



Mirrors of Clay

Yumi Park, Eric Huntington, Betsy Bradley, Beth Batton, Sam Olden

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Mirrors of Clay: Reflections of Ancient Andean Life in Ceramics from the Sam Olden Collection features photographs and descriptions of sixty ceramic vessels from ancient Andean American cultures, including the Cupisnique, Chavín, Vicús, Nazca, Moche, Tiwanaku, Lambayeque, and Chimú, which flourished between 1200 BCE and 1550 CE. These distinctive ceramic vessels, selected from the collection of Sam Olden, were given to the Mississippi Museum of Art and are included in a special exhibition presented by the museum and Jackson State University. The pieces reveal each culture's stylistic aesthetics, religious ideologies, and political roles.

The Pre-Columbian ceramic vessels presented in this catalogue are mainly from the Andean region of South America, which includes the modern countries of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. By analyzing technologies, forms, and decorative designs, author Yumi Park reveals the unique aesthetics, social stratifications, religious ideologies, and political roles within each culture. Ancient Andean potters expressed their native individualities by depicting the forms of warriors, deities, architecture, flora, fauna, and daily life on their ceramic vessels.

Collector Sam Olden lived in Peru during the 1960s. After visiting various archaeological sites and museums, including the Rafael Larco Herrera Museum in Peru, he became enamored with the ceramic vessels of the ancient Andes. Olden later settled in Yazoo City, Mississippi, and began to build an extensive collection of ancient Andean ceramics, eventually making a large donation to the Mississippi Museum of Art. Because of his passion for these artifacts, the people of Mississippi are now afforded a window on the ancient Andean world. The Sam Olden Collection gives us tangible and visible evidence of the social activities, political events, and ideological beliefs of ancient Andean cultures.

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