



The Glassell Collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston: Masterworks of Pre-Columbian, Indonesian, and African Gold

Frances Marzio

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One of the world's top hundred art collectors, Alfred C. Glassell, Jr. (1913-2008), was fascinated by gold, but not for its monetary value. Glassell valued instead the spiritual significance that gold held in many ancient cultures, particularly those of Africa, South America, and Indonesia. Over the years, he acquired an astonishing number of artworks, assembling the largest privately held collection of Pre-Columbian gold. From 1997 to 2004, Glassell donated works of African and Indonesian gold to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Upon his death in 2008, he bequeathed his collection of Pre-Columbian gold to the museum.

Masterworks of Pre-Columbian, Indonesian, and African Gold explores two hundred of these dazzling works, many published here for the first time. Spanning from 2000 B.C. to A.D. 1600, these precious objects reflect a variety of cultures, such as the Calima, Quimbaya, Sicán, Moché, and Coclé, and a range of geographic locations, from Mexico to Argentina and from Africa to Indonesia. The book offers fresh insights into the enduring appeal of gold and its artistic manifestations in diverse cultures.

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