

LAMANAI SERIES ARTIST STATEMENT

I have been exposed to building construction, architecture, and interior design for most of my life and undoubtedly this has influenced my aesthetics. Before becoming a metalsmith, I worked as an interior architect and even then I was intrigued with the vessel form because it defines space and has the possibility of containing something special, much as an architectural space would. My early metalwork focused on vessels and was strongly influenced by my appreciation of our natural environment in combination with my interest in the custom of ritual offerings and ancient/historical offering vessels. My work then evolved to making hollowware that reflected some of the attitudes of the Arts and Crafts Movement in combination with my architecturally influenced appreciation for clean lines and spare design.

My Lamanai Series one-of-a-kind vessels are a reflection of my involvement at the Maya site of Lamanai, Belize, in Central America, and the archaeological excavations and architectural mapping I worked on there. While I feel these bowls are still decorative in nature, they incorporate actual fragments of the architectural drawings I did, and also reference patterns and symbols found in Maya art and culture along with my personal interpretation of these. While the juxtaposition of boulders and rocks against the refined architectural stonework found during excavations provides visual interest, both in situ and in my bowls, it is also a reflection of the development and decline of a society. At the very least, it is a reflection of change. While not intending the viewer to understand how rocks and architecture represent social change, it is my desire that the viewer will see a simple bowl form with interesting textural surface embellishment, which is also aesthetically pleasing. Those with some knowledge of Mesoamerican art and archaeology may glean more.

As I began doing these architectural excavation composite drawings in the bowls, they each evoked memories of different things I encountered in my archaeological adventure—from the simple pleasure of being present on the day a large cache of ceramic vessels was found in the boulders, to the more profound realization of the events that must have taken place to dramatically change a culture. As a metalsmith I've always made vessels and in this body of work the vessels are an expression of personal experience.

Karen Pierce

The following pages provide photos and descriptions of most of the pieces from my Lamanai Series, and also some additional Belize archaeological background information.



The Social-Political Implications of Primary Access

\$2,700.00 Retail **SOLD**

Copper, Epoxy with glass enamel powder, Rosary Peas
3 1/4"H x 17 1/2" Diameter

The bowl is etched with an "in-the-round" site map of the Maya site of Lamanai. The "jade-green" finish on the narrow rim of the bowl serves to represent the surrounding forest and/or jade. To the Maya elite, jade was likely considered more valuable than gold. A modified Maya pattern, which could be read as a "water" or "sun" pattern, is etched on the outside of the bowl. The site of Lamanai sits alongside the shore of a large freshwater lagoon. A separate loose small bowl is placed at the "lagoon" location in the center of the bowl with Red Rosary Peas encased in clear epoxy in a flower pattern in a small round copper bowl. Rosary Peas are poisonous if ingested, but arranged as a beautiful brightly colored flower they are deceptive, as people can often be.



Sweat of the Sun; Tears of the Moon; Walls, Stairs and Floors

\$2,800.00 Retail **SOLD**

3 1/2"H x 17 3/4" Diameter

Copper, Silver leaf, 23K Gold Leaf, Porcelaine Paint.

The inner copper bowl is etched with a composite pattern of archaeological excavation drawings I made at the Maya site of Lamanai, Belize. The drawings are of the Elite-Residential Complex, nicknamed "Ottawa". This bowl is silver-leafed on the underside and is suspended mid-height in the gold-leafed-copper outer bowl by resting on a blue-painted ring, reminiscent of water. The lagoon and river that borders the site was vital for daily life. In Pre-Columbian metalwork, gold was referred to as Sweat of the Sun and silver as Tears of the Moon. Duality is an important concept. Joy and sorrow--- emotions experienced with Maya mapping.



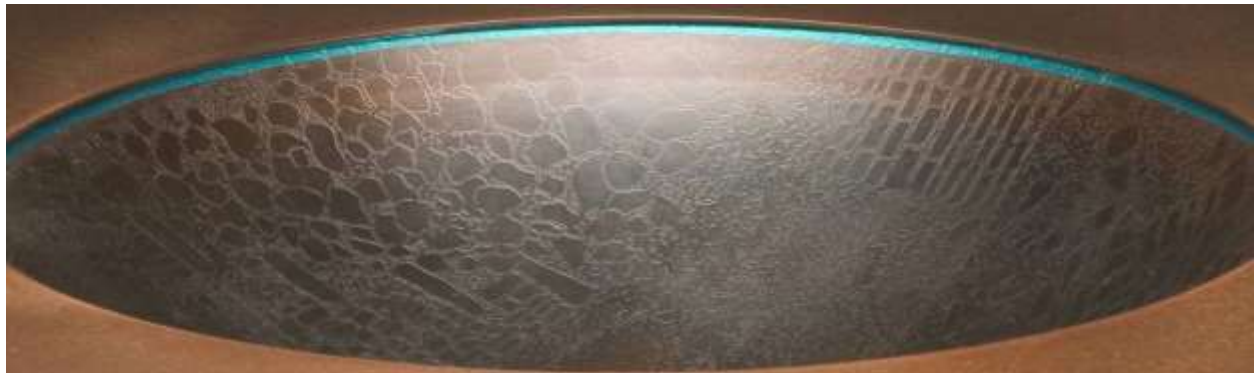
Sweat of the Sun; Tears of the Moon; The Sorrow of Archaeology

\$2,800.00 Retail **SOLD**

3 1/2"H x 17 3/4" Diameter

Copper, Silver leaf, 23K Gold Leaf, Stones

The bowl is etched with archaeological record drawings I did of an Elite-Residential Complex at the Maya site of Lamanai, arranged in a composite pattern—consisting of the many stones, and walls and stairs found during excavation. The inner bowl is silver-leafed on the underside, and “nested” by sitting on a layer of stones representing the boulders the Maya used to bury the residential buildings around AD 1000. In Pre-Columbian metalwork, gold was referred to as “Sweat of the Sun” and silver as “Tears of the Moon”. Duality is an important concept. Joy and Sorrow. Emotions of Maya mapping.



Buried Beneath a Mantle of Boulders

\$2,300.00 Retail **SOLD**

3 1/2"H x 18" Diameter

Copper, Stripping-tape, Colored Epoxy Resin (underneath)

This bowl is etched with a Lamanai Elite-Residential Complex ("Ottawa") excavation drawing composite pattern on the inner copper bowl with blue-green line at the inside top edge of the inner bowl and a rim extends beyond this. The buildings of "Ottawa" were partially demolished by ancient Maya and the entire complex was filled in with a boulder core, thus burying what was left of the buildings. The structures, buried beneath, were revealed as the boulder covering was removed during archaeological excavation. There were lots and lots of rocks in the Ottawa complex! As a surprise find for the viewer, a representation of a jade "artifact" is found underneath the bowl, encased inside the ring base...buried beneath a mantle of boulders.



Lamanai N10-3 LPY

\$2,800.00 Retail

3 1/2"H x 17 3/4" Diameter

Copper, 23K Gold Leaf

The bowl is etched with drawings I did of the excavation of the buildings of an Elite-Residential Complex at the Maya site of Lamanai, combined with elements from a topographic map of the same site, arranged in a composite pattern. The application of gold leaf over the etched surface hides the drawings until viewed upon closer inspection, similar to the way many Maya sites are found before excavations begin. The gold also adds a degree of preciousness to the drawings, for indeed the experience of archaeological discovery and drawing was extraordinary for me.



Altered Architectural Mapping at the N 10-3 Complex

\$2,900.00 Retail **SOLD**

3 1/4"H x 17 1/2" Diameter

Double-Walled Bowl with Flat Rim

Copper, Striping-tape

There is a small piece that sits inside the bowl: Copper, Brass, Resin, Jade and Mercury

The bowl is etched with a composite pattern of archaeological excavation drawings I made at the Maya site of Lamanai, Belize. Elements of the "Ottawa" section drawings are organized in a concentric circle pattern inside the bowl, based on Maya carved limestone altars where glyphs are typically placed in concentric circles...perhaps resembling tree growth rings. In addition to mapping the architecture of Lamanai, I also was part of a team who made molds and reproductions of Maya stelae and altars. My experience at the site of Caracol in the repair and reproduction of the famous Group A Ballcourt Altar 21 was a privileged experience, and definitely one of personal growth as I lived and worked in the jungle with a wonderful team of Belizeans and archaeologists, painstakingly putting the pieces of the damaged altar back together again and making a rubber mold, and later the fiberglass reproduction of the Altar. Be aware of fire ants and fiery sunsets. The small bowl placed inside represents the bowl found under the Lamanai ballcourt altar, which contained mercury—Beautiful, but poisonous.



Tropical Forest Tulip

\$2,000.00 Retail

2 ¼"H x 13" Diameter

Copper, 23K Gold Leaf, Glass Lens, Shell, Bone, Rocks, Greenstone, Cast Resin

The outer bowl is etched with photographs of the trees that surround the buildings of an Elite-Residential Complex at the Maya site of Lamanai, with a plan view of one of the buildings in the center. The upper bowl is etched with drawings I did of this Complex, arranged in a composite pattern—consisting of the many stones, and walls and stairs found during excavation. This building, nicknamed “Tulip” was where I first began architectural recording at Lamanai, so it has precious memories for me. During excavations, there were offering caches found buried in the floors in the rooms of this building—represented by the small “offering” one can peer through the glass lens.



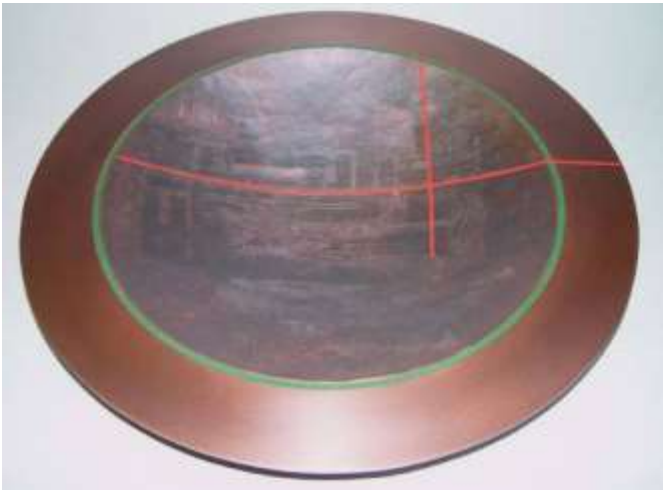
Beginnings, Endings and Empty Pots

\$2,100.00 Retail

5 1/2" H x 17" Diameter

Copper. Pigmented Wax, Pigmented Cast Resin (underneath)

The upper side of the bowl has an etched water pattern at edges with alternating Maya glyphs for birth and death at bowl edge (like a Maya calendar), and a repeating rock/boulder pattern toward the center of the bowl roughly forming a square blanket [shroud]. There is a reproduction of a Lamanai jade artifact of jaguar imagery inside underneath. Jaguars are often representative of "transformation", as shamans sometimes take on an animal form to travel in the spirit world. The glyphs have a faint trace of "painted surface", as do many Maya artifacts and architectural elements. The bowl form is derived from late ceramic vessels found at Lamanai. In some Mesoamerican/South American cultures jade was sometimes placed in the mouth of a dead person. Many empty pots were found buried in caches at Lamanai—they probably once contained perishable goods, but lead us to question their significance.



Incidents of Mapping in Lama'an/ayin

\$3,000.00 Retail **SOLD**

2 3/4"H x 23" Diameter

Copper, Pigmented Resin, Striping-tape

The inner copper bowl is hammered (the hammer texture reminiscent of all the boulders and rocks covering the structures) and then etched with an overview plan of the Lamanai Elite-Residential Complex ("Ottawa") showing the different structures that surround the N10-3 Plaza. Excavation photos are juxtaposed with elements from the excavation drawings. Between the inner bowl and the flat rim is a green resin band--recalling of the green of the jungle surrounding the barren excavation area...also, greenstone, or jade, was highly valued to the Maya. In archaeological mapping, all field drawings are tied to a grid of mapping lines which are installed over the area to be excavated. Many of the section lines are visible on the etched surface, and for emphasis, the two red lines on the piece indicate one of the section lines where I was doing the archaeological record drawings, and the "Main Line", which ties all drawings to an established point elsewhere on the site. Lines and string are all over the place during excavation.

KAREN PIERCE'S ARCHAEOLOGY INVOLVEMENT: THE PROJECT SITE—LAMANAI, BELIZE

During the years 1998-2002 I participated in archaeology at Lamanai (<http://www.belizecubadigs.com/>). At this time I got to know many of the Maya and Mestizo people in the adjacent village of Indian Church. The three main projects I worked on for archaeology were the architectural recording and mapping of the structures of an elite residential complex called "Ottawa"; the investigation of the production of copper artifacts at Lamanai and the search for a "metal production workshop"; and the reproduction of jade artifacts and of large limestone monuments, called stelae and altars. Additionally, I became involved with several humanitarian projects in the village.

The Maya site of Lamanai (formerly called Indian Church, named after the ruins of two Spanish contact period churches built on the site) is located in the Orange Walk District in northern Belize approximately 30 miles inland from Belize's east coast on the Caribbean Sea. The site is situated on the western margin of the New River Lagoon, a 28 mile long lagoon flowing north into the New River, which meets the sea about 80 miles from Lamanai, near the modern day town of Corozal. Excavations have revealed an occupation of the site spanning from late Preclassic, or earlier, through the Spanish Colonial Period—from around 1500BC to AD1550 and beyond.

"OTTAWA" (Elite Residential Area)

The group of structures that surround Plaza N 10-3 are affectionately known as "Ottawa". My main interest at Lamanai was in the architectural recording of the structures of this complex. It is an elite-residential and administration complex—built up on an elevated courtyard, with the 6th century as its earliest known date. It was primarily made up of five range (formerly termed palace) structures. It is believed that originally it consisted of four structures around a courtyard in a U-shaped arrangement that looked out on the Jaguar Plaza. Later a fifth structure was built blocking this off. All structures saw modifications over time. In the Terminal Classic, the top of the structures were chopped off and entire plaza filled in with a boulder core, thus burying what was left of the buildings. Only as the boulder covering was removed were the structures revealed. There were lots and lots of rocks in the Ottawa complex!



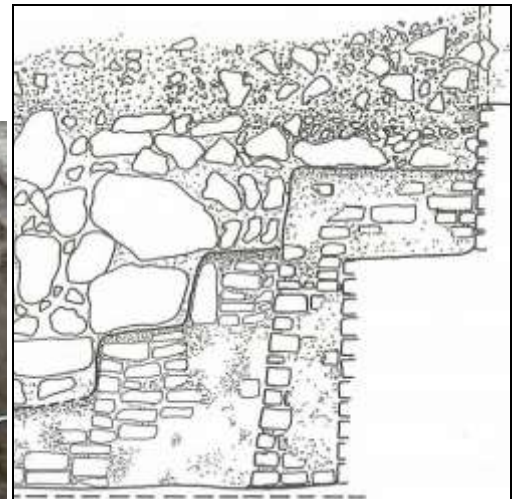
Jaguar Temple and Plaza



"Ottawa" Complex surrounding N 10-3 Plaza



A cache of ceramic vessels in the boulders



The archaeology team at work—Karen's at the drawing board in the lower left, drawing details such as this staircase that was covered with boulders.



Indian Church Village Artisans' Center



IC Village, Artisans' Center (lower rt) & Lamanai Site



Some members of the Indian Church Village Artisans



Jewelry Studio

Indian Church Village Artisans' Center (and Hurricane Shelter)

Adjacent to the Maya site of Lamanai in Belize, this center was established to provide training and a workspace to villagers who make crafts for their livelihood in this small, rural, economically disadvantaged community.

Building construction funded by the British High Commission and the Government of Belize, with a multitude of volunteers providing numerous hours of volunteer labor and teaching

Building size: 41'-0" x 41'-0" (approximately 1,600 square feet)

Concrete, Steel, Wood, Paint

The Indian Church Village Craft Training Project in Belize was initiated by Karen Pierce who voluntarily directed the project from 1999 - 2007. This included grant writing and implementation, fundraising (over \$160,000US), building design and construction of a 1600sf craft center, supply procurement, recruitment of approximately 26 volunteer craft teachers from abroad + 11 from Belize, establishment of instructional outlines for workshops; plus teaching jewelry, and other craft skills, as well as teaching craft business and marketing skills.

The Indian Church Village Scholarship Program is a separate & ongoing program, coordinated by Karen Pierce, to raise funds to send the village children to high school, and provide student loans for junior college.