

**THEORY, METHOD,
&
THE FUTURE OF PRE-COLUMBIAN ART
HISTORY**

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University of California, Los Angeles

100th Annual Conference of the College Art Association,
Los Angeles, California
February 24, 2010

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Introduction of the session

Cecelia F. Klein—Professor Emerita, Department of Art History, University of California, Los Angeles, has taught and written about Pre-Columbian art history since 1972, when she began her teaching career at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, after earning her doctorate at Columbia University. A specialist in the iconography and political functions of Aztec art and culture, she wrote her dissertation (later published by Garland) on frontality in Pre-Columbian Mexican figural imagery. Since then she has written numerous articles on the Aztec rites of autosacrifice and human sacrifice, as well as the symbolism of human body parts. Long interested in the role of visual images in the construction of an official Aztec ideology of gender, she edited and contributed three essays to *Gender in Prehispanic America* (Dumbarton Oaks, 2001). Klein has long been interested in, and published on, the history and methodologies of her field.

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PAPER¹

Welcome to the open forum on the future of Pre-Columbian Art History. I am Cecelia Klein, the organizer of the session, so let me start this off by explaining why I chose our topic today. As the session statement in your program makes clear, it has been my observation that Pre-Columbian art historians are increasingly specializing in a single geographic area, or so-called “culture,” and sometimes a single, often very short, time period within that culture’s history. This occurs to the near or total exclusion of the myriad other places, peoples, and historical moments covered by the field of “Pre-Columbian art history.” Many younger scholars do not seem to be trying to make their work relevant even to Pre-Columbianists specializing in other areas and periods, and evidence even less interest in engaging the broader issues and theoretical debates within their own discipline. The questions before us today are: Is this a good trend or a bad one? And what is behind it?

I realize that what is happening to Pre-Columbian art history is part of a much larger problem vexing the humanities as a whole. It is also tied to the growing disinterest in deep history in favor of preoccupation with the rapidly changes taking place in the world we are living in today. The study of history in general clearly has a problem. Nonetheless, these factors have not kept the field of colonial Latin American art history from expanding at the same time that Pre-Columbian art history seems to be losing ground. There must be something else at play here. Toward the end of provoking the discussion and debate that I hope will follow, let me propose that it is precisely the distancing of the Pre-Columbian art field from the humanistic roots of the discipline of art history and the theoretical issues that drive

¹ The speakers were allowed to make adjustments to their papers as presented. An audio recording of the panel session is available through the [CAA](#).

it that has lessened Pre-Columbian art history's appeal in recent years. This drift has had practical ramifications, for if I am correct, it also accounts, at least in part, for the reduced number of new faculty positions allotted to Pre-Columbian art history in recent years, for the relatively fewer exhibitions of Pre-Columbian art, and for the increasingly rare appearance of serious articles on a Pre-Columbian art topic in the major disciplinary and humanistic journals.

To fire up debate on this matter, I invited five of the most senior Pre-Columbian art historians in the field briefly to take turns sharing with us some of their thoughts about it. These five have been working in the field long enough to have personally lived through some of the changes it has undergone over the last three to five decades. In addition, I asked Claudia Brittenham, a young scholar starting out her career, to serve as a discussant in the hopes that she will represent her own viewpoint as a younger scholar in the field and thus provide a generational perspective. I realize that those of us who have been around the block a few times are likely to see the situation very differently from the younger generation, and not necessarily for the better. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the cast here includes two speakers who are known primarily as Andeanists, two who are considered Mexicanists, one who is a senior Mayanist, and Claudia who has worked on Maya art as well. Most of them have also worked with both the Pre-Columbian and the Colonial periods as well. In other words, in their work the speakers on the stage with me have breached the invisible barriers that today too often divide the Pre-Columbian from the Colonial world. They have not burrowed into a tiny corner of the Americas and stayed there, nor have they stayed focused on a single, brief moment in time. Because they are all very conscious of being art historians first and foremost, I think they all understand the nature and importance of the question before us.

Because this session is about discussion and debate, I have asked the speakers and the discussants not to use images. Each will speak for approximately ten to fifteen minutes, after which we will open up the discussion to each other and to you, the members of the audience, who, we are hoping, will chime in with your own thoughts and observations.

SPEAKER #1: Esther Pasztory

Cecelia Klein's Introduction of Pasztory:

Our first speaker today is **Esther Pasztory**, Lisa and Bernard Selz Professor in Pre-Columbian Art History at Columbia University, where she received her PhD in 1971. She has written a number of books on wide-ranging subjects, including the first book written on Aztec art, which is titled *Aztec Art*. Other books are *Teotihuacan: An Experiment in Living*; *Pre-Columbian Art*; *Thinking with Things: Toward a New Vision of Art*; *Inka Cubism: Reflections on Andean Art*; and *Jean Frederic Waldeck: Artist of Exotic Mexico*. Like me, Esther teaches the art of both Mesoamerica and the Andes. A

main interest is the theoretical study of the relationship of art to society. Esther has long wrestled with the vexed interrelationship of the West and the Nonwest, and related to that, the relation of naturalism to abstraction. Her talk today is titled "The Ethos of Conflict and Naturalistic Representation."

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PAPER:

Pre-Columbian Art and World Art History

Pre-Columbian art is, of course, interesting and worth studying for its own sake, but one of its side benefits is that it also throws light on important issues in general art theory. Despite about a century of the study of Nonwestern art, art theory is still largely based on developments in Western art. More people try to fit Pre-Columbian art into Western schemes than to rewrite art theory based on Pre-Columbian art. Yet Pre-Columbian is potentially of great use to art theory because it developed independently and is therefore a test case situation. Such studies could analyze what features in all arts seem to have been determined by local cultures and what might be the results of universal processes.

I have been particularly interested in the issue of naturalism vs. abstraction. In Western art history naturalism is presented as something hard to achieve both technically and ideologically. Gombrich argued that naturalism required a special "vision" or world view which was only found in sophisticated later cultures. In the Pre-Columbian world realism appears suddenly twice, unrelated, in the Olmec colossal heads and in Moche ceramics. In both cases there is very little earlier development before portrait representations. Evidently, realism is not that hard to do, technically.

Moreover, not all Olmec and Moche works are equally realistic, thus negating the idea of a special "vision". Nor was realistic representation apparently seen as all that superior to conventionalized images, since it was not continued by later cultures. Naturalism in representation was not a tool that Pre-Columbians valued at most times. The Western theory of naturalistic representation needs to come to terms with these Olmec and Moche images - as well as with the famous Ife portraits in this category from Africa.

What may emerge from such a study is that naturalistic representation is not a matter of technology, skill, or "vision", but an artistic and social choice. It is not a developmental stage in art or intellect. In fact, it is always possible but evidently not always desired. The Western desire for and discussion of naturalism may emerge not as the norm, but as the local peculiarity of Western culture.

A related issue I'd like to sketch in this context concerns the relationship of the ethos of a culture to figuration or abstraction. In the Andes, Moche art is the most figurative and more or less naturalistic. The subject matter is largely war and conflict. This is usually interpreted in a literal fashion that the Moche must have

been exceptionally warlike. I am arguing that the Moche had an ethos, or world view, of conflict, whether they were actually warlike or not. Other Andean cultures, some of which we know to have been quite warlike, like the Inka, had an ethos of harmony and integration in their arts as seen in their textiles and stonework. Chavin, Paracas and Huari are also noteworthy for their arts of balanced design as opposed to naturalistic drama.

A conflict ethos is best represented by human figures in action, while an ethos of harmony is conveyed by design or patterned figures. While most Andean art emphasizes design and an ethos of integration, most Mesoamerican art is figurative and revolves around themes of conflict - death and sacrifice. The basic Mesoamerican ethos of conflict is illustrated by the widespread belief that the daily cycle of the sun represents the death of the sun by the forces of darkness in the evening and its rise every morning by the sun's victory over the forces of darkness. Andean ideas of integration are illustrated by systems such as the Inka ceque in which shrines, landscape, calendar and social units were harmonized.

Integrative representational styles are less emotionally resonant than conflict ethos styles.; they are "cool", cerebral and appeal more to the intellect. Despite their often violent nature, conflict ethos styles are more humanistic and naturalistic, in that they appeal to basic human feelings. A culture can have an integrative ethos and still be warlike and conversely a culture with a warlike ethos need not be more warlike than its neighbors. I am not arguing that there is no connection between an ethos and a reality, but the connection is not a 1:1 correspondence. Complex and contradictory actions and beliefs connect ethos to actual life. The argument made here is that representational systems do not reflect reality but the ethos of a culture - or of those who speak for that culture. Reconstructions of "life" based on "art" alone are bound to be off the mark.

I have argued that on the basis of its representational system Teotihuacan society must have been more interested in integration than in conflict. A clearer restatement of the issues is that the ethos of Teotihuacan favored integration and had a "cool" designed art without much figuration. We also know from other representations that Teotihuacan had widespread military and political contacts that have sometimes been collectively described as an empire. Therefore there may have been a disconnect between an integrative ethos and a political/military reality. This may not be as unusual as it seems - in the past some Islamic cultures have been bellicose while promoting integrative art styles.

As a footnote, I would like to add that out of curiosity to see how the conflict vs. integrative ethos and its relationship to representation work outside America, I took a quick look at the Eurasian traditions. It seemed to me that the ethos of the West, including Greece and Rome, falls into a conflict ethos and is highly naturalistic, with the exception of the Middle Ages which are integrative and design oriented. This view contrasts the "capitalistic" epochs with the "Christian" one. In the East I am impressed by the ancient Chinese styles of Shang and Chou which in their symbolic-ornamental style may express the integrative ethos of ancestral veneration.

Whether my conflict vs. integrative style concepts explain anything or not, they illustrate the kind of questions that can be asked in a global art historical context. Rather than being a passive recipient of theory, Pre-Columbian art can and should generate entirely new issues.

SPEAKER #2: Mary Miller

Cecelia Klein's Introduction of Miller:

Mary Miller is Sterling Professor of History of Art at Yale University and, as of December, 2008, dean of Yale College. Mary earned her Ph.D. from Yale in 1981, joining the faculty in that same year. A specialist of the art of the ancient New World, especially the Maya, Mary curated *The Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya* at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in 2004. For that exhibition, she wrote the catalogue of the same title with Simon Martin. First known for her book on the murals of Bonampak, she is equally well known for her collaboration with Linda Schele on the exhibition and catalog titled *The Blood of Kings*. Mary has authored two survey texts: *The Art of Mesoamerica* and *Maya Art and Architecture*, and co-wrote, with Karl Taube, a compact survey of *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya. The Aztec Calendar Stone*, co-edited with Khristaan Villela, was published in 2010. Mary was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1994. In April and May of 2010 she delivered the Fifty-ninth Andrew W. Mellon lectures at the National Gallery of Art and she is scheduled to deliver the Slade Lectures at Cambridge University during academic year 2014-2015. The title of her talk is "Now You See It, Now You Don't: Ancient American Art and the Museum."

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PAPER:

Now You See It, Now You Don't: Pre-Columbian Art in the American Museum . . . and in the Academy

My subject today does not follow a tidy argument, but my goal is to look at the way objects have been acquired by museums and to look for connections with the teaching of a related art history. I'll start—and end—with my own institution, Yale University. Yale's Peabody Museum, an institution for natural history, ethnography, science, and archaeology, acquired Pre-Columbian works in the nineteenth century, the first, a Xipe Totec given in 1879 and later, in 1887, a "calendar stone" purchased from the "sheriff's sale" of an "Aztec Fair" that went bankrupt in the city.

The Yale University Art Gallery's interest in Pre-Columbian art came much

later, largely at the initiative of George Kubler, whose museum interests began with Andean materials but who supported the acquisition of the Fred Olsen Collection. The Olsen Collection came into the Gallery in 1958, and by both gift and purchase the works were all transferred to the University by 1973. Josef Albers gave his Pre-Columbian works to the Peabody in 1970s, but donors subsequently designated most, but not all, gifts of Pre-Columbian objects to the Art Gallery. In 2012, the reinstallation of the Art Gallery's permanent collections in the renovated and expanded museum has seen the first major incorporation of Peabody works, effectively bringing together the best objects of the two museums for the most extensive exhibition of Pre-Columbian art in the University's history. Since 1940, there have been faculty in departments of both Anthropology and History of Art who have worked with these materials.²

Art history or anthropology, then? Or are they at last seen in both contexts? The objects themselves have not changed, but their contexts have. Nineteenth century travelers to Mexico, along with Mexican national leaders, sought from the very beginning to enshrine what they perceived to be important works and discoveries in honored locations, whether official museums or not. In Mexico City, officials decided that the monumental Calendar Stone should be set into the western wall of the city's Cathedral following its 1790 rediscovery, a sort of spolia of the Aztec past, while other rediscoveries of the period found a home in the University.³ American John Lloyd Stephens bought the ruins of Copan for fifty gold dollars, intending to reassemble them in Washington, D.C., imagining that they could provide a foundational and ancient relationship of an American past to the young Republic, although he never returned after his initial sojourn to make good on his purchase. Stephens also acquired dozens of objects for the Smithsonian, almost all of which were destroyed in the great fire of 1865.⁴

As has long been attested, emphasis shifted from the individual explorer, often in quest of museum objects, to institutional exploration at the turn of the 20th century. The thrill of discovery would unfold in the pages of *National Geographic Magazine* and the popular press in the United States and Europe, as discovery after discovery brought yet another "lost city" to the fore. The idea of the swashbuckling archaeologist was embodied by Hiram Bingham, early on in the century, who brought Machu Picchu to light, and who also brought works from the ancient city to Yale's Peabody Museum in 1911.⁵ In the years between the world wars, Matthew

² Kubler, faculty member 1940-1982; Miller, 1981-present; Hiram Bingham, faculty member (History) 1907-1920; Wendell Bennett, 1946-53; Michael Coe, 1960-1995; Richard Burger, 1983-present, among others.

³ Khristaan Villela and Mary Miller, eds, *The Aztec Calendar Stone*, Los Angeles: Getty Sourcebooks, 2010.

⁴ John Lloyd Stephens described Chichen Itza processions in light of the Tizoc stone, using both new drawings of Chichen to make a comparison that still rings as clever and unresolved. John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, Volume 2, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843, 297.

⁵ These works were all returned to Peru in 2011 and are now part of the permanent collection of the University of Cuzco.

Stirling's discovery of site after site in swamps along Mexico's Gulf Coast electrified readers in the United States, as did Alfonso Caso's excavations at Monte Alban in Mexico. Yet discoverers were not always those who provided the most insightful interpretations of the works that came to light; the 1908 dissertation of Herbert Spinden, based entirely on published images and works at Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology would become a 1913 volume of the Peabody Museum Memoirs; reprinted by Dover in 1975, the book remains a model of comprehensive analysis of the known Maya art of the day, and a foundation of Pre-Columbian art history.⁶ In this sense, Spinden is a key bridge figure, seamlessly moving from Harvard's Peabody Museum to the comprehensive Brooklyn Museum. Immediately following the dissertation, Spinden's articles on style and theme in Copan sculpture and on the nature of ruler portrayals in Piedras Negras sculpture can be seen in retrospect as further foundation to the nascent discipline of art history. Spinden's research during his museum years never surpassed his own dissertation, but he became the apostle of the newer, emerging discipline of Art History. In 1936, he would teach George Kubler at the Institute of Fine Arts, where Kubler took classes for a PhD granted by Yale, where he then was a founding member of the History of Art department.⁷

By the time that Spinden was teaching alongside Erwin Panofsky at the IFA, the petite corpus of Maya art he had addressed in 1908 had swollen several fold, and Sylvanus Morley had kept the drumbeat of discovery in the tropical rainforest in front of every armchair archaeologist. Based solely on objects and the drawings he made of them, Miguel Covarrubias isolated style and theme in what he called the "La Venta" or "Olmec" civilization.⁸ J. Alden Mason, who had excavated Piedras Negras, recognized that this was an emerging field of study without leaders inside the academy, gesturing to the need in his 1938 essay on the state of Mesoamerican studies. In two book reviews, he would rave about the foundational overview of Pre-Columbian art mapped out by Pal Kelemen in 1943.⁹ Even so, as Kelemen later wrote, in this very period art museums increasingly built collections and designed installations that excluded the Pre-Columbian past. Harvard's Fogg Museum exhibited its section of the Copan Hieroglyphic Staircase for more than a generation; in the late 1930s, the great work was returned to the Peabody; the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City had long lent its Pre-Columbian objects, among them carved panels from Tula, Hidalgo, given by American painter Frederick

⁶ Herbert Joseph Spinden, *A Study of Maya Art*, New York: Dover Reprint, 1975, of edition of 1913.

⁷ Spinden gave Kubler his only grade that was not an A or A- in his IFA career (Yale Manuscript and Archives). Kubler studied with Martin Weinberger, Erwin Panofsky, and Walter Cook, among others, over a period of two years.

⁸ Miguel Covarrubias, "El arte "Olmeca" o de La Venta", *Cuadernos Americanos* 28:4 (1946), 153-179.

⁹ J. Alden Mason, 'Observations on the Present Status and Problems of Middle American Archaeology, Part II', *American Antiquity* 3:4 (Winter 1938), 300-17; Mason, 'Review of Pál Kelemen, Medieval American Art', *Journal of American Folklore* 56: 222 (1943), 296-97; and 'Review of Pál Kelemen, Medieval American Art', *Geographical Review* 34:3 (Autumn 1944), 508-10.

Church, to the American Museum of Natural History, across Central Park.¹⁰

The counter narrative unfolded in the years after the Second World War, when art museums—usually small or university ones, but also great ones, like the Cleveland Museum of Art—systematically began to collect Pre-Columbian art, or at least accepted gifts. The Yale University Art Gallery collection is a good example, with only a few incidental acquisitions until Fred Olsen lent his collection in 1958. His works were installed in the new Louis Kahn building of the Yale University Art Gallery, which had opened in 1953. Programmed by Andrew Richie, the museum's director, separate installations of African and Pre-Columbian materials were housed in galleries adjacent to 19th and 20th century European modernism on the second floor of Kahn, so that the viewer could move away from those principal galleries to meditate on sources for modernity, given the early 20th century's French painters' engagement with the non-Western world. The museum focused its lens on non-Western arts through canonical works of Modernism.

Years later, in 1983, I would ask George Kubler to explain the tenets by which he had installed the Pre-Columbian collection twenty-five years earlier. Kubler responded: "According to the principle of random scattering." When I first began to teach at Yale, I created assignments that took students into this room, where objects were noted only by traditional "tombstone" labels, and without concern for cultural interpretation, nor even for cultural coherence. I grieved for the West Mexican marriage or ancestral portrait pair who had been kept together in antiquity, by looter, by runner, by dealer, and by collector, only to be issued a divorce at Yale and presented inside separate vitrines, without any reference to one another. Within stark cases and against severe white walls, the Pre-Columbian works were estheticized and deracinated. Docents sat school children in front of Yale's Nayarit ballgame maquette but had no tools—visual or cultural—to connect it to other ballgame materials on display in the same room. Meanwhile, at Yale's Peabody Museum, a full sweep of Pre-Columbian materials, from the Andes to the Aztec stone pieces, was exhibited by cultural area or cultural practice; exhibited in a dark space with intense spotlights, the works were both aestheticized and framed within cultural narratives.

When Pre-Columbian art did enter the art museum, it also entered a department. Typically the objects formed part of departments of African, Oceanic, and the Americas, and until recently usually called Primitive Art, in what I have thought of as "dicing," with non-western fields grouped together, if not chopped into bits. Alternatively, Pre-Columbian could also be "sliced," as if a great archaeological road cut, revealing itself to be the foundational backdrop of Latin America, the antecedent to Colonial and Modern, and sometimes "folk." The Museum of Modern Art show of 1940, '20 Centuries of Mexican Art' (as well as the 1990 recapitulation, 'Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries'), would thus be a

¹⁰ Pál Kelemen, 'Stepchild of the Humanities: art of the Americas, as observed in five decades', booklet. Tucson: Southwestern Mission Research Center, University of Arizona

slicing; and the Rockefeller Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, successor to the Museum of Primitive Art, which closed in 1974, a dicing. For both the scholars and for the public, it would be wonderful to see the 1971 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 'Before Cortes', that would treat the Pre-Columbian world as its own integral phenomenon, neither diced nor sliced, much like Pal Kelemen's *Medieval American Art* of 1943 or George Kubler's *Art and Architecture of the Ancient Americas* of 1962. Slicing remained rare until the Dallas Museum of Art, then the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, then the Denver Art Museum, took that step; as slicing became more common, so, too, could the study of the rest of the slice, Modern and Colonial, become more possible. Increasingly, institutions have recognized that although Pre-Columbian art might be exhibited as a "slice" or a "dice," the works themselves demand a dedicated curator.

The slice of 20 Centuries at MoMA is one of the places where Pre-Columbian art history ought to be born, with individuals who begin to look very hard at the works of art, but returned as the works were to Mexico, they ultimately had little traction either individually or as a narrative. Spinden's training notwithstanding, Kubler's first two books in the 1940s focused on the Colonial, first in the US Southwest and then in Mexico, with his massive two-volume publication, *Sixteenth Century Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century* of 1948. He wrote an essay on Aztec sculpture in 1943, and in his exploration of a "metropolitan style" was clearly developing a framework for Pre-Columbian study, although he did not address the works that Cecelia Klein or Richard Townsend would focus on in the 1970s.¹¹ But Kubler pointed to another direction in his 1944 article in the *College Art Journal*, precursor to *Art Journal*. There, he lamented that "Until recently, the collections were hardly to be found in art museums. Available objects had long since been intercepted by the anthropologists and natural scientists. In Europe and America, Maya sculpture was often exhibited with stuffed whales and shrunken heads; colonial and modern folk art never reached public notice". And he went on to decry that "Latin American art, whether pre-Columbian or colonial, remained for the art historian a dead zone untouched by artists or art-lover". (The term "dead zone" did not enter common parlance until 1970, when low oxygen areas of seas and oceans were described by this phrase.) He further noted that the engagement of West and non-West had taken place along the contours of European colonialism, noting that "no Gauguin took up residence among American Indians", a statement we might contest today – after all, what were Marsden Hartley or Tina Modotti doing? Furthermore, what Kubler called for had become a chronological impossibility: 19th-century artists obviously could not go to the 8th century Maya. Kubler went on to note that "it is that the history of art originally grew within an artifact carapace formed by great collectors, museum directors, and art merchants". And yet, Kubler

¹¹ George Kubler, 'The cycle of life and death in metropolitan Aztec sculpture', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 6:43 (1943), 259-68. See also Cecelia Klein, *The Face of the Earth: Frontality in Two-dimensional Mesoamerican Art*, New York: Garland, 1976; and Richard Fraser Townsend, *State and Cosmos in the Art of Tenochtitlan*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology* Number 20, 1979.

went on: "To be trained, the student must wander far from the art-historical fold among anthropologists, historians, and linguists".¹²

Kubler was preoccupied with the idea of the professional art historian, and he discouraged the engaged amateur: to Linda Schele, even after she received a PhD, he always referred as "the artist" to differentiate her from other art historians. Furthermore, was the curator a professional or an amateur? What were the differences? I'm not going to try to answer the question, but the art museum curator with a PhD in the field was an anomaly, not a norm, until the late 1970s at the earliest, although in an earlier era both George Vaillant and Gordon Eckholm, at the American Museum of Natural History, had earned doctorates at Harvard.

In art museums, curators, trained on the spot, by and large, had first appeared in the 1950s and 1960s at Dumbarton Oaks, the Museum of Primitive Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, LACMA, Denver, and Houston, to be followed in the 1970s and 1980s by the de Young, Cleveland, Emory, and others; independent positions for art historians grew at Texas, Columbia, UCLA, UT San Antonio, University of New Mexico, Tulane, Florida, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Illinois, Chicago, to be later joined by those at Arizona State University, UC Santa Barbara, Chicago, Harvard, Southern Methodist University, and more. These were years of some growth for our field. Then the book *Reframing the Renaissance* of 1995 clearly woke up the Early Modern world, which discovered the exciting world to the south and in the Americas, as if exhaustion in Europe at last returned the gaze to the former European colonies, to see what was in the mirror. What's shocking, I would say, is how little opportunity there was to study modern Latin American art in the United States, and how little museums, especially the temples of Modernism cared. Here's an example: in 1991, Jay Oles and I visited MoMA, looking for works for 'South of the Border', the exhibition Yale would mount in 1994. Of course we couldn't see any of the works; they were in storage offsite. We examined 5x7 note cards, and pencil notations on each—including frequently reproduced paintings by Carlos Merida and Roberto Montenegro—gave a dollar value, the latter just \$2100. Insurance, we asked? No, we were told. They're for sale, if anyone would want them. We spent the train ride back to New Haven wondering if we could raise the funds.

Major collections of both Colonial and Modern Latin American art have now transformed museums, especially at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and the Blanton, University of Texas, and the Denver Art Museum. MoMA has managed to line a corridor with a few works that resist the modernist narrative. The Philadelphia Museum of Art always kept a number of works on display, hiding in plain sight.

At last, the works are being seen, and works from the Pre-Columbian past to the present. Do these museum collections and exhibitions translate into academic art

¹² George Kubler, 'Remarks on the History of Latin American Art', *College Art Journal* 3:4 (Winter 1944), 148-152.

history positions? As I've thought about this, I've come to realize that there's no easy correlation, especially when the major traveling exhibition is taken into consideration. Yes, there have been outstanding modern exhibitions—starting in the 1980s—but there is no obvious relationship to academic art history positions. Then Colonial took off in the 1990s, the 2000s—from 'Painting New Spain' at Denver to 'Tesoros' at Philadelphia in 2007 to 'Contested Visions' this year at LACMA. But of course Pre-Columbian exhibitions have been bigger, better, and more frequent. Just count them: 'Lords of Creation' at LACMA, Dallas, and the Metropolitan (2003); 'Courtly Art of the Ancient Maya' at the National Gallery of Art and the DeYoung (2004), 'Aztecs' at the Guggenheim (2005), 'Fiery Pool' at the Peabody Essex, Kimbell, and St. Louis (2010), 'Olmecs' most recently in 2010-11, at LACMA and the DeYoung. Archaeology in Mexico and Guatemala continues to bring extraordinary works to the fore, and exhibitions now feature the latest excavated materials.

It would be easy to lament the state of the field of Pre-Columbian art these days, when institutions—whether art museums or universities—are under financial pressures the like of which they have never seen before. But here's what I see to be common practice among art historians: regardless of field, and regardless of where one starts, scholars and students move forward, so that a Mayanist like myself becomes engaged with the Aztecs, along with the early Colonial, and a specialist who begins with the Colonial reaches both to Europe and forward in time. Unfortunately what this means is that fewer and fewer students and scholars stay rooted in the deepest past of the ancient New World.

It is ironic that Europe's Colonial expression has found a more comfortable congruence in the academy, leaving the isolated Pre-Columbian tradition (for indeed it has nothing to do with any other part of the world, and North and South America were unaware of each other before the Spanish invasion) easier to lop off, perhaps to ship it back to archaeology and anthropology. Furthermore, Mexico's Modern—as distinct from contemporary—has struggled as much as Pre-Columbian to find its place in the canon. The official narrative of Modernism drives toward abstraction, making room for some South American traditions but little place for most of Mexico's 20th century figural traditions. As long as European and American art remain the core, Latin America's slice is imperiled. What *won't* be seen next? Surely the fact that acquisitions of Colonial and Modern are far more routine—and not subject to the same sort of monitoring that the American Association of Museum Directors has recommended—will lead to further expansion of museum collections in those fields, and not in Pre-Columbian. Will that affect what is *taught* in the future?

As we come together on the occasion of Cecelia Klein's retirement from UCLA, should we lament the state of our field? We could. Our field is definitely going through a generational change. It's hard to believe that it could happen. It's always been happening, but not in the way it seems to be happening right now. Kubler soldiered on for so long, publishing new work up to 1991; Don Robertson

vanished from us so suddenly; Linda Schele's death in 1998 left a sudden, gaping hole. Those of us gathered today: Esther Pasztory, Cecelia Klein, Elizabeth Boone, Tom Cummins: born in 1952, I'm probably the youngest of this group, and none of us is in the first flush of youth. Turnover is natural. But where will study go next?

SPEAKER #3: Elizabeth Hill Boone

Cecelia Klein's Introduction of Boone

We will now hear from **Elizabeth Hill Boone**, the Martha and Donald Robertson Chair in Latin American Art at Tulane University. Elizabeth received her doctorate from the University of Texas in 1977 and has since written a number of books and articles, among them *The Codex Magliabechiano and the Lost Prototype of the Magliabechiano Group*, *Incarnations of the Aztec Supernatural: The Image of Huitzilopochtli in Mexico and Europe*; *Stories in Red and Black: The Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs*; and *Cycles of Time and Meaning in the Mexican Books of Fate*. Her co-edited volumes include *Writing without Words* (1994) and *Their Way of Writing* (2012). In addition, first while Director of Pre-Columbian Studies at Dumbarton Oaks from 1983 to 1995, and later after arriving at Tulane in 1995, she edited a number of important anthologies, many of which have to do with Pre-Columbian writing systems and, most recently, their transformation once Europeans arrived in the New World. Elizabeth, who was awarded the Order of the Aztec Eagle by Mexico in 1990, will, in her talk today, address the question of "What Do You Say When There Art No Words?"

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PAPER:

What Do You Say When There Are No Words?

Pre-Columbian art historians face the challenge of analyzing visual materials without benefit of an accompanying alphabetic discourse. By this I mean that the Pre-Columbian world is free of the kind of documentary exoskeleton that has supported and given structure to Western and Asian art histories. Pre-Columbianists thus cannot study the biographies of artists, cannot track their movements and their personal or corporate expenses, and cannot identify when they were influenced by whom, because we don't know who the artists were, except perhaps for the Maya where we may have a name or a title. We have no contracts, no tax records, no rich literature about vision and aesthetics, no Vasari or Xie He, and no palace inventories. We cannot achieve a social art history either. So what do we say about art when we have no words?

Some of the field's founders looked back to Europe for applicable paradigms; others championed patterning, and still others pursued iconography.

The Hungarian Pál Kelemen and the Yale-trained Donald Robertson framed indigenous American materials according to European principles. Kelemen, whose first book on Latin American art, *Battlefield of the Gods*, was published in 1937, was the first self-defined Pre-Columbian art historian.¹³ Kelemen's comprehensive book on Pre-Columbian art, *Medieval American Art* of 1943, conceptualized Pre-Columbian art as medieval because it was largely anonymous, created by corporate sponsors, formally flat and abstract, and conventional in its indexicality.¹⁴ He segmented the arts of North America, Mesoamerica, and Andean South America not according to culture but according to media — as is still the case in several of the major survey and text books¹⁵ — and he offered a formal description of nearly a thousand individual works. Robertson, who was one of my mentors, turned his PhD into the still important book *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period: The Metropolitan Schools*, and used the paradigm of Bernard Berenson's *Italian Painters of the Renaissance* to frame early colonial manuscript production according to stylistic schools.¹⁶ Robertson's School of Tenochtitlan and School of Texcoco thus paralleled Berenson's School of Florence and School of Venice. Robertson, like Kelemen, privileged formal analysis.

George Kubler, the father of Pre-Columbian art history in this country and Robertson's professor, championed patterning. He advocated that: 'The most elementary process of art history is an empirical one, consisting in the taxonomy of form in the work of art.'¹⁷ His study *Iconography of the Art of Teotihuacan*, which is little more than a pamphlet, patterned out the distribution of various motifs and of profile versus frontal figures on Teotihuacan murals, to reach a sense of who was who in Teotihuacan mural art and, more importantly, how it operated as a visual system.¹⁸ This short study was foundational to Teotihuacan art history. Kubler's brilliant little book, *The Shape of Time*, is an exaltation of the patterns of things

¹³ Pál Kelemen, *Battlefield of the Gods: Aspects of Mexican History, Art and Exploration*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1937. Kelemen never forgave George Kubler, who was then just finishing his PhD, for writing a scathing review of his book. George Kubler, 'Battlefield of the Gods. Aspects of Mexican History, Art and Exploration by Pál Kelemen', *American Antiquity* 5: 4, 1940, 107-112

¹⁴ Pál Kelemen, *Medieval American Art, A Survey in Two Volumes*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943.

¹⁵ E.g., Mary Ellen Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica: from Olmec to Aztec*, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1986; Miller, *Maya Art and Architecture*, New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999; Esther Pasztory, *Aztec Art*, New York: H. N. Abrams, 1983.

¹⁶ Donald Robertson, *Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period: The Metropolitan Schools*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959. Bernard Berenson, *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930, gathers together four earlier works on the Venetian painters (1894), Florentine painters (1896), central Italian painters (1897), and northern Italian painters (1907) in a single revised edition.

¹⁷ Kubler, 'Battlefield of the Gods', 361.

¹⁸ George Kubler, *The Iconography of the Art of Teotihuacan*, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967.

through time (in series and sequences, in times of fast happenings and times of slow happenings).¹⁹

In contrast, the anthropologist Michael Coe, Kubler's colleague and peer at Yale, pushed for the interpretation of motifs and their meaning.²⁰ This iconographic work was taken up by a number of his students and protégés, including the artist and art historian Linda Schele, as well as her own students later. In the beginning, epigraphy served as the handmaiden to Maya iconography, and the early works were quite good. The seminal *Blood of Kings* catalogue is as lasting as it is partly because Mary Miller tempered Schele's ebullient enthusiasm for specific readings.²¹ That enthusiasm flowed freely in some of Schele's latter works.²² But the advances of Maya epigraphy eventually pushed Maya iconography to the side, and now there are relatively few Maya art historians who have active research agendas.²³ There should be many more.

Iconography, as a pursuit, can be of great interest to others in a specific area, but it is usually not of much concern to those outside the area. As a practice, it is at its most excessive when it reaches out to embrace all of the New World, from the first nations of North America to the southern Andes, and over a temporal spread from 2000 BC up to the indigenous present, in order to gather the visual culture, ethnohistorical accounts, oral testimony, and cultural practices into a single pool of authentic indigenous data from which one can select those elements that work for an argument. This conception of a common pool of indigenous iconography allows one to take what one will: to take this Olmec motif from a jade celt, take that figure from a late Classic Maya pot, add an element from the costume of an Aztec deity impersonator, and throw in a phrase from contemporary Zapotecs, so that one can argue for shamans, hearth stones, and were-jaguars in some sort of a pan-American utopia. And what does this really tell us about the visual culture of the people whose work we study? What does it tell us about structures and genres of knowledge? And what does it have to do with anything outside the Americas?

I myself am primarily a patterner, but I have also been an iconographer on occasion and continue to do iconography from time to time. I am a patterner because I have been interested in making sense of a body of visual production, the

¹⁹ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.

²⁰ For example, Michael Coe, 'Olmec jaguars and Olmec kings', in *The Cult of the Feline*, edited by Elizabeth P. Benson, Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1972, 1-18; Michael Coe, 'The iconology of Olmec art', in *The Iconography of Middle American Sculpture*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973, 1-12; Michael Coe, *The Maya Scribe and His World*, New York: Grolier Club, 1973; Michael Coe and Justin Kerr, *The Art of the Maya Scribe*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998.

²¹ Linda Schele and Mary Ellen Miller, *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art*, Fort Worth: Kimbell Art Museum, 1986.

²² E.g., Linda Schele and David Freidel, *Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya*, New York: Scribner, 1986; David Freidel, Linda Schele, and Parker, *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path*, New York: W. Morrow, 1993.

²³ Mayanist art historians who have published major analytical books in the last ten years include Julia Guernsey, Matthew Looper, and Megan O'Neil.

painted books of the Aztecs and their neighbors and the sign system— which I call Mexican pictography— that these books were created to contain. To this end I took the corpus of painted histories and focused on the structure of the manuscripts: how they were organized as visual statements, and how they were structured as pictorial histories.²⁴ And I discovered that structure usually patterned out with discourse genre, with the kinds of stories being told. The structures, in fact, enabled the stories. I did the same, more or less, with the divinatory manuscripts, seeking to understand how the individual almanacs and sections functioned structurally to create visual statements.²⁵ My goal was to reveal the variety of their content and how these parts composed the whole, essentially to understand the graphic, structural, and topical canon for a book of fate.

I was able to do this only by drawing on the scholarship and thought of a range of other disciplines. In order to understand Mexican pictorial histories, I looked to literary theory, narrative theory, neurobiological studies of memory, and anthropological studies of place, event, and time. For the books of fate, which are largely diagrammatic, I looked toward other areas of literary theory— studies of lists, for example— and studies of diagramming systems (as in chemistry). This comparative research enabled me to think differently about how visual forms function as devices that communicate meaning.²⁶

I have also been a bit of an iconographer: re-interpreting the monumental Coatlicue statue, for example.²⁷ This iconographic work may be useful to Aztec scholars, but it does not resonate much beyond Tenochtitlan and its empire. Its relevance for the broad field of Pre-Columbian art history, or for the discipline of art history in general, remains to be asserted.

I am not advocating against iconography, for we need iconography if we are to understand what a thing says. Instead, I want to advocate against its excesses and against the notion that iconography is all that Pre-Columbian art historians do or should do. Very many of our iconographic studies are wrong-headed anyway; they purport to reach a truth but really only pretend to support our own hypotheses and satisfy our desires, in an exercise that is accidentally post-modern. Let me quote Norman Bryson's caveat, from his *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*:

The analyst introduces into the object the principle of his own relation to that object. He is not an inhabitant of the social formation, he lacks the tacit knowledge of its members; an outside observer, his task is felt as the

²⁴ Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Stories in Red and Black: Pictorial Histories of the Aztecs and Mixtecs*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.

²⁵ Elizabeth Hill Boone, *Cycles of Time and Meaning in the Mexican Books of Fate*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007.

²⁶ See, for example, Elizabeth Hill Boone, 'Beyond writing', in *The First Writing: Script Invention as History and Process*, edited by Stephen Houston, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 313-348; Elizabeth Hill Boone, 'When art is writing and writing, art', in *Dialogues in Art History, from Mesopotamia to Modern: Readings for a New Century*, edited by Elizabeth Cropper, Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2009, 56-71.

²⁷ Elizabeth Hill Boone, 'The "Coatlicues" at the Templo Mayor,' *Ancient Mesoamerica* 10, 1999, 189-206

explanation of the mysterious society before him, to others of his own culture; his work is therefore hermeneutic, exegetical. This is perhaps a fair assumption of his own position. The error consists in then attributing to the member of the society his own relationship to it.²⁸

Bryson is saying that we can interpret the Coatlicue as long as we recognize that we are interpreting it for ourselves. We are mistaken when we purport that our reading is the ancient reading.

An article by Stephen Houston, 'The Archaeology of Communication Technologies', suggests a way out of this dilemma. I quote from Houston, who is commenting here on different ancient graphic and writing systems:

Accessing ancient meaning and sound from graphic notation is an immense challenge to archaeologists, whether with respect to marked objects, petroglyphs, or phonic writing. Two paths clear the way: The detection of reasoned reconstruction of "situation," how graphic notations are used in the past and in what social and cultural setting, and the process of "extraction," the hermeneutic scholarship that decodes such messages and establishes the relative plausibility of an interpretation.²⁹

Houston's "situation" is the social and cultural context of an object vis-à-vis its audience, placement, and use. His "extraction" is then the iconographic interpretation, which depends on this "situation." He recognized that extraction cannot succeed if isolated from situation. To return to my earlier analogy of an indigenous pool, one cannot just pull one element out of the artificially created indigenous pool without understanding where it belonged within its own cultural context.

What Houston is calling 'situation' is very much like what Michael Baxandall has famously called the 'period eye'.³⁰ By the 'period eye', Baxandall meant the visual and cultural understanding that the contemporaneous viewer would bring to the object, what was known and assumed and how the object sat vis-à-vis other objects of its kind; this viewer was not just any person, but rather the individual or group for whom the object was intended. For example, we may look at the Coatlicue and see, or have seen, the goddess Coatlicue, the mother of Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec's mother goddess, and a Tzitzimitl (which is variously an ancient deity, a fallen 'angel', a star, and a demon of death, among other things).³¹

²⁸ Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, London: Macmillan, 1983, 72.

²⁹ Stephen Houston, 'The archaeology of communication technologies', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33, 2004, 223.

³⁰ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972, 29-108.

³¹ For the range of interpretations of the Coatlicue, see Justino Fernández, *Coatlicue: estética del arte indígena antiguo*, Mexico: Centro de Estudios Filosóficos, 1954; Jorge Gurría Lacroix, 'Andrés de Tapia y la Coatlicue', *Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl*, 13, 1978, 23-34; Esther Pasztory, *Aztec Art*, New York: H. N. Abrams, 1982, 158-160; Michel Graulich, 'Les grandes statues aztèques dites de Coatlicue et de Yollicue', in *Cultures et sociétés Andes et Meso-Amériques: mélanges en hommage à Pierre Duviols*, edited by Raquel Thiercein, Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1991, 375-419; Boone, 'Coatlicues'; Cecelia

These are all our interpretations, achieved from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We cannot fully know the Coatlicue, however, until we understand how the statue fits with others, where it was placed, for whom it was intended, who actually saw it, and what was the cultural and visual understanding they brought to it.

Situation or the 'period eye', I believe, can best be approximated by patterning, by analyzing the patterns of the visual corpus and seeing the object in relation to its neighbors and others of its genre. Thus, what I want to advocate is less iconography of the kind that picks elements from a common pool and more patterning of contextualized forms, motifs, and objects. Patterning is important in and of itself, and it is also essential to good iconography. Patterning can help us understand when objects appear and disappear, how they are placed and used, how they resemble and differ from others of their kind, and what their canons of production are. Only then does it make sense to read them. But patterning can do more. It can be a foundation for discourses with other art historians and with scholars in other disciplines interested in non-alphabetic communication. Such discourses may focus on the object: they will then be about structure, function, and value. Other discourses will focus on graphic communication; they will also be about structure, about visual language, and about the place of visual images and objects in the intellectual culture of a society.

SPEAKER #4: Tom Cummins

Cecelia Klein's Introduction of Tom Cummins

Our next speaker, **Tom Cummins** is Dumbarton Oaks Professor of the History of Pre-Columbian and Colonial Art at Harvard University, and Chairman of the Department of the History of Art and Architecture there. He received his Ph.D. from UCLA in 1988 and went on to teach for eleven years at the University of Chicago before moving to Harvard. His research and teaching focus on Pre-Columbian and Colonial Latin American Art, with articles on subjects ranging from early Ecuadorian ceramic figurines and Inka systems of knowledge and representation to the colonial Mexican manuscript known as the Codex Huexotzingo and, more recently, the Getty's copy of Martín de Murúa's illustrated Peruvian manuscript. Tom's much cited book *Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Kero Vessels* was published by the University of Michigan Press in 2002. The seminal

F. Klein, 'The devil and the skirt: an iconographic inquiry into the prehispanic nature of the Tzitzimime', *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 11, 2000, 1-26; Cecelia F. Klein, 'A new interpretation of the Aztec statue known as Coatlicue, "Snakes-Her-Skirt"', *Ethnohistory*, 55, 2008, 229-250; Alfredo López Austin and Leonardo López Luján, *Monte sagrado: Templo Mayor*, México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009, 448-461; and Leonardo López Luján, 'La Coatlicue', in *Escultura monumental Mexica*, edited by Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, Leonardo López Luján, and Fauvet-Berthelot, México: Fundación Conmemoraciones 2010, 2009, 113-229.

anthology *Native Traditions in the Colonial World*, which Tom co-edited with Elizabeth Boone, had already come out in 1998. Tom has long had an interest in the role of visual and alphabetic literacy in the conversion of South American natives and a book addressing that topic, which he co-authored with Joanne Rappaport which is titled *Beyond the Lettered City*, was just released last year. Today, Tom will talk about "Looking Back at the Future of the History of Pre-Columbian Art."

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PAPER:

Looking Back at the Future of Pre-Columbian Art History

What, one may ask, does this title imply for the theories and methods and future of Pre-Columbian studies in Art History in 2012? It, in part, acknowledges that Pre-Columbian study is now a part of the Art History curricula in many colleges and in the universities in the United States (more than the rest of the world combined); that there are sessions at the CAA that deal with art historical issues of the field; that there are museum collections, curators and exhibitions in almost all major art history museums;³² that there are students who passionately find it a field of study and the chance to pursue their dreams. This was not the case in 1970, a year when I first thought that maybe this could be my life's pursuit. And thus the title also implies a personal history and assessment of the field through that lens. What follows then is an impressionistic, idiosyncratic account.

So, what was the future for studying Pre-Columbian art some forty years ago for an undergraduate fresh from traveling with his or her companion throughout Colombia, Ecuador and Peru; being the first official visitors to Parque San Agustín, sleeping in the ruins of Machu Picchu and Racchi and traveling by dugout canoe down the Eastern Coast of Panama from the canal to the border of Colombia studying the Cuna and their arts? These experiences were all heady stuff, exciting for a twenty-one year old, but they were animated by being on the road with a politicized generation from all over the world, but especially from Latin America, awaiting with anticipation the election of Salvador Allende.³³ The future,

³² There are some major exceptions. For example the National Gallery, while it has had Pre-Columbian exhibitions, has no collection and worse, it defines its American Collection solely in terms of the art of the United States. The MFA of Boston has both Pre-Columbian and Colonial Latin American collections, but there is no curator trained in either subject, but then it has no real chief curator of European art either. Moreover, the naming of the new wing "Art of the Americas" includes Pre-Columbian and Colonial Latin American art; however, doing so and naming the exhibition wing as such does not acknowledge the fact that only Canada and the United States divide America into two distinct continents, North and South America. The division is based on nationalist identities, ethnic and cultural differences, and a linguistic border.

³³ I suspect that some members of the previous generation of art historians born in the United States, who studied European and Asian art the late 40's and 50's, might look at their experiences in World

we believed, was ours in all aspects, a future to be changed by us, even in the face of the Vietnam war, the massacre of Tlatelolco, the 1970 elections in Colombia and the formation of the M19, and the evil brought by the violent coming of Pinochet in Chile, the dirty war of the generals in Argentina as well as those already in Brazil.

If, then, one were to look for a place to study Pre-Columbian Art in the early 1970's as a field of inquiry, a place to change, they were few and far between. There was nothing in Europe, and Mexico was the only place that offered courses in Pre-Columbian art history in Latin America, and these courses concentrated on nationalist interests. The Pre-Columbian field of study in the United States was not much better, and from a simplified overview, it can be summarized as follows:

George Kubler, of course, was at Yale, and he had already trained some of the first Pre-Columbian and/or Colonial art historians. Donald Robertson was, I believe, his first student and he went on to teach at Tulane, where there was no Ph.D. program in art history. Betsy Smith, also Kubler's student, taught in the new Ph.D. program at the University of New Mexico. But many more of those who began to teach in the seventies or even before were not trained by Kubler or any other Pre-Columbian art historian. For example, Terence Grieder received his Ph.D. as an art historian at the University of Pennsylvania where he studied with Alfred Vincent Kidder II in 1962 and was teaching in the Art History department at the University of Texas where Jacinto Quirarte (PhD 1964, UNAM) was already teaching by 1972. Some of the other early Pre-Columbianists came out of the Harvard Fine Arts Department where George Kubler taught as a visiting professor in 1966-67. Arthur Miller, who taught at the University of Maryland, received his degree in 1969 and was followed by Richard Townsend who finished his Ph.D. in 1975. Townsend studied primarily with Tatiana Proskouriakoff and Evon Vogt of the Department of Anthropology at Harvard, as well as Dr. Oleg Grabar and John Rosenfield, who pushed to accept him as a chance and as someone with a different profile. Clemency Coggins finished her dissertation, entitled "Painting and Drawing Styles at Tikal: An Historical and Iconographic Reconstruction" in the same year in the Department of Fine Arts at Harvard. Finally, Esther Pasztory began teaching at Columbia University in 1971, the year after she received her PhD from the same institution, and Cecelia Klein finished her dissertation the following year at Columbia and began teaching that same year at Oakland University before moving to UCLA in 1976. Along with Yale and Columbia, UCLA and UT Austin became the centers of Pre-Columbian studies in art history.

What is equally significant is that not one of the founding professors studied with a Pre-Columbianist. For example, Klein and Esther Pasztory studied with Douglas Fraser, a specialist in Oceanic and, later on, African art history. Fraser himself took courses both in art history and anthropology and it was an interdisciplinary training that he passed onto his students. But this was not so

War II as catalysts for their career. No generation has the same experiences, but those experiences, for good and bad, are transformative in a way that is untold.

unusual in the sixties and seventies. In fact, there were many more Africanists in art history departments such as those at Yale, the IFA, Indiana, Iowa, UCLA, UC Santa Barbara and elsewhere than there were Pre-Columbianists. There were, if my impressions are correct, also many more exhibitions, books, journals and articles about African art by art historians. Be that as it may, there was not such a distinction between Oceanic, African and Pre-Columbian (which included North American) in terms of affinities with and training in the field of "Non-Western." It should be no surprise therefore that Robert Farris Thompson, who received the second Ph.D. in African Art in the United States, studied with George Kubler. In some real sense, there was a tacit but universal sense of non-western, for good or bad, by those who actually worked with non-western, non-Asian cultures and their arts. But this also meant that, for those outside the study of these traditions, Oceanic, African, Pre-Columbian, and North American were essentialized; that is, they were one and the same thing, separated merely by time, distance, culture, language, etc. Thus, I could be accepted to study Pre-Columbian art history at UCLA even though there was no Pre-Columbianist teaching there when I applied.

Notwithstanding, there were, in fact, some intellectual commonalities that could be shared; one was fieldwork and its preparation. For example, Arnold Rubin, an Africanist who came to UCLA in 1967, also offered courses in Oceanic and Pre-Columbian art history. And when he returned in 1971 from fieldwork in the Upper Benue River Valley, where he had been studying the arts of the region, he decided to offer a field school class in which students picked a subject within LA that focused on issues that had some resonance with what he had found in Africa, such as festival arts. The most famous course involved collaborative work on the Rose Parade, which enrolled students such as Tom Crow, Serge Guilbaut, Holly Clayson, Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, and others. This was visual culture before there was visual culture studies, and it allowed students with very diverse interests to come together to focus on methods and theories of common interest. These students, along with Leonard Folgarait, Shifra Goldman, Mark Graham, Kathleen Corrigan, Joan Weinstein, Michael Orwicz, Carol Knicely, Jane Williams, and Conrad Rudolph to mention just a few, formed an intellectual community that began reading way outside the normal canon of art history texts, and strict areas of focus, reading the structuralism of Claude Levi-Stauss, the linguistic theories of Pearce and Saussure; the spatial theory of Lefebvre, and the psychoanalytic theory of early and late Freud, etc. It was all tempered by political discussion and Marxist reading.

For someone wanting to study Pre-Columbian art history, this kind of training was the opposite of the teaching and writing by Kubler who had a cool, detached architectural sense of the world. In reading his work, one finds that there are almost never people but rather, a kind of twilight zone where only things had life. Nonetheless, like most other Pre-Columbianists, Kubler straddled three worlds: in this case, Pre-Columbian, Colonial, and European art and architecture. That is, he

was like Douglas Fraser, Arnold Rubin and others who had an ample vision of the world of art history and the conviction that Pre-Columbian had a place in it.

This is also true of the generation that followed. For example, I believe that one of the first things Cecelia Klein published was on Oceanic art, and the same is true for Esther Pasztory.³⁴ The first non-western art history piece I ever published was on Oceanic art, based on a seminar I had taken with Cecelia Klein.³⁵ I will return to this once wider sense of the world and Pre-Columbian art's place in it. Be that as it may, if we return to the past of the future of Pre-Columbian, it began to materialize in the 70's as new appointments were being made in PhD programs. ALAA, which had begun in Texas with Jacinto Quirarte was revived and began to advocate continuously for a place at the table at the CAA. There slowly began to be offered the occasional session and there was a growing general interest in the field, not only by those who studied the material but by scholars who wanted to expand the canon, not only in terms of new cultures but by new ways of approaching the study of art.

The success of that Future, with all its hopes and desires, can be seen not only by the number of the sessions devoted to Pre-Columbian art in the present and previous CAA meetings, but also by those devoted to Colonial and Modern topics. More importantly, perhaps, are the invitations to Pre-Columbianists to speak in sessions with broader themes of interest to art historians in general. And finally, there is no doubt in my mind, that the growth and acceptance of both colonial and modern Latin American art history in programs throughout the United States is due first of all to the almost forced entry of Pre-Columbianists into the discipline. Many of these scholars long realized that Pre-Columbian was only a part of a larger whole that needed to be presented to students and they pushed for the expansion.

This is all to the good, but there is also a downside to this intellectual success, and one that puts in peril the new future of Pre-Columbian art historical studies. The growth of Pre-Columbian art history, as well as Pre-Columbian anthropology and archaeology, has meant the ever-greater need for specialization. This is true whether the subject area is Maya, Aztec, Inka or Moche. There is an ever increasing tendency for the field to become both fractured and isolated, scholars interested in only a precise time period, culture, medium. Expertise allows for the claim that "I am an Andeanist" or "Mesoamericanist," or "I work on textiles or glyphs." Of course, most scholars do teach the full range of Pre-Columbian art, but as the focus of particular research and knowledge becomes ever more precise and refined, there is an ever-greater balkanization, in part, because of the need to master the ever growing scholarly literature and the discovery of new archaeological material. But with the growth in the numbers of scholars working only in Maya or Aztec or Moche art, we begin to listen to talks and read papers that are overburdened with extreme details without larger questions. Most Pre-

³⁴ Esther Pasztory "Hieratic Composition in West African Art," in *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 52 (1970): 299-306.

³⁵ "Kinshape, The Design of the Hawaiian Feather Cloak," in *Art History*, Vol. 7, (1984) 1-20.

Columbianists can follow the papers and essays, but they increasingly shut out other art historians, even Colonial and Modern Latin Americanists, who might otherwise be interested. I, of course, understand the complaints of my colleagues who often rightfully feel that their colleagues don't understand or appreciate what they do. The willful ignorance about Latin America is always palpable. After an 11-hour flight from Buenos Aires, one very well educated colleague asked me how I was recovering from my jet-lag. Or, it is always a shock to students and colleagues that from a Latin America understanding of geography we all live on only one continent not two. I always begin whatever class I teach at Harvard with the 1551 Charter for the establishment of San Marcos to demonstrate that Harvard is not the oldest University in America. Usually that fact is simply shrugged off as irrelevant.

It may seem that nothing ever really changes; nonetheless, we should never retreat into our own world, especially Pre-Columbianists, speaking only to ourselves, or even a fraction of ourselves. If we do, we very much risk being not only being marginalized but being forgotten. We very much risk becoming a field like Egyptology, something that has few if any positions in art history. We must always think of our colleagues in art history when we write and speak. I learned this first at UCLA where most of my fellow graduate students did not study Pre-Columbian art history, but because Cecelia Klein was rigorous in her teaching in terms of theory and method, they attended her classes. We came to have shared intellectual interests that then were re-shaped by the material that we studied.

This does not mean dumbing down our material, but it means first of all asking big questions that then can only be addressed by precise knowledge, rigorous research, methodological meticulousness, and a theoretical apparatus that responds to the problems presented by the material. Most importantly, it is to remember that we are not archaeologists or anthropologists. We are art historians and while we may often use some of the methods of our allied fields, we are not performing the same thing. If we think that then we are lost, as we will only do it badly.

We are art historians and we have a lot to offer, but there still remain problems. First, many Pre-Columbianists work either in the Maya area or in very late periods bordering on and crossing over into the colonial period. The reasons for this are obvious. This material has a set of texts that can be deployed; there are names, dates and events as well as language. It is no accident that there has been a growth in Colonial studies; as in the United States they grew organically out of Pre-Columbian. That is precisely how I came to work in Colonial art. Those coming from Europe looking at the Colonial period see it differently, an issue to be more fully addressed elsewhere. But colonial study, for Pre-Columbianists, among other things, helps us understand what comes before it in a myriad of ways, using many of the same tools that our colleagues use in studying European and Asian art.

But the interest in the colonial as a hermeneutics for the study of Pre-Columbian art also allows me to address my main concern for the future of Pre-Columbian art history. It is a concern of how what I call deep Pre-Columbian, other

than Maya and Moche, is being studied or more precisely, is not being studied. That is, most Pre-Columbian art historians, especially recent ones, are bunched in their studies near the years 1492, 1521, 1532. Many fewer work in deep Pre-Columbian where there is no text and often no context. And to understand what I am about to say, I need to digress into personal history for a moment. When I first started studying at UCLA, I was not a Pre-Columbianist but a medievalist, studying with O. K. (Karl) Werckmeister. I was not so interested in Medieval art itself, rather I was always more interested in working with Latin America and Pre-Columbian material. But Karl offered a rigorous Marxist approach to studying art history. I cannot tell you what a revelation it was to read and discuss the work of Meyer Schapiro, a Marxist art historian who brought works to life through people. But these were not the laissez-faire days of method and theory that we find today, in which a Marxist approach is one among many in the supermarket of theories and positions. It was a cultural-political position and it was anything but accepted by mainstream North American art historians.³⁶

And so, I remember that Karl said if you want to do this you cannot be just 100% rigorous in research, evidence, and argument, you must do it 110%. Yes, I understand that may be impossible, mathematically, and especially for me in the days before spell check, but I took the point to heart. Not only in my role as Marxist in a Capitalist society, but as someone who wanted to study Pre-Columbian art. And that is what I did when Cecelia Klein came to UCLA. And so, when I think and write, I remember Karl's advice in general, but most importantly, I think about it when I write about deep- Pre-Columbian, be it Chavin sculpture, Chorrera, Jama-Coaque ceramics. One has to address questions that the material poses and that can be rigorously examined. This means a preparation theoretically and methodologically. It also means that interpretation is a very risky business and the burden of proof of any claim to what one thinks ones sees must be 110%. Furthermore, it should be written in the conditional, as it is very difficult to make any absolute claims beyond precise material and technological studies. That said, I really feel that my training as an Art Historian at UCLA, allowed me to imagine a set of criteria that now beget questions that can be posed and answered.

I will end here with as much hope for the future of Pre-Columbian art history as I had when I first started. And that was dependent on the notion that one had to make a place for it by demonstrating to our colleagues not only its intrinsic

³⁶ The first article I published, co-authored with Joan Weinstein and Deborah Weiner, was entitled "Le rôle de l'historien l'art marxiste dans une société capitaliste," *Histoire et Critique des Arts*, no. 9-10, (1979) 88-108. It came from a collaboratively researched and written graduate seminar on Marxist art history led by O.K Werckmeister. Not a great article, but I am still proud to list it in my CV as it was cited as the evidence and reason for not offering me a job in 1985 at a major university on the East Coast. In fact, the political nature of UCLA Art History in the 1970-80s and its impact on the field has never been really acknowledged. Nor has the resistance towards it and the exacting undercurrent of resentment and fear that came both openly and secretly, such as signed letters against possible appointments, has ever been chronicled.

beauty and wonder, but also the capacity of Pre-Columbian art and architecture to present problems that beget rigorously new and different questions about art and the ability to resolve them. This is still the task of university scholars and museum curators, and what is hopeful is that there are more opportunities now than there ever have been before.³⁷

SPEAKER #5: Carolyn Dean

Cecelia Klein's Introduction of Dean:

Our final presenter is **Carolyn Dean**, known to many of us as Lyndy, who since 1991 has been teaching Pre-Columbian art and culture at the University of California, Santa Cruz; in June she will step down from the added role of Associate Dean of the Arts Division at UCSC. Like Tom Cummins, Lyndy received her Ph.D. from UCLA—in her case, in 1990—and like him she writes primarily about the Andes. A revised version of her doctoral dissertation was published in 1999 with the title *Inka Bodies ad the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru*, of which a revised and expanded edition in Spanish came out in 2003. Her most recent book, *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock* (2010), won the 2012 Arvey Book Award for the best book on Latin American art. Lyndy has written a number of articles on topics ranging from representations of Inka children and Inka masculinity to wet-nursing in Colonial Peru and notarial doodles, while others have a distinctly theoretical value. The 2003 article she co-authored with Dana Leibsohn, titled “Hybridity and Its Discontents” Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America,” is widely cited, as is her 2006 essay “The Trouble (with the Term) Art.” Today Lyndy will share her thoughts on the current state of Pre-Columbian art history: “The Elusive Future of Pre-Columbian Art History”

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PAPER:

The Elusive Future of Pre-Columbian Art History

Just a week after Cecelia Klein asked me to participate on a panel at the College Art Association to discuss theory, method, and the future of pre-Columbian art, a colleague of mine at the University of California, Santa Cruz, sent me an essay entitled ‘The Elusive Big Idea’ from the *New York Times* written by the film historian Neal Gabler. In it, Gabler comments on an article which appeared in the summer (July/August) 2011 issue of *The Atlantic*.³⁸ The article — ‘The 14 Biggest Ideas of the

³⁷ Special thanks to David Roxburgh for his help in the preparation of this essay.

³⁸ Neal Gabler, ‘The elusive big idea’, *New York Times*, Sunday Review, 13 August 2011, SR1, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/14/opinion/sunday/the-elusive-big-idea.html>.

Year' — included 'ideas' such as the rise of the middle class in emerging economies and the unchanging nature of how business is done on Wall Street. Gabler aptly observes that not only are these two examples not actually ideas, none of *The Atlantic's* fourteen biggest ideas of 2011 was, in fact, an idea. All were observations, remarking on the state of things and having nothing to do with intellectual vision or insight.

Gabler's commentary is germane not only to the theme of this session, but also to the future of research in the humanities in general. Scholars in the humanities do not invent commodities or patentable products; rather, we generate ideas. Hence current and future thinking about ideas ought to concern us. Accordingly, I will summarize Gabler's essay before offering some observations of my own, which are intended to stimulate further discussion, not just about the state of pre-Columbian art history, but about intellectual engagement in the humanities more broadly.

Gabler begins his essay by observing: 'Ideas just aren't what they used to be. Once upon a time, they could ignite fires of debate, stimulate other thoughts, incite revolutions, and fundamentally change the ways we look at and think about the world. They could penetrate the general culture and make celebrities out of thinkers.' As examples of celebrity-thinkers he offers Albert Einstein, Betty Friedan, and Carl Sagan, among others. Gabler writes with a note of nostalgia that 'intellectuals like Norman Mailer, William F. Buckley Jr., and Gore Vidal would even occasionally be invited to the couches of late-night talk shows'. Whether our highest aspiration ought to be sitting on Jay Leno's coach or rubbing elbows with Jimmy Fallon, Gabler's overall point seems valid: public intellectuals, the purveyors of grand ideas, are not very prevalent these days.

Gabler insists that the fact that today's thinking often seems small is not because we are less intelligent than our forebears. He argues that our ideas have diminished because 'we are living in an increasingly post-idea world — a world in which big, thought-provoking ideas that can't instantly be monetized are of so little intrinsic value that fewer people are generating them and fewer outlets are disseminating them, the Internet notwithstanding. Bold ideas are almost passé.' Indeed, Gabler asserts that despite huge technological advances, we may actually have retreated intellectually from advanced modes of thinking into what he characterizes as old 'modes of belief'. '[R]ationality, science, evidence, logical argument and debate have lost the battle', he argues, 'to superstition, faith, opinion, and orthodoxy'. Gabler observes that the public intellectual has been replaced 'by the pundit who substitutes outrageousness for thoughtfulness'. One of the consequences of this — observable in my own classroom — is the fact that students who are so inclined can readily find 'confirmation' for extraterrestrial visitation in the pre-Columbian Americas. Unproven and unsubstantiated assertions seem to have gained equal footing with carefully reasoned argumentation. My lectures and the scholarly readings I assign are often received as just additional input, on par with whatever can be Googled. The web is a buffet feeding whoever is hungry

whatever they desire; sometimes I feel like the nagging nutritionist trying to encourage a healthy diet while competing with sugary treats!

Gabler implicates academics in the current dearth of big ideas, even suggesting that many of us contribute to the post-idea world he has described. He attributes the current state of intellectual discourse to 'the retreat in universities from the real world, and an encouragement of and reward for the narrowest specialization rather than for daring — for tending potted plants rather than planting forests'. What propels us into a retreat from ideas, he asserts, may be the quantity of information itself; Gabler writes:

It may seem counterintuitive that at a time when we know more than we have ever known, we think about it less. [...] Courtesy of the Internet, we seem to have immediate access to anything that anyone could ever want to know. We are certainly the most informed generation in history, at least quantitatively. [...] But if information was once grist for ideas, over the last decade it has become competition for them. We are like the farmer who has too much wheat to make flour. We are inundated with so much information that we wouldn't have time to process it even if we wanted to, and most of us don't want to.

Thus he argues that overwhelming amounts of information actually discourage the time-consuming processes through which we generate thought-provoking ideas. Who doesn't feel inundated by all the data at our fingertips? Who doesn't have, in addition to a stack of books and journals to be read, a computer folder containing dozens upon dozens of articles in the form of pdf documents? We can obtain articles from convenient databases by the click of a mouse, by the slightest flexing of an index finger, but the time saved in gathering information, doesn't ever seem to translate into more minutes to read and reflect.

In addition to the tsunami of available information, Gabler blames popular engagement with new media in the ongoing creation of the post-idea world. He observes that the post-idea world has blossomed alongside the world of social networking:

[S]ocial networking sites engender habits of mind that are inimical to the kind of deliberate discourse that gives rise to ideas. Instead of theories, hypotheses and grand arguments, we get instant 140-character tweets about eating a sandwich or watching a TV show. [...] To paraphrase the famous dictum, often attributed to Yogi Berra, that you can't think and hit at the same time, you can't think and tweet at the same time either, not because it is impossible to multitask but because tweeting, which is largely a burst of either brief, unsupported opinions or brief descriptions of your own prosaic activities, is a form of distraction or anti-thinking.

The conclusion to Gabler's essay is powerful, compelling, and a little discouraging:

We have become information narcissists, so uninterested in anything outside ourselves and our friendship circles or in any tidbit we cannot share with those friends that if a Marx or a Nietzsche were suddenly to appear, blasting his ideas, no one would pay the slightest attention, certainly not the general media, which have learned to service our narcissism. What the future portends is more and more information — Everests of it. There won't be anything we won't know. But there will be no one thinking about it.

Certainly Gabler is right when he observes that thinking takes time. Yet, universities — at both the undergraduate and graduate levels — urge the rush to a degree. Many universities now offer guarantees of a BA or BS in four years or less — who cares about knowledge, get the piece of paper and move on. No time to think! The question is, in this environment where it's the degree that seems to matter and not the knowledge accrued or skills developed, how do we encourage our students to take the time to think, and to think for themselves? Of course, we must model thinking for our students — and that is not always easy to do given that universities often seem to reward faculty publications by the numbers, not by the thought. Is it surprising that many of us have resorted to writing on a small area of expertise and not engaging big ideas more generally, not engaging in theoretical or methodological discussions that have an impact on our field or on our discipline? Is it surprising that faculty at research institutions increasingly teach within their narrow sub-subfields because enlarging the instructional focus requires time that is deemed better expended churning out publications?

Moreover, with the web beckoning, students resist actually learning specific things, especially about the past, including the pre-Columbian past. Why should they spend time on history when its details are readily available — or so they think — with the point and click of a cursor? Without analytical abilities and the skill to deconstruct an argument they become indiscriminate consumers of the junk food to which I referred earlier. It is exactly those critical and analytical skills that are required not just to evaluate the worth of what is found on the Web, but to produce rich, complex, and substantive ideas. I could go on, but my goal is to initiate not just discussion about, but reflection upon, how we can actively undermine the post-idea regime and culture of anti-thinking, how we can intervene and inspire big thinking both in the classroom and in scholarship more generally.

Before closing, I note that, when Gabler says that no one today is authoring big ideas, he surely doesn't mean to be absolute. Certainly, he excludes himself. I would say that the organizer of and speakers on today's panel also represent distinct exceptions. What they all have in common is that, over the years, they have required us to re-think accepted truths—What do we mean by art? What do we mean by writing? What do we mean by literacy? What do we mean by the categories 'women' and 'men'? — concepts that are all too often taken as given, but on which pre-Columbian societies, their cultures and practices, shed new light. These concepts are all sweeping notions, requiring thinking across cultures and

across time. My questions for discussion, and my food for thought: How does one resist the temptation to pot plants rather than plant forests, as Gabler puts it so precisely? How can faculty encourage students to plant some forests of their own?

SPEAKER # 6: Claudia Brittenham

Cecelia Klein's Introduction of Brittenham

Our discussant today is **Claudia Brittenham**, who is currently wrapping up a four year stint as Assistant Professor of the History of Art, and Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Michigan, and who will move to the University of Chicago in the fall. Claudia received her Ph.D. from Yale in 2008, writing her dissertation on the murals of Cacaxtla, an Epiclassic period Pre-Columbian site in Mexico. A manuscript on the Cacaxtla paintings is currently under review for publication. She has written several articles on Cacaxtla; one on Inka *wakas*, or sacred stones; and co-authored with Mary Miller an essay on Maya architecture. She also co-authored with Mary a book titled *The Spectacle of the Late Maya Court: Reflections on the Paintings of Bonampak*, which is in press, and co-authored with four other scholars the 2009 innovative and much heralded *A History of Maya Color*. I asked Claudia to share her reflections on the talks we heard today as a member the younger generation of Pre-Columbianist art historians.

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PAPER:

Interdisciplinary, International, Indispensable

I'd like to begin with an anecdote. During the discussion after my very first College Art Association panel, lo these many years ago, someone—I think it was Rebecca Stone—turned to the audience and said, “Come! Work on this material. We need more people to study Pre-Columbian art!” I remember thinking how wonderful it was to have chosen a field that is collegial instead of territorial, a field with more than enough material to go around, a field kept vital by a constant stream of new discoveries. All of this remains true today. So, I say once again to all of you: Please, join us. Come, study this material. There's much more to be done. And not enough of us to do it.

And if you don't study this material, please teach it. The future of our field depends on people who are not Pre-Columbian specialists knowing what excitement there is to be found in the American past. It's tremendously important that we all do what we can to expose our undergraduate students to the totality of Latin American art, including Pre-Columbian, colonial, and modern art, so that they can take it with them for the rest of their lives. It's also important that Pre-Columbian art becomes part of the vocabulary that all art historians have in

common. Even if you're not a specialist in ancient China, you can probably summon an image of a Shang bronze, just as someone has asked us to do this very afternoon. Our challenge is to make Pre-Columbian objects part of that general conversation.

As we move forward, I believe that our field must be interdisciplinary, international, and indispensable. We are art historians. We've heard clarion calls today to remain art historians in spite of the temptation to become first and foremost Andeanists, or Mesoamericanists, or specialists in an even small geographic and chronological region. We must do both—we need that geographic expertise as well, of course—but all of the scholars on the panel today have demonstrated the strength that comes from our disciplinary home, the power that derives from engaging broad questions that are of interest to all art historians. At the same time, we must contribute to the interdisciplinary conversations about our geographic regions, and we must be attentive to the ways that our corpus is produced. We have to talk to archaeologists—and let them find value in talking to us. We also have to talk to museum curators, to conservators, to linguists and epigraphers, to historians and historians of religion, among others. Our practice must be interdisciplinary, even as we never lose sight of our disciplinary roots. We should be open to collaboration, even if that isn't the norm in our home departments. We should help our colleagues see the value that can come from collaborative endeavours.

Our field must also be international. The fact that we often have two parallel discourses, one in English and one in Spanish, is a challenge for our field. I hope that scholars in the next generation will work harder to bridge that gap, publishing in both languages and bringing those two conversations together. If there's one flaw with the panel assembled up here today, it's that we're all Americans.

The third thing that I'd like to see our field become is indispensable. We need people to come to think of Pre-Columbian art as part of that essential corpus without which you can't really call yourself an art historian. There are so many places where the art of the Americas presents a valuable counterexample, places where it presents accounts that challenge our conventional understandings, often shaped by the art of other continents. One of the great promises of the Americas for art history is its ability to beget new questions that all art historians are going to want to answer. At the same time, commonalities with ancient art in other parts of the world can be equally fascinating and productive. Greater breadth of knowledge makes us think more deeply about everything we see.

It's so tempting to lament the lack of texts in our chosen region. Several commentators today have talked about how we tend to focus our research on the cultures for which we have the most text, be that Aztec or Inca or Maya. I'd like to remind us that the absence of texts can be an opportunity as well as a challenge. It pushes us back on the objects themselves, because they are the primary evidence that we have. It asks us to look at those objects from different angles, to draw on rich and interdisciplinary methods, to think about materials, facture, archaeological

context, patterning, close observation of the objects themselves. It may drive us to new methodological and theoretical insights that scholars in other areas of ancient art, or in more text-rich fields, may also find beneficial.

In closing, I'd like to second a call that other panelists have issued today: we need be intelligible outside of our smallest and narrowest fields. We need to speak not just to other specialists, but to push out to bigger questions, to always answer the question: "so what?" The stakes are large: What is art? How is it that we know what we know? How is it that you can form an argument and support it with different kinds of evidence? What do you learn when you look? These are questions that all art historians have to ask, and they are questions that we have opportunities to ask and answer in powerful ways. We have a lot to offer. So I say once again, come and join us.