



Decoding Mimbres Painting

Resnick Pavilion • October 27, 2018 • 11 am

This exhibition will feature over 50 examples of the finely painted ceramic wares produced by the Mimbres people in the region of southwestern New Mexico between 850 and 1150 CE. The hallmark of Mimbres culture are extraordinary black-and-white ceramic bowls, painted with great ingenuity, dexterity, and precision. The bowls are best known for the variety of animals and plant life that they depict, with a small number of vessels showing human figures engaged in narrative scenes. Alongside these recognizable figurative paintings, Mimbres artists produced seemingly “geometric” designs including zigzags, spirals, checkerboard patterns, and other motifs that appear to have little or no reference to the natural world.

This exhibition will introduce the interpretations of longtime artist and observer, **Tony Berlant**, and scholar **Evan Maurer**. Their views are informed by scholarship and decades studying Mimbres ceramics, as well as the expertise of collaborators from many different disciplines. They present compelling evidence that the so-called Mimbres “geometrics” were not invented motifs without reference to the natural world, but rather abstracted depictions of various hallucinogenic plants—most commonly *Datura*—and the brain-generated shapes manifested in the eye as a result of ingesting these plants (often referred to as “entopic” shapes).

Tony Berlant is a prominent artist, collector, former University teacher, author of numerous articles and catalogues, and a long-standing EAC member. Dr. Evan Maurer is a pre-eminent intellectual, author, and former Director of the MIA.

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