



Ear Spools

Date
20th Century

Primary Maker
Miao

Medium
Silver

Description

This object is a pair of silver ear spools from the Miao people residing in China’s Guizhou Province. Most silver would have been reserved for festival or celebratory wear, most often by unmarried women. Traditionally, silver was worn to ward off evil, with silver’s bright sheen symbolizing light. Over time as it became more culturally pervasive it came to be used as a show of wealth and health for families who could afford to wear the precious metal. Adolescent girls could wear as much as 10 kilograms of silver. When women marry the silver serves as a dowry and is eventually redistributed to their own children. Silversmithing on the other hand is exclusively performed by men and taught from father to son.

Dimensions

2015.26.29.1: 1 5/8 × 1 in., 22.7g (4.1 × 2.5 cm, 0.023 kg) 2015.26.29.2: 1 5/8 × 1 in., 20.9g (4.1 × 2.5 cm, 0.021 kg)