I am an art historian and archaeologist specializing in Ancient and Early Colonial Andean art and currently a post-doctoral fellow at the program *4A Laboratory: Art Histories, Archaeologies, Anthropologies, Aesthetics (at what institution??)*. I am now pleased to applya (*for what year?).*

In my work as an art historian, I have conducted research on Andean iconography, textiles, and gender structures. As an archaeologist I have participated in several excavations and surveys under the auspices of the Israel Antiquities Authority in addition to a project in Peru. Moreover, beyond my research experience in an academic context, I have had the opportunity to work as a curator of a private collection.

For my dissertation I studied more than 1,000 artifacts firsthand, including ceramics, textiles, shells, wood, and metal objects. These artifacts spanned the collections of 30 museums in Europe and South America. This aspect of my research taught me a great deal about the characteristics of curatorial work, and I came to a greater understanding of the museums where I conducted my research and to appreciate their differing museological approaches to such areas as conservation, cataloging systems, and exhibitions.

Further, as my Curriculum Vitae relates, in addition to my own research, for several years I was the curator of the Maiman Collection, a private assemblage of ancient Andean artifacts. This experience enriched my knowledge of Andean material culture as well as offering me direct experience with the intricacies of curatorial work, such as artifact cataloguing, research, conservation, object authenticity, and art education.

Throughout my work and research I have developed a strong ability to work as a team member. In my work with the excavations carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority, I always maintained good collegial relations with the archeologists and the excavations workers. Furthermore, I have collaborated with colleagues in iconographical studies, such as when I joined forces with Amnon Nir and Javier Fonseca Santa Cruz in analyzing a unique ceramic artifact that was found in the last Inca refuge at Vilcabamba. An article that summarizes our findings was recently published in the journal *Latin American Antiquity*. Likewise, I worked with Sabina Aguilera, an anthropologist who specializes in North Mexican (??) indigenous communities, specifically on the connection between different regions of the South American continent and the ways by which ideas and symbols were diffused in ancient times. We presented our findings in a workshop we organized as part of the Maiman Collection’s activities as well as in an academic congress.

Furthermore, due to the nature of my research, I developed a sensibility towards cultural diversity and relativity. This enables me to compare different societies not only in my research, but as an Israeli working in Latin America, also in daily life. I am fluent in Spanish and I wrote my M.A thesis and Ph.D. dissertation in English. However, to date, the papers that I have presented and the articles I published have been written in Spanish. Additionally, as part of my Master’s degree studies I gained knowledge of the Quechua language.

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I believe that the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas might benefit from my intimate acquaintance with Andean Ancient and Early Colonial art as well as my experience in the direct research of artifacts. Reciprocally, I look forward to becoming involved with, and learning further about, the educational aspects of museums and the curation of museum exhibitions.

In my research I mainly focus on the material representation of ideas and concepts through iconography, but I also explore an artifact’s form, technology and material. I pursue this interest with an interdisciplinary approach, which combines the use of visual, archaeological, ethno-historical, and vocabulary sources, and with tools and insights taken from the fields of both art history and archaeology. A good example of this approach is my doctoral dissertation “Beyond the Image: Femininity and Other Gender Expressions in the Ancient Art of the South-Central Andes (800 B.C-1532 A.D)” that successfully reconstructs many aspects of the ancient Andean gender structures and their expressions in art, society, religion, and cultural ideology. This research defines the roles and status of women and reveals the ways in which women's fertility and sexuality were perceived by several cultures, including the Nasca, Wari, Tiwanaku, and Inca. The study also demonstrates that Andean gender structures contained at least five gender categories, three of which are neither totally feminine nor masculine. I was able to identify successfully several anthropomorphic images that are classified under these categories.

My current and future research extends into three directions that I am simultaneously developing. The first one is a project entitled “A Queer Reading of Northern Andean Coast Material Culture and Practice in Ancient and Early Colonial Societies”. This continues my interest in the representation of these gender categories that were neither entirely feminine nor masculine. The research focuses on different societies in comparison to the ones I covered in my dissertation. In light of my deep interest in Andean gender structures, I believe my knowledge can contribute substantively to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s reorganization of the galleries displaying Andean art, taking into consideration my findings on Andean gender mechanisms as well as the archaeological discoveries related to gender topics that were found during the last two decades. In addition, this knowledge can serve well in the cataloging of artifacts of anthropomorphic images that form part of the Museum’s collection.

The second research topic I am pursuing is part of the framework of the *4A Laboratory: Art Histories, Archaeologies, Anthropologies, Aesthetics* Fellowship. My study “Mutual Growth: The Agency of Plants as reflected in Inca and Chimú Visual Culture” explores the meaning and agency of the represented plants in these two artistic styles. Furthermore, the study aims to examine whether these representations echo animistic ontologies regarding plants and crops. The research also investigates the potential relationship between the social role of a represented plant and the artifact’s function, form and agency. I believe as a result of this study I will broaden my perspective on non-anthropomorphic representation in Andean art and the interaction between meaning and form.

The third research interest I am currently focusing on is the way Andean societies viewed the European invasion. This research centers on a unique ceramic piece that was found in the Inca last refuge in Vicabamba and depicts a complex scene of confrontation between the Spaniards and the indigenous population. Together with two of my colleagues I have analyzed this exceptional iconography and, now after interpreting this complex scene, my intention is to center on the historical context of this piece and connect the historical data on the Early Colonial Period with the ceramic’s representational theme.

Beyond my research, I have had the opportunity to work in a diverse array of curatorial capacities. For the nine years I served as the curator of the Maiman Collection of Ancient Andean Artifacts, my responsibilities entailed researching, cataloguing, and conserving the collection’s artifacts, as well as evaluating the authenticity of the objects. My work with this collection also included two types of public engagement: the first involved interaction with the general public, and the second with university students and professors. Each visitor to the collection had a private tour, which took him or her through a journey of different ancient Andean cultures. For academics and advanced students, I created eight workshops through which we explored together a specific theme or a culture by means of related artifacts. Five of the workshops focused on a specific style, such as Chavin, Nasca, Moche, Wari-Tiwanaku and Lambayeuqe. Three other workshops centered on Inca textiles, Andean ethnomusicology, and the contacts between South ???America's ancient societies.

In addition to my professional experience with Maiman Collection, I catalogued the Andean collection of the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University. I also served as a curatorial assistant for the exhibition “Chimu: Imperial Riches from the Desert of Peru” that took place at The Israel Museum. As a result of these further experiences, I became aware of the importance of collection management in order to create both virtual and physical access to the artifacts for researchers, artists, and the public at large.

Since I obtained my doctorate, I have been seeking a way to bridge the knowledge I have acquired with the non-academic public. While my work in the Maiman Collection was partially directed to this end, I would now like to broaden the component of public engagement on a broader scale and reach a wider variety of audiences by curating exhibitions and creating other types of activities such as interactive museum tours, public talks, and workshops.

To this end, I have a special interest in the use of modern technology within the museum setting. In these days of rapid technological development and the flooding of images, we should ask ourselves what a museum can offer its visitors. Since the image of almost every artwork can be accessed by a push of a button, I believe a museum should offer an experience that goes beyond the superficial acquaintance with an artwork. One way a museum can undertake this challenge is by creating an infrastructure that will enable the visitor to delve into several symbolic levels of a select number of art works per visit.

In the case of Ancient Andean art, there is an important advantage of observing the actual work of art over its photographic image. This is due to the importance of the three-dimensional qualities of these artifacts. Even in case of a seemingly two-dimensional artifact, such as textile, it should be recognized that it was also a three-dimensional object when worn by the original owner or draped on a human body. The two-dimensional image of an artifact transmitted a screen thereore does not relate the entire art experience. Furthermore, Andean objects contain several levels of meanings that can be explored more easily when we have a firsthand experience with them. In my research on Andean artifacts, I was exposed to multiple layers of the artwork's meanings, which are inherent within different components of the work. In this way a “Russian doll” of significance may be created:

The artist's society

The artist

Aesthetic

Iconography

Function

Form

Technology

Material

I believe that these multiple layers of significance can be conveyed to museum visitors by technological means, such as an application that the visitor can use on a tablet provided by the museum or downloaded on his or her cellphone. This app will serve as an explanatory device and not just as medium to represent the artwork. The app will include an interactive presentation focusing on several art objects that represent basic Andean concepts. After learning about these examples through this app, the visitor will have food for thought while exploring other works on view.

The app will advance in relation to the visitor’s movement around the artwork or in relation to the visitor's visual interaction with it. By using audio and audio-visual material the app presentation will refer to the different layers of meaning depending on the artifact's characteristics. For example, in case of 1979.206.1096 (fig. 1), the function and the iconography of this ceramic alludes to the reciprocal relationships that Andean present and past societies have with the consumption of the maize beer in *queros*, or Andean ritual cups??. In order to illustrate the way this cup is used, the app will present a short video of a ritual in Andean contemporary community where some *queros* are used. Another potential use for the app is to illustrate more complex iconographies that incorporate several figures (fig. 2). In these instances, an animation video will explain the iconography. However, rather than converting the scene into a flat two-dimensional sequence, the animation video will move the figures around the image of the work itself.

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It is a pleasure to write this recommendation letter for Dr. Artzi's application for the Metropolitan Museum of Art Curatorial Research Fellowship. I first met Bat-ami Artzi at a congress on Amerindians textiles in 2010 and since then we met several times in Peru and Paris. We stay constantly in touch regarding the common interests we share in the fields of Andean and gender archaeology.

The doctoral thesis of Bat-ami Artzi, “Beyond the Image: Femininity and Other Gender Expressions in the Ancient Art of the South-Central Andes (800 B.C-1532 A.D)” is a monumental and extremely original iconographic analysis based on a very extensive database that was collected from many museums and was intensely studied by the candidate. Given the original discovery in this thesis of different facets of gender mechanisms in Andean societies, it became a veritable landmark in the history of the study of gender structures and roles in the ancient Andean societies.

Furthermore, I read two of Dr. Artzi's articles: “… y son yndios por conquistar”: las alegorías femeninas de los cuatro suyus en el testimonio etnohistórico y arqueológico” (2015) and “La participación de las mujeres en el culto: un estudio iconográfico de la cerámica inca” (2016). They are very original and well-argued articles that offer totally new interpretations to materials previously studied.

Bat-ami Artzi's research sticks out for its interdisciplinary approach to the study ancient Andean art. It uses methods and sources taken from art history, archaeology, anthropology, ethno-history and linguistics. As Artzi's findings clearly demonstrate, this methodological approach has proven to be highly effective. In light of that, I sure that the candidate can contribute significantly to the interpretation and presentation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Andean collection.

It is important to take into account that Dr. Artzi was able to conduct engaging and thorough research projects without the benefit of being in close proximity to the main centers of investigation into Andean archaeology. Her dedication and creativity no doubt helped her to overcome this gap.

I have to admit that I myself would be delighted to collaborate with Dr. Artzi in further research on the issues and interests we have in common. For time to time I consult her regarding Andean art and Andean gender representation. Her commentaries are very original, and they always help me to consider new directions in my interpretations.

Bat-ami Artzi's articles and doctoral thesis clearly demonstrate that she is a very high-level researcher. Her interdisciplinary work opens new possibilities to study art and material culture of ancient and colonial societies of the Andean region. If she will be chosen for Curatorial Research Fellowship, The Metropolitan Museum of Art will gain extremely professional assistance and, at the same time, I am certain that this opportunity will move forward Dr. Artzi's curatorial capacities.

For all these reasons, I wholeheartedly recommend Bat-Ami Artzi for the Curatorial Research Fellowship that will be an unparalleled opportunity for professional advancement in her promising scholarly career.