

Basic Detail Report



Mask

Date

ca. 1500-400 BCE

Primary Maker

Olmec

Medium

greenstone

Description

Greenstone of all types was highly prized in ancient Mesoamerica for its resemblance to young sprouts of corn that appeared annually after the first rains. The brilliant green color and luster of the stone from which this mask is made is perhaps its most attractive element. The facial

features demonstrate a perfect balance of stylized and naturalistic characteristics. The eyes, eyebrows, and ears have been rendered in a minimalistic style, with only basic incisions to suggest the contours. By contrast, the nose and mouth are depicted with great realism: The nose is rounded with flaring nostrils and the upper lip curls to show teeth in the characteristic Olmec expression. Two holes at the corners of the mouth are also typical of such masks and have been interpreted as guides in the stone working process.

Dimensions

Overall: 4 7/8 x 4 3/8 x 3 in. (12.4 x 11.1 x 7.6 cm)