

Molas - Art of the Cuna Women from Panama

The traditional costume of a Cuna woman consists of a patterned blue cotton wrapped skirt, red and yellow headscarf, arm and leg beads, gold nose rings and earrings and the many layered and finely sewn mola panel blouse.

The artistry of a mola reflects a synthesis of traditional Cuna culture with the influences of the modern world. Mola art developed when Cuna women had access to store bought yard goods. Mola designs are often inspired by modern graphics such as political posters, labels, pictures from books and TV cartoons, as well as traditional themes from Cuna legends and culture.

Geometric molas are the most traditional, having developed from ancient body painting designs.

Many hours of careful sewing are required to create a fine mola. The quality of a mola is determined by such factors as

- number of layers
- fineness of stitching
- evenness and width of cutouts
- addition of details such as zigzag borders, lattice-work or embroidery
- general artistic merit of the design and color combination.

When Cuna women tire of a particular blouse, they disassemble it and sell the molas to collectors.



Pricing for each piece is from \$65 to \$75 plus framing (\$65 at Roanchoft)