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# University of Toronto shows off silver Peruvian art

## Sneak peek

Scores of Peruvian silver and gold artifacts will be on display at The University of Toronto Art Centre until March 9.



Dr. Anthony Shelton, curator of Luminescence: The Silver of Peru, checks out some of the artifacts of the silver altar front. (PAUL IRISH/TORONTO STAR)

By **PAUL IRISH** Entertainment Reporter  
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A spectacular, glittering exhibit at The University of Toronto Art Centre is doing its best to dispel the notion of winter being our dark and desperate season.

Titled “Luminescence: The Silver of Peru,” it includes 150 silver artifacts from devils to angels that can’t help but enliven the gallery — as well as our spirits — with a sense of optimism and well being.

Anthony Shelton, director of the University of British Columbia’s Museum of Anthropology and curator of the show, explains that the cliché “a once-in-a-lifetime event” holds true for the exhibit, which runs, with free admission, until March 9.

“The people of Peru may never see all this work together in one place at one time, but it’s happening right here,” he says. “It’s the first time some of the work has been out of that country. It cuts across a lot of private collections and a lot of work, and cooperation was needed for it all to work.”

The collection, organized by the Patronato Plata del Peru with the main sponsor being the Pan American Silver Corp., is free-ranging and includes sculpture, jewelry, painting, crowns and masks.

Highlights include two rare 19th-century silver dance crowns, a silver 19th-century armadillo pomander (historic in that it represents a departure from depicting European themes focussing on local flora and fauna) and three golden headdresses worn by pre-Columbian lords.

There’s also a fabulous reconstruction of an 18th-century altar completely made from silver.

Shelton says most items — which include some gold artifacts — are national treasures that are one of a kind and span from 400 B.C. to present day, including the pre-Columbian, colonial, republican and contemporary periods.

The works have been selected from private collections and national museums with the intent to “explore the role of silver in Peruvian history and culture.”

The art takes centre stage, as it should. But the subtle, sophisticated lighting gives the items optimum impact.

*The University of Toronto Art Centre is located directly behind University College, 15 King’s College Circle. The centre is open noon to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; noon to 8 p.m. on Wednesday; noon to 4 p.m. on Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday.*

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