HEMISPHERE

Visual Cultures *of the* Americas

VOLUME XV, 2023

HEMISPHERE

Visual Cultures *of the* Americas

VOLUME XV, 2023

HEMISPHERE

Visual Cultures *of the* Americas

VOLUME XIV, 2023

Hemisphere is an annual publication produced by graduate students affiliated with the Department of Art at the University of New Mexico (UNM). *Hemisphere* provides a forum for graduate students to present scholarship and studio practice pertaining to all aspects and time periods of the visual and material cultures of North, Central, and South America, and related world contexts. Through the production of *Hemisphere*, students promote their educational and professional interests as they gain first-hand experience in academic publishing. The journal welcomes and will continue to accept submissions from authors at other institutions in and outside of the United States. A call will be sent out each year to invite submissions for the next issue. Please see the *Hemisphere* webpage for submission information and content for previous issues.

EDITORIAL ADDRESS:
Department of Art
MSC04 2560
1 University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

CONTACT
Email: hmsphr@unm.edu
Webpage: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/hemisphere/

ISSN 1945-1482

The Question of Visual Communication and Writing in the Americas VOLUME XV, 2023

Founded in 1889, the University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico – Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache – since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.

For more information on the University of New Mexico's Land Acknowledgment, please see the Division of Equity and Inclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication of *Hemisphere* would not be possible without funding from the following sources at the University of New Mexico: The Department of Art, College of Fine Arts; Susanne Anderson-Riedel, Chair of the Department of Art, College of Fine Arts; Harris D. Smith, Dean of College of Fine Arts with funds from the Dean's Circle. The editorial committee expresses gratitude to Susanne Anderson-Riedel, Associate Professor, Chair of the Department of Art, and Ray Hernández-Durán, Professor, Department of Art, for working with the Department of Art to arrange the Brown Fine Arts Scholarship providing academic support for the journal's Chief Editor. Our sincerest thanks to the Digital Initiatives & Scholarly Communication team, for *Hemisphere's* digital repository page and for making this year's volume accessible to our virtual communities.

Table *of* Contents

Editor's Introduction to Volume XV: The Question of Visual Communication and Writing in the Americas

BETH WILSON NORWOOD, PH.D. CANDIDATE AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

The fifteenth volume of *Hemisphere: Visual Cultures of the Americas* brings together articles that address the topic of visual and material communication in the Americas, as well as papers that discuss art that emulates or draws inspiration from those traditions. Indigenous artists in North, South, and Central America are part of a long tradition of graphic communication that conveys information through the use of imagery, pictography, codified signs, operational notation, semasiography, and glyphic writing. Visual culture that communicates and records concepts, histories, narratives, and geographies are common throughout the Americas beginning during the ancient period and extending to contemporary popular culture.

Examples of Indigenous visual communication includes Moche ceramics, Maya sculpture, Mixtec manuscripts and maps, North American hide painting and ledger art, and Inka khipus. Modern and contemporary artists such as Sandy Rodriguez, Joaquin Torres Gonzalez, and Cecilia Vicuna emulate and draw inspiration from these traditions. This journal seeks to highlight, first, art and visual/material cultures originating in the Americas and to place this body of work in conversation with the larger global narrative of Art History, and also to provide a forum for and promote graduate student research.

The articles in this volume address the central theme by exploring topics that span the millennium. Catherine Nuckols' essay, "Sun Gods and Forest Figures: Duality and Complementarity in Copán Stela D's Full-Figure Inscription" examines Maya full figure glyphs in Copan's Stela D, highlighting how Maya art and writing are one in the same. In "The Wild Child of the Soil: The Symbol of the Datura Plant in Southwestern Art, from Ancient Native American Cultures to Georgia O'Keeffe," Adrian Butler offers a survey of the depiction of Datura, also known as Jimsonweed, in the Southwest over hundreds of years. Like Butler, Jacki Putnam examines the work of artists from the twentieth century in "Reframing Knowledge, Reenacting Myth, and Remapping Identity: Photographic Interpretations of Mesoamerican Codices." Her article looks at the work of three photographers, all working in the 1980s, who drew inspiration from Mesoamerican codices. Each article approaches the theme in different and exciting ways.

We include a book review by M.A. Student, Madison Garay of Denise Low and Ramon Powers, *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art by Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors (2022)* and an interview conducted by Ph.D. Candidate, Breanna Reiss with Ancient American art historian and Art Institute of Chicago curator, Andrew Hamilton, which explores his career as an art historian and his interest in Indigenous arts and visual communication. For the Artist Spotlight, we are pleased to feature Rosalba Breazeale (MFA, UNM 2022), who references her Indigenous Peruvian heritage in her work and draws inspiration, in part, from Andean khipus.

We are grateful for all of the hard work of our associate editors, faculty advisors, and most importantly, the authors who contributed to *Hemiphere's XV* volume. We hope you find this issue of interest.

Sun Gods and Forest Figures: Duality and Complementarity in Copán Stela D's Full-Figure Inscription

CATHERINE NUCKOLS
TULANE UNIVERSITY

The elegant complexity of Copán Stela D's hieroglyphic inscription has inspired admiration in both scholars and tourists alike since John Lloyd Stephens and Frederick Catherwood surveyed and illustrated the Honduran archaeological site in 1839.[1] The first full-figure inscription to have been excavated and documented in modern times, Stela D's inscription content expands our knowledge of Copán's influential 13th ruler, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, who is represented on the front, and illustrates the possibility of personified Maya writing. However, a more intriguing aspect of the monument (and its associated altar) has so far remained unexamined: the visual relationship between Stela D's full-figure inscription and its figural imagery suggests that Stela D functions as the embodiment of the Maya concept of *ts'ihb*—a term used by both ancient and modern Maya that encompasses both Western concepts "art" and "writing" within a single category. As an embodiment of *ts'ihb,* Stela D capitalizes on the inherent pictorial quality of Maya glyphs and incorporates their imagery into that of the rest of the monument.

Through its formal, figural, and iconographic properties, Stela D's inscription reaches beyond the traditional boundary of glyphs and fully incorporates itself into the monument's imagery. As one monument within a larger visual program emphasizing balance and duality, Stela D manages to adhere to these greater themes while still differing from its counterparts. The figures surrounding the ruler on all sides of the monument (including those found in the inscription) share similar formal qualities, body proportions, and levels of relief, increasing the sense of visual unity. The stela-altar pair also communicates themes of duality and complementarity, reinforced by the iconographic motivation of the signs in the full-figure inscription—signs likely chosen intentionally by scribes to further incorporate the text into the visual message. This full incorporation of text and image not only animates the embodied glyphs in the inscription through their association with their figural counterparts; it also clearly represents *ts'ihb* in action.

Maya Hieroglyphic Writing, Full-Figure Inscriptions, and *Ts'ihb*

The 8th-century ancient Maya world presented many different artistic, linguistic, and material innovations. During this time, Maya rulers and the scribes they commissioned sought to create innovative stone monuments to commemorate their power and influence. One of the more notable inventions of this time, full-figure glyphs, took the Maya hieroglyphic writing system and exaggerated the figural

quality and potential behind many hieroglyphic signs. Standard glyphic signs typically represented the disembodied heads of supernaturals, animals, and the occasional human, combined with abstract signs whose original visual referents had been forgotten long ago. But in the 8th century, inventive scribes grew bodies for these bodiless signs, creating what scholars today call "full-figure" glyphs: signs that took on entire bodies that reclined, gestured, and called out, all while functioning as linguistic signs.[2]

The Maya hieroglyphic writing system, including full-figure glyphs, embodies the juxtaposition of writing and art. The highly iconic nature of its signs allows for images of objects, animals, plants, natural elements, and even anthropomorphic beings to function as sound signs and meaning signs, and very frequently the same icon can appear within glyphic or figural contexts. Figure 1 shows an example of the representation of the moon sign, which can function as the syllable /ja/, the logograph UJ (meaning "moon") as part of multiple lunar-based calendric statements, or as an iconographic representation of the moon and moon goddess. Similarly, "head variant" glyphs frequently take on the form of the head of a particular animal or deity, aligning the sign's value even more closely with its related iconography of Maya art. Within this system, words could be images and images could be words.

a. b. c.

Figure 1. The moon sign as seen used for a) syllable /ja/, b) the logograph UJ (meaning "moon"), and c) an iconographic representation of the moon and moon goddess. (Drawings courtesy of author after Alexandre Tokovinine, "Beginner's Visual Catalog of Maya Hieroglyphs" pages 14 and 24 (University of Alabama, Department of Anthropology, 2017), photograph courtesy of Justin Kerr, detail from vessel K504. http://research.mayavase.com/kerrmaya_hires.php?vase=504.)

This flexibility represents a philosophy of thought, in both ancient and modern Maya culture, that categorizes writing and art as part of a single concept: *ts'ihb*. For the ancient Maya, the term *ts'ihb* meant both writing and painting; generally, it seems to have referred to the making of marks across a surface.[3] In modern Maya communities, *ts'ihb* (written as *ts'iib* in some modern orthographies) expands upon this idea, and includes practices of weaving or field-plowing, reinforcing the understanding of *ts'ihb* as much more broadly defined than a Western conception of "writing."[4] Modern scholarship on ancient Maya writing and iconography has examined the relationship between glyphs and their figural counterparts, producing insightful books and articles on the topic.[5] My own work examines the visual nature of full-figure glyphs from a *ts'ihb* perspective.[6]

Stela D: A Study of Duality and Complementarity

The Monument's Role within the Visual Program of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil

In July of 695 CE, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil acceded to the throne of Copán as its 13th ruler. Like all Maya rulers, he quickly began to carry out his vision for a distinctive monumental program that would mark his reign. From the beginning, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil seems to have valued visual complexity and nuance in his monumental works: his first monument, Stela J, represents a complicated, carved text whose reading order follows the plaits of a woven mat, with lines of glyphs intersecting and overlapping each other.[7] His later monuments continued to play with the visual disposition of text on monuments. By 711 CE, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil had begun the erection of the multi-stela program that would distinguish his reign. He commissioned, erected, and dedicated seven stelae between 711 and 736 CE, forming a ritual circuit within the central portion of the main plaza.[8] These stelae represent the ruler in ritual acts, impersonating different deities and performing his role as political and spiritual leader.

Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil dedicated the last of these monuments, Stela D, in 736 CE. (Figure 2) The overall message of the monument's detailed execution and complex iconography emphasizes complementarity and duality. Unlike the six other monuments in the program, Stela D faces in a North-South orientation, rather than East-West. Like those other monuments, Stela D depicts the ruler facing outward, holding a bicephalic serpent bar in his arms (serpents marked in green in Figure 2). From each of the open serpent maws at either end of the ruler's ceremonial bar, the head and shoulders of the lightning deity K'awiil emerge, summoned by the ruler's bloodletting sacrifice (Figure 2 shows emerging K'awiil figures in blue). Additional pairs of serpents reinforce the visual balance communicated on this monument. Two interlaced bicephalic serpents float above the ruler's head on the front side of the monument, each with one head on the front of the monument and the other head curving onto the side of the monument and facing forward with a K'awiil head

emerging from the open mouth. Two monocephalic serpents appear on the stela's two sides at the height of the ruler's thighs (facing the back of the monument) and their corresponding tails with crosshatched black spots seem to curl under the monument and reappear halfway up the monument on the opposite side. K'awiil emerges, visible from head to upper torso, from every serpent mouth, bearing vegetation in his hands in a reference to the positive pole of life, and on the serpent tails an upturned skeletal mask represents the negative pole associated with death. Four additional small figures (mostly representations of K'awiil as well, marked in red in Figure 2) sit on the bodies of the serpents at the top of the monument and hold out glyphs and other vegetation in their hands.

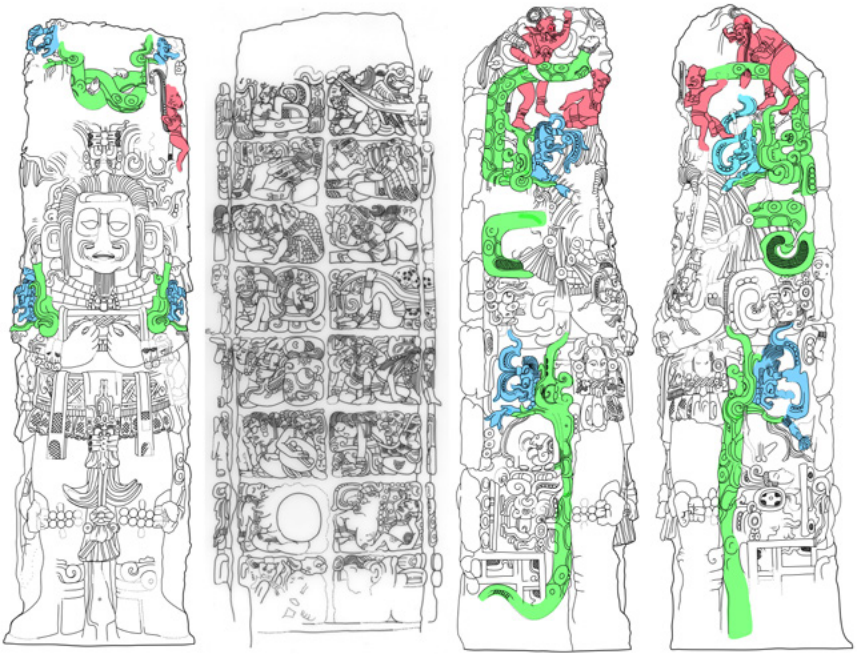


Figure 2. Front, back, and side views of Stela D. Copán, Honduras, 736 CE. Volcanic tuff. (Photographs courtesy of the author. Drawings of the front and sides by the author after Ann Dowd from Baudez 1994 pgs. 39-41, figs. 11-13 with highlighted sections by author. Back drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, photo of drawing courtesy Ancient Americas at LACMA (ancientamericas.org).)

The back of the monument bears the full-figure glyphic inscription and continues the established expectation of visual complexity. Two columns of text, read in rows from left to right and top to bottom, take up the entire back of the monument, extending onto the monument's sides in a slight overlap (discussed further below). Within each glyph block, the reader would also read from left to right and from top to bottom, with a few key exceptions discussed below. Every glyph block contains a personified sign, and every block but one contains at least two full-figure glyphs. The figures within the block do not sit quietly; they grapple with, carry, or harass each other at different intervals, only occasionally sitting in quiet peace with each other. This entangled interaction creates another level of complexity in which the reader must tease apart the individual signs prior to reading the message.

Despite its rich visual complexity, the text of the monument contains a standard dedicatory phrase. It begins with a detailed calendric notation situating the event in time (a common opening feature of Maya inscriptions) and then records the dedicatory planting or erection of the stela by Copán's ruler: "It is the year-count of Ch'en, 9 bak'tuns, 15 k'atuns, 5 years, 0 months, 0 days, 0 Ajaw, G9-F, the 8th [day] of Ch'en. It was planted, Yax Balun ? K'awiil, Balun K'awiil is its name, the large/wide stone of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, Holy Lord of Copán ? ?."9 The name of the stela itself is unfortunately eroded but contains multiple references to the deity K'awiil and the venerated Yax Baluun, one of the famous hero twins of Maya mythology known as a "Master of Animals" who lived in the forest.10 The final blocks of the inscription have been damaged beyond legibility but appear to have originally indicated a supernatural patron for the event. The text's content does not present any real innovation; rather, the novelty lies in the text's visual execution.

Glyphs Coming to Life: Formal and Figural Qualities of Stela D's Glyphic Text

The formal and figural qualities of Stela D's full-figure inscription diverge from the canon in ways that bring attention to the text's visual nature. Traditionally, glyphic inscriptions on Maya monuments end just before the edge of the stone face on which they are carved, even those carved in high relief; this creates the sense of the glyphs being contained within the stone.

However, in the case of Stela D, the full-figure glyphs on the back of the monument continue around the edge, bleeding slightly onto the monument's east and west sides. This wrap-around presentation increases the level of relief and allows the full-figure glyphs to step beyond the expected domain of "writing" and encroach into the figural relief shown on the other sides of the monument.[11] The overlap of the textual register into the figural communicates to the viewer that the inscription participates in the monument as a visual component rather than being an addition to (or explanation of) the figural representation on the front and sides.

The sense of the inscription overlapping into the figural sphere stems from the uncharacteristically high relief of the glyphs. Standard hieroglyphic inscriptions do occasionally appear in somewhat high relief; however, they more often maintain a low profile (literally and figuratively) on the backs of monuments. The high relief of Stela D's glyphs augments their lifelike, animated quality; they are no longer the low-relief head variants and abstract signs of other inscriptions, but rather full forms, modeled in high relief and excised from the stone around them. Instead, their relief mirrors that of the figures on the front and sides of the monument, drawing valuable parallels between these two groups that align with the monument's overarching visual message of unity through duality.

In addition to their high relief, the figures in the inscription also share sizes and proportions with their figural counterparts, the K'awiil figures emerging from serpent mouths and sitting on serpent bodies. On Copán Stela D, the average head and torso for full-figure glyphs measure 10.5cm and 22.4cm, respectively; their figural counterparts measure 11.75cm and 23cm on average. The proportions of head to torso do not appear to vary significantly between these groups. The same pattern occurs for measurements from shoulder to elbow, elbow to wrist, hip to knee, and knee to ankle.[12] The only significant difference arises in the representation of hands; the one remaining hand of figural signs measures 12cm (all others having been lost to damage or erosion), while those of full-figure glyphs measure 7.5cm. Perhaps the missing figural signs' hands would have been smaller, closing the gap in averages. This occurs with the full-figure glyphs: one of the full-figure glyphs also has a hand measuring 12cm, but the average is balanced out by many other smaller hands. These shared proportions create visual parallels between signs used within the inscription and the figures in the rest of the monument. It seems that even formally, the monument's creators meant for the viewer to draw similarities on all sides of the monument.

Occasionally, the position of supernaturals and animals in the glyphic section aligns with that of the supernatural beings emerging from Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil's serpent bar and the other open serpent maws on the monument. The bicephalic serpent bar held by the ruler on the front of the monument takes pride of place over the other serpents, and K'awiil figures emerge from its maws. However, the serpents on the sides of the monument also conjure up other instances of K'awiil; the deity emerges once from each of the four serpent heads. These serpents also face both the front and the back of the monument, creating a visual balance that directs the reader in both directions simultaneously. The alignment of full-figure glyphs in the inscription with the figures emerging from serpent maws gives the impression that the full-figure glyphs, too, emerged from the serpent bar, and have since been organized (whether by their own accord or by the ruler's mighty influence) into blocks for maximum legibility.

An Iconography of Duality and Complementarity

Duality seems to be the main theme of this monument: a pairing of opposites that makes up more than the sum of their parts. The ruler holds a bicephalic serpent bar that visually emphasizes balance through opposition, and other serpents on the monument reinforce this concept through their careful placement and the opposed heads emerging from their open mouths.

On the front of the monument, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil wears the mask of an aged deity over his face; the mask has large openings for the eyes and mouth, from which the viewer can see the ruler's own face looking out. A large mirror appears in the forehead of the mask, molars sit on the top and bottom gums of the mask's mouth, and a beard hangs from its chin. The identity of this figure remains ambiguous: although the wrinkles around the mouth suggest an elderly being, the remaining details do not offer a clear identification. Claude Baudez, a French Mayanist, archaeologist, and iconographer, identifies it as the mask of the nocturnal sun deity, while Elizabeth Newsome suggests that it could represent the face of the Pax tree god.[13] Although I find some visual support for Newsome's interpretation, other visual details from the monument more firmly reinforce the identification of this as a mask of an aged (possibly skeletal) sun god, as will be discussed below. Given the abundant references to duality on this monument, however, the mask's ambiguity likely references both possible interpretations.

Another representation of duality associated with Stela D appears in the depiction of the altar placed in front of it and dedicated alongside it.[14] (Figure 3) Ancient artisans carved Altar D into a square diamond shape, in which the north and south points formed the noses of two personified natural elements: a personified mountain and a skeletal sun. The skeletal sun points south, its face marked with crescent shapes and undulating lines indicating boniness and a skeletal jaw. A four-petaled flower sits in each eye: the symbol for the sun seen both in the personified celestial body and the deity associated with it. In its forehead rests a darkness marker associated with the night. This sun, then, represents the setting sun, past its prime and moving toward the underworld. Facing to the north, the second head forms a personified mountain: a distinctly curved nose pairs with undulating eyebrows to give the formal shape, with details identifying the stoniness of the personified element in the form of inverted triangles made of three stacked concentric circles and other smaller circles dotting the face. The eyes of this creature also contain the dotted circles that identify the personified mountain, reaffirming its identity. In ancient and modern Maya thought, the mountain represents a space bursting with vegetation and untamed life—the home of wild creatures and unruly supernaturals.[15] It functions as the opposite complement of the organized, human-made cityscape.

Figure 3. Altar of Stela D. Copán, Honduras, 736 CE. South side on left, North side on right. Volcanic tuff. (Courtesy of the author.)

The pairing of these two heads creates a dichotomy between death (the skeletal head of the sun) and life (the mountain and all that grows freely on it), as well as between light (the sun transitioning to night) and dark (the shady world underneath the mountain's vegetation canopy). Joining these heads are two paws, one on either side of the altar. The paws also bear the crescent shape at the top marking their boniness; however, the lower portions of the paws are marked with the black spots and circles of jaguar pelt. The presence of two claws on the skeletal sun side and one claw on the mountain side implies that the "front" of the paw points in the direction of the skeletal sun, towards the south. This aligns with the stela standing behind the monument, also facing south. The front side of Stela D, then, hints at sunlight and the approach to death, while the monument's back side bursts with life and abundance in a representation of untamed mountain forests.

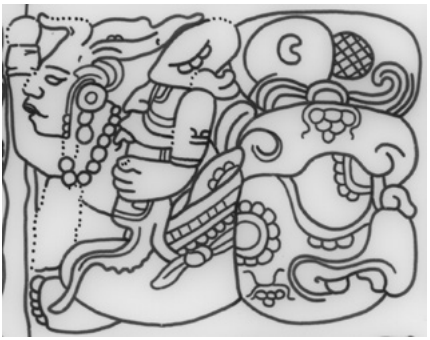
Forest Figures: The Iconography of Stela D's Full-Figure Glyphs

Iconographic analysis of the figures forming these glyphs allows the reader to identify who these figures are and what sign they represent. The iconographic value of each sign was frequently determined by its linguistic value, while in other cases, the scribe found the flexibility to choose between various possibilities of signs and could play with these options to communicate a different message. For example, the calendric text at the beginning includes two instances of the number zero and one instance of the number 10; Ak'aan the death god is the designated patron deity of both numbers, and thus appears three times in the inscription.[16] A scribe that wished to write the number zero in full-figure glyphs only had one option to do so; therefore, Ak'aan appears in each instance. Similarly, the text evokes K'awiil, a deity associated with rulers and royal authority, three times: twice in the name given to the monument, and once in the name of the dedicating ruler, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil. K'awiil appears in the form of the logograph for himself in each of these instances; nowhere in the full-figure corpus (and only rarely in the hieroglyphic

corpus at large) does the word *K'awiil* receive a purely phonetic spelling rather than the usual logographic one.

In some key instances, the master artist behind the monument's design seems to have chosen one sign over another to align the visual properties of the hieroglyphic text with the monument's overarching message. In glyph block B3 (the third from the top on the right side), the scribe completes the Long Count calendric cycle with a mention of the position "0-K'IN" meaning zero days.[17] (Figure 4a) The glyph for zero is the personified death god Ak'aan mentioned above, and the *k'in* sign appears as a monkey with the tail of a centipede. When choosing between full- figure options for the day sign, the scribe could have selected this sign or the personified sun god K'inich. By selecting the monkey, the scribe elected to continue the theme of humanoid supernaturals grappling with zoomorphic creatures, a pattern that encompassed all glyph blocks prior to this one. This choice also meant that the scribe did not choose an image that would have more closely aligned with the monument's front-side theme (that of the sun, also seen on the front side of the altar), but rather reinforced the idea of the forest and its untamed creatures as seen on the back side of the altar. In doing so, the scribe clarifies that the viewer should interpret the back of Stela D as the parallel to the personified mountain seen on the altar's back side, a forest populated by supernaturals and animals.

a.



b.

c.

Figure 4. Full-figure details of Stela D. Copán, Honduras, 736 CE. Volcanic tuff. a) Glyph block B3: 0-K'IN at end of Long Count calendric cycle. Death God at left and supernatural monkey at right. b) Glyph block A5: the Maize God (left) as the number 8 (waxak) and the Pax god (right) as the logogram TE'. c) Glyph block B5: the clown (left) as the syllable /pa/ holding the conflated syllables /tz'a/ and /ja/ in his bent arm, spelling tz'apaj, "was planted." Photographs courtesy of the author, drawing by Linda Schele © David Schele, photo of drawing courtesy Ancient Americas at LACMA (ancientamericas.org).

Another key decision was made in block A5, where the first head variants occur in this inscription. (Figure 4b) Here the maize god Ixiim sits as a full-figure glyph for the number 8, holding the head variant for the logograph TE'. These two signs together spell *waxakte'*, meaning "eighth" and referencing the 8th day of the month Ch'en. Visually, these two signs reference growth, fertility, and trees: the maize god represents the life cycle of the maize plant itself and the associated abundance and life that corn brings, while the head variant for TE' represents the "Pax" tree god—a personified tree embodied by a face that sits at the base of mythical trees with roots growing from the jawless bottom half of its mouth.[18] Although the maize god was the scribe's only choice for personifying the number 8, the decision to include the TE' head variant seems intentional—the inclusion of the suffix *-te'* after *waxak* ("eight") appears to have been optional to scribes. Furthermore, in other full-figure texts that include TE', the scribe frequently conflates the TE' sign's flowing roots with the face of the associated number, creating a leafy beard. The choice to isolate this sign as a head variant draws the reader's eye and visually reinforces the theme of trees and leafy growth associated with forests and trees—an aspect also associated with stela, as will be discussed below. In addition, the theme of severed heads growing from trees finds parallels in the Maya myth in which the Maize God is decapitated in the Underworld, and his head is hung from a calabash tree.[19]

Another intentionally chosen head variant, the glyph used for the month Ch'en represents a personified stone with an abstract sign for the color black sitting above it. (Figure 4b, right) The scribe could have created a full-figure variant of this sign (a full-figure example of the personified stone creature appears on a later monument at Copán).[20] However, as a head variant, this sign almost perfectly parallels the living head of the stone altar sitting in front of the stela, representing the personified mountain and the forests that live upon it. The scribe seems to have chosen to use a head variant rather than a full-figure glyph to evoke the visual parallels between the altar and this sign. Additionally, this intentional use of a head variant in the middle of a full- figure inscription calls attention to the glyph itself and invites the reader to reflect on the greater context of the inscription.

A final example of intentional scribal choice occurs in the following glyph block, B5. (Figure 4c) On the left side of this block, three syllables come together to spell tz'a-pa-ja or *tz'apaj*, meaning "was planted." This phrase uses an arboricultural reference to tree-planting to describe the erection of stelae, which the Maya often conceived of as stone trees.[21] This phrasing continues the visual emphasis on trees seen in the preceding glyph block described above. Additionally, the choice of glyphs spelling out this phrase reinforces the concept. The syllable /tz'a/ appears as an elongated leafy bundle held in the arm of the full-figure syllable /pa/. The syllable /ja/, usually a moon sign or the moon goddess, conflates into the center of /tz'a/. The full-figure /pa/ appears as a "clown," a long-nosed human-like creature that lived in the forest and appeared in court during important calendric and ritual moments.[22] The combination of these glyphs suggests that the scribe intentionally personified only one sign and broke traditional reading order in order to personify this desired sign: it seems strange that /tz'a/ and /ja/ should be conflated, as sign conflation usually indicates that the reader should read the conflated signs consecutively, and reading order dictates that /tz'a/ (as the first sign in the phrase) should appear at the left-most or top-most side of the glyph block, and /ja/ (as the final sign in the phrase) should come at the end. The scribe could have chosen to personify /ja/ as the moon goddess as well instead of using the iconic variant. However, by breaking reading order, personifying /pa/, and placing it at the front of the phrase, the scribe creates a visual scene that continues the theme of arboriculture, trees, and the forest. The /pa/ clown leans forward with one fist on the ground. With the other hand, he holds the leafy bundle composed of /tz'a/ and /ja/. The figure's gaze and posture make clear that his next action will be to plunge the leafy bundle into the ground, planting this tree into the prepared soil just as Stela D would have been placed into the ground on the day of its erection.

The many appearances of Yax Baluun further reinforce the forest associations of Stela D's back side. As mentioned above, Yax Baluun is one of the famous hero twins who, in Late Classic Maya iconography, becomes known as a "master of animals" and lives in the forest. He grows a beard, wears his hair loose, and always appears with patches of jaguar pelt on his face and body. In some versions of the mythology, he becomes the moon at the end of his journey. Yax Baluun represents the complementary opposite of his twin, Juun Ajaw, who becomes the sun and functions as the prototype of the good ruler, reigning over the organized human-made world.

Yax Baluun's appearances on Stela D as the patron deity of the number nine and as part of the monument's name might have influenced the forest theme of the backside of the monument. However, the number nine appears on every Late Classic stela with a Long Count inscription, as all these stelae were dedicated in the ninth baktun. If Yax Baluun's presence were the deciding factor, we would expect all stelae with the number nine to have a forest association. Instead, it seems more

likely that the visual theme of the monument was established first, and the scribe took advantage of the theme to emphasize Yax Baluun's role as forest ruler and master of animals. The scribe then continued to manipulate other available signs to bring themes of arboriculture and forestry to the forefront, further establishing the theme.

Conclusion

These decisions regarding sign choice and position all point to a conscious effort on the scribe's part to maintain a sense of coherence in the visual message communicated by this stela-altar pair. By choosing full-figure signs that relate to "wild" forest figures, the scribe reinforced the visual elements seen in mountain iconography on the back of Stela D, strengthening the imagery needed to create an opposition to the large image of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil as an aged solar deity on the front of the monument—a possible nod to Juun Ajaw as well, since all rulers strove to embody the aspects of this deified ruler. This complementarity in turn echoes that seen on the altar in front of Stela D, where the skeletal sun opposes the vibrant mountain.

This juxtaposition relies not only on the front and back of the monument, but the sides as well. Just as the paws on the associated altar formed a unifying axis joining the front and back of the monument, the sides of Stela D mark the point at which front and back imagery meet and become one. The high relief and wrap-around quality of the full-figure inscription support the text's merging with the figural register, reinforced by the shared proportions between the full- figure glyphs and their figural counterparts. The imagery of Stela D's sides creates an axis of balance that joins the imagery of sun and forest, ruler and ruled, organized and untamed.

Beyond the communication of the monument's theme, this analysis illustrates how Stela D functions as the embodiment of *ts'ihb*. The full-figure glyphs not only fulfill their role as linguistic signs; they also step into the realm of the figural through their execution in high relief and their interactions with nearby signs. Their visual elaboration extends their sphere of influence beyond that of captions or explanations and fully incorporates them into the *tableau vivant* of the monument, which in turn extends the reach of the figural components.

This interpretation of full-figure glyphs as figural representations suggests other implications for the glyphs' animacy and personhood. Stephen Houston and David Stuart have shown that Maya sculpture held part of a ruler's "essence" or vitality and would have been considered animate to a certain degree.[23] Houston has also suggested that full-figure glyphs carry the potential for animacy, which could be extended to Maya glyphs at large.[24] The degree to which Stela D incorporates full-figure glyphs into the figural register confirms that this is the case and that these

glyphs, possibly due to their inherent animacy, could inhabit both the figural and textual registers.

As embodiments of *ts'ihb*, the full-figure glyphs of Copán Stela D take full advantage of their iconic and figural nature not only to create a more complex and nuanced reading experience, but also to enhance the visual message of the monument. Their placement on the back side of the monument (corresponding to the north) draws a parallel with the iconographic features of the stela's altar, which represents a personified mountain. It also provides a counterweight to the solar imagery seen on the fronts of the stela and altar, facing south. These cardinal orientations could also explain the iconographic choices: the front sides of the stela and altar receive sun almost constantly, while the back sides remain in shadow. By juxtaposing opposites, the scribes responsible for the monument emphasized duality and complementarity and debuted an innovative means for incorporating hieroglyphic inscriptions into the larger visual narrative.

CATHERINE NUCKOLS is a PhD candidate in the Joint PhD in Art History and Latin American Studies at Tulane University. She holds a M.A. in Art History from the University of Texas at Austin and a B.A. in Latin American Studies from Brigham Young University. She specializes in the intersection of ancient Maya art and writing, particularly during the Late Classic period. Her dissertation, *Unfolding the Sign: Iconicity and Figuration in Maya Full- Figure Inscriptions*, has been supported by grants from the Center for the Advanced Study of Visual Arts, the Tinker Foundation, and Tulane University. This essay builds on research conducted for one chapter of the dissertation.

[1] John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (A. Hall, Virtue & Company, 1854).

[2] Although prior Early-Classic examples of full-figure inscriptions exist (at Yaxchilán, Copán, Takalik Abaj and Caracol), the more-than-100-year hiatus between these examples and the 8th-century inscriptions suggest a break in their usage and a subsequent return by 8th-century scribes to recover this writing style. This more modern iteration of full-figure inscriptions seems to have maintained the concept of full-figure glyphs while innovating the style and formal execution.

[3] David Stuart, "Ten Phonetic Syllables. Research Reports on Ancient Maya Writing 14," *Center for Maya Research, Washington, DC*, 1987; Adam Herring, *Art and Writing in the Maya Cities, AD 600-800: A Poetics of Line* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). Elizabeth Boone and others have argued for a similar parallel in Central Mexican artistic traditions: Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztec and Mixtec* (Austin: Univ of Texas Pr., 2008); Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D Mignolo, *Writing without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Elizabeth Hill Boone and Gary Urton, eds., *Their Way of Writing: Scripts, Signs, and Pictographies in Pre-Columbian America*, Dumbarton Oaks Pre-Columbian Symposia and Colloquia (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2011).

[4] Paul M. Worley and Rita M. Palacios, *Unwriting Maya Literature: Ts'íib as Recorded Knowledge* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019).

[5] Arthur G. Miller, "Comparing Maya Image and Text," *Word and Image in Maya Culture: Explorations in Language, Writing, and Representation*, 1989, 176–88; Stephen Houston and Simon Martin, "Mythic Prototypes and Maya Writing," *Maya Decipherment* (blog), January 4, 2012, https://mayadecipherment.com/2012/01/04/mythic-prototypes-and-maya-writing/; Adam Herring, *Art and Writing in the Maya Cities, AD 600-800: A Poetics of Line* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); Andrea Joyce Stone and Marc Zender, *Reading Maya Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Maya Painting and Sculpture* (New York, New York: Thames & Hudson, 2011).

[6] The present study stems from research for my doctoral dissertation, which analyzes the visual aspects of full-figure glyphs as a corpus from the sites of Copán, Quiriguá, Palenque, and Yaxchilan in the 8th century CE.

[7] Dedicated in 702 CE. See Claude F. Baudez, *Maya Sculpture of Copán: The Iconography* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), Fig. 27.

[8] Elizabeth A. Newsome, *Trees of Paradise and Pillars of the World: The Serial Stela Cycle of "18-Rabbit-God K," King of Copan*, Linda Schele Series in Maya and Pre-Columbian Studies (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Diana C. Rose, "Living Time, Performing Memory: Maya Ceremonies of Foundation and Renewal" (UC Santa Cruz, 2017), pp.101-135 https://escholarship.org/uc/item/64v520m2.

[9] The epigraphic annotation for the monument's reading is as follows: Transcription:
tzi-ka-HAAB-[Ch'en] 9- BAK'TUN 15-K'ATUN 5-TUN 0-WINAL 0-K'IN 0-AJAW
?-HUN 8-TE'-CH'EN pa-tz'a[ja]-YAX-BALUN?
?-K'AWIIL-9-K'AWIIL-la u-K'ABA-u-LAKAM-TUN 18?-? K'AWIIL-K'UH-xu[ku] ?
?-ma-ko-?;

Transliteration: *tzihk haab Ik'sihoom balun? pik ho'lajuun winikhaab ho' haab mih winik mih k'in mih ajaw ? huun waxakte' ik'sihoom tz'apaj Yax Balun ? K'awiil, balun K'awiil u k'aba, ulakam tuun Waxaklajuun? ?[Ubaah] K'awiil, k'uhul Xukpi ajaw ? ?*

[10] Karl Taube, "Ancient and Contemporary Maya Conceptions About Field and Forest," in *The Lowland Maya Area: Three Millennia at the Human-Wildland Interface*, ed. A. Gómez-Pompa et al. (University of California Riverside, 2003), 472; Oswaldo Fernando Chinchilla Mazariegos, *Art and Myth of the Ancient Maya* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 159-184.

[11] The use and definition of the term "writing" is hotly debated among scholars of Mesoamerican cultural history (see Elizabeth Hill Boone and Gary Urton, eds., *Their Way of Writing: Scripts, Signs, and Pictographies in Pre- Columbian America*, Dumbarton Oaks Pre-Columbian Symposia and Colloquia (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2011). I use the term here only for the reader's sake.

[12] The measurements for each of these categories are as follows: from shoulder to elbow, full-figure glyphs measure 12.18cm and figural signs measure 13cm. From elbow to wrist, the measurements are 10.04cm and 10.3cm respectively. When measured from hip to knee, full-figure glyphs measure 17.19cm and figural signs measure 17.25cm, and from knee to ankle, each respective group measures 11.75cm and 12.25cm.

[13] Claude F. Baudez, *Maya Sculpture of Copán: The Iconography* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), p. 42; Elizabeth A. Newsome, *Trees of Paradise and Pillars of the World: The Serial Stelae Cycle of" 18-Rabbit– God K," King of Copan* (University of Texas Press, 2001), 141-142.

[14] Stela-altar pairs occur frequently in the Maya world and occur in every monument dedicated as part of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil's ritual circuit. See Elizabeth A. Newsome, *Trees of Paradise and Pillars of the World: The Serial Stelae Cycle of" 18-Rabbit–God K," King of Copan* (University of Texas Press, 2001).

[15] Karl Taube, "Ancient and Contemporary Maya Conceptions About Field and Forest," in *The Lowland Maya Area: Three Millennia at the Human-Wildland Interface*, ed. A. Gómez-Pompa et al. (University of California Riverside, 2003).

[16] Nikolai Grube, "Akan: The God of Drinking, Disease and Death," *Continuity and Change: Maya Religious Practices in Temporal Perspective*, 2004, 59–76.

[17] The Maya Long Count presents the calculation of the number of days passed since the current creation of the work (on 4 Ahau 8 Cumku in 3112 BCE). After the Initial Series Introductory Glyph, the count proceeds to outline the quantity of periods of 400 years (baktun), 20 years (katun), one year (haab), one "month" of 20 days (winal), and individual days (k'in).

[18] Karl Taube, "Ancient and Contemporary Maya Conceptions About Field and Forest," in *The Lowland Maya Area: Three Millennia at the Human-Wildland Interface*, ed. A. Gómez-Pompa et al. (University of California Riverside, 2003), 470.

[19] See Oswaldo Fernando Chinchilla Mazariegos, *Art and Myth of the Ancient Maya* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 225-238 for a discussion of Late Classic and modern Maya representations of the Maize God.

[20] This instance appears on Copán Bench 9N-82; see Baudez 1994 Fig. 111, Glyph B for an illustration.

[21] Linda Schele and David A Freidel, *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya* (New York: Quill//W. Morrow, 1992).

[22] Karl Taube, "Ancient and Contemporary Maya Conceptions About Field and Forest," in *The Lowland Maya Area: Three Millennia at the Human-Wildland Interface*, ed. A. Gómez-Pompa et al. (University of California Riverside, 2003), 483.

[23] Stephen Houston and David Stuart, "The Ancient Maya Self: Personhood and Portraiture in the Classic Period," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 33 (1998): 73–101.

[24] Stephen Houston, *The Life within: Classic Maya and the Matter of Permanence* (Yale University Press, 2014).

The Wild Child of the Soil: The Symbol of the Datura Plant in Southwestern Art, from Ancient Native American Cultures to Georgia O'Keeffe

ADRIAN BUTLER

"At the time of the White Dawn;
At the time of the White Dawn,
I arose and went away.
At Blue Nightfall I went away.
I ate the thornapple leaves
And the leaves made me dizzy.
I drank thornapple flowers
And the drink made me stagger…"

--Tohono O'odham Ritual "Datura Song"[1]

The night-blooming, white-flowering plant—*Datura* spp.—with serrated leaves and spiky seed pods, has been a feature of the American Southwestern landscape for thousands of years. The unique appearance of this plant, along with the psychoactive alkaloids within every aspect of its composition, inspired its use in sacred environments and its appearance in artistic expressions. The flower is known by many names: Moon Flower, Jimson Weed, and Thornapple, among others.[2] The most famous artistic representation of it is perhaps in Georgia O'Keeffe's *Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1* (1932). However, the depiction of Datura in art existed years before O'Keeffe felt its allure. Numerous ancient Native cultures, prominently the Mimbres cultures of New Mexico and Arizona, but also other indigenous groups from Arkansas to California have used the plant in a ceremonial manner. Given its significance, Native cultures' experiences with this mystical botanical informed and inspired their artwork from rock pictographs to ceramics.

Despite its illustrious ancient presence among Native cultures and its prominent placement within O'Keeffe's oeuvre, the significance of Datura as a powerful symbol of the U.S. Southwest has not been fully studied in a holistic manner. In examining Datura's ancient and modern presence in art, I aim to render evident that Datura operates as a unique symbol within Southwestern art and within the Southwestern landscape itself. Nowhere else in the world does Datura have such a strong visual presence; in this essay I will demonstrate its influence in this region.

The Datura Plant: Background

The Datura plant comes in several different species—*D. stramonium*, *D. metel*, and *D. inoxia*, among others, all possessing similar chemical makeups and appearances, with slight variances and all belong to the nightshade family. This plant family includes innocuous members such as potatoes, peppers, and tomatoes, along with other notorious plants, such as Mandrake, Brugmansia, Belladonna, Henbane, and Tobacco.[3] Datura aligns more closely with the latter nightshade members. It possesses a chemical composition that include the narcotic tropane alkaloids atropine, hyoscyamine, scopolamine, daturine, stramonine, and meteloidine, all of which possess powerful physical and psychological/hallucinogenic properties.[4] One such example of the plant's potency comes from the often-used name for the plant—Jimsonweed— which is thought to be an abbreviation of "Jamestown Weed," a name given to the plant after soldiers in seventeenth-century Virginia accidently consumed the plant and reportedly hallucinated for eleven days, all memories of their experience forgotten.[5]

The exact origin of the plant is debated among botanists, with some positing that Datura is native to the Americas while others argue it is native to Europe or India.[6] Confusion arises as to Datura's true origins even with the differing species mentioned above. Hence, it can be difficult to ascertain which subspecies is discussed in relation to the art of the American Southwest. Many researchers simply write "Datura" without specifying the species. Other times, specifically in the scholarship on O'Keeffe, *D. stramonium* is identified. Although I am not a botanist, I am reticent to correct or assert a definitive identification. However, based on my own research and first-hand observations of the various Datura species, O'Keeffe's depictions more closely resemble *D. inoxia* or *D. wrightii*. When not explicitly identified, I suggest it is probable that the Native artworks discussed below are also based on these species, and/or *D. stramonium*.

Regardless of its origins, Datura has operated as poison, medicine, and visionary drug throughout history, in both the Americas, Europe and beyond, largely due to the plant's narcotic alkaloids and their effects. Datura is sacred to the Indic god Vishnu in the Hindu religion. In Europe, its history is shrouded by spiritual and occult elements. It was included in recipes for magical formulas, such as in the eleventh-century Arabic-to-Latin grimoire *The Picatrix*, along with its hypothesized use as an aid in the altered-states and prophecies of the oracles of Delphi in ancient Greece.[7] The plant is also included in Renaissance-era healing salve recipes, along with being one of the ingredients in the infamous witches' flying ointment.[8] Among the colonial settlers in what would become the United States of America, Shakers sold pain-relief blends of Datura, and Datura cigarettes have been sold until relatively recently to aid in bronchial issues.[9] However, Datura's presence and prominence, not only spiritually but especially in artistic realms among Native

Americans, spans much further back in time than Shakers or Jamestown soldiers.

Evidence of the use of the Datura plant in North America can be dated to as far back as the Archaic period (roughly from 6,500 BCE to 700 CE with Datura chiefly being found in the mid- late years).[10] The desiccated botanical remains of Datura— primarily seeds and fruit/seed pod— have been found at archeological sites in New Mexico, Utah, Texas, Arizona, California, and Mexico, among others. The Chumash of the modern-day Santa Barbara region held the plant in especially high esteem and used it to contact the spiritual realm, for divination, and to heal wounds, among other applications.[11]

Recent discoveries at a Chumash cave site with accompanying petroglyphs have confirmed that the Chumash ritually consumed Datura (*D. wrightii*) and used the resulting visions and experiences in concert with artistic depictions of the plant. In use between 1300 CE to 1782 CE, Pinwheel Cave in California displays a Datura flower unveiling its petals, an image resembling a rotating pinwheel.[12] (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Left: *Datura,* c. 1300 CE-1782 CE, Pinwheel Cave, California, Rock Art. Right: Photo of Datura. (Images courtesy of Rick Bury (left) and Melissa Dabulamanzi (right).)

The artists created a spiraling rhythmic composition that may capture and/or convey a psychedelic effect when considering the darker setting of the cave and the rock itself against the vivid red paint. Five red lines radiate outwards in a clockwise fashion from a central dark round hole representing the heart of the flower's bloom. The image may have helped facilitate the hallucinatory meditative state of the spiritual journey or experience. In the words of the scientists working at the site, "The rock art served epistemologically, preparing participants for the experience

they were undertaking by inculcating them into culturally specific knowledge…" of Datura and its psychosomatic effects.[13] The Hawkmoth family, a primary pollinator of the Datura plant (specifically the *Hyles lineata* species), is likely depicted near this pinwheel painting on the cave wall. Represented in a transmorph state, the Hawkmoth is highly abstracted and seems to be morphing between physical forms. Scholars have suggested that the Hawkmoth acted as a symbolic representation of a Chumash partaker who similarly experienced Datura's psychotropic effects.[14] The rock painting was repainted and modified over time representing different artists' hands and the importance of the Datura symbol at the site. Coupled with the communal setting of the cave, this may further suggest the importance of Datura to the Chumash as seen in its continued usage through time and its role in communal identity.

Desiccated remains of the Datura plant were found at the site wedged within crevices of the cave. This suggests a concrete connection between consumption of a hallucinogen in relation to a rock art setting.[15] Datura seems to have possessed numerous significances and symbolism to the Chumash—Datura was seen as a manifestation of a grandmother spirit called *Momoy*, and functioned in a spiritual, mythological, and ritual context.[16] It was used throughout important and liminal periods of life—perhaps embodying a wise elder figure—such as during puberty when transitioning to adulthood, along with gaining supernatural power, protection, and healing. So important was this site, and Datura to the Chumash that it continued to be used throughout the post-contact period.[17]

Other archeological evidence of Datura has ranged from the ancestral Pueblo culture (1250 CE– 1300 CE,) and in Mississippian culture (1100 CE–1200 CE) specifically in southern Illinois.[18] In New Mexico, the site known as Pottery Mound, situated on the Río Puerco Tributary west of Los Lunas, contains more pottery sherds and kiva murals than any other location in the area. Pottery Mound, an adobe Pueblo village that was occupied from approximately 1320 CE to the sixteenth century, is of immense cultural importance. The site contains various Native cultural influences, from Hopi and their *Sikyátki*-style to Zuni and other tribes. In relation to Datura, the kiva murals seem to display iconography directly related to the plant but also motifs inspired by visions while under Datura's hallucinatory influence.[19] Several murals depict Mothmen, or anthropomorphized Hawkmoths. As discussed above, this insect is closely associated with Datura since it is often seen imbibing its nectar and flying erratically afterward. One Kiva mural at Pottery Mound depicts numerous Mothmen marching in procession. (Figure 2) They are all uniquely colored in black, yellow, and beige palettes, but have similarly shaped wings, antennae, and matching necklaces. Each hold what appears to be Datura stalks topped with numerous spiky seed pods.

Figure 2. *Mothmen from Pottery Mound holding Datura capsules*, c. sixteenth century, Pottery Mound, New Mexico, Kiva Mural. (Image courtesy of Christine S. Vanpool, "The Signs of the Sacred: Identifying Shamans Using Archaeological Evidence," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 28(2) (June 2009), 186.)

These Mothmen may depict shaman figures, taking on the guise or spirit of the Hawkmoth as both insects and humans receive the spiritual power from the flower.[20] This relationship between Datura and the Hawkmoth manifests time and again in numerous Native American cultures and their artworks. A Hopi synonym for moth is *Tsimonmana*, which translates to Datura or "Jimsonweed Maiden."[21] Similar to Chumash rock art but more visually overt, this kiva mural marries the symbiotic relationships between shaman and participant, the sacred flower, and its pollinator in visual form.

While the opening flower is a prominent feature in Southwestern art, attention is also given to Datura's distinctive spiky seedpod, as the Kiva Mural demonstrates. Many other cultures also highlight this unique attribute of the plant, such as those found in the Lower Pecos River region, West Mexico, and the Mimbres. Mixing representations of Datura with spiritual symbolism and often the plant matter itself, these numerous representations further enhance the importance of Datura as a powerful, trans-temporal and cultural artistic symbol in western North America.

Similar to Pinwheel cave and other archeological sites, the correlation between the found plant matter and artistic representations of shaman figures in relation to the plant can be seen in the Lower Pecos River region in the southwestern corner

of Texas and northwest Mexico during the Archaic Period (8500 BCE–500 CE). Desiccated Datura seeds and seed pods have been found at archeological sites. Images on nearby rock wall paintings closely resembling the spiky seed pods with stylized motifs occur frequently in the pictographs of this region. The seed pods are closely linked with anthropomorphic shaman figures who are often depicted using the pods as rattlers.[22] Likewise, evidence of consumption of the plant in conjunction with art comes from the pottery samples taken from Mississippian and Caddoan Mississippian sites in Arkansas and Oklahoma, as well as from vessels from West Mexico.[23] Researchers used mass spectrometry to identify residue of Datura, specifically the alkaloid atropine on Mississippian shell and pottery vessels dating from 1400 CE–1700 CE, suggesting the ceremonial and ritualistic ingestion of the plant.[24] The motif of Datura is also present on vessels, along with other depictions relating to Mississippian cosmology and mythology. Many motifs depicting Datura have been found in West Mexico, with the artworks chiefly focused on the plant's spiky seed pod, such as a bowl from the region dating to c. 300 BCE–500 CE. (Figure 3) These kinds of ceramics are Datura effigies resembling the natural world and relating to their intended ceremonial usage. Datura residue was also found in this red and cream bowl from West Mexico that depicts the moments in which the pod opens and spills forth its bountiful seeds.[25]

Figure 3. *Bowl with Opening Datura Seed Pod*, Late Formative–Early Classic Pottery, c. 300 BCE-500 CE, West Mexico, Ceramic. (Image courtesy of Adam King, et al., "Absorbed Residue Evidence for Prehistoric Datura Use in the American Southeast and Western Mexico," *Advances in Archaeological Practice: A Journal of the Society of American Archaeology* 6, no. 4 (2018), 323.)

Resembling a four-pointed star, the composition on the round base of the bowl seems to echo the opening of the Datura flower, which correlates with the cyclical nature of the flower—from unfurling blossom, death, and then the production of life-bearing seeds. It has been posited that other ceramic vessels from many Southwestern and Mexican locations, ranging from Central and Western Mexico to Mesa Verde, Colorado, have forms inspired by the spiky seed pods dating from prehistoric times, c. 700 CE–1100 CE. Many effigy vessels that resemble the pods themselves, with spiky exteriors surrounding a spherical jar.[26] These vessels stand as examples where art, ritual, and nature come together as one.

The above examples of the Datura plant's ceremonial and artistic use demonstrate its wide- spread influence and prominence, especially in the Southwest U.S. landscape and among the various cultures that inhabited this land throughout vast time periods. Of particular interest are the Mimbres people of New Mexico who developed a rich visual language around Datura and its ritual use. It is to this culture and their ceramics that this essay will now turn by providing further analysis of the flower's presence and significance in Southwest art.

The Mimbres Culture and Datura

The Mimbres Valley stretches approximately one hundred miles between the Mimbres and Gila rivers in southwest New Mexico. The culture that resided in this region—a desert landscape with lush pockets around the rivers—were the Mimbres people who were farmers and hunter gatherers who inhabited the valley from the 10th to the 12th century CE.[27] Known primarily through their black and white pottery, this culture gives deep insight into the use of the Datura plant, both as an integral element in their artistic expressions and in their spiritual life. Mimbres pottery displays a variety of plant and animal motifs (including a wide range of Hawkmoth imagery) with a smaller number of narrative scenes that include human figures. There are also instances of seemingly non-figurative, abstract, and geometric designs on the pottery. Founding member of the Mimbres Foundation Tony Berlant, and Director Emeritus of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts Evan Maurer have posited that the Datura plant is likely the inspiration for the abstract, geometric designs and a major source of inspiration for much of the art of Mimbres culture.[28]

In the oval *Bowl with Abstraction of Unfurling Datura Bud* (10th to 11th century CE) four white shapes in a black background swirl in a clockwise motion around a circular white center. (Figure 4) The lines that connect the four principle white swirls, spiral into one another creating a sense of flowing movement. This rhythmic design correlates with the shape of a blossoming Datura bud; as the flower slowly unfurls as it readies for full bloom, the ends of the flower create a spiraling effect, weaving lines down to the intertwined, compacted, and yet-to-be exposed petals in

the center. This creates an outside-in trajectory when viewing the flower from the top—the viewer sees the delicate swirls at the edges of the flowers and follows their swirling lines in a semi-circular fashion to the center.

Figure 4. "Bowl with Abstraction of Unfurling Datura Bud," 10th–12th century CE, Mimbres Culture, Ceramic, 11" x 4 3/8" inches. (Image courtesy of Museum Associates/LACMA, © 2018.)

The same aesthetic motion is present in Mimbres pottery; the four scrolling shapes encompass a circular center, with a distinctive puncture. This so-called "kill hole" is present on many Mimbres pottery artworks and is deliberate—it may have been a way to release the sacred nature and essence of the bowl and the Datura, or it may have been a portal created so the soul of the deceased would be able to leave the body and ascend to the spirit world.

The fact that many of these bowls were found in a funerary context, buried with and on top of a body, seems to reinforce these hypotheses.[29] The bowl is an abstraction of the Datura flower— although the actual flower possesses five petals this bowl, and many other Datura motifs on Mimbres pottery, only depict four. This was a purposeful abstraction from the original subject matter. The number four represents the cardinal directions and thus the symbolism of the number was sacred to the Mimbres.[30] In addition, the abstracted flower and spirals are presented in a magnified form on the bowl, which measures around eleven inches in diameter. Situated against the black background of the vessel, the viewer holding this bowl

would be staring into the face of the night-blooming Datura flower, larger than life and mesmerized by shapes like looking at the flower against the night sky.

Numerous other examples exist of the abstracted Datura blossom at various stages of its transformations from unfurling bud to full, trumpet-like bloom. A recurring feature appears to be the shifting, dynamistic motion of the designs, which may have been a reference to the seemingly ever-changing lifespan of the flower which blossoms at night and lasts approximately one day, also echoing the cycles of life and death.[31] The flower appears to transform from bud to bloom in a series of unfolding swirls, open blooms, and eventual wilting contortions and strange shapes as it fades, in the words of Berlant and Maurer, "making the blossom appear animated," and resulting in striking spiky seed pods.[32]

Spirituality and sacred rituals may offer another possible explanation for these abstract and geometric designs. Evidence suggests that the Mimbres people consumed the seeds of the Datura plant, preparing a special tea in rites of passage and ritual environments to produce hallucinations and trance-like visions.[33] The transformative properties of the plant's cycle along with these hallucinations may have inspired the depictions of Datura, conveying a "morphing trance state portal" to the never-ending spirals and abstractions present on the pottery.[34] Effigies of the Datura seed pod, presumably meant to be the drinking receptacle for the Datura tea, have been found among Mimbres artifacts. Examples of pottery featuring designs of Datura seed pods as they explode open and seem to rotate, echoing the rotation and swirls of the flowers that produced them. (Figure 5) The alkaloids present in Datura which are concentrated in the seeds, cause neurological reactions that can produce, depending on dosage, intense auditory and visual hallucinations, feelings of flight, and even sensations related to death and resurrection.[35]

Figure 5. "Bowl with Painting of Exploded Seed Pod," 10th–12th century CE, Mimbres Culture, Ceramic, 8 ¼" x 2 7/8" inches. (Image courtesy of Museum Associates/LACMA, © 2018.)

It can be assumed that each culture who worked with Datura both artistically and spiritually developed unique relationships with the plant. However, as the above examples demonstrate— from the Chumash, Pottery Mound, Mississippian, West Mexico, and the Mimbres—Datura itself appeared to inspire certain common motifs and expressions within the minds and hands of the artists and people who worked with it. Many Mimbres ceramics also contain depictions of the Hawkmoth, cementing its connection to Datura across the Southwest United States. Likewise, the seed pod vessels and the swirling, geometric, and rhythmic lines symbolizing the graceful opening of the Datura blooms and pod are also a recurring element seen across cultures.

Although certain researchers posit that the sacred ceremonial usage of the Datura plant has continued in various Native cultures even up to the present, the full expression of the plant in Native arts appears to be less visually apparent between these older cultures and their contemporary descendants.[36] Not only was Datura a significant element of the land and in the arts of the cultures who inhabited the Southwest, it also offers a fascinating example in the breaking with pure representation of nature in art and the move towards abstraction. Datura seemed to inspire a freedom of design that would be of interest to later artists. The swirling, geometric, abstract shapes, and motifs that can be seen in certain Native arts, such as in Mimbres pottery, appear to inspire modern painting.[37] These artistic representations of the plant may be inspired by spiritual experiences but it also appears that the Datura plant itself invites artistic license; in the Datura, artists from all time periods were given freedom to employ what are often thought as "modern" techniques regarding the blending of abstraction within depicting elements of the natural world. The twentieth-century artist O'Keeffe, most likely not knowing the full extent of Datura's history, picked up on this plant's powerful presence when she traveled to and lived in New Mexico.

Datura And O'Keeffe

The Datura flower was a favorite subject of O'Keeffe who returned to the flower as a motif throughout her career. O'Keeffe traveled to Toas, New Mexico in 1929 to stay with the influential, salon-hosting socialite Mabel Dodge Luhan who was a foundational figure in establishing the modern artistic environment in New Mexico. O'Keeffe would return to New Mexico every summer until she moved permanently in 1949 to her house known as the Ghost Ranch. What O'Keeffe found in New Mexico was a freedom in her art and an independence that she had lacked in her former environments of New York City and Lake George, where she frequently worked alongside her husband Alfred Stieglitz another founding figure in the development of American modernism and a prominent photographer and owner of Gallery 219.[38] O'Keeffe found within the land of New Mexico numerous subjects that would be used in her oeuvre, from mountain ranges, particularly the Pedernal

mountain, to local architecture and botanicals.

Inspired by the Datura flowers of the region, O'Keeffe produced numerous works with the plant as her subject ranging from paintings, photographs, a crystal bowl etching, and even an abstract sculpture. One of O'Keefe's first Datura/ Jimsonweed-based works is *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1* (1932).[39] (Figure 6) The composition of the artwork is striking—the canvas overflows with the sensuous white Datura flower at the center with green leaves surrounding it. Gradations of white, green, and yellow are present against a blue and white accented background highlighting the contours of the petals and the veins of the leaves. With the slight exception of the darker green values on the leaves indicating shadows, the color value throughout the work remains moderately-even with subtle shifts and no sharp contrasts imbuing the work with a tranquil aesthetic.

Figure 6. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1*, 1932, oil on canvas, 48 x 40 inches (121.9 by 101.6 cm). (Image courtesy of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas.)

One of the most prominent elements of the work includes the placement of the flower— O'Keeffe presents it as hovering in front of the viewer, floating as if suspended in the sky. This is most likely not the way O'Keeffe would have viewed the flower in real-life. Datura's blooms normally open skyward and usually at night; although, they sometimes bloom in the late afternoon or twilight. The light blue background suggests daylight, furthering the break from true-to-nature representation. Notably, O'Keeffe manipulated the scale of the flowers to such a degree that the subject is presented to the viewer in an innovative and arresting

manner—the magnified viewpoint of the Datura flower and the size of the painting adds to the distinctive modernist sensibilities that the artist was known for, blending and threatening the boundaries between the natural world and abstraction in her canvas compositions.[40] Although there is a sense of tranquility and stillness to the painting, the way O'Keeffe depicted the pointed ends of the petals, with alternating green-yellow-tinted swirls and smooth, subtle white waves imbues a sense of movement to the flower. The petals are painted in alternating circular rows that move in opposing directions suggesting a slow back-and-forth motion. The lines formed by the green and yellow spirals at the ends of the petals guide the viewer's eyes down towards the flower's center.

This sense of movement, along the edges of the flower and the downward motion of the lines resembles the Mimbres bowl and the emphasis on dynamic, circular motion, spiraling around and down to a central shape—the distinctive "kill hole." The magnified view of the flower in O'Keeffe's work also recalls Mimbres pottery and its enlarged pictorial visions of Datura. One early viewer of O'Keeffe's work commented that the viewer is situated as if they were themselves a butterfly before the flower.[41] A Hawkmoth, the principal pollinator of Datura, would be a more apt comparison but the size of O'Keeffe's composition and the larger-than life representation of the flower is significant because it was one of the first times the artist chose a larger canvas.[42]

Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1 would become one of the most recognizable works of O'Keeffe's. Despite the repeated reference to the plant in the artist's work, and the magnificent presence of it in *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1*, there is little writing and research specifically concerning O'Keeffe's subject matter. When it is mentioned, it is usually treated as a sidenote— a curious artistic elevation of such a lowly, noxious, foul-smelling, and poisonous weed.[43] This disregard is a disservice to such an important motif in O'Keeffe's work, and for such an iconic symbol of the Southwest United States. It seems likely that these writers never had actual contact with the Datura plant for it is captivating with a strong perfume scent when it flowers. The scent and beauty of Datura may have been what first attracted O'Keeffe to the plant and inspired its presence in her art. O'Keeffe loved the plant and remarked on its distinctive smell and features, saying:

> It is a beautiful white trumpet flower with strong veins…twisting as they grow off beyond it... The Jimson weed blooms in the cool of the evening—one moonlight night at the Ranch I counted one hundred and twenty-five flowers. The flowers die in the heat of the day…Now when I think of the delicate fragrance of the flowers, I almost feel the coolness and sweetness of the evening.[44]

Since O'Keeffe chose to depict the flowers during the day—as indicated by the

lighter, blue- toned background in the painting—perhaps the artist was trying to capture the flower during the last moments of its fleeting lifecycle, showcasing the poetic full bloom and vitality of life just before the transformation of the wilting and death phase. This would also correlate with the Mimbres designs which emphasize the transformative, animated lifecycle stages of the Datura on their pottery. O'Keeffe produced the painting in the summer of 1932, around time she discovered her passion for the unique landscape and natural features this Southwest location offered. To O'Keeffe, New Mexico offered elements akin to the artist's own aims and artistic yearnings. A distinctively "American" setting and subject matter, with an emphasis on the locale's "spirit (place, soil, and rootedness)," in the words of art historian Emily Neff.[45]

In 1932 and during the preceding years, O'Keeffe and her husband Alfred Stieglitz exchanged numerous letters to one another. O'Keeffe's excitement for her southwest surroundings— especially the land itself—and the boundless inspiration it provided are apparent. Surveying her environment, she endeavored to capture her ecstatic response to the shifting, colorful land writing that she, "hunted for something of myself out there…something in myself that will give me a symbol for all of this—a symbol for the sense of life I get out here;" O'Keeffe's exuberance for the Southwest led Stieglitz to proclaim her the "wild child of the soil."[46] Datura, with its long and abundant history in the region, was more than enough to feed the artist's lofty goals. In summer 1932, many letters reference the artist's "White Flower" paintings, presumably the Datura work she was producing at the time. Although O'Keeffe found much inspiration from New Mexico, from mountain ranges, old churches, bones, and other botanicals, Datura possessed a special significance. It lent itself to her modern techniques with its swirling, magnified presence, and prominent placement in the land she so wished to capture in her art. Not isolated in its inspiration during O'Keeffe's formative early years in New Mexico, Datura manifested itself time and again in her artworks, being one of the chief subjects through which the artist could express her unique visions and love of the land.

The second Datura-themed work O'Keeffe produced came in 1936—*Jimson Weed* (also known as *Miracle Flower*). (Figure 7) A massive painting measuring 6 x 7 feet, was commissioned for one of America's wealthiest self-made women, Elizabeth Arden, who wished for it to be hung in her Gymnasium Moderne on Fifth Avenue in New York City.[47] It is significant that O'Keeffe chose Datura as her subject matter. In 1932, when she painted the aforementioned Datura work, *Jimson Weed/ White Flower No. 1,* she had a commission to paint a mural at Radio City Music Hall which never came to fruition and caused an ego-bruising hit to her career at the time; the mural was to be composed of white flowers and flowing green leaves, which, based on this description, could easily have been Datura motifs.[48] If the Music Hall commission was to depict a Datura, then when O'Keeffe painted *Jimson Weed*, she may have been using one of her favorite symbols of the Southwest to

commence her triumphant return. With Datura as her subject, O'Keeffe signaled an undaunted attitude after the commission unfortunately fell through. This furthers the importance of Datura for the artist and its (and her) symbolic connection to New Mexico.

Jimson Weed's composition appears to be an expansion on O'Keeffe's earlier 1932 work; the Datura flower in the bottom right of *Jimson Weed* is an exact replica of the 1932 Datura painting. However, O'Keeffe has expanded to showcase multiple viewpoints of Datura flowers and the plant's growth cycles on a massive scale, while retaining the core aesthetic of her earlier work. This Arden-commissioned painting marked a triumphant return to a large scale, public work that had eluded O'Keeffe four years earlier. It does not seem like a coincidence that the artist chose the subject of Datura—a symbol of the land which inspired and ignited her artistic passion—to mark this career achievement.

Figure 7. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jimson Weed*, 1936, Oil on linen, 70 x 83-1/2" inches. (Image courtesy of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum / Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY.)

Many other examples of Datura in O'Keeffe's work exist spanning many decades of her career, with some artworks being in public institutions and others in private collections.[49] The painting, *Datura and Pedernal* (1940) represents one of the most appropriate examples of Datura in the O'Keefe's work; it encapsulates and affirms the flower's significance as a symbol of the southwest landscape, a symbol deeply rooted in history and inspiration. (Figure 8) The painting is a coupling of two spiritual emblems of importance to the land, to O'Keeffe, and to Native cultures.

The Pedernal mountain was visible from O'Keeffe's studio at her Ghost Ranch home, and she featured it in many of her paintings. The mountain was so dear to the artist that her ashes were scattered on the summit after her death.[50] Pedernal mountain is also sacred to the Navajo Culture who believe it was the location of a founding episode of their creation myth.[51] In this painting, O'Keeffe chose to unite two of her favorite subjects, the Pedernal mountain and Datura. The exaggeration of scale and deviation from natural representation seen in her earlier Datura works is further emphasized and exaggerated in this composition, with the repeated frontal positioning of the Datura facing the viewer and the mountain range behind it. The Datura is again presented as a floating bloom, larger-than-life, and out of proportion to the mountain range directly behind it, which seems to cradle the flower in its curves and recesses. Attention is paid to the swirling lines of the flower, its large presence facing the viewer, and the sloping lines of the Pedernal as the mountain embraces the Datura in the foreground. Just as in O'Keeffe's earlier Datura works, these stylistic choices echo Native depictions of Datura, namely Mimbres, with their emphasis on magnification and the swirling shapes and lines of the flower. O'Keeffe captures not just two elements of the Southwest that most inspired her, but also the "spirit" of the land—a rootedness manifested in an artistic vision that combines a spiritual and symbolic linking for both O'Keeffe and the Native cultures who inhabited the region from ancient times to the present.[52]

Figure 8. Georgia O'Keeffe, *Datura and Pedernal,* 1940, oil on board, 11 x 16 1/8" inches. (Image courtesy of Orlando Museum of Art.)

It is important to note that O'Keeffe likely did not know about Native cultures' artistic or spiritual use of Datura. None of the research indicates her knowledge of the plant past what she witnessed first-hand in New Mexico. Furthermore, much of the research on Datura in relation to the Mimbres and other Southwest cultures has been relatively recent being produced well after O'Keeffe's death. This seems to indicate an absence of any purposeful appropriation on O'Keeffe's part in her use of Datura. It affirms how Datura itself functioned in the land, presenting itself time and again as muse and inspiration. That said, acknowledging issues concerning colonialism and cultural appropriation are vitally important when discussing O'Keeffe in her role as an outsider and white artist in the Southwest. Those issues are outside the scope of this essay and what it aims to achieve: examining and showcasing how Datura has played an integral role in the region and how it has functioned as a source of artistic inspiration and a symbol of the land, historically and across cultures, something that had not been done until now.

When Stieglitz called O'Keeffe, "the wild child of the soil," it was a reference to her love of New Mexico. This moniker also seems apt for Datura, itself a wild child of the soil with its deep resonance to this American realm, its influence in the visual arts, and its spiritual—and sometimes sinister—aura. As stated above, it is doubtful that O'Keeffe knew the full history and meaning inherent in these white flowers, but in a way the land itself called out to her through them, beckoning to be represented once again in art. In a sense, the whole of the Southwest itself is exemplified through these flowers, with their deeply rooted history and cultural symbolism, connecting O'Keeffe and her work to a long lineage—the Mimbres and other Native cultures— that belongs distinctly to the art and culture of this region. There exists a relationship between O'Keeffe's work, Datura, and the history and magic of the land that nourished the various cultures and artists that inhabited it.

ADRIAN BUTLER received his M.A. in Art History from the University of Denver in Denver, Colorado. His interests focus on subject-based art historical themes ranging from botanicals to spirituality and myths across time and culture. This is reflected in his master's thesis on the mythical Circe and the Mandrake plant through time (with advisor Scott Montgomery, Ph.D.). Adrian plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Art History.

[1] "The Powerful Solanaceae: Datura," *U.S. Forest Service*, accessed October 15th, 2020, https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/ethnobotany/Mind_and_Spirit/datura.shtml

[2] Larry W. Mitich, "Jimsonweed," *Weed Technology* 3, no. 1 (1989): 208-10.

[3] Deirdre Larkin, "Dangerous Beauty," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: The Cloisters Museum and Gardens: Medieval Garden Enclosed*, August 24th, 2012, https://blog.metmuseum.org/cloistersgardens/2012/08/24/dangerous- beauty/#more-9364

[4] Mitich, "Jimsonweed," 208, and "The Powerful Solanaceae: Datura."

[5] "The Powerful Solanaceae: Datura."

[6] Larkin, "Dangerous Beauty."

[7] Picatrix: A Medieval Treatise on Astral Magic, trans. Dan Attrell and David Porreca (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2020), 209; and Mitich, "Jimsonweed," 209.

[8] Larkin, "Dangerous Beauty."

[9] "The Powerful Solanaceae: Datura." Although the plant and its chemical makeup are used and studied in pharmacology and modern medicine, it is still considered a deadly poison when used in excess and/or inappropriately. See: Mitich, "Jimsonweed," 208-10.

[10] Carolyn E. Boyd and J. Philip Dering, "Medicinal and Hallucinogenic Plants Identified in the Sediments and Pictographs of the Lower Pecos, Texas Archaic," *Antiquity* 70, no. 268 (1996): 258.

[11] Ibid., 267.

[12] David Robinson, et al., "Datura Quids at Pinwheel Cave, California, Provide Unambiguous Confirmation of the Ingestion of Hallucinogens at a Rock Art Site," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117(49) (November 2020): 9.

[13] Ibid., 10

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 1.

[16] Ibid., 3.

[17] Ibid., 10.

[18] Adam King, et al., "Absorbed Residue Evidence for Prehistoric Datura Use in the American Southeast and Western Mexico," *Advances in Archaeological Practice: A Journal of the Society of American Archeaology* 6, no. 4 (2018): 313.

[19] Christine S. Vanpool, "The Signs of the Sacred: Identifying Shamans Using Archaeological Evidence," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology,* 28(2) (June 2009): 185.

[20] Ibid., 186.

[21] Gary A. David, *The Kivas of Heaven: Ancient Hopi Starlore* (Kempton, Illinois: Adventures Unlimited Press, 2010), 245.

[22] Boyd, Dering, "Medicinal and Hallucinogenic Plants," 268.

[23] These artworks are now reposited in the Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

[24] King, et al., "Absorbed Residue Evidence for Prehistoric Datura," 316.

[25] Ibid., 322.

[26] William Joseph Litzinger, "Ceramic Evidence for the Prehistoric Use of Datura in Mexico and the Southwestern United States," *Kiva* 44, no. 2/3 (1979): 150-154.

[27] Tony Berlant and Evan M. Maurer, *Decoding Mimbres Painting: Ancient Ceramics of the American Southwest*

(Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2018, exhibition catalogue), 11.

[28] Ibid., 17.

[29] Ibid., 12.

[30] Ibid., 28.

[31] See "Bowl with Abstraction of Unfurling Datura Bud and Hawkmoth Proboscis," page 27 in Berlant, Maurer, 2018.

[32] Ibid., 21.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 25.

[35] Ibid.

[36] King, et al., "Absorbed Residue Evidence for Prehistoric Datura Use," 313.

[37] Berlant, Maurer, *Decoding Mimbres Painting*, 11.

[38] Emily Neff, "The Southwest," In *The Modern West*, 189-199 (189-199) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, exhibition catalogue), 189.

[39] There exists speculation that O'Keeffe first painted Datura in 1931, titled *Jimson Weed 3* (making *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1* her second Datura-themed work), but it is seldom documented in scholarly material and I was unable to find concrete and legitimate photographic evidence of it or its location in a museum or private collection.

[40] "Georgia O'Keeffe 1887 – 1986, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1*," Catalogue Notes, *Sotheby's Auction Records.* https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/american-art-n09229/lot.11.html.

[41] Museum label for Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1*, Arkansas, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, https://collection.crystalbridges.org/objects/5355

[42] "Georgia O'Keeffe 1887 – 1986, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1*,"

[43] For examples, see: Karen Rile, "Georgia O'Keeffe and the $44 Million Jimson Weed,"

JStorDaily.com, December 1st, 2014. https://daily.jstor.org/georgia-okeeffe-and-the-44-million-jimson-weed/; and: Larry W. Mitich, "Jimsonweed," *Weed Technology* 3, no. 1 (1989): 208-10.

[44] "Georgia O'Keeffe 1887 – 1986, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1*,"

[45] Neff, "The Southwest," In *The Modern West*, 189-199 (189-199), 189.

[46] Georgia O'Keeffe, Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, May 30th, 1929, in *My Faraway One: Selected Letters of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz: Volume One, 1915-1933*, ed. Sarah Greenough (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011), 407.

[47] Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, *Full Bloom: The Art and Life of Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2004), 366.

[48] Nancy J. Scott, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Critical Lives* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2015), 144.

[49] Janet Souter, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Parkstone Press Ltd, 2011), 104-105. For example, a series of photographs O'Keeffe took of the flower in the 1960's: https://collections.okeeffemuseum.org/search/#query_string=weed; and the possible influence of the plant in her Abstraction sculptures (modeled 1946, cast ca. 1979-1980): https://collection.crystalbridges.org/objects/5353/abstraction

[50] "Pedernal Society," *Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.com,* accessed November 20th, 2020, https://www.okeeffemuseum.org/support/pedernal-society/

[51] Scott, *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 154.

Bibliography

Berlant, Tony and Evan M. Maurer. *Decoding Mimbres Painting: Ancient Ceramics of the American Southwest*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2018. Exhibition Catalogue.

Boyd, Carolyn E. and J. Philip Dering. "Medicinal and Hallucinogenic Plants Identified in the Sediments and Pictographs of the Lower Pecos, Texas Archaic." *Antiquity* 70, no. 268 (1996): 256-276. doi:10.1017/S0003598X00083265.

Chabot, Maria. Maria Chabot to Alfred Stieglitz, May 4th, 1943. Collection: Letters to Alfred Stieglitz, MS.9. https://collections.okeeffemuseum.org/archive/component/aspace_4d96976495082b9c70 094fe04bb9ddc1/

Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art. Museum label for Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1*, Arkansas. https://collection.crystalbridges.org/objects/5355

David, Gary A. *The Kivas of Heaven: Ancient Hopi Starlore*. Kempton, Illinois: Adventures Unlimited Press, 2010. https://discovery-ebsco- com.rrcc.idm.oclc.org/linkprocessor/plink?id=8d50e2ac-ba2c-3a46-a766-1d6fc15565b6.

Drohojowska-Philp, Hunter. *Full Bloom: The Art and Life of Georgia O'Keeffe.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2004.

"Georgia O'Keeffe 1887 – 1986, *Jimson Weed/White Flower No.1."* Catalogue Notes, *Sotheby's Auction Records*. https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/american-art- n09229/lot.11.html

King, Adam, Terry G. Powis, Kong F. Cheong, Bobi Deere, Robert B. Pickering, Eric Singleton, and Nilesh W. Gaikwad. "Absorbed Residue Evidence for Prehistoric Datura Use in the American Southeast and Western Mexico." *Advances in Archaeological Practice: A Journal of the Society of American Archeaology* 6, no. 4 (2018): 312-27. ProQuest Central.

Larkin, Deirdre. "Dangerous Beauty." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art: The Cloisters Museum and Gardens: Medieval Garden Enclosed.com,* August 24th, 2012. https://blog.metmuseum.org/cloistersgardens/2012/08/24/dangerous-beauty/#more-9364

Litzinger, William Joseph. "Ceramic Evidence for the Prehistoric Use of Datura in Mexico and the Southwestern United States." *Kiva* 44, no. 2/3 (1979): 145–58. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30245974.

May, Stephen. "Trauma, Tradition, and Transformation: Western American Art in the 1930's." *Southwest Art* 28, no. 12 (1999): 74-81. https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www- proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org/docview/1415662679?accountid=14608

Mitich, Larry W. "Jimsonweed." *Weed Technology* 3, no. 1 (1989): 208-10. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3987151.

"Pedernal Society." *Georgia O'Keeffe Museum.com.* Accessed November 20th, 2020. https://www.okeeffemuseum.org/support/pedernal-society/

O'Keeffe, Georgia. Georgia O'Keeffe to Alfred Stieglitz, May 30th, 1929. In *My Faraway One: Selected Letters of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz: Volume One, 1915-1933*, edited by Sarah Greenough, 407. Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011. ProQuest Central.

Neff, Emily. "The Southwest." In *The Modern West*, (189-199). New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006. Exhibition Catalogue.

Picatrix: A Medieval Treatise on Astral Magic. Translated by Dan Attrell and David Porreca. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2020.

Rile, Karen. "Georgia O'Keeffe and the $44 Million Jimson Weed." *JStorDaily.com,* December 1st, 2014. https://daily.jstor.org/georgia-okeeffe-and-the-44-million-jimson-weed/

Robinson, David, Kelly Brown, Moira McMenemy, Lynn Dennany, Matthew James Baker, Pamela Allan, Caroline Cartwright, et al. "Datura Quids at Pinwheel Cave, California, Provide Unambiguous Confirmation of the Ingestion of Hallucinogens at a Rock Art Site." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117(49) (November 2020): 1-12. DOI:10.1073/pnas.2014529117.

Scott, Nancy J. *Georgia O'Keeffe: Critical Lives.* London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2015. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/du/reader.action?docID=4312139&ppg=18

Souter, Janet. *Georgia O'Keeffe.* New York: Parkstone Press Ltd, 2011.

"The Powerful Solanaceae: Datura." *U.S. Forest Service*. Accessed October 15th, 2020. https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/ethnobotany/Mind_and_Spirit/datura.shtml

Vanpool, Christine S. "The Signs of the Sacred: Identifying Shamans Using Archaeological Evidence." *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology,* 28(2) (June 2009):177-190. DOI:10.1016/j.jaa.2009.02.003.

Nothing Comes from Nothing: Photographic Re-Interpretations of Mesoamerican Codices

JACKI MARIE PUTNAM
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO

The visually encoded contents of Mesoamerican codices have long influenced artists and writers exploring indigenous knowledges, pre-Hispanic histories, Latin American identity, and even pseudoscientific or new-age religious beliefs. The range of interpretations and applications of elements of the codices highlight their original usage as tools for containing and creating knowledge through active interpretation by a limited audience. This essay examines works by three photographers from the late 1980s through the mid-1990s, Tatiana Parcero (b. 1967), Rick McKee Hock (b.1947-2015), and Suter (b. 1957), who have each engaged with Mesoamerican codices in three distinct ways: drawing on the imagery, structure, and mythical content, respectively. Coming from different backgrounds with different aims, each of these photographers uses the historical manuscripts to comment upon various aspects of American and Mexican culture and examine issues of the construction of knowledge or identity.

Simultaneously, each series utilizes the codices to explore different temporal relations, whether looking to the future, situating myth in a hybrid of contemporary yet timeless space, or turning to the distant past to explore questions of one's own interiority and personal identity. Through their respective remapping of personal identity, reframing of knowledge, and reenacting of myth, Parcero, Hock, and Suter draw dramatically different inspirations from similar source materials, all to very different ends.

A Very Brief Introduction to Mesoamerican Codices

Densely packed with imagery and information, Mesoamerican codices were not mere texts, but intricate repositories of heritage and knowledge that were revered as sacred and historical documents in the pre-Hispanic era. These manuscripts functioned as instructional manuals, religious texts, and historical records, providing insight into everything from astronomical calculations to genealogical lineage to mythology and divination. The codices were living documents that actively connected individuals and communities with their past, playing an essential role in shaping cultural identity, guiding religious practices, and transmitting current and ancestral knowledge—effectively bridging the temporal gap between the past and the present.

The physical form of these codices is distinctive, typically crafted on bark paper or deer skin folded in an accordion style and painted with glyphs and coded imagery. The visual elements within these codices held great importance; pictorial

cues, spatial arrangement, interlocking images, narrative continuity, and codex-specific conventions all served to guide the reader through the intricate narratives they contained. Red guidelines helped communicate reading direction and order or functioned to segregate different sections of visual information. Symbols and pictorial elements often acted as mnemonic devices, providing contextual clues and aiding comprehension. For instance, a glyph representing water might accompany descriptions of water-related rituals or events, facilitating the reader's understanding of the information.

The codices are not meant to be passively read in solitude but demand an active engagement and interpretation on the reader's part. The spatial arrangement of visual elements within Mesoamerican codices was deliberate and meaningful, making a thorough understanding of the codex's spatial structure essential for grasping the chronological and thematic progression of the text. Symbols and illustrations often overlapped or were interwoven, creating layered meanings. A glyph placed within the context of a specific illustration could convey a different connotation than when isolated. This interplay demanded an astute understanding of symbolism and context. Events and themes were interconnected across pages, and readers had to follow the narrative thread, making cross-referencing and backtracking common practices. Expert readers were akin to cultural knowledge interpreters, deciphering the intricate language of the codices to extract the rich tapestry of history, mythology, and spirituality that these manuscripts encapsulated.

Even centuries after most of these ancient manuscripts were destroyed as part of colonial epistemicide, the remaining Mesoamerican codices bridge the gap between past and present by serving as living conduits of indigenous heritage and knowledge. They inspire cultural continuity, academic exploration, artistic expression, and educational outreach, ensuring that the vibrant tapestry of Mesoamerican civilizations continues to influence and enrich contemporary life and identity. These manuscripts are not static relics but dynamic vessels through which the past continues to shape the present and future.

Tatiana Parcero's *Cartografia Interior*

Drawing upon visual organizations of knowledge ranging from manuscripts to anatomical drawings to archaic maps, Mexican-born photographer Tatiana Parcero's *Cartografia Interior* series merges visual knowledges of the past with fragmented self-portraits. The result is a series of layered photographs that act as an exploration of self through references to the visual archive of history. As the artist explains, her work aims to explore the body "as a map where I can relate different concepts of identity, memory, territory, and time."[1] The images Parcero incorporates draw on a loosely defined idea of "maps," extending to various forms of visual knowledge organization that reflect the changing of places, as well as changes and movements

in identity and knowledges in relation to space. Among the various selections from the visual archive are several reproductions of Mesoamerican codices, ranging from Maya to post-conquest codices produced by Indigenous artists. While the codex pages she references sometimes contain cartographic elements such as place sign names or topographical information, they more typically function primarily as historical and genealogical narratives – acting as maps of events or bloodlines through time rather than spatial relations of geographical locations.

Sometimes the images are presented straightforwardly, sometimes reversed, and other times inverted or upside down, reflecting that Parcero's goal is not about presenting specific information that can be "read," but is instead primarily about relations in reference to the artist's body. Also important is the refusal of reference to the source of the appropriated imagery in the titles of the works—each work in the series is simply titled *Cartografia Interior*, followed by its corresponding number—emphasizing the seriality of the exploration in mapping the interior self, rather than placing any importance on the specifics of the original images.

Remapping Identity

In *Cartografia Interior #38* (1996), Parcero presents a line drawing reconstruction of the Codex Selden, a 1560's post-contact Mixtec document, painted in a pre-contact style, overlaid with a black and white image of the bottom of her left foot. (Figure 1) The Codex Selden details the history of a single ruling family from c. 794 –1556, noting significant family events, including the forging of alliances, important births and deaths, and marriages. The page selected is one from the narrative of Lady Six Monkey, showing her marriage to Lord Eleven Wind and the subsequent events which would ultimately lead to war.

Figure 1: Tatiana Parcero, Cartografia Interior #38, 1996. Chromogenic print and acetate, 9 3/8 × 6 3/16 in. (Image courtesy of the Tatiana Parcero.)

The choice of codex for the base layer of *Cartografia Interior #38* is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, the Codex Selden is known as a palimpsest volume, with information erased and overwritten. Parcero's addition of another layer of imagery which "overwrites" parts of the pages but leaves other areas untouched acts as a secondary instance of overwriting and editing the imagery. Second, it is also important to note that the Codex Selden is a vividly colorful manuscript. The achromatic imagery making up the background in Parcero's work is clearly a reproduction of the original codex, copied and simplified for easier and cheaper duplication. This lack of color demonstrates one of many challenges in the accessibility of indigenous knowledges. Color holds significance and conveys information. It is an integral element of pre-Hispanic pictorial writing, as evidenced by the phrase "*in tlilli, in tlapalli*" ("the black ink, the red ink" or "the black ink, the colors"), which was used to refer to pictorial writing, codices, and even the general idea of 'knowledge.'[2] But color is often lost as it degrades over time or is omitted from reproductions. While it is unclear if Parcero chose this particular copy of the codex due to necessity, ease, or aesthetic preference, the draining of color from the codex imagery results in a loss of visual information—paralleling the loss of information through time, through epistemological genocide, and through the removal of these important texts from their places of origin.

The choice of body part for the incorporated photography is also significant, as it acts as a visual reiteration of the footprints in the original codex, which indicate travel and migration, as well as genealogical lineages. The foot could be read as both a reference to the artist's apparent searching for roots and identity through the series, as well as a reference to the artist's own migration narrative—from Mexico to Argentina.

While from a later series, *Actos de Fé #14 (*2003), continues the artist's attempt to map her personal identity. The image pairs an almanac from the Madrid Codex (pages 75–76) with the tops of the artist's feet. The almanac illustrates the four quadrants of the world, with two creator deities at the center, surrounded by the representation of the 260 days of the *tzolk'in.* In extensions between each scene are a series of footprints, which have been interpreted as representing the 18 *uinals* of each *haab'* and that the almanac can be employed to represent an entire cycle of the Calendar Round.[3] Scenes of sacrifice are depicted in the northern and southern quadrants, while deities are shown seated within temples in both the eastern and western quadrants. Parcero's choice to pair the almanac with an overlay of an image of the top of her feet underscores the two-page layout of the almanac, with each foot framing the imagery of either page and the divide between the two aligned with the hinge between pages. The artist's feet also emphasize the imagery of the codex pages by reiterating the footprints between each of the four quadrants.

Parcero's work consistently draws connection between the visual culture of the past, embodiment, and contemporary identity. The incorporation of Mixtec and Maya codices in the mapping of the self-challenges the typically Aztec-focused approach to the construction of Mexican national cultural identity that was implemented following Mexico's independence from Spain, and which later intensified after the Mexican Revolution. The inclusion of other types of imagery, from various sources originating well outside of Mesoamerica, complicates the idea of constructing identity based solely on the history of the location where one was born, indicating the complexity of personhood and interior identity.

By printing the black and white photographs on sheets of acetate, adhering them to plexiglass, and placing the images of herself atop the images from the past, Parcero creates a sort of reversal of the process of creating manuscripts—rather than images painted atop skins of deer or trees, she places her skin atop of the images. The images are thus beneath the skin, in the interior realm of identity, thought, emotion, and knowledge, rather than sitting atop an exterior. The imagery from the past merges with black-and-white images of the artist's body, drawing a connection between embodiment and knowledge, while the series' title stresses the role of the interior self.

Separated from the reproduced pages by a sheet of plexiglass, the images of the skin act as a container for the cultural knowledge held within the pages of the codex—the body becomes a container for cultural identity.

Rick McKee Hock, Codex Series

The works in American photographer Rick McKee Hock's *Codex* series consist of collections of Polaroid dye diffusion transfers of various images of photographic and non-photographic sources (such as paintings, cartoons, and news clippings), arranged in a grid, divided by rough lines typically red to rust-brown in color. The presence of the colored grid draws a formal similarity to the red guidelines of Mesoamerican codices, with both acting as a means of organizing densely packed information encoded in visual symbols.

The name of the series, and indeed the first part of the title of each individual work, "Codex," draws a limited connection to Mesoamerican codices, which is strengthened through additional similarities. Just as the codices contained extensive references to ritual, there is also a suggested element of ritual in Hock's process of creating these works—the photographing and then re- printing of images, the removal of the backing, and the burnishing of the typically disposed of layer onto a single sheet of paper, is repeated again and again in each image, carefully arranged and laid out in a grid. The process is then repeated in each work in the series. However, Hock was likely not drawing inspiration from a single or select group

of Mesoamerican codices but rather working with the general idea and process of reading a codex. The photographs refer to culturally significant figures and objects, symbols of evil and righteousness, shared historical and contemporary knowledges, and instances of everyday life. Hock then compiles this visual information into heavily encoded pictorial texts that rely on a viewer's active contemplation and interpretation to be read.

Hock's perception of the project helps to strengthen these associations. He considered the works in the series to be "visual texts, not only to be seen, but also to be read," much like the Mesoamerican codices, and referred to his arrangements of photographs as "pages for an encyclopedic book of images that is ever evolving."[4] As viewers, we can take each work as its own sort of codex, viewed in isolation, or as a single page in a unified, overarching project—a contemporary codex, created in the cultural context of the United States, yet drawing on global histories.

Each collection of images is loosely centered around a theme, often indicated by the title. *Codex (Monkey Business/Trap)*, (1987) references both Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and the foolishness, often to the point of absurdity, of politics. The work includes images of ape skulls and a skeletal drawing of a chimpanzee (both often colloquially referred to as monkeys), Donna Rice (alluding to a 1987 sex scandal involving presidential candidate Gary Hart and taking place on Hart's yacht "Monkey Business"), and a portrait of John Scopes (the Tennessee teacher tried for teaching evolution in 1925 in the Scopes vs. The State of Tennessee, which would come to be known as the Scopes Monkey Trial). Along with these more obvious references to the theme are images of a cartoon banana screaming as it is peeled, a tabloid article with the headline "My Baby Looks Like a Gorilla!", a photograph of two black widow spiders, a Victor branded mousetrap, and reproductions of artworks, such as Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912), and Pablo Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907). The majority of the images have no immediately discernible relation to each other. It is up to the viewer to construct connections between the seemingly disparate images, with only a small hint provided by the artist through the title. Each divergent image prompts the viewer to scan the composition for associations in a search for meaning. The result is a refusal of a single, unified narrative, but instead a plurality of often paradoxical or nonsensical narratives based on the co-occurrence and proximity of individual elements.

Similarly, *Codex (Fury on Earth)* (1988) juxtaposes images from art history, including two neoclassical works: Jacques-Louis David's *La Mort de Marat* (1793) and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' La *Source* (c. 1820–1856) with photographs representing great minds of human history. (Figure 2) A portrait of seventeenth-century English Poet John Donne appears, along with images of nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars including nuclear physicist Enrico Fermi, and

philosophers Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Also included are two separate images of Remojadas smiling figures from Mexico's Classic Veracruz Culture (c. 300 to 900 CE), indicating that Hock was indeed taking some elements of pre- Hispanic visual culture as source material for his images. The connections between the various images depend on the viewer's knowledge and ability to recognize and interpret different images, as well as the general mindset of the viewer. A viewer might see the connection between neoclassicism and philosophy, between the common interpretation of the Remojadas figures as beings engaged in "states of ecstatic transformation" or "drug-induced trances"[5] and Donne's poem "The Ecstasy" or the associations of drug use with figures such as Sartre and Nietzsche,[6] or a seemingly endless extension of possible connections, based on their particular base of knowledge.

Figure 2: Rick McKee Hock, *Codex (Fury on Earth)*, 1988, Polaroid transfer prints, 60.6 x 47.5 cm (image), 76.5 x 57.2 cm (sheet). (Image Courtesy of: Princeton University Art Museum / Art Resource NY.)

Hock also included visual references to pre-Hispanic cultures in *Codex I* (1987), in the form of two Maya figures of prisoners.[7] (Figure 3) Contrasting with these pre-contact works are more contemporary images from comic books (including Dracula, from the Marvel comic book "The Tomb of Dracula" and a caped skull-headed figure alongside the words "If this be doomsday"), an anatomical drawing of the human renal system, a group of figures wearing gas masks, and numerous depictions of human skeletons. One of the skeletal representations is *Cigarro Calavera*, by Mexican lithographer José Guadalupe Posada (1852 – 1913) (who also appears in the work in a photograph with his son). Posada's satirical calaveras, created roughly between 1890 and 1910, were reinterpreted by Diego Rivera in the 1920s as references to victims of Aztec sacrifice in an effort to associate the artist with indigenous Mexican culture.[8] Posada's prints were then repurposed as part of the larger project of the construction of Mexican national cultural identity after the Mexican revolution. Acting as an aesthetic bridge between pre- Hispanic, popular, and modern art, the calaveras allowed Rivera to establish "a formula that would give voice to Mexico's singularity"—one that drew heavily on ideas and images related to death.[9] The inclusion of both Maya figures and modern Mexican art that was utilized as a link to Aztec heritage helps this particular codex work underscore the connections between Hock's work and the ancient past of what is now Mexico and Central America. The figures could also be seen as related to the "doomsday" images, as ancient Maya culture has long been (mistakenly) associated with eschatological and apocalyptic ideas within pseudohistorical and pop archaeological discourse. However, every intended association depends on the viewer first being able to identify the various "signs" correctly and then having knowledge about their context– a thorough analysis of the associations of each image in the *Codex* series is a lofty task demanding a broad range of background knowledge in multiple fields, further complicated by the degradation of many of the individual frames.[10]

Figure 3: Rick McKee Hock, *Codex I,* 1987, Polaroid transfer print, 16 x 22 1/2 inches. (Image Courtesy of: The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY New York, NY.)

"Reading" Hock's Codex Series: A Contemporary Take on Visual Texts

Photography has often been framed as a "universal language" that readily communicates meaning to viewers regardless of their sociocultural background,[11] with photographs acting as 'windows' into the world or allowing immediate access to a past event by acting as a historical record. This view, fueled by the apparent evidentiary quality and indexicality of photographs, has been critiqued by countless scholars of photography and art history, but has persistently remained within the popular discourse of photographic theory. Scholars, critics, and photographers alike have rejected this view, instead arguing that a photograph's meaning is never self-evident,[12] but instead plural and always dependent on the context of both its presentation and its viewer,[13] as well as historical and art historical discursive frames, including those surrounding the medium itself.[14] This idea of the possibility for a multitude of meanings in a singular photograph is amplified in photographs taken within the context of postmodernism, which also rejected the idea of a total or final meaning.

Hock's *Codex* images underscore this rejection of both the idea of photography as a universal language and the idea of a universal meaning to any artwork. By centering the works around the process of distilling meaning from provided visual and personal context, the *Codex* series reveals how we as viewers shape images through our interpretations and construction of meanings. As Keith F. Davis recalled of his late friend and former colleague, Hock showed "a commitment to indeterminacy," and emphasized that "meaning is *made* rather than discovered, and that we are each responsible for the stories and explanations we construct."[15] Meaning is instead gained from these works through cognitive connections built between seemingly disparate images.

Associations can be found in directly adjacent juxtapositions or through large leaps around the grids. The gleaning of knowledge and understanding through visual juxtapositions and associations, visual, open-ended rebuses, mimics the way Mesoamerican codices conveyed extensive information through relatively simple imagery and the way in which the original reader would have played an active, rather than passive, role in the creation of meaning.

Varying meanings are conveyed not only through the individual images themselves, which may or may not be identifiable by any given viewer but are also built through the cognitive effort of the viewer, exemplifying how the meaning of visual elements depends heavily on the viewer. The individual images of each of Hock's works in the series each act as visual signs, conjuring up a multitude of associations based on visual context and the existing knowledge of the viewer. This multiplicity of meanings is central to Hock's work, as he stated, "[i]t is not my intention to deny any meaning the viewer might get from a reading of my work, nor is clarity an issue. Rather, like a cultural Rorschach, my intention is to *present possibilities* for whatever meanings the viewer might desire."[16] The varying possible interpretations of Hock's non-narrative presentation of images are dependent on each viewer's existing knowledge, associations, and biases on topics ranging from art and history to pop culture and current events (of the artist's time). The resulting plurality of interpretations means the impossibility of any final meaning of the work – the meaning and interpretation will always remain fluid, similar to the contents of the pre-Hispanic divinatory texts that were interpreted by *tlamatinime (*"wise men"/ philosophers/ literally "those who know things") or *tonalpouhqueh* ("diviners"). The individual images draw on cultural memory while acknowledging its temporality—cultural memory will always shift, evolve, and eventually be forgotten as the years pass.

As a result of this dependence on the cognitive effort of the viewer, the meanings and interpretations of the images evolve over time as their audience changes—the popular images and icons of Hock's present generate different meanings and associations for subsequent generations. This change in meaning was very much

of interest to Hock, but his series also demonstrates the potential for the *loss* of meaning. This was particularly the case with his images drawing on contemporary events. In *Codex (Monkey Business/Trap)*, for example, some meaning is lost when the contemporary viewer does not recognize Donna Rice or know of the scandal aboard Hart's appropriately named yacht. For some works, the loss of one or more references proves far more of an impedance to the viewer's ability to build connections between the independent images. *Codex (Art of Describing)* (1988), for example, features several headlines and photojournalistic images from newspapers and tabloids, prompting the question: what happens to the meaning of the work when his audience no longer gets the references? How can the work be understood by an audience who holds no memory of media spectacles such as an American woman getting assaulted by a Chinese police officer in Tibet when he confused the actor on her shirt for the Dalai Lama or when Colonel Oliver North held a "slideshow" on television, consisting of him holding up individual slides and verbally describing their contents? Through the inclusion of relatively minor events of his time with more sensational events and easily recognizable imagery, Hock seemed to wish to embrace this ambiguity and ephemerality of meaning through the loss of knowledge and references.

Gerardo Suter's *Codices* Series

Whereas Parcero made direct references to the imagery of the codices and Hock drew inspiration from their structure, Argentine-Mexican photographer Gerardo Suter extracted aspects of their content, reenacted in moments removed from historical time and space. Suter's *Codices* series draws on the representation of Mesoamerican belief and history through references to the contents of codices. Throughout the series, Suter recreates and re-presents visual references to various Mesoamerican codices, inserting the human body into the imagery to draw connections between the contents of the codices and lived, embodied experience. Working in a fictionalized realm of myth and memory, Suter's series re-mystifies the contents of the codices, reviving and recreating established representations and investing them with new potential cultural meanings and identities. At the same time, there is a theatricality present in these images, aided by the presence of the human body and the dimly lit scenes, highlighting the role of performance in the original codices.

Tonalamatl (1991) reinterprets the corporeal almanac from page 54 of Codex Ríos (also known as Codex Vaticanus A), recreating the imagery of the twenty-day signs of the *tonalpohualli*, the Aztec 260-day ritual calendar, arranged as plaster casts around a nude male figure.[17] (Figure 4) Deviating only slightly from the Codex Ríos, the nude body in Suter's version shares the same parted lips and wide-eyed, vacant stare as the codex version, but appears covered in dirt or ash, emphasizing both his skin and corporeality. Suter's reimagining notably does not include lines linking the

day signs with their corresponding body parts, as seen in Codex Ríos. Still, the signs arranged around the nude figure appear in the same order in the photograph as in the codex depiction, thereby allowing for a rough approximation of which portion of the body signs are meant to correspond to. Even those viewers without knowledge of the source material can find certain connections between the body and signs, such as the skull ("death") corresponding with the head and the serpent with the penis.

While other works in the series do not draw as apparently on the imagery of the codices, they still engage with pre-Columbian concepts found in the codices, along with other forms of representation, while inserting the human body into each. In *Xiumolpilli* (1991), which translates to "a binding of the years,"[18] we see a symbol reminiscent of Reed, with two hands pressed together, bound with rope interwoven with cactus spines, forming the center. Significantly, the "reed" part of the symbol is missing from Suter's re-interpretation. However, his image still bears a striking resemblance to a symbol on page 34 of the Codex Borbonicus, which shows the New Fire Ceremony, also known as The Binding of the Years. Given the name of the work, it can be assumed that it is intended as a reference to 2 Reed, when the binding of the years ceremony would be held.

Figure 4: Gerardo Suter, *Tonalamatl,* 1991, Photogravure, Sheet: 74.9 x 85.4 cm (29.5 x 33 5/8 inches.) First published in Gerardo Suter, *Códices*, text by Alberto Ruy Sánchez, Galería Arte Contemporáneo, México, 1991. (Image Courtesy of the RISD Museum, Providence, RI)

Tlapoyahua contains a half sun-disc/half night symbol, with a human hand placed on the center, with large, slender spikes bound to three fingers and extending past the edge of the disc. While similar part day, part night representations appear elsewhere in the codices, Suter's inclusion of the protrusions radiating out from the center on one side of the disc seems to be in reference to a representation on page 68 of Codex Yoalli Ehecatl (also known as Codex Borgia), turned on its side. The name of the work, meaning "nightfall" or "twilight,"[19] providing veiled information regarding a possible meaning of the symbol, although the sign could also be a representation of a solar eclipse—an event which could roughly be interpreted as causing apparent nightfall mid- day.[20] *Tzompantli* (1991) recreates an image of a skull rack, replacing a denuded skull with a fully-fleshed human head, mouth and eyes wide open, with a wooden stake protruding from the model's mouth. While most representations of skull racks show the skulls from the front, the profile depiction of a single head, mounted through the gaping mouth, mirrors the place name sign of Tzompanco from page 16 of the Codex Mendoza.

A single work in the series deviates from the pattern of reimagining specific visual elements of the codices. In *Tlaloc* (1991), a nude male kneels before a column inscribed with a stalk of maize, which he grasps with both hands. The figure's head is entirely covered by a clay mask of Tlaloc, recognizable from the distinctive goggle eyes and protruding fangs, and his skin is smeared with damp soil. There is a sense of performance and movement as the figure tilts his head unnaturally far back to make the fanged teeth more readily apparent. The soil on skin again emphasizes the bodily elements, suggesting that we are not to see this as a true god, but rather a deity impersonator, manifesting the rain god in the midst of some ritual that is unknown to us but to which we are nevertheless granted visual access. While Tlaloc repeatedly appears throughout multiple codices, often holding a stalk of maize, the specific manner in which the god is depicted in Suter's reimagining does not appear in any of the known codices. However, the inclusion of this image in the series can be read as a reference to the frequent depictions of both Tlaloc and deity impersonators throughout the entirety of the corpus.

A Photographic Performance of Timeless Myth

In his re-creation of pre-Hispanic legends and myths as metaphor, Suter combines indigenous imagery with themes of pain, suffering, and sacrifice, weaving elements of the deep past, trauma, violence, and myth together into a narrative that is accessible even to viewers with little to no knowledge of any specific iconography or Mesoamerican beliefs. The frequent juxtapositions of human flesh with rough stone or sharp objects (such as cactus spines and wooden stakes) vividly allude to violence, drawing connections to the references to auto and human sacrifice throughout the codices, as well as the physical and epistemological erasure of indigenous identity that began post-contact. Suter's mythic figures resist this

erasure, recalling nearly forgotten ancestral deities and rituals hidden away in the dark corners of cultural memory and bring them (back) into being.

Aside from the mythological content, the *Codices* series provides several points of connection to pre-Hispanic codices. There is an emphasis on skin in the photographs, achieved through the contrast between flesh and stones/spines that can tear human skin, but also through the application of pigmented substances like ash and dirt to the models' bodies. This parallels the materiality of the codices—they are records of culture entirely composed of pigments applied to skins. The theatricality of each of the photographs in the series also references the performative aspect of how the original codices would have been read—not in isolation and quiet contemplation, but aloud, as part of a performance—a dramatic and engaging re-enactment of the information contained within the screenfold volumes.[21]

Disrupting typical associations of the medium, Suter does not utilize photography to document a moment in time, but rather a moment of timelessness. His figures appear in an ambiguous setting—there is no specificity of place or time presented in the images; it is as if the beings are pulled from mythical time or perhaps the pages of a codex. Re-presenting scenes from the deep past or mythical time through the means of modern technology, Suter's series disrupts our understanding of the flow of time by allowing past and present to intersect. The images are simultaneously ungrounded from both time and place through their composition, yet necessarily bound to a specific coordinate in spacetime through the photographic event. The scenes are mythical and thus removed from our everyday world, but nevertheless remain linked to it through the indexical quality of the photographic medium. The removal of any reference to specific time or place within the visual plane recalls the way in which the pre-Hispanic images presented against plain gessoed pages in the Mesoamerican codices are seemingly temporally and spatially ambiguous to viewers untrained in how to read them.

Meticulously staged from the artist's mental image, Suter's work also highlights the potential for photographs to be constructed, prompting the viewer to reflect on the myth of photographic truth and the constructed nature of history. Through the combination of the general idea of the content, the connection of pigment on skin, and the performance of myth and ritual, Suter's work acts as a photographic reinterpretation of the codices, one that prompts reflection on the destruction and subsequent revival of Mesoamerican culture in the history of what is now Mexico.

Exploring Temporal Relations through Codices

While the three artists discussed above, Tatiana Parcero, Rick McKee Hock, and Gerardo Suter, each draw inspiration from a different element of the pre-Hispanic

codices—whether structural, content, or imagery—they each seem to be using their resulting series to engage in explorations of different temporal relations. Parcero's work shows the artist's turn to the distant past in the search for self-identity, seeking connections between herself and historical visual representations of knowledge. Through his interest in knowledge created out of cultural references and viewer participation, Hock reflects on the effects of time's passage on existing knowledge, looking to the future to question what happens when we lose the cultural references contained within his modern-day codex pages, and viewing his work as a living document that is always being reinterpreted in the context of any reader's present moment. While many considerations of knowledge in the future focus on advancements and gains of information, Hock instead acknowledges the inevitability of the loss of information through the progression of time. In contrast, Suter's *Codices* series attempts to present a simultaneously timeless yet contemporary representation of "mythological time." The temporally and spatially ambiguous settings of the photographs conjure feelings of timelessness (and even placelessness), as if detached from reality. Yet the scale of the images, often presenting figures and fragmented body parts as close to life-size, paired with the usage of the medium of photography, creates a sense that the mythical realm depicted is very much connected with our own.

Using the codices as a starting point for building these temporal connections, all three artists reflect a crucial element of Mesoamerican views of creation: nothing comes from nothing. According to Mesoamerican creation beliefs, the creation of the "present" age came out of the destruction of four previous world ages, or "Suns," and began with the repair of the destruction left behind from the previous age.[22] Similarly, the humans of the current age were understood to have been born from the bones and ashes of those of the prior age, ground into a flour and mixed with blood of the gods.[23] By using the visual culture of the past in their present, these three photographers reiterate this idea of creation always being born out of something prior. The seeking of answers in the past, as well as the seeming inevitability of a repeating loss of knowledge in the future, also reflects the Mesoamerican view of time as cyclical in nature: what has happened in the past is bound to be repeated; thus, it is necessary to look to past events to prepare for their inevitable recurrence. As a result, the temporal bridges built by the series of Parcero, Hock, and Suter can be seen as a final link between the source material and the reinterpretations by the late-twentieth-century artists. Despite their differing motivations and inspirations, each photographer used the ancient manuscripts to comment on Mexican and American culture and explore themes related to knowledge and identity while touching upon key elements of the Mesoamerican worldview regarding creation and time. Through their individual methods of remapping personal identity, reframing knowledge, and reenacting mythology, Parcero, Hock, and Suter not only created works that continue in the tradition of

the original codices, but they revitalize the historic visual texts by reinventing them as late-twentieth-century artworks, demonstrating the status of the codices as living, ever-evolving documents.

JACKI MARIE PUTNAM is a PhD student in Art History at the University of Illinois Chicago. Her dissertation, advised by Dr. Andrew Finegold, will explore the use of photography as a means of disrupting or illustrating experiences and theories of time.

Works Cited

Bleichmar, Daniela. "Painting the Aztec Past in Early Colonial Mexico," *Renaissance Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2019): 1362–1415.

Braezeal, Daniel. "Ecce Psycho: Remarks on the Case of Nietzsche." *International Studies in Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (1991): 19–33.

Burgin, Victor. "Looking at Photographs." In *Thinking Photography*, edited by Victor Burgin, 142-53. London: Macmillan, 1982.

Burgin, Victor, and Hilde Van Gelder. "Artistic Representation and Politics: An Exchange Between Victor Burgin and Hilde Van Gelder." In *The Routledge Companion to Photography Theory*, edited by Mark Durdgen and Jane Tormey, 371–84. New York: Routledge 2020.

Davis, Keith F.. "The Geography of the Imagination: Thoughts on the Work of Rick McKee Hock," *Afterimage* 44, no. 1/2 (Jul – Oct 2016): 2-11.

De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Prime of Life.* Translated by Peter Green. London: Penguin Books, 1965..

Earle, Edward W.. *Informed Objects: Photographs by Zeke Berman, Rick McKee Hock & William Paris* (*CMP Bulletin* 7, no. 4) 2–3 + 31–32. Riverside, CA: California Museum of Photography, University of California Riverside, 1988.

"Gran Diccionario Náhuatl," Gran Diccionario Náhuatl (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), accessed April 14, 2023. https://gdn.iib.unam.mx/.

Hock, Rick McKee. "Rick McKee Hock" (Artist's Statement) in *Informed Objects: Photographs by Zeke Berman, RickMcKee Hock & William Paris*, 12. Riverside, CA: California Museum of Photography, University of California Riverside, 1988.

Khalisi, Emil. "Eclipses in the Aztec Codices." arXiv: History and Philosophy of Physics (2020): n. Pag. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2008.08982

Lamperez, Joseph De Falco, "The Aztecs and Urban Form in Georges Bataille, Diego Rivera, and J.G. Posada," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 49, no. 4 (December 2016): 145-166.

Lomnitz, Claudio, *Death and the Idea of Mexico*. New York: Zone Books, 2005.

Miller, Mary and Karl Taube. *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Monaghan, John. "Performance and the Structure of the Mixtec Codices," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 133 – 140.

Parcero, Tatiana. "Statement." Tatianaparcero.com. Accessed March 26, 2023. https://tatianaparcero.com/blog/?page_id=2.

Sander, August. "From *The Nature & Growth of Photography*: Lecture 5: Photography as a Universal Language." Translated by Anne Halley. *The Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 674-79.

Schaafsma, Polly, Ed Knupp, Susan Milbrath, Mike Mathiowetz, and Robert L. Hall, "White Paper: The Role of Venus in the Great Eclipse of 149 in Codex Borgia 39 – 40," Unpublished Paper from "Cosmology and Society in the Ancient Amerindian World" workshop, Santa Fe Institute, Santa Fe, NM, 2010. Downloaded from academia.edu, University of Florida.

Schneider Enriquez, Mary. "Rites of Memory: The Photographs and Video Installations of Gerardo Suter." In *Labyrinth of Memory*, edited by Joseph R. Wolin, 10–21. New York: The Americas Society, 1999.

Sekula, Allan. "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning." In *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photoworks 1973-1983*, 3–21. Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984.

Tagg, John. *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Trachtenberg, Alan. "Introduction: Photographs as Symbolic History." In National Archives and Records Services, *The American Image: Photographs from the National Archives, 1860- 1960*, ix-xxxii. New York: Pantheon Books, 1979.

Vail, Gabrielle. "A Reinterpretation of *Tzolk'in* Almanacs in the Madrid Codex," in *The Madrid Codex: New Approaches to Understanding an Ancient Maya Manuscript*, edited by Gabrielle Vail and Anthony Aveni, 215-252. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2004.

Vail, Gabrielle and Christine Hernández, *Re-Creating Primordial Time: Foundation Rituals and Mythology in the Postclassic Maya Codices*. Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2013.

[1] Tatiana Parcero, "Statement," TatianaParcero.com, accessed March 26, 2023, https://tatianaparcero.com/blog/?page_id=2.

[2] Daniela Bleichmar, "Painting the Aztec Past in Early Colonial Mexico," *Renaissance Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2019), 1364.

[3] Gabrielle Vail, "A Reinterpretation of *Tzolk'in* Almanacs in the Madrid Codex," in *The Madrid Codex: New Approaches to Understanding an Ancient Maya Manuscript*, eds. Gabrielle Vail and Anthony Aveni (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2004), 241--242.

[4] Keith F. Davis, "The Geography of the Imagination: Thoughts on the Work of Rick McKee Hock," Afterimage 44, no. 1/2 (Jul–Oct 2016): 8.

[5] Mary Miller and Karl Taube, *An Illustrated Dictionary of The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 155–56.

[6] Simone de Beauvoir documented Sartre's experimentation with mescalin in her book *The Prime of Life* [trans. Peter Green (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 209-210)] ; Not only does Nietzsches work often reference intoxication, but Daniel Braezeal has also claimed that Nietzsche used "massive and regular doses of drugs," from hashish and opium to potassium bromide (an anticonvulsant), to treat a broad range of ailments. [Daniel Braezeal, "Ecce Psycho: Remarks on the Case of Nietzsche," *International Studies in Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (1991): 19–33, 19] [7] A figure of a tortured, scalped prisoner from Campeche (Mexico, 700–900 CE), currently in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art, and a Late Classic Maya figure of a Defiant bound captive (600–800 CE), currently in the collection of the Princeton University Art Museum.

[8] Joseph De Falco Lamperez, "The Aztecs and Urban Form in Georges Bataille, Diego Rivera, and J.G. Posada," *Mosaic: an interdisciplinary critical journal* 49, no. 4 (December 2016):146–47.

[9] Claudio Lomnitz, *Death and the Idea of Mexico* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 50.

[10] At the time of writing, I have consulted with experts in mathematics, physics, art history, and philosophy, and utilized AI image identification software. Yet, I have only identified approximately 25% of the individual frames in the Hock works discussed in this paper.

[11] August Sander, "From The Nature & Growth of Photography: Lecture 5: Photography as a Universal Language," trans. Anne Halley, *The Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 674–79; Allan Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning,"in *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983* (Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), 3-7.

[12] John Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 239.

[13] Victor Burgin, "Looking at Photographs," in *Thinking Photography*, ed. Victor Burgin (London: MacMillan, 1982), 153.; Sekula, 3-5.

[14] Victor Burgin and Hilde Van Gelder, "Artistic Representation and Politics: An Exchange Between Victor Burgin and Hilde Van Gelder," in *The Routledge Companion to Photography Theory*, ed. Mark Durden and Jane Tormey (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 372.; Alan Trachtenberg, in *The American Image: Photographs from the National Archives, 1860-1960* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979) xxviii, xx.; Tagg, 57.

[15] Davis, 8.

[16] Rick McKee Hock, "Rick McKee Hock"(Artist's Statement) in *Informed Objects: Photographs by Zeke Berman, Rick McKee Hock, & William Paris* (Riverside: California Museum of Photography, University of California Riverside, 1988.), 12. Emphasis added.

[17] Although it falls outside of the scope of this paper, the use of plaster casts can also be understood as a link to the history of archaeology in Mexico, a topic Suter has been heavily critical of throughout his oeuvre.

[18] "Gran Diccionario Náhuatl," Gran Diccionario Náhuatl (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,), accessed April 14, 2023, https://gdn.iib.unam.mx/.

[19] Gran Diccionario Náhuatl

[20] While some representations of a half-solar/half-night disc have been interpreted as a representation of a solar eclipse, Polly Schaafsma et al. note in "White Paper: The Role of Venus in the Great Eclipse of 1496 in Codex Borgia 39–40," that eclipse signs typically appeared as solar discs with wedges removed to indicate a brief period of darkness caused by the eclipse. While Emil Khalisi notes that the Aztec sign for a solar eclipse is typically understood as a truncated solar disc with dot-like circles attached (representing stars), he omits these half day/half night representations from his discussion in "Eclipses in the Aztec Codices."

[21] John Monaghan, "Performance and the Structure of the Mixtec Codices," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 133–140.

[22] Gabrielle Vail and Christine Hernández, *Re-Creating Primordial Time: Foundation Rituals and Mythology in the Postclassic Maya Codices* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2013), 31–32.

[23] Vail and Hernández, 33–34.

Artist Spotlight

ROSALBA BREAZEALE, MFA, PHOTOGRAPHY
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Figure 1. Rosalba Breazeale, *Lumenous Futures #1*, 2021, Pigment print on silk taken from 8 x 10 in. chemigram on silver gelatin paper, 40 in. x 32 in. (Image courtesy of Rosalba Breazeale.)

My art practice is based on an ever-expanding network of stories derived from conversations with the land, surrounding human communities, my Peruvian and Ashkenazi Jewish ancestors, and with myself. We have been sharing our stories and recording our experiences both orally and visually for thousands of years. It is an honor and duty to share stories of pain and loss, so that we can try not to repeat past mistakes but also to express joy and resilience so that we may all have a brighter future to look forward to. To build a better future, we must first envision it.

As a transnational adoptee raised in heteronormative white communities, I experienced the violence of assimilation and erasure, which left me without a voice for years. A 35mm camera became the first vehicle through which I learned to express myself outwardly and as such, photography has been my primary visual language for over a decade. I still believe it is a powerful tool for visual expression but as my art practice continues to evolve, the mediums with which I work evolve, as well.

Research into Andean culture and religion began as a method for reconnecting with my ancestral background. It led me toward *Runasimi* (the Quechua language) and

concepts that I could not find words for in my primary language, English. The term, *huaca*, became central to my art as I moved away from camera-based work. A *huaca* is a natural place or object that possesses its own spiritual essence making it animate and autonomous. It is the belief that all living beings, from the Aloe Vera sitting in my window to the largest mountain range, are our living relatives. This idea fueled my desire to imbue sculptural objects with their own energy as I expanded into camera-less photographic and fiber-based sculpture and installation.

I came to realize the limits of the English and Spanish languages as I wrestled with the concepts behind the work that eventually became my first solo exhibition, *Poems from Kay Pacha*. The Quechua term, *Kay Pacha*, is used to describe all living beings between the earth and sky in this space and time. This body of art is a constantly changing entity comprised of camera-less photography, silk and cotton textiles, felted and organic sculpture, and space specific installation. The concept of *Kay Pacha* is a collaboration between my temporal body and the multitude of living entities with whom I cohabit. Silver gelatin paper, which is light sensitive in nature, reveals the ephemeral presence and story of each plant and microbial relative. (Figure 1) Laborious processes of felting, plant and paper pruning, and *khipu*-making are responses to the imprints and bodily remnants of plant beings. *Khipu* are generally associated with the Inka although other Andean communities also used these knotted cords as a means of communication. Many were used for record-keeping purposes but more recently, there has been emphasis on narrative *khipu*.[1] Material, dye color, ply direction, knot type, and placement all contribute to the visual language. (Figure 2)

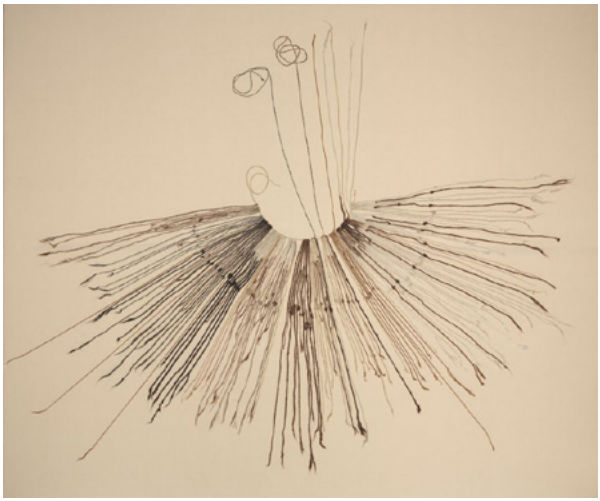


Figure 2. Inca, *Khipu,* c. 1400-1532, cords, cotton and wool cords, 85 x 108 cm (33 7/16 x 42 ½ in.) (Image courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art.)

Vessel for Reincarnation (2022) reanimates plant relatives previously used for chemilumen prints in the work, *Symbiotic Relatives*. (Figure 3) Alocasia, Spathiphyllum, Thaumatophyllum xanadu leaves, and Phalaenopsis flowers are positioned as though they are crawling out of a bodily orifice. Red dye representing *Pacha* (the earth) permeates the fiber sculpture while soil collected from my home in Limington, Maine (traditional territory of the Pequawket) builds on the aura of the piece. *Khipukuna* snake out of the felted sculpture and over the sides of the pedestal simultaneously embodying umbilical cords and legs. The end of each *khipu* hangs from the pedestal and contains knots that represent each plant participant within the exhibition.

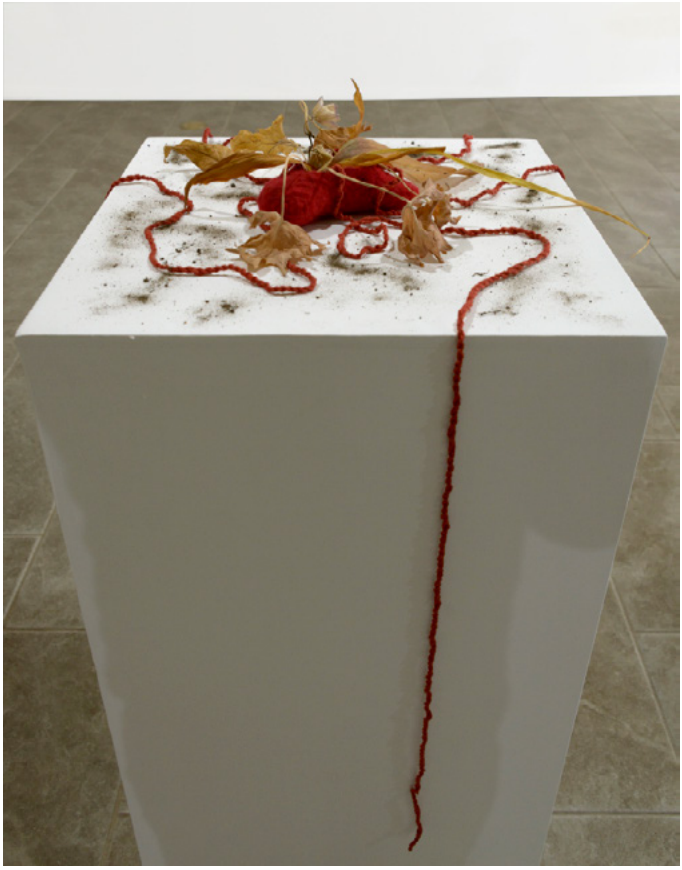


Figure 3. Rosalba Breazeale, *Vessel for Reincarnation*, 2022, Felt sculpture, plant leaves, soil, and madder dyed Inka cotton *khipu*, 17in. x 17 in. x 3 in. (Image courtesy of Rosalba Breazeale.)

Figure 4. Rosalba Breazeale, *Ayni* (1 of 3), 2023, chemigram, madder dyed Inka cotton *khipu*, and Monstera Deliciosa, 8 in. x 15 in. x 22 in. (Image courtesy of Rosalba Breazeale)

Ayni (2023) completes the circular life cycle of the plant relatives in the exhibition with the inclusion of living plant companions from my studio and home. (Figure 4) The *khipukuna* in these sculptures expand on the symbolism of the color red. Unknotted, they function as tendrils of energy or roots emanating from the Philodendron bipinnatifidum and Monstera deliciosa. My Peruvian and Ashkenazi heritage and experiences as a transnational adoptee growing up in the United States have granted me the opportunity to derive new meaning that embodies *Kay Pacha* (life in this present day and time). As my art practice continues to grow and change, so too will the language of the *khipu*.

[1] Sabine Hyland, "Writing with Twisted Cords: The Inscriptive Capacity of Andean *Khipus*." *Current Anthropology*

58, no. 3 (June 2017): 412–19.

Book Review of Denise Low, Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art by Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors (2020)

MADISON GARAY
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art by Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors (2020) was written Denise Low, Kansas poet laureate and scholar of Indigenous literature, in collaboration with Ramon Powers, former executive director of the Kansas State Historical Society and researcher of Cheyenne history and material production. Powers' research focuses on the Northern Cheyenne Exodus, in which the Fort Robinson breakout is considered the conclusive battle of the Northern Cheyenne's efforts to return to their homeland after forced relocation. En route back to the Northern territories, one of the escaping groups led by Northern Cheyenne chief, Dull Knife, was intercepted by U.S. forces and held at Fort Robinson from October to December 1878. On January 9, 1879, the group broke out of the military barracks; some individuals fled successfully but many were massacred.

Low's previous research on Plains poetry, storytelling, and land epistemologies involved both creative writing and scholarly essays. *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art* synthesizes Powers' historicization of the Fort Robinson Breakout with Low's research in Plains pictorial writing through a distinctly Northern Cheyenne semiotic lens. The body of material they examine consists of Ledger art. Ledger art, as defined by Low and Powers, is the genre of Plains Indian art derived from late-nineteenth-century glyphic drawings.[1] Ledger drawings were predominately produced on paper–specifically on ledger books, which are lined notebooks used by Anglo settlers for indexing–and illustrated with pencils and crayons obtained via trade or collected from battlefields. For the Northern Cheyenne people during the Exodus Period (1877– 1879), maintaining traditional symbols and methods of pictorial communication through colonial mediums, such as the ledger book, was a vital practice in cultural preservation.

Effectively prison art, the ledger drawings created by the Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors are contextualized by the inherent necessity of discretion. Communication, even glyphic, needed to be encrypted from the surveillant gaze of the U.S. military authorities.

Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art primarily investigates ledger art examples from three named Northern Cheyenne captives held at Dodge City, KS: Wild Hog, Porcupine, and Strong Left Hand, along with other unnamed ledger artists (amounting to seven total artists). The identified artists were leaders in the initial flight northwards in 1877, condemned in the trial *State of Kansas v. Wild Hog et al.* The authors frame ledger art as *polysemic*, meaning that the pictures may bear different meanings depending on how the symbols are read together. The images are

"read" as a codified sign where each individual symbolic picture elicits multifaceted meanings in conjunction with other pictures.[2] Thus, the ledgers are treated not only as individual works of art but as intentional historical documentation distinctly Plains in their method of storytelling and recordkeeping. The ledger book as an indexical tool was expanded upon in its form and utility by the Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors, falling not into "resistance" or "assimilation" practices (the common dichotomy in U.S. Indigenous history) but into a third space of cultural fluidity and sovereignty.[3] Not only did the ledger artists track their own physical numbers, they also tracked battles and alliances during the Exodus through these European-style journals.

In examples such as the courtship scene depicted in a drawing by Wild Hog, visual signifiers paired with oral histories articulate how the Fort Robinson drawings differed from other Plains ledger drawings. (Figure 1) For example, most of the figures in this series are barefoot rather than wearing traditional moccasins. U.S. soldiers killed women and children and removed their footwear so it could not be salvaged by survivors. By adapting non-traditional tools for the traditional pictorial communication of Northern Cheyenne people, the ledger drawings offer a powerful Cheyenne eyewitness angle to the colonial Master Narrative present in most recollections of the Fort Robinson Breakout.

Figure 1. Wild Hog, *Courting: Water Bucket and Courting Couple*, c. 1878–1879, lead pencil, blue pencil, black ink, red watercolor, KSHS plate 6. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society, kansasmemory.org.)

Low and Powers crafted *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art* as a highly accessible art historical primer for anyone unfamiliar with historical discourses and theories in Native American Studies, complete with multiple visual and textual sources to detail the specific narrative of the Fort Robinson Breakout. A reader who has never encountered notions, such as cultural sovereignty, cultural syncretism, or visual literacy, would finish this book with a greater understanding of those scholarly concepts through the focused lens of Northern Cheyenne ledger art produced during the Northern Cheyenne exodus. However, such critical terms are not used consistently, even if relevant to note. Rather, notions such as sovereignty and syncretism are highly inferred in the generally critical approach to the Fort Robinson Breakout narrative, which posits the battle and its associated ledger drawings as a cornerstone event in the greater endeavor to develop a Northern Cheyenne legacy after colonialism.

Concise visual analyses of the Fort Robinson Breakout ledger art comprise the bulk of *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art*. The authors effectively detail each visual element within an individual ledger example, reading for potential symbols based on Northern Cheyenne visual culture and related histories dealing with literary, military, and even spiritual histories. (Figure 2) For the study of Plains ledger art, Low and Powers laid an expansive foundation for the further study of the Fort Robinson Breakout within the sphere of Northern Cheyenne and Native American art history broadly. Compared to similar works in the study of Plains ledger art, such as Joyce Szabo's *Howling Wolf and the History of Ledger Art* (1994) and Colin G. Calloway's edited anthology *Ledger Narratives* (2012), the early history of incarceration and Native Americans is prominent across these texts. Szabo focuses primarily on the Fort Marion ledger drawings, while Calloway includes ledger drawings collected broadly and nonspecifically to any historical event or group of artists. *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art* provides valuable visual and historical material from the Fort Robinson Breakout, which had not been covered in the same depth before. However, for the reader seeking a broader understanding of Plains ledger art with a multitribal historical dialectic, *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art* only provides a focused sample of that.

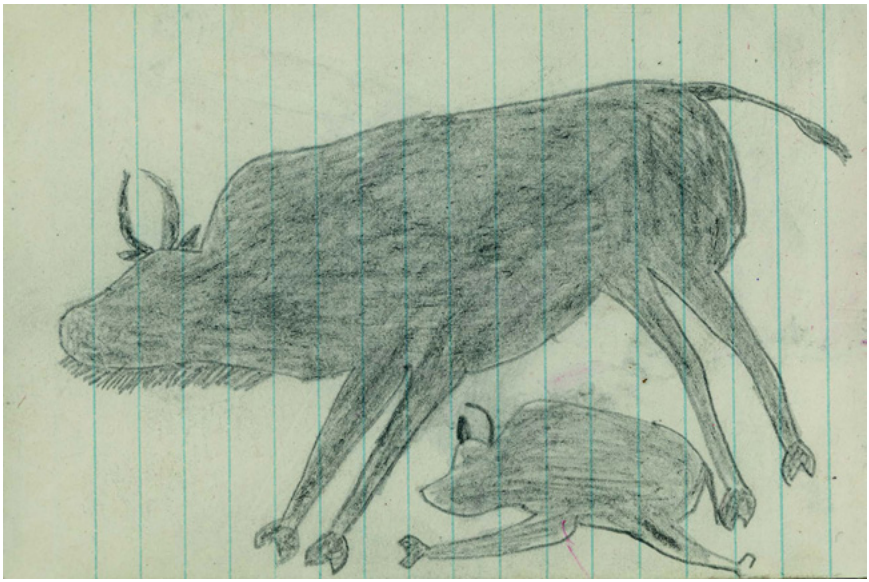


Figure 2. Strong Left Hand, *Bison, Female, with Calf*, lead pencil, black ink, Northern Cheyenne-KSHS, plates 17, pt. 2. (Courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society, kansasmemory.org.)

MADISON GARAY is currently a Master's student in Art History at the University of New Mexico, with an emphasis on Art of the Americas, and a research fellow with the Center for Southwest Research. Her research at UNM focuses on transient spaces (interstates, highways), placemaking through material culture, and formulation of regional identities on historic Route 66 through the American Southwest. Madison holds a B.A. in History of Art and Visual Culture from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

[1] Low and Powers. "Preface" in *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art by Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors*: xv.

[2] Low and Powers. "Provenance" in *Northern Cheyenne Ledger Art by Fort Robinson Breakout Survivors*: 29.

[3] "Cultural sovereignty," as defined by Beverly Singer (2001), involves the practice of adapting indigenous traditions and methods to imported or colonial technologies, securing community-determined futures for indigenous material culture.

Interview with Andrew Hamilton, Ph.D., Associate Curator of Arts of the Americas, Art Institute of Chicago

BREANNA REISS
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

Breanna Reiss: My name is Breanna Reiss, and I am a Ph.D. Candidate in Art of the Ancient Americas in the Department of Art at the University of New Mexico. I am interviewing Andrew Hamilton, who is Associate Curator of Arts of the Americas at the Art Institute of Chicago. Andrew, thank you for joining me today. Could you begin by telling me a little bit about your background, where you studied, where you grew up, and how you wound up working in the world of Pre-Hispanic art history?

Andrew, thank you for joining me today. Could you begin by telling me a little bit about your background, where you studied, where you grew up, and how you wound up working in the world of Pre-Hispanic art history?

Andrew Hamilton: Thank you for inviting me. I grew up in Kansas and took an art history course in high school, AP Art History. I hated art history, initially, because we just looked at slides, which didn't capture the real-world applicability of art or its impact.

When I went to Yale for undergrad, I experimented with a lot of different majors, but it was Mary Miller, the professor of Pre-Columbian art, who drew me to the field. At that point, I came to understand art history in a different way because of the campus museums and the collections, which made it more real to me, something whose relevance I could see. At Yale, I also had the opportunity to travel and visit the countries of origin for so many of the works and things that we were studying. That experience showed me why this mattered. So, it was really Mary at Yale that set me on this path.

After Yale, I ended up going to Harvard for a Ph.D. and I worked with Pre-Hispanic and Colonial Latin American art historian, Tom Cummins. Although as an undergraduate, I had worked with Mary, who is a renowned Mayanist, I was really interested in Andean topics, so I went to Harvard to work with Tom, who is a renowned Andeanist and Inca specialist.

Through that experience, I came to work more in the period between the Pre-Columbian and Colonial periods. It really fascinated me to look at objects and understand them, and then to compare those objects to texts and see how colonial texts and the actual artifacts may tell different stories. So, I came to work on the Incas, and that sort of brings me somewhat to the present in terms of intellectual formation.

I came to the Art Institute in 2019 after a number of post-docs, and was really grateful for the opportunity to work with the objects that drive my work and to really see why they matter and what their relevance is on a daily basis here, with so many people coming into our galleries.

BR: Getting to work with Tom Cummins is impressive. I study the Moche, mostly, but also Jama-Coaque and coastal Ecuador, which was the focus of my master's work.

So, you started working at the Art Institute right before the pandemic. Looking at your time there, what's the most exciting thing about working at that museum? What are some of the strengths of the collections you work with and how do people respond to them?

AH: What has drawn me in at the Art Institute is twofold. First, I help steward around 2,000 objects. Of those objects, probably around 3/4 are Andean. The bulk of the collection is Indigenous and largely comes from two collections: the Gaffron Collection and the Nathan Cummings Collection. The Gaffron Collection was the founding collection of the department. It was acquired in 1955 and the department was formed in 1957. There's a huge number of works that really would benefit from a lot more research. It's very exciting to work with the collection.

I help oversee the entire hemisphere of the Americas over a period of 5000 years. My portfolio is broad and covers the Ancient Americas, Colonial Latin America, and contemporary art, as well. Interestingly, some of the most rewarding work that I've done since coming to the Art Institute is working with contemporary Native artists. Working with many contemporary Native artists has been really rewarding: bringing their work into the collection, seeing the way their work relates to more historical and archeological pieces in the collection, and really showing the long continuity and relevance of Indigenous art in the Americas and its continued impact today. That's been really rewarding, as has been building those relationships with the artists and learning about new artists, their work, and their careers.

BR: The faculty advisor for *Hemisphere*, Professor of Spanish Colonial Art, Ray Hernández-Durán mentioned that you have spent time in New Mexico visiting the Pueblos, which is great. We need more of that in the museum world. Do you have anything else to say regarding those connections and the continuity that you're seeing between contemporary and Pre-Hispanic arts?

AH: I think in academia there is this sort of schism between Native American art and Pre-Columbian art that is not helpful and is clearly derived from colonialism. Some of it has to do with the languages of scholarship and the nationalism of cultural patrimony. When really thinking about the Indigenous Americas, I'm glad that my position allows me to, both, see and approach the Americas holistically and

build those long arcs, chronologically and geographically, through the collection and the presentation of works in the galleries.

It's nice to be able to make those connections but it is also impossible to be the authority on all of those artistic and cultural traditions. I see my role and this great opportunity to keep learning, finding experts in all of these different artistic traditions, whether scholars, cultural leaders, etc., and learning from them about the collection and its stewardship.

BR: That's an important observation, i.e. the relationship between nationalism and cultural patrimony. We definitely struggle with some issues due to the way we've created these divides and that's a lot of what this issue of the journal is aiming to address. This edition focuses on how we in the Americas regard ideas related to such things as semasiography and semiotics, and how to communicate. For example, you have the Maya with their logographic writing that is also phonetic. There are examples where we find that imagery is a visual language, in its own right, and has elements of Narrative.

I would be interested to hear your thoughts, if you're willing to talk about it, because I know this goes into your new book. What is your opinion on Andean textiles as a form of communication?

AH: My new book, *The Royal Inca Tunic: A Biography of an Andean Masterpiece* is looking at the royal Inca tunic at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., an object whose history and scholarship has been so shaped by a search for a writing system within it. (Figure 1) The idea that the tocapus were a kind of logographic writing system really gets born out of the way in which the tunic presents reduced-scale checkerboard tunics throughout it, so a tunic within a tunic. That was how I first came to the object in my first book on scale. As I was working on that book, *Scale & the Incas*, I realized that I had so much more to say about this object. I guess my answer is sort of verging on a couple of the questions that I know you're thinking of asking me.

On the one hand, the tunic does become a communication device through scaled relationships, and it is presenting, in my reading of the garment, a reduced-scale embodiment of empire on the body of the Sapa Inca. Working with what we know about the checkerboard tunics, they seem to have dressed what would have been something like a royal guard for the emperor. Wherever he was being carried while wearing this garment, whether carried on a litter or just being present, presumably people wearing the reference to other tunics would have been adjacent to him. In that sort of sphere, I think the tunic is communicating something very powerful through the sartorial effect of the garment.

On the flip side, as you mentioned about Maya writing, where the goal is to find

communication in other parts of the Americas, there are many ways in which *tocapus* can be formally reminiscent of Maya glyphs. On the Inca tunic, the tocapus are squarish and arranged in a specific order or formation. They've got many intricate internal parts. It's possible to see how the dream of such forms being a type of glyphic writing system unfurled. When you really boil down the arguments made about how *tocapus* might be some form of writing, it's like seeing images in clouds. Everyone has had a different interpretation of what they thought a certain pattern looked like.

In some ways, that very reductive way of thinking about language and communication, that it must be writing, is what I think overshadows our ability to look with greater nuance at an object like the tunic. Because we had a very scripted, pre-formed understanding of, a.) what we thought cultural achievement looks like, and b). what we think writing looks like or should look like, we're trying to fit Inca culture into a preconceived notion and by doing so, we miss so many other important aspects suggestive of what actually were the Incas' great cultural achievements.

Figure 1. Inca, *All-Tocapu Tunic*, c. 1450-1540 CE, 90.2 cm x 77.15 cm (35 ½ in x 30 3/8 in), alpaca fiber and cotton. (Image courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. Photography by Neil Greentree.)

BR: I agree with you. I can't wait to read your next book. It's similar to my Moche research on the decorated beans. (Figure 2) There's a lot of talk about them functioning as a language system but I think we need more nuance and to look at this question from a broader perspective in terms of how the peoples of the Andes and the coast of Peru may have looked at communication and how those forms may not necessarily fit with our ideas about writing.

Figure 2. Moche, *Vessel Depicting Bean Warriors and Painted Beans*, c. 100 BCE – 500 CE, 25.9 cm x 13.2 cm (10 3/16 x 5 3/16 in), ceramic and pigment. (Image courtesy of the Kate S. Buckingham Endowment at The Art Institute of Chicago.)

AH: Another key point of my research on the tunic is that we look at so many objects through photographs. These images become emblazoned in our mind in the sort of glamor shot that gets published and republished. So much is lost in that way of approaching objects.

This circles back to what I was saying earlier about coming to care about art history through objects and the study of objects. As you're looking at the tunic, you can really see the different hands of the two makers that created it in ways that help you see that they're not actually even creating the designs in the same way as they work on the tunic. The way they create contributes to the *tocapus'* inconsistency. They simplify some and they screw up things in the same place each time. Really looking at an object and what an object can tell us is something that's very important for overturning our preconceived ideas. You really have to listen to the object so that it guides your scholarship.

BR: It's a really important point that so much gets lost in translation of what actually went into the materiality of the object itself and the hands making it. I think that, especially with the textiles, it is such an important and understudied facet of the art form and, also, the work we do.

AH: Something that I find so fascinating about textiles, and one of the reasons why I'm drawn to studying them, is that their creation is so sequential. You lay down a thread, you lay another thread on top of that, then another cut on top of that; you can know exactly the order in which the maker did it. 58

It's not the same thing as looking at strokes made by a paint brush on a canvas. You cannot necessarily put in the exact order every brushstroke sequentially but with a textile, you really can to a large extent and thus understand how the work developed. You can see cause and effect, and the butterfly effect of a decision made early on that has ramifications later.

Because it's all made from threads, once the thread is broken, it will always be broken. You can't mend it in a way that won't allow a scholar to later come along and see that mend. A textile really does record the traces of its own making in history in a way that I think can be very fruitful for an art historian who is looking closely at it.

BR: I had never thought much about textiles like that but it's a similar reason why I love studying ancient ceramics, given how you can follow what the maker did and how it came to fruition. One can see where somebody decided to add something at the last minute or perhaps, even after firing. That's fascinating. I know you spoke about it a little bit but that there are certainly some interesting places in the Andes where you see scale being communicated and using communication and scale together in a way that reveals bits of ideology and such. Is there anything that comes to mind from your book or otherwise that you might like to speak about?

AH: One of the things I was struck by in in studying scale within the context of Inca culture is that it is nonverbal. It is something that can communicate in a very immediate way. The scale or relationship between two objects is like that, it represents that as a similar sort of structure to word and idea; this word instantiates that thing over here.

When you see it, you know it. But it does it in a way that's not using a linguistic faculty. In an empire like the Incas', which would have been multilingual, it actually makes a lot of sense as to why it might have come to be relied upon more to communicate. I ended the book with my admitting being struck by these similar ways of using scaled relationships even in the present moment. I make a point about the Super Bowl commercials, when you really are pressed for time; similarly, making a commentary or conveying an idea through scale is a very fast, effective way of doing it. I think that that's something that is enduring. Scaled relationships are still used in that way.

Going back to the way we often come to study art history through slides or images rather than from the objects themselves, photography and the representation of objects through images is something that, actually, obliterates scale more often than not. You have to be really, really careful about how you preserve scalar knowledge within an image or within a representation because it's inherently rescaled. So again, it's just something that direct object study makes more apparent.

BR: I agree entirely. I think the miniatures that you see crop up in the Inca Empire as offerings are fascinating. I did not know this until last summer when I visited some of the museums on the coast. These kinds of objects are showing up in the mountains of Cerro Reque and in the surrounding areas, too. People were explaining them to me and saying, "well, that was an offering, and it does have a direct relationship with the thing that's being offered. We're offering this smaller miniature version of it, which can stand in for the whole." I think that was very well said. How that relationship develops in the Andes is fascinating.

AH: When I was starting to write my dissertation, I thought that I was going to study scale writ large. But then as I was looking at it culture by culture, it became clear that every culture was doing it in slightly different ways so that there was an Inca approach to it that was seemingly very different on the surface from, like, a Paracas approach or a Moche approach. I think that there's a lot of room for further studies that identify scale as an issue and understand the challenges of studying it, and then try and see it in other Andean cultures because the Incas are the end of that development and they're doing it in a really sophisticated way but they didn't invent it. It's a way of making references and making connections that their predecessors were using at great length for long periods of time. I'm keen to see whether my own future research or another scholar's future research changes what

we are learning about those different cultural differences in the Andes.

BR: I think scale would be an interesting way to see those differences, as well as looking at things like communication. I just wonder how, given that these cultures have so many languages, especially in the Inca period, which they use to speak to one another and how they deal with that divide. In the Americas, generally, and here in New Mexico, I know a lot of the Pueblos don't speak the same languages. It's fascinating to think about long term trade and how they dealt with those divides. Is there anything that you'd like to add about what we've talked about, your time at the Art Institute, or the Inca?

AH: Well, the current book is going through copyediting right now and hopefully, we'll have advance copies in the beginning of 2024. It's with Princeton University Press and should come out Spring 2024. So that's exciting.

BR: Thank you for making time to meet with me and participating in this interview. You're doing such important work so good luck with all of your projects.

BREANNA REISS is a Ph.D candidate who studies pre-Hispanic ceramics, primarily from coastal Ecuador and Peru, with a focus on their iconography and elements of their composition. She also received her M.A. from UNM where in partnership with the Earth and Planetary Sciences Department, she examined the chemical composition of rare blue and blue-green post- fire ceramic figurine colorants from Ecuador. Her dissertation explores the intersections between ancient Moche semasiography related to plant motifs and the ethnobotanical uses of these identifiable plant species. Along with teaching introductory art history courses, she has received numerous fellowships with UNM's Center for Southwest Research and the Digital Initiatives and Scholarly Communication Department.

The University of New Mexico
Hemisphere Journal
Department of Art
MSC04 2560
1 University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131–0001