



Cooperativa Divino Niño |
Colombia | Apparel,
Basketry, Beaded Jewelry

Cana flecha and Zenu weaving traditions



Colombian artist collective Divino Niño was founded by master artisans Reinel Mendoza and Magno Mahecha, members of the indigenous Zenu group in the northwestern part of Colombia. Throughout the course of a history that spans thousands of years, the Zenu people have developed a distinctive, highly refined approach to art making.

Traditionally, skills and techniques are learned through apprenticeships at informal community settings, in which women learn to braid and weave fibers, which men then sew together using a pedal-powered sewing machine. The so-called sombrero vueltiao—a type of fedora hat made of woven and often dyed fibers—is traditional to Colombia. Most of the symbols woven represent clans, boundaries, and personal ancestral legacies from ancestors.

In addition to intricately woven purses and hats, Divino Niño's artisans also create a range of beautifully unique jewelry, including necklaces, earrings, bangles, and other accessories.

The idea of making jewelry in addition to more traditional items was the brainchild of Mahecha, who studied design in Colombia and also abroad. These wearable items include not only locally sourced silver, but also woven yarn elements, using wool from regional alpacas. Purses and other woven items have their origins in arrow cane, a type of tall, fiber-packed grass. Leaves are dried and then scraped with a knife to remove the tough inner fibers, then split into fine strips and woven into braided strips suitable for weaving. Whether in the form of a practical, gorgeous satchel, a unique fedora hat, or an innovative bangle or necklace, Divino Niño's artisans truly offer something for everyone.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ARTIST