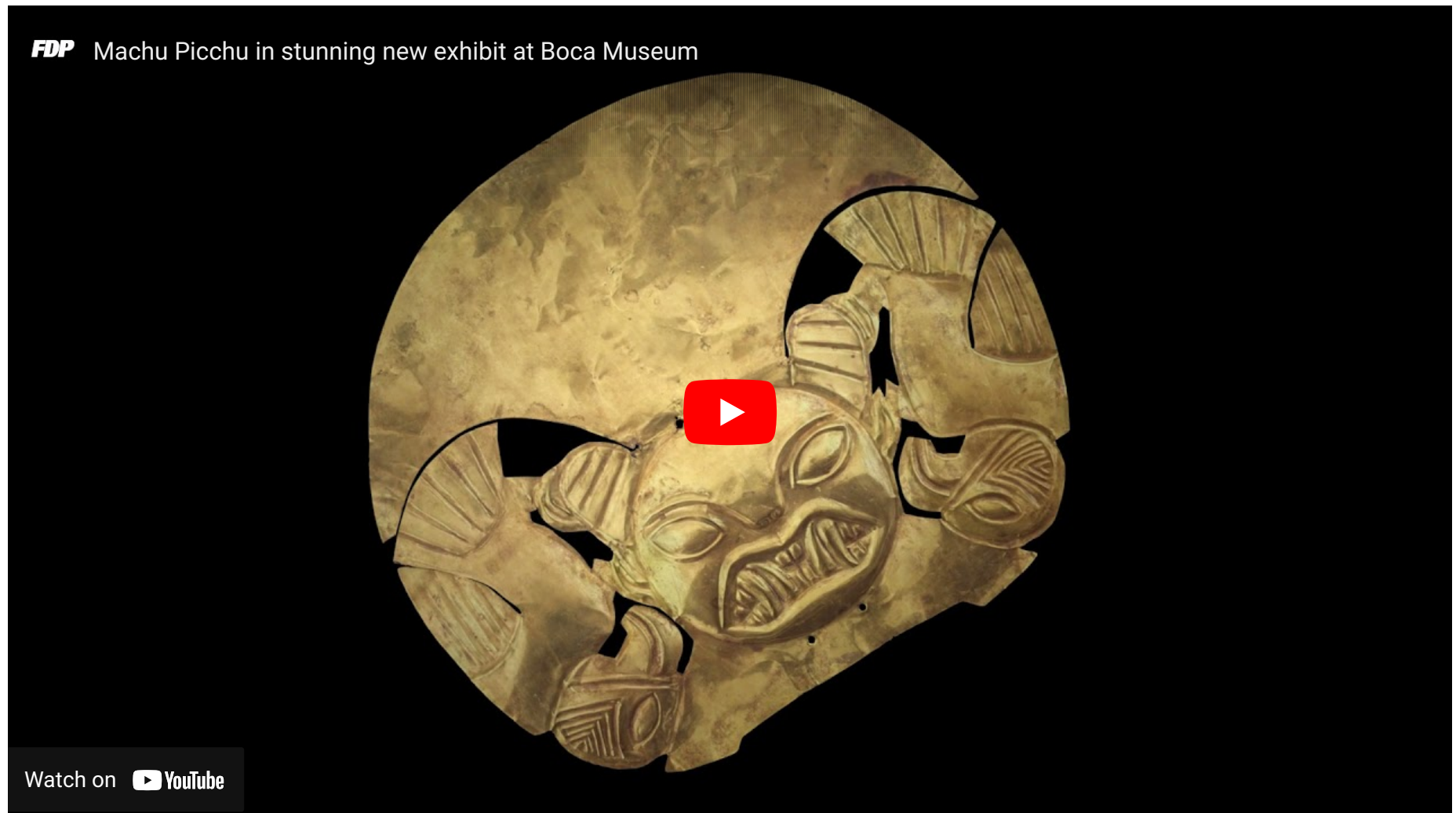


# The glory and terror of Machu Picchu in stunning new exhibit

Machu Picchu, and the Golden Empires of Peru opened on October 16th at the Boca Raton Museum of Art and runs through Sunday, March 6, 2022. Many of these gorgeous, gleaming objects of gold and silver and turquoise have never been on a touring exhibit before.

By **Sandra Schulman** 10/24/2021



Like a thrill ride at a theme park, the new world premiere exhibition, Machu Picchu, and the Golden Empires of Peru opened on October 16th at the Boca Raton Museum of Art. Far from a dusty old display of artifacts, this immersive, virtual reality show is one-of-a-kind modern technology.

With a collection of art of ancient America on loan from Museo Larco in Lima, Peru, and Museo de Sitio Manuel Chávez Ballón in Aguas Calientes, Peru, many of these gorgeous, gleaming objects of gold and silver and turquoise have never been on loan before.

Presented in an imaginative, engrossing way, viewers enter the full museum exhibit on the second floor and are ushered into a full surround cave-like interior, with full wall projections of leaping jaguars, twittering birds, and ominous storm clouds high above the mountains of Peru.

Pottery and ancient wares are displayed with lively stories beside them, bringing to life the ways they were used.

Machu Picchu is a 15th-century Inca site located on a ridge between the Huayna Picchu and Machu Picchu mountains in Peru. High above the clouds at 8,000 ft elevation, it overlooks the Urubamba River. The site's pristine preservation, the quality of its advanced architecture, and the breathtaking mountain vista have made Machu Picchu a true wonder of the world. Terraced fields on the edge of the 80,000-acre site were once used for growing crops, likely maize and potatoes, and coca.

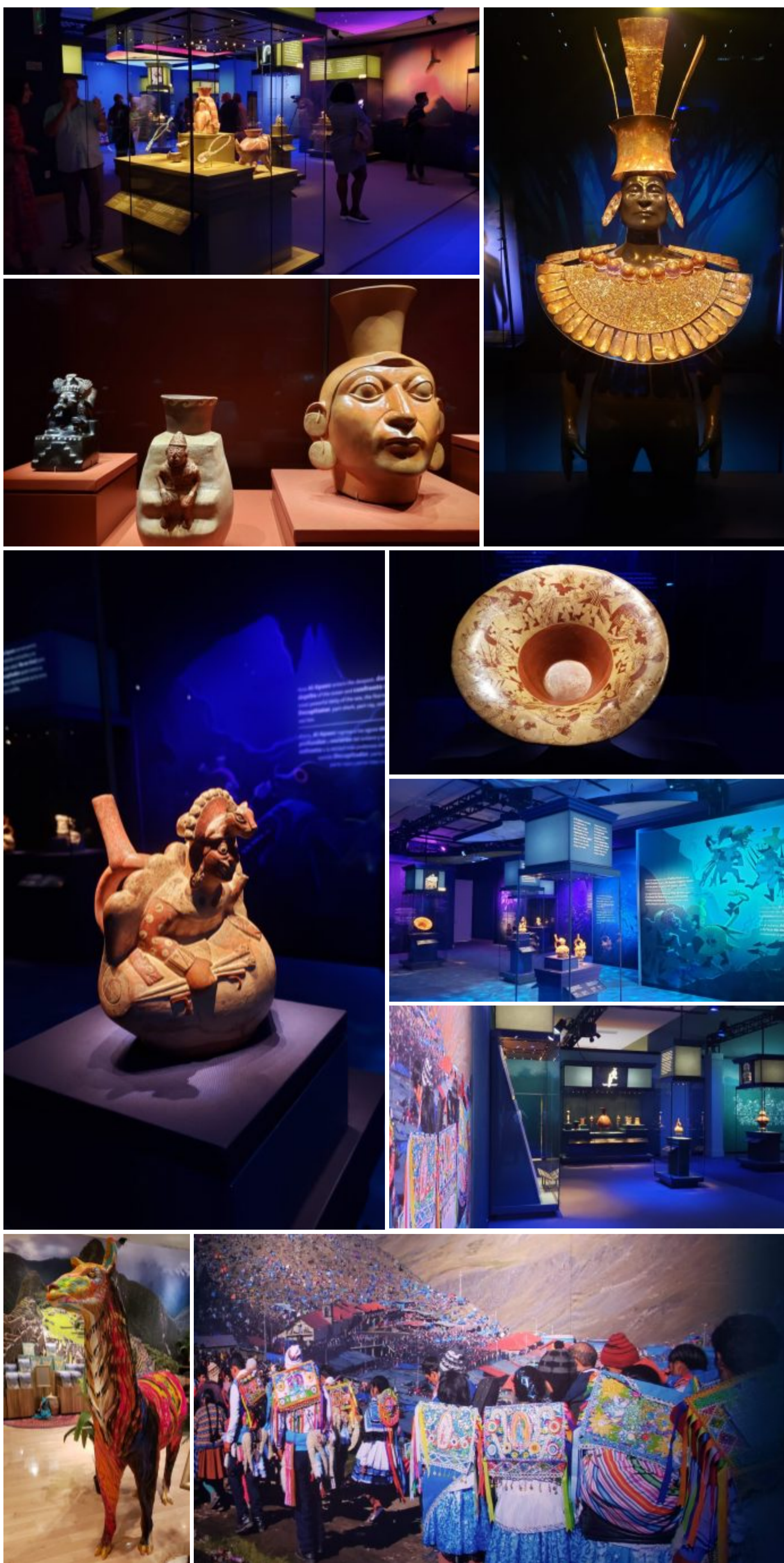


In 1911, explorer Yale University Professor Hiram Bingham III visited the site and published its existence to the modern world for the first time. Covered with vegetation, the buildings were made without mortar, their granite stones quarried and precisely cut.

Archaeologists believe that Machu Picchu was a royal estate of sorts, used by the emperor and his family as a temporary respite, with no war was ever fought there. Machu Picchu has a number of structures that enhance the spiritual significance such as “Temple of the Sun,” an elliptical design similar to a sun temple found at the Inca capital of Cuzco. A rock inside the temple is as an altar. During the June solstice, the rising sun shines directly into one of the temple’s windows, and this indicates an alignment between the window, rock, and solstice sun.

Although their empire existed for only 100 years before being cut short in 1533 by the arrival of the Spaniards, the Incas created 26,000 miles of roads, ruled an empire of 10 million people, and ruled with their language and culture from one end of the Andes to the other.

### Photo Gallery



The exhibit highlights many of these features, including the barbaric animal and human sacrifices. While the exhibit shows a man's heart being cut out and a silver sacrificial cup, it was often children who were sacrificed after being drugged with coca leaves and plied with alcohol, they were left to freeze to death high in the Andes, their bodies preserved for centuries.

Why the sacrifices were made is a strange melange of Inca religious beliefs, natural catastrophes, and the sheer difficulty of trying to survive amid the frozen heights of a volatile mountain chain.

Violent earthquakes are common, as were savage floods that disrupted food supplies.

In response to such terrifying natural phenomena, the Incas resorted to religion, believing the elements were controlled by gods. To survive, the Incas sought to form reciprocal relationships with their gods, appeasing them with simple prayers, food, coca leaves, woven cloth, animals, blood, and, in the ultimate sacrifice, human beings.

The most powerful room is the gold room, filled with incredible masks and "ear flares" and headdresses made of gold that have been melted, hammered into sheets, then cut and formed into plates and shapes and hoops and jewelry. Turquoise stones are cut into small beads or inlaid to form creatures in mosaics.



The biggest thrill is the Virtual Reality expedition of the mythical "Fortress in the Sky," located in a separate room off the lobby. Sit in a cocoon-like chair, don the headset and take a flying journey with an Incan warrior to the various rooms and sections of Machu Picchu. Leaping off the cliff is a heady thrill as butterflies flit by and surprised llamas peer up in surprise from the ground below. Temples and food storage rooms, irrigation systems and crop fields, gods, and symbols are all introduced in a fast-paced VR trip. The ground – and chair – even shake as an earthquake strikes. Not to be missed!

A new gift shop at the back has some quality Peruvian exports of llama skin rugs, textiles, painted boxes, and jewelry.

If you visit, Machu Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru runs through Sunday, March 6, 2022. Online at [bocamuseum.org](http://bocamuseum.org)