

QUIPU FROM PERU

Artist: Unknown

Date: 1450 - 1533 AD

Dimensions: 82.5 x 161.5 cm

Material: Cotton, cardboard, wooden frame

Inventory Number: 107764

Total cost: € 9.835,00

STATE OF PRESERVATION:

The cardboard support shows deformation, abrasion, and darkening. Old nails were inserted to keep the ropes in place. There are insect larvae. The fabric is darkened. The threads appear loose and some labels are missing. The frame needs restoration. Several damaging deposits are located on the overall surface.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Removal of the frame
- Scientific studies
- Photographic and graphic documentation
- Dusting
- Microaspiration
- Dry cleaning and deacidification
- Consolidation and cleaning of the strings
- Replacement of protective paper

Quipus, known as talking knots, were recording devices used in the Inca Empire and its predecessors in the Andean region. The cords contained numeric and other values encoded by knots in a base ten positional system. Quipus consisted of a set of small cotton cords ranging in size and color which were knotted in different positions to represent different numerical values and information. These many cords were then attached to a larger central rope. Their reading began from the top where the colors indicated the contents to where the knots were used to quantify the data. A group of officials, known as *quipucamayus*, was responsible for its composition and reading. This system of strings is very complex, but what is most fascinating and mysterious is the literary-historical aspect of this system. Based on the Spanish chronicles of the time, it seems the quipu also had a narrative content, and it is possible to consider these colored strings like a writing system - full of symbolism related to the cosmology and religious beliefs of the Incas.

This quipu presented in our 2012 Wishbook comes from the temple of Pachacamac at Mamacoma in Lima, Peru and is a part of the Incan information system of knotted strings used by for the administration of the empire. This quipu is inserted within a frame of wood and glass. It is made of woven plant fibers such as cotton and hemp which were sewn onto a cardboard support. The fabric is sewn in a series of lines. There are forty-five vertical strings of different lengths, each with several knots, which are set horizontally on a rope with knots at the end of which has labels with inscriptions in ink on paper.

