



Chest Ornament

Date

20th Century

Medium

Bailer shell and fiber

Description

Bailer shells are the shells of the melo genus of gastropods, large marine snails. The colloquial name bailer is said to have originated when Europeans observed the peoples of Australia using such shells to remove, or bail, the water out of their canoes. Shells are often used for decoration throughout Melanesia. Even in locations hundreds of miles from the coast such as the Highlands of

Papua New Guinea. A variety of shells such as bailer or clam shells are used as ornamentation to cover either the chest or pubic area of the body.

Dimensions

Including top strap: 16 3/4 × 8 1/2 × 3 1/2 in. (42.5 × 21.6 × 8.9 cm)