

Basic Detail Report



1985.00488.01a-b

Title

Portuguese Nautical Astrolabe

Date

1985

Medium

Metal (brass), Wood

Description

An astrolabe (.01a) is attached to a wood plaque with a brass plate (.01b). The plate is engraved "PORTUGUESE NAUTICAL ASTROLABE DUNDEE Instrument recreated in Portugal in the 15th century, which allows the exploration of the seas by measuring the height of celestial bodies, thus allowing navigation out of sight of any coast. A reproduction of the original, dated 1550, is on display at the Dundee Museum, Scotland. Enatur Posadas de Portugal Lisbon 1985."

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Dimensions

7 in. (17.8 cm)

Historical Note

This plaque features a brass replica of a Portuguese mariner's Astrolabe from 1555. Astrolabes allowed for ships to determine latitude by measuring the altitude of the sun at noon or a star at night, and was allowed for navigation in open waters, cloudy conditions, and heavy winds. $(\text{Zenith} - \text{Altitude}) + \text{Declination} = \text{Latitude}$. The astrolabe was an important tool in the golden age of exploration. The original astrolabe was made by Portuguese instrument maker Lopo Honem.

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