REPEAT PATTERNS

NOTE TO TEACHER
This fourth set of activities relates specifically to the Andean arts and cultures in the second chapter of the manual but any of the other ancient American cultures discussed could be used instead. The repeated patterns, sometimes abstract and other times based on natural elements, are found in architecture, carved reliefs, pottery, metalwork, textiles, and paintings and form the basis for student work.

PREPARATION
See slides 12, 15, 16, 17, and 19 as well as the figures in Chapter 2. Identify the shapes found in these examples, paying close attention to how patterns are decoratively repeated. Ask your students to imagine that they are archaeologists and have them make intelligent guesses regarding their discoveries. For example, consider the sources for the designs: do triangular shapes represent mountains? Check this hypothesis: were mountains located near the region where the object was created?

EXERCISES
1. After looking at several examples of repeat patterns, create your own purely abstract version.

2. Design a pattern based on natural forms. You may choose those found in plants, shells, mountains and rivers, humans and animals, etc. Bring objects to the classroom and sketch the elements you have chosen. Use your imagination to determine how each element in your pattern relates to the others. For example, the shape of the human eye and a bird’s wing may go together to symbolize how we see things at a great distance through vast amounts of air and space — the same air and space that are the natural domain of a bird.

3. Look at repeat patterns found on pots and think about how the shape of the pot influences the design. Make your own paper pot by cutting out a simple shape and rolling it to form a cylinder or use the templates in the following Classroom Activity. Before rolling, draw a repeat pattern based on your own life and consider how the design will have to adjust to the pot’s shape; where the pot narrows you may want to place the least important aspect of your life, etc.