

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Scrimshaw bobbin for pillow lace

Date

19th Century

Medium

Whalebone, glass, wire, paint

Dimensions

Overall: 133 x 26 x 8 mm, 0.008 kg

Name

Bobbin

History

Scrimshaw was originally a maritime folk art that developed from the unique conditions encountered onboard whaling ships in the early 19th century. No one knows for sure where the term originated, but it comes from the Dutch words 'scrim' meaning to etch and 'shorn' meaning to make. The earliest written reference is in an American ship's log dated 20 May 1826. Scrimshaw is produced by engraving, carving, inlaying or assembling bone from marine mammals, such as whale bone, teeth and baleen, walrus tusks and shell. Using jackknives, saws, homemade files or needles sailors would carve functional objects and pieces of art depicting images of women, whaling scenes or memories of home. Lace making, crochet, knitting and needle work were popular pastimes for women in the 19th century and led to the production of a prolific number of scrimshaw sewing objects. Lace was produced on taught pillows by twisting and crossing a bobbin with an attached thread, along the outline of a pattern.