



Bag fastener (?)

Not on display

Title/Description: Bag fastener (?)

Object Type: Ornament

Materials: Walrus ivory

Measurements: h. 16 x l. 111 x d. 12 mm

Accession Number: 723

Historic Period: Punuk (c. AD 500-1200)

Production Place: Bering Sea, North America, Punuk Iskands, The Americas

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

Although described as a needle case by Wardwell (1986: no. 145), this ivory cylinder is in fact solid and was most likely used as a fastener for a bag. Important sewing equipment was kept securely in a

workbag or 'housewife'; nineteenth-century examples possess a large flap in which they were rolled, and then bound by a thong with a fastener of this kind at the end (see Fitzhugh and Kaplan, 1982: 132-3).

The engraving suggests two opposed animal heads, joined at the nose. The depth and precision of the engraving indicates the use of metal tools, which are known to have been available to Punuk craftsmen, since a number of iron-tipped engraving tools have been found at Punuk sites (Collins *et al.*, 1973: 30).

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. 232.

Provenance

According to the vendor, George Everett Shaw, it was collected on Punuk Islands 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.
