

THE MESOAMERICAN AND ANDEAN ART COLLECTION

The museum's collection of Mesoamerican art includes an array of images of elites, commoners and deities, ranging from a small Olmec *Mask* (900-400 B.C.E.) of precious stone to a strikingly youthful Maya stucco head. The new installation explores what these visages might reveal about life, death, civil authority and the supernatural.

Delicate Maya ceramic figures meant to accompany the deceased reveals an interest in recording the people of their time, including captives, warriors, orators, dancers and singers, including *Figure with rattle* (ca. AD 600-900). Representations of gods and ancestors in sculpture and painted on vessels emphasize the importance of ritual devotion.

SAM's range of ceramics, metalwork and rare textiles from the ancient Andes prompts an examination of the fluid relationship between humans, non-humans and supernatural beings, as figures appear on items used by the living and are then buried with the dead. Deemed articles of great prestige, Andean textiles, such as the Wari *Four-cornered hat* (ca. AD 500-800) made of camelid fiber and cotton, were considered more valuable than gold. Such textiles expressed status and authority in life as well as in death, and were placed in tombs along with the deceased. The hat's brilliant colors were produced with natural dyes, such as cochineal for scarlet red and indigo for blue, which are easily absorbed by the silky, flexible fibers from llamas and alpacas.

Curated by Barbara Brotherton, Curator of Native American Art.