Sutherland). The Great Pyramid of Cholula is a massive structure and it is the largest pyramid known to exist in the world today. In the article, Reinterpreting the Great Pyramid of Cholula, Mexico by Geoffrey G. McCafferty, McCafferty states, "The Great Pyramid was built in four major construction stages and at least nine minor modifications. Early stages shared stylistic similarities with Teotihuacan, but toward the end of its construction history external contacts shifted to the Gulf Coast, particularly El Tajin, and probably relate to occupation by ethnic Olmeca-Xicallanca. The fourth and final stage was contemporary with extensive construction on the south side at the Patio of the Altars, and dates to the Early Postclassic period (McCafferty 1)". Even though it was built a long time ago, The Great Pyramid of Cholula continues to be an extremely important religious site in Mexico. McCafferty says, "The Great Pyramid of Cholula is both the largest and oldest continuously occupied building in Mesoamerica (McCafferty 1)". To confirm this, Sutherland reaffirms, "The Great Pyramid of Cholula has a base four times the size of that of the Pharaoh Khufu's Great Pyramid of Giza and is the largest pyramid base in the Americas (Sutherland)". What seems especially interesting about Sutherland's statement is that the Great Pyramid of Cholula isn't as popular or mainstream as of Pharaoh Khufu's Great Pyramid of Giza. If one is asked to close their eyes and imagine or visualize a pyramid of any size it is almost certain that one will imagine or visualize the Pharaoh Khufu's Great Pyramid of Giza.

I think the main reason, or at least a major reason, is that when one thinks of the Aztecs most of us automatically envision and we remember the Aztec society as a very war-oriented society, how they would murder or sacrifice thousands of slaves in the matter of days, and define them by their brutality and violence, not by their artistic and architectural capabilities. In the article, Aztec Warriors Fighting for Conquest and Captives, it reveals, "The primary objective of most Aztec warfare was to subjugate other cities and lands to extract tribute. Everyone in Aztec society benefited from a successful battle of campaign. Captives of the war would be sacrificed to the gods, ensuring continued benevolence from the gods to the Aztecs". Even though the Pharaoh wasn't innocent at all and Egypt wasn't the most peaceful society, I think what some would call the beauty, the fact of it being built by slaves, and the mystery around how the slaves were able to carry the massive rocks to the top of the pyramid of the Pharaoh Khufu's Great Pyramid of Giza overpaints the ugly part of their society and makes people think more of the Great Pyramid of Giza as it is more mainstream.

The Sun Stone, popularly known as the Aztec Calendar (most people get confused or are ill informed believing that the Sun Stone is an actual working calendar), is also a beautiful and one of the most popular pieces of art that were created by the Aztecs. Every time of many times I've been to Mexico, stores and people on the street are selling replicas of the Sun Stone in forms of shirts, chains, paintings, pictures, moldings, forms of pottery, etc. In the article, Star Patterns on The Aztec Calendar Stone by Robert S. McIvor, McIvor writes, "The Aztec calendar stone, or Stone of the Fifth Sun, is a basaltic disk measuring twelve feet in diameter and three feet in thickness and weighing twenty-four metric tons. It was uncovered in 1790 in Mexico City in what was once the central square of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan and is now on permanent display at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City. The principal feature of the stone is the perfectly circular image that is a chock-a-block with mesmerizing Aztec symbols (McIvor 56)". McIvor continues, "The tongue is actually a stone knife, an at either side of the face its claws grasp human hearts. The stone has a religious quality with the ability to shock and attract simultaneously. It was a sacred object in Aztec religious liturgy, and incorporated their astronomy and their worship, as well as their interpretation of past history and their eschatology (doctrine of future events). It is, if one may describe it so, a stone of fiendish holiness or un-holiness which might explain its mystical quality (McIvor 56)". The calendar represents the Aztec belief that the universe had already passed through four world creations, which had all been destroyed. We are now in the fifth creation, which is doomed to destruction by earthquakes.