



EMORY

MICHAEL C.  
CARLOS  
MUSEUM

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | Contact: Priyanka Sinha**  
Office: 404-727-4291 | Cell: 404-822-5019 | [priyanka.sinha@emory.edu](mailto:priyanka.sinha@emory.edu)

**A VISIONARY AESTHETIC; ANCIENT AMERICAN ART INSPIRED  
BY SHAMANISM AT THE CARLOS MUSEUM**

ATLANTA, GA (July 17, 2012)—The Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University presents *'For I am the Black Jaguar': Shamanic Visionary Experience in Ancient American Art* on view from September 8 through January 5, 2013. This exhibition--focusing primarily on ancient Costa Rica, the Central Andes and Mesoamerican traditions-- will explore visionary experiences that deeply influenced the artistic output of American indigenous cultures before the European invasions of the sixteenth century.

From earliest times to today, indigenous peoples of the Americas have valued shamanic visionary trance as one of their most important cultural and religious experiences. Shamans still speak of their trance journeys to other cosmic realms, the truths they learn, and the information they bring back to cure their communities' ills. Depicted in ancient American art, trance consciousness often includes the shaman transforming into an animal such as a powerful black jaguar, an enormous whale shark, a predatory owl, or a venomous rattlesnake. Animal selves and spirit companions are considered to be guides to the shaman in caring for his or her community, the animals' powers augmenting the shaman's innate healing abilities. The show's title is based on a quote from a contemporary traditional Taulipang shaman of northern Brazil: "Call upon me for I am the black jaguar . . . I drive away the illness..." The shaman's statement conveys the most pervasive shamanic visionary experience of actually becoming a powerful animal, the black jaguar in particular.

Over 115 objects portray the key perceptual characteristics of the shamanic trance consciousness -- brilliant colors and geometric shapes; spinning, spiraling, and undulating movement; confrontations with predatory animals and the transformation of the self into other beings; sensations of flying; communication with spirit-beings; and revelations concerning a universally shared life force. The exhibition also features art that illustrates how visions are achieved in traditional settings, from meditation, to drumming and dancing, to ingesting sacred plants such as peyote cacti, vines, and spiny oysters. Traditional shamans refer to these plants as teachers, and they are understood as wise spiritual guides through the cosmic realms beyond the terrestrial.

"This exhibition seeks to find clues to past artistic meaning using contemporary accounts, visual analysis, botany and zoology, and documentary sources -- it is a multidisciplinary investigation, one that promises to further our understanding of art and its complex role in indigenous Amerindian traditions," notes Masse-Martin/NEH Distinguished Professor of the Humanities, Professor of Art History, and Faculty Curator of Art of the Americas at the Carlos Museum, Rebecca Stone.

**Education and outreach**

Public educational programs, including workshops for children, teachers, and scholars, will be held in conjunction with the exhibition offering many opportunities for visitors to learn about the artistic traditions of American indigenous cultures. Events include a lecture by Ray Hernández-Durán, Associate Professor of Art and Art History at the University of New Mexico on *The Indigenous and Colonial Roots of the Magical Imagery in Latin American Visual Culture*; Stone on colonial documentation of Inka shamanic practices found in the work of seventeenth-century Jesuit friar Bernabé Cobo in a lecture titled *'Confessors, Doctors, and Sorcerers': Inka Religion as Imperial Shamanism*; and *Finding the Jaguar Within: Psychedelics, the Brain, and the Shaman's Journey* with Katherine MacLean of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Charles Raison, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Arizona.

For more information, visit <http://carlos.emory.edu/black-jaguar>

For more information on the exhibition calendar, visit

[http://carlos.emory.edu/files/u1/blackjaguar\\_exhibition\\_events\\_fall2012\\_0.pdf](http://carlos.emory.edu/files/u1/blackjaguar_exhibition_events_fall2012_0.pdf)

For press images, visit <http://carlos.emory.edu/press-room>

*'For I am the Black Jaguar': Shamanic Visionary Experience in Ancient American Art* is made possible by the generous financial support of the Massey Charitable Trust. Educational programs in conjunction with the exhibition are supported in part by a grant from the Emory College Center for Creativity & Arts' David Goldwasser Series in Religion and the Arts.

**About the Michael C. Carlos Museum**

The Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University collects, preserves, exhibits, and interprets art and artifacts from antiquity to the present in order to provide unique opportunities for education and enrichment in the community, and to promote interdisciplinary teaching and research at Emory University. The Carlos Museum is one of the Southeast's premier museums with collections of art from Greece, Rome, Egypt, Near East, Nubia, the Americas, Africa, and Asia, as well as a collection of works on paper from the Renaissance to the present.

[www.carlos.emory.edu](http://www.carlos.emory.edu)

###