

Finch & C^o



NATIVE AMERICAN WOODLANDS IROQUOIS SENECA FALSE FACE SOCIETY MASK

ARARE EXPRESSIVE AND DRAMATIC NATIVE AMERICAN WOODLANDS IROQUOIS SENECA FALSE FACE SOCIETY MASK OF CARVED WOOD WITH ACCENTED METAL EYES A CROOKED BENT NOSE AND LONG TRESSES OF BLACK HORSE HAIR ATTACHED TO A HORSEHIDE STRIP

CIRCA 1860'S – 1880'S

SIZE: 25CM HIGH, 18CM WIDE, 10CM DEEP - 10 INS HIGH, 7 INS WIDE, 4 INS DEEP

APPROX: 56CM LONG - 22 INS LONG (WITH HAIR)

LITERATURE

THESE MASKS WERE WORN BY MEMBERS OF THE 'HIDIGONSA SHANO' A CLUB OF MASKED DANCERS IN 'CURING' CEREMONIES. EMBODYING A SUPERNATURAL BEING THEIR ORIGIN IS BELIEVED TO DATE FROM THE MYTHICAL PAST WHEN THE LEADER OF THE SUPERNATURAL FOREST DWELLERS, THE 'GREAT HUMPBACKED ONE', CHALLENGED THE CREATOR TO A TEST OF STRENGTH. AS PUNISHMENT THE GIANT WAS GIVEN THE TASK OF HELPING HUMANS COMBAT SICKNESS. THE MASKS WERE CARVED FROM THE WOOD OF LIVING TREES AND ARE THEREFORE ALSO CONSIDERED TO BE LIVING AND BREATHING. TRADITIONALLY RED PAINTED MASKS WERE CARVED FROM TREES IN THE MORNING, AND BLACK ONES IN THE AFTERNOON.

THE FALSE FACE RITUAL IS PERFORMED BY MEMBERS OF AN IROQUOIS MEDICINE SOCIETY DURING THE SPRING AND AUTUMN WITH SMALLER VERSIONS SOMETIMES OCCURRING MID WINTER. WEARING MASKS EMBODYING THE SPIRITUAL BEING THE MEMBERS GO THROUGH THE HOUSES OF THE COMMUNITY DRIVING AWAY SICKNESS, DISEASE AND EVIL SPIRITS USING TURTLE SHELL RATTLES WHICH THEY SHAKE AND RUB ALONG THE FLOORS AND WALLS TO EXPEL THE UNWANTED SPIRITS. IF A SICK PERSON IS FOUND, A HEALING RITUAL IS PERFORMED USING TOBACCO AND CHANTING. ONCE THE TOBACCO IS BURNED THE ASHES ARE BLOWN OVER THE INVALID. THE COMMUNITY THEN GATHERS AT THE LONG HOUSE WHERE THE FALSE FACES ENTER AND SIT ON THE FLOOR. THE PEOPLE BRING TOBACCO WHICH IS COLLECTED AS THEY ARRIVE AND BURNED WHEN THE CEREMONY BEGINS. THE RITUAL RENEWS AND RESTRENGTHENS

THE POWER OF THE GATHERED MASKS AS WELL AS THAT OF THE GREAT SPIRIT 'HADUI'. THE CEREMONY CONTINUES WITH DANCING AND AT THE END A WHITE CORN MUSH IS GIVEN TO THE ASSEMBLED CROWD WHO EAT AND THEN RETIRE HOME.