

Basic Detail Report



Pig Fetish

Date

20th Century

Medium

Bone, tooth, tusk and pigment

Description

This painted pig jaw was collected in the New Ireland province of Papua New Guinea. In many Melanesian cultures, the pig—especially the male pig—is a greatly

valued commodity. Pigs are considered as a symbol of a family's monetary wealth and are regarded as currency in a village's economic system. A pig could be sold to pay for schooling, presented to open negotiations for arranged marriage, or gifted as a peace settlement between neighboring communities. As an important feature of the bride price exchange, a pig could be borrowed as loan for the ceremony. The repayment of a loan would include interest, which is calculated by how much the loaned animal's tusk would have grown between the time of borrowing and the time of repayment. Upon the death of the animal, the bones are kept as a status symbol for its owner and a representative object that the pig was given in a bride price exchange or any other of the many important event in which a pig was used. The mandible, tusk, and teeth of the pig are common remains to keep and decorate as tokens. In the New Ireland province, the mortuary festival—known as Malagan— is held to honor a number of deceased family members. The grand feast of the celebration is based solely on the pig and will feature a stand to commemorate the change of status of slaughtered pigs. The festival is widely known for the intricately wooden carvings that often feature pig motifs.

Dimensions

5 1/2 × 6 1/8 × 10 3/4 in. (14 × 15.6 × 27.3 cm)