

Basic Detail Report



Comb

Date

1800-1902

Medium

Bone, wood

Description

Bone and wood comb. Bristles of wood emerge from both sides and are tied with twine to the bone centre. The top is shaped as a man's head, wearing a headdress decorated with spots. Spots are also incised into his collar, which juts out; he has very prominent cheek bones. The bottom of the bone is shaped like an animal walking on two legs, decorated with spots. Combs with intricate designs were used for both utilitarian and aesthetic purposes by native Alaskans and Canadians. Usually made from bone, wood, or animal tusk, women used combs for hair dressing and sanitation, like their European counterparts. They became popular objects of trade when European explorers arrived in these areas. The man and the animal carved into the ends of this comb fall within a relatively new stylistic tradition formed in order to attract European traders.