

Basic Detail Report



Mortar

Date

date unknown

Medium

Stone

Description

Most artifacts in New Guinea serve a utilitarian function, like this ancient mortar which was most likely used to

grind up foods. But this particular object is unique, with a human face carved into the front. Beautiful in its minimalistic design, it lends a simple strength to the artistic qualities of the object. Stone objects date back to the earliest inhabitants of Melanesia, growing in specialization over time with the evolution of practices like agriculture and hunting. Mortars, pestles, and ceremonial objects that might be hundreds or thousands of years old are rediscovered with some frequency, especially during construction or from tilling soil, and are used or instilled with a newfound spiritual significance. Utilitarian stone tools tend to be undecorated, but pieces created for ceremonial purposes are highly refined—painstakingly pecked and ground to create figurative or abstract geometric forms.

Dimensions

7 1/2 × 14 in. (19.1 × 35.6 cm)