

Lime Spatula

Date

late 19th to early 20th century

Primary Maker

Artist Unknown

Medium

wood and stain

Description

The southeastern region of Papua New Guinea (Massim Region) together with its off shore islands is famous for its kula circle, a ceremonial trading system that linked wide spread locations and dispersed a single style of art over the entire area. Ritually exchanged gifts circulated widely and often ended up great distances from where they were created. This common style, referred to as Massim, is characterized by complex interlocked curvilinear patterns, lightly incised but sculpturally conceived and arranged along a longitudinal axis. Sometimes life forms like frigate birds or crocodiles can be discerned among the abstract curves. Lime spatulas were among the most popular kula exchange objects and were made in great numbers. The lime spatulas were used with betel, a mild narcotic that, when chewed, induces copious amounts of red-stained saliva often symbolically associated with blood when used in rituals. The spatula is used to scoop lime from decorated gourds to mix with the betel in carved mortars.

Dimensions

Overall: 11 5/8 x 2 x 1/2 in. (29.5 x 5.1 x 1.3 cm)



