



Handle with human head

Not on display

Title/Description: Handle with human head

Object Type: handle

Materials: Walrus ivory

Measurements: h. 162 x w. 30 x d. 28 mm

Accession Number: 720

Historic Period: Old Bering Sea II (c. AD 100-300)

Production Place: Bering Sea, Kukulik, North America, St. Lawrence Island (?), The Americas

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1980

This object, pitted and flaked by weathering, has been ascribed to the Old Bering Sea II phase by Wardwell(1986: no. 62). It may have been the handle for a drum, ancestral to known nineteenth-century ivory handles which were attached to tambourine-like drums of wood and animal skin.

The back of the head is flat, and the recess below it is positioned opposite the rectangular aperture beneath the chin. The circular hole at the end may have been for ivory links or other ornamental attachments. Three horizontal lines are engraved across each cheek, probably representing tattoos. The colour is a dark chocolate brown.

Steven Hooper, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 229.

Provenance

According to the vendor, George Everett Shaw, it was collected at Kukulik, St Lawrence Island, in 1979.

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from George Shaw, Aspen, Colorado on the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1980 out of income from the Sainsbury Purchasing Fund.
