

Basic Detail Report



Rug

Date

c. 1910

Primary Maker

Navajo

Medium

Wool and dye

Description

This is a Navajo rug which dates to approximately 1910. Use of the swastika was favored at the Crystal and Ganado trading posts between 1890 and 1920 but did appear elsewhere until World War II. Despite its modern connotations, the motif has been an auspicious symbol for at least thousands of years. For the Navajo, it was a figurative representation of the 'whirling logs,' a commonly depicted sand painting from the Night Chant and together with an axis with two legs—where the swastika instead has four—forms a visual pun of the Navajo mantra, "successfully attaining a ripe old age by daily spiritual renewal according to the universal beauty of the cosmos." Its use in Navajo textiles was probably more inspired by the introduction of the Asiatic motif by Western traders. This rug features a large central design known as the Spider Woman Cross. This design has several different forms, but it is generally characterized as having small squares of other geometric motifs attached to the outer perimeters of crossed lines or arms. Although the term refers to Spider Woman, the sacred being who taught the Navajo how to weave, it is thought that this term was developed by commercial traders and not the Navajo themselves.

Dimensions

59 × 84 1/2 in. (149.9 × 214.6 cm)