

DONNA MCCLELLAND (OCTOBER 24, 1932- SEPTEMBER 11, 2004)

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Donna McClelland holding the Sacrifice Ceremony goblet that she excavated in the tomb of a Moche Priestess at San José de Moro, Peru, 1991 (photo by Don McClelland).

Just one week after Donna McClelland and her family returned to California from Hawaii where they celebrated her fiftieth wedding anniversary, she lost her eleven-year battle with breast cancer. She is survived by her husband Don, two daughters, six grandchildren, and her sister.

Donna was born in Augusta, Kansas. She graduated from Wichita State University with a degree in education in 1954, earning the highest grade point average in her class. That same year

she married Don McClelland, who would be her lifelong companion—sharing a strong interest in archaeology, travel, and mountaineering. Together, they visited more than sixty countries, including two trips to Antarctica. They climbed in the Sierra Nevada, the Japan Alps, and Australia, and in 1987 they reached the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest point in Africa.

Donna taught elementary school in New York and California before pursuing course work in

archaeology at UCLA. She participated in the excavation of an archaeological site in southern California, and became involved in analyzing its lithic material. In this capacity, she served as a Research Assistant for Professor James Hill, who is most well known for his archaeological research in the American southwest.

In 1968, Donna volunteered to help organize photographs that I had taken of Moche objects in several museums and private collections. At that time, the corpus included about 2,000 photographs, but I was hoping to expand it and to organize the photographs into categories to facilitate the study of Moche civilization through a systematic analysis of what is depicted in Moche art. When Donna and I began working together, neither of us imagined that our collaboration would continue over the next thirty-five years as we developed what is now known as the Moche Archive, nor that it would be such a rich and wonderful venture. I continued to track down and photograph Moche objects, while Donna developed and maintained the organization of the negatives, prints, and slides. Each year we added important new examples of Moche art that significantly enhanced our ability to reconstruct aspects of Moche civilization. What we developed together now consists of more than 165,000 photographs of Moche objects in museums and private collections throughout the world. Over the years, Donna developed 98 categories into which the art is divided. These include warfare, hunting, fishing, architecture, erotic themes, portraits, etc. Donna carefully sorted the photographs into those categories, and filed the negatives in such a way that any one negative could be retrieved from the entire inventory in less than a minute.

When we began our study of Moche art, we concentrated primarily on ceramic sculptures of plants, animals, people, and objects. We soon realized, however, that these are of limited iconographic significance—largely because they lack the context that provides insights about their meaning. It became clear that fineline painted vessels are much more informative because they often portray the objects in context, and depict activities

in which two or more figures participate. Drawing an analogy from Christian art, an attempt to reconstruct the Nativity by studying individual sculptures of the Christ child, Mary, or the wise men would be fruitless until one had seen the entire Nativity with its figures, animals, stable, and star portrayed together. Clearly, it was the fineline painting of the Moche that would provide the key to interpreting their art.

There was, however, a major problem in working with Moche fineline paintings—nearly all are wrapped around the chambers of ceramic vessels, and thus are impossible to see in a single photograph. Even with multiple photographs, it is difficult to realize how different parts of the scene fit together, and manipulation of multiple photographs is awkward and time-consuming.

To study Moche fineline paintings, they must be reproduced as two-dimensional drawings. Some paintings already had been reproduced in this way at the time we began our study. Of particular importance were those published by Gerdt Kutscher (1950, 1954, 1983) and Rafael Larco Hoyle (1939, 1948, 1963). These provided clear evidence of the wealth of information contained in Moche fineline paintings, and suggested how much more information would be available if additional drawings could be produced. Most of Kutscher's early drawings were of painted vessels in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, while most of Larco's drawings were of vessels in his museum, or of vessels that he was able to borrow from local collections. In both cases, the drawings were produced by artists working directly from the painted vessels—a procedure that required a good deal of skill and patience on the part of the artist, as well as considerable time with each vessel. Somewhat later, Alan Sawyer published various drawings of important fineline paintings from the Nathan Cummings Collection (Sawyer 1966), but again, the artist worked directly from the painted vessels.

It was clear that accurate drawings of many more fineline paintings would have to be produced. The problem was how to produce them

when the vessels were scattered in museums and private collections throughout the world. It was not possible to bring the vessels to Los Angeles to make the drawings, nor was it possible for us to live where the vessels were located for long periods while drawings were made. The solution was to develop a technique of taking multiple, standardized photographs of the painted vessels that would allow us to make drawings of their paintings in Los Angeles. Photography had several advantages. It made it possible to record efficiently the painted vessels wherever they were. It also minimized the time necessary to handle these ancient ceramic objects. Moreover, since the drawings were traced directly from photographic images, they reflect variations in line width, brushstroke, and idiosyncratic variations of style that proved to be critical later in identifying the work of individual Moche painters.

I set out to take the photographs that were needed, while Donna began converting the photographs to finished ink drawings. Her work required not only artistic skill and manual dexterity, but also a good understanding of Moche art and material culture, and above all, patience and perseverance. She became extremely skilled at producing these drawings, and was fully committed to the task. Even when she traveled, she would take along drawings so she could continue to work toward their completion. Some of her drawings were published by us or by colleagues working on various aspects of Moche art. Many more were produced simply because we wanted to study the content of the paintings, but they remained unpublished.

As the corpus of Donna's drawings grew, we became increasingly fascinated with the tradition of Moche fineline painting. We decided to produce a book about it, which would include many of her unpublished drawings, thus making them available for research by other scholars. The production of that book (Donnan and McClelland 1999) proved to be a fascinating venture. We found ourselves continually discovering how features of fineline painting that began in the early phases of Moche culture developed and changed

over time, while others continued for some time and then were replaced. Some features were innovated—seemingly with great potential—but were suddenly discarded by the Moche painters.

In the course of our research, we were able to identify multiple paintings by individual Moche artists. This allowed us to appreciate the variety of scenes that an artist might paint, and the range of variation in how he painted the same scene. It also informed us about the range of vessel forms that he might use, and suggested that certain artists were influenced by the paintings of others.

In addition to her work on Moche fineline painting, Donna conducted extensive research on various aspects of Moche iconography. She was keenly interested in the increased frequency of maritime scenes that characterizes late Moche iconography, and published two papers on her observations (Cordy-Collins and McClelland 1983; McClelland 1990). She also studied the *ulluchu*, a plant form that is frequently portrayed in Moche art (McClelland 1977, in press), the Muscovy duck (McClelland 1992), the Botanical Frog (McClelland 1991a), and the Burial Theme (Donnan and McClelland 1979).

While Donna maintained her continuing involvement in the Moche Archive and in her research on aspects of Moche iconography, she also participated in archaeological projects in Peru. These included the Moche Valley-Chan Chan Project in 1972, the Chotuna Chornancap Project from 1980 through 1982, the Pacatnamu Project from 1983 through 1987, and the San José de Moro Project in 1991 and 1992. Donna was not only involved in the excavations, she helped catalog, draw, and analyze the excavated material, and was instrumental in publishing the results (McClelland 1997; Donnan and McClelland 1997). At the time of her death, she was working on a book about the fineline paintings from San José de Moro, which will be published in early 2007 (McClelland *et al.* in press).

By combining her knowledge of Moche art with experience gained from participation in

archaeological excavations in Peru, Donna developed important insights about the Moche. Many of these were incorporated in the first documentary film about this civilization, "Discovering the Moche", which she helped film in Peru in 1974, and major museum exhibitions that she helped produce at UCLA Fowler Museum: *Moche Art of Peru* in 1978, *Ceramics of Ancient Peru* in 1992, and *Royal Tombs of Sipán* in 1993. Then, in 2000, she and her husband Don co-curated a wonderful exhibition at the Fowler Museum titled *Moche Fineline Painting of Ancient Peru*.

Donna also presented the results of her research at professional meetings. She was recognized internationally as one of the world's leading authorities on the Moche, and was often an invited speaker at conferences on Pre-Columbian civilizations. Over the years, she produced more than 780 rollout drawings of Moche fineline paintings. These have become critically important in Moche research and are constantly being reproduced in scholarly journals, textbooks, museum exhibitions, and television documentaries.

Donna's talent, dedication, and upbeat personality were appreciated by all who knew her. She was a very gracious, kind, and loyal person, who never overlooked an opportunity to celebrate. That is the way she will be remembered by those of us who were fortunate enough to know her. For future generations, she will be known for the quality of her publications, and above all for her remarkable reproductions of Moche fineline paintings. Through her drawings, Donna gave us the ability to see what the Moche depicted in their art, and thus provided an unsurpassed resource to explore and understand the Moche world that she found so profoundly engaging. That she left such a remarkable gift is in keeping with her manner. She would be pleased.

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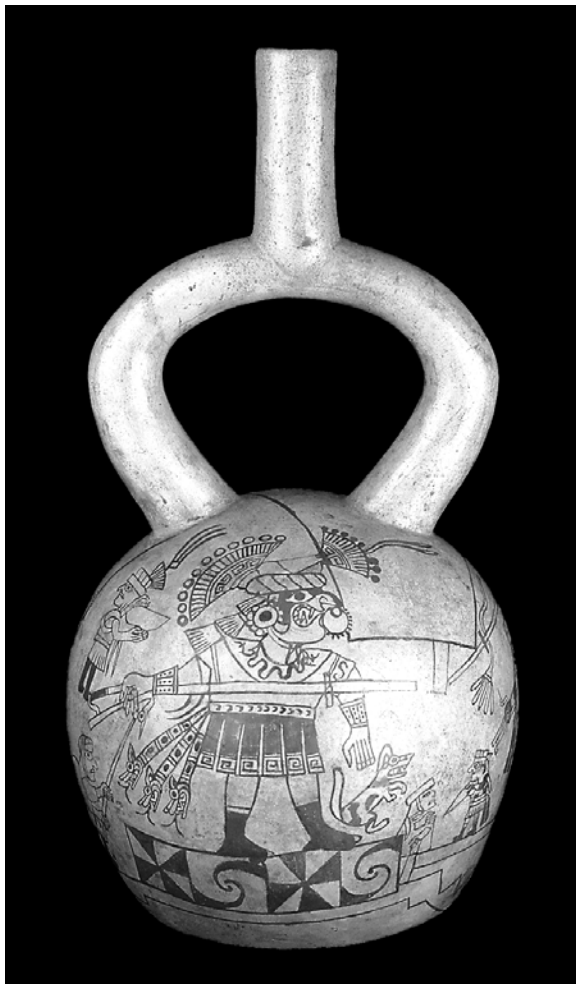
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- 1991b* The Late Moche Ceramic Record of the Middle Horizon. Paper presented at the Chacmool Conference, Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.
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*A Moche fineline painted bottle from a private collection,
with its rollout drawn by Donna McClelland
(photo by Christopher B. Donnan).*