

## Plateau Region, Rawhide Cylinder

For centuries, men and women on the Great Plains have made containers of buffalo, deer, and other rawhides to store food and personal belongings. French traders called these durable containers *parfleche*, which translates to "against the arrow." Rawhide containers served a practical purpose, yet they were also beautified with bold, geometric painted designs that were unique to each maker and were meant to be seen from afar. Though we do not know the name of the person who made this cylindrical container from buffalo hide, their mastery of the rawhide painting tradition was surely recognized within their community. The fine linework of the painted designs makes it an exceptional work of mid-nineteenth-century Native American painting.

The cylindrical container likely came from the Plateau region, a vast area that extends from the Rocky Mountains in the east to the Cascades in the west and encompasses the Fraser and Columbia River valleys that extend north into British Columbia. As is common in Plateau rawhide cases, light green and ochre pigments native to the region frame the central diamond design made of brighter commercial pigments introduced through trade. Plateau communities adopted the practice of making buffalo rawhide containers in the early eighteenth century when horses were first introduced to the region. The usage of buffalo rawhide as well as the mix of natural and trade pigments suggests that this container was made on the cusp of the reservation era, a period of dramatic transition for Native Americans. With the near extinction of the buffalo in the 1870s, containers made using deer or elk hide and painted with saturated blue, yellow, and red trade pigments eventually replaced those of buffalo hide and natural pigments. As part of Joslyn's Native American art collection, this exceptional work adds depth to our understanding of transformations in Native American painting and the artistic practices shared by many tribes across North America.



RIGHT: Plateau Region, Rawhide Cylinder, c. 1875, bison hide and natural and commercial pigments, 20 1/2 x 36 x 5 in., Museum purchase with funds from the Durham Center for Western Studies Art Endowment Fund, 2022.12