Finch & Co



A WESTERN ALASKA, ESKIMO WALRUS IVORY CARVING OF A SWIMMING SEAL

A WESTERN ALASKA, ESKIMO WALRUS IVORY CARVING OF A SWIMMING SEAL
THE EYES INLAID WITH BALEEN. PROBABLY A DRAG HANDLE
18TH / 19TH CENTURY
SIZE : 11.5 CM LONG, 3.5 CM WIDE, 2 CM HIGH – 4½ INS LONG, 1¼ INS WIDE, ¾ INS HIGH

LITERATURE

EXPERIENCED ESKIMO CARVERS RARELY BEGAN WORK WITH A SPECIFIC OBJECT IN MIND. INSTEAD THEY STUDIED THE BLANK, TURNING IT OVER AND OVER IN THEIR HANDS, UNTIL THEY DISCERNED ONE OR MORE IMAGES IN THE MATERIAL ITSELF. THEY THEN 'RELEASED' THEM BY SHAPING THE BLANK INTO THOSE FORMS.
DRAG HANDLES SUCH AS THIS WERE ATTACHED TO A LOOP OF SEALSKIN LINE AND USED TO HAUL DEAD SEALS OR OTHER HEAVY OBJECTS ACROSS THE ICE OR SNOW. THEY WERE CARVED IN A VARIETY OF FORMS OUT OF WOOD OR BONE, ADAPTING THEIR DESIGN TO THE SHAPE OF THE RAW MATERIAL. THEY WERE ALWAYS CARVED TO PACIFY BOTH THE MAJOR SPIRITS AND THE SOULS OF THEIR PREY.