



Whistle in the form of a finger

Not on display

Title/Description: Whistle in the form of a finger

Object Type: Musical instrument

Materials: Elephant ivory

Measurements: h. 52 x w. 22 x d. 14 mm

Accession Number: 769a

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Cultural Group: Kongo

Credit Line: Purchased with support from the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Art Trust, 1980

This whistle is carved as a human finger with well-marked fingernails and lines marking the first joint. It is sounded by blowing across the opening at the end; the air-vent is below the side loop. Whistles were used in hunting, which often took the form of a line of beaters driving game towards a net where other hunters were waiting. In thick bush, whistles served as signals to regulate the line: if there was a kill, a whistle might sound a paeon of triumph. In dancing, whether masked or not, whistles still play an important part in the musical accompaniment.

Margaret Carey, 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. 185.

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from Merton Simpson Gallery, New York on the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1980 out of funds provided by the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Art Trust.

