



Arm band ornament

Not on display

Title/Description: Arm band ornament

Born: 1800 - 1950

Object Type: Pendant

Materials: Fibre, Gum, Shell, Wood

Measurements: h 321 x w. 38 x d. 52 mm

Accession Number: 162

Historic Period: 19th century, 20th Century - Early

Production Place: Middle Sepik River, New Guinea, Oceania, Pacific

Cultural Group: Iatmul

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Many materials, including bird feathers and fur from tree kangaroos, are collected and put together to create traditional costumes, or *bilas*. As part of these costumes, arm bands play an important role in holding several objects tightly together on each arm. The quality of this fine arm band ornament can be seen in its stylised, carved designs and incorporation of shells and rope.

Artworks created in the Sepik region are particularly connected with spiritualism. The arm band ornament is associated with many stories and beliefs. The carved shapes of the wood and the incorporated shells gave extra strength and power. The sculpted, face design at the top of this arm band ornament indicates that was made for a chief or someone special in the village.

Pax Jakupa, February 2023TO-BE-REPLACED-WITH-A-GAP

Arm bands and small masks were part of the finery worn by men on important ritual occasions, together with shell and fur ornaments, leaves, flowers and body paint. This narrow, finely-modelled head was probably worn on the upper arm, attached through the vertical aperture at the back to a man's arm band.

The carving has traces of white and red pigmentation and retains most of its shell decoration. It resembles in composition, especially in the form of the mouth and the presence of shells, the wood masks used in *mai* rituals discussed by Hauser-Schaublin (1976/77, 1981; see also an example from Niyaura in the Wielgus Collection, Newton *et al.*, 1979: 318). It is similar in form to a carving in Berlin (Kelm, 1966: I: no. 64), but no specific function is ascribed to that example.

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. 51.

Provenance

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1951. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
