

ROM Backstage: Modelling the Sicán Lord's Tomb

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Project Management

Royal Ontario Museum

[Animated ROM logo appears with sound sting; Ambient music in background, with narrator voiceover]

[Images of artist paints, tools] How do you recount the story of the mysterious Sicán using paint, foil and wax? [Georgia Guenther gesturing towards a sketch of the 3D model] An ancient civilization that flourished in Pre-Columbian Peru ... [Scan of Georgia's workspace, including wax figures, and Plexiglas cover for model] A burial place dating back over a thousand years ... A twelve metre deep shaft, filled with over a ton of precious metals ... [Camera scans model of shaft] A tomb, considered by many to be the elite burial place of the "Lord of Sicán" ...

*[Georgia moves the Plexiglas cover from the base of the model; close-up of two wax figures; Georgia gestures towards the figures; view of Georgia working at her desk, camera pans down to show her working on one of the wax figures] To compliment the exhibition, *Ancient Peru Unearthed*, ROM artist Georgia Guenther is tasked with recreating an exploded 3D view of this burial setting and archaeological excavation. She recreates a scene from generations ago, with information gathered with the help of Justin Jennings, our Associate Curator of New World Archaeology. *[Close-up of Georgia shaping the feet of the figure using a metal tool; Georgia holds a small mould in her hand, with wax figures in the background]* She shapes one of the female figures using modelling wax. One woman was found buried seated with her back to the wall, while a second woman was placed lying down with her legs splayed as if giving birth.*

[Close-up of Georgia snipping a small piece of foil; a shot of Georgia's workspace, showing many of the tiny gold ornaments she has replicated for the model; view of Georgia painting a replica gold standard] A remarkable number of artifacts were found, including almost one hundred personal ornaments and ritual objects made of 14 to 18 karat gold, about 50 kilograms of beads, and hundreds of bronze implements. Georgia uses oil-based paint, followed by a gold burnish, to emulate the lustrous gold standards.

Sophisticated and distinctive art, pottery, architecture and religious artifacts were unearthed from this undisturbed tomb. *[View of three wax figures, and scan back to Georgia painting]* As a result of this find, Sicán metal work is now seen as the

pinnacle of Andean metallurgy, surpassing that of the Incas. The Sicán were also highly skilled in producing bronze, and are now credited with introducing northern Peru into the Bronze Age.

Knowledge of the Sicán's proper role in Peruvian history was hampered by the extensive looting of tombs along the northern coast of Peru. *[Camera scans across workspace to the shaft model; close-up view of figure of archaeologist in the empty tomb]* Although Sicán artifacts filled North American and European museums and private collections, they lacked the provenance so crucial to understanding their cultural significance. The discovery of this tomb provides the valuable context that was lacking for so many years.

[View of Georgia arranging completed figures and ornaments on the red base of the model] Paying close attention to detail, Georgia's goal is to replicate the correct placement of these objects, as accurately as possible, as they were discovered in the tomb. *[Georgia and preparator Bill Hodgkinson work to install Plexiglas shelves into the model case; close-up of Bill positioning shelf holding the "Lord of Sicán"; view of the model with all the shelves in place]* At the centre of the tomb, a 40-50 year old man was discovered. Dubbed the "Lord of Sicán" by the Peruvian press, he was surrounded by gold offerings. The tomb contents were layered around the Lord, who was buried in an inverted position with his head detached and rotated to face west. Among other accessories, an exquisite gold mask was wrapped around the Lord's head. This mask is the highlight of the exhibition. *[Close-up of figures and ornaments inside the model]*

[The model rotates and fades to reveal the model installed in the Ancient Peru Unearthed: Golden Treasures of a Lost Civilization exhibition; young girl looks at the model and then walks away] The location and placement of the figures in this royal burial place seems to be essential to our understanding of Sicán culture and their customs. This 3D model allows us to better understand the collection in a tactile and evocative way. *[Fades to black]*

[Video ends with animated ROM logo and sound sting]