

BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART

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BLANTON MUSEUM EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS ART OF ANCIENT ANDES, EXPLORES RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND ENVIRONMENT



Between Mountains and Sea: Arts of the Ancient Andes **February 1 – August 17, 2014**

AUSTIN, Texas – January 30, 2014 – The Blanton Museum of Art, in partnership with the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin, presents a special selection of objects that illuminate the lifestyle, technological achievements, and ideology of pre-Inka cultures among the coastal Andes of South America. *Between Mountains and Sea: Arts of the Ancient Andes* features 80 extraordinary works drawn primarily from the University's collections with loans from the Dallas Museum of Art, ranging from intricately woven textiles to painted ceramic vessels and modeled effigies. Through a dynamic presentation that integrates art historical and anthropological contexts, the exhibition traces the artistic development of the ancient Paracas, Nasca, Wari, Moche, Chancay, Sicán, and Chimú cultures from the Early Horizon (900–200 BCE) through the Late Horizon (1476–1534 CE) periods.

The exhibition was conceived by the Blanton and guest-curator Dr. Kimberly L. Jones, while she served as a UT Austin lecturer and curator of UT's Art and Art History Collection before her recent appointment as the Ellen and Harry S. Parker III Assistant Curator of the Arts of the Americas at the Dallas Museum of Art. This collaboration continues the Blanton's tradition of working with experts across disciplines to present material outside the scope of its permanent collection, and furthers the Museum's mission to provide experiences with art that allow visitors to see beyond their world. It also responds to audience interest in ancient objects that lend insight into our global cultural heritage – as evidenced by the success of recent exhibitions like *Into the Sacred City: Tibetan Buddhist Deities from the Theos Bernard Collection* and *Through the Eyes of Texas: Masterworks from Alumni Collections*.

“We are delighted to partner with UT’s Department of Art and Art History and Dr. Kimberly Jones to present this important material to our audiences,” remarks Blanton Director Simone Wicha. “The exhibition will serve as a wonderful resource for students and the greater community, and provide a unique opportunity to see these beautiful and culturally significant works in a new context.”

As the title suggests, the exhibition *Between Mountains and Sea* speaks to the achievements of coastal Andean cultures in their vital position between the western Pacific Ocean and eastern Andes mountain range. The Pacific coast of South America is home to environmental extremes, where the narrow but stark desert coastline is striped by fertile river valleys, whose abundance depends on the towering highland peaks for rains, springs, and water runoff. Mountains and sea thus frame the desert coast, marking environmental, ecological, and economic contrasts that have prompted complex networks of production and trade throughout Andean cultural history.

“Undoubtedly, popular imagination about ancient Andean cultures is most often captured by the highland Andes, through elite Inka sites such as Machu Picchu,” states Dr. Kimberly L. Jones. “The coastal resources and societies, however, were foundational to the rise of Andean civilization.”

The coastal Andean societies devised both technological and ideological means to tackle their precarious dependence on water for agricultural production. Through the vivid colors and refined modeling of their ceramic vessels and woven textiles, viewers understand the ideas, personae, and performances addressing such concerns. Perhaps one of the most well-known, the Nasca culture (100 BCE – 600 CE) created vast geoglyphs in the desert pampa known as “Nazca lines.” Among various possible functions, these immense earthworks may have indicated regions possessing or void of underground water channels. Historical photographs of these expansive figural and geometric designs will be included in the exhibition. They bear close connection to the images decorating vibrant polychrome Nasca ceramic vessels, which retain their remarkable brilliance after 1500 years.



Arguably the most prolific of Andean visual cultures, the Moche (100–800 CE) on the North coast of Peru excelled in ceramic arts, using the medium to portray ritual, regalia, performance, and power. Moche ceramicists blended modeling and mold-making, painting, and relief to illustrate dramatic scenes of warfare and sacrifice, agricultural production, and fertility. The Moche approached stark realism in portraiture of male warriors, as well as in animal and plant representations. The identifiable species have sparked great scholarly interest, providing entry into the visual system of this ancient Andean culture. While many floral and faunal scenes recall the ecology of the desert north coast; others reference the dramatic changes brought by El Niño (ENSO) during its decade-long cycle of abundance and destruction. It is perhaps from this reality that the Moche conceived of beings with attributes combining the human and non-human, envisioning such “supernatural” figures as the “Crab-Being” featured in the exhibition.

As populations and territory grew along the coast, so did competition and conquest. The exhibition highlights the expansion of coastal states, such as the Chimú (900–1470 CE), and the impact of highland states, such as the Wari (600–1000 CE) and Inka (1470–1532 CE), on the coast. Relying on the ocean, the Sicán and Chimú elite drew on the northern sea for their dynastic lore and social wealth. While metallurgy and fine stone engravings were hallmarks of these coastal states, ancient Andean textile arts were among the finest in the world. The exhibition thus concludes with a

selection of richly woven panels and tunics, whose iconography and patterned colors serve as testament to these dynamic societies and their successful development along the desert coast.

Between Mountains and Sea champions the unique opportunity to highlight exceptional works of art from the University of Texas at Austin's collections, and to engage public audiences in scholarship on the pre-Hispanic Andes. The exhibition exemplifies the Blanton's commitment to complement the educational mission of the University while creating opportunities for the greater Austin community to experience works from around the world in unexpected and thought-provoking ways. It builds on recent opportunities that have allowed the Blanton to bring ancient objects from many cultures, including Tibetan *thangkas* and mandalas, Japanese masks, Egyptian statuary, Maya eccentric flints, and more, to Austin.



Between Mountains and Sea: Arts of the Ancient Andes is organized by the Blanton Museum of Art, with support from the Department of Art and Art History, The University of Texas at Austin.

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About the Blanton Museum of Art:

Founded in 1963, the Blanton Museum of Art is one of the foremost university art museums in the country and holds the largest public collection in Central Texas. Recognized for its modern and contemporary American and Latin American art, Italian Renaissance and baroque paintings, and encyclopedic collection of prints and drawings, the Blanton offers thought provoking, visually arresting, and personally moving encounters with art.

The museum is located at the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Congress Avenue and is open Tuesday through Friday from 10 - 5, Saturday from 11-5, and Sunday from 1-5. Thursdays are free admission days and every third Thursday the museum is open until 9. Admission Prices: Adults \$9, Kids 12 and under FREE, Seniors (65+) \$7, Youth/College Students (13-21) \$5. Admission is free to members, all current UT ID-holders. For additional information call (512) 471-7324 or visit www.blantonmuseum.org.

For more information and high-resolution images contact:

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Image Captions:

Moche Culture, 100-800 CE

Stirrup spout bottle of Blind Figure

Ceramic, slip paints

Collection of The University of Texas at Austin, courtesy the Department of Art and Art History

Moche Culture, 100-800 CE

Stirrup spout bottle of Supernatural Crab Being

Ceramic, slip paints

Collection of The University of Texas at Austin, courtesy the Department of Art and Art History

Nasca Culture, 100 BCE - 600 CE

Bowl with profile birds

Ceramic, slip paints

Collection of The University of Texas at Austin, courtesy the Department of Art and Art History

Paracas Culture, 900 – 200 BCE

Mantle with condors

Camelid fiber, plain weave, stem-stitch embroidery

Dallas Museum of Art, The Eugene and Margaret McDermott Art Fund, Inc., in memory of John O'Boyle