

Basic Detail Report



Petroglyph

Date

Prehistoric

Medium

Stone

Description

This petroglyph was collected from Gaua Island in the Banks Islands of the Torba Province in Vanuatu.

Petroglyphs, the oldest form of prehistoric art to be discovered anywhere in the world, appear throughout Melanesia. Under appropriate environmental conditions, such as those found in the arid, wind-protected environs of caves, stone carvings and paintings can survive tens of thousands of years. This rock carving depicts an anthropomorphic figure with three faces on a vertical axis. The figure has multiple pairs of bent arms and legs. 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

6 1/2 × 2 1/2 × 1 1/4 in. (16.5 × 6.4 × 3.2 cm)