We now turn our thoughts to the Trees.

The Earth has many families of Trees who have their own instructions and uses.

Some provide us with shelter and shade, others with fruit, beauty and other useful things.

Many people of the world use a Tree as a symbol of peace and strength.

With one mind, we greet and thank the Tree life.

Ohenton Kariwahtekwen
The Iroquois Thanksgiving Address

The Steven Michaan Collection
of North American Tribal Arts

The Art *of the* Spirit World

WOODLANDS

By Steven Michaan

Foreword & Descriptions
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William Terrill Bradby in Native Dress with Headdress, October 1899. Pawmunkey Reservation, King William County, Virginia

Woodlands Art

Of the many collections of Native American art that have been formed, most have concentrated on color and more or less, on flat design. Though the Woodlands cultures succeeded within these parameters, it is small scale, personal sculpture where they truly excelled.

The Steven Michaan Collection is focused on such sculpture rather than personal adornments and non-utilitarian forms. This sculpture was created upon the utilitarian forms of bowls, ladles, pipes and clubs that the Woodlands People refined and mastered over centuries. These objects of necessity were platforms that married ancient mythologies with utility.

Objects of daily use and ritualistic events had meaningful effigies carved upon them that served to protect, guide and offer confidence to an individual or tribe. For their patients, shaman used ceremonial effigy bowls, ladles and pipes to extract illness and nourish their bodies and being. Sometimes they used, **"wild tobacco lighted [in a pipe], and here they either sucked or blew down the smoke, according to the physician's direction"** (*Antiquities of the New World, vol. 17, Shaman's Medicine Tubes & Pipes, Old Algonquian*, 1935).

The archeologist, Arthur C. Parker wrote about the Nzganega"a' oi'no', or the Seneca Little Water Company, a secret medicine society where the "feast-makers pass bowls of berry-juice, giving each singer a draft from a ladle" (*American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1909).

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein famously posited the following, "If a lion could speak, we could not understand him." For most of the modern era this concept has pervasively guided the critique of historical ethnographic and tribal arts. In that it is said that the Western concept of art cannot be applied to other, more 'primitive' cultures, because they did not share the same language or definition of art, that they had a different construct or were playing a different game entirely—as if one were trying to apply the rules of baseball to making a loaf of bread. Thus ethnographic and tribal arts are often judged differently—either they are given a pass because of their 'primitive sensibilities' or are overrated for the same reason.

Though the practice of craft—its motives, goals, and even peer analysis may vastly differ or not even comparatively apply from one culture to the other—something happens in every reach of the globe, throughout every stage in the human timeline—a product, an artificial build beyond utilitarian purpose is crafted by human hands. Art is universal and though they may not have had the same definition or defined it at all, what the Woodlands people were creating for centuries before the arrival of European settlers was indeed art.

If art is a human concept that aims to make more beautiful its communication efforts, its language, its tools and devices, then what they created was art. For the Woodlands people, or for that matter what all world cultures have done over time is to construct basic communication tools and implements and then embellish them. Inherently as humans, we strive to make things better, simpler, more aesthetically efficient—if this were not so, or if it were an isolated cultural concept, this art phenomena would not occur in every corner of this earth. Though each culture may define art differently or not at all—ultimately, "a rose is a rose is a rose," or a ladle is a spoon is a scoop.

Some of the earliest recorded artifacts of the Woodlands cultures are bowls, pipes and spears. In reductionist terminology, these represent food technology, weaponry, social communication and ceremonial worship. Objects and implements for these basic functions, once perfected beyond utilitarian purposes, were crafted competitively to express complex belief systems and/or to be made more artful. Unaware of other worlds, the Woodlands people refined and further developed these crafts over thousands of years. When the Europeans arrived along the Eastern Seaboard of North America, the Woodlands mastery and ingenuity of these art forms were well matured and did not go unnoticed. The English artist, come ethno-historian, John White, who in 1585 during his time in Virginia and its surroundings, sketched the Algonquians with wampum-beaded adornments, feathers and elaborate body tattoos. Thomas Morton observed that the natives of Massachusetts "have dainty wooden bowles of maple, of highe price amongst them," *(New English Canaan,* 1637*)*.

Antoine Denis Raudot added, "...the men make dishes of knots of wood and spoons on which they carve the figure of some animal..." (*Memoir Concerning The Different Indian Nations of North America,* 1709).

The carver's success and proficiency in these fields were sources of personal and cultural pride. Their creations were gifted, valued and traded within their own tribes and between tribes and often buried them with their dead. The objects were communication devices that conveyed history, legends and cultural beliefs then as they do now. Talented as they were, however, the carvers would not have been successful message makers if they just conveyed static information or further cherished if they were not artfully executed. Their messages succeeded and continue to live on long after their creation because their messages were artistically conveyed.

When making crafts, utilitarian needs are first met and as proficiency in manufacture is attained, art is created upon these utilitarian forms to either increase the efficiency of the form, to add communication devices or to simply make it more beautiful. Much of the personal sculpture seen in this collection is incidentally focused on the utility of food technology.

While the Woodlands people engaged in hunting and gathering, they were predominantly an agrarian culture. Their crop staples were corn, beans and squashes or "the three sisters" as they were sometimes called. The anthropologist Frank Boas wrote that as the Eskimo had hundreds of words for "snow," the same may apply for the Iroquois and Algonquians of "corn." The Woodlands people gave thanks for this staple each year, in late summer during the Green Corn Ceremonies. This annual ceremony or festival tied in with the ripening of the corn harvest and lasted from a few to several days. Fasting, spiritual renewal, dancing and then feasting were all part of the rituals. In addition, the Woodlands diet relied on wild rice, berries, roots, maple syrup, vegetable and animal fats, fish, fowl and other meat.

Most of their foodstuffs were mashed, mixed and macerated. This required large vessels for gathering, chopping and grinding—baskets, bowls and mortars. The baskets were made from wood splints, bowls and mortars were hewn from hard woods, and ladles were made for eating their porridge and stew based meals. The Woodlands people produced master carvers to fill the demand for this basic utility.

WOODLANDS BOWLS

"Once I was fortunate enough to see the Indian food and sugar bowls growing in a state of nature. These were sickly, semicircular excrescences on a maple-tree, about a foot in diameter. These excrescences, which are also found on other trees, are externally as perfectly round as a half a bomb-shell. The Indians cut them from the trees, scoop them out, and they employ these lusus naturæ as soup-plates." (Johann Georg Kohl, *Kitchi-gami: Wanderings Around Lake Superior*, 1855).

"Before any formal aspects of these objects may be effectively discussed, a single underlying concept must be recognized... wood is sacred." Gaylord Torrence wrote in *Art of the Red Earth People: The Mesquakie of Iowa,* 1989. Robert Hobbs continued from the same, "They regard trees, for example, as their grandparents. And bowls are formed of burls, which appear on tree trunks in enlarged growths that resemble the swelling caused by a human fetus. Since a tree's swelling burl is a metaphor for fecundity, these bowls also serve also as an image of hope in the sacred feasts where they are used." Though Torrence and Hobbs referred specifically to the Mesquakie of the Sauk and Fox, these thoughts can be applied to the beliefs of all Woodlands people.

The Woodlands artisans were master bowl makers. It was a craft that became an art form centuries before first contact. It can be theorized that soon after they learned the rudiments of hewing a bowl and perfecting that craft, it was not long before they began to critically examine form, proportion, design and execution—making it an art.

Sculptural bowls were not only reserved for effigy bowls: their vessels for everyday food preparation, serving and individual use, were often remarkable works masterfully conceived and thoughtfully executed in hardwood burls (ash, elm and maple). Their understanding of form following function led them to ingenious and refined designs. They appreciated surface and the complexity that use and age lent to these vessels and they were passed down from generation to generation—for wood was sacred.

Wooden carved effigy bowls are important and profound carvings of the Woodlands culture. Their marriage of utilitarian form with ceremony is arguably unsurpassed by any culture. The carvings are intimate and understated, yet powerful and bold without any contrivance. The carved effigies exude tremendous confidence and potential energy.

Effigy bowls were not common utilitarian receptacles for food service—they were reserved for ceremonial feasts or medicine rituals. They were created with such thought and purpose that today we can understand just a fraction of their original import.

A breakthrough in their understanding was made in the 1980's by Evan M. Maurer, then the Director of the University of Michigan Museum of Art, when he first recognized the integral relationships between the abstracted rim decorations on 17th -19th century Great Lakes wooden bowls and the representational images of anthropomorphic Manitou torsos and heads on earlier Ancient Woodlands - Mississippian period ceramic bowls (see Maurer, "*Representational and Symbolic Forms in Great Lakes-Area Wooden Sculpture, Great Lakes Indian Art*" 1989).

I furthered this study and understanding in *North American Burl Treen: Colonial & Native American*" (Powers, 2005) and through an article, "*The Evolution of the Water Manitou as Seen Through Its Presence in Woodlands Bowls & Ladles*" (Powers, *Good Wood*, Vol. I, 2008) which traces certain abstracted forms and devices representative of a Woodlands Manitou.

WOODLANDS LADLES & PIPES

"The end of the [ladles] handle is often surmounted with the figure of an animal or bird....These figures were often carved with surpassing skill, the proportions, and attitude of the animal being accurately preserved and studied." — Lewis Henry Morgan, 1851.

Effigy ladles were meaningful, personal objects. At every meal a Woodlands native brought with them a personal eating ladle and bowl. Effigies were often totemistic of one's clan - e.g. bear, wolf, turtle, etc. Individuals would often discuss dreams or visions with a medicine man or shaman to construct a design and choose the type of wood that would best convey the meaning, content and spirit of such visions. The resulting objects would be carefully and finely carved to perform as both utilitarian devices and sculptural platforms for personal expression.

Consistent with the Woodlands aesthetic, effigy carvings on ladles attempt to capture the essence of a subject. Thus effigies can sometimes be difficult to determine—the carver may have focused on an abstracted element and/or reduced the carving to a particular detail of an animal or being (e.g. an eye or the general architecture of a body). These Woodlands carvers understood that in art it is more difficult to edit, to take away from a subject and still have it retain its essence than to leave it all in—and they realized the end result was often more perspicuous and powerful.

Though there appears to be no limit to the variety of forms based on animals, humans and mythological beings, overwhelmingly, the perched bird is the most common subject found on effigy ladles. Others include the beaver, otter, bear, wolf, panther, turtle, even pigs. Human effigy ladles are quite scarce and tend to be early within the historic period.

Though many ladles may appear to be non-representational, it is likely that these abstracted ladles are reductionist in interpretations of a common subject, and without the aid of other more representational examples, it is extremely difficult to figure out the more reductive or abstracted specimens.

Pipes, compared to ladles, appear more regularly in the archeological record (likely due to their stone and their ceramic mediums, compact and less vulnerable forms). Like ladles, the crafting of pipes evolved over centuries and is an integral part of the Woodlands cultural identity. Tobacco was a sacred plant and used more ritualistically than habitually. It was smoked communally in sacred ceremonies and in negotiations to seal a deal (analogous to a hand shake). The effigies on pipes were typically less reductive, and they often incorporated subjects such as animals and regional mythologies.

Woodlands Warriors

Likely coinciding with the development of the arrow-headed spear for hunting food animals, the spear was also adapted to the task of killing human beings.

Well-crafted pointed rocks and heavy, blunt, well-balanced clubs were made expressly as killing machines. The ball-club is a compact weapon made from a hardwood and/or stone and is an efficient and effective instrument for close combat. Examples are seen globally. The Woodlands people selected choice root specimens and burls that naturally grew in the architecture of these weapons. As the utilitarian form was perfected, surfaces were inscribed with pictographs recording battles and accomplishments in war. Often the overall form was carved to incorporate an effigy of a mythological creature or warrior, which served to empower the combatant. Boys from an early age were taught games that help practice and perfect battle techniques and strategy.

When a boy became a man and saw his first battle, it was a day of individual and family pride. He would record his accomplishments on his personal war club. Well decorated and battle worn clubs were held in high esteem and became status symbols within the tribe and were noted by others. War clubs were pridefully displayed in dances and ceremonies—some were made expressly for these dances and others for important rituals that were part of bundles that shaman kept and were passed down through generations.

Conclusion

The Woodlands aesthetic of "less is more," was formed over generations of refinement. The aim was to capture and reveal the essence of a subject without superfluous detail. It invited contemplation and freed the artist to explore form, texture, proportion and detail without the mimicry of realism.

The artistry of the Woodlands people was tied to its language, history and mythology. As the People assimilated or were forced from their lands, their artistic language was irrevocably disrupted. Traditional crafts carried on, but more in the manner of carrying the torch, versus continuing a tradition that was integral to their way of life.

Steven S. Powers, Brooklyn, 2013

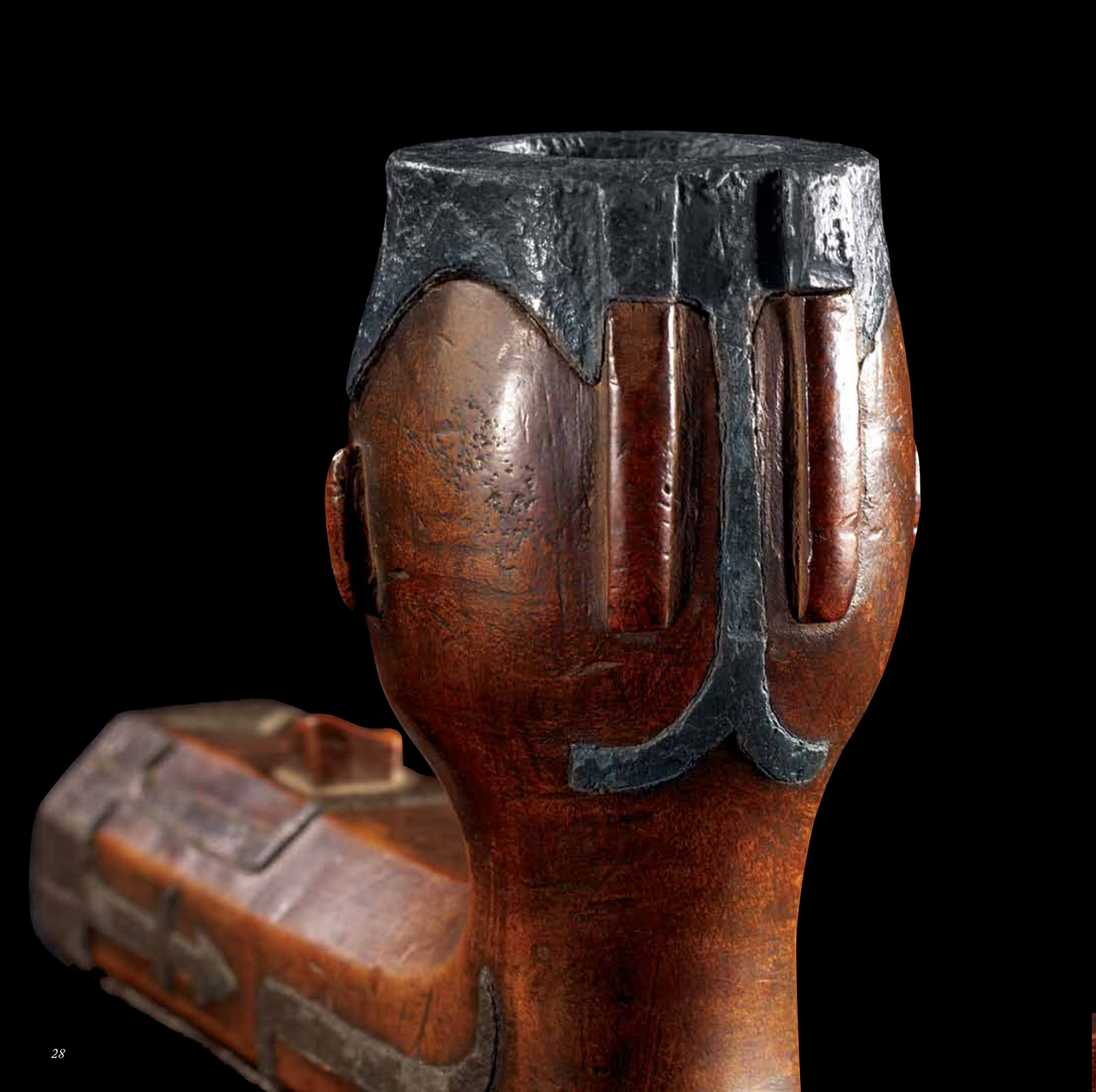
The Plates

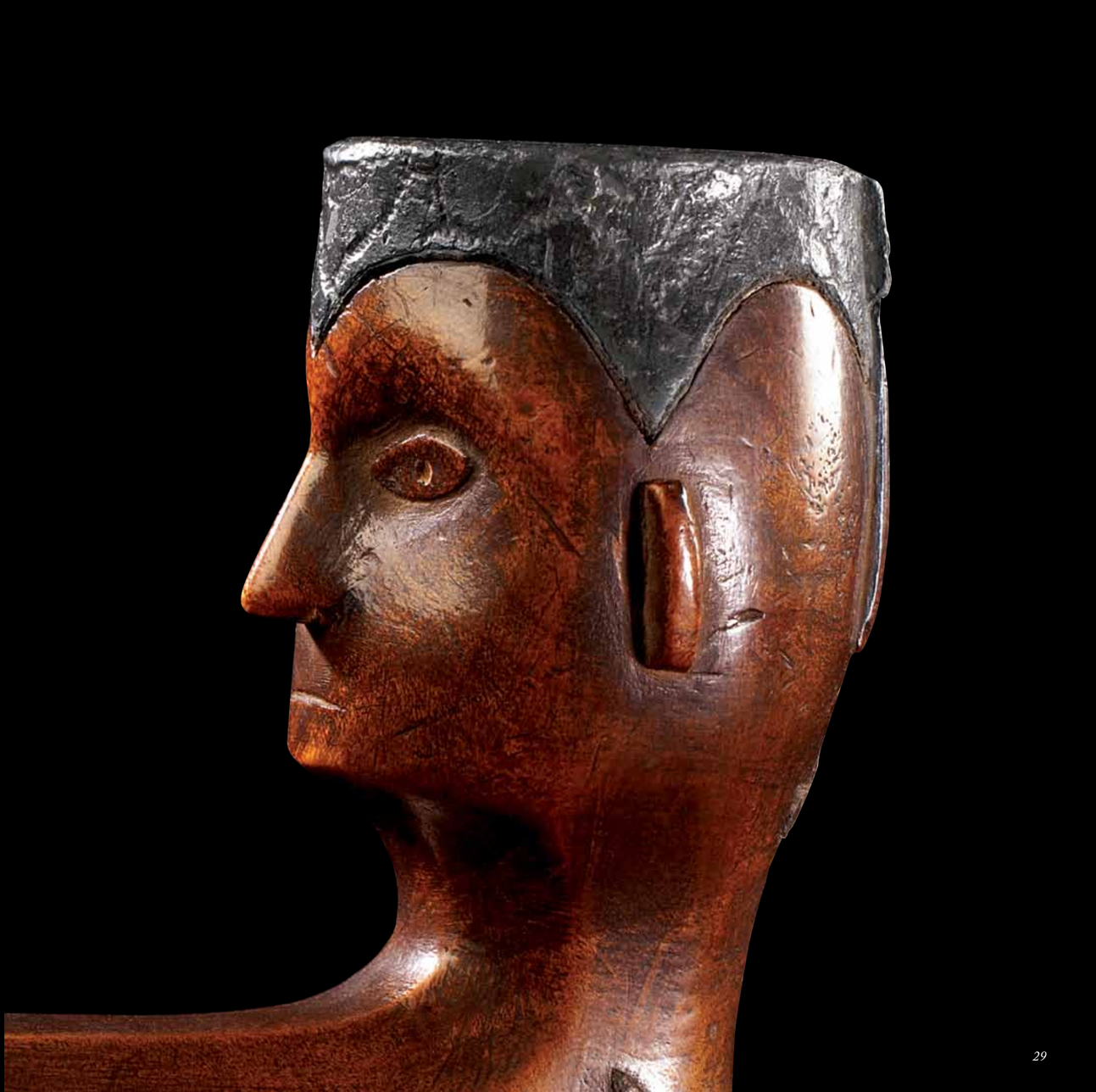
Central-Western Great Lakes Woodlands
Human *Effigy* Bundle Club
Maple Burl
15" Height, *c.1740-1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Ball Headed Club
Maple Burl & Earth Elements
14" Length, *c.1820*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Speaker's Staff
Maple, Snakeskin, Lead & Textile
30" Length, *c.1760*

Great Lakes Woodlands
Human E*ffi*gy Pipe
Maple Burl & Lead
4⅜" Length, *c.1760*





Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Female E*ffi*gy Pipe
Maple Burl
2 ½" Height, *c.1760-1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Human E*ffi*gy Pipe
Maple
3” Height, *c.1780*

Northeast Woodlands
(Southern New England)
Human Effigy Bowl
Ash Burl
14 ⅞" Length, *c.1660 (or earlier)*

Western Great Lakes Woodlands
Manitou E*ffi*gy **Bowl**
Burl, species unknown
15 ⅞" Width, *c.1820*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands *(Iroquois)*
Ceremonial Bowl
Ash Burl
8 ¾" Width, *c.1760-1780*

Northeast Woodlands
Bowl *with* Single Tab Handle
Maple
5 ½" Height, *c.1640*

Northeast Woodlands
Food Bowl
Ash Burl
17 ¾" Diameter, *c.1700 (or earlier)*

Northeast Woodlands
Food Bowl
Ash Burl
18" Length, *c.1760-1780*

Western Great Lakes
Manitou E*ffi*gy **Bowl**
Maple
13 ⅛" Length, *c.1800*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
E*ffi*gy Bowl
Elm Burl
14" Length, *c.1700 (or earlier)*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands *(Ojibwa)*
Red Painted Ceremonial Bowl
Elm Burl
8⅜" Length, *c.1760*

Western Great Lakes / Northern Plains

Medicine Bowl

Elm Burl with Leather Thong

6 ½" Length, *c.1800-1820*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Medicine Bowl *with* Reductive Manitou
Maple Burl
4" Length, *c.1760-1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Small Medicine Bowl *with* Beaded Rim
Maple Burl
4" Length, *c.1800*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Medicine Bowl *with* Reductive Manitou
Maple Burl
6 ½" Length, *c.1760-1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Medicine Bowl *with* Shouldered Ends
Elm Burl
8" Length, *c.1760-1780*

Great Lakes Woodlands
Gaming Dish
Figured Maple & Peach Pits
10" Diameter, *c.1800*

Northeast Woodlands
Belt Cup
Maple
8½" Length, *c.1880*

Northeast Woodlands *(Wabanaki Group)*
Belt Cup
Ash Burl
8" Diameter, *c.1780-1800*

Eastern Woodlands
Carved Crucifix
Maple
4" Height. Dated *"1822" or "1829"*

Northeast Woodlands
Woodwind Blow Pipe
Wood, Birch Bark & Pewter Inlay
14" Length, *c.1840*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Maple Sugaring Ladle
Ash Burl
59" Length, *c.1780 -1810*

Northeast Woodlands
Otter E*ffi*gy Cup
Maple Burl
7¼" Length, *c.1720 or earlier*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands *(Iroquois or Seneca)*
Wolf E*ffi*gy Scoop
Elm Burl
11" Length, *c.1720-1740 or earlier*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Pig Effigy Knife *with* Porcupine Quill Sheath
Wood, Trade Steel Blade, Deerskin, Sinew & Porcupine Quills
9 ⅜" Length, *c.1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Pig E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple Burl
3 ⅛" Length, *c.1760-1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Bird E*ffi*gy Ladle
Ash Burl
8 ½" Length, *c.1760-1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Bird E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple Burl
8 ½" Length, *c.1760-1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Owl E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple
4 ½" Length, *c.1820-1840*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Snow Owl E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple
4 ½" Length, *c.1720-1740*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Woodcock E*ffi*gy Ladle
Ash Burl
7½ Length, *c.1780-1820*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Owl E*ffi*gy Ladle
Ash Burl
5⅛" Length, *c.1780*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Otter E*ff*gy Ladle
Maple
13" Length, *c.1820*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Beaver E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple Burl
5¾" Length, *c.1760 (possibly earlier)*

Northeastern Woodlands (Hudson River Valley)
Beaver E*ffi*gy Ladle *with* Large Frieze & Tail
Ash
7¼" Height, *c.1680 (possibly earlier)*

Northeastern Woodlands (Hudson River Valley)
Beaver E*ffi*gy Ladle *with* Tail
Maple
7⅝" Height, *c.1700 (possibly earlier)*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Human E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple
6½" Length, *c.1720 (possibly earlier)*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Human E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple
5 1/4" Length, *c.1780-1800*

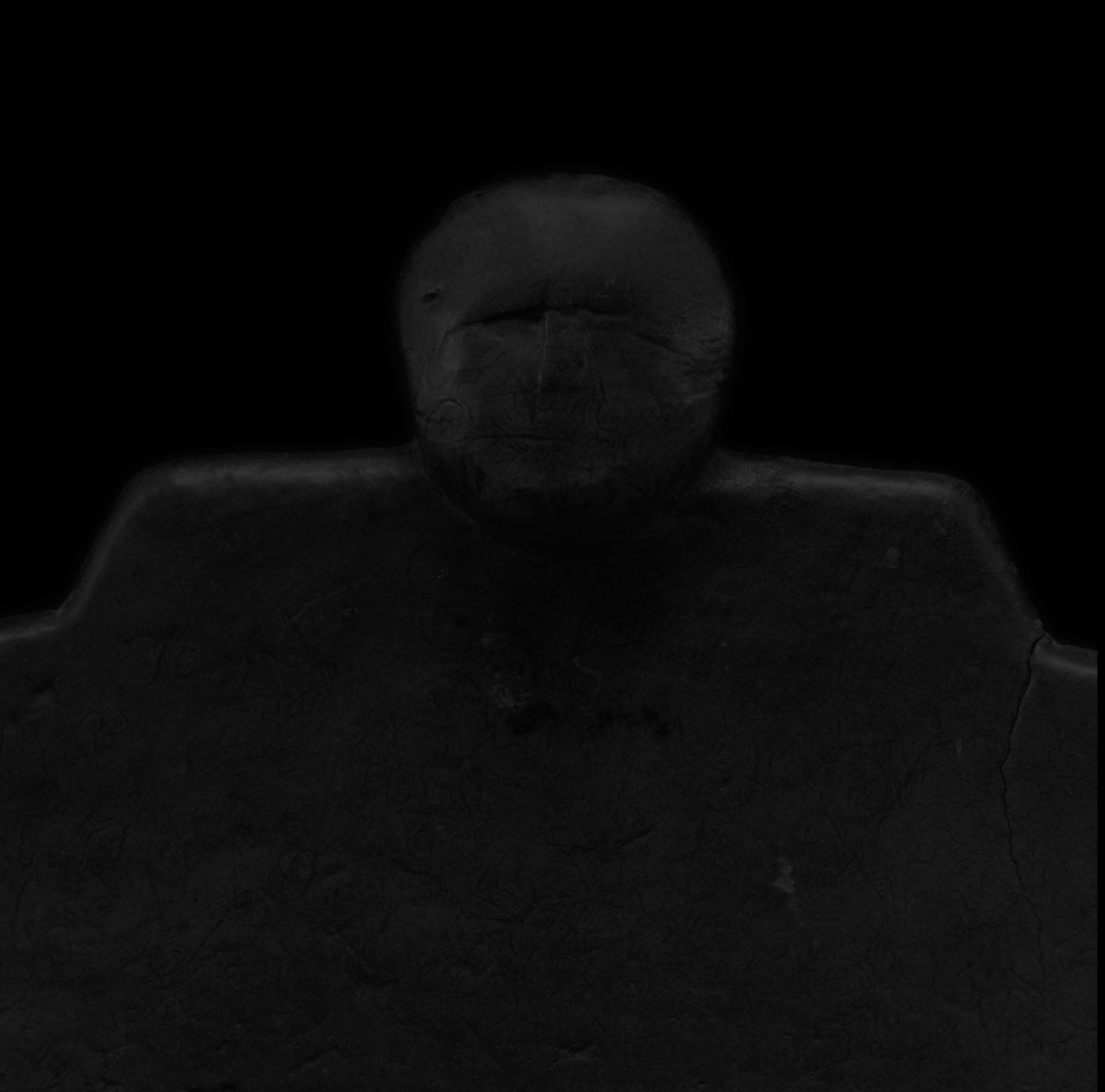
Northeastern Woodlands
Effigy Feast Ladle *with* Manitou Eye
Ash Burl
11½" Length, *c. 1680*

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Ladle *with* Pierced Octagon Top
Ash Burl
7 ⅜" Length, *c.1820*

Central-Western Great Lakes Woodlands
Manitou E*ffi*gy Cup or Scoop
Maple
8” Length, *c.1800*

Great Lakes Woodlands *(Potawatami)*
Abstract E*ffi*gy Ladle
Elm
7” Height, *c.1760-1780*

Description *of* Plates



Central-Western Great Lakes Woodlands
Human *Effigy* Bundle Club
Maple Burl
15" Height, *c.1740-1780*

Before the widespread availability of metal edged weapons and firearms, ball-headed clubs, or as they were known in the period, 'tomahawks' or 'club hammers,' were highly effective weapons. They were utilitarian implements, status symbols and ceremonial devices. Because of its size, this club was likely part of a medicine bundle and served a ceremonial or ritualistic purpose.

The visage carved upon the ball of the club may be representative of an ancestor of the maker or a particular warrior. The face is carved in relief with full features; it does not have some of the more reductive elements that we find on more Easterly carvings. The architecture of the club relates to other 17th century clubs that are from the Eastern Great Lakes. One, in the collection of the Rock Foundation, has a fully carved head carved on the ball or striking end—its mouth is open and its eye sockets are filled with lead. Another human effigy club likely dating from the late 18th to early 19th centuries is in the collection of the Danish National Museum. It has a Manitou or serpent carved on the top of the figure's head and recedes down the backside of the club. The serpent Manitou on that club may relate to the bumps carved on the club shown here.

From the side view, one is able to clearly see a tab carved under the figure's chin and on top of his head. The tab on top transitions into large bumps that recede down towards the backside of the club. It can be posited that these elements make up a Manitou called Mishipizheu, or as it is more commonly referred to an Underwater Panther. The tabs are its mouth and the bumps on its back are features identified on early pictographs on Agawa Rock, Ontario, Canada and recorded on a Woodlands burl bowl and ladle (see Powers, *Good Wood, Vol. I, The Evolution of the Water Manitou as Seen Through Its Presence in Woodlands Bowls & Ladles, 2008*).

The Manitou Mishipizheu was regarded as the most powerful being of the underworld and central to the Woodlands mythology of the Great Lakes and Northeastern regions. It was both feared and revered as a spirit of the water where it lived and was regarded as the demigod of troubled and rough waters.

Mishipizheu took the form of a snakelike feline with sharp teeth, horns, "power lines" and a spiked tail.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Ball Headed Club
Maple Burl & Earth Elements
14" Length, *c.1820*

The Woodlands people sometimes favored visual puns in conceiving a work. A ball-headed club in practical use would be held in hand—so here the club is carved to illustrate a sleeved hand grasping the ball. The 'sleeve' is incised carved to mimic the design one might find on a quill-worked or bead decorated jacket. The incised carvings are carved as vines and other floral motifs. Heavy zigzag 'stitching' runs up the sleeve. The whole is compact and though it has a sense of power when held in hand, it was likely carved for a ceremonial or ritualistic purpose.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Speaker's Staff
Maple, Snakeskin, Lead & Textile
30" Length, *c.1760*

This is one of the most powerful Woodlands speaker's staves extant. The artistry of the carved hand firmly clenching the palm gavel or wax seal, combined with the extensive lead inlay and atypical snakeskin wrapping and collected cloth tassels make for a most powerful communication device and work of art.

Provenance : The Alan J. Sainsbury Collection

Great Lakes Woodlands
Human *Effigy* Pipe
Maple Burl & Lead Inlay
4 ⅜" Length, *c.1760*

Tobacco is a sacred plant of the indigenous people of North and South America. Traditionally is was ground and snuffed nasally in South America, whereas in North America it was smoked through a pipe. The centuries old act of pipe smoking was often a communal ceremonial act among fellow tribe members and between fellow tribes, additionally it was often used to seal a contract between fellow natives and early colonists.

This precisely composed and masterfully executed human effigy wood pipe is carved from a solid maple burl and accented with lead inlay. The self-directed effigy is consistent within the Woodlands culture-with the bowl in hand, smoker and effigy communicate.

The face is stylistically similar to this collection's human effigy club with its well-defined features. A pipe in the collection of the National Museum of Denmark has an earlier pipe with similar features—its eyes filled with lead. The lead inlay on the head of this pipe represents a headdress and is rocker engraved.

The shaft of the pipe is also decorated with wide lead bands and an end cap. The lead bands are shaped in a very deliberate pattern and may represent "power lines."

Carbon remains within the bowl and the pipe remains in a remarkable state of preservation, exhibiting a rich patina from use and age.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Female *Effigy* Pipe
Maple Burl
2 ½" Height, *c.1760-1780*

Seated male figures have been part of the Woodlands vernacular on carved pipes and ladles for centuries, however, the female subject and subtly erotic nature of this pipe is both unique and compelling.

The carver of this pipe created a certain grace by accentuating the roundness of the form, from the figure's hips and knees to the subtle curve in the small of its back.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Human *Effigy* Pipe
Maple
3" Height, *c.1780*

Effigy pipes were often self-directed in that the anterior side of the effigy faced the smoker. In this example, however, the smoker would be looking at the posterior side. A male figure hugs the pipe bowl, as a bear would huge a tree. The carving of the head is stylistically typical of the Eastern Woodlands with reductive features, combining the eyes and nose.

Northeast Woodlands
(Southern New England)
Human *Effigy* **Bowl**
Ash Burl
14 ⅞" Length, *c.1660 (or earlier)*

This extraordinary bowl is possibly the only surviving example of a human effigy bowl of Southern New England origin. It is also quite likely one of the oldest, non-excavated, Woodlands wooden objects extant.

Early Algonquian effigy bowls of the Southern New England area were often nearly perfectly round with a broad flat bottom and a single castellation.

The castellation herein portrays the shoulders and head of a man. The carving of the face is direct and sublime—it is Woodlands carving at its core—quiet and understated, yet undeniably powerful and profound.

The economy of detail is typical of faces carved by the Algonquian tribes (and found on pre-contact stone maskettes). The face is flatly carved and the eyes and nose are combined and defined by slightly arched, upside-down and opposing ells. The backside of the head and shoulders are flush with the curve of the bowl.

Robert Hobbs writes of the Algonquians (Torrence & Hobbs, *Art of the Red Earth People: The Mesquakie of Iowa,* 1989), "They regard trees, for example, as their grandparents. And bowls are formed of burls, which appear on tree trunks in enlarged growths that resemble the swelling caused by a human fetus. Since a tree's swelling burl is a metaphor for fecundity, these bowls serve also as an image of hope in the sacred feasts where they are used."

Effigy bowls were revered objects and passed down from generation to generation. Through these vessels, their ancestors (metaphorically the physical material of the bowl) and effigy (the spirit of the carving) would nourish a new generation with each succession.

This bowl is in a remarkable state of preservation and maintains a stunning presence. The interior is well marked with hundreds of utility marks and is blackened from repetitive use over many years and generations.

Provenance:
Samuel Wineck, Hartford, CT
Reginald Rose, Oyster Bay, NY

Western Great Lakes Woodlands
Manitou *Effigy* **Bowl**
Burl, species unknown
15 ⅞" Length, *c.1820*

Though carved nearly two hundred years ago, the lyrical line treatment of this important bowl is surprisingly modern. Symmetrically composed, the basin is wide and shallow with elegant castellated sides depicting a Manitou—the head and tail reduced to the same form.

It is arguably the finest regional example extant.

Water serpents, monsters and panthers were widespread myths throughout the Woodlands cultures. They were both feared and revered and were thought to be found in rivers, lakes and streams. They are often illustrated with horns, serrated backs, long tails and short legs, however in sculpture the features are often minimized and reduced to semi-abstacted elements.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands *(Iroquois)*
Ceremonial Bowl
Ash Burl
8 ¾" Diameter, *c.1760-1780*

An exceptional, small, double handled Eastern Woodlands ash burl bowl with paper thin walls and open-work handles framed by stepped, incurvate castellations which appear as reductive interpretations of a water Manitou. The line quality and craftsmanship are master class.

Though the general form of this bowl is similar to larger food preparation bowls, its size and delicacy suggests that it is more likely used for medicinal or ritual ceremonies.

Northeast Woodlands
Bowl *with* Single Tab Handle
Maple
5 ½" Diameter, *c.1640*

A bowl of exceptional age and architecture—the form directly relates to early, pre-contact stone examples originating in New England (mainly Massachusetts). Owning to its extensive history of use, the bowl exhibits an extremely complex surface.

Northeast Woodlands
Food Bowl
Ash Burl
17 ¾" Diameter, *c.1700 (or earlier)*

A very early Northeast Algonquian (New England) bowl masterfully hewn from a great specimen of ash burl. The remarkably thin, round bowl has an undulating rim and a proportionally wide basin that sits atop a subtle foot treatment.

Northeast Woodlands
Food Bowl
Ash Burl
18" Length, *c.1760-1780*

The basic tab-handled form is traditional and one we see variations on throughout the Woodlands cultures. The artful quality of this example is masterful and goes far beyond something carved for mere utilitarian intent—from the skilled execution of its thin, deep walls on the bean-like form, tab handles, chamfered rim to the tapered incurvate lead into the foot.

The exterior has taken on a rich dark nutty brown hue with burnt sienna undertones, while the interior has contrasting dry, earthy tonal gradations—the result serves as a benchmark for complex patination and surface integrity.

Provenance : The Peter Brams Collection

Western Great Lakes
Manitou *Effigy* Bowl
Maple Burl
13 ⅛" Length, *c.1800*

The carver of this masterfully executed bowl achieved a remarkable sense of movement within the carved effigy atop its rim.

The round bowl, with rounded bottom is hewn thin and the crowning Manitou effigy is dynamic and almost animate in nature, its arms, or wings, outstretched, drawing the viewer into the belly of the bowl. The head of the effigy has a curious, partially carved point in its center and may represent the being's eye or was used as a directional device. The bowl displays a silky smooth surface with complex patination and coloration.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Effigy Bowl
Elm Burl
14" Length, *c.1700 (or earlier)*

In the canon of Eastern Woodlands bowls, this striking example stands high in terms of sheer elegance and quiet beauty. We find it truly sublime. The highly castellated back with repeating scallops recedes from the bowl as it rises, which is quite unusual. The elongated form and opposing crest indicate that the origin of this bowl is likely Northeastern-central New York or even Southern Ontario—which would make this bowl of Iroquois or Ojibwa manufacture.

Though the nature of the carving is not fully understood, the castellation is interpreted as being avian in nature—however, it is possible that the bumps may refer to the backside of the Underwater Panther (see Powers, *Good Wood, Vol. I, The Evolution of the Water Manitou as Seen Through Its Presence in Woodlands Bowls & Ladles*, 2008).

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands *(Ojibwa)*
Red Painted Ceremonial Bowl
Elm Burl
8 ⅜" Length, *c.1760*

Elongated bowls with peaked ends or boat forms bowls are a small genre within the Woodlands tradition. Most documented examples appear to come from the Iroquois and Ojibwa cultures. This exceptional example, with its peaked ends and tapered body, is very thinly hewn with a grace and balance attainable only by a master artisan.

The exterior retains its original earthy, red paint. The whole has a quiet, sublime quality, creating magic juxtaposing the delicacy of the elegant form against a dark exterior contrasting with the glowing lightness of the interior.

Medicine Bowls

Medicine rituals led by shamans were performed twice a year in most Woodlands cultures. In addition to leading these dedicated spring and fall ceremonies, shamans were tribal leaders and healers that cultivated and prepared natural remedies for sick tribal members and guests. Their medicines were often fully or partially prepared within the vessel as attested by grinding and cutting marks as well as carbonized interiors from heated stones that were used to burn herbs and heat concoctions. The bowls would often have an effigy carved upon them to invoke a spirit to aid in recovery or encourage strength.

The following five medicine bowls are exceptional examples for their applicable practice, small size, efficient forms and surface integrities.

Western Great Lakes/Northern Plains
Medicine Bowl
Ash Burl with Leather Thong
6 ½" Length, *c. 1800-1820*

The rounded bottom and leather thong indicate that this bowl was used in hand and hung when not in use. The lacerated and carbonized interior is a record of the preparation that medicine men would employ to prepare herbal concoctions by chopping and burning plant and animal matter (with heated stones) within the bowl.

Provenance: West Yellowstone Museum, Yellowstone, MT

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Small Medicine Bowl with Reductive Manitou
Maple Burl
4" Length, *c.1760-1780*

Relating in shape to the slightly larger example herein, this bowl also has a reductive Manitou on the ends, however further abstracted by wear from use and age. In hand these bowls have a sensual quality and are imbued with a sense of the importance of their ceremonial past.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Medicine Bowl *with* Beaded Rim
Maple Burl
4" Length, *c.1800*
A finely tapered form with a well-defined shallow basin.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Medicine Bowl with Reductive Manitou
Maple Burl
6 ½" Length, *c.1760-1780*

A small to medium sized medicine or ceremonial bowl. The shaped raised ends form the outline of a horned Manitou. The whole has evidence of an extensive use history with exceptional patination and an overall dark color and beaded rim.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Medicine Bowl with Shouldered Ends
Elm Burl
8" Length, *c.1760-1780*

A quietly sophisticated form with deep sides and slightly raised shouldered ends with a subtle beaded edge to aid in handling the bowl. The interior maintains a carbonized surface from heated stones that were used to burn or heat the herbal infused remedy.

Great Lakes Woodlands

Gaming Dish

Figured Maple & Peach Pits

10" Diameter, *c.1800*

Bowls such as this example were used for a traditional Woodlands game involving peach pits. Only a few gaming bowls are known, and most have breaks with period repairs, as game play involved slamming the bowl into a blanket, which caused the peach pits to bounce into patterns that determined the winner but sometimes caused the bowl to shatter. On this example, the ancient repairs are testament to the vigor with which the game was played.

A gaming dish of nearly identical form, also with breaks and period repairs, is in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution.

Northeast Woodlands

Belt Cup

Maple

8 ½" Length, *c.1880*

The Northeastern Wabanaki groups (Penobscot, Abenaki, Passamaquoddy, Maliseet and Micmac Nations) of Vermont, Maine and Eastern Canada had a history of serving as guides for non-indigineous hunters who wished to explore the region's rivers and lakes. To service the needs of these travellers, they created drinking cups that they crafted or had crafted in centers of trade.

Called "canoe" or "belt" cups, these items were crafted from hardwoods and burls and often were embellished with sporting motifs. This example is carved from maple and has a jagged border carved along its edge—the whole, when turned upside down, seems to represent a duck's head and bill.

Northeast Woodlands *(Wabanaki Group)*

Belt Cup

Ash Burl

8 ½" Length, c.*1780-1800*

The indigenous Woodland tribes of the upper Northeast had a tradition of carving "belt cups" or later "canoe cups". These cups were used for hunting or fishing and were attached to a sash or belt by a leather thong.

This large example (likely Micmac or Penobscot), has notched sides and its back is intricately decorated with a complex curvilinear design. This tracery is referred to as a double curve motif and is found on dress and crafts throughout the Northeastern Algonquian tribes.

Eastern Woodlands

Carved Crucifix

Maple

4" Height. Dated *"1822" or "1829"*

Missionaries from the 17th Century onwards were quick to try to convert the Indian "savages". By the 19th Century, many of the Iroquois and Ojibwa leaders were themselves Christian preachers. To meet the new demand, trade silver crucifixes were imported for sale at trading posts and many European makers became well-known for their work. By comparison, native-made crucifixes and Christian artifacts are exceptionally rare.

This crucifix, made by an unknown Woodlands carver, is a particularly artful example, with the Christ figure's portrait reduced to the essence of its figural meaning. This has been accomplished with subtle exaggeration of the figure's arched back, recessed groin and radiating lines framing the head.

Northeast Woodlands

Woodwind Blow Pipe

Wood, Birch Bark & Pewter Inlay

14" Length, *c.1840*

Singing, chanting and the playing of instruments played an integral role in Woodlands ceremonies and rituals. The Iroquois referred to these woodwind instruments as, Ya-o-da-was-ta or a "blow-pipe." The use of birch and the pewter inlay is characteristic of the Northeastern tribes.

The anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan wrote, *"As played by the Indians, it affords a species of wild and plaintive music."* (Tooker, *On Iroquois Material Culture*, 1994).

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Maple Sugaring Ladle

Ash Burl

59" Length, *c.1780 -1810*

Maple sugaring was an ancient craft of the Eastern Woodlands Indians and a main source for sugar. Upon the European colonization of North America, the Woodlands people taught the colonists how to tap the trees and how to harvest the sap during the spring thaw. The large scale of this piece should be noted; it stands just under 5 feet long. Hewn from one piece of ash, the bowl is hewn from a burl, while the handle continues up the straight grain.

Despite its length, it is finely balanced and graceful in form. The lead from the backside of the handle into the backside of the bowl is particularly well resolved and elegant.

Northeastern Woodlands

Otter *Effigy* Cup

Maple Burl

7 ¼" Length, *c.1720 (or earlier)*

The invention of the otter as the cup's handle is thoughtfully and successfully executed. As with all great Woodlands carving 'less is more' and the essence of the effigy is conveyed with minimal detail.

This cup appears to relate to two other cups of similar design. One pictured in *The Iroquois* by Frank Gouldsmith Speck, p. 83, is also carved from maple burl and has an open worked handle. The effigy on that cup is hard to identify but is decisively zoomorphic in nature.

The other cup is in the Heye Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian and the outlines of the cup and the handle are similar to this one. The Heye example, however, lacks an effigy. Documentation from it notes the cup's origin as Scaticook of the Mahican tribes of the Hudson River Valley of New York and Connecticut.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands *(Iroquois or Seneca)*

Wolf *Effigy* Scoop

Elm Burl

11" Length, *c.1720 -1740 (or earlier)*

The wolf effigy is slightly abstracted and clearly relates to depictions of wolves carved upon 16th and 17th century Seneca antler combs. The effigy is seen by following the rounded terminal of the handle, which is the wolf's muzzle, then the eye ridge and then its ears, followed by a slightly arched back and into the tail (which in its utilitarian purpose acts as a thumb stop).

The fineness of carving is exceptionally rendered and its execution is nothing short of masterful—the bowl of the scoop is uniformly carved to just 1/16 of an inch. The positioning and style of the effigy carving relates to the important otter effigy cup shown above. This Woodlands wolf effigy scoop is the only known example.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Pig *Effigy* Knife *with* Porcupine Quilled Sheath

Wood, Trade Steel Blade, Deerskin, Sinew & Porcupine Quills

9 ⅜" Length, *c.1780*

Woodlands carved knives as such are quite rare. French-made trade blades were appropriated just as trade-made pipe tomahawks—the Woodlands people would haft them and make them their own with ornamental metal, bead, quillwork and carvings.

The sheath would have had an attachment near the top to hang around the neck of a warrior. The knife's handle is carved from a fruitwood in the form of a pig's head. Though pigs were sometimes carved in the tradition of the Iroquois false-face, it is unexpected to find it here. Another rare pig effigy piece is the diminutive pig effigy ladle shown below.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Pig *Effigy* Ladle

Maple Burl

3 ⅛" Length, *c.1760-1780*

The presentation of the effigy here is atypical, as it has no distinct separation from the stem of the handle. The effigy appears to be the head of a pig with ears, snout, and an open mouth.

Though excavated examples have been recorded, this is the only documented pig effigy ladle known. This is the smallest ladle in this collection and one of the smallest documented.

Provenance : Devere A. Card

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Bird *Effigy* Ladle

Ash Burl

8 ½" Length, *c.1760-1780*

A large bird-of-prey commands its position atop a slightly delineated perch—the bowl is both refined and gutsy—being a little heavier than typical. Carved from a beautiful specimen of ash burl, the whole maintains a dark, richly patinated surface.

Ladles or scoops were personal objects. Every Woodlands Native had one that they would eat with at each meal. The totemistic carvings were personally meaningful and reflected something intimate to and about its user. Ladles are larger than European spoons and were held so that the palm would hold the back of the bowl, and the thumb atop the middle of the handle to balance and secure the ladle in ones hand. Their outsized bowls were employed to complement the Woodlands diet, which mainly consisted of corn, bean and squash-based stews.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Bird *Effigy* Ladle

Maple Burl

8 ½" Length, *c.1760-1780*

When the elements of design, execution and surface unite, sublime magic can occur. Of the hundreds of bird ladles we have documented, this example sits apart for its bold simplicity of design and masterful execution.

The thinly carved bowl and proportionately flat handle lead into a slightly crooked perch, upon which a beautifully sculptured bird sits.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Owl *Effigy* Ladle

Maple

4 ½" Length, *c.1820-1840*

Visually, this is a well-balanced carving—the owl's body divided between the front and the back by the stem of the handle, which strongly tapers into the owl's belly.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Snow Owl *Effigy* Ladle

Maple

4 ¼" Length, *c.1720-1740*

An early ladle with a wide, narrow bowl and a straight handle with delineated perch upon which the owl effigy sits. It has a reductive body with a serrated face simulating the look of feathers around a snow owl's face.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Woodcock *Effigy* Ladle

Ash Burl

7 ½" Length, *c.1780-1820*

The flow of line in this masterfully carved ladle is especially pleasing—with the transitions between the planes of the bowl, the handle, the beak of the woodcock and then its sweep down the bird's back.

Owning to the unpredictable nature of the grain structure of burl, the open-work between the bird's beak and its body was technically challenging for the artisan of this work.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands

Owl *Effigy* Ladle

Ash Burl

5 ⅜" Height, *c.1780*

This small ash burl ladle is well executed with a balanced bowl leading to a handle with beaded perch upon which the owl sits. The owl's head is slightly turned backwards, capturing the essential nature of the bird's form and movement.

A Tale of Four Ladles

The facing ladles, an otter and three beavers, reinforce the status of these animals within the Woodlands cultures, showing them to be integral to the Woodlands diet, clothing (pelts) and mythology.

Beaver skin hats were the height of fashion in Europe during the 17th & 18th Centuries and the indigenous European beaver had been hunted to near extinction. The new world offered what appeared to be an unending supply of valuable skins.

The Dutch, English and French settlers, who arrived in the early 17th century, understood the enormous commercial value of beaver and otter pelts, and the totemistic animals quickly assumed a darker meaning within the tribes.

North American export posts were set up and trade routes were established with both the Algonquian and Iroquoian Nations. Competition between the tribes developed, quickly escalated and suddenly one of the bloodiest eras in American history as 'The Beaver Wars' began in earnest.

Centered around the early European settlements on the Hudson River, the Mohawk (Iroquois) and Mahican (Algonquin) tribes fought fiercely to gain control of the fur trade. The Dutch and English backed the Iroquois, who occupied most of present day upstate New York, while the French backed the Algonquian tribes of New England and the Great Lakes.

The Iroquois held an offensive edge and by the mid-17th century the tribe's influence extended west to the Ohio and north to Ontario, in the process defeating the Huron, the Susquehannocks and the Erie. In the latter 17th century they moved farther westward towards present day Michigan and Illinois, seeking to conquer the Miami, Pottawatomie and the Illinois.

Alliances changed as the 17th century progressed and English influence on the Continent grew at the expense of the French. The Iroquois began to see the English as more dangerous than the French and the French-backed Algonquians. In an effort to halt English expansion into Iroquois territory, they reversed alliances.

Tribal elders met with the French in Montreal and signed the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701 between New France and forty First Nations of North America. Present for the diplomatic event were the various peoples; part of the Iroquois confederacy, the Huron peoples, and the Algonquian peoples.

Northeastern / Eastern Canada Woodlands
Otter E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple
13" Length, *c.1820*

The architecture of this ladle is atypical and highly sculptural—from the deep cove that separates the bowl and stem, the intricate openwork around the otter's body and tail, to the scale and orientation.

Due to these factors and the piece's unusual size, it was likely made as a presentation piece by a Woodlands artisan and gifted to someone involved in the fur trade.

Pipes of similar imagery and orientation made by the Micmac have been documented. Additionally, a handled cup of similar design, recorded as Nipmuc, is in the collection of the Worcester Historical Museum and illustrated in Willoughby, *Antiquities of the New England Indians*, p. 259, fig. 139/h.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Beaver E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple Burl
5 ¾" Length, *c.1760 (possibly earlier)*

The beaver effigy on this ladle is apparently feeding. The creature's body rises up from a plane carved to represent a watery surface—its arms and paws holding washed food up to its mouth.

As with most successful Woodlands carvings, this carving is not highly detailed. The animal's character is defined by essential points of reference and sophisticated observation that inspired a carving that seems to capture the animal's spirit and shy demeanor.

Northeastern (Hudson River Valley) Woodlands
Beaver E*ffi*gy Ladle
Ash
7 ¼" Length, *c.1680 (or earlier)*

This dramatic example puts all focus on the proportionally large-scale beaver, which sits atop a four-tiered frieze. The reverse side is equally compelling as the artisan carved a large, well defined tail running down the backside of the handle.

The scale of the effigy in relation to the handle and bowl, as well as the angle relationship of the bowl to the handle is diagnostic of early-mid 17th century ladles (see, Prisch, *Aspects of Change in Seneca Iroquois Ladles AD 1600-1900*, 1982).

This is quite possibly one of the earliest, non-excavated ladles extant.

Northeastern (Hudson River Valley) Woodlands
Beaver E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple
7 ⅝" Length, *c.1700 (or earlier)*

The first aspect one notices about this early ladle is its overall sleekness. The proportionally large bowl is hewn decisively thin to reinforce the streamlined beaver effigy that fully occupies the handle. The backside of the beaver has a tail running down the back of the handle. The whole has an exceptional surface.

Purportedly the initials, "I B" stand for John Bull (1721-1807) of Hamptonburgh, Orange County, NY, who was the son of William Bull (1689-1756) and Sarah Wells (1694-1796). Bull likely acquired the ladle in trade or as a gift. This is the only known early ladle with branded initials. and is one of the earliest, non-excavated ladles extant.

Eastern Great Lake Woodlands
Human E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple
6 ½" Length, *c.1720 (possibly earlier)*

Carved from maple, this important early ladle depicts a Woodlands Indian in profile with coxcomb or braided hair. The unique corrugated panel on the figure's backside may represent a wampum belt or beaded sash.

The tiny nubs projecting from the sides of the handle are a previously unrecorded device, and are suggestive of arms and shoulders—artistically, they balance the thong hole within the center of the head. The piece is further distinguished by an untouched and remarkable surface.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Human E*ffi*gy Ladle
Maple
5 ¼" Length, *c.1780-1800*

This is a captivating and haunting carving. Hewn from maple, the clamshell shaped bowl is exceedingly thin and the effigy is meticulously rendered. The features of the face are subtly and sensitively carved.

This ladle relates to a group of Wyandot human effigy ladles, one being in the collection of The National Museum of the American Indian and pictured in *Indian Art In North America*, Dockstader, pl. 237. The character and features of the face of that example are remarkably similar to this piece.

Northeastern Woodlands
E*ffi*gy Feast Ladle *with* Manitou Eye
Ash Burl
11½" Length, *c.1680*

The flow of line in this masterfully carved ladle is especially pleasing—with the transitions between the planes of the bowl, the handle, the beak of the woodcock and then its sweep down the birds' back.

Owning to the unpredictable nature of the grain structure of burl, the openwork between the bird's beak and its body was technically challenging for the artisan of this work.

Eastern Great Lakes Woodlands
Ladle with pierced Octagonal Top
Ash Burl
7 ⅜" Length, *c.1820*

This ash burl ladle relates to a body of work recorded by Powers, in *North American Burl Treen: Colonial & Native American.*

The overall proportions, strong geometric design (octagonal crown), and overall feel of the piece are strongly associated with other works, but the complete reduction of the crown to an abstract geometric shape is unique.

Central-Western Great Lakes Woodlands
Manitou E*ffi*gy Cup or Scoop
Maple
8" Length, c.*1800*

This outsized cup or scoop displays a large Manitou effigy with overlapping references to the spirit's eye, head and horns.

Hewn from rock maple, the cup or scoop is masterfully carved with a thinly hewn bowl and a dramatic rendering of the Manitou effigy with a hyper extended crown and a large demilune eye (see, Powers, *The Evolution of the Water Manitou as Seen Through Its' Presence In Woodlands Bowls & Ladles, Good Wood* Volume 1, 2008 and Maurer *Great Lakes Indian Art, Representational and Symbolic Forms in Great Lakes-Area Wooden Sculpture*, 1989).

Great Lakes *(Potawatomi)*
Abstract E*ffi*gy Ladle
Elm
7" Length, *c.1760-1780*

This feast ladle, hewn from a magnificent specimen of ash burl, has a large, well-balanced bowl and handle that terminates with an acutely angled disc carved with a demilune center.

This demilune is interpreted as an eye of a Manitou. Research documents that this motif is repeated throughout Northeastern and Western Algonquian cultures, either singularly, in pairs, or part of a larger abstraction—it has convincingly been shown to be diagnostic of a Manitou (see Powers, *Good Wood, vol. I, The Evolution of the Water Manitou as Seen Through Its Presence in Woodlands Bowls & Ladles*, 2008).

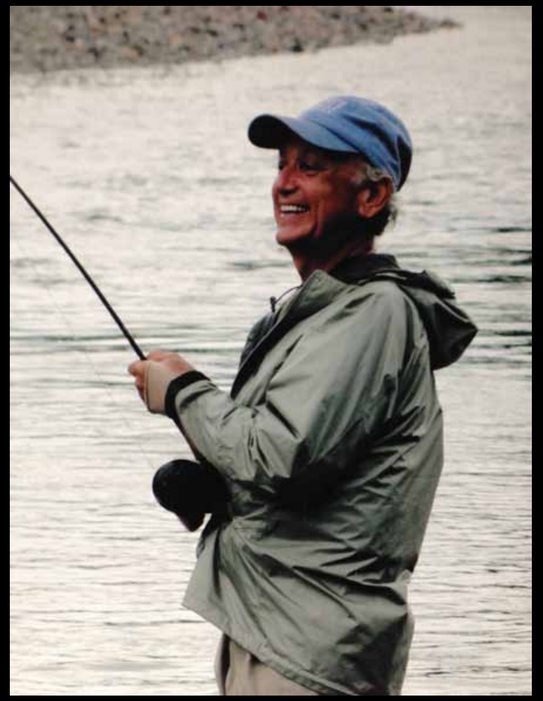
However, in later years, the motif appears to have become more a decorative device rather than totemistic.

Biographical Information

Steven Michaan

Steven Michaan is a collector's collector. In his youth, he began collecting stamps, coins, swords and antique firearms.

As a university student at U.C. Berkeley, Michaan assembled a collection assembled a collection of M.C. Escher prints that he bought from the artist himself, and Edward S. Curtis photographs. Michaan spent the next decade collecting Arts & Crafts and specializing in Louis Comfort Tiffany stained glass windows.



The author Atlantic Salmon fishing on the Cascapedia River in Quebec.

Always an avid fisherman, Michaan began collecting the best examples of fish decoys. His collection was the basis for major museum exhibits, notably, "Beneath the Ice: The Art of the Fish Decoy" featured at the Museum of American Folk Art in New York in 1990-1991.

His interest in fishing and fish decoys and his passion for collecting expanded to include Northwest Coast and Eskimo halibut hooks and other fishing implements. From there, Michaan launched into a new field: tribal arts. Michaan specialized in collecting shaman artwork from the Northwest Coast and Arctic regions.

Michaan's Northwest Coast tribal arts collection evolved and received international recognition and praise when it became the basis for the exhibit "Jackson Pollock et le Chamanisme" held at the Pinocatheque de Paris in 2007-2008. "Jackson Pollock et le Chamanisme" was a ground-breaking show that tied Jackson Pollock's early abstract expressionistic works directly to Northwest Coast shamanic art. Over 25 pieces from Michaan's collection were represented in this exhibit.

In this collection, Michaan showcases North America's tribal arts as a unique contribution to the world of art, perception, and the spirit world.

Michaan has previously authored the book on his fish decoy collection, "American Fish Decoys," published in 2003, and co-authored "Beneath the Ice," published in 1990. He has three children and lives with his wife in Westchester County, New York.

Credits

Steven S. Powers

Steven S. Powers is the country's leading specialist in Woodlands sculpture and one of the foremost dealers of American folk art sculpture and paintings, as well as American & English treen.

In 2005, Powers authored and published the ground breaking study, *NORTH AMERICAN BURL TREEN: COLONIAL & NATIVE AMERICAN*, which has become the benchmark reference work in the field.

Powers began collecting, cataloguing and researching Woodlands sculpture more than twenty years ago. For fifteen years he worked hand and hand with an inveterate private collector and assisted in assembling the largest and most extensive collections of Woodlands bowls, ladles and related cultural material extant. These collections served as a means for Powers to study these Woodlands objects in a vacuum—to have at hand samples spanning centuries and miles of geographic origin, from 17th century New England to the mid-19th century Great Lakes area to any combination of time and origin in between. This cataloguing and having the objects at the ready enabled Powers to discern certain relationships of form, design and devices that had previously gone uncodified.

Powers lives and works in Brooklyn, NY with his family.

A Note on The Peter Brams Collection

The Steven Michaan Woodlands Indian Art collection is composed of many works collected by the veteran collector, Peter Brams. The Peter Brams Collection of *"Important Woodlands Indian Art"* was the most extensive and comprehensive collection of its type ever assembled. With its focus on Woodlands sculpture (primarily bowls and ladles), Mr. Brams aided greatly in expanding the understanding of this important Woodlands field.

Image Credits

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William T. Bradby dressed in Native dress with headdress, October 1899.
Photo by: DeLancey W. Gill

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Smithsonian Institution
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Untitled
by Alphonse Deportes
The Steven Michaan Collection