



House Posts

Date

1820-1840

Primary Maker

Tlingit (Tongass)

Medium

Red cedar, paint

Description

The Tlingit often carved house posts that were made to stand before and fasten to a plain interior post which actually supported the weight of the roof structure of large clan houses. This would better preserve the posts, but more important, it allowed them to be moved easily from one house to another. The carvings usually represent the crest emblems of a particular clan, in this case the Raven clan. The image of the Raven carrying the sun in his beak is one of the oldest in Tlingit mythology. It recalls the stealing of daylight from a giant or other powerful being and its eventual release to man-kind. Here the Raven is depicted in flight, carrying in his beak a mask-like face that symbolizes the sun. The style of work in each of these posts indicates that they were carved by two different artists. Taken together the two images contain a level of design evolution which implies that they were created in the first half of the 19th century. The two styles differ significantly, however. The work on the post with a larger tail face is more sculptural in its carving and suggests an older, somewhat more conservative artist. The other post has more detailed, but flatter carving which suggest the work of an artist more influenced by the design evolution of the early classic post-1820 period.

Dimensions

Overall (A): 105 × 38 × 12 3/4 in. (266.7 × 96.5 × 32.4 cm) Overall (B): 104 × 38 × 11 in. (264.2 × 96.5 × 27.9 cm)