

Basic Detail Report



Bowl

Date

late 19th to early 20th Century

Medium

Wood

Description

In the Huon Gulf region, the inhabitants of the Tami Islands are known for their distinctive style of wood

carving, often referred to as the Tami style. This unique art style is distinguished by the use of a carving method known as high-relief carving—in which designs are carved into the wood and protrude from the background. This method of carving requires meticulous planning beforehand and great skill of tool manipulation to achieve desired effect. Oval-shaped wooden feast bowls with pointed edges are some of the most recognizable types of carved wooden objects from the area. As the Huon Gulf area is part of a vast trade network, these oval wooden bowls served as an important trade item that supplemented the income of local carvers. As such, most of these bowls were used for trade and not ceremonial purposes; however they are sometimes used as food preparation vessels for large community feasts or gatherings. Feast bowls such as this example could be classified by other names, depending on if their designs represented powerful mythical creatures or beings or family specific clan figures. Wooden bowls are also used as bride price along with various other significant items such as clay pots, shell money and modern currency. The Tami are brilliant seamen, which allows them to extensively trade their craft goods with the neighboring islands—such as New Guinea, Rook, and Siassi. Therefore, it is no surprise to find Tami style goods spread over large areas through trade. Due to social restrictions, the distinctive carving style of the Tami remains confined to their community of wood carvers. If any individuals outside the community used a style other than their own, the act would constitute as a severe offence.

Dimensions

5 7/8 × 28 3/4 × 12 3/8 in. (14.9 × 73 × 31.4 cm)