

Sculpture

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Ivory sculptures of a whale (beluga: qilalugaq) and a tern on a soapstone base.

Accession Number 2022.18.130

Period 20th century

Materials ivory, walrus, stone, soapstone

Measurements 4,5 x 13 x 3,5 cm

Historical context

This ivory miniature depicts a white whale, or beluga or qilalugaq in the Inuit language, swimming near what appears to be a tern. Also known as a sea swallow, this bird with its slender wings and graceful body is suspended on an ivory stem above a soapstone base whose mottling may evoke the foam of the waves, the marine environment. The walrus ivory contrasts with the dark surface of the base, highlighting the whiteness of the beluga's skin and the tern's plumage. In addition, the parallelogram-shaped base has a certain rigidity, despite its dynamic design, which contrasts with the fluid, animated organic forms of the whale and tern.

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Photo by Victor Diaz Lamich