

MASTERPIECES

MUSEO LARCO

treasures from ancient Peru

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Discover the MUSEO LARCO masterpieces

In common with other cradles of civilization, the societies of ancient Peru were agricultural and therefore sought to understand the cycles of nature. The close and dynamic relationship ancient Peruvians maintained with their natural environment underpinned their belief in the existence of an upper, celestial world, inhabited by the sun, stars and gods, from where the rainfall required for crops fell; and a dark, damp underworld inhabited by the dead and ruled over by Mother Earth, or Pachamama, where plants grew. The tinkuy, or meeting, of these complementary worlds gave rise to the earthly world, where humans dwelled. It was in this world where such contact occurred that the opposing forces essential to life were found, expressed in the combining of sunlight with water and soil, and in sexual union.

Through these 12 masterpieces held in the Larco Museum, visitors can journey through 5000 years of ancient Peruvian history and learn about the close relationship pre-Columbian societies maintained with nature.



2 Pacopampa Goddess

(1250 BC – 1 AD)
This powerful stone-carved deity takes on the features of a bird (upper world), a feline (earthly world) and a snake (underworld), and the flow that comes out of her mouth reminds us of a spider's web.

Vitrine 11 | ML300025



1 Pacopampa feline

(1250 BC – 1 AD)
In the Andean world, fierce and powerful felines, including the jaguar, take other animals' lives in order to continue living. For this reason, they symbolize power in the earthly world.

Vitrine 2 | ML301346



3 The journeys of Ai Apaec

(1 AD – 800 AD)
Ai Apaec is a mythological character of Moche culture, with great fangs, a serpent belt and ear adornments, who journeys through different worlds in order to ensure the continuity of the cycles of nature.

Vitrine 18 | ML018882



4 Moche portrait vessels

(1 AD – 800 AD)
The Moche produced extraordinarily realistic portrait vessels. The skull-like face symbolizes the underworld; the man wearing a headdress the earthly world; and the figure with feline fangs the celestial world of the gods.

Vitrine 20 | ML003022, ML013572, ML013574



5 Nasca Shaman drum

(1 AD – 800 AD)
Personage who, in his role as a shaman, takes contact with the different worlds after his consumption of hallucinogenic plants.

Vitrine 35 | ML013683



6 Paracas Dragon mantle

(1250 BC – 1 AD)
On Peru's southern coast, the dead were wrapped in sacred woven mantles. They transformed their ancestor's bodies into a seed that would regenerate in the underworld.

Vitrine 52 | ML600068



7 Moche ceremonial sacrifice

(1 AD – 800 AD)
In nature, death is needed in order to give life. It would seem likely that the human sacrifice depicted in this vessel was associated with the spring equinox, the passage from winter to spring. This was an important moment in the agricultural calendar, announcing the beginning of the rainy season.

Vitrine 68 | ML010847



8 Gold and silver Chimú vessel

(1300 AD – 1532 AD)
This vessel symbolizes duality; the existence of opposite yet complementary forces. Gold represents the sun, daytime, the dry season and masculinity. Silver represents the moon, nighttime, the rainy season and femininity.

Vitrine 95 | ML100865



9 Huari funerary bundle

(800 AD – 1300 AD)
This decorated funerary bundle adorned with a mask contains the body of a child, wrapped in cloth. In the Ancient Peru, the dead were carefully prepared for their journey to the underworld.

Vitrine 130 | ML800001



10 Gold Moche head adornment

(1 AD – 800 AD)
Leaders were crowned with adornments which symbolized their power to mediate between different worlds, such as this adornment featuring a powerful mythological being possessed of feline, fox, bird and serpent features.

Vitrine 150 | ML100769



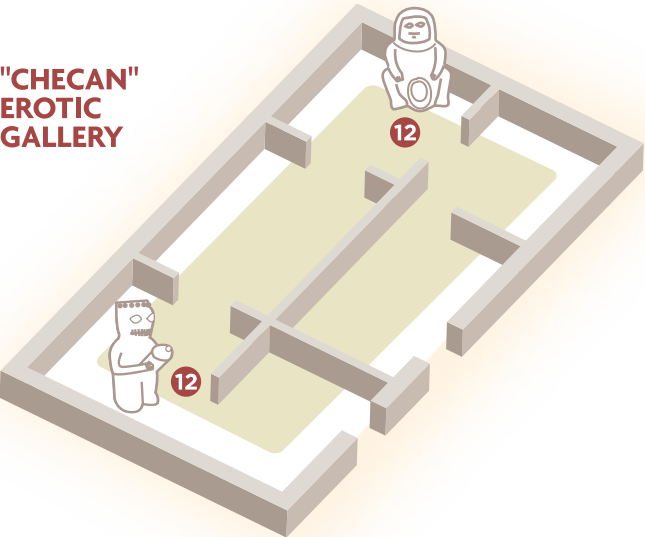
11 Gold funerary attire

(1300 – 1532 AD)
This costume belonged to a great lord who was buried in the mud brick city of Chan Chan, the capital of the Chimú kingdom. The feathers in the gold crown, breastplate and epaulettes evoke his relationship with the birds and the sun, the celestial world.

Vitrine 156 | ML100855



"CHECAN" EROTIC GALLERY



Plan your visit

MUSEO LARCO

Founded in 1926 by Rafael Larco Hoyle,
the great pioneer of Peruvian archaeology,
the Larco Museum exhibits more than 5000 years
of ancient Peru's history.

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Opening hours

Please, check the current opening hours on our website.

Guided visits

Enjoy an inspiring journey of discovery through the cultures
of ancient Peru with the Larco Museum's specialist staff.

Tours available in Spanish and English. Family, school
and special programs by prior reservation.

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