

BOCA RATON MUSEUM OF ART

**ART OF THE
ANCIENT AMERICAS
GALLERY GUIDE**

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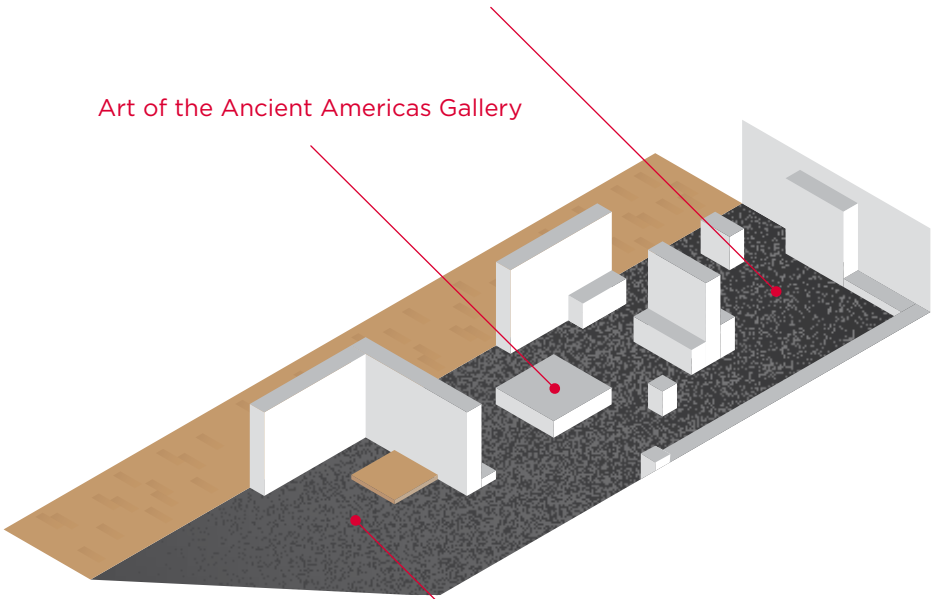
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African Collection Gallery

Art of the Ancient Americas Gallery



Modern and Contemporary Gallery

INTRODUCTION

The people who lived throughout the ancient Americas built complex cities, some of which had populations of well over a hundred thousand, created works of art that have endured the centuries, and operated in a globalized world where they traveled widely, exchanging goods and ideas. There were many unique cultures that existed throughout the ancient Americas. The earliest culture you see in this gallery, the Tlatilco, thrived in the Central Mexico from around 1800 BCE through 400 BCE. Other cultures, such as the Aztec in central Mexico and Inca in the Andes, were expansive empires at the height of their power into the contact period, when the Spanish first invaded the Americas. When thinking of ancient American cultures, it is important to consider the diversity of peoples that lived over this large geographic region for thousands of years. These cultures continue to play a crucial role in our society, as they shape the identities, artwork, and beliefs of many people today.



1. Laughing Figure, Remojadas artist, Mexico, 550-950 CE, polychrome mold-made buff earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

2. Face of Maquetaurie-Guayaba, Lord of the Land of the Dead, Taíno artist, Dominican Republic, 1200–1500 CE, stone. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

3. Bichrome Figure of a Man with Arms Outstretched, Chancay artist, Peru, 1100–1400 CE, earthenware with crème slip and black pigments. Acquired 2007; Gift of Dr. Gerald J. Shepps

4. Standing Woman with Elaborate Headdress, Tlatilco, Mexico, 1150 BCE-550 CE, buff clay terracotta with traces of white pigment. Acquired 2009; From the Estate of Eleanor Simon

The period of time in Mesoamerica referred to by academics as the Formative Period stretched from around 1800 BCE through 200 CE. During this time period, various cultures created large cities, codified religion, and developed iconographic systems. This figure is from the important Formative Period cultural area, Tlatilco, located in Central Mexico.

5. Standing Articulated Figure, Veracruz artist, Mexico, 550-950 CE, earthenware with bituminous paint. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker



6. Stirrup Spout Vessel, Chimú-Incan artist, Peru, 1000-1470 CE, terracotta with ebony glaze (Chimú greyware), blackware. Acquired 1994; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Bernhardt

7. Blind Spout Vessel, Paracas artist, Peru, 400-100 BCE, ceramic. Acquired 2009; Gift of Mr. Gordon DeBoard

8. Dog/Man Wine Flask, Mochica artist, Peru, n.d., terracotta. Acquired 1994; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Bernhardt

9. Zoomorphic Vessel with Bridge-Strap Handle, Chimú artist, Peru, 1000-1470 CE, blackware pottery. Acquired 2007; Gift of Dr. Gerald J. Shepps

This vessel is an example of the stirrup spout vessel form, which received its title because the spout of the vessel resembles a riding saddle stirrup. This was a popular style produced by different cultures in the Andes. Here you see one made by an artist from the Chimú culture, which spanned between 1000 – 1470 CE on the north coast of what is now Peru. The vessel you see here depicts a bird face and beak forming the vessel's handle opposite the offset tail spout, and connected by a bridge/strap handle.

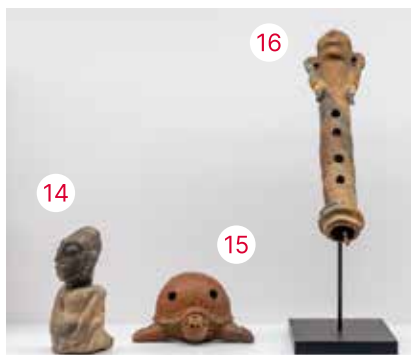


10. Standing Female Figure, Remojadas artist, Mexico, 550-950 CE, earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

11. Seated Figure of Moon Goddess Ixchel with Old God N, Mayan artist, Mexico, 600-900 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

12. Mask Pendant Head, La Tolita artist, Ecuador, 300 BCE-300 CE, earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

13. Seated Figure, Nayarit artist, Mexico, 400 BCE-400 CE, redware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker



Flower World, or the paradisaical realm of ancestors, is a solar paradise filled with flowers, birds, and butterflies. Many cultures throughout Mesoamerica believed in variations of this solar paradise. In the Maya area, music first originated in Flower World and was later delivered to earth by the maize god. In order to reach the ancestors and deities that resided in Flower World, people on earth needed to use an ephemeral substance that could be carried on the wind. Therefore, music and incense were often used in order to commune with those residing in the paradisiacal realm. Musical instruments like the ocarinas (whistles) that you see here would have been used to commune with those living in Flower World.

14. Whistle Figurine, Mayan artist, Mexico, 830-930 CE, blackware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

15. Turtle Ocarina, Nayarit artist, Mexico, n.d., terracotta. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

16. Flute, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 670-1200 CE, buffware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

17. Standing Male Deity Impersonator Figure, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 670-830 CE, mold-made buffware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

18. Standing Male Sheep-Faced Figure, Jalisco artist, Mexico, 300 BCE-100 CE, earthenware. Acquired 2009; From the Estate of Eleanor Simon

19. Pitcher, Chancay artist, Peru, 1100-1400 CE, low-fired earthenware with paint. Acquired 1991; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alger Scott

20. Figure, Nayarit artist, Mexico, 100 BCE-250 CE, redware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker



Textiles have been produced in the Andes since the second millennium BCE, and are one of the earliest art forms in the region. They were used to denote political, occupational, and social status, in part separating the upper from lower classes. Textiles adorned the bodies of both the living and the dead. In Andean cultures, it was customary to wrap the deceased in fabrics, creating what are commonly referred to as mummy bundles. These textiles, made from materials such as cotton and camelid fibers, have survived hundreds and thousands of years due to the extremely arid climate of the Andes, and still maintain their vibrancy today.

21. Tapaerabo (Loincloth) Border, Chancay artist, Peru, 1200-1550 CE, camelid fiber tapestry on cotton warp with plain cotton weave. Acquired 1997; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stephan Lion

22. Woven Textile, Huari artist, Peru, 700-1100 CE, polychrome camelid fiber on camelid warp. Acquired 1997; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stephan Lion

23. Garment Textile, Chancay artist, Peru, 1100-1400 CE, camelid wool and cotton. Acquired 1997; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Stephan Lion



Wealthy Maya commissioned beautifully painted vessels, such as the ones you see here, in order to gain prestige by either using them at special events or gifting them. Similar to how people today might put out nicer quality dishes when guests are coming over. Some of these cylinder vessels were used to consume important beverages, such as cacao. Painting was one of the primary mediums for the Classic Maya (250-900 CE), but the majority of their paintings have been lost to time, either through natural weathering or due to intentional destruction during the Spanish Conquest. With the exception of a few murals, the primary examples of Maya painting that survive are on these ceramic vessels. These vessels play an extremely important role in helping us to understand Maya artwork, social structure, ritual events, and even their writing system.



24. Cylinder Vase, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 500-900 CE, clay with light slip glaze, carved, incised, and painted light orange. Acquired 2007; Gift of Dr. Gerald J. Shepps

The Classic Maya (250-900 CE) had an extremely advanced writing system. On monuments, detailed inscriptions would be made recording dates, historic events, and historic figures. These glyph blocks were read left to right and top to bottom on the top of the vessel detailing either what the vessel was depicting or why the vessel was commissioned. The glyphs either represent an entire word based on the image or they represent syllables that when sounded out together make up the word, similar to how we write today. We know as much as we do today about Maya history due to the detailed texts that were left behind.

25. Tripod Rattle Vessel, Atlantic Watershed artist, Costa Rica, 1000-1500 CE, buff clay with remains of red slip. Acquired 2002; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Weiser

26. Cylinder Vase, Mayan artist, Honduras, 600-900 CE, terracotta carved and polychrome in four panels. Acquired 2007; Gift of Dr. Gerald J. Shepps

27. Lidded Basal Flange Vessel with Parrot Head Finial, Mayan artist, Mesoamerica, 250-550 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker



28. Cylinder Vase with Water Lily Medallions, Mayan artist, Honduras, 600-900 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2007; Gift of Dr. Gerald J. Shepps

29. Bowl, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 550-950 CE, polychrome orangeware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

30. Large Tripod Plate, Mayan artist, Mesoamerica, 550-950 CE, earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

31. Cylinder Vase, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 500-700 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2007; Gift of Dr. Gerald J. Shepps

32. Cylinder Vase with Tripod Feet, Mayan artist, Honduras, 600-900 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2007; Gift of Dr. Gerald J. Shepps

Ritual feasting and drinking were essential aspects of the ceremonies of many cultures. At these feasts, lavish foods would be served to impress the guests of those hosting. In the Maya area, for example, cacao was a favorite beverage that would have been served. Cacao was mixed with water, vanilla, chilies, and other seasonings to make a frothy and zesty beverage. Wealthy Maya would commission elaborately painted cylinder vessels in order to drink cacao out of, such as this Cylinder Vase with Tripod Feet.

33. Lidded Basal Flange Vessel with Cylindrical Finial, Mayan artist, Mesoamerica, 250-550 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

A dish similar to tamales, called *Waaj*, was served at important events. They were served in beautifully decorated vessels, similar to this Lidded Basal Flange Vessel with Cylindrical Finial.



34. Vessel with Glyphs, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 550-950 CE, polychrome, red and black on glossy orangeware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

35. Round-Side Bowl, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 550-950 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

36. Pulque Cup, Aztec artist, Mexico, 1200 - 1500 CE, earthenware with paint. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

37. Small Bowl, Nazca artist, Peru, 200-600 CE, clay with multicolor pigmentation. Acquired 1991; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alger B. Scott

38. Tripod Cylindrical Vase with Opposing Monkey Heads, Mayan artist, Honduras, 600-900 CE, hematite red, and black-and-white paint on light orange clay. Acquired 1991; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. David Colker and Mrs. Ethel Schwartz



39. Seated Tomb Effigy Xantile Figure, Mayan artist, Mexico, 900-1300 CE, earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

40. Two-Part Incensario, Corobicí artist, Costa Rica, 400-850 CE, buff-ware with traces of red paint. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

The area south of Mesoamerica is typically referred to as Central America and includes the land that makes up the countries we now know as Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. The landscape played a very important role in shaping the lives and mythology of the people that resided in this area. Costa Rica is one of the most geologically active countries in the world with six active volcanoes. These volcanoes had a profound impact on shaping people's lives. Many incense burners were made to resemble volcanoes, such as the Two-Part Incensario seen here. When lit, smoke would have poured out of the top, serving as a representation of a smoking volcano.



These are beautiful examples of the Pataky-style tripod jar from the greater Nicoya region of Nicaragua, dating to roughly 800-1250 CE. This style often has a white body with detailed scrollwork done in black or red on the head, arms, and legs. In Central America, various groups believed that ritual specialists could transform into jaguars to commune with spirits and deities in other realms. To transform, the ritual specialist would enter into a trance-like state on the ground. The final act of transformation occurs when the ritual specialist rises from the ground, placing their hands on their knees, before standing upright in their jaguar state. These vessels depicting a personified jaguar hunched over with their hands on their knees possibly symbolize the final moment of transformation as the ritual specialists stand upright embodying their jaguar form.

41. Tripod Jaguar Effigy Vessel, Guanacaste-Nicoya artist, Nicaragua, 1200-1400 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2002; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Weiser

42. Tripod Jaguar Effigy Vessel, Guanacaste-Nicoya artist, Nicaragua, 1200-1400 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2002; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Weiser



43 Ballgame Yoke, El Tajín artist, Mexico, 600-900 CE, polished gray stone with traces of red cinnabar throughout. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

The ballgame was an extremely important ceremonial event played throughout Mesoamerica. Many different cultures played slightly different versions of the game, but often the key elements were similar. The game was typically played in a ballcourt, an alley between two structures with clearly defined end zones. The objective was to get the ball past the opposing team and into the end zone. The game was played with a solid rubber ball that would ricochet around the ballcourt, creating a dramatic sound when it struck and picking up momentum. To protect themselves from the solid rubber ball, players wore yokes, such as the one you see here. The ballgame served as a type of political theater, a public reenactment of warfare, and also was intimately tied to religion. In the Maya's origin story, the *Popol Vuh*, the protagonists, the hero twins, venture to the underworld to play the ball game against the lords of the underworld.

44. Seated Tomb Effigy Xantile Figure, Mayan artist, Mexico or Guatemala, 900-1300 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker



45. Joined Pair of Figures, Jalisco artist, Mexico, 100 BCE-300 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

This duo was most likely interred in a West Mexican shaft tomb, due to the high level of preservation and is most likely from Jalisco. These matched pairs appear fairly frequently in West Mexico, either conjoined, as you see here, or separated. As the figures here are well made, this pair was probably interred with an elite individual, but lesser quality versions were available to commoners. These figures could represent original ancestors of a family and possibly were included in the family tomb, or they might represent mythical ancestors, such as the original ancestral pair.

46. Effigy Parrot Metate and Grinder, Huetar artist, Costa Rica, 300-700 CE, carved volcanic stone. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

Metates, such as the one you see here, were used to grind maize kernels into masa, or corn meal. Maize was one of the primary food staples throughout Mesoamerica and Central America, and many cultures had origin stories that detailed how the bodies of the first humans were formed from maize. The act of grinding maize into masa was seen as a transformative process, and over time the metates took on symbolic significance in Central America. People began to elaborate on the simple utilitarian metate to make important seats that political and religious leaders would sit on, similar to a throne of sorts. Metates were often included in the burials of important individuals, due to their transformative abilities of breaking down the body of maize into powder, just as a human body is transformed in death. Ashes to ashes, masa to masa, as it were.



47. Incensario Urn with Serpent Monster and Winged Panels, Quiché artist, Guatemala, 600-1300 CE, polychrome flanged cylindrical vessel with modeled and painted red buffware and traces of post-fire pigment. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

48. Pedestal Jar with Annular Base, Guanacaste-Nicoya artist, Nicaragua, 1000-1200 CE, clay with light slipped polychrome, and painted designs in zones. Acquired 2002; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Weiser

49. Sun God Cache Vessel with Lid, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 400-800 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

Many deities were worshiped by various cultures throughout ancient Mesoamerica. These gods were often based on powerful natural phenomena. Some of the most important deities include rain gods, maize gods, and sun gods. Here, you see an example of the Classic Maya sun god Kinich Ahau, meaning the sun-faced or sun-eyed lord. Kinich Ahau is recognizable by the snakelike appendages curving out from the corners of the mouth and by the T-shaped tooth, amongst other indicators. The Sun God was also associated with the color red, the color of the daytime sun at sunrise.

50. Two-Part Lidded Vessel with Seated Crocodilian Finial, Guanacaste-Nicoya artist, Nicaragua, 600-1100 CE, polychrome earthenware. Acquired 2002; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Weiser

The people from this region incorporated powerful animals into their mythology such as jaguars and crocodiles. Crocodiles, being an apex predator, appeared frequently in artwork, for example the crocodilian figure seated on the Two-Part Lidded Vessel. In mythology, Talók is a crocodile spirit who would eat people who had broken social norms.

51. Incensario or Burial Urn with Skulls and Sun God, Mayan artist, Guatemala, 550-950 CE, polychrome unslipped buff earthenware. Acquired 2000; Gift of Jean and David Colker

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