Viking Metal Art

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Metal Art in Viking Culture

- They began making metal art well before 300CE
- They had advanced metalworking techniques for the time
- Types of metal jewelry they wore signified their social status
- Blacksmiths held high social standings
- Many of the techniques they used are still in use today
Cultural Importance of Metal Art

- Ships and armor were engraved
- Everyday items were engraved
- Showed social status
- Ornamentalism was an important part of European culture
Social Status of Blacksmiths

- Most owned land
  - Slaves and serfs could become blacksmiths if they were talented enough
- Iron was thought to be connected to the supernatural
- Blacksmiths were often featured in mythology
- Women could not become blacksmiths because they were thought to ruin the final product
Metalworking Steps

- Start with a model
- Make a mould based on the model
- Bake mould
- Pour iron into the mould
- Receive item that was casted
Step 1: the Model

- Could be made of beeswax, an antler, or an existing item
  - Existing items were the most common
    - This was easiest
    - Allowed for the most detail
  - Sometimes beeswax or antlers were shaped or carved

- Wax models are still common in metal sculpting today
Step 2: Creating the Mould

- The model was greased in animal fat
  - Then pressed into a clay and charcoal mixture
  - Fabric and wax were inserted after the model was removed to preserve shape
- A hole was cut in the top to allow for metal to flow into the mould
- The mould had a top and bottom piece that fit together
Step 3: Baking the Mould

- Heated for 15 hours
- Used a simple fire pit with hot coals
- Moulds were heated to 900°F
- Moulds could break during this stage due to inaccuracies in the clay to charcoal ratio
Step 4: Pouring Metal into The Mould
Step 5: Remove Product from the Mould
Conclusion

- Metal art was important to Viking culture
  - Everyday items featured intricate metal designs
  - The types of metal jewelry worn signified social status
- Blacksmiths held high social standings
- Many of the same techniques used by Vikings are still used today

