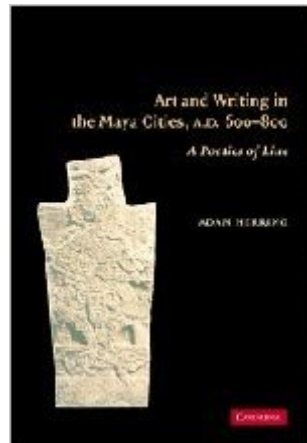




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# **Art And Writing In The Maya Cities, AD 600-800: A Poetics Of Line**



## Synopsis

Art and Writing in the Maya Cities, AD 600-800 examines an important aspect of the visual cultures of the ancient Maya in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras. During a critical period of cultural evolution, artistic production changed significantly, as calligraphy became an increasingly important formal element in Maya aesthetics and was used extensively in monumental building, sculptural programs and small-scale utilitarian objects. Adam Herring's study analyzes art works, visual programs, and cultural sites of memory, providing an anthropologically-informed description of ancient Maya culture, vision, and artistic practice. An inquiry into the contexts and perceptions of the ancient Maya city, his book melds epigraphic and iconographic methodologies with the critical tradition of art-historical interpretation.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The volume has an extensive bibliography and excellent illustrations." Choice  
Adam Herring has written an engaging, informative, and generally readable book that provides an intriguing new perspective on late classic lowland Maya art (A.D. 600 -800). The book presents a welcome and long overdue redirection in contemporary studies of classic Maya art...a wonderful new examination of classic Maya art and its appreciation, and one well worth reading by any with an interest in the Maya or art history." Joseph W. Ball, American Historical Review

Examines important aspects of the visual cultures of the ancient Maya. During a critical period of cultural evolution, artistic production changed significantly, as calligraphy became an increasingly

important formal element in Maya aesthetics and was used extensively. Adam Herring's study analyzes art works, visual programs, and cultural sites of memory.

The complex, seemingly highly stylized Mayan figurative and symbolic art work and calligraphic art work of the late, most advanced period of Mayan civilization was not merely, or even mainly, decorative; nor was it iconographic. Although for its skillfulness, composition, and prevalence, it is often presumed to be either. Rather, the Mayan visual art of this period "offered an expansive discourse of culture and power," mainly to the elites in the urban centers in what is today the Yucatan Peninsula and adjacent Central American countries. This art based on calligraphic tools, techniques, and intentions is known as "ts'ib'", a term which can be translated variously as line, painting, brushwork, and design, among other terms. As Associate Professor of Art History at Southern Methodist U. author Herring demonstrates, ts'ib' "was not so much a term of Maya calligraphy as it was a mode of visual attention and moral valuation within the sensory regime of Maya sociability." The discourse contained within this Maya art reflected values, concerns, and situations of the past while giving cautious, coded, guidance in changing circumstances of the evolving society, fading even as it was coming into its highest powers. Herring's treatment of the diverse, interrelated cultural and artistic matters ranges from broad historical views to analysis of minutiae of Mayan relics. At times he makes use of approaches and perspectives from the contemporary field of cultural studies.

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