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IN THE BEGINNING PRE-COLUMBIAN CULTURES
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CHULUCANAS RISING CERAMIC RENAISSANCE
MASTER WEAVER MAXIMO LAURA
SMALL WORLDS HIGHLAND RETABLOS
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MASTER WEAVER



MAXIMO LAURA'S award-winning tapestries are many things: artisanal product, contemporary textile art, historical document, Peruvian artifact. It takes **CONSIDERABLE TALENT** to weave all of this together into Peruvian works of art for global collectors.

Maximo Laura was recently designated as one of Peru's Living Treasures, an honor worn easily by this self-taught artist whose textiles have received numerous national and international awards during a 35-year career. This important award is given, following UNESCO guidelines, to an artist whose role is to preserve and elevate the culture of their homeland. Through his reverential references to ancient traditions as well as his modern manipulations of them, Maximo's work represents a masterful continuity in Peru's textile traditions. He is also a respected teacher of young people.

He started weaving when he was nine years old in his father's atelier in Ayacucho. Under his father he was an apprentice and assistant until he turned 20. His father, a traveler, a violinist and above all a weaver, was revered in Ayacucho. His textiles were recognizable, simple and completely handmade. Maximo also learned from Gregorio Sulca, another master weaver from Ayacucho. He also admired the work of his brothers Vidal, Gregorio and Andres, and his brother-in-law, Pelagio Capcha whose works from the Chavin, Paracas and Nazca cultures were memorable. All of these men were secretive weavers who worked behind closed doors.

His independent weaving practice began in the 1980s, when he sold his work to pay for his studies in literature in Lima. Eventually, literature faded into the background and the nuances, meanings and ideas inherent in the textiles became his focus.

Some of Maximo's favorite themes are drawn from Andean iconography, but elements of pre-Columbian cultures from across the Americas abound. Jaguars, spirals, square crosses, jungles, mountains, sacred offerings, and dream visions fight for space in his densely populated work. "Peru's ancestral textiles are an infinite source of inspiration. This history merged with the innovations, experiments and ideas of international contemporary textile art, allows for continuation and originality while always maintaining a very personal and Peruvian worldview, a unique spiritual language," says Maximo about his own work.

Maximo sees his role as that of an interpreter, always decoding and making tangible what otherwise would be a feeling or a thought. He has had many influences throughout his career, such as Chavin culture, which is expressive and totemic; Paracas, which is colorful and strong; Nazca and Wari for their geometric shapes; and Chancay for its sobriety and lineal spirit.

Fibers and colors make up the elements of his universe. For Maximo, color has the power to highlight or undermine symbols, contexts and messages. Color allows for an encounter with light and shadow to build with intensity, drama and spirituality. "For me a colorless design is like a body without soul. It is through color that all the elements gain energy, life, intention and real value. Color has a symbolic value in my work, it refers to places, seasons, feelings and philosophy. I am very passionate about all shades of red, orange, yellow," he says.

His creative process is continuous, intense and vital – so much so that he has to be calm and at peace so that his visions can come to life. He is constantly taking notes that mix drawings, words, and feelings with the potential to be the starting point of a new tapestry. "Tapestry-making requires a progressive, slow and irreversible system of work that allows for the miniscule, patient and intimate meeting of technical and visual solutions, leading to the opening of an infinite repertoire of possibility subjected to the communicative intentionality of the work. I try to surrender to the limitations of the materials and to the requirements of the act of creation, under the light of an obsessive taste that will, in the end, reflect a cultural and textile connotation that is typically Peruvian," affirms Laura in his artist's statement.

His work is a woven symbiosis of ancient Andean textiles, international influences, and something deeply personal. It's art.



Maximo Laura's work can be found in major museums and galleries around the world, including the National Museum of Peruvian Culture (Peru), National Museum of the American Indian (USA), and Le Musée de Bibracte (France). For more information, see www.maximolaura.com