Emmett & White
ANTIQUES & INTERIORS

19th-Century Carved Folk-Art Snake and Mask Walking Cane

£95

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REF: 6375

Height: 86 cm (33.9")

Description

A distinctive 19th-century carved folk-art walking cane, surmounted by a wonderfully characterful mask-form handle and decorated with entwined snakes. Rich in sculptural detail and visual intrigue, the cane transforms a practical object into a compelling work of vernacular art.

The handle is carved as an expressive face or mask, giving the piece an immediate human presence. Below, sinuous serpents wind around the shaft, their coiled forms creating rhythm, texture, and a strong sense of movement. Snakes have long carried a wide range of symbolic associations-from protection, transformation, and wisdom to mystery and danger-and their inclusion gives this cane a particularly theatrical and evocative quality.

The carving has a direct, hand-worked quality typical of folk art, where imagination and individuality take precedence over formal academic finish. Its combination of a mask-like head and snake ornament suggests that the cane may have had a symbolic, ceremonial, or storytelling role as well as a practical one. While its precise origin remains unconfirmed, the design may draw on a regional or cultural carving tradition and warrants further specialist research.

A highly decorative and conversation-starting object, this rare cane would make an engaging addition to a collection of folk art, walking sticks, carved wood, or unusual 19th-century decorative objects. It is equally effective displayed as a standalone sculptural piece.

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