



Suspension hook

On display

Title/Description: Suspension hook

Born: 1900 - 1999

Object Type: hook

Materials: Pigment, Wood

Measurements: h. 460 x w. 135 x d. 50 mm

Accession Number: 166

Historic Period: 20th century

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

Cultural Group: Chambri

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This traditional suspension hook from Chambri was used to hang items in certain parts of the *hausman* (men's house) and may be kept in a special place within the house. It was designed and carved in relation to its task - to hold anything that may need hanging. The artist from Chambri would have conveyed specific beliefs in his designs. Most of the traditional practises which took place in the *hausman* or *hausmeri* (men's house) are not allowed for open discussion, so the subject matter of the artwork relating to this artist may not be obvious and apparent to us.

We had *sing sing* (song and dance festivals) in our villages some years ago and my dad put traditional costumes together and hung them. When the men change into their traditional costumes, they hang all the items up on the hook to prepare. They perform magic on the hook and talk to it, so they can go out and give a good performance. The face is a spirit to talk to, watching, to prepare and give power.

Pax Jakupa, February 2023

TO-BE-REPLACED-WITH-A-GAP

Suspension hooks were used widely in the Middle Sepik region for hanging valuable property away from vermin and the danger of accidental damage. In some cases they represent a whole figure, in others a head, as here, both motifs no doubt signifying the presence of a protective spirit. In the same region larger and more elaborate versions were used to support and display trophy skulls.

This example is probably from the Chambri, who live south-west of the Iatmul, and is comparable to

a Chambri example collected by Margaret Mead in 1934/35 (Vardwell, 1967: no. I86). The designs are painted rather than engraved and, although faded, red, white and black can be seen. The head has a hole for a suspension cord at the top and the ears are pierced twice for pendants, now lost. The nose is elongated and extends to the chin.

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. 55.

Provenance

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1969. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
