The People and Gold of Pre-Hispanic Colombia

Photographs taken by Cathleen Rosen at Museo del Oro
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

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<th>Nariño</th>
<th>Tumaco</th>
<th>Calima</th>
<th>San Agustín</th>
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<td>Tierradentro</td>
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<td>Zenú</td>
<td>Tairona</td>
<td>Muisca</td>
<td>Urabá and Chocó</td>
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Techniques of Goldmaking
Lost Wax Molds
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
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
Muiscas 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 Nosering
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