

AP Art History Review

From Simple Studies, <https://simplestudies.edublogs.org> & @simplestudiesinc on Instagram

Indigenous Americas (1000 B.C.E–1980 C.E)

~6% of exam (14 works)

****Disclaimer: the material provided has been compiled from two main sources, including the College Board AP Art History Course Description and Khan Academy's AP Art History course resources. The material provided is not claimed by Simple Studies as original content. All images have been provided courtesy of The College Board.*

What are the Indigenous Americas?

- The “**Indigenous Americas**” refers to the cultures that inhabited the American continent during the pre-Columbian era (before the arrival of Europeans)
 - The Americas developed independently of the eastern world from c.10,000 B.C.E - 1492 C.E, until European exploration began
- The Indigenous Americas spanned North, Central, and South America and were composed of various major civilizations
 - **Andes** (Peru): *Chavin* (900 B.C.E-200 B.C.E), *Inca* (1450 C.E-1540 C.E)
 - **Mesoamerica** (Guatemala, Yucatan, Belize)/(Central Mexico): *Maya* (250 C.E-900 C.E), *Aztecs* (1345 C.E-1521 C.E)
 - **North America** (Southwest)/(East)/(Pacific Northwest): *Anasazi* (550 C.E-1400 C.E), *Mississippian* (800 C.E-1500 C.E), *Northwestern Coast* (18th century-present)
- These civilizations were organized into large city states and complex societies
- Native American populations drastically changed after the pre-Columbian era due to direct contact with the Europeans, who introduced diseases, such as smallpox, syphilis, and measles, to the Native American populations.

Characteristics Of Indigenous Art

- Peoples in the Andes civilization had shared various elements of their cultures with each

other as a result of sharing major geographic features, such as the Andes Mountains. This led to common themes in the art that they produced, including **human-environment interaction, shamanism, dualism, and reciprocity.**

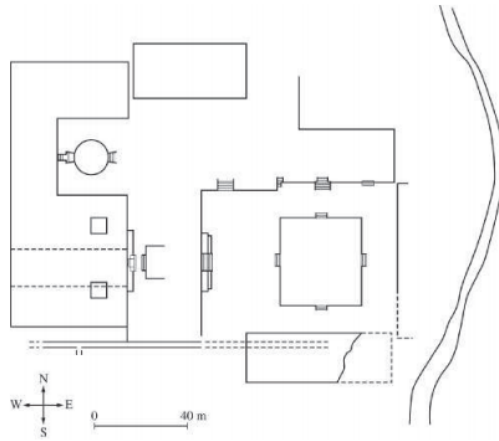
- The art of ancient Mesoamerica demonstrates an interest with **celestial orientation** and calendars. The Mesoamericans also valued precious objects that were **green** in color, such as jadeite.
- Civilizations in pre-Columbian North America such as the **Mississippians** created large earthworks that were connected to astrological patterns

Key Vocabulary

- **Ashlar masonry:** technique of fitting stone blocks together without mortar
- **Axis mundi** (“Center of the world”): A symbolic point believed to be the center of the world by a specific culture or people
- **Earthworks:** artworks created by altering a large area of land using natural and organic materials and are usually large-scale projects that take formal advantage of the local topography
- **Effigy:** a model of someone or something represented in a three-dimensional medium
- **Halley’s Comet:** a comet discovered in 1705 that repeats itself every 76 years and last appeared in 1986; one of the brightest comets Earth has ever seen
- **Mexica:** the name that the “Aztec” peoples referred to themselves as during the pre-Columbian era
- **Kivas:** architectural units that functioned as underground ceremonial chambers in Anasazi dwellings
- **Repoussé:** technique used in metal relief sculptures; the backside of a metal plate is hammered in to create designs or a specific texture
- **Tenon-head:** type of sculpture hung on the exterior walls of Chavin that illustrate a shamanistic transformation
- **T’oqapus:** small rectangular shapes in an Inkan garment
- **Superimposition:** the placement of one object directly over another
- **Spolia:** Term used to describe the creation of a new work or piece of architecture that has elements taken from earlier monuments or buildings

153. Chavín de Huántar. Northern highlands, Peru. Chavín. 900–200 B.C.E.

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



Chavín de Huántar plan





Content

- Large three-story temple complex
 - Old Temple (900 B.C.E) & New Temple (500 B.C.E): interiors contained galleries (tunnels)
 - Tenon head sculptures on outside walls--represent shamanic transition of human to feline
 - Sunken courtyard containing relief sculptures and a plaza for rituals
- Lanzón stela
 - 15 feet wedge-shaped granite stone
 - Depicts a smiling human-feline hybrid figure; fangs and talons most likely represent the jaguar, which is a prevalent icon in Andean art. Hair resembles snakes.
- Shallow relief sculptures depicting jaguars
- Nose ornament ring (c. 500-200 B.C.E)--nose ring with snake-headed whiskers
- San pedro cactus is a recurring symbol in carvings in the complex

Context

- The archaeological site was once the main seat of cultural expression in the Andes, but declined after 200 B.C.E
- Two building phases: 900 B.C.E and 500 B.C.E
- Metallurgy (the manipulation of the form of metal through heat or other techniques) developed in South America, where the Andes is located
- Located at the convergence of two rivers

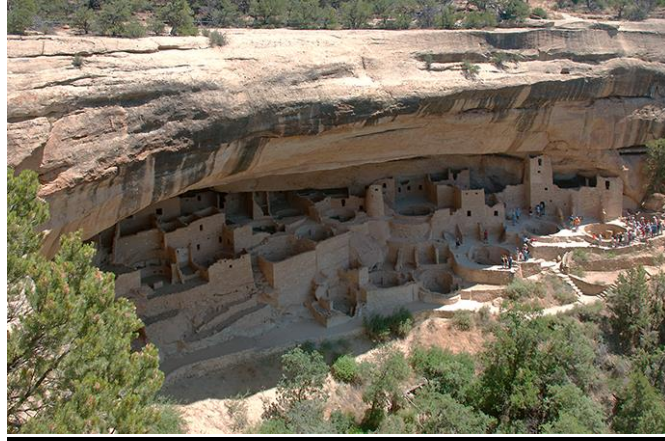
Form

- Walls and floors of the temple were created from rough stones; carvings were created from smoother stones.
 - Galleries contained no source of light (no windows)
- Serpent motifs on granite of Lanzon stela; carvings create contour rivalry
- Nose ring ornament made from gold--metallurgy

Function

- The temples became a pilgrimage site for the Andean peoples; the site was constructed for a god. Example of a **sacred space**.
 - Various elements of shamanism are evident in iconography and imagery depicted in the artifacts found at the site
 - Maze-like tunnels suggest certain areas of the site were only accessible to priests or shamans who performed rituals or connected with the supernatural in such locations
- Site spread stylistic conventions of Chavin art to various ends of the Andes--jaguar imagery extended beyond this area

154. Mesa Verde cliff dwellings. Montezuma County, Colorado. Ancestral Puebloan (Anasazi). 450–1300 C.E. Sandstone



Content

- Communal dwellings built into a rock plateau
 - Cliff palace: largest dwelling place--contains 150 rooms
 - Kivas (semi-circular chambers) built into the ground
 - Multi-storied
 - Contained circular towers and hearths
 - Painted and plastered murals found within dwellings and towers

Context

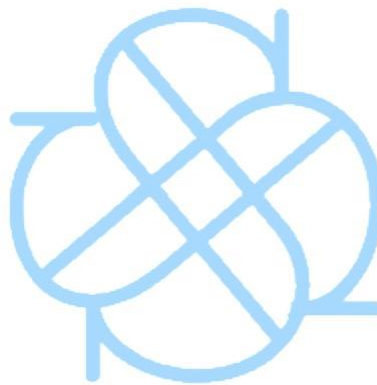
- The Anasazi are the ancestors of the Puebloan peoples
- The Anasazi built structures into cliffs located in each of the states of the Four Corners for 600 years, which encompassed the indigenous cultures of the southwest
- Agriculture and sedentary farming (maize) c. 200 B.C.E
- Families lived in communal units; strong social cohesion within groups in southwest is linked to the idea of living in harmony with nature
- Site abandoned after 1300 C.E.

Form

- Buildings were created using stone, mud mortar, and wooden beams
 - Kivas (architectural units inhabited by families) had wooden-beamed roofs, columns, a central fire pit, and small ceremonial hole (sipapu)
- Murals, usually painted or plastered with clay and other natural materials, depicted geometric forms, plants, and animals

Function

- Residential area--communal dwellings encouraged social cohesion
 - Ceremonial pits within kivas and other structures suggest that rituals were performed within area



155. Yaxchilán. Chiapas, Mexico. Maya. 725 C.E. Limestone (architectural complex).



Content

- **Lintel 25, structure 23**
 - Located at central doorway of the structure
 - Depicts wife of ruler Shield Jaguar II, Lady Xook, participating in a bloodletting ritual
 - Hallucinatory effects as a result of the ritual are shown; Lady Xook sees another figure emerging from the mouth of a serpent, clad in armor
 - Lady Xook wears ornaments and regalia--a headdress, earrings, and a huipil bracelet
 - Contains inscription with date (681) and description of the events; Lady Xook is acting as a shaman to interact with her ancestors
- **Structure 33**
 - Located within the Central Acropolis of the complex
 - Temple contains decorative friezes, niches, and relief
- **Structure 40**
 - Building located in the South Acropolis of the complex, flanked by structures 39 and 41
 - Not well preserved--collapsed roof
 - Located at one of the highest points of the city

Context

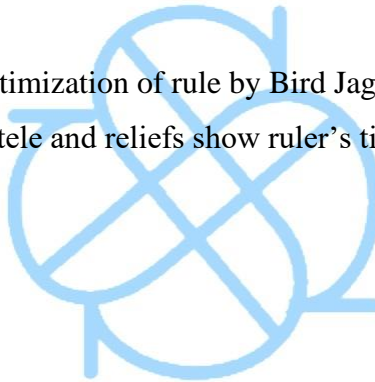
- Civilization founded around 600 B.C.E
 - Divided into units of organization known as city-states (which competed with each other)
- Mayans developed precise calendars, recorded the position of celestial objects, and developed a system of arithmetics
- Yaxchilán is located in Chiapas, Mexico, and is one of the various centers of the Mayan civilization

Form

- **Lintel 25, structure 23**
 - Carved in high relief
 - Details added through incising and contour techniques
 - Traces of paint remain on figures
- **Structure 33**
 - Mayan Classic architecture, Usumacinta region
 - Narrow passageway, single deep vault--limited space
 - Combed-roof
- **Structure 40**
 - Yaxchilan architectural style; rectangular vaults and combed roof
 - Contains stela

Function

- Expression of power--legitimization of rule by Bird Jaguar IV
 - Commemorative stele and reliefs show ruler's ties to his ancestors and dynasty



156. Great Serpent Mound. Adams County, southern Ohio. Mississippian (Eastern Woodlands). c. 1070 C.E. Earthwork/effigy mound.

Content

- ~1,300 foot long sculpted mound in the shape of a serpent, situated in a meteor depression
- Orientation of the snake has connections to astronomy
 - Head and tail aligned with the summer and winter equinoxes respectively
 - The shape of the body resembles the shape of the constellation Scorpio, while the head resembles the star Antares.
 - Shape of the body might also be interpreted as the constellation Draco, which could be used as a compass to mark the direction of the North

Context

- Earthworks are one of the main forms of artistic expression found near large river valleys, where the indigenous cultures of North America flourished
- Society engaged in agriculture and crop domestication
- Social stratification and organized labor present in culture
- Halley's Comet occurred in 1066 C.E.
- Believed to be either built or renovated by Fort Ancient Culture (1000-1650 C.E.); rattlesnake image adapted from Mississippian Culture (700-1550 C.E)

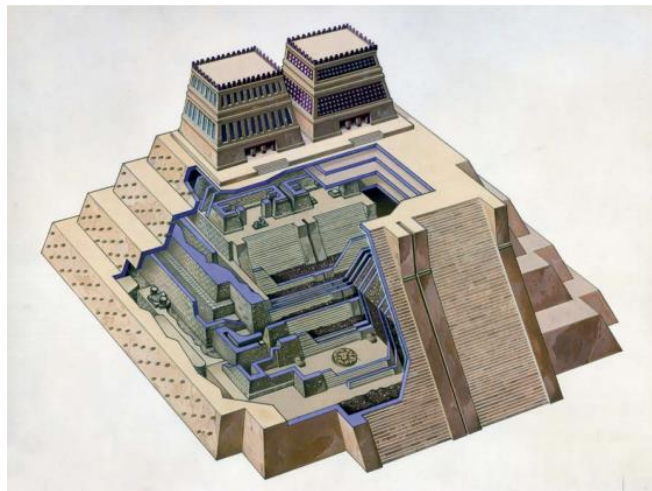
Form

- Made directly from materials found in surrounding environment (dirt)
- Topography on plateau with folded bedrock underneath allows snake to appear to be writhing
- Circular head, crescent-shaped body

Function

- Attempt at documenting celestial phenomenon
- Compass directing to the north
- Time marker (marking the solstices and equinoxes)

157. Templo Mayor (Main Temple). Tenochtitlan (modern Mexico City, Mexico). Mexica (Aztec). 1375–1520 C.E. Stone (temple); volcanic stone (The Coyolxauhqui Stone); jadeite (Olmec-style mask); basalt (Calendar Stone).



Content

- Templo Mayor
 - Two small twin temples top a stepped pyramid; the red temple was dedicated to the patron god of the Mexica, Huitzilopochtli, while the blue temple was dedicated to the rain god, Tlaloc.
 - Huitzilopochtli's temple symbolized Coatepec (Snake Mountain), an important location in the patron god's myth
 - Tlaloc's temple may have symbolized Tonacatepetl mountain, which was very fertile.
 - On the equinoxes, the sun rises between the two temples
 - Axis mundi of the Mexica culture
- Coyolxauhqui stone
 - Depicts a dismembered goddess, Coyolxauhqui, from the Huitzilopochtli myth. In the myth, Huitzilopochtli killed his sister, Coyolxauhqui (the moon goddess), who had plotted with others to kill their pregnant mother, and then dismembered her body.
 - Coyolxauhqui is identified by the colored bells on her cheeks (her name translates to "Bells-her-cheeks")
 - Sagging breasts and stretched belly indicates that she was a mother
 - Dismembered limbs with the faces of deities at her joints; the deities symbolized chaos and mischief.
- Olmec-Style Mask
 - Skull-looking mask
 - Sunken eyes
 - Defined nose and mouth

Context

- Templo Mayor means "The Great Temple"
- Excavations have revealed the temples are linked to the concept of superimposition, which played an important part in Mesoamerican architecture and duality in storytelling
- Tenochtitlan was established as the capital city of the Aztecs (Mexica) in 1325
 - Excavations revealed remains of Tenochtitlan under modern-day Mexico City
- Humans sacrifices were an essential part of the rituals performed at Templo Mayor; war

captives were taken to the temple and then had their hearts carved out as an offering to the gods

- Reference to the myth depicted in the Coyolxauhqui stone
- 7,000 artifacts and artworks from various parts of Mesoamerica were found in the lower-layer of the temple, suggesting that the Mexica collected art, similar to cultural ambassadors

Form

- Templo Mayor
 - Pyramid complex organized on grid system
 - Graduated stepped pyramid
 - 90 feet high
 - Covered in stucco
- Coyolxauhqui Stone
 - Pinwheel-shaped Monolith carved in low relief
 - Served as a decoration on the Huitzilopochtli temple
 - Originally painted in bright colors
 - Even carvings
- Olmec-style Mask
 - Made from jadeite, a harder, more rare form of nephrite jade

Function

- Coyolxauhqui stone: art in the service of the state ideology; this piece is promoting the power of the Mexica over those who they have conquered
- Templo Mayor: ritual site for human sacrifices and the worship of gods. Expresses power and wealth in capital of Tenochtitlan
- Olmec Masks: historical artifact collected by the Mexica; may have been seen as significant treasure

**158. Ruler's feather headdress (probably of Motecuhzoma II). Mexica (Aztec).
1428–1520 C.E. Feathers (quetzal and cotinga) and gold.**



Content

- Headdress consists of 400 green tail feathers from the Quetzal and Cotinga birds
- Golden bird beak was once attached to the front

Context

- The Aztec empire reached its peak of power in 1519 with its expansion across Mesoamerica
 - Empire interconnected through trade networks and militarism
 - Extensive empire led Aztecs to acquire tribute, or luxury items. Quetzal and Cotinga feathers were examples of such “tributes”.
- Created by amantecas (feather workers), who were organized into guilds and were held in high regard
- Headdress taken into the possession of Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes, after he took the Aztec ruler, Monteczuma II, as a prisoner in 1519
 - Europeans admired the precious feathers that the Aztecs had exacted as tribute

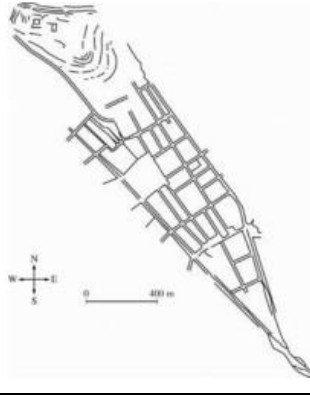
Form

- Consisted of vibrant colors--gold, green, blue, red
- Feathers placed on a net of sticks and then sewn together
- Gilded bronze ornaments

Function

- Lavish display of wealth and power
- Could have been worn by ruler as a costume during ceremonial occasions

159. City of Cusco, including Qorikancha (Inka main temple), Santo Domingo (Spanish colonial convent), and Walls at Saqsa Waman (Sacsayhuaman). Central highlands, Peru. Inka. c. 1440 C.E ; convent added 1550–1650 C.E



Content

- Qorikancha (“Golden House”)
 - Shrine dedicated to Inti, the most prominent sun god
 - Physical and symbolic focal point of the Inca empire
 - From this point radiating outwards, there was an interconnected system of shrines connected through imaginary lines called ceques

- Santo Domingo
 - Cathedral built on top of the Qorikancha after Spanish conquest
 - Incan walls of the pre-existing shrine were enclosed within the walls of the Santo Domingo
- Walls at Sacsayhuaman
 - Fortress of zig-zagging walls overlooked the city; interpreted to be unfinished

Context

- The city of Cusco was an axis mundi in Incan culture
- City divided into hanan (upper section) and hurin (lower section)--class distinction among residents
 - Division of labor existed--many stoned structures were built by individuals who were a part of the mit'a system, which was a labor tax
- An earthquake in 1950 destroyed the Santo Domingo, leaving much of it in ruins; however, the walls of Qoorikancha over which it was built are still standing
- Inca peoples known for their masonry techniques
- Women were brought to the city to work for nobles; these women were known as acllas.

Form

- Qorikancha
 - Walls composed of tightly packed stones that fit together as a result of an interlocking technique called ashlar masonry
 - Blocks had a smooth finish
 - Walls were once covered in sheets of gold; the interior once contained precious jewels and stones
- Santo Domingo
 - Architectural features mirror those of the Spanish Baroque style--ornamental and decorative elements, simple plan layout, courtyard, twisted/dynamic columns
 - Spolia: church built over Incan shrine--elements of previous building combined with another for repurposing and new construction.

Function

- City functioned as a secular and religious center
- Seat of nobles/control center

160. Maize cobs Inka. c. 1440–1533 ce. Sheet metal/repoussé, metal alloys.



Content

- Representation of a maize cob--an important food item cultivated and consumed across the empire
 - Resembles “black maize” which is oxidized after it is harvested, hence its name
- Located within the walls of the Qorikancha, which displayed small gardens that mimicked the natural world

Context

- The Incans made elaborate gardens of plant and animal figures (llamas, pigs, maize, flowers, etc) with gold and silver
 - Unusual representations--differ from more abstract Incan art
- Maize was also of political significance; it was used to make beer during feasts of nobles
- The Incans developed the first metallurgy techniques in South America
- The Spanish conquistadors looted various sites across the empire and took the gold and precious materials that they found back to Europe

Form

- Silver and copper were combined to mimic the look of an actual corn cob
- Kernel textures recreated through repoussé, a metal-working technique
- Smooth exterior husk and leaves

Function

- In gardens commissioned by Incan royals
 - Perhaps shows the Incans' dominance over their environments
 - Expression of wealth and power within a sacred space

161. City of Machu Picchu Central highlands, Peru. Inka. c. 1450–1540 ce.

Granite (architectural complex)





Content

- 200 buildings located on a mountain
 - Staffed by retainers
 - Contains terraced steps, a water management system, fountains, an observatory, and various ritual sites
- Clustering of certain buildings in specific areas suggest apparent social division;
 - ex.: noble residences in northeast and emperor's residence isolated in southwest

Context

- Different groups were believed to inhabit Machu Picchu, including the Yanaconas (retainers) and Mitimaes (obligated colonists), besides the emperor
- Emperor Pachikuti claimed to be a direct descendant of a sun god
- During Spanish conquest in the 1500s, many sundial stones were destroyed

Form

- Houses and terraces built through stone masonry techniques
 - These stones were smooth
 - Wooden roofs
 - Trapezoidal entryway
 - Red walls
- Residences of lower class built with mud and mortar
 - Rough, unshaped stones
- Intihuatana (sundial stone): small conical-like stone carved from a boulder

Function

- Royal estate for the first Incan emperor, Pachacuti

- Various observatories demonstrate an interest in and understanding of astronomy and celestial phenomenon
- Expression of power through architecture
- Sacred space

162. All-T'oaqapu tunic. Inka. 1450–1540 C.E. Camelid ber and cotton.



Content

- Each of the colors used in the making of this textile are of symbolic importance
 - Red (war and rulership), green (growth and the environment), black (creation and death), yellow (maize and gold), purple (matrilineal founding of Incan empire)
- This tunic represents Pachacuti's role as the ruler over an extensive empire with diverse subjects, as represented by the variety of colors and designs
- T'oaqapu: square geometric motifs that were only allowed to be worn by nobles

Context

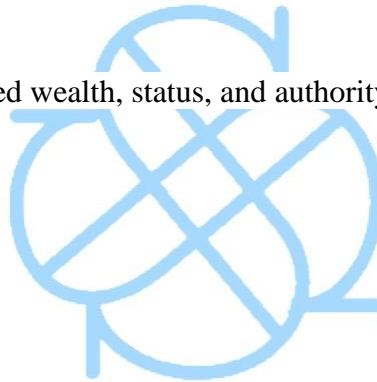
- Textile technologies were well-developed before ceramic technologies in eras that preceded the rise of the Incan Empire
 - Textiles held in high regard as status objects
- Commissioned by the king, making it a royal garment
- Most textiles were produced by women called acllas, who were chosen from all over the empire to weave

Form

- 300 threads per inch of cloth; weaved using a backstrap loom
 - Looming allowed for the creation of a diverse amount of patterns
- Very careful attention to detail
- Dyed using insects that live on cacti

Function

- Identified the king--showed wealth, status, and authority



163. Bandolier bag Lenape (Delaware tribe, Eastern Woodlands). c. 1850 C.E.

Beadwork on leather.



Content

- Thousands of tiny, colorful beads and ribbons (which also formed fringes) span the surface of the bag
- Abstracted forms may represent the four cardinal directions
- Resemble the ammunition-storage bags carried by Europeans

Context

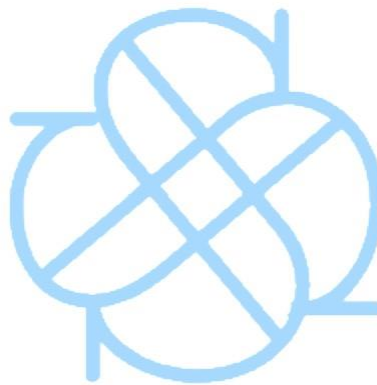
- Bandolier Bags were created across the northeastern and southeastern sections of North America
 - Production of the bags continued even after the relocation of the Lenape due to President Jackson's "Indian Removal Act"
 - Crafted by women
- Materials required to produce the bag consisted of both traditional materials (animal hides) and new materials that were gained by trading with the Europeans (cotton, glass beads, silk ribbons)
- Still made and worn today

Form

- Styles depended on personal preference
 - “Prairie style” born from the combination of relocated and native peoples-- naturalistic and abstract floral pattern
 - White beads acted as contour lines
 - Repetition of forms

Function

- Meant to be worn across the body
- Complemented ceremonial outfits of men
 - Were not necessarily used to hold items



164. Transformation mask Kwakwaka'wakw, Northwest coast of Canada.

Late 19th century ce. Wood, paint, and string



Content

- Mask depicting an eagle on exterior and human face when opened to interior
 - Both faces are painted with similar colors

Context

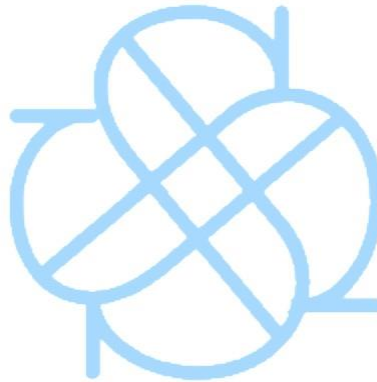
- The Northwest Coast culture inhabited areas that spanned from southern Alaska to northern California
 - Kwakwaka'wakw lived in British Columbia, Canada
- Common belief that ancestors inhabited the earth and transformed into animals
 - Clans (Numayns) claimed ancestry from specific animals, which they represented in their masks
 - Important rituals associated with these beliefs--potlatch (gift-giving ceremony) and initiation into Hamatsa Society

Form

- Formline style
 - consists of the colors red, blue-green, black
 - Symmetrical interior and exterior
 - Calligraphic lines
 - Made from red cedar wood

Function

- Worn during initiation ceremony, along with a costume
 - Performance mask: strings pulled to open the mask during performance → transformation into another animal
 - Mask imbued with powers from animal ancestors



165. Painted elk hide; Attributed to Cotsiogo (Cadzi Cody), Eastern Shoshone, Wind River Reservation, Wyoming. c. 1890–1900 ce. Painted elk hide



Content

- Historical scenes depicted on the front of the hide; celebrates the Sun Dance, which corresponds with the date of the summer solstice, as well as the Grass and Wolf dances (non-religious)
 - Celebrates harmony with nature and joy
 - Human figures are wearing ritual clothing--headdress made from eagle feathers; symbolizes power and honor
- Domestic scenes from everyday life included--resting and hunting

Context

- Animal hide paintings were a central part of the traditions practiced by the people of the Great Basins and Great Plains
- The Plains Indians inhabited North America and parts of Canada
 - They shared certain elements of culture such as buffalo hunting, relying on transportation by horses, and teepees
- Cotsiogo known for his hide paintings, which usually helped him support himself and his family
- The buffalo population sharply decreased around the 1880s

Form

- Painted using natural materials, such as ocher, chalk, and dyes from insects
- Figures depicted in twisted perspective
 - Helps to give illusion of movement

Function

- Hides primarily functioned as a means of recording oral history visually, but later depicted certain subject matter that helped appeal to tourists

166. Black-on-black ceramic vessel; Maria Martínez and Julian Martínez, Tewa, Puebloan, San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico. c. mid-20th century ce.

Blackware ceramic. 1939

Content

- Black olla (rounded pot) with shiny designs imprinted on its surface
- Inspired by Neolithic Puebloan vessels discovered in New Mexico, date to ~2,000 years ago

Context

- Maria Martinez's ability to expose a wider, non-native audience to Native pottery helped to elevate the status of Native Ceramics as a fine art
- Martinez learned techniques from the Puebloan community in which she was raised in
 - Communal environment
 - Martinez signed her name of pots made by the community to increase their value, and thus help the community

Form

- Made completely by hand in several steps:
 - Clay is made into the shape of an olla and are then burnished to achieve a shiny, polished exterior
 - Matte patterns are painted on exterior, and then the vessel is fired in an adobe pit, which results in the black color
- Divided into two registers, both of which contain abstract patterns and designs
 - These designs mirrored the Art Deco movement that began in 1920, which was characterized by bold geometric forms

Function

- Elevated the status of Native Ceramics as a fine art; financially supported the community
- Decorative vessel

