

# THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53 STREET, NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

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SPECIAL TO THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS\*

More than 400 treasures of the ancient cultures of the Andes, loaned to the Museum of Modern Art for an exhibition in New York, have traveled across the United States in a sealed and guarded train for additional showings in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the middle west section of the country and in San Francisco, on the Pacific Coast, where the exhibition will be on view for two months beginning July 15. When the exhibition ends its tour in September, the works of art will be returned to the lenders.

The display of gold and silver, ceramics, stone and wood sculptures and tapestries, dating from approximately 1200 B.C. to the 16th century, from nine countries in Central and South America, was visited by more than eighty thousand people at the Museum of Modern Art in New York where it was widely acclaimed by the public and the press. One million more people are expected to see it in the course of its six months tour.

Organized by Rene d'Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum of Modern Art and an authority on primitive art and its relation to the art of our time, the exhibition was hailed by the New York Times as "one of the most spectacular" ever seen at the Museum. TIME magazine praised it for its abundance of "exquisite craftsmanship" and LIFE magazine called it "stunning art."

Although generous loans from public and private collections all over the world were made to the exhibition, the many beautiful and rare objects borrowed from collections in South America received outstanding attention. These included 47 gilt metal plaques from the National Museum of Archeology in Lima, Peru; objects in gold and ceramics lent by Don Rafael Larco Hoyle, outstanding scholar in the field of ancient art, whose museum in Chiclin, Peru, contains one of the largest private collections of ancient Andean art anywhere in the world; and objects from the famous collection of Norbert Mayrock in Santiago, Chile.

Mr. d'Harnoncourt made two trips to Brazil, Ecuador, Chile and Peru to make arrangements to obtain these works of art for the exhibition. Because these objects arrived too late to be included in the Museum's original publication, ANCIENT ARTS OF THE ANDES, by Wendell Bennett, the Museum of Modern Art will issue late this summer a special illustrated supplement, MASTERWORKS OF ANDEAN ART, in recognition of their outstanding quality.

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Two television newscasts were made as the objects were unpacked in Minneapolis. Because of the extraordinary fragility and value of the ancient treasures, elaborate security systems have had to be devised by the three exhibiting Museums. While at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the costly items were protected by a specially installed custom-made burglar alarm and an augmented force of Museum guards.

The exhibition, which was opened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York on January 26, is currently on view at the San Francisco Palace of the Legion of Honor from July 15 to September 15.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES

In commenting on this exhibition, Rene d'Harnoncourt, director of the exhibition, said:

"Modern artists and people interested in modern art have so far paid little attention to Andean art despite their great concern with Negro Africa, Oceania and pre-Columbian Mexico. This is undoubtedly due to the lack of knowledge about this area which is still little known even to the professional archaeologist. Only recently has the art work of the early civilizations been uncovered and since exportation is forbidden, very few fine examples of Andean culture have been seen outside their native countries until now. But these unknown artists and artisans working with primitive tools and living in a civilization that did not know the wheel, a written language, or a calendar, did produce fine works of art. Some are unequalled anywhere in the world for their excellence of technique, imagination, workmanship and emotional power which still affects us."

The exhibition covers the regions of the SOUTHERN ANDES, which is roughly defined in the exhibition as the northwest mountainous parts of Argentina and the northern half of Chile, the CENTRAL ANDES, covering most of Peru and the eastern borderlands of Bolivia around Lake Titicaca, and the NORTHERN ANDES, which includes the republics of Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Panama and the Amazon region of Brazil.

The objects in the exhibition date from approximately 1200 B.C. to the time of the Spanish conquest.

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## I. CENTRAL ANDES

In the Central Andean region extensive archeological studies have revealed a reliable chronology of cultural development which, in this exhibition is divided into six major periods.

1. Among the objects from the early cultures of the Central Andes, (1200 B.C. - 400 B.C.), is a cast of "El Lanzon", a 15 foot high stone sculpture found in the underground passageways of the Castillo at Chavín de Huántar and thought to be the oldest pre-historic sculpture known. Carved from black rock, the monolith reveals the extensive use of the feline motif which was undoubtedly a symbol of power and which dominates the culture of the Central Andes during this early period. The feline motif is seen again in a drawing of mythical monsters taken from the carved design on another stone monolith at Chavín and in the cast of an ancient stela, 6 feet high, which is elaborately carved with the feline motif. The motif also appears on hammered gold and carved clay walls throughout the Central Andes during this period, although it is not known whether or not the area was united politically at this time.

Also from this first period of Andean art are three gold pieces, including a crown of hammered gold which once adorned an ancient chieftain and an ancient silver mask. These are believed to be the earliest examples of metal work known in South America and are closely related in style to the stone carvings at Chavín. Once again the feline motif appears in the gold crown which shows a feline deity flanked by two birds of prey and in a silver feline mask, as it also does in a black carved stone puma.

From the Cupisnique graves in the Chicama valley are 8 pieces of Cupisnique pottery which are related to the Chavín stone carvings and which represent the oldest known ceramic style. Some of these pieces are from one of the world's finest private collections of ancient art, owned by Don Rafael Larco Hoyle, in Peru, and are among those being shown publicly for the first time. Stirrup jars with engraved decorations, made in the forms of snakes or feline heads, are included as well as a stirrup jar in the shape of a seated woman which is the first known representation of a human being in Andean art.

2. Among the objects of art from the second period (approximately 400 B.C. to 400 A.D.) are examples of the ceramic art, found in caves on the isolated Paracas peninsula, which are considered nearly as old as those of Cupisnique. These

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ceramics are noted for their variety of shapes and for their broad range of colors. They are the first pieces of Andean art to stress geometric stylizations. One of the most unique of these pieces is a double-spout jar in the shape of a trophy head which is the most delicate ceramic known anywhere. The walls of this clay jar are less than 1/8 inch thick and its total weight, although it is 7 1/2 inches high, is only about 8 ounces.

3. Many of the finest examples of ceramics and weaving yet found in the Central Andean region are assigned to the third period, which extended from approximately 400 A.D. to 1000 A.D. and which includes such well-known cultures as Paracas Necropolis, Nazca, Mochica, Recuay and Pucará.

One of the most precious objects in the exhibition is a pair of Mochica earrings made of gold inlaid with <sup>or</sup> tiny mosaic of turquoise depicting warriors wearing jewelry inlaid in gold and turquoise, from the Don Rafael Larco Hoyle Collection in Peru.

The Mochica culture is one of the best known pre-historic cultures partly because of the numerous surface remains and burial tombs but also because of its faithfully realistic art style which depicted <sup>of</sup> many details of daily life. Many examples of Mochica ceramic art <sup>of</sup> included in the exhibition. Several vessels are skillfully sculptured portraits of individual people while other ceramics are delicately painted with scenes depicting such details of everyday life as local plants and animals, dress, diseases and their cures, ceremonies and methods of punishment. The exhibition also includes examples of gold and silver casting in which Mochica craftsmen particularly excelled.

Among the many finely woven tapestries, mantles and wall hangings, those from Paracas Necropolis are among the finest and most elaborate textiles in the world. They are famous for the intricacy of their technique and their carefully planned color and design. Many of these Paracas mantles were found on mummy bundles. The painted border of one Paracas mantle shows pre-historic men wearing the ear ornaments, ponchos, head, hair and nose ornaments shown in the exhibition, and carrying trophy heads of their enemies like those depicted in some of the sculptures in the show. Embroidered shoulder ponchos, a poncho of needle Reseau with the demon cat and serpents, a mantle with a fish design repeated in an incredibly intricate and precise way with planned variations of the theme are other examples of the fine woven articles found in graves and tombs in Peru in fantastically good state of preservation.

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4. Three beautiful painted pottery beakers of great dignity and formality illustrate the classic style of the Tiahuanaco culture (100 - 1300 A.D.). From the coast a large vessel, 29 inches high, shows a striking similarity in the figure of a god painted on its sides to the style and content of the famous "Sun Door," at Tiahuanaco, believed to be a place of origin of this style in Bolivia. A section of a poncho in tapestry weave shown here illustrates the transformation of representational art into a decorative all-over pattern.

The exhibition also includes 47 plaques of hammered gold with repoussé designs which were sent from the great collection of the National Museum of Anthropology and Archeology in Peru. These plaques, which come from the coastal Tiahuanaco culture, were used by ancient civilizations as wall coverings.

5. From the ruins of the Chimu civilization (1300 - 1438 A.D.) come many fine examples of metalurgy in which the Chimu excelled, including gold and silver goblets with relief designs, breast plates, plumed helmets and delicately incised ear plugs ending in ornamented discs. The ceremonial adornments of an ancient Chimu king, which consisted of a huge gold crown with four gold plumes, two enormous gold ear plugs, a necklace of nine large gold beads and two epaulettes and a collar with thirty gold pendants, are among the most splendid objects in the exhibition.

6. Works of art from the great Inca Empire represent the final period of pre-historic cultures in the Central Andes (approximately 1439 - 1532 A.D.)

Many examples of Inca metallurgy, including gold vessels, plates and bottles, are shown in the exhibition.

Inca ceramics in the exhibition are typical of those of this culture which are characterized by highly standardized shapes such as the aryballos shape and the shallow dish with the single bird head handle. Most of the polychrome designs in ceramics and in weaving are geometric. The gold bottles and silver ornaments created by the Incas for their privileged class are also ornamented by geometric designs and human representation has almost vanished. A large urn in the exhibition resembles the Greek aryballos in its classic shape and restrained geometric decoration.

The famous stone constructions of the Inca in Peru are shown in a separate photographic section of the exhibition with photo-murals of spectacular architectural achievements. Walls of a temple in Machu Picchu, a stairway entrance to a ceremonial cave in Kenko and part of the great wall at Ollantaytambo are among those shown in these photographs. The beauty of Inca stone architecture rests on its basic form and exquisite stone work which was completely devoid of surface decoration. Enormous tasks were undertaken for the sake of ceremonial

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or aesthetic considerations as demonstrated by the choice of the pale pink granite blocks, over ten feet high and four to five feet wide, which were used at Ollantaytambo and had to be brought across a mountain and a river to reach the site.

Among the featherwork from the Central Andean cultures represented in the exhibition are feather mosaic hats, ear plugs and a series of feather panels each of which measures approximately 80 inches by 37 inches, made of large yellow and turquoise rectangles. These latter panels were found originally in huge polychrome jars in Peru. Very few have come to this country. The five panels, which are from private and public collections, are shown as a wall covering for which it is believed they were originally intended.

From the famous Norbert Mayrock Collection in Chile is a large collection of Peruvian bronze objects, unique in the world, including knife heads decorated with hunting scenes, human sacrifice and various animal figures including a ring around a rosette of leopards holding hands. It is most interesting to compare these lively and splendid bronzes with their counterparts from Greece and Rome.

## II. SOUTHERN ANDES:

The cultures of the Southern Andes are represented in the exhibition by small wooden sculptures, two large bronze discs made before the Inca conquest and wooden snuff tablets, pottery bowls and a pipe. Those objects from pre-Incan Southern Andean cultures date from approximately 400 A.D. and, although the southern cultures were essentially independent in their development, they share many parallels with the Central Andean art forms.

## III. NORTHERN ANDES

As relatively few archeological studies have been conducted in this area it is impossible to give specific dates to the various northern art styles represented in the exhibition.

The ceramic sculpture shown from the Esmeraldas region of Ecuador shows great variety in style but uniformly skillful execution. The striking naturalism of a small figure of a hunchback, for example, is in sharp contrast to the stylized formality of a small head and a figurine shown with it. Other ceramics from the north include a variety of pieces from Colombia and an intricate clay vessel from Brazil which resembles a baroque candlestick. A stone carving of an anthropomorphic figure from Panama and a monumental sculptured stone seat from Ecuador are also shown.

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Nearly 100 gold objects from the Northern Andes are collected together in one part of this exhibition. Comparing these objects with, for instance, the 47 plaques of hammered gold from the Tiahuanaco culture and the ancient Chimu crown from the Central Andes, Mr. d'Harnoncourt, director of the exhibition comments, "It is interesting to note the difference between the way gold was used in the northern section of the Andes and in Peru. In the north, gold was always made into beautiful and precious objects - figures of deities, staff finials and mace heads, and pendants in which the gold was combined with ivory, emeralds or quartz. In Peru gold was often used to cover the surfaces of large objects, such as chests and litters and even entire walls, somewhat like the use of velvet during the Renaissance."

The gold objects made by the Quimbaya civilization, which was centered in what is now the state of Antioquia, in Colombia, are from their graves. These people left no ruins of village sites, ceremonial centers or agricultural terraces. If it were not for their numerous graves richly stocked with offerings they would be a forgotten people. But their goldsmith work is among the finest ever produced in South America. They fabricated gold into ornaments and objects by hammering, repoussé, cutout, cast filigree, solid and hollow casting, and soldering. Variations were achieved by joining bands of metal of slightly different composition. The bottles are particularly noted for their exquisite form and simplicity of outline. In both technique and quality the Quimbaya gold work is unequalled in the Andean region.

In contrast to the three-dimensional figures of the Quimbaya region, Chibcha figurines from Bogata, Colombia, are based on a flat form overlaid with gold wire and often resemble line drawings. They are highly stylized and show great variety and imagination. Other outstanding gold pieces from the north include examples of goldwork from the Coclé culture in Panama, including a helmet and plaque representing the crocodile god, and pendants of ivory and gold, emeralds and gold, and quartz and gold. From northern Panama from the graves in the Chiriqui province, has been found a pendant representing the most abstract form of gold work in the Americas. Only by comparison with other pieces is it possible to ascertain that the two small knobs resembling screw heads represent the eye of the figure and the spirals between them, its nose.

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Many of the objects in the exhibition were brought to this country through the cooperation of Pan American Grace Airways (Panagra) and W. R. Grace and Company, who provided special handling for the fragile and precious works of art.

In connection with this exhibition, the Museum has published ANCIENT ARTS OF THE ANDES by Wendell Bennett, with an introduction by Rene d'Harnoncourt. 188 pages; 202 plates in black and white, 6 in color; \$6.50.

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