



Warrior's pendant

On display

Title/Description: Warrior's pendant

Born: 1800 c. - 1950 c.

Object Type: Pendant

Materials: Cloth, Feather, Gum, Wood

Measurements: h. 511 x w. 200 x d. 240 mm

Accession Number: 511

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

Production Place: Admiralty Islands, Oceania, Pacific

Cultural Group: Matankor

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

An early photograph of a Matankor warrior, published by Nevermann (1934: pl. 3), shows a pendant of this type being worn at the nape of the neck, the feathers spreading downwards and outwards. Information on their precise significance is limited, but it has been suggested that these pendants are a kind of war charm and protective amulet. Human bones and hair pendants were also worn in a similar way, and it is likely that this object is a kind of substitute trophy head of a slain enemy, worn to proclaim the man-slayer status of the wearer.

The back of the head is hollowed, and the long feathers are bound and gummed to the base of the neck. Nevermann (1934: 138-9), who illustrated several examples, noted that the feathers are from the frigate bird or sea eagle. These are both large and effective fishers, embodying aggressive and predatory qualities which are much admired in a warrior. Traces of red, black and white pigment remain on the head, and a cotton cloth strip secures the feathers near the tips. Cloth was a highly valued material in early trading with Europeans. Three main groups inhabit the Admiralty Islands, the Manus, Matankor and Usiai (Badner, 1979). Most sculpture was produced by the Matankor.

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. 63.

Provenance

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