

GOLD

in the Americas



April 30, 2008 to January 22, 2009

From the gold of pre-Columbian civilizations to the industrial gold of today, the exhibition *Gold in the Americas* offers a fascinating peek into the lives of the peoples who forged the New World. The glitter of gold has penetrated even the remotest of regions, sparking adoration, expeditions, and conquests. Aboriginal peoples, conquerors, colonists, explorers, and entrepreneurs have all played a role in this quest.

The exhibition tells its story in four complementary themes:

“The Flesh of the Gods” delves into the theme of gold as venerated treasure. The sacred, even divine qualities attributed to gold by pre-Hispanic peoples extend into the symbolic uses made of the metal by religious and civil authorities.

“Gold of the Powers” provides an opportunity to focus on a more prosaic world view. The appetites of the new 15th and 16th century European arrivals transform gold into a tool of power. The gleaming metal inspires dreams of grandeur, such as Eldorado, as well as myriad examples of less-than-lustrous behavior.

“Dream Chasers” looks at the more recent outbreaks of gold fever that swept North America, especially in California (1848) and along the Klondike River in the Yukon (1896). In both cases, the discovery of gold sparked a veritable rush (close to 100,000 prospectors converged on the Yukon).

Lastly, “Gold, King of Metals” divulges gold’s physical properties and modern-day uses. This section of the exhibition examines our scientific knowledge of the yellow metal and the evolution of mining technology and techniques.

An elemental archetype, panacea of happiness, elixir of life, and metaphor for triumph, rare and glittering gold casts a powerful spell, awakens passions, and has driven multiple transformations in human history.

Some 250 splendid objects – masks, jewels, sculptures, paintings as well as gold digger modest memories bear witness of this great adventure.



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