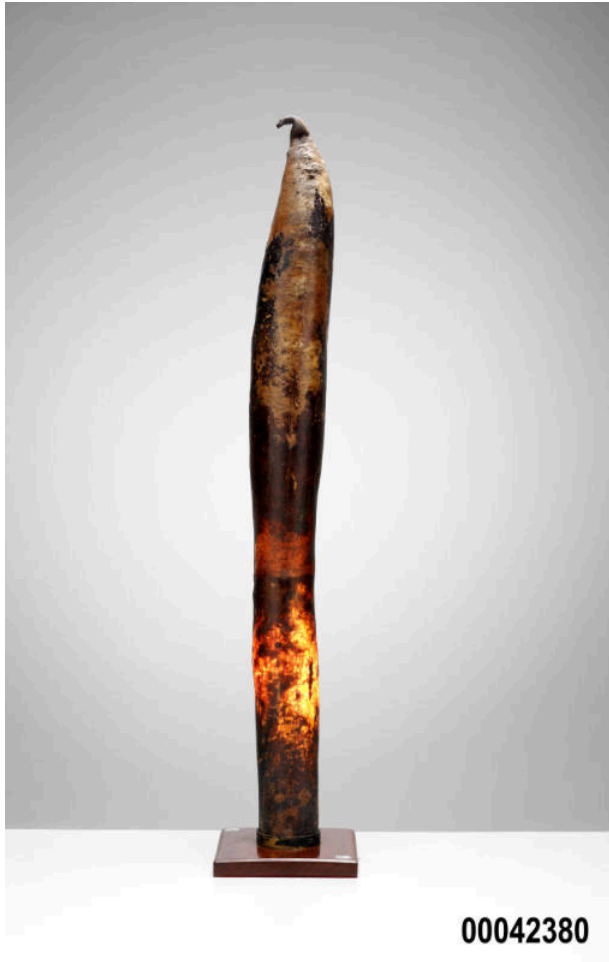


Basic Detail Report



00042380

Title

Whale penis lamp

Date

post 1950

Medium

Wood, wire, plastic, preserved organic matter

Dimensions

Overall: 1160 x 220 x 220 mm

Name

Lamp

History

The skin of a whale's penis is known to produce particularly soft suede once dried and tanned. It is alleged that the 20th century Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis had the bar stools of his luxury yacht CHRISTINA covered in whale penis leather. This symbolic statement, whether true or false, was often used by journalists as

'proof' of Onassis' perceived virility, power and extravagance. The brutal and rapacious escalation of the British and American whaling industry through the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries saw the whale penis fetishised as a phallic amusement. With no recognisable commercial use for the penis other than as an addition to a trypot, the organ was sometimes souvenired by whalers as trophy evidence of their power and control over a creature so much larger than themselves. In the small arctic communities of Iceland, Greenland and Norway, where all parts of the dead whale were historically used, whale penises were dried and tanned, and often transformed into whips.