

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Woman's paritally nude portrait on a toothed whale's jawbone

Date

1800-1900

Medium

Whale jaw, ink

Dimensions

Overall: 535 x 150 x 50 mm, 0.5 kg

Name

Scrimshaw whale jaw

History

American scrimshaw can trace its roots back to the 18th century whaling industry and was a folk art practiced by whalers with plenty of spare time on their hands. It is one of a handful of American crafts that has maintained a presence in contemporary art practices. The average whaling expedition lasted anywhere from three to five years. This could bring about unbearable boredom and

loneliness for the sailors. Whalers would fill their long hours by crafting presents for their loved ones back home. They carved designs into whale teeth and bone reflecting scenes of everyday life afloat or their memories of home. Pilot whales are related to Dolphins and can be found in all the worlds' oceans. They were caught by sailors as a source of fresh food and their jaws used in scrimshaw.