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Painting The Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics Of The Classic Period (Duke University Museum Of Art)



Synopsis

Lavishly illustrated with nearly 400 color images, *Painting the Maya Universe* is the most thorough study and brilliant display of Classic Maya ceramic painting yet published. Building on twenty years of research and debate, Dorie Reents-Budet and her collaborators Joseph W. Ball, Ronald L. Bishop, Virginia M. Fields, and Barbara MacLeod bring together many perspectives, including the art historical, archaeological, epigraphical, and ethnohistorical, to examine one of the world's great but overlooked painting traditions. With an emphasis on sixth- to eighth-century pottery featuring both pictorial and hieroglyphic imagery, *Painting the Maya Universe* presents an extraordinary exploration of the cultural roles and meanings of these Guatemalan, Belizean, and Mexican elite painted ceramics. Maya pottery is discussed both in aesthetic terms and for the important information it reveals about Maya society, artistry, politics, history, religion, and ritual. The range of ceramic painting styles developed during this period is also presented and defined in detail. *Painting the Maya Universe* is the first publication to present a definitive translation of the hieroglyphic texts painted on these objects. With many glyphs deciphered here for the first time, this analysis reveals much about how these vessels were perceived and used by the Maya, their owners' names, and, in several cases, the names of the artists who created them. This information is combined with archaeological and other data, including nuclear chemical analyses, to correlate painting styles with specific Maya sites. Published in conjunction with Duke University Museum of Art and an exhibition touring the United States, *Painting the Maya Universe* presents an astonishing visual record as well as a monumental scholarly achievement. With photographs by Justin Kerr, the foremost photographer of pre-Columbian art, it includes over 90 unique full-color rollout photographs, each showing the entire surface of an object in a single frame. The book also addresses the questions and controversy regarding the loss of information that occurs when objects are removed from their archaeological context to become part of public and private collections. *Painting the Maya Universe* will energize discussion of Maya pottery, hieroglyphic texts, and iconography. Its photographs, a lasting resource on this great painting tradition, will stimulate and delight the eye. It is a breakthrough in art history and Latin American scholarship that will enrich general readers and scholars alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've read much of what has been written about Mayan ceramics and can say with confidence that this is the best book on the subject ever written. The essays in it, by top professionals, discuss the forms and functions of the ceramics, the meaning of their calligraphy, their basic themes and the places particular styles of ceramics come from. Indeed, if you read it carefully and more than once, you too will be able to decipher the principal inscriptions even on pots that are not in the book.

There are hundreds of full-color photographs of Mayan ceramic vases and plates in this book. These vases are decorated with pictures of formed the greatest Pre-Columbian civilization. These ceramics depict Mayan textile design, Mayan hair-dressing, Mayan head-dresses, Mayan ceramics (within the ceramic paintings), Mayan concepts of design and of the other worlds below this one. From them we learn of Mayan myth, Mayan ritual, Mayan daily life, and Mayan art. Leaving aside the great monumental art of sculpture and stucco that adorned major structures, leaving aside the structures themselves, and giving credit for a host of varieties of artistic representations ranging from the Tsimshian to the Moche... I think it is an absolute fact that the art that appears on Mayan ceramics is the best that America ever created prior to Columbus and arguably the best... period. This book discusses, describes, depicts and defends that incredible artistic legacy better than any other ever did.

This is one of the finest books about the ancient Maya ever written, period. It's a bit dated now, but no one has come up with anything to replace it, in the couple of decades since it was written. It's a picture book of Mayan ceramic paintings and writings, in full glorious color, with scholarly essays on what the ceramics say and what they mean, and its scholarship is still relevant today. This book groups ceramics by type (vases, plates, bowls, etc.) and subject matter (animals and nature,

supernatural, court scenes, etc.) and explores them both broadly and in depth. I've owned a copy of this book for twenty years, and it is in no danger of being unseated from my shelf. There is simply no other collection of ceramic photos anywhere near this quality or depth. The scholarship is intense; you can explore it hit-and-miss or really sink your teeth in for a fuller understanding of what the Maya were up to with their ceramics, how they used these objects in their daily lives and where they were found, in tombs or garbage heaps or ceremonial caches next to temples and palaces. It is very rare that a work of scholarship remains this outstanding for this long. If you're into the Maya Indians and are wondering if you should own a copy of Painting the Maya Universe, wonder no longer: just get it. As a side note, this book is a little on the fragile side. You have to take care of it well, or it will fall apart (as one copy did on me). Any copy you get these days will be old and probably used, so take good care of it!

This handsome book covers a wide range of Maya ceramic imagery, and is filled with stunning photographs. The imagery is also broken down by category, and is supplemented with explanations of glyphs. The accessible text that explores the mythology, culture, iconography, and hieroglyphics on and related to the ceramics. The information is thorough without being overly specialized.

I expected another fluff piece catalogue book leaving more questions than info. Not!!! Answered questions I didn't know I had. I am passionate about maya art and this is the best book of all

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