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<http://www.intermundos.org/grass/lagartijas.htm>

- are links to a partial collection of precolombian designs, the fruit of an investigation carried out by the Colombian painter Antonio Grass, who did the incredible and very important work of cataloguing an immense quantity of designs from cultures that lived in what today is known as Colombia. Grass reproduced precolombian symbols, copying them from gold jewelry, ceramics, textiles, bone carvings and petroglyphs.

From his book *The Faces of the Past*:

When faced with the fabulous treasures of America' a great German artist wrote in his diary:

“ I also saw all of the things that the king had brought from those new golden lands: an entire sun made of gold, the size of a patio, and also a silver moon equally big. And I saw two rooms full of armours made of these same metals and all kinds of weapons, projectiles, marvelous shields, strange clothes, feathers, a great variety of magnificent utensils for different uses, more beautiful to the eye, then all of the miracles. All of these objects were so precious that its value was estimated in thousands of Florin. Nothing I had ever seen had moved my heart as much as these things. And upon seeing all of these artistic marvels I was surprised as to the subtle genius of the people of other lands, and I could not describe here everything that I saw”

Alberto Durero, August 1520

El Sudor y las Lagrimas de la Luna

Andre Emmerich, 1965.

In the first part of the book *The Faces from the Past*, Grass explains why and how he started this immense work which resulted in four books; *Diseños Precolombino*, *El Circulo*, *La Marca Magica*, *Animales Mitologicos*, *Los Rostros del Pasado*:

“Nationally everything has functioned and continues to function as in an intellectual colony: European thoughts and customs, or of which ever country is fashionable at the moment. Presently there is a preponderance of the New York and San Francisco schools. There has been an ongoing campaign on the part of cultural leaders in favor of the “universal”, but not in favor of the universal essences that move man in his creation. They favor the imposition of this or that style or concept, these that have been created by people of other nations who, in order to develop these, did think of their own environment, context and roots. Thus, the essence and basic principles that which impulse man’s creativity are confused with fashion and decrees for colonies. The cultural “decrees” play the same role as did the Laws of the Indies, which were enforced here, coming from the Spanish courts. It is believed that “universal” means to unite London and Bogotá in one expression.” P 244

“Has any value ever been given to pre-Hispanic art in the cultural circles of our nation? Has anyone been interested? Has there been men that have desired to base the structure of an art form based on national origin? No.....”

“Today, as before, foreign agents shout out to the winds “Pre-colombian art is dead; it is more than dead”....

“Here, Europe has been and still is being studied from beginning to end, but America is never studied. We have been and will continue to be a small and shameful colony.”...

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As to the medium he chose:

“Upon publishing these investigations, I decided to do so threw the medium of design, plain structures and graphics, I felt that such a presentation would make it more comprehensible and clearer to understand for the onlooker. Plain design would make its order and structure palpable; no one could say that behind these designs there were not a diaphanous, intelligent and calculated concepts; nor could they say that this order was not concordant with the medium and essence of the Colombian Indian, our ancestor.

My research on these designs seeks to defend, re- evaluate, make palpable and clear the entire pre-Hispanic world. Only nations with a past can construct a present and future. Nations without a past are nations without a face.” P 249

The Faces of the Past

Pre-Hispanic Colombian Design

Research, drawings, texts, design and editing by Antonio Grass

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