



Treasure Box (Wakahuia or Papahou)

Date
19th century

Primary Maker
Maori people

Medium
wood, stain and haliotis shell

Description
Richly carved containers for valued personal items were found in the homes of chiefs. This box held treasures such as feathers that were symbols of status, jade or bone objects, or musical instruments such as flutes. The treasure boxes were suspended from ceiling beams by means of the lugs carved at either end; hence the careful carving of the bottom surface which was clearly visible from below. In the center, in raised carving, is a human figure (tiki) in characteristic form with shell- inlaid eyes. Disembodied tiki heads with inlaid eyes form the handles on each end. The rest of the surface is covered by basic elements of the Maori style: the double spiral, the spiral with elongated stem (koru) typically doubled, and parallel ridges with rows of “dog teeth” notching in between (rauponga).

Dimensions
Overall: 22 3/4 x 8 3/4 x 6 5/8 in. (57.8 x 22.2 x 16.8 cm)