

Basic Detail Report



Lintel

Date

mid 20th Century

Medium

Wood and pigment

Description

This is a wooden architectural lintel featuring carved and painted scenes on either side depicting a story from Palauan legend. The front side of the lintel depicts three scenes beginning with four men aboard a canoe at the left, then a man carrying a large palm branch at center, and finally three men constructing a building, perhaps a bai, at the far right. The reverse side of the lintel depicts two buildings on either end and a before-and-after sequence of three men performing a ritual task or dance in the center. Originally, these storyboards were carved and painted on the beams of the traditional Palauan meeting house known as a bai. The pictographic art depicted on these storyboards is used as a mnemonic device to recall legends. Often times, these folktales tell of amusing or tragic stories of romance and daring deeds, usually accompanied by moral teaching or tradition. Long storyboard beams like this one became rarer over time as bai buildings were constructed less frequently and the style of storyboards evolved. During the Japanese occupation of Palau (1914-45), artist Hisakatsu Hijikata began crafting storyboards on small, portable boards for the purpose of export. Other Palauan carvers noted the monetary value of this style and began crafting single panel storyboards for the purpose of barter.

Dimensions

5 7/8 × 77 1/2 × 1 5/8 in. (14.9 × 196.9 × 4.1 cm)