



## Head with spike

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**Not on display**

**Title/Description:** Head with spike

**Object Type:** Ornament, Shaman

**Materials:** Walrus ivory

**Measurements:** h. 100 x w. 20 x d. 15 mm

**Accession Number:** 659

**Historic Period:** Mid 19th century

**Production Place:** North America, Northwest Coast, The Americas

**Cultural Group:** Tsimshian

**Credit Line:** Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1976

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This carving seems to imitate the form of the spikes on a shaman's goat-horn head-dress, where a face was sometimes carved at the base (see de Laguna, 1972:693, pl. 175, for a Tlingit example). The face here has human features but large, bear-like ears; the bear spirit, if encountered during a shaman's vision quest, was among the most important of his helpers. This is too small to be part of a head-dress, but it may have been a shaman's pendant or attachment of some kind. A clue to its former function is provided by a similar ivory in the Peabody Museum, Harvard (69-30-10/1922), which serves as a toggle on the end of a strap which ties a pouch of gambling sticks. The Skeena River provenance makes it likely to have originated among the Tsimshian.

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. 268.

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## Exhibitions

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

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## Provenance

Formerly in the collection of Harry Beasley.

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from K. J. Hewett in 1976 out of funds provided by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury.

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