



A Kowar Headrest collected by Jacques Viot

An extraordinary and rare headrest representing a zoomorphic quadruped standing on a rectangular base. The animals face is of typical Korwar form. The body is elongated and curved to form the neck-bar of the headrest. It is supported on four massive legs with carved feet. The animals genitals are placed behind the junction of the hind legs – reminiscent of a monkey on all fours. Yapen Island, Korwar Area, Vogelkop Peninsula, Geelvink Bay, Indonesian New Guinea, Melanesia. Wood with an excellent patina of age and wear. 33 cm. 19th century.

Provenance:

Collected in the field by Jacques Viot circa 1929. An inventory label on the underside of the baseplate in French script : “Oreille.../(sing.../village de .../ile Jappen.../(il n'y a pas d.../dans cette ile .../les legends en... “. This label is written in Viots handwriting of the mid to late 1930's and appears to be an explicative description of the piece with more detail than usually offered on the field inventory labels. The label is of similar paper and dimensions to those used by Viot on the pieces he collected in the area in 1929. The field inventory label is now missing on this headrest. Viot, an artist on the fringe of the Surrealist movement went to Dutch New Guinea as an agent for the gallerist Pierre Loeb and is famous for bringing back to France most of the sculptures from Lake Sentani. He also visited the Korwar area collecting extensively on Jappen (Yapen) and Kurudu Islands and in the general area.

Ex coll. : Philippe Bourgoïn - acquired from André Fourquet & Ascher Eskenazi along with a group of objects collected by Viot ; Gal. Meyer, Paris ; private collection, Paris.

Literature:

Published : Meyer, Anthony JP: OCEANIC ART / OZEANISCHE KUNST / ART OCEANIEN. Könemann Verlag, Köln. 1995, page 58, fig. 36/37.