

Basic Detail Report



Headrest

Date

mid 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 tool manipulation to achieve desired effect. Like many other cultures in Melanesia, the Tami use wooden headrests as pillows on which to elevate one's head or neck during sleep. Headrests from this region tend to be cubistic in shape, have a smooth top section that houses the user's head, and openwork figures underneath the top section. On this particular headrest, coiled and geometrically shaped designs—similar to many border designs found on other Tami crafts—are found on the underneath portion of the headrest. 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. 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

4 3/8 × 8 5/8 × 2 1/8 in. (11.1 × 21.9 × 5.4 cm)