

Basic Detail Report



Funerary Mask

Date

800-1350

Primary Maker

Lambayeque-Sicán

Medium

gold alloy and cinnabar

Description

Masks of gold and silver alloys and copper were produced for funerary bundles of the elite. While as many as five gold masks have been discovered with one funerary bundle, only one would have covered the face. In its original state, the mask would have been covered with semiprecious stones, metal ornaments, pigments and feathers, much of which has been lost during subsequent cleaning. The gold, in fact, served as a foundation for bright paint or colorful featherwork. Except for areas around the mouth, very little of the gold was left visible. In manufacturing the masks, the Ancient American goldsmith employed both copper/gold (tumbaga) and copper/silver alloys. These alloys were well-suited for sheet metal work since they could be shaped by hammering while remaining malleable. Gold objects fashioned out of sheet metal show a wide range of fabrication techniques which employed templates for cutting, dies for stamping, embossing for rigidity, and surface ornamentation. Mechanical joining methods included lacing, stapling, crimping, and the use of tabs and wiring while metallurgical joining involved welding and soldering.

Dimensions

Overall: 6 7/8 x 10 1/2 x 3/4 in. (17.5 x 26.7 x 1.9 cm)