

Basic Detail Report



Mask

Date

ca. 1500-400 BCE

Primary Maker

Olmec

Medium

greenstone

Description

This greenstone mask displays a great sensitivity to the natural features of a human face and may represent a portrait or death mask of an individual. The mouth is rendered with great realism to reveal a line of well defined teeth and provide the face with a lively

expression. The long nose and rectangular ears imbue the mask with a symmetry and authority that convey Olmec aesthetic ideals. Strength and stoicism in a rather genderless form are seen again and again in Olmec high-status art. The two holes in the ear lobes suggest the inclusion of jewelry and the single incisions across the bridge of the nose may represent a facial tattoo. This masterpiece of stonework was made without the use of any metal or mechanized tools and must have consumed many hours in the life of the craftsman.

Dimensions

Overall: 7 5/8 x 7 3/8 x 4 3/8 in. (19.4 x 18.7 x 11.1 cm)