

Finch & C^o



13 A Mayan ceremonial lip plug of polished obsidian tipped with gold
Circa 800-1000AD

Size: 5.5cm long
Provenance: Ex: Maurice Boham Collection

Lip plugs or 'labrets' were worn through a perforation in the lower lip. The wider flattened end was worn inside against the teeth and gums while the rounded end protruded beneath the lower lip and in this example it is possible that something with a special ceremonial function was inserted into the gold end.
Obsidian is a silica-rich volcanic rock formed by the very rapid cooling of viscous acid lava. It is used by the Maya for razor sharp knives that resemble scalpels, as well as for objects of adornment.

A MAYAN LIP PLUG OF POLISHED OBSIDIAN TIPPED WITH GOLD

A MAYAN CEREMONIAL LIP PLUG OF POLISHED OBSIDIAN TIPPED WITH GOLD
CIRCA 800-1000 AD

LITERATURE

LIP PLUGS OR 'LEBRETS' WERE WORN THROUGH A PERFORATION IN THE LOWER LIP. THE WIDER FLATTENED END WAS WORN INSIDE AGAINST THE TEETH AND GUMS WHILST THE ROUNDED END PROTRUDED BENEATH THE LOWER LIP AND IN THIS EXAMPLE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOMETHING WITH A SPECIAL CEREMONIAL FUNCTION WAS INSERTED INTO THE GOLD END.

OBSIDIAN IS A SILICA-RICH VOLCANIC ROCK FORMED BY THE VERY RAPID COOLING OF VISCOUS ACID LAVA. IT IS USED BY THE MAYA FOR RAZOR SHARP KNIVES THAT RESEMBLE SCALPELS, AS WELL AS FOR OBJECTS OF ADORNMENT.