



# Polychrome Figural Urn with Jaguars and Skulls

**CHARLES STREET BUILDING  
LEVEL 2A, LATIN AMERICAN ART /  
ARTE LATINOAMERICANO**

The Maya people believe we exist within a continuum of three realms: sky, earth, and underworld. Some creatures, like jaguars, move fluidly between realms. When a family or community member dies, they become an ancestor who can communicate across realms like a jaguar for eternity.

## LOOK

The transformation from individual to ancestor is captured here. Costumed as a jaguar, the deceased person is welcomed to the underworld by two supernatural beings painted in dark colors. What other moments of change can you find?

Burial Urn with Jaguars and Skulls, Unidentified artist(s), K'iche' Maya culture, 600–900 CE, earthenware, paint. Anonymous gift, 2008, acc. no. 48.2818.

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# Four-Cornered Hat

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The owner of this hat was likely a warrior who may have hoped to access the strength and swiftness of the animals the hat references. The vibrant birds represent Andean condors, whose enormous wing-spans create an inspiring sight as they soar over South American valleys. The four tufts at the corners may imitate the ears of a fierce cat, like a jaguar or puma.

## SEEK

Can you find other artworks in this gallery that borrow the power of an animal? What animal qualities would you want to embody?

Four-Cornered Hat, Unidentified artist(s), Wari culture, 600–900 CE, camelid fibers.  
Gift of Georgia and Michael de Havenon, 2016, acc. no. 2011.20.13

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# Cintli, Corn, Maíz

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Corn was domesticated in Mesoamerica nearly 9,000 years ago. This process took place over the lives of generations of people and plants, with the best seeds saved and planted season after season. The development of this crop was deeply intertwined with the stability and survival of peoples who cultivated it—in some origin myths, the first human beings were made from corn.

## FEEL

Read the label for Jessy DeSantis's work to learn how the Baltimore artist grew corn to connect to their Indigenous roots. What foods make you feel connected to your community?

*Cintli, Corn, Maíz*, Jessy DeSantis (b. 1990), 2020, acrylic on canvas. Museum purchase, 2023, acc. no. 37.2951

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