



PACIFIC STANDARD TIME: LA/LA

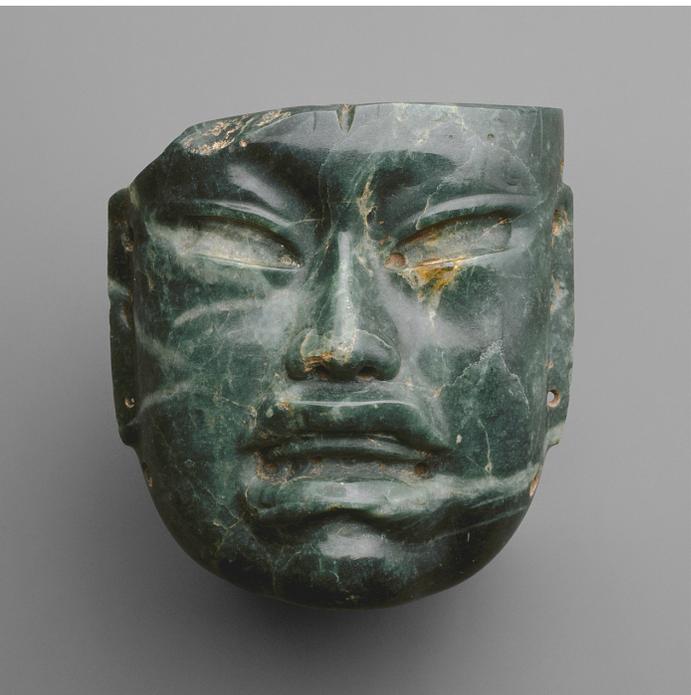
GOLDEN KINGDOMS: LUXURY AND LEGACY IN THE ANCIENT AMERICAS

9/15/17 - 1/22/18

J. Paul Getty Museum

Getty Center

Exhibitions Pavilion



Golden Kingdoms: Luxury and Legacy in the Ancient Americas is a major international loan exhibition featuring some 300 works of art rarely or never-before seen in the United States. The exhibition traces the development of gold working and other luxury arts in the Americas from the earliest times until the arrival of Europeans in the early sixteenth century. Featuring spectacular works from recent excavations in Peru, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Mexico, this exhibition focuses on specific places and times—crucibles of innovation—where artistic exchange, rivalry, and creativity led to the production of some of the greatest works of art known from the ancient Americas. This exhibition explores not only artistic practices but also the historical, cultural, social, and political conditions in which luxury arts were produced and circulated, alongside their religious meanings and ritual functions. *Golden Kingdoms* will provide new ways of thinking about materials, luxury, and the visual arts in a global perspective.



From the beginning of the sixteenth century, Europeans have considered gold and silver the most valued materials in the Pre-Columbian Americas, fueling the myth of El Dorado, a legendary place of seemingly infinite quantities of precious metals. Yet a growing body of evidence suggests that other materials were of equal or even greater importance in the ancient Americas. Jade, for example, remained deeply ingrained in ancient Mesoamerican society, retaining its status as perhaps the pre-eminently valued

material until the Spanish conquest, even after the introduction of metalworking techniques from South America to Mexico. In the Andes, Spondylus, a colorful shell, was described by the first missionaries as more highly prized by the Inca than gold or silver. This exhibition examines distinction and value in the visual arts from a native perspective: what materials were most prized, and why? In contrast to most exhibitions of Pre-Columbian art in the past, this project is neither a survey of “treasures” from a single modern nation, nor a monographic study of only one culture. Rather, Golden Kingdoms creates new understandings of ancient American art through a thematic exploration of indigenous ideas of value and luxury. Central to the exhibition is the idea of the exchange of materials and ideas across regions and across time: works of great value would often be transported over great distances, or passed down over generations, in both cases attracting new audiences and inspiring new artists. The idea of exchange is also at the intellectual heart of the exhibition catalogue, researched and written by twenty scholars based in the U.S. and Latin America.

Golden Kingdoms will feature remarkable loans from Latin America, Europe, and the United States, including the newly excavated regalia of a powerful priestess from Peru’s north coast, ornaments from the richest unlooted tomb in the ancient Americas, and exquisite offerings recently excavated in the sacred precinct of the Aztec Empire. The exhibition concludes with the arrival of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Among the final works in the exhibition will be objects from the Fisherman’s Treasure, a set of gold ornaments destined for Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor and Spanish king, and marked with a “C,” to indicate the royal fifth, but lost at sea en route to Spain. Remarkably recovered in the 1970s, these final works will be a poignant reminder of the brilliant traditions of ancient America’s lost golden kingdoms.

Following its presentation in Los Angeles at the Getty Museum, the exhibition will travel to New York where it will be shown at The Metropolitan Museum of Art from February 26 to May 28, 2018.

IMAGES:



Left to Right: *Nose Ornament with Spiders*, 1st century B.C.E.-2nd century C.E., Salinar culture. [MEDIUM]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. / *Mask*, 10th – 6th century B.C., Mexico, Mesoamerica, Olmec culture. Jadeite. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Alice K. Bache, 1977. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. / *Earflare, Winged Messenger*, 3rd – 4th century A.D., Peru, Moche culture. Gold, turquoise, sodalite, shell. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift and bequest of Alice K. Bache, 1966, 1977. Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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