



Mask or part of a mechanical doll

On display

Title/Description: Mask or part of a mechanical doll

Object Type: Mask

Materials: Walrus ivory

Technique: Carving, Drilling

Measurements: h. 120 mm

Accession Number: 1112

Historic Period: Old Bering Sea (500-750 AD)

Production Place: Alaska, Bering Sea, North America, The Americas

Cultural Group: Old Bering Sea

Credit Line: Purchased with support from the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Charitable Trust, 1995

The mouth opens as if it is blowing, in the corners are two circles indicative of labrets. The eyes are piercing underneath stern eyebrows. The oval shaped face has a thin nose. This walrus ivory carving of a head is unusual in its shape and expressions. Most likely, the eyes would have been decorated with ivory inlets. The labrets suggest this to be a male figure, but we can only ponder what the purpose of this early Old Bering Sea (500 -750 AD) maskette or head had. Perhaps it was much more recently made and part of a mechanical doll with the neck and body broken off. [1]

Peter Loovers, February 2022

[1] Ann Fienup Riordan, 'Cat Tamarmeng Ellanqertut/All Things Have Awareness, in Gifts from the Ancestors: Ancient Ivories of Bering Strait, ed. by William W. Fitzhugh, Julie Hollowell and Aron L. Cromwell, (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2009), pp.226-239, (p.237, fig. 32, 33).

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from Anthony Plowright on the advice of Robert Sainsbury in 1995 out of funds provided by the Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Charitable Trust.

