



Mask

Date

c. 1870

Primary Maker

Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl)

Medium

Red cedar, leather straps, iron nails

Description

Raven masks are often used in the prestigious Hamat'sa, a complex series of dances involving an initiation ceremony. The raven is one of three cannibal bird attendants to the great Bakhwbakwalanooksiwey, a spirit described as a humanoid covered in mouths. The initiate is usually a young man. He becomes possessed by Bakhwbakwalanooksiwey but is gradually subdued and

then finally reintegrated into society. The initiate is accompanied by three cannibal birds who make a dramatic appearance in dances by sharply snapping their powerful beaks. This is accomplished by the dancer who snaps the mask's lower beak up and down.

Dimensions

Overall: 9 x 26 1/4 in. (22.9 x 66.7 cm)