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Hirsch Library Research Guide



**Tripod Vase with Bird Handles**  
Pre-Columbian, Ulúa

Ulúa, Terminal Classic, 700–1000 AD  
Travertine, 5 3/4 x 13 x 9 3/4 in. (14.6 x 33 x 24.8 cm)

Museum purchase funded by the Alice Pratt Brown Museum Fund

This is one of the largest and most elaborate tripod cylinder vases made by the Ulúa people of northwestern Honduras. They carved local marble into beautiful translucent vessels.

The handles of this vase represent birds with large curved beaks, possibly parrots or macaws. Frontal feline deity heads with sharp fangs and round ears framed by profile serpent heads decorate the sides. These motifs are embedded in rows and columns of scrolls that probably signify the watery Underworld. Vases like this were important luxury items traded over long distances of Mesoamerica.

**Online Resources:**

[Hirsch Library Online Catalog](#)

[The Metropolitan Museum of Art Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#)

**Articles:** (full-text access available on-site; off-site access available through your school library or Houston Public Library)

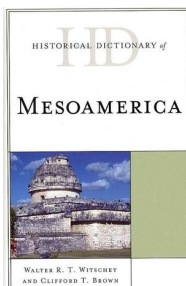
[Lothrop, S. K. "The Southeastern Frontier of the Maya." \*American Anthropologist\* 41, no. 1 \(1939\): 42-54.](#)

[Joyce, Rosemary A. "Terminal Classic Interaction on the Southeastern Maya Periphery." \*American Antiquity\* 51, no. 2 \(1986\): 313-329.](#)

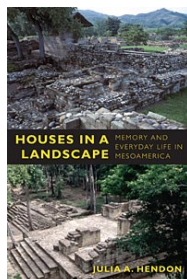
[Schortman, Edward M., and Patricia A. Urban. "Late Classic Society in the Rio Ulua Drainage, Honduras." \*Journal of Field Archaeology\* 22, no. 4 \(1995\): 439-457.](#)

[Davis-Salazar, Karla L., Christian Wells, and José E. Moreno-Cortés. "Balancing Archaeological Responsibilities and Community Commitments: A Case from Honduras." \*Journal of Field Archaeology\* 32, no. 2 \(2007\): 196-205.](#)

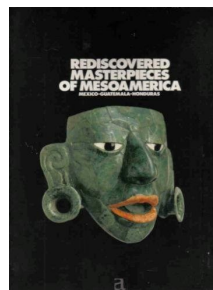
**Print Resources:**



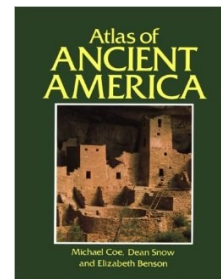
[Historical Dictionary of Mesoamerica](#)



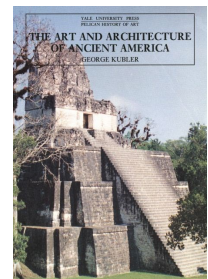
[Houses in a Landscape](#)



[Rediscovered Masterpieces of Mesoamerica](#)



[Atlas of Ancient America](#)



[The Art and Architecture of Ancient America](#)

## Bibliography

### Object Specific Information

[Landay, Janet, and Thomas T. DuBrock. \*The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Visitor Guide\*. London: Scala, 2000.](#)

N 576 .H7 A85 2000 Ref.

[Marzio, Peter C. \*A Permanent Legacy: 150 Works from the Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston\*. New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1989.](#)

N 576 .H7 A63 1989 Ref.

### General Surveys of Art

[Gardner, Helen, Fred Kleiner, and Christin J. Mamiya. \*Gardner's Art Through the Ages\*. 12th ed. Belmont: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005.](#)

N 5300 .G25 2005 Ref.

[Honour, Hugh, and John Fleming. \*The Visual Arts: A History\*. 5th ed. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1999.](#)

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[Stokstad, Marilyn, and David A. Brinkley. \*Art History\*. 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.](#)

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### Similar Objects

[Hellmuth, Nicholas M. \*Maya Cylindrical Tripods and Related Early Classic Art : Iconography and Form\*. Culver City: International](#)

[Photographic Archive of Pre-Columbian Art, Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research, 1985.](#) F 1435.3 .P8 H45 1985

[Hooper, Steven. \*Robert and Lisa Sasinsbury Collection\*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.](#) N 1439.5 .A65 1997

[Luke, Christina M. "Ulúa Style Marble Vases." PhD diss., Cornell University, 2002.](#) F 1505.1 .U4 L84 2002

[Stone, Doris. \*Masters in Marble\*. Middle American Research Series 1. New Orleans: Tulane University, 1938.](#) F 1421 .T95 1938

### Imagery or Symbolism

[Chevalier, Jean. \*A Dictionary of Symbols\*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.](#) AZ 108 .C413 1994 Ref.

[Miller, Mary, and Karl A. Taube. \*The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya: An Illustrated Dictionary of Mesoamerican Religion\*.](#)

[New York: Thames & Hudson, 1993.](#) F 1219.3 .R38 M5 1993

### General Mesoamerican History and Archaeology

[Coe, Michael, Elizabeth P. Benson, and Dean R. Snow. \*Atlas of Ancient America\*. New York: Facts on File, 1986.](#) E 61 .C66 1986

[Disselhoff, Hans Dietrich, and Sigvald Linné. \*The Art of Ancient America: Civilizations of Central and South America\*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1961.](#) E 59 .A7 D513

[Evans, Susan. \*Ancient Mexico & Central America: Archaeology and Culture History\*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004.](#) F 1219 .E92 2004

[Wauchope, Robert. \*Archaeological Frontiers and External Connections\*. Handbook of Middle American Indians, vol. 4. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966.](#) F 1434 .H3 v.4

This reference guide is just the tip of the iceberg on helpful resources in the library's holdings. Many of the suggested resources above have their own bibliographies. Each of these may lead you to other resources that would also be helpful in your research here in the museum or in another library. To find additional resources, use keywords such as "Mesoamerica" and "stone vases" in the on-line catalog and periodical indexes. Once you find a few relevant titles, pay attention to the subject headings to identify similar materials. Examples of useful subject headings are:

*Indians of Central America--Antiquities*

*Central America--Antiquities*

*Indian art--Central America*

*Archaeology --Central America*

For guidelines about writing, it may be helpful to look at Sylvan Barnet's *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*, which includes tips for looking, reading, and writing about art. Ask for it at the reference desk. At every stage of your work, please allow the library staff to help you. We can be reached at 713-639-7325 or hirsch@mfah.org