



Needle case as human figure

Not on display

Title/Description: Needle case as human 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

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.

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.
