



Over-Modeled Skull

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

latmul

Medium

Human skull, clay, pigment, shell and human hair

Description

Over-modeled skulls played a function in the remembering of ancestors and preservation of a clan's origin. The skulls of the founding members of a clan were kept and displayed alongside other ancestors of the family. Using clay, pigment, shells, and human hair, a craftsmand transformed the skull white skeletal form into a realistic likeness of the deceased. This was done after the body was decomposed and bureid for variable amounts of time. In the latmul culture, white designs painted on the skulls indicated the ancestor was male,

and black designs signaled the ancestor as female. The latmul were well regarded for their skill in rendering easily recognizable images of the deceased individual.

Dimensions

5 7/8 × 5 7/8 × 7 15/16 in. (14.9 × 14.9 × 20.2 cm)