



Splashboard (Lagim)

Date

early to mid 20th Century

Primary Maker

Massim

Medium

Wood, fiber and pigment

Description

This splashboard, known colloquially as a lagim, was collected from the Massim people residing on the Trobriand Islands group in Papua New Guinea's Milne Bay Province. Splashboards are placed at the ends of canoes to offer protection from ocean spray. Canoes are the primary language of trade along the Kula ring, a ceremonial trade route in Papua New Guinea's Milne Bay Province. Decorated canoe parts, such as wave splitters

(canoe prows), their finials, and splashboards which are transversely socketed into the ends of canoes, signal the arrival of a trader and identify the community they are associated with. Their carvings, black, white, and red palette, and beautiful shell adornments are designed by Massim craftsmen to magically influence one's trade partners into making disadvantageous exchanges. The patterns of carving and painting on these pieces are unique to the various communities that trade around the Kula ring, making fleets easy to identify. However, some motifs like the rolling forms of waves, coiled serpents, and key navigational stars are universal within Massim groups.

Dimensions

24 1/2 × 23 1/4 × 1 1/2 in. (62.2 × 59.1 × 3.8 cm)