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THE WORLD OF SPIRITS | EL MUNDO DE LOS ESPÍRITUS
IN PRE-COLUMBIAN ECUADOR | EN EL ECUADOR PRECOLOMBINO
Iván Cruz Cevallos

Supported by a wealth of photographs of archaeological objects, this book delves into a fascinating world of ancestral spirits, revealed by the surprising richness and variety of these pre-Columbian pieces fashioned out of various materials. These works, on exhibition in the Museo Casa del Alabado, in Quito (Ecuador), outline the pre-Columbian view of the world centred on a flow of energy aimed at preserving life. These pieces evoke this primordial energy emerging from mother earth, the source of the good deeds performed by spirits and the ancestral guardian of the permanent renewal of the world of daily life, where spirits constantly draw on the balance of the forces ensuring their survival. Pre-Columbian art has the extraordinary capacity to express the power of reciprocal opposites which together provide a meaning to the existence of animate and inanimate beings.

Hard materials, such as stones and shells, served to embody powerful spirits, such as carts, macaws, or primordial ancestors. Ceramics were suitable for the depiction of ordinary plants and animals. The extraordinary growth of metalworking skills led to the creation of ornamental pieces designed for the elite (chest decorations, nose jewellery, earrings, and crowns) whose purpose was to reflect the power of the sun.

Each picture in the book is accompanied by notes explaining the function the article would have served, while acknowledging that these pieces have lost none of their expressiveness in the modern world.

Iván Cruz Cevallos is the scientific advisor of the Museo Casa del Alabado and chairman of the Alejandro Labaka Foundation and is in charge of establishing the Amazon Maco (Coca, Orellana) archaeological museum.

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