



American Federation of Arts

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Contact: 212.988.7700

**RECENT DISCOVERIES AND NATIONAL TREASURES OFFER A WINDOW TO A
REMARKABLE ANCIENT WORLD**

Shamans, Gods, and Mythic Beasts: Colombian Gold and Ceramics in Antiquity

(May 1999)-*Shamans, Gods, and Mythic Beasts: Colombian Gold and Ceramics in Antiquity* is the first major international exhibition to focus on the important ceramic sculpture and related gold works from ancient Colombia. Drawn from collections in Colombia and the United States, many of the objects are unique expressions of prehispanic Colombian art and many are on public view in the United States for the first time.

The exhibition is organized by The American Federation of Arts and The Bowers Museum of Cultural Art. Travel assistance is provided by American Airlines. Educational materials are made possible by The Brown Foundation, Inc. Additional support is provided by the Benefactors Circle of the AFA. The exhibition is a project of ART ACCESS II, a program of the AFA with major support from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

Spanning more than 2,500 years of cultural and artistic development, the 167 masterworks date from about 1200 B.C. to the Spanish Conquest in the 16th and 17th centuries. The artistic diversity evident in both the ceramics and gold works may be explained by the geographic position of Colombia at the crossroads of the Americas and its varied topography of mountains, valleys, rivers, and tropical lowlands. Transcending these regional variations, however, is a remarkable cultural continuity.

Guest curator, Armand J. Labbé, Director of Research and Collections, The Bowers Museum, and Marie-Thérèse Brincard, senior curator of exhibitions, AFA, organized the exhibition into six thematic sections: Seated Figures; Standing Figures; Masks; Anthropomorphic Figures; Zoomorphic Figures; and Shamans and Priests.

Pre-Columbian artists favored abstraction and stylization, often preferring to suggest and imply rather than depict and define. Almost every component of their work is richly symbolic, conveying aspects of indigenous religion, myth, cosmology, and sociology. The ceramics in the exhibition represent a wide range of powerful forms, including highly decorated figural jars and urns, musical instruments, and ritual paraphernalia. Indeed, recent archeological discoveries have established Colombia as one of the earliest ceramic producing areas of the New World.

Gold was perceived by the indigenous people to have intrinsic religious powers that imbued objects made of this precious material. The 43 featured gold works, drawn principally from the extraordinary holdings of Colombia's Museo del Oro, demonstrate that motifs and designs used by the ceramicists were shared by the goldsmiths.

Shamans, Gods, and Mythic Beasts premieres at the Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, and completes a five-venue tour under the auspices of The American Federation of Arts in January 2000.

PUBLICATION

In conjunction with the exhibition, the AFA and the University of Washington Press published *Shamans, Gods, and Mythic Beasts: Colombian Gold and Ceramics in Antiquity*. Armand J. Labbé's lead essay focuses on the cultural themes and symbolism portrayed in the pre-Columbian art of Colombia. An essay by archeologists Warwick Bray, Leonor Herrera, and Marianne Cardale Schrimpf discusses the artistic significance and archaeological context of the recently discovered Malagana-style artifacts from the Cauca Valley of Southwestern Colombia. Ana Maria Falchetti's essay explores the relationship of the gold and ceramic art of the Sinú region to concepts of gender, status, and socio-cultural organization. The foreword is by Julie Jones, curator in charge, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 215 pages, 10 x 7", over 150 color illustrations; softcover, \$35.00.

NATIONAL TOUR

- Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, October 31, 1998-January 10, 1999
- Mingei International Museum of World Folk Art, San Diego, California, January 31-April 11, 1999
- Orlando Museum of Art, Orlando, Florida, May 1-July 11, 1999
note: exhibition title change for this venue only:
Treasures of El Dorado: Colombian Gold and Ceramics in Antiquity
- The Frick Art Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 29-October 3, 1999
- The Bowers Museum of Cultural Art, Santa Ana, California, October 29, 1999-January 28, 2000

As museum schedules are subject to change, please confirm dates before going to press.

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS: Founded in 1909, the AFA is the nation's 550 member institutions with traveling art exhibitions and educational, professional and technical support programs developed in collaboration with the museum community. Through these programs the AFA seeks to strengthen the ability of museums to enrich the public's experience and understanding of art.

More than 25 years ago, the AFA organized one of the first exhibitions of antiquities from Colombia to travel to American museums, *El Dorado: The Gold of Ancient Colombia*.

THE BOWERS MUSEUM OF CULTURAL ART: The Bowers Museum believes that learning about people through their arts will lead us to a greater understanding of ourselves as well as a fuller appreciation for the marvelous diversity of the human family. The Bowers Museum celebrates this diversity by preserving and presenting the arts of world cultures.