



Mask

Date

late 19th to early 20th century

Primary Maker

Artist Unknown

Medium

wood and paint

Description

Murik Lake is near the coast just north of the Sepik River delta and is part of the larger Sepik River art tradition. This mask is very typical with its elongated oval face and exaggerated arching nose. Sepik men are quite proud of their large noses and perforate the nasal septum to add ornaments to emphasize its size. The long noses symbolize male genitals and evoke by association the whole spectrum of the aggressive male ethos of the Sepik warriors. Besides phallic associations, the elongated nose can evoke either the crocodiles or the weevil, two important totemic animals. Women with large noses are also considered quite beautiful. Masks can be worn in a variety of ceremonies from initiations to naven. They are frequently described as representing ancestors of the maternal clan come to participate in the communal ceremonies.

Dimensions

Overall: 27 5/8 x 10 x 5 1/4 in. (70.2 x 25.4 x 13.3 cm)