

Basic Detail Report



Mask

Date

1850-1870

Primary Maker

Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl)

Medium

Red cedar, black bear skin, human hair, black and red paint with graphite, forged iron nails, sinew, bite loop

Description

This very fine and unusual mask of the image appears to be of the type known as "chief's mask," or gikam. This type of Dzunukwa mask would be worn only briefly by a family leader who is about to transfer a large amount of wealth, often on the occasion of a traditional marriage, from his family to the opposite side. The mask is of the

typical size for the gikam, and employs a bite-loop on the inside back that can be gripped by one's teeth. This enables the mask to be easily held in place over the wearer's face while they utter the ooh-hu-hu-hu-hu cry of the Dzunukwa, and removed again readily as the speech concerning the upcoming transfer is made. Chief's masks vary widely between ones that are very traditionally stylized and graphically refined, and those intended to be very naturalistic, as if representing a living Dzunukwa. This very finely modeled version appears somewhere between the two types: it shows the stylization of ovoid-shaped eyesockets and ears, along with the very precise modeling of a cheek-bone ridge and naturalistic lips.

Dimensions

Overall: 12 3/8 × 10 1/4 × 7 in. (31.4 × 26 × 17.8 cm)