

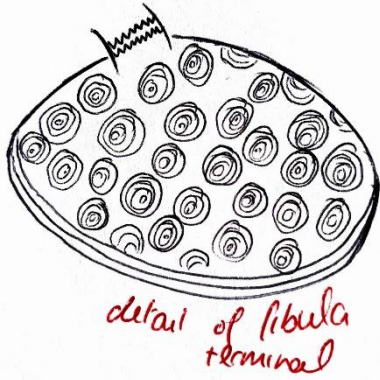
Pre-Christian - Bronze Age | Sample answer

Name, describe and discuss the two artefacts illustrated on the accompanying sheet. In your answer refer to form, function, materials and the techniques used in their production and decoration.

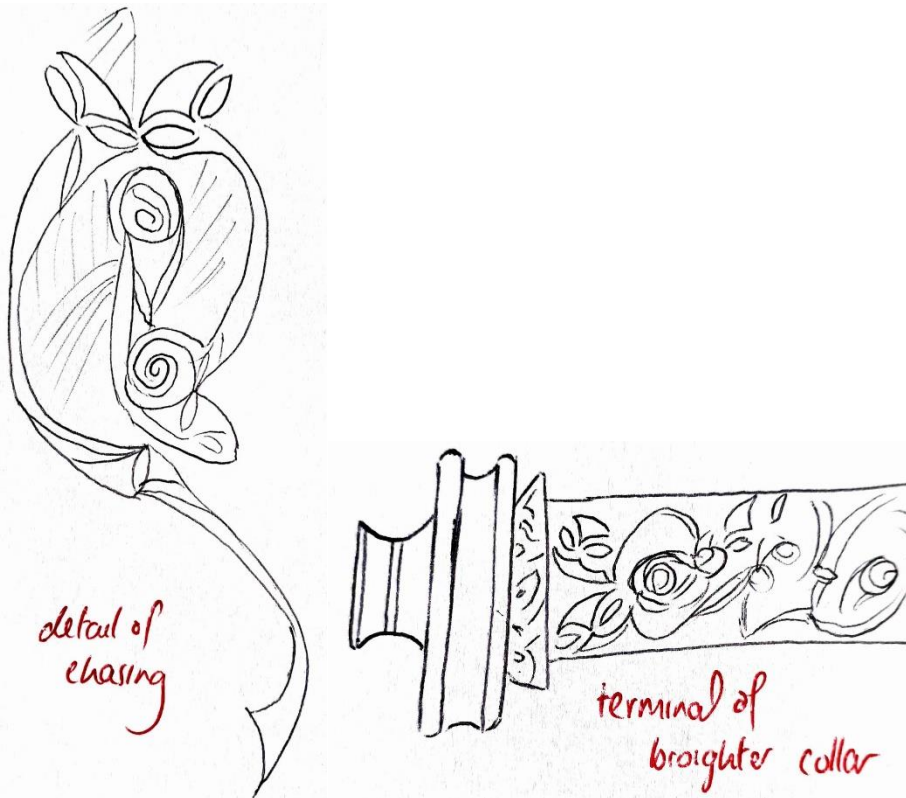
and

Briefly describe and discuss the periods in which these artefacts were made. Illustrate your answer. (2017 Q2)

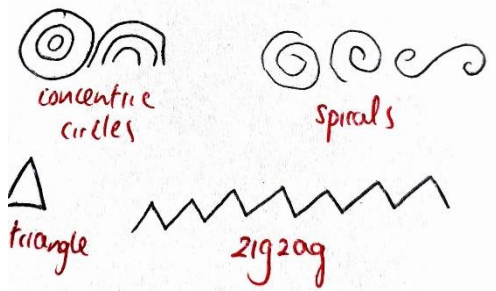
The first artefact is the Clons dress fastener (fibula). The form is two large concave/basin shaped terminals, which are joined together by a rounded, curved metal bow. It is 21.5cm long. In terms of function, this was probably a dress fastener. The two terminals probably slipped into slits or buttonholes on a dress or other garment, and held the garment closed. It was likely worn during religious ceremonial occasions, or to symbolise power. It is made entirely of gold. The entire thing is around 1kg in weight, and the bow is cast in solid gold. The terminals are hollow and soldered to the bow. The surface is highly polished. The terminals have raised concentric lines around the edge, which were made using repoussé. Repoussé is a metalworking technique wherein the design is etched onto the wrong side of the metal, creating a raised design on the right side. There are zigzags scratched in along the join between the terminals and the bow. There is also an irregular concentric circle pattern all over both terminals. This was incised by rotating a specially designed compass-like tool. This shows a huge amount of foresight and skilled craftsmanship in both the planning and execution of this piece.



The second artefact is the Brighter Collar. This comes from the Brighter Hoard, discovered in 1896. Its form is two semi-circular cylinders, which were once joined by a hinge. This hinge is now missing. There is a two-part locking device at the terminals. The function was an ornamental collar worn to indicate status, fastened around the neck by a locking device. It was possibly worn during pagan rituals or before going into war. It may also have been an offering to the sea god Manannán or some other pagan deity. It is made entirely from gold. The main structure is made from 2 sheets of gold, which were curved into tubes before being soldered together. They were probably filled with sand for support in the shaping process. Curvilinear La-Tené motifs are added using chasing—a technique where the sheets were placed over a moulded surface before being beaten into shape. This is more precise than repoussé. There are spirals and stylised leaves in high relief, this interlocking S-shaped scrolls and trumpet shapes. Some of the spirals have been soldered on. Some of the background between designs has been cross-hatched/etched using a scribe or compass. This creates a contrast with the smooth relief. The lock mechanism is called a mortise and tenon lock.



Artefact 1 was made during the late bronze age, which lasted from 1200-500 BC. A number of new techniques had been developed around 900BC, including soldering, casting, riveting and the use of gold foil. The Bronze Age was characterised by skilled metalworkers and attention to detail and, though this artefact is actually made from gold, the use of bronze. Bronze is an alloy of tin and copper and was found to be much stronger than either of those two metals. Gold was sourced as alluvial gold in Tyrone and Wicklow, panned as nuggets in riverbeds and melted together to form ingots. The Bronze Age people were also known as beaker people, due to their elaborately decorated clay burial pots. They made swords, daggers, pots and jewellery, and developed trade links with Britain and mainland Europe. This led to the growth and spread of ideas and metalworking techniques. Bronze Age metalwork was characterised by geometric decorative motifs, such as concentric circles, hatched triangles, squares, chevrons, dots, and herringbone patterns.



Artefact 2 was made during the Iron Age, which lasted from 500BC to 400AD. In 500BC, Celts came from mainland Europe and settled in Ireland, bringing with them iron, iron metalworking techniques, and the Celtic language. Due to the Roman's trade links with Celts, Ireland was never invaded by Rome, and so the Celts survived. The La Tène phase started in 300BC and brought about a new "La Tené" style of motif, with designs such as spirals, triskeles, stylised bird heads, scrolls, and leaf and trumpet motifs. Iron was commonplace for tools such as swords, knives, axes and daggers, though bronze was still also quite common, as it does not rust like iron. Gold became rarer, and therefore more precious, than it had been during the iron age, and so was used sparingly, and only for very decorative pieces.

