



Cooking Pot (Somo)

Date

mid 20th Century

Medium

Ceramic

Description

Unusual in its shape and size, this ceramic cooking pot indicates a sophisticated level of artistry and craftsmanship. The large pots fired along the coast of New Guinea's Madang Province are known for their elongated shape, pointed base, and incorporation of advanced pottery techniques. The lips of these pots feature decorative geometric patterns. More than likely, the pot was used only during special occasions and was probably owned by a respected elder or village chief. Feasts are the premiere social gatherings in New Guinea. These village-wide or multi-village events can mark the end of a battle, the passing of an elder, or the celebration of a marriage.

The day of the feast the host provides as many pigs as he can afford to ensure his social status for years to come. The pigs are ritually killed and then roasted in a rock pit for hours. Eventually they are served along with other Oceanic staples like taro and sago. As the gathered crowd awaits the food, elaborate dances are performed to further demonstrate the organizer's wealth and power.

Dimensions

22 × 9 × 9 in. (55.9 × 22.9 × 22.9 cm)