



## Needle case as human figure

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**Not on display**

**Title/Description:** Needle case as human figure

**Object Type:** Figure

**Materials:** Walrus ivory

**Measurements:** h. 70 x w. 15 x d. 10 mm

**Accession Number:** 686

**Historic Period:** 19th century or earlier

**Production Place:** Alaska, North America, The Americas

**Credit Line:** Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1977

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Sewing equipment was important to every Inuit woman and special tubular cases were used to keep the bone and ivory needles safe. Needle cases in human form are rare.

This female figure, is an exceptional example of miniature sculpture - smooth, much used, with carefully observed detail like the thigh muscles. Down the centre of the figure is the tubular cavity within which the needles were kept on a hide thong. The hair is shown dressed in a double chignon at the back. Comparable examples are illustrated by Nelson (1899: pl. xlv, collected on the Lower Yukon) and Mathiassen (1927:11: fig. 3, from Point Hope).

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. 248.

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## **Provenance**

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from K. J. Hewett in 1977 out of funds provided by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury.

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