



Car Hood Ornaments

On loan from the Joyce Smith and Georgetown Collection, Sebastopol

Mascots and hood ornaments saw a period of high popularity in the 1930s to early 1950s, with some holdouts still in use today on some models. The concept began with the earliest automotive temperature gauges, which were mounted on external radiator caps. The idea has lost much of its appeal with the passage of time, but the era of the elaborate radiator decorations we now call mascots, was impressive.

Before the first temperature gauges, or motometers, drivers were at the mercy of overheating engines with no warning. The new improvement also offered manufacturers a new artifact on which to display some distinctive emblematic form or stylized logo, which could be seen by everyone, perched, as it were, prominently on the hood of the vehicle.

Motometers began displaying wings and other features as the manufacturers jumped on the bandwagon with increasing creativity. With the advent of interior temperature gauges and under the hood radiator caps left the hood ornament as completely ornamental, and with the loss of any need for functionality, the beauty of the mascot took full flight.

By 1930 the mascot was being promulgated industry-wide, in all sorts of beautiful examples from the elaborate to the simple, from the detailed and realistic to the completely stylized. The human form became a popular concept, with many examples of figures, both clothed and naked. The goddess was an extremely popular motif along with mythological figures and creatures. Animal forms were also very popular, with everything from rabbits to roosters to elephants.



Alaskan and Trans-Siberian Indigenous Carvings

circa 1700-contemporary
On loan from the Daniel Murley Collection, Jenner

This Collection of carvings, made from walrus ivory, whale tooth, reindeer antler, whale baleen and other materials, represents a range of work by indigenous people from Alaska, Greenland and the Trans-Siberian region. The pieces range from older works that embody age-old traditional beliefs of indigenous peoples, to more contemporary artworks produced as saleable items for the consumer market.

Among many notable items, there are several examples of the Tupilak from Greenland traditions dating back some 5,000 years. The Tupilak of ancient tradition was a magically created troll animal manufactured from human bone, earth, seaweed and skin. Individuals created Tupilaks to cause harm to a particular enemy. Today, except in rare circumstances, Tupilaks are not created for diabolical purposes. Rather, Greenlanders create them in the spirit of laughter, goodness and humor. The Tupilaks in this collection are troll-like creatures with distorted features such as overly large head and eyes.

Other carvings in this collection represent the strong tradition of shamanism and spiritual transformation among Alaskan and arctic peoples. One manifestation is the religious belief in reincarnation of human and animal souls, or inua. Physical objects, such as carvings, also possess inua that could take many different forms and this is usually expressed as a human-like face. All entities that possess inua are capable of transformation, and this theme is expressed in many forms of Arctic art, including masks and sculpture.



Paul Caponigro

Running White Deer, County Wicklow, Ireland, 1967 (unnumbered edition)
Silver Gelatin Print Photograph, Image 6X13" With frame 15X24"
There are approximately 275 "Running White Deer" in all sizes
On loan from the Barbara Graves and Craig Rosser Collection, Sebastopol

Paul Caponigro (b. 1932) is considered by many to be one of America's foremost landscape photographers whose work is included in several museums' permanent collections. His landscapes have been described as haunting, spiritual and mysterious. His works range from still life to ancient monuments to nature (his most famous image is Running White Deer) to up-close plant forms. His black & white images resonate with those of Ansel Adams & Minor White (who was his mentor and teacher). With a solo exhibition of his works in 1958 at the famous George Eastman House in Rochester, New York (International Museum of Photography and Film, established in 1945 in the mansion of co-founder of Eastman Kodak Co., George Eastman), Caponigro's career took off and he has been at the forefront of landscape photography ever since. His use of the view camera (like Ansel Adams) allows him to take very large negatives creating high resolution prints. His use of slower shutter speed gives a stunning impression of rushing movement.



Pomo Basketry

circa 1900-1982
On loan from the Bob and Pam Stone Collection, Sonoma

Pomo baskets are generally acknowledged to be among the finest examples of basketry ever produced. The Pomo Native Americans of Northern California, who traditionally occupied portions of Sonoma, Mendocino and Lake Counties, achieved great complexity in the production of baskets in their long history and continue this art-form today. Pomo basket makers employ two primary techniques—twining and coiling. Historically, twined baskets were made for rougher usage, such as gathering and processing acorns. Coiled baskets can be highly decorative with brilliantly colored feathers, beads or shells.

Highly decorated baskets are significant objects and were traditionally used as prestigious gifts or kept as family heirlooms. Miniature baskets are also important, used as gifts, charms or even in jewelry. They range in size from two inches in diameter, down to less than half an inch. The smallest baskets are the product of refined techniques, some of which remain closely guarded secrets.

This collection provides a sense of the array of materials used by Pomo weavers. The materials represented here include the plants willow, redbud, sedge root and bulrush; bird feathers from Oriole, Mallard Duck, California Woodpecker and Robin; as well as shells and other decorative materials. Pomo basket making is a living art form, still practiced by traditional Pomo weavers today.