

Finch & C^o



WESTERN ALASKAN PUNUK OR THULE ESKIMO CARVED WALRUS IVORY ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURE OF A MAN-POLAR BEAR
A RARE WESTERN ALASKAN PUNUK OR THULE ESKIMO CARVED WALRUS IVORY ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURE OF A MAN-POLAR BEAR

18TH – EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 9.5CM LONG, 3CM HIGH, 3CM WIDE – 3¾ INS LONG, 1¼ INS HIGH, 1¼ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

THE IDEA OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF ANIMALS INTO MEN AND VICE VERSA IS CENTRAL TO WESTERN ESKIMO CULTURE AND A CORNERSTONE OF THE RAVEN ORIGIN MYTH AND THE CONCEPT OF THE SPIRIT OR 'INUA'. THIS ABILITY OF MEN AND ANIMALS TO TRANSFORM THEMSELVES WHILST RETAINING THEIR SPIRITS RESULTS IN AN UNPREDICTABLE WORLD IN WHICH ONE CANNOT BE SURE OF THE TRUE IDENTITY OF ANY GIVEN CREATURE. IT IS THE SHAMAN WHO KNOWS AND WHO USES THIS TRANSFORMATION IN HIS PERFORMANCE AND MAGICAL RITUALS. THESE CARVED FIGURES ARE USED AS PROTECTIVE AMULETS AND SOMETIMES GIVEN TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS BY THE SHAMAN FOR USE AS A PROTECTING SPIRIT.