

Basic Detail Report



Slit Gong (Garamut)

Date
20th Century

Medium
Wood

Description

This is a garamut, a carved wooden slit drum hailing from Papua New Guinea’s Sepik River region. Smaller slit drums are more common than the larger slit gongs only used in men’s houses—their utility lies in their portability, a function of their size. In general, slit drums are used for making music during ceremonies, especially initiation ceremonies and for signaling. The deep resonating voice of the slit gong carries for miles along the river and surrounding area. Prior to being sold for export, garamut were considered to have a spirit and they have names. They are powerful like masks and figures. They are thought to be so powerful that they can kill people or make them sick. A garamut is said to have the capability of taking on other forms and walk at night. This drum features an atypical design for its handles, the rare instance in which a man or crocodile is not used. The wear to the side of the drum indicates significant usage.

Dimensions
7 1/8 × 34 3/8 × 6 in. (18.1 × 87.3 × 15.2 cm)