



Maiden's Apron (Isiphephetho / Isiphephethu)

Date

ca. 1950

Medium

pounded goatskin, glass beads, thread

Description

Ndebele women continue to create and wear their renowned beaded garments for special occasions, maintaining a vibrant tradition that visually communicates

identity. In Ndebele society, a woman's life stage can be immediately recognized by the form and decoration of her traditional beaded attire—whether she is a child, a pubescent girl, a bride, or a married woman. Upon reaching puberty, a girl enters a period of seclusion, during which her mother and grandmothers teach her the traditional arts of beadwork and mural painting. On her coming-out day, she wears a rectangular beaded front apron made by her mother, along with other ornaments she crafted during seclusion. This apron marks her as pubescent and eligible for marriage proposals. This Isiphephetho or Isiphephethu, young woman's beaded apron, features the traditional background of white seed beads with a house or building motif in blue, green, and light pink beads.

Dimensions

15 3/8 x 16 15/16 in. (39 x 43 cm)