



Snow goggles

On display

Title/Description: Snow goggles

Object Type: Implement

Materials: Walrus ivory

Measurements: w. 131 x h. 35 x d. 25 mm

Accession Number: 830

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

Production Place: Bering Sea, North America, The Americas

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1982

Snow blindness, caused by excessive ultraviolet light, is a painful and debilitating condition, and in fine weather the combination of sun and ice produces a powerful glare against which the eyes of the Inuit traveller or hunter have to be protected. Before the twentieth-century introduction of sunglasses, snow goggles with small slits provided remarkably good vision, especially on the horizontal plane, while deflecting much of the harmful glare. Engraved ivory examples are rare and this one is attributed by Wardwell (1986: no. 137) to the Punuk period. Most nineteenth-century examples are made of wood.

Six small holes around the eyes were for inlay of tiny pebbles; the three around the bridge of the nose have been interpreted as an animal face, possibly a fox. There is a rectangular hole at each end for attaching a headband.

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

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from George E. Shaw, USA, on the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1982 from the income of the Sainsbury Purchasing Fund.
