Primary Maker: Unidentified maker
Title: Rosa Isabella, the Spanish Maiden
Date: 1865
Medium: Red pine, cherry, oil paint, iron
Dimensions: Overall: 74 x 29 x 21 in. (188 x 73.7 x 53.3 cm)
Credit Line: Purchased from Elie Nadelman
Object Number: 1937.330

Object Name: Figurehead
Classification: SCULPTURE

Curatorial Remarks:
This object was once part of the folk art collection of Elie Nadelman (1882-1946), the avant-garde sculptor. From 1924 to 1934, Nadelman's collection was displayed in his Museum of Folk Arts, located in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. The Historical Society purchased Nadelman's entire collection in 1937. This figurehead, one of seven in the Nadelmans' museum, adorned the clipper ship "Rosa y Isabel," which was admired for a record-breaking voyage around Cape Horn. The figure's windblown clothing alludes to clippers' characteristic speed and identifies her as a Spanish dancer. Before arriving at the museum, Rosa Isabella was displayed by a man named Louis M. Monsanto, in a ship graveyard on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas, not far from where she foundered in 1888. Monsanto bought crippled ships for junk and dismantled them. He created a unique walkway to his residence with a row of twenty something figureheads, which he maintained annually with fresh coats of paint. Eventually, Monsanto sold at least ten of these figures to the dealer Max Williams. The Nadelmans acquired the figurehead from Williams...
in 1923 or 1924, by which time she had lost her original forearms and right foot. Similarities between the replaced left forearm and hand and the carved limbs of Elie Nadelman’s own wood sculptures suggest that he may have participated in the restoration.

Physical Description:
Ship figurehead

Related Objects: