Hieroglyphic Inscriptions program in March 2001, Harvard Ph.D. William Saturno made one of the most exciting discoveries in the history of Maya Mural program. While exploring in the Guatemalan rainforest, he and his team found an ancient site in the Petén region of Guatemala. Arriving finally at the site of San Bartolo, Saturno explored the site and continued to explore the site. He found that the painted narratives spring to life in brilliant color and vivid color that defies time itself. Like an ancient Maya book unfolded on the walls, the painted murals illustrate the Maya's complex creation story, agricultural cycle of death and rebirth and the otherworldly realm of the gods. Paintings appear above a geometric “skyband,” the power of the real Maya king in this world. The story of creation and sacrifice serves to establish the symbols and rituals of kingship. The otherworldly realm of the gods includes the celestial realm of the gods. Paintings appear above a geometric “skyband,” the power of the real Maya king in this world. The story of creation and sacrifice serves to establish the symbols and rituals of kingship. The otherworldly realm of the gods includes the celestial realm of the gods. The Bonampak murals were painted for a private audience. Each small room can hold only a few people at a time. Further, the most stirring scenes and images were reserved for the king himself—who was privileged enough to sit upon the benchlike thrones.

Conservation efforts continue today at San Bartolo. The murals’ exposure to modern environmental conditions has severely undercut the paintings, causing some of the mural’s paints to fall from the walls. Saturno, along with archaeologists and conservators, is working to preserve the Bonampak murals in the oppressive heat and changing humidity of the rainforest. Although Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History carried out a massive cleaning and restoration effort in the 1980s, physical challenges persist. In the late 1980s, infrared imaging revealed that the entire complex is covered by a layer of dust and smuggling the dust proved difficult. In 1990s, the Bonampak Documentation Project, led by Mary Miller of Yale, photographed every inch of the paintings in normal and infrared wavelengths, which reveals details that are no longer visible to the naked eye. Guided by infrared images, in 2002 artists Heather Hurst and Leonard Ashby completed the most accurate reproduction of the Bonampak murals to date.

SAN BARTOLO, GUATEMALA

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The painters who adorned these walls left behind many of the materials and techniques from the Moche murals. In the small interior chambers, imagery at large scale in bright, vivid colors visible from Moche murals were made to impress, painted on the adobe walls of large, terraced architectural complexes called huacas. Archaeologists visiting Huaca de la Luna noted their presence, and subsequent excavations of the huacas uncovered these earlier layers, they use chemicals to remove. Following their discoveries and investigations, and uncover these earlier layers, they use chemicals to remove. After ceremonies, the walls might be covered with human sacrifices and other rituals took place. The peeled mural was then attached to a board, to the mural and then peeled it from the wall. Throughout time and around the world, people have painted the walls of their homes, palaces, temples, and governmental buildings with an array of scenes and designs expressing events, as well as social values. The peeling of the above-mural walls reflects a communal and significant event, according to these indigenous communities after their creation. In the past, some walls were removed to repair, painted, plastered, or reconstructed. In the late 1920s, the Peabody Museum launched an expedition to Antelope Mesa, twenty-one artifacts were recovered. Modern conservation techniques and restoration work on these paintings, the history of inheriting and preserving paintings, and their functions through time and place.