



Clapper in bird form

Not on display

Title/Description: Clapper in bird form

Object Type: clapper

Materials: Fibre, Wood

Measurements: h. 60 x w. 229 x d. 54 mm

Accession Number: 930

Historic Period: Early 19th century

Production Place: North America, Northwest Coast, The Americas

Cultural Group: Tlingit

Credit Line: Purchased with support from the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Art Trust, 1986

Clappers, or snappers, are much rarer instruments than rattles and were mostly used in the northern part of the Northwest Coast. They performed the same functions as the rattles used by dancers and orators on public occasions, but the sound they produce is a sharp clap, which is more precise than that produced by a conventional rattle. Clappers were held horizontally in the hand, and by a quick upward and downward motion the upper section was caused to swing up and snap back against the lower half. The flexible arm of the upper section of this example has been broken and is glued and tied with cord, possibly of cedar bark. A wooden peg through the handle holds the two parts together.

Clappers, as with rattles, are very often in the form of a bird. This one seems to portray a fledgeling, with broad immature beak, large eyes and chubby appearance. The shape of the beak suggests this is young raven, an identification which is also proposed by Holm (1983 : no. 21), who detects humour in the image, appropriate to the trickster aspect of raven's mythological character. There is a certain torpedo-like energy to the young bird. The two feet are tucked back under the tail, giving an impression of forward thrust. Stubby wings project on either side, but both are broken, and formerly would have extended to at least twice their current width. The two halves are both extremely thin and have suffered cracking; black and red painted designs on the back and breast are faded.

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. 280.

TO-BE-REPLACED-WITH-A-GAP

A little clapper with an incised face, these make a little clicking noise which, when produced rhythmically and en masse create a sound which would fill the longhouse during a celebration. It marks the start of another story, the imminent arrival of the masked dancers. Music, from drums, rattles, clappers and flutes, is an integral part of ceremonial life on the Northwest Coast, produced along with rhythmic singing to generate a powerful communal effect at potlatch.

Exhibitions

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

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of James Hooper and John Hauberg.

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from George Terasaki, New York, on

the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1986 out of funds provided by the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Art Trust.
