

RITUAL OBJECT, FUNERARY OFFERING, WORK OF ART

THE PLACE OF THE PRE-COLUMBIAN PAST IN THE
HISTORY OF ART IN PERU

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ABSTRACT

The debate on whether Pre-Columbian objects should be studied from the discipline of art history or from archaeology has been the subject of various research studies in recent decades. The present essay reflects on this debate in the context of museum curation in the Museo de Arte de Lima (Peru). It presents examples of recent temporary and permanent exhibition displays, focusing on the creation of new narratives and forms of sharing the past, derived from the study of the objects themselves while placing them in a wider context of updated archaeological research. The article concludes by proposing a new form of curation demonstrating that the coexistence of both disciplines is not only possible but necessary.

KEYWORDS

Art museums; Archaeology; Curation; Museology; Museo de Arte de Lima; Peru.

I. Introduction

The inhabitants of ancient Peru have left us a vast legacy that offers an understanding of their particular worldview. Despite the undisputable beauty of the pieces we find gathered in these galleries, they were not created as works of art, nor were they purely decorative objects or depictions of actual customs. In most cases, these pieces were conceived as symbols of power and elements for use in rituals of life and death.¹

This text greets the visitor to the new permanent galleries of the Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) that present a panorama of art in Peru from the Pre-Hispanic era through the mid-twentieth century.² The thirty-four galleries are configured as thematic spaces within a principal organization that prioritizes chronological order. A display of more than a thousand objects – ceramic vessels, textiles, metal objects, paintings, sculptures, furniture, silverwork, photographs, and works on paper – offers the public a view – one among many possible views – of the history of art in Peru, a history of ruptures and continuities that reflects the complex social, political, and ideological processes that have occurred over the span of nearly three thousand years. Despite not having been originally created as “works of art”, the Pre-Hispanic collections constitute the necessary beginning of a Peruvian history of art [Fig. 1]. Otherwise, how would we understand, for example, the continuities of the Pre-Hispanic past with early colonial art – which materialized in objects like *queros* (drinking cups) or *tupus* (silver pins), which were probably not made as works of art either, and that were also made well into the twentieth century³ – or the effect of the Andean past on photography and on the early twentieth-century artists who endeavored to envision a national art?⁴

In such a setting, the question arises of how an object of Pre-Hispanic facture should be studied, interpreted, and presented in a museum. As an archaeological object or as a work of art? Or as both? Even though it was not conceived as either one or the other? In what follows in this essay, I explore the different ways that the

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Excerpt from the introductory text to the Pre-Columbian section of the new permanent galleries of the Museo de Arte de Lima. The collections of museums like the MALI grew from the activities of individuals who assembled important collections of archaeological objects during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. See also: Cecilia Pardo (ed.), *Guía MALI*, Lima 2016.

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Ricardo Kusunoki, *Identidad andina. Memoria e invención*, in: Pardo, *Guía MALI*, 152–155.

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Ricardo Kusunoki and Luis Eduardo Wuffarden (eds.), *Arte moderno. Colección del Museo de Arte de Lima*, Lima 2014, 140–143.



[Fig. 1]

Permanent gallery installation of Pre-Columbian art in the Museo de Arte de Lima, 2015.
Archivo Institucional, Museo de Arte de Lima. Photograph by Edi Hirose.

Pre-Hispanic can enter into curatorial work within art museums. Following a brief reflection on the aesthetic/archaeological opposition, and the place that objects produced by Pre-Hispanic Andean societies occupy within museums, I present a series of case studies – in the form of research and exhibition projects – that have depended on the cooperative coexistence (*convivencia*) of two disciplines, archaeology and art history, from a curatorial standpoint. I focus on the renovation of the permanent galleries of the MALI but also discuss a series of exhibition and publication projects undertaken within that institution in recent years.

II. The Debate between Anthropology and Art History

The debate between art and anthropology (and archaeology as a discipline derived from anthropology⁵) has been the subject of various studies in recent decades. Some begin from the premise that archaeologists classify objects by use, whereas art historians classify them by aesthetic value, school, or style. Many scholars question, nevertheless, whether Pre-Columbian objects made within a specific historical and geographic context should be inscribed within the modern idea of “fine arts” or “art history”, as such, which emerged toward the end of the eighteenth century in Europe.⁶ That ancient Andean societies did not have a word for the modern concept of “art” does not negate the fact that, behind the Pre-Hispanic objects that are exhibited in museums, there exists a clear sense of the aesthetic, similar to our current perception of beauty, in these works – objects of undeniable artistic quality and exceptional skill that reveal the great mastery achieved by those who made them.

Art collecting – a practice that took shape with the appearance of European cabinets of curiosities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and later with the formation of the great encyclopedic museums of the nineteenth century – defined views of non-Western art, the category within which ancient Andean civilizations and their material culture were placed.⁷ Without writing systems, the ancient history of the New World seemed to lack sources for its study and because of that it was not considered to be part of “history”. It was then, as several studies have shown, that the ancient societies of the Americas became the subjects of other disciplines like the natural

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In the North American academy, Americanist archaeology is usually included within the academic programs of departments of anthropology, as opposed to the university program in Peru (e.g., Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú) where archaeology is taught within humanities.

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James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Cambridge, MA 1988, 189.

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Ibid.

sciences or geology.⁸ The research methods and associated practices of the natural sciences were thus applied to the incipient study of archaeology. In fact, this was what brought European travelers – many of them today considered to be the pioneers of Andean archaeology – to study the Andean past. Such was the case, for example, for Wilhelm Reiss and Alphonse Stübel whose work was in great part defined by their interest in geology.⁹

The absence of precise research methods for the interpretation and presentation of the culture of Pre-Columbian societies persisted well into the nineteenth century. The museums that exhibited this material classified these objects as part of the natural sciences. As James Clifford has described, around 1900, non-Western objects were generally regarded either as primitive art or as ethnographic specimens. Prior to the modernist revolution associated with visual artists like Picasso, and the birth of cultural anthropology led by Boas and Malinowski, these objects were seen as antiquities, exotic curiosities, or simply as evidence of “early man”.¹⁰ With the rise of modernism, in the twentieth century, objects that until then had been considered “fetishes” began to be interpreted as part of material culture. It was then that the distinction between the aesthetic and the anthropological (or archaeological) gained greater emphasis. In art museums and galleries, non-Western objects were exhibited only for their aesthetic qualities, while in ethnographic museums they were represented within a broader cultural context.

In an example with parallels to the local context in Peru, Clifford described the case of the treatment of African tribal objects in an exhibition organized by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) of New York in 1984 under the title “*Primitivism*” in *20th Century Art. Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, in which the interpretation of the object as a work of art involved excluding its cultural context. As the text placed at the entrance to the exhibition explicitly stated, consideration of context was the job of anthropologists.¹¹ If one follows this line of thought, the cultural context is not required for aesthetic appreciation since the work of art would be universally recognizable. What was pleasing to the eyes of Picasso was good enough for MoMA. In this system of representation, the object was

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Stefanie Gänger, Philip Kohl, and Irina Podgorny, Introduction. Nature in the Making of Archaeology in the Americas, in: Philip L. Kohl, Irina Podgorny, and Stefanie Gänger (eds.), *Nature and Antiquities. The Making of Archaeology in the Americas*, Tucson, AZ 2014, 3–20; Joanne Pillsbury, Finding the Ancient in the Andes. *Archaeology and Geology, 1850–1890*, in: Kohl, Podgorny, and Gänger, *Nature and Antiquities*, 48–68.

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Pillsbury, Finding the Ancient in the Andes; see also Johann Reiss and Alphonse Stübel, *The Necropolis of Ancon in Peru. A Contribution to Our Knowledge of the Culture and Industries of the Empire of the Incas*, Berlin 1880–1887.

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Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 197.

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Ibid., 189.

extracted from its environment, to move freely through a world of museums, markets, and collectors.

In Peru, in academia as well as in museums, Pre-Hispanic collections have generally been studied from the discipline of archaeology rather than art history.¹² These studies have privileged the iconographic study of works without archaeological context over analysis of the objects themselves as relevant sources of information. The latter type of reading has been much more present in the North American tradition.

In the 1960s, influenced by the primitivist vision of European modernism, the new Instituto de Arte Contemporáneo (IAC) of Lima organized a series of exhibitions of Pre-Columbian art. In a review of the show *Pinturas del Perú precolombino*, the critic Juan Acha credited modern art with “having the great merit to have rescued” primitive art “from archaeology and ethnology, where it was a simple document, and from the *bric-à-brac* where it was considered curiosity and exoticism, to definitively restore to it all of its aesthetic and human dignity”.¹³ In these same years, the Peruvian artist Fernando de Szyszlo, whose professional career would unfold within the IAC, referred in this context to the “erroneous value judgement of the artistic quality” of Chancay art “that we have inherited from archaeologists who used obsolete standards of critique”. Szyszlo insisted that it was only due to the recent developments in art in the twentieth century that “so-called primitive art has been given the importance that it deserves”.¹⁴ The example of Chancay is interesting because it perfectly illustrates this dichotomy, which we now question, of the different contrasting values that the discourses of archaeology and those of the art world and art collecting assigned to the Pre-Hispanic past.

With a few exceptions, curatorial work has continued to contribute to the reinforcement of this apparent opposition, exhibiting the object either from a strictly formalist perspective or from one that is purely archaeological. I propose that we venture to cre-

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Although some archaeology programs in Peru include modules on iconographic analysis for the study of ancient objects, courses on art historical theory and methods are absent.

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“Hoy, el arte primitivo encuéntrase ya completamente desagraviado de aquel injusto menosprecio estético que aún por desgracia, es dable advertir en mentes rezagadas o en sensibilidades adormecidas por los prejuicios excluyentes del naturalismo greco-romano. Y el arte moderno tiene el gran mérito de haberlo rescatado de la arqueología y etnología, donde era un simple documento, y de los ‘bric-a-brac’ donde era curiosidad y exotismo, para restituirle definitivamente toda su dignidad estética y humana.” Juan W. Acha, *Pinturas del Perú precolombino*, in: *Cultura Peruana* 21/155–156, 1961, n.p.

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“Cualquier propósito de evaluación de la Cultura Chancay desde el punto de vista artístico tiene que partir necesariamente de un intento de aclaración de algunos conceptos que han dificultado su apreciación. El primero de ellos es un errado juicio de valor sobre su calidad artística que nos fue legado por los arqueólogos que [...] usaron patrones de crítica obsoletos. Es necesario también tener presente que la tardía valoración del arte Chancay se debe a que ha sido solamente durante este siglo, y gracias a las transformaciones que ha sufrido el arte y, consecuentemente, la crítica de arte, que se ha puesto en valor, y se le ha dado la importancia que merece, el llamado arte primitivo.” Fernando de Szyszlo, *Miradas furtivas. Antología de textos 1955–1996*, Lima 1996, 1.

ate narratives within museums that start with the objects but that incorporate academic research, including information that can be obtained or inferred from known archaeological contexts whenever possible.

III. The Context in Peru

In Peru, the creation of the collections that allowed for the formation of a memory of the past had to start from private collections and isolated objects that have shaped the public collections of today. Although this process began at the end of the nineteenth century, it did not succeed in shaping an institutional museum framework until well into the twentieth century. The Museo Nacional, for example, founded through the individual efforts of Mariano Eduardo de Rivero, would be a fragile and under-funded institution for decades.¹⁵ In the face of this institutional frailty, the well-intentioned accounts that travelers and scientists like Humboldt, Markham, Squier, Banelier, or Raimondi disseminated about Peru unfortunately ignited a sudden interest among both local and foreign collectors in the Peruvian past and the objects that represented it.¹⁶ Commercialization of archaeological objects thus began, leading to the departure of very important collections destined for the United States and Europe. The War of the Pacific, a tragic episode that brought with it the plundering of the Museo Nacional, as well as its temporary closure and suspension of the development of its collections, would leave a museal vacuum that seemed insurmountable. It was in this context that private initiatives emerged to build the public collections of the nation. For example, the history of the collection of Víctor Larco Herrera, which would end up being acquired by the state in 1924, reveals the important role that individuals' actions had in the creation of collections.¹⁷ This would also be the final destination of the collection of the politician and intellectual Javier Prado Ugarteche (Lima, 1871–1921), integrated years later into the recently founded MALI. It was through these individual efforts, marked by the personal vision of each collector, that it gradually became possible to broaden access to the vestiges of the past and outline a collective vision for history in Peru – an important but, no doubt, slanted vision.¹⁸

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Julio C. Tello and Toribio Mejía Xesspe, *Historia de los museos nacionales del Perú, 1822–1946*, in: *Arqueológicas* 10, 1967, 1–268.

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Pascal Riviale, *Un siècle d'archéologie française au Pérou (1821–1914)*, Paris 1996.

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Larco Herrera acquired collections from the Castillo and Estrada families of Chiclayo, the Black family of Chiquitoy, the Dieguez, Kosmann, and Neira families of Pacasmayo, and the Baglieto, Cossío, Urquiaga, and Vélez López families of Trujillo. See Tello and Mejía Xesspe, *Historia de los museos nacionales del Perú*, 119.

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For more information on the history of collecting in Peru, see Cecilia Pardo, *De lo privado a lo público. La formación de colecciones precolombinas en el MALI*, in: *De Cupisnique a los*

The case of the MALI is revealing in this context. Of the 17,000 works that today constitute the collections of the MALI, at least 7,000 form part of the Memoria Prado, the collection created at the beginning of the twentieth century by Javier Prado Ugarteche. Over the course of his law career at the Universidad de San Marcos, Prado began intense political and intellectual activities that would make him one of the most influential people in the country.¹⁹ His collection was born of the desire to bring together objects that could encompass the history of Peru and represent it through its principal periods, styles, and civilizations.²⁰ Prado created his own museum that was a product of his intellectual vocation, his interest in the past, but also his concern for contemporary Peru. His proposal involved integrating the Pre-Columbian past into narratives about the history of Peruvian art in various ways. This contribution – rarely explicitly recognized as such – set the tone for the collecting project of the museum and still defines the curatorial work of the MALI today. I would like to thus reflect here on how we worked as an art museum to construct narratives informed by the objects themselves – pieces of great artistic quality – that generally lack archaeological context but that allowed us to develop interpretations informed by archaeological research and, at the same time, that served to establish trans-historical dialogues with works from other moments and traditions that are represented in the collection.

IV. Three Exhibitions

Temporary exhibitions allowed us the opportunity to create new forms of presenting and sharing Pre-Columbian art. Such was the case with shows like *Modelando el mundo. Imágenes de la arquitectura precolombina* (Modeling the World. Images of Pre-Columbian Architecture), an exhibition that took place in the temporary galleries of the museum between October 2011 and February 2012. The concept began as an exploration of architectural images in the Pre-Hispanic world, ideas about their function, and whether they were understood as real or ideal representations of buildings, plazas, residences, and funerary chambers or as amplified and stylized versions of ceremonial constructions. These images in ceramic, stone, and other media juxtaposed the concrete reality of the monument and its representation with the idealized conception of space, scale, and geographic surroundings. At the same time, they led to consideration of their relationships with the people who took these objects with them to the great beyond, and of the rituals depicted in those spaces.

incas. El arte del valle de Jequetepeque (exh. cat. Lima, Museo de Arte de Lima), ed. by Luis Jaime Castillo and Cecilia Pardo, Lima 2009, 27–33.

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Felipe Portocarrero, *El Imperio Prado. 1890–1970*, Lima 2007, 103.

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Pedro Morales de la Torre, Javier Prado. Evocador de la castiza tradición limeña, in: *Mercuro Peruano* 7/42, 1921, 278–279.

The exhibition and the catalogue that accompanied it – which was born from a research project led by scholars in the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú and an international symposium that took place in June 2010 that brought together various specialists on the subject – presented a review of the most significant pieces that refer to architecture. The show addressed these works' functionality and relevance as objects of ceremonial use, or as idealized prototypes for construction, from the foundation of interdisciplinary study wherein architecture, archaeology, and art history converged. It called attention to those abstract elements of art that demonstrate ties to architecture, in the end questioning the use of these objects as maquettes or precise models for the architect's reference, leading to a discussion that resulted in ascribing a principally symbolic intent to these works. The exhibition included objects from the MALI and various other museums such as the Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú (MNAAHP), the Museo Larco, the Museo Amano, and pieces that were recovered in the archaeological excavations of research projects at sites including Sipán, San José de Moro, and Huaca de la Luna.²¹

The show was designed along three principal lines. The first was a panoramic vision of architectural representations across time from Chavín to the Incas. Here the interpretation focused on the object and on the architectural traits that characterized each period. The second line presented cases related to archaeological discoveries on Peru's north coast, which related objects with the places where they were found. This included the example of the wooden Chimú maquette found within the excavations of the earlier Moche temple of Huaca de la Luna, together with a plan of a Chimú palace in Chan Chan, which allowed for explanation of the possible formal relationship between the object and the architecture. The clay maquettes from the Moche cemetery of San José de Moro offered a similar case where it was possible to hypothesize that the objects were closely tied to the individuals who were buried in the tombs in which they were found. Following the work of art historian Juliet Wiersema,²² the exhibition included a selection of bottles that allowed comparisons between ceramic representations and buildings at full scale. A third line of the exhibition was based on a more formalist perspective, centered on the objects and the processes of abstraction in Pre-Columbian representation. The importance of this project was based in proposing a dialogue across three disciplines, each with its own methods.

The conservation and *puesta en valor* (site development) project at Castillo de Huarmey took place in 2014, through an agreement with the Proyecto Arqueológico Castillo de Huarmey directed by

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For more information, see *Modelando el mundo. Imágenes de la arquitectura precolombina* (exh. cat. Lima, Museo de Arte de Lima), ed. by Cecilia Pardo, Lima 2011.

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Juliet Wiersema, La relación simbólica entre las representaciones arquitectónicas en las vasijas mochica y su función ritual, in: *Modelando el mundo*, 164–179.

the team of Polish archaeologists Miłosz Giersz, Patrycja Prządka, and Krzysztof Makowski. During the process of conserving a selection of objects recovered from the Wari mausoleum found at that site, located to the north of Lima, we planned an initial show that presented the research-in-progress on this funerary context [Fig. 2].²³ The exhibition *Castillo de Huarmey. El mausoleo imperial wari* (Castillo de Huarmey. The Imperial Wari Mausoleum) was envisioned as a preliminary interpretation of the burial ceremonies of the Wari elite (ca. 600–1000 CE) that also touched on other themes including the social status and political power of this group, the relationship between women and textile production, and the techniques used in various media including metal and wood.

This exhibition was a preliminary exercise of interpretation that allowed us to glimpse the importance of this discovery for Andean archaeology. The potential in having the intact context that was saved from looting marks a high point in our understanding of the tombs of the elite during the Middle Horizon. The discovery also became a platform for the discussion of broader topics within Peruvian archaeology. Wider issues also arose, like the diversity of styles of the Middle Horizon period that were found in one single context and sometimes in a single object, as well as the characteristics of the Wari political presence and the modalities of power that it exercised on the north coast of Peru after the Moche decline around 800 CE.

Within the reconstruction of the mausoleum chamber that was a central component of the exhibition, different sets of objects from the funerary assemblage – jewelry (metal, wood, and bone earspools, necklaces, pectorals, pendants, *tupus*, and rings), weapons (axes, knives, and spear throwers), paraphernalia (lime bottles, rattles, whistles), weaving tools (looms, spindles, spindle whorls, spoons with pigment), and vessels made of ceramic, metal, and carved stone (jars, bottles, flasks, vases, and bowls) – were presented with detailed descriptions and interpretations, arranged as they had been found within the particular setting of the tomb. The group of earspools in the exhibition was presented two ways: in a re-creation based on how they would have been worn by the Wari women and as individual objects with explanations of each one. For example, a pair of gold and silver ear ornaments that were embossed with the image of a human figure with an appendage emerging from the nose was placed in comparison to another image reproduced from a Wari glove now in the Brooklyn Museum in New

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In September 2012, the Proyecto de Investigación Arqueológica Castillo de Huarmey (PIACH) announced one of the most important archaeological discoveries of recent years. They uncovered a mausoleum of the highest Wari elite (600–1000 CE), constructed upon a ridge of bedrock at Castillo de Huarmey, an archaeological site located in the region of Ancash. The funerary chamber contained more than sixty mummy bundles – the great majority of whom were women – and more than 1,300 objects of exceptional wealth that formed part of the ceremonial assemblage and mortuary offerings.



[Fig. 2]
View of the exhibition *Castillo de Huarmey*, organized by the Museo de Arte de Lima, 2014.
Archivo Institucional, Museo de Arte de Lima. Photograph by Daniel Giannoni.

York.²⁴ Similarly, a group of openwork carved wooden ear spools was exhibited together with a lithograph of very similar pieces published by Reiss and Stübel 150 years prior.²⁵

This show also allowed us to give context to other collections, for example the group of textiles in the MNAHP that Heiko Prümers excavated at Castillo de Huarney in the 1980s;²⁶ a selection of the Amano collection, which its namesake Yoshitaro Amano had recovered at the site during the 1970s; and the illustrations that Julio C. Tello had made of the site during one of his expeditions in 1919.²⁷

The third exhibition and publication project – *Moche y sus vecinos. Reconstruyendo identidades* (Moche and Their Neighbors. Reconstructing Identities) – which originated in the MALI and was presented between April and August of 2016 – was designed to give a wider audience access to advances in research produced within the academic field. Led by Peruvian archaeologist Julio Rucabado,²⁸ the show [Fig. 3] presented a selection of images associated with Moche art that conveyed the specific relationships that this culture had entered into with neighboring communities, principally from the mountains. This is the case of groups that migrated from the Recuay, Cajamarca, or Huamachuco regions toward the milder environment of the upper Moche and Chicama Valleys at the beginning of the Early Intermediate Period (ca. 100–300 CE). Through a set of symbols and visual narratives manifested in pieces from collections and archaeological discoveries, the show sought to convey the ideas developed by the Moche around the formation of their collective identity, which included both conflict and negotiation with their neighbors

Rucabado's work was supported by the interdisciplinary studies of a group of specialists who studied the concept of the foreigner in Moche art and society from different research perspectives.²⁹

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Castillo de Huarney. *El mausoleo imperial wari* (exh. cat. Lima, Museo de Arte de Lima), ed. by Milosz Giersz and Cecilia Pardo, Lima 2014, 156–157.

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Ibid., 155.

26

Heiko Prümers, “El Castillo” de Huarney. Una plataforma funeraria del Horizonte Medio, in: *Boletín de Arqueología PUCP* 4, 2000, 289–312.

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Eugenio Yacovleff, Informe acerca del viaje a Huarney III-1930, Box 18, Grupo Huaylas, fols. 601–620, Archivo Julio C. Tello, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima. For more information on this project, see Castillo de Huarney, 27.

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See also Julio Rucabado Yong, Los otros, los “no-moche”. Reflexiones en torno a la formación y representación de identidades colectivas, in: Marco Curatola Petrocchi, Cécile Michaud, Joanne Pillsbury, and Lisa Trever (eds.), *El arte antes de la historia. Para una historia del arte andino antiguo*, Lima 2020, 259–290.

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The project's collaborators were Luis Jaime Castillo Butters (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú), Solsiré Cusicanqui (Harvard University), George Lau (University of East Anglia, Norwich), Fred Longstaffe (University of Western Ontario), J. Marla Toyne (Uni-



[Fig. 3]

View of the exhibition *Moche y sus vecinos*, organized by the Museo de Arte de Lima, 2016.
Archivo Institucional, Museo de Arte de Lima. Photograph by Edi Hirose.

From those perspectives, the exhibition developed four topics that determined the spaces of the galleries: battles between Moche and non-Moche, the relationship between Moche and Recuay, the presence of Cajamarca in Moche iconography, and images that refer to a space that was foreign, exotic, and possibly associated with the tropical forests and the Amazon. The project prioritized the study of images with the support of archaeological data, an approach that characterizes the research that Rucabado has carried out with archaeologist Brian Billman in the middle Moche Valley, as well as the discovery of Cajamarca vessels in coastal sites like Huaca de la Luna and San José de Moro.³⁰

The opportunity to develop a project like this, that embraced understudied topics in Andean archaeology, enabled us to open new windows of interpretation on certain pieces. Such was the case, for example, with a Recuay style stone object belonging to the MALI that formed part of the Javier Prado collection and that had no specific information about its origins (provenience). Out of context, there was little that could be said about this piece – a representation in carved stone of a seated human figure that wore a headdress of human hands and that seemed to be associated with the Recuay culture. In the process of selecting works for the exhibition, we identified the piece in the museum collection and noticed that the figure was carrying something on its back but it was difficult to make out because of conservation problems. Thanks to Rucabado's research, it was finally possible to associate the object on the figure's back with the bags that appeared in scenes in Moche art and that, according to various scholars, were related to foreign groups. Thus, in the context of the museographic proposal, this object served as a linchpin to establish the link between the theme of ritual battles and the Recuay culture. This case revealed the importance of tying curatorial work to research carried out in the academic sphere.

V. 3000 Years of Art in Peru. The Permanent Galleries of the MALI

Representation of the Pre-Hispanic in an institution like the MALI necessarily depends on the nature of the collections and the manner in which they were formed. The majority of the museum's Pre-Columbian pieces was brought together by Javier Prado at the beginning of the twentieth century, when scientific archaeology was just taking its first steps in Peru.³¹ As happened with other collections formed during the same era, the objects lack information about

versity of Central Florida), Lisa Trever (University of California, Berkeley), Santiago Uceda (Universidad Nacional de Trujillo), John Verano (Tulane University), and Christine White (Tulane University).

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Moche y sus vecinos. Reconstruyendo identidades (exh. cat. Lima, Museo de Arte de Lima), ed. by Cecilia Pardo and Julio Rucabado, Lima 2016.

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For more information on the history of collecting in Peru, see Pardo, *De lo privado a lo público*. See also Natalia Majluf, *Working from Objects*. Andean Studies, Museums, and Research, in: *Res. Anthropology and Aesthetics* 52, 2007, 65–72.

their archaeological provenience or precise context. For the same reasons, then, approaching the curatorial plans for the new permanent galleries of the MALI posed a particularly difficult challenge.³²

With only eight of the thirty-four rooms to represent the entire history of Peruvian art before the European conquest, the project had to prioritize the histories that had the greatest strengths in the museum's collections. Our desire to create what Jaime Cuadriello – art historian in the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México – calls “discursos intertextuales” led to the creation of specific discourses within broader narratives.³³ Such is the case, for example, in the vitrines on representations of architecture, within the gallery dedicated to “Espacio y entorno” (Space and Environment), which developed out of the framework of the *Modelando el mundo* exhibition. In one vitrine, objects of various styles share a text on the possible function of these representations, whereas another displays a series of *yupanas* and discusses the possible uses of these objects for counting or as synthetic representations of buildings [Fig. 4].

A similar case was a section that forms part of the museum's textile gallery. Conceived of as a rotating exhibition space, given the fragility of the medium, the gallery was designed to convey three ideas: textiles as material supports of images and symbolic messages, as objects produced for death, and as distinctive elements of identity. In one subsection – as another mode of intertextual discourse – we exhibited a portion of the burial assemblage from the Middle Horizon funerary context at the site of Cerro de Oro in the Cañete Valley. This material served as the basis for a temporary exhibition that emerged out of a conservation and *puesta en valor* project of the discovery and the site itself.³⁴ This was also an opportunity to incorporate objects into the installation from collections of the MALI, the MNAHP, and from Huaca Malena, all of which may have come from the same original location.

A small section of the permanent galleries was dedicated to displaying a group of vitrines with objects that demonstrate designs that reveal the richness of Pre-Columbian art, composed of geometric motifs and abstractions that form decorative patterns. Although from a contemporary perspective we might understand these elements in purely formal terms, they generally result from

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After extensive renovation, the new permanent galleries of the MALI opened to the public in the Palacio de la Exposición at the end of 2015.

³³

Personal communication to the author, 2015.

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Located on the top of a hill that marks entry to the Cañete Valley, Cerro de Oro dominated the landscape of the south-central coast of Peru for about a thousand years (550–1500 CE). Archaeological research undertaken in recent years has created a clearer picture of the possible nature of Cerro de Oro: a Pre-Hispanic city that played an important role in a great sphere of regional interaction over the span of a millennium. The exhibition presented a selection of the findings of the research carried out in Cerro de Oro in the last years through a set of objects from the Proyecto Arqueológico de Cerro de Oro (PACO), led by archaeologist Francesca Fernandini, and from public collections.



[Fig. 4]
Permanent gallery installation of “Espacio y entorno” in the Museo de Arte de Lima, 2015.
Archivo Institucional, Museo de Arte de Lima. Photograph by Edi Hirose.

the extreme stylization of recognizable motifs. Icons like waves, crosses, steps, and triangles can thus be interpreted both as part of a symbolic language that expresses the cosmography of these societies, and as forms that were motivated by an aesthetic program. Here, more than in other examples, the installation expressed the virtues of the possible union of the two disciplines of anthropology and art history.

A dominant component of the Pre-Columbian section was the gallery dedicated to the north coast of Peru. The contents of that gallery were based on a research project that the museum began in 2007 and that led to the museum's acquisition of part of the collection created by Oscar Rodríguez Razzetto in the Jequetepeque Valley. This acquisition of seventy-three pieces enriched the small collection of Cupisnique, Moche, Lambayeque, and Chimú vessels already in the MALI collections. In the early twentieth century, when Prado formed his Pre-Hispanic collection, Nasca archaeology was booming, which could explain why he had greater access to collections like Nasca coming from the south coast than from the north coast. It has been possible to correct this imbalance in the original Memoria Prado with the acquisitions that have been made since the museum's foundation. In fact, thanks to the generosity of Petrus and Verónica Fernandini, the collection acquired from the family of Rodríguez Razzetto today constitutes one of the central pillars of the archaeological collection of the museum.

The transition from the Pre-Hispanic to colonial galleries was planned as a radical break: one case contains Inca pieces and a group of aryballos that closes the section, followed immediately by a European canvas that depicts the Virgin and Child, a work by the Italian painter Mateo Pérez de Alessio that dates to the early seventeenth century. This abrupt transition reflects the vision of art historian George Kubler, who emphasized the rupture that the Conquest signified, writing that "very few native art forms have so far survived this wreck".³⁵ Despite this visual shock, however, certain parallel continuities and colonial reinventions are suggested in the cases that exhibit groups of objects like *queros*, *pacchas* (libation vessels), *tupus*, and textiles in the gallery that explores the memory of the Pre-Hispanic past in early colonial art.

The installation suggested that even though there are traditions that have managed to survive, the visual culture has been largely run over, destroyed, and replaced by a new culture. The tour through the colonial, republican, modern, and contemporary collections is marked by galleries or vitrines that explore some moments or traditions in which artists turned their gaze to the Pre-Columbian past. This is the case in the gallery "Modelos para un arte nacional", which documents the rise of aesthetic nationalism in the early twentieth century, when artists like Elena Izcue, Camilo Blas, Antonino Espinosa Saldaña, and Manuel Piqueras Cotoí began to revalorize

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George Kubler, *The Shape of Time. Remarks on the History of Things*, New Haven, CT 1962, 107.

Pre-Columbian art as a source of inspiration for contemporary art. In this way, Pre-Columbian production becomes a counterpoint that allows visitors to imagine how the past is continuously recreated through time.

VI. Conclusion

In these curatorial projects at the MALI, we sought to work from the objects themselves, ascribing new readings to them. Certainly, when working with collections in art museums we are dealing with pieces of great artistic value, in which the mastery achieved by those who created them is revealed. But it is necessary to go beyond skill or artistic excellence, to comprehend the place that these objects occupied within the Pre-Columbian world. Unlike the modern artists who limited their understanding of the artistic to the formal, we have tried to return these objects to their social and cultural context. This does not contradict but rather emphasizes their aesthetic value. We have been finding our own way to approach them and, through them, the societies that created them. This approach leaves aside the old, false opposition between art and archaeology, by allowing the formation of projects that demonstrate that the *convivencia* of both disciplines is not only possible, but necessary.

Within the space of the art museum, the archaeological object can be shown at once as a ritual object, as a funerary offering, and as a work of art. Beyond the examples discussed here, there are many ways in which disciplines can be joined, through accessible content for the publics that visit museums, allowing objects to generate histories and at the same time transmit experiences. If not for the purpose of producing and sharing knowledge in spaces like museums and universities, there is no use in arguing about the quarrel – hopefully now obsolete – between archaeology and the history of art.

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