



2021 Eagle Hill Institute Online Natural History Seminars

office@eaglehill.us 207.546.2821 ext. 4 www.eaglehill.us

Perceptions of Flora and Fauna in Ancient Central and South American Art and Culture

Shelley Burian, Ph.D.

February 2nd – February 16th, 2020

Plants and animals have played a central role in the lives of the indigenous peoples in the Americas for thousands of years not only as sources for subsistence and goods production but as spiritual advisors who could pass on knowledge, notably about healing, to humans. Due to this importance, plants and animals feature prominently in the art of ancient cultures and serve as the primary source of information on their place in societies whose method of communication was visual rather than written. This particularly true within the cultures of ancient South and Central America, such as the Inka, Nasca, Wari, Tiwanaku, Guna, and Greater Nicoya, which have left us with a detailed record of their relationship with the natural world through their masterful ceramics, metalwork, stone sculpture, and textiles.

This course will provide a comprehensive introduction to the relationships between humans and the natural world throughout history in South and Central America using collection high-resolution digital photographs and videography of artwork held in prominent museum collections throughout the world, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Michael C. Carlos Museum, the Penn Museum, and the British Museum. Each session will focus on two cultures or related cultural groups with an overview of their history and cultural practices followed by an in-depth presentation and discussion of the ways each culture represented and understood the flora and fauna of local environments. While this is a Zoom platform lecture-style course, there will also be opportunities for discussion of course material. There will be one assignment to allow students to practice the visual analysis techniques presented in the course. Each student will select an object in the Ancient American Art collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the Michael C. Carlos Museum that appeals to them and present it to the class in a five-minute presentation.

Scheduling Details

Feb. 2, Feb. 4, Feb. 9, Feb. 11, and Feb. 16
7PM – 9PM ET

Participants need to have a Zoom account (<https://zoom.us> sign up for zoom is free). You will receive a secure link to join the instructor before each class. Classes will be recorded so participants can review them or make up missed ones.

For more information regarding seminar costs and registration please visit:
<https://www.eaglehill.us/programs/sems-online/general-info.shtml>

About the Instructor

Dr. Shelley Burian is a recent graduate of Emory University's Art History Ph.D. program specializing in the Art of the Ancient Americas and currently working as an independent scholar and curator. Her research focuses on the technical and cultural connections between PreColumbian textiles and textiles made during the period of Spanish colonization in Bolivia. She has taught both introductory art history courses and a course on the art of ancient South and Central America at Emory University and has presented her research at national and international conferences such as the Northeast Conference on Andean and Amazonian Archaeology and Ethnohistory and International Conference on Pre-Columbian Textiles. Together with Rebecca Stone, emeritus curator of Art of the Ancient Americas at the Michael C. Carlos Museum, she curated the 2017-2018 exhibition *Threads of Time: Tradition and Change in Indigenous American Textiles*.

Optional texts (Book purchase not required)

Art of the Andes: From Chavín to Inca by Rebecca Stone (2012)

The Jaguar Within: Shamanic Trance in Ancient Central and South American Art by Rebecca Stone (2011)

Ancient People of the Andes by Michael Malpass (2016)

