



Head

Not on display

Title/Description: Head

Object Type: Figure, Head

Materials: Paint, Wood

Measurements: h. 222 x 150 x 145 mm

Accession Number: 790

Historic Period: Late Woodland Period (?) (AD 500-1000)

Production Place: Florida, North America, Southeast USA, The Americas

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1981

This life-size head has a circular recess in the neck, and was therefore probably originally fitted to a wood body or post. It has no collection data, nor have comparable heads been found in the available literature, so any observations as to its age or origin remain speculative. A test by the U.S. Department of Agriculture found the wood to be a species of *Erythrina*, possibly *E. herbacea*, which is native to the southeast region. The wood has suffered abrasion, insect damage and cracking, the last consistent with having dried out after saturation. Animal images from the Fort Centre site in Florida, dating to the late Woodland period, were preserved by immersion in the swamp (Sears, 1982: 38 ff.), and this head may have had a similar history.

Wooden images, some of them large, were made in the southeast (Fundaburk and Foreman, 1957: pl. 141), and Brown (1985: 104) suggests that they represented the founding ancestor of the group to whom they belonged. This head has traces of brown paint, especially on the face. There are also three black lines on the left cheek, radiating from the temple, and a broad black line from the right eye to the corner of the mouth. Three wood pegs remain in the top of the head, and there are holes for others, indicating that hair may once have been attached.

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) pp. 300-301.

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of J. C. Leff, Pennsylvania.

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from Jonathan Holstein, New York, on the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1981 out of income from the Sainsbury Purchasing Fund.
