

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK, WILLY THE HULI, Plate 1

Willy and the man who killed his brother are both from the upper highlands of Papua New Guinea. It took over three years hard work before Garry finally had the chance to take this portrait. The original inspiration is from Garry's grandfather Allen Sneesby who was one of the first white men to discover and photograph Soki head-hunters up the Fly River in Papua New Guinea in the late 1930s to early 1940s. Willy is a revered and respected Huli warrior from the village of Tari and wears the traditional fighting dress and colours akin to his village. Tribal warfare is common among the highland tribes of New Guinea. Though national authorities and missionaries have helped to reduce the fighting, skirmishes between villages persists. Highland tribes honour a "payback" system where punishment for a wrongdoing must be more severe than the original misdeed. To forgive and forget would be an unthinkable crime. Throughout Papua, cannibalism was commonly practiced by the Korowai and Kombai peoples of the southeast and throughout the Asmat regions of the southwest. It is due to the spread of kuru that the Australian administration outlawed ritualized cannibalism in 1959, though it is believed to have gone on well into the 1970's. Willy holds the skull of the man who killed his brother, his father then killed this man before being killed in turn by a relative of the deceased. The war originated after the theft of three pigs and lasted 28 days, of which 17 people were killed, including two of Willy's cousins. Because of animist belief the dead man cannot be named, although he came from a neighbouring village less than three kilometres away and was speared to death in the pursuing war. Willy is an animist and believes in the souls, he has no poisoned arrows, but believes that his arrow and spears heads are pre destined and are magically potent. The teeth have been removed from the skull to confuse the spirit of the dead and not provide the deceased extra strength. They are placed in a small black burnt bowl, (seen left) and are sometimes mixed with the skeletal remains of other ancestors in order to confuse the victims' vengeful ghost. Willy's head dress or *manda* is made of compacted human hair and at its crest we can see the magnificent *ubija Raggiiana*, Bird of Paradise plumes. His head dress is an important ceremonial *manda* and is coloured with black clay, this is unique as most are red, whereas a normal daily wig is brown. The *manda* is topped with *yari iri* cassowary plumes, denoting status. Freedom of expression is an integral part of the Huli culture and accounts for the wide variety of decoration that can be found. At the front of the wig we can also see the fabulous shimmering green / blue crests of a *yagama*, Superb Bird of Paradise. There is a mixture of parrot feathers on either side of the wig, symbolizing wisdom, these are placed with several other species of bird which Willy hunted last year. Just under the wig, he wears a *lebage* snake skin, unique among the Huli's. His ears are covered with possum fur *tia iri*, with tree kangaroo fur running down each side of the wig. Around his neck Willy wears the usual half moon mother-of-pearl shell called *halepange*. This is a sign of wealth and an important part in buying a wife, Willy has seven wives. There are 12 twisted strands of red plastic beads around his neck, all were acquired through trading with other tribes. Around Willy's waist we can see a red dyed *pupai sporran* which has at its ends *nogo erene* pigs tails. His apron is called a *dambale* and it is made by rolling tree fibres together, dyeing them and plating them into twined string called *pu*. *Pu* is also used in binding the head of a stone axe to its helve, other uses include the making of string bags called *billums*. Willy's *billum* is five years old, self made and can be seen in the lower right of the artwork. Inside the bag he has a day's ration of sweet baked potato *hina* and tobacco *mundu*, as well as a bamboo pipe *mundu-be*. Willy carries at all times a stone axe *aju*, a stick for digging *keba*, a comb and a piece of broken mirror for decoration as well as some makeup and a *iba waea* wallet made of leaves. On his waist he wears a *hongoia* bone knife with the tail of a pig *nogo erene*. The knife is made of cassowary bone and is used in warfare and for digging. The background design to the artwork holds many profound and symbolic meanings, one of which represents the unity, spirit and power of the Huli clan. For in depth meanings see books about the artist. Willy also speaks Pigeon English which is the official language of Papua New Guinea. Written on his body is his favourite personal saying. Translated it means, "Don't say everything you know but know everything you say." Traditionally it was common to tie the dead on stilts in front of the family home and let them rot as a reminder for the deceased's family and clan to avenge the killing. This is no longer today the case as Christian missionaries and later the government finally succeeded in having this practice banned. For more information about this and many other Garry Orriss artworks please visit [GoArt.com](http://GoArt.com) or the official website, [www.GarryOrriss.com](http://www.GarryOrriss.com)