New Guinea COLLECTION

Acquired by:
Grand Valley State University
Anthropology Laboratory
Primal Woman

Symbol of rebirth. In the upper story of the men’s ceremonial or initiation house (*Haus Tambarans*), is stored all of the sacred cult objects. A steep ladder goes up each gable end. Above the top of each ladder on the crossbeam facing towards the interior sits a female figure with splayed legs. Thus one can only reach the upper floor between the legs of this figure, which represents the mythical primal woman. *(pictured without 1 leg)*

Wood, Raffia, & Cowrie
23” x 23” x 7”
NG2010/C02
Ancestral Figure

Mindimbit Culture

Tribal ancestor figures are kept in the spirit house, usually leaning against the wall at an angle. They are believed to enshrine the spirits of their ancestors and are regarded with great respect and reverence. Other ancestor figures are family heirlooms kept by their direct descendants in their own houses.

Carved Wood
45" x 12" x 10"
NG2010/C03
Spirit Mask

Represents the spirit of a specific ancestor and is kept in the cult house. Used in ceremonies, it allows communication with the clan spirits.

Angriman Village
Middle Sepik Region

Carved Wood, Basketry, Cowrie, Shells, Feathers, & Boar Tusks
47” x 20” x 10”
NG2010/C04
Spirit Mask

Represents the spirit of a specific ancestor and is kept in the cult house. Used in ceremonies, it allows communication with the clan spirits. Elongation of the nose or tongue signifies strength and virility.

Kandangai Region

Carved Wood, Cowrie, Shells, Raffia Grass, Cassowary Feathers, & Boar Tusks
48” x 17” x 8”
NG2010/C05
Skull Rack

Carved Wood, Cowrie, Shells, & Raffia Grass
60" x 60" x 7"
NG2010/C06
Attached to the main posts of the men’s ceremonial house, the skull rack was formerly adorned with the skulls of slain enemies. The skulls of one’s ancestors, over modeled with clay, are now put up and the racks are hung with offerings such as betel nuts and shell money.

These rituals maintain the connection with the spirits of one’s ancestors and thus with the powers of the other world. The bark painting represents a “wagen” spirit.

Angoram Village
Substitute Head

Used in ceremonies.

Carved Wood
9” x 5” x 4” (head only)
NG2010/C07
Woven Mask

Used in ceremonies.

Woven, Feathers, Mud, & Shells
11" x 24" x 10"
NG2010/C08
New Guinea

BILLUM

Kabwum Morobe Province

Woven
26” x 10” x 1”
NG2010/C09
Bilas

Traditional jewelry, generally woven of bush fiber and adorned with shell and pig tusks. Bilas may be used as gift exchange, as well as bride price.

Woven, Cowrie, & Boar Tusks
20" x 6" x 1"
NG2010/C10
Bilas

Traditional jewelry, generally woven of bush fiber and adorned with shell and pig tusks. Bilas may be used as gift exchange, as well as bride price.

Woven, Cowrie, Shells, & Seeds
19” x 8” x 1”
NG2010/C11
Bilas

Traditional jewelry, generally woven of bush fiber and adorned with shell and pig tusks. Bilas may be used as gift exchange, as well as bride price.

Woven, Cowrie, Shells, & Seeds
36" x 7.5" x 1"
NG2010/C12