



The People and Gold of Pre-Hispanic Colombia

Photographs taken by Cathleen Rosen at Museo del Oro

Gold Ornament



Ancient Metalsmiths

The earliest discoveries of ancient metalsmithing in the Americas began in Peru. There is evidence of the use of gold in the Colombia region as early as 1500 B.C. The advancements and varied uses of metals in this region were then taken to a fine art.

Pre-Hispanic Societies Of Colombia

Nariño	Tumaco	Calima	San Agustín
Tierradentro	Tolima	Quimbaya	Cauca
Zenú	Tairona	Muisca	Urabá and Chocó

Techniques of Goldmaking

Lost Wax Molds



Clay Mold Lost Wax Cast



Gold Tools



Gold Tools



Flat Sheet of Gold



Gold Hammering



Flat Breastplate









Types of Artifacts

Pre-Hispanic cultures primarily created gold objects for the leaders of their societies and for spiritual purposes. The array of adornments generally were intended to show the special status of either the chieftans or their shamans.

Funerary Masks



Calima Funerary Mask



Breastplate



Earrings



Body Adornments

The shamans would utilize the gold objects during spiritual ceremonies in which they might be trying to protect the community, cure illness, or predict the future.

Ear Spools



Muisca Gold Object



Winged Gold Object



Lime Container



Votive Object



Beliefs

Pre-Hispanic societies created objects that either transformed them or showed a transformation of humans into different animals. Many animals and birds were incorporated into the designs of the objects used throughout Colombia.

Jaguar

The power and strength of the jaguar was highly admired by societies not only in Colombia, but in other regions of the Americas. Shamans were known to adopt the personality of the jaguar to project fear and respect.



Shaman Necklace



Calima Jaguar Noserling



Animal Symbols

The snake with a head at each end appears associated with the sun, as a symbol of its eternal movement to and fro between two opposite points on the horizon. It was from this movement that life originated.

Gold Container



Artistic Elements

Many of the Pre-Hispanic artisans used the idea of cycles or repeating patterns of nature in the designs they used in their various metal artifacts.

The also believed some materials with a reflective quality could communicate with supernatural forces.

Artistic Elements



Amazing

