



Frieze

Not on display

Title/Description: Frieze

Born: 1880 c.

Measurements: w. 838 x h. 310 x d. 165 mm

Accession Number: 943

Historic Period: Late 19th century

This frieze depicts a bird with elaborate spread wings, gripping a snake in its beak and talons. The snake's tail emerges from that of the bird, and it appears to be about to strike the bird in the right eye. The 'bird-struggling-with-snake' is a common theme in New Ireland art, indeed in the art of the Indo-Pacific region (see object 872).

The purpose of friezes of this kind is not entirely clear. They have been referred to as dance paraphernalia, since most have a perforate ridge down the back which could function as a handle (Bodrogi, 1987: 28). However, it seems more likely that they were for fixed display on a post of some kind, so that the back of the wings could also be seen. The ridge down the back of the bird on this example has two holes, but these do not form a hand-grip and were probably for binding to a post. At least three friezes of this kind were in the George Brown collection (Brown, 1908: 200).

Steven Hooper, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 312.
