

TITLE: Tlatilco Female Figurine **LOCATION:** Central Mexico **DATE:** 1200-900 BCE

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Middle Preclassic period **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Ceramic

FORM:

The artist paid special attention to the detail of the hair, which is intricately braided, providing evidence of the styles of the era. The figure's pelvis and hips are accentuated, suggesting that agrarian people in Tlatilco equated fertility with a good harvest. Also, the two faces of this figure give us insight into what could be an ancient understanding of dualities such as life and death. The Tlatilco figurine at the Princeton University Art Museum has several traits that directly relate to many other Tlatilco female figures: the emphasis on the wide hips, the spherical upper thighs, and the pinched waist.

FUNCTION:

The accentuated hips and legs of the figurine could indicate she served as a fertility symbol. The specific function of the Tlatilco figurine is unknown, but the figurine was most likely used for rituals or ceremonies or as a burial offering.

CONTENT:

This figurine not only shows an elaborate hairstyle, but shows it for two connected heads (on the single body).

CONTEXT:

The makers of Tlatilco figurines lived in a large farming village near the great inland lake in the center of the basin of Mexico. Modern Mexico City sits on top of the remains of the village, making archaeological work difficult. This is the region of the later and much better-known Aztec empire, but the people of Tlatilco flourished 2,000-3,000 years before the Aztec came to power in this Valley. What we do know is that Tlatilco was an agrarian society, and its people would have planted and harvested corn. It's a pretty good bet, then, that this curvy figure symbolized a good harvest.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The double-faced sculpture helped them piece together early human migration. Their intimate, lively poses and elaborate hairstyles are indicative of the already sophisticated artistic tradition.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

It could be that she represents a sense of duality: life and death, winter and summer, feast and famine. Artists treated hairstyles with great care and detail, however, suggesting that it was hair and its styling was important for the people of Tlatilco, as it was for many peoples of this region. The main forms were created through pinching the clay and then shaping it by hand, while some of the details were created by a sharp instrument cutting linear motifs onto the wet clay. The forms of the body were depicted in a specific proportion that, while non-naturalistic, was striking and effective. The artist was given a very small space (most figures are less than 15 cm high) in which to create elaborate hairstyles. Even for today's viewer, the details in this area are endlessly fascinating. The pieces have a nice finish, and the paint that must indicate body decoration was firmly applied.

INTERPRETATION:

Because art historians haven't yet uncovered a written record for the people of Tlatilco, there is no way to know for certain what the figurine meant to its creators or what use they intended for it. Because ancient Central Mexican civilizations relied heavily on agriculture for survival, the emphasis on her hips could also symbolize hopes for a good harvest.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

TITLE: Yaxchilan

LOCATION: Chiapas, Mexico

DATE: 725 CE

ARTIST: _____

PERIOD/STYLE: Maya: late-Classic period

PATRON: dedicated by Itzamnaaj B'alam II, a.k.a. Shield Jaguar the Great for Bird Jaguar IV

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Limestone

FORM:

A city set high on a terrace. It features a plaza surrounded by important buildings. Structure 40 is situated to overlook the main plaza. It has three doors leading to a central room decorated with stucco. It has an ornamented stone top on the roof called a roof comb. It has a corbel arched interior. Lintel 25 was set above the central doorway of structure 23. The building was dedicated to Lady Xoc. Structure 33 is a restored temple structure with the remains of a roof comb with perforations. It too has three main entrances, and a corbeled vault interior that lead into a large single room.

FUNCTION:

Some of the most famous lintels are those on Structure 23—a yotoot (palace building) showing Shield Jaguar II's wife, Lady K'abal Xook. Anyone entering Structure 23 would pass underneath the limestone lintels when entering the doorways; the lintels are thus situated in a liminal space between exterior and interior. Structure 23 is therefore important not only for advertising Shield Jaguar II's power, but also for highlighting the important role of royal women in Maya culture. Other relief sculptures, such as Lintel 45 on Structure 44, show Shield Jaguar II with war captives to commemorate his victory in battles against rival city-states.

CONTENT:

The site is host to an impressive number of structures and monuments—over 100—and is especially famous for its high-quality relief carvings. Lintel 25 features Lady Xoc invoking the Vision Serpent to commemorate her husband's rise to the throne. She holds a bowl with bloodletting ceremonial items. Vision Serpent has two heads, one has a warrior emerging from its mouth; the other has Tlaloc, a war god. The inscription is written in mirror text. This has uncertain meaning perhaps indicating that she is receiving a vision from the other side of the existence, and she is acting as an intercessor or shaman. With a barbed cord, she pierces her tongue in a bloodletting ceremony that according to accompanying inscriptions, celebrated the birth of a son to one of the ruler's other wives as well as an alignment between the planets Saturn and Jupiter.

CONTEXT:

The Maya reached their zenith of cultural productivity during the Late Classic Period (600–900 C.E.). One of several sites located along the banks of the Usumacinta River between Guatemala and the Mexican state of Chiapas, Yaxchilán reigned supreme over the Usumacinta corridor. Yaxchilán's ruling dynasty rose in the 4th century C.E., but its heyday followed several hundred years later (during what art historians call the Classic period), with Lord Shield Jaguar II who ruled for 60 years beginning in 681. He commissioned some of the most famous sculptural works at the site. His son and heir, Bird Jaguar IV, continued this tradition. Blood held a special place in the Yaxchilán belief system and symbolized a kind of life force or essence. Some believe that rituals such as the one recorded on Lintel 23 were a form of giving to the gods and a way of conveying their souls to the next world.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The lintels exemplify the skilled carving of Maya artists at Yaxchilán—and the Maya more generally. The scenes are carved in high relief with carefully incised details decorating the raised surfaces. A beautiful diamond pattern decorates Lady Xook's huipil, for instance, in Lintel 24. The contour and incised lines of the lintels possess a calligraphic quality, as if they were drawn or painted rather than carved. Such careful attention to detail as well as the formal qualities of the line compare to other Maya sculptures, as well as vase painting and murals.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The Yaxchilán lintels were originally painted, although only traces remain, including red on Lady Xook's clothing and the brilliant Maya blue color on the background of Lintel 24.

INTERPRETATION:

A ruler or other elites (including women), would let blood to honor and feed the gods, at the dedication ceremony of a building, when children were born, or other occasions. Rulers needed to shed blood in order to maintain order in the cosmos. The ruler was believed to be a descendent of the gods, and the act of bloodletting was of critical importance in maintaining their power and order in the community. Bloodletting was also an act related to rebirth and rejuvenation.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Note: the monuments and objects uncovered at Yaxchilán are numbered in the order in which they were found—so Lintel 1 is not the oldest, but rather the first to be excavated by archaeologists.

TITLE:Chavin de Huantar (temple, Lanzon and nose ornament) **LOCATION:**Northern highlands, Peru **DATE:** 900-200 B.C.E.

ARTIST:_____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Chavin **PATRON:**_____

Stone (architectural complex); granite (Lanzon and sculpture); hammered gold alloy

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: (jewelry)

FORM:

Chavín de Huántar is a large Andean, pre-Inka, complex located north of modern Lima, right in between the desert and the Amazon forest. The complex consisted of several buildings from various stages of construction, including an Old Temple, built in a U-shape, and a New Temple, constructed from black limestone and white granite that expanded on the U-shape of the Old Temple. Inside the old Temple is a maze like system of hallways. At the center, underground is a lanzon (Spanish for blade). The Lanzon is 15 feet tall and served as a cult figure. The gold nose ornament features two snake heads on either end.

FUNCTION:

The Old Temple was an important pilgrimage site. The image is meant to be the meeting point of the heavens and the earth. Located in the Old Temple, it is accompanied by grinding stones and conch shell trumpets. Graves containing the remains of Chavín elites have also been excavated on the site. Containing precious metals and textiles, these graves allowed elites to take their earthly possessions with them even in death. Chavín de Huantar is a religious capital and a center of pilgrimage. The nose ornament makes the wearer into a supernatural being during ceremonies. It was worn by males and females under the nose.

CONTENT:

The temple complex that stands today is comprised of two building phases: the U-shaped Old Temple, built around 900 B.C.E., and the New Temple (built approximately 500 B.C.E.), which expanded the Old Temple and added a rectangular sunken court. The majority of the structures used roughly-shaped stones in many sizes to compose walls and floors. Finer smoothed stone was used for carved elements. From its first construction, the interior of the temple was riddled with a multitude of tunnels, called galleries. While some of the maze-like galleries are connected with each other, some are separate. The galleries all existed in darkness—there are no windows in them, although there are many smaller tunnels that allow for air to pass throughout the structure. Archaeologists are still studying the meaning and use of these galleries and vents, but exciting new explorations are examining the acoustics of these structures, and how they may have projected sounds from inside the temple to pilgrims in the plazas outside. It is possible that the whole building spoke with the voice of its god.

CONTEXT:

Chavín de Huántar is an archaeological and cultural site in the Andean highlands of Peru. Once thought to be the birthplace of an ancient “mother culture,” the modern understanding is more nuanced. The cultural expressions found at Chavín most likely did not originate in that place, but can be seen as coming into their full force there. The location of Chavín seems to have helped make it a special place—the temple built there became an important pilgrimage site that drew people and their offerings from far and wide. At 10,330 feet (3150 meters) in elevation, it sits between the eastern (Cordillera Negra—snowless) and western (Cordillera Blanca—snowy) ranges of the Andes, near two of the few mountain passes that allow passage between the desert coast to the west and the Amazon jungle to the east. It is also located near the confluence of the Huachasca and Mosna Rivers, a natural phenomenon of two joining into one that may have been seen as a spiritually powerful phenomenon. This site was chosen because it was at the intersection of two tributaries, and it symbolized “tinkuy,” or the union of opposing forces, which became a recurring theme throughout the temple complex.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The complex is most famous for its extensive stone carvings. The most common subjects combine feline, bird, reptilian and human features. While the Lanzón itself was hidden deep in the temple and probably only seen by priests, the same iconography and contour rivalry was used in Chavín art on the outside of the temple and in portable wares that have been found throughout Peru. The visual legacy of Chavín would persist long after the site’s decline in approximately 200 B.C.E., with motifs and stylistic elements traveling to the southern highlands and to the coast. The location of Chavín seems to have helped make it a special place—the temple built there became an important pilgrimage site that drew people and their offerings from far and wide.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Visual complexities emerge in the animal heads that decorate the bottom of the figure’s tunic, where two heads share a single fanged mouth. This technique, where two images share parts or outlines, is called contour rivalry, and in Chavín art it creates a visually complex style that is deliberately confusing, creating a barrier between believers who can see its true form and those outside the cult who cannot.

INTERPRETATION:

The god for whom the temple was constructed was represented in the Lanzón, a notched wedge-shaped stone over 15 feet tall, carved with the image of a supernatural being, and located deep within the Old Temple, intersecting several galleries. Lanzón means “great spear” in Spanish, in reference to the stone’s shape, but a better comparison would be the shape of the digging stick used in traditional highland agriculture. That shape would seem to indicate that the deity’s power was ensuring successful planting and harvest. The Lanzón depicts a standing figure with large round eyes looking upward. Its mouth is also large, with bared teeth and protruding fangs. The figure’s left hand rests pointing down, while the right is raised upward, encompassing the heavens and the earth. Both hands have long, talon-like fingernails. A carved channel runs from the top of the Lanzón to the figure’s forehead, perhaps to receive liquid offerings poured from one of the intersecting galleries.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Architecture was a means of staging space. Within the site, ritual participants traveled through dark passageways to come face-to-face with the curving features of the deity. These pre-Columbian worshippers were also known for eating a cactus that produced hallucinatory effects. Unafraid of living on the wild side, these pre-Columbian magic cactus-eaters had no qualms hanging out with a sculpture embodying a chilling deity. In fact, the psychedelic effects were all part of the worship package.

TITLE: Great Serpent Mound **LOCATION:** Adams County, southern Ohio **DATE:** C. 1070 C.E.

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Adena and Mississippian **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Earthwork/effigy mound

FORM:

A grand knoll-like form, effigy mound. 1300 feet in length, the serpent (possibly representing a rattlesnake) curves through the rolling landscape, a mammoth form that can only be seen in its totality from the skies. Viewed from above, the mound forms a large serpent with mouth open about to swallow a large oval.

FUNCTION:

The Great Serpent Mound is an effigy mound, possibly a burial site for a large number of individuals as well as various grave goods. This new research also showed that the mound had functioned as a funerary site, not necessarily a ceremonial one, that helped spirits navigate northward like a giant compass. Although there are no graves found inside the Great Serpent Mound, there are burials found nearby, but none of them are the kinds of burials typical for the Fort Ancient culture and are more closely associated with Adena burial practices. Current archaeological evidence does not support a burial purpose for the Great Serpent Mound.

CONTENT:

The serpent is slightly crescent-shaped and oriented such that the head is at the east and the tail at the west, with seven winding coils in between. The shape of the head perhaps invites the most speculation. Whereas some scholars read the oval shape as an enlarged eye, others see a hollow egg or even a frog about to be swallowed by wide, open jaws. But perhaps that lower jaw is an indication of appendages, such as small arms that might imply the creature is a lizard rather than a snake. Many native cultures in both North and Central America attributed supernatural powers to snakes or reptiles and included them in their spiritual practices. The native peoples of the Middle Ohio Valley in particular frequently created snake-shapes out of copper sheets.

CONTEXT:

Effigy mounds also in the shapes of various animals (including snakes, birds, cats, and deer) but on a smaller scale were common in what are now Wisconsin, Ohio, Illinois, and Iowa. These particular examples were destroyed with Euro-American settlement in the 19th century. Since the mounds don't look like much straight on, those settlers probably thought they were regular hills and built on top of them so they would have a nice view of the surrounding landscape. The Great Serpent Mound survived this period of settlement because it was far too large and snakelike to be mistaken for another hill. At first, researchers believed that the Adena peoples, who roved the area between 500 B.C.E. and 200 C.E., made the mound. After radiocarbon dating was completed on samples from one part of the site, the theories were revised. Now some believe that the Mississippian peoples (900 C.E.–1450 C.E.) created the serpent around 1000 C.E. They also took radiocarbon samples, and their samples suggest that the Adena peoples did in fact build the first mound, but that it was probably given a face lift around 1070 C.E. after years of erosion had worn down its features. The repair work done on the site accounts for the second radiocarbon date of 1070 C.E.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The mound conforms to the natural topography of the site, which is a high plateau overlooking Ohio Brush Creek. In fact, the head of the creature approaches a steep, natural cliff above the creek. The mound is singular and significant in its ability to provide tangible insights into the cosmology and rituals of the ancient Americas. It is proof that the builders of the serpent mound were a large labor force under the firm direction of a powerful elite eager to leave their mark on the landscape forever.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

It was never meant to be viewed from the ground, suggesting that those who built it did so in order to please ancestors or gods looking down from above. The creation of the Grand Serpent Mound was one of many earthworks made by the hands of Eastern Woodlands peoples and other indigenous peoples across the Americas. The head of the serpent aligns with the summer solstice sunset, and the tail points to the winter solstice sunrise.

INTERPRETATION:

Archaeologists are baffled by the meaning of the mound. It could be influenced by comets (Hailey's comet passed in 1066) or other astrological phenomenon. The head may be pointing toward the summer solstice sunset. Snakes are associated with crop fertility, so the rattlesnake play a role in this piece. Some have interpreted the egg or eye shape at the head to be a representation of the sun. Perhaps even the swallowing of the sun shape could document a solar eclipse. Another theory is that the shape of the serpent imitates the constellation Draco, with the Pole Star matching the placement of the first curve in the snake's torso from the head. An alignment with the Pole Star may indicate that the mound was used to determine true north and thus served as a kind of compass.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

TITLE: Mesa Verde cliff dwellings **LOCATION:** Montezuma County, Colorado **DATE:** 450-1300 C.E.

ARTIST: Ancestral Puebloan (Anasazi) **PERIOD/STYLE:** Indigenous Americas **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Sandstone

FORM:

The Ancestral Puebloan peoples (formerly known as the Anasazi) built some of the most remarkable structures still in existence today. Beginning after 1000-1100 C.E., they built more than 600 structures (mostly residential but also for storage and ritual) into the cliff faces of the Four Corners region of the United States (the southwestern corner of Colorado, northwestern corner of New Mexico, northeastern corner of Arizona, and southeastern corner of Utah). The dwellings depicted here are located in what is today southwestern Colorado in the national park known as Mesa Verde ("verde" is Spanish for green and "mesa" literally means table in Spanish but here refers to the flat-topped mountains common in the southwest).

FUNCTION:

At sites like Cliff Palace, families lived in architectural units, organized around kivas (circular, subterranean rooms). A kiva typically had a wood-beamed roof held up by six engaged support columns made of masonry above a shelf-like banquette. Other typical features of a kiva include a firepit (or hearth), a ventilation shaft, a deflector (a low wall designed to prevent air drawn from the ventilation shaft from reaching the fire directly), and a sipapu, a small hole in the floor that is ceremonial in purpose. They developed from the pithouse, also a circular, subterranean room used as a living space. In the past, these circular spaces were likely both ceremonial and residential. If you visit Cliff Palace, you will see the kivas without their roofs (see above), but in the past they would have been covered, and the space around them would have functioned as a small plaza. Clans moved together for mutual support and defense.

CONTENT:

The twelfth- and thirteenth-century structures made of stone, mortar, and plaster remain the most intact. We often see traces of the people who constructed these buildings, such as hand or fingerprints in many of the mortar and plaster walls. The builders of these structures plastered and painted murals, although what remains today is fairly fragmentary. Some murals display geometric designs, while other murals represent animals and plants. Many of these high-quality objects and their materials demonstrate the close relationship these people had to the landscape. Supplies are stored in the upper stories that are cool and dry. Farming was done on the plateau above the pueblo. Everything was imported into the structure including water.

CONTEXT:

Anasazi means "ancient ones" or "ancient enemies" in the Navajo language. They are most famous for their meticulously rendered pueblos, which are composed of local materials. The cliff palace is wedged into a sheltered ledge above a valley floor. It was designed to take advantage of the sun to heat the pueblo in winter and the sheltering ledge to shade it during the hot summer months. The ancestral Puebloans did not disappear but evolved into the various Pueblo peoples that still live in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The Anasazi had made their home in the canyon since 600 C.E., building subterranean structures for living. By 1000 C.E., they had mastered the craft of masonry; between 1100 and 1300 C.E., known as the Classic Period, they built some of their finest stone structures. To build these structures, people used stone and mud mortar, along with wooden beams adapted to the natural clefts in the cliff face. This building technique was a shift from structures built prior to 1000 CE in the Mesa Verde area, which had been made primarily of adobe, a type of brick made of clay, sand and straw or sticks. These stone and mortar buildings, along with the decorative elements and objects found inside them, provide important insights into the lives of the Ancestral Puebloan people during the thirteenth century.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Cliff Palace, has about 150 rooms and more than 20 circular rooms. Due to its location, it was well protected from the elements. The buildings ranged from 1 to 4 stories, and some hit the natural stone "ceiling." To build these, people used stone and mud mortar, along with wooden beams adapted to the natural clefts in the cliff face. This building technique was a shift from earlier structures in the Mesa Verde area, which, prior to 1000 C.E., had been made primarily of adobe. These stone and mortar buildings, along with the decorative elements and objects found inside them, provide important insights into the lives of the Ancestral Puebloan people during the 13th century. The creators of the murals used paint produced from clay, organic materials, and minerals. For instance, the red color came from hematite (a red ochre). Blue pigment could be turquoise or azurite, while black was often derived from charcoal. Along with the complex architecture and mural painting, the Ancestral Puebloan peoples produced black-on-white ceramics and turquoise and shell jewelry (goods were imported from afar including shell and other types of pottery). Many of these high-quality objects and their materials demonstrate the close relationship these people had to the landscape.

INTERPRETATION:

It is likely that the migration from this area was due to either drought, lack of resources, violence or some combination of these. We know, for instance, that droughts occurred from 1276 to 1299. These dry periods likely caused a shortage of food and may have resulted in confrontations as resources became more scarce. The cliff dwellings remain, though, as compelling examples of how the Ancestral Puebloans literally carved their existence into the rocky landscape of today's southwestern United States.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Many excavations and preservation projects took place over the course of the 20th century, including the Conservation Corp efforts in the 1930s. Later, Mesa Verde became a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage site, a designation reserved for historical structures of great import across the globe. When Mesa Verde celebrated the centennial anniversary of the national park's establishment in 2006, a number of native North American human remains and items that were exhumed in past excavations were respectfully reburied.

TITLE: Templo Mayor/ Coyolxauhqui Stone, Calendar stone and Olmec Jade mask **LOCATION:** Tenochtitlan **DATE:** 1375-1520 C.E.

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Mexica (Aztec) **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Stone (temple); volcanic stone (The Coyolxauhqui Stone); jadeite (Olmec-style mask); basalt (Calendar Stone)

FORM: Tenochtitlan was laid out on a grid. It is a city seen as the center of the world. It features two temples atop a pyramid, each with a separate staircase. The North temple is dedicated to Tlaloc the god of rain and agriculture. The South temple is dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, the god of sun and war. The sun rises between the two at the spring and autumn equinox. There are large braziers on top where the sacred fires burned. They have been rebuilt 6 times, and ultimately destroyed by the Spanish in 1520. The Coyolxauhqui stone is a circular relief sculpture. The calendar stone is a circular shape that reflects the cyclic cycle of nature.

FUNCTION: Aztec sacrificed people and then threw them down the steps of the temple dismembered. The Coyolxauhqui stone represents the dismembered moon goddess who is thrown at the base of the twin pyramids. The calendar stone was a place where rituals took place on certain days and it was the altar from which people were sacrificed and then thrown down onto the Coyolxauhqui stone at the base of the pyramid. It once featured a flint knife in the place of the gods tongue that was used in the killing of the sacrificial victim. The Olmec jade mask has unknown function, but it reflects the fact that the Aztecs collected and embraced artworks from earlier cultures. It is an example of art in the service of state ideology.

CONTENT: The Calendar Stone shows the Mexica calendar, a cycle related to other Mesoamerican dating systems. The calendar consisted of two counts: a 365-day calendar based on the sun called xihpohualli, and a shorter 265-ritual-day cycle. The face of Tonatiuh (god of heaven) is at the center of the calendar and doubles as the face of the sun. The rings that circle around the calendar either represent epochs or months, which had 20 named days each. The Coyolxauhqui monolith is approximately eleven feet in diameter and displays the female deity Coyolxauhqui, or Bells-on-her-face. Golden bells decorate her cheeks, feathers and balls of down adorn her hair, and she wears elaborate earrings, fanciful sandals and bracelets, and a serpent belt with a skull attached at the back. Monster faces are found at her joints, connecting her to other female deities—some of whom are associated with trouble and chaos. Otherwise, Coyolxauhqui is shown naked, with sagging breasts and a stretched belly to indicate that she was a mother. For the Mexica, nakedness was considered a form of humiliation and also defeat. She is also decapitated and dismembered. Her head and limbs are separated from her torso and are organized in a pinwheel shape. Pieces of bone stick out from her limbs.

CONTEXT: Located in the sacred precinct at the heart of the city, the Templo Mayor was positioned at the center of the Mexica capital and thus the entire empire. The capital was also divided into four main quadrants, with the Templo Mayor at the center. This design reflects the Mexica cosmos, which was believed to be composed of four parts structured around the navel of the universe, or the axis mundi. From the heights of the terraced buildings, Mexica prisoners were sacrificed, and sent tumbling downward in a bloody mess of body parts. High priests cut these hapless victims' chests open, pulling out their hearts and sending the slain individuals down the stairs, leaving a stream of blood that the Mexica believed appeased their ancestors. The Coyolxauhqui Disk shows the strewn body parts of a goddess named Coyolxauhqui. According to Mexica lore, her brother Huitzilopochtli killed her in combat at the peak of the Coatepec Mountain because she was about to wage war against their mother, Coatlicue, who was the mother of all the gods. To keep her from following through with her plan, Huitzilopochtli cut off Coyolxauhqui's head and threw her body off the cliff, where it fell to the ground as a dismembered heap of parts. Carved in trachyandesite, the huge stone was placed at the foot of the entrance to the Huitzilopochtli temple as a reminder of his power.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION: Aztec art is most famously represented by gold jewelry that survives in some abundance, and jade and turquoise carvings of great virtuosity. The aggressive nature of Aztec religions, with its centering on violent ceremonies of blood letting, was often manifest in great stone sculptures of horrifying deities. The unforgettable image of the fragmented goddess proclaimed the power of the Mexica over their enemies and the inevitable fate that must befall their foes when defeated.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS: The mighty Mexica in the city of Tenochtitlan built the Templo Mayor, comprised of two stepped pyramids raised on a base that rose nearly ninety feet high. Located on Lake Texcoco, construction on the Templo Mayor began when the city was founded, in 1325 C.E. Six construction phases followed, each honoring a specific ruler. Part of the post-classic period of Mesoamerican architecture, the Templo's two pyramids are dedicated to two important deities: Huitzilopochtli, god of war, and Tlaloc, god of rain and agriculture. When the Spanish overtook Tenochtitlan, they destroyed most of the Templo Mayor and promptly built their own Zócalo, or main plaza, just southwest of the site. Clearly they missed the memo about how Huitzilopochtli dealt with his enemies.

INTERPRETATION: One of the pyramids symbolized the mountain of Coatepec, where Huitzilopochtli was born. The other symbolized the mountain of Tonacatepetl, otherwise known as the Hill of Sustenance. The Aztecs felt that they needed to feed the Sun god human hearts and blood regularly. Two grand staircases accessed twin temples, which were dedicated to the deities Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli. Tlaloc was the deity of water and rain and was associated with agricultural fertility. Huitzilopochtli was the patron deity of the Mexica, and he was associated with warfare, fire, and the Sun. Paired together on the Templo Mayor, the two deities symbolized the Mexica concept of atl-tlachinolli, or burnt water, which connoted warfare—the primary way in which the Mexica acquired their power and wealth. By placing this Coyolxauhqui stone sculpture at the base of Huitzilopochtli's temple, the Mexica effectively transformed the temple into Coatepec.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS: Skull racks, or tzompantli, displayed the skulls of felled enemies within the ceremonial complex. After the Spanish Conquest in 1521, the Templo Mayor was destroyed, and what did survive remained buried. The stones were reused to build structures like the Cathedral in the newly founded capital of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (1521-1821).

TITLE: Ruler's feather headdress, _____ **LOCATION:** Mexica (Aztec) _____ **DATE:** 1428-1520 C.E. _____
(probably Motecuhzoma II)

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** _____ **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Feathers (quetzal and cotinga) and gold

FORM:

Nearly 400 quetzal feathers (collected only from the tails of male birds) were used to make the crown. When worn, the feathers fanned out, catching the light on their iridescent surface so that the ruler, Motecuhzoma II, could be seen from far away. Feathers mounted on wooden sticks layered in semi-circles with small plates of gold. Originally included a golden bird beak. Each of the 450 feathers is a tail feather from a different bird, specifically quetzals and contingas.

FUNCTION:

Feathers were a very important part of the Aztec Economy. Art made of feathers were seen as a symbol of wealth and status. Were used to create fans and shields as well as headdresses. Were also a part of a warrior's clothing. Especially rare feathers were received as payment from cities conquered by the Aztec Empire.

CONTENT:

The quetzal was a sacred bird to the Mexica and regarded as the most beautiful of feathered creatures. The number 400 was significant, too, symbolizing eternity. Though the bird was native to Central America, the Mexica traded widely to get their hands on these tail feathers. (Each bird only produces two such tail feathers.) The bright teal feather design accents come from the feathers of another bird, the cotinga. Hernán Cortez was totally enamored of the treasures he encountered in Motecuhzoma's court, including the feathered objects made by workers called amantecas. Some artists even adopted the use of feathers for the creation of Catholic objects after the conquest was all said and done. The result was a completely hybrid form of art.

CONTEXT:

Acquired by Hernán Cortés, a conquistador who led an expedition that led to the fall of the Aztec Empire. Sources vary on whether the headdress was gifted as a diplomatic gesture or taken forcefully. This headdress is also called the Penacho of Moctezuma II. Moctezuma II's headdress was first mentioned in a European inventory in 1596, when it was acquired by Austrian Archduke Ferdinand II von Tyrol. It was listed there as "a Moorish hat." It was likely an object sent from Mesoamerica to Europe by Hernan Cortes, but it is unknown whether it actually belonged to Moctezuma II himself.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

This is the only known feathered headdress in the world. It was probably part of a collection of artifacts given by Motecuhzoma to Cortez for Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire. The feathers on the Aztec headdresses, held a sacred status, the god Huitzilopochtli was the God of the featherworkers, known as Coyotlinahual or the 'ones who crafted the feathers'. All different aspects of Aztec life incorporated the use of feathers, and apart from being the major adornment in headdresses, they were also utilized in clothing, artworks and even in the armor of a warrior. Aztec featherworkers worked full time to produce luxury goods for the nobility, and the Aztec headdresses were surely one of the most important items.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The number 400 is symbolic of eternity. The headdress of the Aztecs formed a disc in shape which represented the universe and the sky. Once worn it would remind the Aztecs that they should be one with the universe, and this was a central part of the wearing of headdresses.

INTERPRETATION:

The use of vibrant colors, rare materials, and the overall size and grandeur of the headdress symbolize status, wealth, and importance.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Some think Cortez sent the headdress to King Charles V of Spain, who was part of the Habsburg line of kings. Over the last century and a half, the headdress has become an important touchstone for Mexican national and indigenous identity, and many Mexicans think it should be returned. Representatives and activists from Mexico have continuously made requests for its repatriation, but despite a deal almost struck in 2011, the Austrian authorities have as yet refused to officially allow the loan or return of the headdress to Mexico, claiming that the trip across the Atlantic would be too risky for the fragile object.

TITLE: City of Machu Picchu **LOCATION:** Central highlands, Peru **DATE:** C. 1450-1540 C.E.

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Inka **PATRON:** Pachacuti Inka Yupanqui

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Granite (architectural complex).

FORM:

Roosted on the ridges of the Andes Mountains, 8000 feet above sea level, and looking onto the Ururamba Valley below, Machu Picchu is a remarkable complex of living quarters, agricultural production, religious observance, and sun gazing. Some of the best masons in the world, the Inka constructed Machu Picchu much like the walls at Saqsá Waman and the Qorikancha, with large stones, no mortar, and trapezoidal doorways to help stabilize the structure during earthquakes.

FUNCTION:

While many theories exist about Machu Picchu's function, most archaeologists believe that the complex served as Emperor Pachacuti's summer retreat and it probably housed about 1000 of his closest friends and staff members. It was so remote that it probably did not have an administrative function. The observatory charted the sun's movements. It was intended as a place where the Inka emperor and his family could host feasts, perform religious ceremonies, and administer the affairs of empire, while also establishing a claim to land that would be owned by his lineage after his death. Modifications of the windows in the Observatory's upper walls indicate that they were used to calculate the June solstice, as well as the first morning rise of the constellation Pleiades and other important constellations. The cave beneath the enclosure may refer to the place of the underworld in Inka myth, making the Observatory a building that embodied cosmological thought as much as it facilitated astronomical observation.

CONTENT:

The Intihuatana Stone, the Temple of the Sun, and the Room of the Three Windows are all dedicated to the sun god, Inti. There were 200 buildings, mostly houses, some temples, palaces, baths, even an astronomical observatory. There was farmland built on terraces. The Intihuatana Stone known as the "Hitching Post of the Sun" aligns with the sun at the spring and autumn equinoxes. The site contains housing for elites, retainers, and maintenance staff, religious shrines, fountains, and terraces, as well as carved rock outcrops, a signature element of Inka art.

CONTEXT:

Inka religion incorporated a vast pantheon of gods and lesser spirits called huacas. Inti was the sun god and the second most important deity in the spectrum of holy beings. According to the Inka, royalty, such as Pachacuti, derived from Inti. In fact, the word Inka actually translates to "emperor," even though we now use it to define the entire culture. Because the sun held so much importance, when there was an eclipse, Inka priests went into a frenzy; eclipses were thought to represent the sun's displeasure. Machu Picchu was uncovered by Hiram Bingham III, a professor of South American history at Yale University, in 1911. In addition to the structures at the site, he and his team excavated thousands of artifacts, including ceramics, tools, jewelry and human bones, which he brought back to Yale under an agreement with the Peruvian government at the time. Machu Picchu is only one of many such world heritage sites around the world that are dealing with the threats brought by increased visitation, and it points to the tensions between the need for everyone to enjoy and benefit from the experience of seeing these magnificent sites, and the need to preserve them for future generations.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Terraces were a common element of highland agriculture long before the Inka. They increased the arable land surface and reduced erosion by creating walled steps down the sides of steep mountains. Each step could then be planted with crops. Terracing took advantage of the landscape and provided some sustenance for the emperor and his entourage during his visits, as well as producing ritually-important maize crops.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The site was chosen and situated for its relationship to the Andean landscape, including sight lines to other mountain peaks, called apus, which have long been considered ancestral deities throughout the Andes. The walls were built of stones that had been individually shaped to fit closely with one another, rather than being shaped into similar units. This was accomplished by a laborious process of pecking at the stones with tools, gradually shaping them so that each stone was uniquely nested against those around it. The accommodation of its architecture to the landscape is so complete that the buildings seem a natural part of the mountain ranges surrounding the site on all sides. The Inca even cut large stones to echo the shapes of the mountains beyond. They carefully sited buildings so that windows and doors framed spectacular views of sacred peaks and facilitated the recording of important astronomical events.

INTERPRETATION:

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

The ingenious Inka placed a rock in the Temple and aligned it with one of the structure's windows so that on the day of the summer solstice, the sun would shine through the window and onto the surface perfectly. Apart from this, another, perhaps of more import, stone was the Intihuatana Stone, which was located in what is now called the Principal Temple. Though it didn't give anyone eternal life, it still carried an important ritual function within the Inka's sun-gazing cycle.

City of Cusco, including Qorikancha
TITLE: (Inka main temple), Santo Domingo (Spanish colonial convent), and Walls at Sasqa Waman (Sacsyhuaman). **LOCATION:** Central highlands, Peru **DATE:** C. 1440 C.E. convent added 1550-1650 C.E.
ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Inka _____ **PATRON:** Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Andesite

FORM:

The city of Cusco takes the rough form of a puma, or jaguar, which was a sacred animal to the Inkas. The modern plaza is in the place where the puma's belly would be. The head is the fortress, and the heart is the central square. The Qorikancha is the Inkan temple of the sun. Today it forms the base of the Santo Domingo which the Spanish built on top. The walls of Sasqa Waman are a complex outside the city walls of Cusco with stoned that weigh up to 70 tons. The walls of the Koricancha taper upward as an example of Inkan trapezoidal architecture.

FUNCTION:

The first Inkan emperor built the Qorikancha, the Inka city's main temple. However, it was Pachicuti, the ninth emperor, who gave the site its name; "Qorikancha" roughly means "house of the sun," and the building was dedicated to the sun god. It was the historic capital of the Inkan Empire, Tawantinsuyu ("Land of the Four Quarters") It was an axis mundi—the center of existence—and a reflection of Inka power. It was once an observatory for priests to chart the skies and the most important Inka temple in the world. At the heart of hurin Cusco was the Qorikancha ("Golden House"), the most sacred shrine of the Inka, dedicated to the worship of the sun. The Qorikancha was the center point of the empire, and from it radiated imaginary lines, called ceques, which connected it to shrines throughout the Cusco valley. Dedicated to the god Viracocha and the gods of the sun, moon, stars and elements, the temple was the counterpoint of a network of radiating sight lines leading to some 350 shrines.

CONTENT:

The interior courtyard of the Qorikancha was said to have been completely covered in gold. The spectacular, radiant exterior was not the apex of the building's wonders. Inside, a reproduction of the world in miniature took the shape of a garden made from gold, silver and jewels, with people, animals, and plants. The riches of the Qorikancha would be taken in the looting of the city following the Spanish conquest in 1532, and melted down for their precious materials. Built on the site of the home of Manco Capac, son of the sun god and founder of the Inka dynasty, the Temple of the Sun housed mummies of some of the early rulers.

CONTEXT:

To assert their authority, the Spanish often built structures like churches right on top of indigenous buildings. This happened in Tenochtitlan, the Mexica city, and it also happened here in the Qorikancha, where a colonial church was erected in the years after the Inka were conquered. In fact, the entrance to Santo Domingo is almost in the exact same place as the entrance to the Qorikancha once was, facing northeast toward the rising sun. When Francisco Pizarro rolled into Perú, little did he know that the Inka empire was already experiencing some internal turmoil. A civil war had recently taken place between two brothers vying for the throne, creating the perfect conditions for conquest. Obviously, Pizarro had heard of the golden riches; that alone possessed the Spaniard to venture out of Spain into the New World. Pizarro killed thousands of men quickly. Atahualpa was promptly taken prisoner and, even after surrendering a whole lot of gold as ransom, was unceremoniously killed. Within twenty years of their entrance into Peru, the Spaniards were in charge.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Through the arduous labor needed to construct buildings with ashlar masonry, this form of construction came to signify the Inca's imperial power to mobilize local labor forces. The replication throughout Andean South America of Inca architectural techniques such as those employed at Coricancha further illustrates the Inca's control over a vast geographic region. The masonry of Cusco displays an understanding of stones as being like people, in that many different ones may fit together if they are properly organized. Each individual stone was pecked with tools and fitted to the one next to it, with the result that blocks will have a varied number of sides, such as the famous Twelve-Sided stone in the walls of Hatun Rumiyoq Street.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

After the conquest, the Qorikancha was one of many Inka shrines turned into a Christian holy space. The monastery and church of Santo Domingo were built around and on top of the original shrine, incorporating the old structure into the new one in a way that makes for a strange appearance today. Parts of the old temple are still visible, inside and out, alternating with Spanish Baroque architectural features

INTERPRETATION:

Qorikancha also known as the Golden enclosure once was the most important temple in the Inkan world. The city was divided into two sections, hanan (upper or high) and hurin (lower), which paralleled the social organization of Inka society into upper and lower moieties (social divisions). Cusco was further divided into quarters that reflected the four divisions of the empire, and people from those sections inhabited their respective quarters of the city. In this way, the city was a map in miniature of the entire Inka empire, and a way for the Inka rulers to explicitly display their power to shape and order that empire. Some scholars think that the city was deliberately laid out so that it was shaped like a puma, symbol of Inka might, but this is still under debate.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Ashlar masonry: Carefully grooved and beveled edges of the stone fitted together. Saqsa Wayman looks down on the city of Cusco from the northwest. The structure, with its zig-zagging walls, is described as a fortress, although there are still many questions as to how it functioned in that capacity, and the purpose of some of its features is debated.

TITLE: Maize cobs **LOCATION:** Qorikancha, in the capital city of Cuzco **DATE:** C. 1440-1533 C.E.

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Inka **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Sheet metal/repousse, metal alloys

FORM:

Figurines, including these corn stalks, were made with sheet metal, an alloy of copper and silver. Although the figurines reference the look of the plant, these examples are beautifully stylized, husks semi-open to reveal the corncob within. The corncob takes on a slightly different color than the husks, perhaps a reference to a specific variety of corn; The maize cobs that the Inka metallurgists hammered into perfection were the size of an actual cob, measuring twenty-seven centimeters in height.

FUNCTION:

These sculptures may have been used to ensure a successful harvest. The rituals and offerings help retain Inka official's power (the Qorikancha's garden reinforced the Inka's divine right to rule). All these offerings acted as symbols of the supernatural origin of the Inka's in the Sun, and their control over the natural world as descendants from the most powerful deity

CONTENT:

In this sculptural representation of maize (*Zea mays*), individual kernels of corn protrude from the cob that is nestled in jagged metallic leaves. Inka metalsmiths expertly combined silver and copper to mimic the internal and external components of actual corn. Hollow and delicate, the ears of corn on the stalk are life-sized.

CONTEXT:

Maize was the principal food source in the Andes. Originally this cob may have been part of an entire garden of full sized metal sculptures of maize plants and other plants. After the defeat of Inka leadership in the 1530s, Spanish royal agents set up colonies across the continent. They looted Inka objects in large quantities and sent many back to Spain. The silver corncob and stalk were likely part of the spoils captured in this raid. By 1534, the collections of the Spanish king Charles V included a gold maize stalk with three leaves and two ears of corn, similar to the one above. Royal inventories also describe gold and silver llamas, female figures, a lamb, and a male figure that purportedly originated in in one of the most important Inka temples in the capital city of Cuzco, the Qorikancha.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

The indigenous peoples of Peru had been hammering precious metals into jewelry and other objects for thousands of years. The Inka emperor made swift use of his subjects' talents, especially the Chimú, whom he moved to a metal workshop in the capital since they were the most renowned metalworkers in all of the Americas. Inka art (unlike many other Andean artistic traditions) favored naturalistic forms, as seen in this life like portrayal of corn. While many ancient Andean art traditions favored abstract and geometric forms (such as the All-T'oaqapu Tunic), Inka visual expression often incorporated more naturalistic forms in small-scale metal objects. This silver alloy corncob sculpture is one example of this type of object.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

The artists used repousse technique. Inka metalsmiths combined silver and copper to mimic the internal and external components of actual corn

INTERPRETATION:

The metallic maize cobs would have represented one of the most important imperial foodstuffs, used for making the chicha (maize beer) consumed at political feasts, which cemented the obligations of local political leaders to the Inka state. The Qorikancha's garden asserted the natural world as a possession of the Inka at the same time it reinforced their divine right to rule across the Andes.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Spaniard Pedro Ciera de Leon wrote: "There was a garden in which the very earth was lumps of gold, and it was cunningly planted with stalks of maize that were of gold—stalk leaves, and ears..."

TITLE:All-T'oaapu tunic **LOCATION:** Peru **DATE:** 1450-1540 C.E.

ARTIST:Inkan Women **PERIOD/STYLE:**Inka **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:Camelid fiber and cotton

FORM:

This checkered tunic—or knee-length, sleeveless garment—was made from the fibers of the camelid with cotton. Camelids are the distant New World cousins of camels, and they include llamas, alpacas, guanacas, and vicuñas. It is a rectangular shape with a slit in the center for the head. The composition is comprised of small rectangular shapes called t'oaapu. Each individual t'oaapu may be symbolic of individuals, events or places.

FUNCTION:

This combination of materials was also used for the quipu (pronounced kee-poo), an ingenious device made of knots that was used by Inka record-keepers to keep track of everything from taxes to military organization. Their society was well known for its prosperity and administrative efficiency. The quipu made some of this possible, as it was one mode of transmitting information over long distances. Used in tax transactions and given as gifts, these tunics could, depending on their design, convey a person's status in tandem with other garments, such as wool caps. They were often buried with their owner or, when the Spanish arrived, completely destroyed.

CONTENT:

Most Andean camelid-fiber textiles were made with the silky wool of the alpaca. Animal fibers are more easily dyed than plant fibers, so when weavers wanted bright colors they most commonly used alpaca wool. The All-T'oaapu Tunic is made of dyed camelid wool warp over a cotton weft, a common combination for high-status textiles. T'oaapu are the square geometric motifs that make up the entirety of this tunic. The Sapa Inka's power is manifest in the tunic in several ways; firstly, its fine thread, expert weave, and bright colors signify his ability to command the taxation of the empire, access to luxury goods like rare and difficult dyes, and the weaving expertise of the acllas. Secondly, among the t'oaapu in the tunic is one pattern that contains a black and white checkerboard. This was the tunic pattern worn by the Inka army, and shows the Sapa Inka's military might. Lastly, the collection of many patterns shows that the Sapa Inka (which means "unique Inka" in Quechua) was a special individual who held claim to all t'oaapu and therefore all the peoples and places of his empire.

CONTEXT:

The Inkan empire was the biggest empire the Americas had ever seen. When Spanish conquistadors overtook them in the mid-16th century, they were still relatively young as far as empires go, having begun consolidating their power in the 1430s. This tunic may have been worn by a great ruler. Finely-made textiles from the best materials were objects of high status among nearly all Andean cultures, much more valuable than gold or gems. The All-T'oaapu Tunic is an example of the height of Andean textile fabrication and its centrality to Inka expressions of power.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

This work exhibits the Inkan preference for abstract designs, standardization of designs, and expression of unity and order. The All-T'oaapu Tunic is an example of the height of Andean textile fabrication and its centrality to Inka expressions of power. Some dyes, like cochineal red or indigo blue, were especially prized and reserved for high-status textiles. Cochineal dye comes from the bodies of small insects that live on cacti, and it takes thousands of them to make a small amount of dye. Indigo dyeing requires a high level of technical skill and a large investment in time. Red- and blue-dyed textiles were not only beautiful, they also represented the apex of the resources needed to produce them and the social and political power that commanded those resources.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Incredibly time-consuming even for the detail-oriented Inka, these tunics contain miles and miles of thread. This example shows symmetrical and repeated geometric patterns. Each square contains stepped imagery, X configurations, and smaller checkered patches. The Inka were known for textiles created from three different types of loom: a backstrap loom, a vertical loom, and a horizontal loom. The Inka emperor had his own special group of weaving women called "the chosen women" who made special garments of only the highest quality. Weaving in Andean cultures was usually done on backstrap looms made from a series of sturdy sticks supporting the warp, or skeletal threads, of the textile. A backstrap loom is tied to a post or tree at one end, while the other end is attached to a strap that passes around the back of the weaver. By leaning forward or tilting back, the weaver can adjust the tension on the warp threads as he or she passes the weft threads back and forth, creating the pattern that we see on the surface of the textile. By the time of the Inka, an incredible number of variations on this basic technique had created all kinds of textile patterns and weaves.

INTERPRETATION:

Each color was significant, but red was special. It symbolized blood, conquest, and power.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

For this tunic, weavers probably made use of the popular pigment cochineal—a type of stinky insect that can be ground into a fine powder to make various shades of red and orange. In the Inka empire, textiles were produced by a number of groups, but the finest cloth, called qompi in Quechua (the language of the Inkas), was produced by acllas ("chosen women"), women who were collected from across the empire and cloistered in buildings to weave fine cloth.

TITLE: Painted elk hide **LOCATION:** Wind River, Wyoming **DATE:** c. 1800

ARTIST: Costiogo (Cadzi Cody) **PERIOD/STYLE:** Eastern Shoshone **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:

FORM:

It displays elements of several different dances, including the important and sacred Sun Dance and non-religious Wolf Dance (tdsayuge or tásayùge). The Sun Dance surrounds a not-yet-raised buffalo head between two poles (or a split tree), with an eagle above it. Men dressed in feather bustles and headdresses—not to be confused with feathered war bonnets—dance around the poles, which represents the Grass Dance. With their arms akimbo and their bodies bent, Costiogo shows these men in motion. Men participating in this sacred, social ceremony refrained from eating or drinking.

FUNCTION:

Painting, in tandem with oral traditions, functioned to record history. Worn as a robe over the shoulders of a hero. Warrior's deeds are celebrated on the hide. It conveyed biographical details, personal accomplishments, heroism and battles. Men painted hides to narrate events. Eventually they were painted for European or American markets. These depicted romanticized or nostalgic aspects of the Plains culture, such as bison hunting with bow and arrow. With newly established trade markets and the influx of new materials, artists like Costiogo sometimes produced work that helped support themselves and their families.

CONTENT:

In the image, horses, bison, and men all participate in the Sun Dance, a ceremony that celebrated the abundance of bison as a food source for the Eastern Shoshone people. This dance was later outlawed by the US govt. Wearing feather bustles (headpieces), the men are painted while dancing with horses prance around the margins. A bison head is staked on the pole in the middle, the main element in the colorful celebration. Bison were considered to be gifts from the creator. Horses were common in 1750. Fire represents the heart. The doorway of a teepee faced east to greet the new day.

CONTEXT:

Costiogo (known as Cadzi Cody to Americans) painted this elk hide during a tumultuous time in the lives of the Eastern Shoshone people. Settlers moving westward were given nearly free reign in choosing where they wanted to live, even if that meant pushing out the people (i.e. the Shoshone) who had actually called the lands between Wyoming and Montana home for at least two hundred years. Battles were fought, families separated, and treaties made and broken. The U.S. federal government created the reservation system to give Euro-American settlers room to stake much of the Shoshone's lands without contest. By 1863, the Shoshone lived in a cordoned-off area now called the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, which enabled Euro-American encroachment and the entrance of railroad companies wanting to lay down tracks that would connect one coast to the other. Culturally a nomadic people, the tribe was now confined to the reservation and that confinement meant a number of customs could no longer be practiced. One particular custom was hunting bison. Another was the Sun Dance, although that had nothing to do with a nomadic lifestyle. That was just outlawed by the U.S. government.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Elk skins had been used for centuries, but the Shoshone traditionally painted on them with natural pigments such as hematite (red) or lake algae (green). Costiogo used modern paints—a trade item that had recently become available through interactions with Euro-Americans on the plains—instead of natural pigments to lay down this image.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Typically, women painted geometric designs on elk hides and men painted grand stories like the Sun Dance scene. Costiogo, however, painted his version of the Sun Dance after the tradition was outlawed, making his work mostly about the past. It was unique in that the materials he used were both traditional and modern. Usually, artists decorated the hides with geometric or figural motifs. By the later nineteenth century certain hide artists like Costiogo began depicting subject matter that “affirmed native identity” and appealed to tourists.

INTERPRETATION:

The role of the bison was important to the Eastern Shoshone and central to ceremonial practices and cultural maintenance. While it had been over-hunted by Costiogo's time, his hide (a common material for painting) shows that bison remained important to the culture of the Shoshone even after the arrival of the reservation system. Before that time, the peoples of the Eastern Shoshone were incredibly organized, gathering for spring and fall bison hunts and then separating into family units in the off-season. Bison were so important that they probably accounted for fifty percent of the Eastern Shoshone diet.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

TITLE:Bandolier bag _____ **LOCATION:**Eastern Delaware _____ **DATE:** C. 1850 C.E. _____

ARTIST: _____ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Lenape _____ **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Beadwork on leather

FORM:

An accessory modeled after European artillery belts and worn by males of many Eastern Woodland tribes as status symbols. It is a heavily beaded pouch with a slit on top. It is held at hip level with the strap across the chest. It is constructed of trade cloth, cotton, wool, velvet or leather. The beads were imported from Europe.

FUNCTION:

Sewing the brightly colored, almost nano-sized, glass seed beads (factory-produced trade items from Euro-American settlers) into intricate designs. Typically, designs favoring flowers, leaves, and curving shapes were beaded with painstaking handiwork, whereas bandolier bags with geometric designs were usually created with the help of a loom. Men wore elaborate bandolier bags in ceremonial dances, often sporting two at once, crisscrossing the straps across their chests. When men rode their horses with these strapped to their chest, the low-slung pouches looked like beaded saddlebags. Typically, bandolier bags were presented as gifts, making it difficult to trace the histories of individual examples. They were also prestige items for women.

CONTENT:

Beads and other materials were embroidered on the trade cloth and hide. The tiny glass beads, called seed beads, were acquired from European traders, and they were prized for their brilliant colors. Glass beads replaced porcupine quillwork, which had a longstanding history in this area. Before the use of glass beads, porcupine quills were acquired (carefully!), softened and dyed. Once they were malleable enough to bend, the quills were woven onto the surfaces of objects (especially clothing or other cloth goods like bags).

CONTEXT:

The Eastern Woodlands tribes are those that live along the eastern seaboard and around the Great Lakes. A handful of these tribes are the Ojibwa, the Iroquois (which is comprised of five independent groups), the Choctaw, the Seminole, and the Lenape. The intricate bead work probably originated with the Manitoba tribes (First Nations), who were known for beading moccasins, saddles, and pouches in the early 1800s. They did not work with beads till after European contact. While these bags look similar to medicine bags, they didn't hold items used in medicinal ceremonies. The beaded bandolier bag is a distinctive form created by American Indians in the Great Lakes and Plains regions beginning in the mid-19th century. These large, vividly colored and intricately beaded bags were a central element of men's formal dress for dances and ceremonies. Wearing two bags at once, was a sign of prestige and status.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Eastern Woodlands tribes were known for their intricate beaded bags that either depicted geometric or floral forms. In this example, female bead workers used factory-produced beads to create bags inspired, in part, by European artillery belts. While Euro-American settlement was detrimental for native North Americans, trade enabled the emergence of new objects. The bandolier bag was integrated into celebrations and ceremonies of gift giving.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

INTERPRETATION:

Floral forms, combined with the use of ribbons and colorful glass beads, not only attest to the transformations in artistic production, but also testifies to the creativity of people as they adapted to new situations. Bandolier Bags, as well as other objects and clothing, helped to express group identities and social status. In the wake of forced removals and threats to traditional ways of life, objects like the NMAI Bandolier Bag demonstrate the resilience and continued creativity of groups like the Lenape.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

in the Ojibwe language they are called Aazhooningwa'on, or "worn across the shoulder". Many Anglo-American traders and collectors snapped up these striking works of art, which also makes it difficult to track their specific histories.

TITLE: Transformation mask **LOCATION:** Northwest Coast of Canada **DATE:** Late 19th century C.E.

ARTIST: Kwakwaka'wakw **PERIOD/STYLE:** Kwakiutl **PATRON:**

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Wood, paint, and string

FORM:

Worn over the head as part of a complete body costume. The mask's human aspect owes its dramatic character to the exaggeration and distortion of the facial parts such as the beak-like nose and flat, flaring nostrils, and the deeply undercut curvilinear depressions, which form strong shadows. In contrast to the carved human face, but painted in the same colors, is the two-dimensional abstract image of the eagle painted on the inside of the outer mask.

FUNCTION:

These masks were worn during ceremonial dances at a potlatch, a competitive feast, where the host proved his status to the community and to members of the surrounding communities by throwing a huge party and sparing no expense. Myth is highly important to the Kwakwaka'wakw. Ceremonies commemorating mythical histories and making objects, such as transformation masks, are important components of performances. The name of the object, "transformation mask," gives a sense of its use as a spiritual guide.

CONTENT:

This transformation mask depicts a raven, and it is only one of many animal forms that the Northwest Coast tribe constructs and rigs. The artist meant it to be seen in flickering firelight, and ingeniously constructed it to open and close rapidly when the wearer manipulated hidden strings. The transformation theme in myriad forms, is a central aspect of the art and religion of the Americas.

CONTEXT:

Kwakwaka'wakw legends and origin stories tell of supernatural birds. These birds, according to lore, worked for a powerful forest cannibal who lived in the north. Accordingly, these legends are fodder for an important dance in the Kwakwaka'wakw ceremonial cycle, which features the four birds. Ceremonial performers embody the birds when they don the masks. As with other indigenous groups in Canada and the U.S., the ceremonial practices of the Kwakwaka'wakw were banned in the 20th century. Officials confiscated masks, which eventually landed in the hands of museums across the globe, where they were shown as nice-looking objects without the context of dancers to enliven them. In the eyes of the First Nations people of the northwest coast, this amounted to separating the spirits from the Kwakwaka'wakw culture.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

These masks use elements of the formline style, a term coined in 1965 to describe the characteristics of Northwest Coast visual culture. Typical of the formline style is the use of an undulating, calligraphic line. Also, note how the pupils of the eyes on the exterior of the Brooklyn Museum mask are ovoid shapes, similar to the figures and forms found on the interior surfaces of many masks. This ovoid shape, along with s- and u-forms, are common features of the formline style.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

With the introduction and enforcement of Christianity and as a result of colonization in the nineteenth century, masking practices changed among peoples of the Northwest Coast. Prior to contact with Russians, Europeans, and Euro-Americans, masks like the Brooklyn Museum's Thunderbird Transformation Mask, were not carved using metal tools. After iron tools were introduced along with other materials and equipment, masks demonstrate different carving techniques. Earlier masks used natural (plant and mineral based) pigments, post-contact, brighter and more durable synthetic colors were introduced.

INTERPRETATION:

Northwest Coast transformation masks manifest transformation, usually an animal changing into a mythical being or one animal becoming another. Raven, for instance, is known as a consummate trickster—he often changes into other creatures, and helps humans by providing them with a variety of useful things such as the sun, moon, fire, and salmon. Thunderbird (Kwankwanxwalige'), who was a mythical ancestor of the Kwakwaka'wakw, also figures prominently in mythology. He is believed to cause thunder when he beats his wings, and lightning comes from his eyes. He lives in the celestial realm, and he can remove his bird skin to assume human form.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

With the prohibition of potlatches, many masks were confiscated. Those that weren't destroyed often made their way into museums or private collections. When the ban against potlatches was removed by the Canadian government, many First Nations have attempted to regain possession of the masks and other objects that had been taken from them. Potlatches are still practiced today among Northwest Coast peoples.

TITLE:Black-on-black ceramic vessel **LOCATION:** New Mexico **DATE:** _____

ARTIST: Maria Martinez and
Julien Martinez **PERIOD/STYLE:** C. mid-20th century C.E. **PATRON:** _____

MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE: Blackware ceramic

FORM:

Black on black vessels of striking shapes with matte designs on highly polished surfaces.

FUNCTION:

Before the arrival of the railroad to the area in the 1880s, pots were used in the Pueblos for food storage, cooking, and ceremonies. But with inexpensive pots appearing along the rail line, these practices were in decline. By the 1910s, Ms. Martinez found a way to continue the art by selling her pots to a non-Native audience where they were purchased as something beautiful to look at rather than as utilitarian objects.

CONTENT:

The shape, color, and designs fit the contemporary Art Deco movement, which was popular between the two World Wars and emphasized bold, geometric forms and colors.

CONTEXT:

The dynamic duo revived this particular example of Pueblo ceramics after an archaeological dig between 1908 and 1909 revealed shards of pots in styles that hadn't been practiced for many years. Edgar Lee Hewett, the person in charge of the whole shebang, promptly requested that Maria, a potter who was already famous in the area, reproduce the style indicated on the shards. After much experimentation, Maria and Julian developed a characteristic technique of their own that sent American anthropologists and collectors into a frenzy.

INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Pueblo potter Maria Martinez and her husband, Julian, refined the labor-intensive process for creating these objects after much experimentation with materials and designs. Making pottery was common in Pueblo practice, but Maria and Julian needed to invent a new process to create the shiny black properties of this vessel. Maria and Julian were trailblazers; they helped lead the way in changing how people thought about Native American cultural production. Typically thought of as artifacts (recall Hewett), the pair effectively transformed ceramics from an archaeological curiosity into work accepted as art. She learned the ceramic techniques that were used in the Southwest for several millennia by watching potters from San Ildefonso, especially her aunt Nicholasa as well as potters (including Margaret Tafoya from Santa Clara), from other nearby Pueblos.

ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

After the clay and ash were combined with water, Maria formed long, thin pieces of clay that, when coiled into a cylindrical shape like a snake, gave the pot its basic structure. Once the edges were smoothed out so the coils weren't visible, a slip, or liquid clay, was applied. Maria and Julian used a red slip because of the high quantity of iron it contained. After applying the red liquid clay, the pot was glossed by hand with a stone and then decorated with painted designs. Afterward, the pot was fired, in yet another complicated process (for starters, it requires animal dung). When the pot came out of the kiln, the once-red slip had been transformed into a lustrous black, with the painted areas transformed into a rich matte.

INTERPRETATION:

The avanyu serpent, one of Julian's favorite motifs, was also a popular mythical reptile of the Pueblo peoples, who pictured it with horns in ancient representations. For Julian, the horned serpent was personal associations related to water and rainfall.

DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

To help other potters in the Pueblo, Ms. Martinez was known to have signed the pots of others, lending her name to help the community.