



Captive 'witch'

Not on display

Title/Description: Captive 'witch'

Born: 1800 - 1899

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Whalebone

Measurements: h. 118 x w. 34 x d. 48 mm

Accession Number: 122

Historic Period: 19th century

Production Place: North America, Northwest Coast, The Americas

Cultural Group: Northern Tlingit

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This bound captive image differs in treatment from object 501 in that, although the subject matter is recognisably Tlingit, the facial features are not. The rib-cage is, however, often depicted on Tlingit images in death or distress, and since shaman's charms also sometimes have an idiosyncratic quality it is likely that this piece originated from the Tlingit, perhaps from the north, near Prince William Sound.

The captive's wrists are shown tied at the back with a twisted cord, though no hair is shown. There is a depression on each side of the neck.

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. 269. TO-BE-REPLACED-WITH-A-GAP

Tiny amulets in bone, ivory and wood were crucial parts of a shaman's regalia. The shamans were separate from the rest of Northwest Coast communities, conducting their mental, physical and spiritual preparation in the deep forest. They were known to wear their hair tangled and long, and were treated with awe and respect, being capable of bestowing curses and blessings. Their connections to the supernatural were deeper than those of others, and they held powerful positions within society.

Exhibitions

'Empowering Art: Indigenous Creativity and Activism from North America's Northwest Coast', Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, 12/3/23 - 30/7/23

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of William Winkworth.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1950.

Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
