



## **Creatures of the Earth, Sea, and Sky: Painting the Panamanian Cosmos**

**Ahmanson Building, Level 2 • October 21, 2017 • 11 am**



*Plate with Smiling Serpent, Millipede, or Tadpole Creature, Panama, Conte Style, 600–800 CE, gift of Drs. Alan Grinnell and Feelie Lee.*

Join us for EAC's 4<sup>th</sup> program, a special curatorial tour led by Drs. Julia Burtenshaw and Alan Grinnell. ***Creatures of the Earth, Sea, and Sky: Painting the Panamanian Cosmos*** presents a unique opportunity to see a selection of extraordinary painted ceramics from LACMA's collection, supported with loans from Drs. Alan Grinnell and Feelie Lee. The dizzying slip-painting, covering every inch of the surface with strong, unusual colors and forming barely discernible figures, is identifiable only with ancient Panama. The exhibition focuses on depictions of animals, real and mythical, that inhabit the different levels of the cosmos—the sea, earth, and sky. Artists disassembled readable images and merged them into hybrid combinations that are so abstract it makes identification impossible—and probably undesirable. The Panamanian aesthetic deemed naturalism far less important than the significance of unifying diverse cosmological beings into one multilayered image that captured a snapshot of the cosmos as experienced in shamanic vision quests.

As well as featuring ancient ceramics produced for elite burials, a few 20th-century textiles will be on display, showcasing both the ancient and modern fascination with bright colors, bewildering visuals, and the natural world.





A second tour of an EAC funded Mesoamerican exhibition will follow...



***Ancient Bodies: Archaeological Perspectives on Mesoamerican Figurines*** explores the central role of archaeological excavation in situating ancient art and artifacts in a cultural framework. In April 2006, archaeologists discovered a masonry tomb chamber while excavating a grand pyramid in the ancient Maya city of El Perú-Waka', Petén, Guatemala. The tomb, dating to 600–650 CE, contained the remains of a ruler of the city and a rich array of funerary objects selected to accompany the ruler into the afterlife. Among these was an elaborate scene composed of ceramic figurines depicting an ancient funerary ritual. Mourners purposefully arranged the figurines in the tomb to tell a story, perhaps their own story, and archaeological excavation documented and preserved that story. This assemblage of 23 individual figurines is a compelling example of the critical importance of archaeological context, or provenience—the location of an object and its position relative to other objects. While each figurine is singularly expressive, their meaning and power are truly anchored in the story they tell when engaged together as a scene. To see a most informative video go to <http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/ancient-bodies>

**RSVP by Noon• November 20, 2017 to [feelie@ucla](mailto:feelie@ucla)**