



Rattle in bird form

On display

Title/Description: Rattle in bird form

Born: 1800 - 1899

Object Type: Musical instrument

Materials: Pigment, Stone, Wood

Measurements: h. 184 x w. 85 x d. 318 mm

Accession Number: 130

Historic Period: 19th century

Production Place: North America, Northwest Coast, The Americas

Cultural Group: Haida, Tlingit

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This rattle depicts a long-beaked bird, possibly an oyster-catcher or kingfisher, with a further bird mask on its breast and a human face carved on the tail. It is constructed of two hollowed parts, pinned at the handle and tied at the sides, the bird's body forming a globular cavity for the small pebble rattles.

Rattles were used throughout the Northwest Coast to provide rhythmical accompaniment to speeches, songs and dances performed on public occasions. They were also used during shamanic rituals, when their sound was associated with the presence of spirits. The original function of this rattle is not known, nor its precise tribal attribution. It is painted black, red and pale turquoise, these colours now faded.

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. 277.

Exhibitions

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

'A World of Water: Can the Seas Survive Us?', Sainsbury Centre, Norwich - 15/03/25 - 03/08/25

Provenance

Formerly in the collections of Captain K. A. Webster and the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham Dorset.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1966.

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