

Joe David

*Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask), 1992*

alder, acrylic, operculum  
29.0 cm x 25.0 cm x 14.0 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition  
Fund  
VAG 93.5



## Joe David

*Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask)*, 1992



Image source: Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild: 1977 Graphics Collection. Ottawa: Canadian Indian Marketing Services, 1977.

### Artist's Biography

Nationality: Canadian  
First Nations Affiliation: Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka or Westcoast)  
Born: 1946-05-30, Opitsaht Village, Clayoquot Sound, Vancouver Island

Joe David was born in Opitsaht on Vancouver Island. A member of the Clayoquot band, David has become an important figure in Northwest Coast Native Art. As a child, David left his village and moved to Seattle where he had less contact with his West Coast background. David was always intrigued by his Native culture and as a young man returned to Vancouver island to study carving with noted Northwest carvers, Duane Pasco and Bill Holm.

David returned to Washington to teach carving at Evergreen State College and at the Centrum Foundation in Olympia, where he started carving workshops for Native students. In 1974 David's work was recognized on the international stage when he carved a 25 foot totem pole for the British Columbia Pavillion at Expo '74 in Spokane.

David returned to British Columbia shortly after and began receiving high profile commissions, including an entrance pole with Bill Reid, and carvings for the Royal British Columbia Museum and B.C. Ferries.

In 1997 British Airways selected David to create a work for their "World Images" campaign and an image derived from this work was reproduced on five of their passenger jets.

### Artistic Context

Nationality: Canadian  
First Nations Affiliation: Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka)  
Training: Studied under Bill Holm and Duane Pasco  
Peers: Robert Davidson; Ron Hamilton  
Group: Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild; 20th Century; 21st Century  
Provenance: purchased from the Inuit Gallery of Vancouver in 1993  
Subject: social and political issues; West Coast iconography

### Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Joe David  
*Medicine Drum*, 1979  
screenprint on paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 96.41.8

## Joe David

*Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask)*, 1992

### Other Works in the Vancouver Art Gallery Collection

Joe David  
*Medicine Drum*  
screenprint and paper  
Gift of J. Ron Longstaffe  
VAG 96.41.8

### Further Reading

David, Joe. *Joe David. In Northwest Coast Indian Artists Guild: 1977 Graphics Collection.* Ottawa: Canadian Indian Marketing Services, 1977.

Gerber, Peter R. and Vanina Katz-Lahaigue. *Native Artists from the Northwest Coast.* Zurich: Ethnological Museum of the University of Zurich.

McFarlane, Nathalie. "Joe David," *Museum Notes.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology, 1978.

Stewart, Hilary. *Looking at Indian art of the Northwest Coast.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979.

### Exhibition History

#### Exhibitions at the Vancouver Art Gallery

Art in British Columbia. *January 1, 1994 - December 31, 1994.*

Face to Face: Four Centuries of Portraits. *June 19, 1999 - September 26, 1999.*

Long Time. *May 19, 2001 - April 28, 2002.*

75 Years of Collecting: First Nations: Myths and Realities. *May 6, 2006 - August 27, 2006.*

### Archival History

#### Acquisitions Justification

*Acquisition Record*  
1993-03

[transcription]

#### David, Joe, b. 1946

*Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask)*  
alder and operculum shell  
11" x 8" x 3"

Vendor: Inuit Gallery, Vancouver

## Joe David

### *Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask), 1992*

Joe David's art is firmly rooted in his early life and participation in ritual dancing and potlatching. He was born in 1948 at the village of Opitsaht, situated on Meares Island in Tofino Inlet off the West Coast of Vancouver Island. He is a member of the Clayoquot, one of fifteen Nootkan-speaking groups inhabiting the West Coast of Vancouver Island and sharing in a common cultural tradition. Formerly collectively referred to as the Nootka, a name given to them by Europeans, many of these people today call themselves, and prefer to be called, West Coast people.

Much of Joe David's knowledge of West Coast Indian traditions and cultural history has been passed on to him by his father, the late Hyacinth David, who was an accomplished speaker, dancer and singer. Joe David received the name Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth, Supernatural White Wolf Transforming into Killer Whale, from his father when he was twenty-three, in recognition of his serious commitment to extending his cultural heritage.

*Haida Noble Woman with Labret* is a portrait mask in the tradition of Haida portrait masks made for sale to Europeans prior to the 1860s and 1870s when, due to missionary activities and the ravages of smallpox, Haida culture began to disintegrate. Prior to this time it was portrait masks, more than any form of ritual object or Shamanic regalia, that the Haida were prepared to sell, primarily because the portrait masks had long since lost their traditional significance.

There are approximately thirty known examples of Haida portrait masks from the nineteenth century, and the majority of them represent women of high rank wearing labrets and painted with abstract formline crest designs.

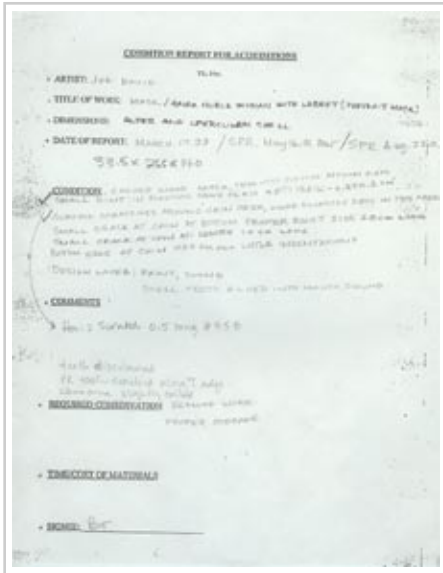
This mask shows the broad, flat face of a Haida noble woman with a labret. The abstract formline designs delineate a two finned killer whale outlined in blue on the forehead, left and right cheek. The red areas over the nose and mouth and at the bottom of the right cheek are "space-forms" used to create the overall balance of the mask. The two finned killer whale indicates the noble woman to be a member of the Raven clan and is a village crest of the village of Skedans. The mask is exceptionally delicate and represents the formal refinement and exceptional technical skill which marks Joe David's recent work.

Recommend purchase.

Willard Holmes  
Director  
March, 1993

Joe David

*Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask)*, 1992



**Condition Report for Acquisitions**

Conservation  
1993-03-17

**[transcription]**

CONDITION REPORT FOR ACQUISITIONS

ARTIST: Joe David

TITLE OF WORK: Mask/HAIDA NOBLE WOMAN WITH LABRET (PORTRAIT MASK)

DIMENSIONS: ALDER AND OPERCULUM SHELL

DATE OF REPORT: MARCH 17.93 / SPR. MAY 16.01 POW/ SPR AUG 22.02

33.5 x 25.5 x 14.0

CONDITION: CARVED WOOD MASK, UNPAINTED SURFACE APPEARS TO DIRTY  
SMALL DINT: IN FOREHEAD ABOVE PL EYE 4.5(T) 15.8(L) - 0.2 x 0.2 CM

SURFACE SCRATCHES AROUND CHIN AREA, WOOD SLIGHTLY DIRTY IN THIS AREA

SMALL CRACK AT CHIN AT BOTTOM PROPER RIGHT SIDE 2.8 cm LONG  
SMALL CRACK AT CHIN AT CENTRE 1.0 cm LONG

BOTTOM EDGE OF CHIN HAS SMALL LITTLE INDENTATIONS

DESIGN LAYER: PAINT, SOUND  
SHELL TEETH GLUED INTO MOUTH, SOUND

**COMMENTS**

Horiz 2 scratch 0.5 long @ 4.5 B

teeth discoloured  
PR tooth cracked along T edge  
chin area slightly soiled

**REQUIRED CONSERVATION**

REMOVE WIRE  
PROPER STORAGE

Joe David

*Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask)*, 1992

Submission	Conditions	Curatorial comments	Committee Disposition	Board Approval
<p>Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask) alder and operculum shell; 11" x 8" x 3"</p> <p>Artist: Joe David Vendor: Inuit Gallery</p> <p>This set of two Clayoquot artist is rooted in his early life in Opitsaht, Meares Isl. and participation in ritual. This mask is in the tradition of Haida portrait masks made for sale to Europeans prior to the cultural disintegration of the 1860s and 70s. It is exceptionally delicate and represents the formal refinement and exceptional technical skill which marks David's recent work.</p>		Recommend purchase	Approved Unanimously	MAR 24 1993
<p>Carlin Bell Sculpture (stone)</p> <p>This is a unique work of art made from wood and stone. It is a sculpture of a woman's face, and is a traditional Haida portrait mask. It is made from wood and stone, and is a traditional Haida portrait mask. It is made from wood and stone, and is a traditional Haida portrait mask.</p>		Recommend purchase	Approved Unanimously	MAR 24 1993

### Board Minutes

Acquisition Record  
1993-03-19

[transcription of excerpt]

### SCHEDULE "A"

#### Works Recommended for Acquisition

#### Submission

4. Haida Noble Woman with Labret (Portrait Mask)  
alder and operculum shell; 11" x 8" x 3"

Artist: Joe David

Vendor: Inuit Gallery

The art of this Clayoquot artist is rooted in his early life in Opitsaht, Meares Isl. and participation in ritual. This mask is in the tradition of Haida portrait masks made for sale to Europeans prior to the cultural disintegration of the 1860s and 70s. It is exceptionally delicate and represents the formal refinement and exceptional technical skill which marks David's recent work.

**Curatorial Comments:** Recommend purchase

**Committee Disposition:** Approved Unanimously

**Board Approval:** MAR 24 1993 [in ink]

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