Maya Mold Made: Virtual Impressions of Ancient Figurine Molds in the Ruta Maya Foundation Collection. Mark Van Stone and Paul Johnson. 2022. Tlacaélel Press, San Diego, California. 430 pp., 800+ illustrations. $79.95 (paperback), ISBN 9780982682630.

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Mark Van Stone and Paul Johnson have created a unique and important book in *Maya Mold Made.* This long-awaited contribution to Maya studies is the lengthiest, most complete book ever published on ancient Maya figurines. It is replete with beautiful photos of figurines and their fragments, the molds used to make them, and "virtual impressions": digital reconstructions of objects that appear as if cast from these molds. These reconstructions, digitally engineered by Johnson, are an admirable innovation that take advantage of the Ruta Maya Foundation's large mold collection without damaging it. The book's extraordinary visual quality and corpus of "new" virtual figurines justify its substantial price tag.

Several Mayanists have devoted their attention to ancient Maya figurines in the past, most notably Mary Butler, Mary Miller, Christina Halperin, Michelle Rich, and Erin Sears. Yet, the field has long lacked a reliable reference to assist in the visual analysis of these common artifacts. As noted by Van Stone and Johnson (pp. 9–12), most archaeologists do not encounter whole figurines in the field but rather fragments that are often hard to assign to specific types or styles. *Maya Mold Made* makes this easier by providing a lengthy, high-resolution, full-color inventory (pp. 115–340) of virtual casts produced using well-preserved molds. It is conveniently subdivided into seven coherent categories. I would certainly have benefited from this reference in 2016 while analyzing a Late-to-Terminal Classic figurine collection from La Corona, Guatemala.

Van Stone and Johnson's book is not a typical archaeological laboratory-oriented monograph. Its first 114 pages are more akin to text for a popular museum exhibition catalog, providing a concise introduction to Maya civilization and its figurine tradition. Both this initial section and Appendix A feature many pieces from beyond the Ruta Maya collection, including Guatemala's Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología. Although the first half is peppered with short technical blurbs, it is most appropriate for a general audience. Following the exhibition catalog style, Van Stone and Johnson mostly avoid jargon, offer "real-world" and cross-cultural analogies to demystify ancient Maya technology, and include some humor in their prose. Although these features represent an effort to popularize this material, they also push the book to the coffee-table category. Some attempts at humor are unintentionally distasteful, with casual, off-hand comments such as "Maya gods are a rather dumb, disreputable lot" (p. 67). The contrast between the tone of this informal first half and its more professional and analytical second half results in an unusual literary tension. It also contributes to the book's heftiness. The second half—with its systematic catalog, technical descriptions, iconographic analyses, and referential quality—may have best stood alone as an individual volume.

Despite their eccentric style, the authors also highlight important facts and analytical themes, helping better situate figurines in Maya studies and dispel common misunderstandings of them. Notably, the section "Mass Production in Ancient Mesoamerica" (pp. 23–25) provides an insightful *chaîne opératoire* approach for molded figurine technology. A key contribution is the authors' realization that ancient Maya craftspeople molded individual body parts as composite elements used to make whole figurines. The authors present multiple examples of this process (pp. 221–235), which is not only analytically helpful but may also explain why individual body parts are so common in the archaeological record. The section "Summary and Afterthoughts" (pp. 105–114) may be the best part of the first half. The authors emphasize that most archaeological encounters of figurines occur in mundane contexts; most are fragments found in architectural fill or middens. They also address the conundrum of Jaina: the island was quite unusual, perhaps mostly because it was one of the few places where ceramic figurines were regularly included as typical grave goods. The authors address Brent Woodwill's recent salvage archaeology work on the Aragón figurine workshop in Cobán, Guatemala, that, once published, will become another great resource for studying this ancient technology. Van Stone and Johnson also adequately discuss the musical qualities of most Maya figurines. Following other authors, they highlight the ancient accessibility of this technology: figurines were widely distributed across society, with distinct qualities crafted for all segments of ancient Maya communities. Finally, Van Stone and Johnson should be lauded for their inclusion of a rare, detailed archaeological map for Alta Verapaz (p. 389) and for their meticulous endnotes (pp. 395–409) and extensive bibliography.

With its many excellent figures, Appendix A is another worthy contribution. It acts as an iconographic supplement, drawing on published painted and carved Maya art to explain many details from figurines presented in the book—from ornaments and body

modifications to monkey species. Appendix B tackles the provenance of all known fragments of Dieseldorff Throne figurines, perhaps the most complex figurine type and a clear object of fascination for the authors.

I cannot review this book without mentioning that the Ruta Maya Foundation collection at its heart is privately owned and unprovenanced. The book features two sincere and straightforward prologues: one by Fernando Paiz (the collection's owner), relating his long love history for Maya artifacts, and the other by Sofía Paredes Maury (curator of the collection), introducing the book. Unfortunately, the lack of contextual information associated with the book's materials not only raises ethical concerns but also places significant constraints on its archaeological and analytical value. However, publishing the collection in such a non-destructive, innovative, and coherent way is a productive and responsible scholarly endeavor.

Despite some content and stylistic issues with the book's first half, the combination of Johnson's digital imaging technique and Van Stone's knowledge and excellent handling of visual matters has resulted in an impressive volume. As the first expansive, visually oriented reference on ancient Maya figurines, *Maya Mold Made* is a valuable contribution to the field, especially for ceramicists and archaeologists interested in better understanding the figurine collections they analyze.