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# ORIGINS

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A VISION ON AFRICAN ART

ANNA DEMINA & LEINUO ZHANG  
COLLECTION

MILANO  
NOVEMBER  
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COLLECTING AFRICAN ART IS A FASCINATING ADVENTURE.

IT IS AN APPROACH TO APPARENTLY UNKNOWN FORMS, WHICH SOON REVEAL ON THE CONTRARY

THEIR DEEP CONNECTION WITH MODERN ART AND THE AESTHETICS THAT SURROUNDS US.

PASSION, TASTE, CURIOSITY AND COURAGE ARE ESSENTIAL IN THIS JOURNEY AND ONLY THANKS

TO THESE ATTITUDES ONE CAN SUCCEED.

THE WORKS OF ART PRESENTED IN THIS BOOK ARE THE RESULT OF THE ADVENTURE

THAT LED US TO THE ORIGINS OF THE 20TH CENTURY ART.

OUR HOPE IS THAT THE EMOTION WE FELT WHEN FACED WITH THE MYSTERIOUS BEAUTY

PERMEATING THESE SCULPTURES CAN BE SHARED.

*Daniel*

*Leimu zhang*



## AFRICAN ART: TO THE ORIGINS OF MODERN ART

AFRICAN ART IS ONE OF THE GREAT DISCOVERIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

WHILST AFRICAN SCULPTURES WERE CONSIDERED IN THE PAST JUST AS EXOTIC CURIOSITIES, THEY BEGAN TO BE PERCEIVED AS AESTHETICALLY AND CONCEPTUALLY IMPORTANT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

THE AUTHORS OF THIS DISCOVERY, THE RESTLESS ARTISTS OF THE PARISIAN AVANT-GARDE, SUCH AS MATISSE, DERAINE, VLAMINCK, PICASSO, BRAQUE, BRANCUSI, LÉGER, SEARCHING FOR A NEW AND PURER ARTISTIC LANGUAGE, WERE THE FIRST TO GRASP THE REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL OF THOSE "WILD" FORMS AND THE FIRST TO COLLECT THEM AND HANG THEM ON THE WALLS OF THEIR ATELIERS.

THEY SAW IN THEM NEITHER SIMPLICITY NOR NAIVETY, BUT AN EXTREME INTELLECTUAL SYNTHESIS, A DEFINITIVE OVERCOMING OF FIGURATION AND A FREEDOM IN THE USE AND COEXISTENCE OF DIFFERENT MATERIALS NEVER GLIMPSED BEFORE.

THEY WERE ABLE TO RECOGNISE IN THEM THE PREVALENCE OF CONCEPTION AND INVENTION OVER SKILL AND VIRTUOSITY, THAT IS TO SAY GENIUS OVER EXECUTIVE TALENT.

WE OWE TO THE SENSITIVITY OF THESE FIRST MODERN ARTISTS, AND TO THE SUBSEQUENT TRIUMPH OF AVANT-GARDE ART, THE RECOGNITION OF AFRICAN SCULPTURES AS GREAT ART AND THE REASON OF THEIR UNFAILING PRESENCE IN THE MAJOR ART MUSEUMS AND IN PRESTIGIOUS PRIVATE COLLECTIONS.

*Tomaso Vigorelli*



## WORKS OF ART





MAN RAY, BLACK AND WHITE, 1926  
ZABRINSKIE GALLERY, NEW YORK

## MASK

DAN-MANO, LIBERIA

LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENT.

WOOD, FIBRE, BONE

26 CM

## PROVENANCE

COLLECTED BY AN U.S. DIPLOMAT WHILE STATIONED IN LIBERIA BETWEEN 1935-1937

PRIVATE COLLECTION, CALIFORNIA, AND THENCE BY DESCENT

COLE HARRELL, NEW YORK

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

LEINUO ZHANG COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

PARCOURS DES MONDES, SALON INTERNATIONAL DES ARTS PREMIERS,

CATALOGUE, PARIS, 2018, P.43



## THE DAN-MANO MASK

THE MANO PEOPLE LIVE IN THE NORTH EAST OF LIBERIA ALONG THE BORDER OF THE IVORY COAST.

THEIR PROXIMITY TO THE DAN PEOPLE HAS HAD AN EVIDENT INFLUENCE ON THEIR ART, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THEY HAVE ALSO MAINTAINED THEIR OWN STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS AND SENSIBILITY.

THEY SHARE WITH THE DAN PEOPLE THE INITIATIC PORO SOCIETY AND THE USE OF MASKS IN THEIR RITUALS.

THE GUARDIAN MASK OF THE INITIATION CEREMONIES TRADITIONALLY REPRESENTS A FEMALE FACE AND IT IS HONOURED AS THE MOTHER OF ALL OTHER MASKS.

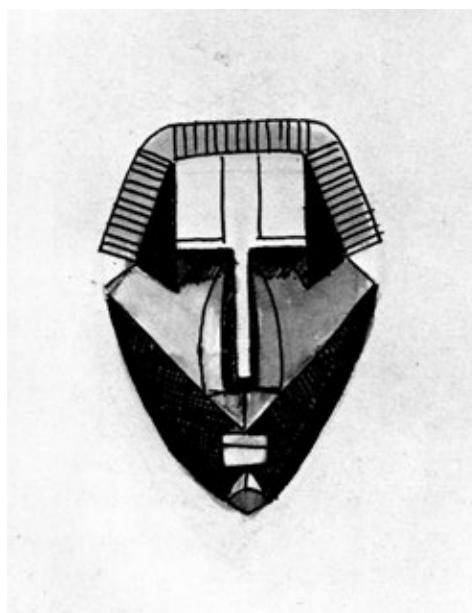
NORMALLY GUARDED BY THE OLDEST WOMEN OF THE CLAN, THIS MASK APPEARS IN PUBLIC AS GUARDIAN OF THE SECRET INITIATION RITUALS FORBIDDING TO STRANGERS THE ACCESS TO THE SACRED GROUNDS OF THE CEREMONIES.

THE INTENSE AND ALMOST SUFFERING EXPRESSION OF THE FACE. THE PROMINENT FOREHEAD THAT UNDERLINES THE MYSTERIOUS FISSURES OF THE HALF-CLOSED EYES AND THE PERFECTION OF THE DELICATE FEATURES ARE ENHANCED BY THE SPLENDID BRIGHT BROWN PATINA.

THE EXTRAORDINARY INTENSITY OF THIS MASK MAKES IT ONE OF THE HIGHEST KNOWN EXAMPLES OF MANO ART.







JULIO GONZALES, AUSTERE MASK, 1940  
PRIVATE COLLECTION, PARIS

## **MASK, KAOGLE**

DAN-KRAN, IVORY COAST

19TH CENT.

WOOD, METAL

23,5 CM

## **PROVENANCE**

WILLY MESTACH COLLECTION, BRUXELLES

DIDAC CAPARROS, BARCELONA

JOHN GILTSOFF, NEW YORK-GIRONA

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

LEINUO ZHANG COLLECTION, MILAN

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- A HIDDEN HERITAGE, V. CARINI, GALLERIA DALTON SOMARÉ, MILAN, 2004, P. 129
- ENTRE GRÂCE ET BRUTALITÉ, GALLERIA DALTON SOMARÉ, MILAN, 2017, P. 55



## THE DAN-KRAN MASK

THE DAN PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT *GLÉ*, THE POWERFUL SUPERNATURAL FORCE DWELLING IN THE DEEP FOREST, CAN MAKE ITSELF VISIBLE THROUGH WOODEN MASKS TO TAKE PART TO THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY.

ONE OF ITS MANIFESTATIONS IS THE *KAOGLE* MASK WITH THE FEATURES OF A CYNOCEPHALUS MONKEY.

THIS EXAMPLE STRIKES FOR ITS DARING GEOMETRY AND FOR ITS STRAIGHTFORWARD AND ESSENTIAL PLASTIC VITALITY.

THE FACE IS DIVIDED INTO SIMPLE VOLUMES COMBINED TOGETHER BY SHARP ANGLES.

TWO HORIZONTAL LINES DIVIDE IT IN THREE SECTIONS JOINED BY THE VERTICAL LINE OF THE NOSE.

THE EXTREME GEOMETRY OF ITS SHAPE AND ITS SHARPNESS PUSHED ALMOST TO ABSTRACTION ARE NOT ABLE TO CANCEL THE SUBTERRANEAN AGGRESSIVENESS STREAMING IN THIS MASK.

THE PERFECT CUBISTIC ARCHITECTURE OF THIS MASTERPIECE MAKES IT A MODERNIST SCULPTURE AND A CLEAR SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR MODERN ART.







HELENA RUBINSTEIN SHOWING A GURO MASK  
PARIS, 1936

## MASK

GURO, IVORY COAST

19TH CENT.

WOOD, PIGMENTS

23,5 CM

## PROVENANCE

ROBERT DUPERRIER, PARIS

STACY COLLECTION, WASHINGTON D.C.

PRIVATE COLLECTION, MUNICH

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

LEINUO ZHANG COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

UN'AVVENTURA ESTETICA, GALLERIA DALTON SOMARÉ, MILAN, 2018, P. 19



## THE GURO MASK

THIS MASK IS PROBABLY A WORK OF THE YASUA MASTER'S ATELIER, OF WHOM ANOTHER KNOWN WORK IS AT BARBIER-MUELLER MUSEUM IN GENEVA.

IT REPRESENTS THE GURO FEMALE IDEAL OF BEAUTY.

THE FACE IS A PERFECT OVAL, THE FEATURES ARE SENSITIVE AND DELICATE AND THE STRICT ORDER OF THE HAIRDO, AS WELL AS THE GEOMETRIC ARRANGEMENT OF THE SCARIFICATIONS, CONVEY A SENSE OF MORAL ORDER.

THE EYES REDUCED TO A THIN CUT ARE UNDERLINED BY WHITE KAOLIN AND EXPRESS THE RESERVED ATTITUDE THAT MUST ACCOMPANY PHYSICAL BEAUTY.

THE GREAT SCULPTURAL MASTERY AND THE DEEP BROWN PATINA, DUE TO ITS ANTIQUITY AND PROLONGED USE, CONTRIBUTE TO THE HIGH AESTHETIC QUALITY OF THIS MASK.







FERNAND LÉGER, LA CRÉATION DU MONDE, 1923

## GUARDIAN FIGURE, *MBULU NGULU*

KOTA, GABON

MIDDLE OF 19TH CENT.

WOOD, COPPER, BRASS, IRON

32 CM

## PROVENANCE

HENRI KAMER, NEW YORK

DANIEL HOURDÉ COLLECTION, PARIS

NICOLE AND JOHN DINTENFASS COLLECTION, NEW YORK

PACE PRIMITIVE, NEW YORK

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

ANNA DEMINA COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

BRUNEAF XXII, NON EUROPEAN ART FAIR, CATALOGUE, 2012, P. 45

## EXHIBITIONS

- PARCOURS DES MONDES, SALON INTERNATIONAL DES ARTS PREMIERS, PARIS, 2013
- CULTURES, THE WORLD ART FAIR, BRUXELLES, JUNE 2018
- AMART, PALAZZO DELLA PERMANENTE, MILAN, MAY 2018



## THE KOTA GUARDIAN FIGURE, *MBULU NGULU*

AMONG THE KOTAS THE GUARDIAN FIGURES WERE USED TO MAKE VISIBLE THE PROTECTIVE AUTHORITY OF THE ANCESTORS. THEY WERE FIXED ON TOP OF BASKETS IN WHICH THE MEMORIES OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE CLAN WERE KEPT.

THE FIGURES RECEIVED PERIODICALLY OFFERS BEFORE ANY ENTERPRISE THAT MIGHT REQUIRE THE WISDOM AND THE IMMORTAL STRENGTH OF THE ANCESTORS.

THE SURFACE, COVERED WITH BRASS OR COPPER SHEETS, WAS KEPT POLISHED AND SHINING SO THAT THE ANCESTORS COULD CONTINUE TO HAVE A VIGILANT EXPRESSION EVEN IN THE DARKNESS.

THE FIRST GUARDIAN FIGURES APPEARED IN EUROPE AT THE END OF 19TH CENT. AND THEY ATTRACTED IMMEDIATELY THE ATTENTION OF ARTISTS AND COLLECTORS OF ART, STRICKEN BY THE DYNAMISM AND THE VIGOUR OF THESE BIDIMENSIONAL SCULPTURES.

THE EUROPEAN AVANT-GUARDE ARTISTS DID NOT MISS TO NOTICE THE EXTREME SYNTHESIS OF THESE IMAGES AND APPRECIATED THE RIGOUR OF THEIR FORMS AND THE ABSOLUTE ABSENCE OF ANY DECORATION.

THEIR RARITY AND AESTHETICAL APPEAL BROUGHT QUICKLY THESE FIGURES INTO HIGHEST ART COLLECTOR'S WORLD AND TODAY THEY APPEAR INVARIABLY NEXT TO THE WORKS OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ARTISTS OF THE 20TH CENT.

THIS GUARDIAN FIGURE, WHICH BELONGS TO A VERY RARE STYLE, TROUGH ITS EXTRAORDINARY GEOMETRY AND ITS SEVERE GAZE, IS ABLE TO CONVEY PERFECTLY THE ARCANES AUTHORITY OF THE ANCESTORS.







JUAN GRIS, RELIQUARY FIGURE, 1922

## GUARDIAN FIGURE, *BWETE*

KOTA, GABON

19TH CENT.

WOOD, COPPER, BRASS, IRON

45 CM

## PROVENANCE

COLONIAL FRENCH COLLECTION, PARIS

GALERIE BERNARD DULON, PARIS

PRIVATE COLLECTION, MUNICH

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

ANNA DEMINA COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

L'ART KOTA, LES FIGURES DE RELIQUAIRE, A. AND F. CHAFFIN, 1979, P. 311, N. 194



## THE KOTA GUARDIAN FIGURE, *BWETE*

THIS ELEGANT AND WELL PRESERVED SMALL GUARDIAN FIGURE IS ESPECIALLY REMARKABLE FOR THE EXCELLENT QUALITY OF ITS CRAFTSMANSHIP AND THE BALANCE OF ITS PROPORTIONS.

THE MASSIVE CONCAVE FACE IS ENTIRELY COVERED BY THICK NATIVE COPPER AND BRASS STRIPES FIXED WITH WINDINGS OF THE SAME METAL TO THE LARGE BAND WHICH VERTICALLY CROSSES THE FACE.

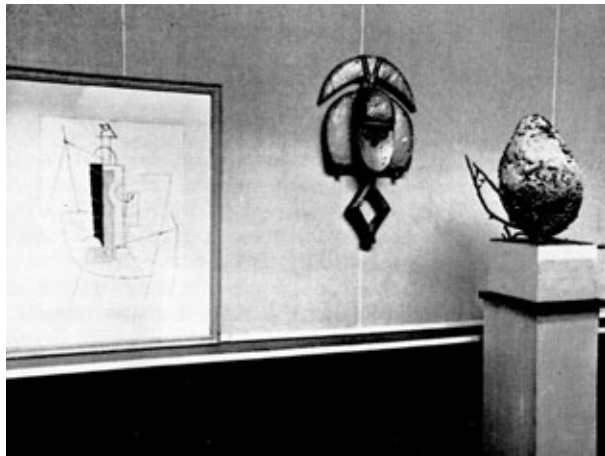
DECORATIVE WINDINGS CROSS HORIZONTALLY THE FACE AT THE HEIGHT OF THE EYES AS WELL. THE METAL STRIPES ARE PLACED IN A WAY TO CONVERGE TOWARDS THE CENTER OF THE ELLIPSE OF THE FACE, EMPHASISING THE BULGING AND ALERT EYES.

THE LATERAL PROTUBERANCES, WHICH ARE PLACED FOLLOWING THE SAME INCLINATION OF THE METAL STRIPES ON THE FACE, ENHANCE THE DYNAMISM OF THIS REMARKABLE SCULPTURE AND UNDERLINE ITS LIVELY AND VIGILANT EXPRESSION.

THE LARGE AND PERFECTLY SYMMETRIC LOSANGA WEARS THE SIGNS OF A LONG RITUAL USE.







EXHIBITION AT "291" GALLERY, A KOTA FIGURE NEXT TO A PICASSO'S PAINTING  
NEW YORK, 1914 - 1915

## GUARDIAN FIGURE

KOTA, GABON

ATELIER OF SEMANGOY

MIDDLE OF 19TH CENT.

WOOD, COPPER, BRASS, IRON, SHELL

63 CM

## PROVENANCE

ACQUIRED FROM A PRIVATE FAMILY COLLECTION IN THE '80S

GALERIE RATTON-LOURDÉ, PARIS

MARC LAROCK COLLECTION, PARIS

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

ANNA DEMINA COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

- KOTA, GALERIE RATTON-LOURDÉ, PARIS, 2003, PP. 52-53

- GABON, GALERIE RATTON, PARIS, 2017, PP. 42-43

- UN'AVVENTURA ESTETICA, GALLERIA DALTON SOMARÉ, MILAN, 2018, PP. 13-15



## THE SEMANGOY KOTA GUARDIAN FIGURE

THIS ANCIENT KOTA-VUMBU FIGURE CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO SEMANGOY, A MASTER CARVER ACTIVE IN ZOKOLUNGA, A SMALL VILLAGE CLOSE TO MOANDA, IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY. THE SCULPTURE IS CHARACTERISED BY ITS IMPOSING VOLUMES.

THE MASSIVE FOREHEAD IS PROTRUDING AND SHELTERING THE LARGE CONVEXITY OF THE FACE CENTRED ON THE WIDE OPEN EYES.

BOTH ITS DIMENSIONS AND ITS STRONG BUT CONTROLLED ENERGY TESTIFY THAT THIS FIGURE GUARDED THE MEMORIES OF THE ANCESTORS OF AN IMPORTANT KOTA CLAN.

THE SEMANGOY STYLE IS KNOWN FOR ITS PRECISION AND SOBRIETY.

WIDE PARTS OF THE PLAIN METAL WHICH COVERS THE SCULPTURE ARE FREE FROM ANY DECORATION AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SCULPTURE IS DOMINATED JUST BY THE GEOMETRY OF THE VOLUMES.

THE EXPRESSION OF THE FACE IS REINFORCED BY AN HORIZONTAL BAND OF A DIFFERENT METAL (COPPER) WHICH UNDERLINES THE EYES AND HIGHLIGHTS THE SHARP SIGHT WHERE EUROPEAN SCREWS ARE USED AS IRIS.

A COWRY SHELL IS PLACED ON THE MOUTH BOTH AS DECORATION AND AS A SYMBOL OF RICHNESS.

ON THE CRESCENT AN INCISED HALF MOON ENDING WITH STUDS CAN BE CONSIDERED AS THE TRUE SIGNATURE OF SEMANGOY.







RAMON PICHOT IN THE STUDIO OF PABLO PICASSO  
WITH A PUNU MASK ON THE WALL, PARIS, 1910

## MASK, *OKUYI*

PUNU, GABON

LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENT.

WOOD, PIGMENTS, KAOLIN

34 CM

## PROVENANCE

COLLECTED IN SITU AROUND 1923

PRIVATE COLLECTION, PARIS

GALERIE RATTON, PARIS

COLLECTION ANNA DEMINA, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

PARCOURS DES MONDES, SALON INTERNATIONAL DES ARTS PREMIERS,

CATALOGUE, PARIS, 2018



## THE PUNU MASK

THIS BEAUTIFUL MASK SHOWS THE CALM AND SERENITY THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE FAME OF PUNU ART.

THE FEATURES ARE SYMMETRICALLY DISTRIBUTED, ADDING GRACEFULNESS TO THE SCULPTURE. THE THIN ARCH OF THE EYEBROWS GIVES A BEAUTIFUL HEART-SHAPED FRAME TO THE LOWER PART OF THE FACE.

THE SLIT EYES, IN THE SHAPE OF "COFFEE BEANS", THE DELICATELY SHAPED NOSE, AS WELL AS THE PLUMP LIPS CORRESPOND TO THE IDEAL PERFECTLY PROPORTIONED TRAITS ATTRIBUTED TO THE SPIRIT IN ORDER TO FLATTER IT.

ON THE FOREHEAD AND TEMPLES, NINE RED SCALES IN THE SHAPE OF A DIAMOND REPRESENT THE *MAGUMBI* SCARIFICATIONS AND REFER TO THE NUMBER OF CLANS IN THE PUNU MYTHS OF ORIGIN.

THE IMPRESSIVE HAIRSTYLE IS METICULOUSLY CARVED AND OVERHANGS THE BULGING FOREHEAD, ITS DEEP BLACK COLOUR BEAUTIFULLY CONTRASTS WITH THE REDDISH LIPS AND SCARIFICATIONS AND WITH THE KAOLIN OF THE SKIN.

THE SUPREME BEAUTY OF THIS MASK GIVES EVIDENCE OF THE TALENT OF PUNU SCULPTORS AND OF THE DEVOTION OF THIS PEOPLE TO THE WORLD OF THE SPIRITS.\*

\* TEXT COURTESY GALERIE RATTON, PARIS







PABLO PICASSO, LES DEMOISELLES D'AVIGNON (DETAIL), 1907  
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

## GUARDIAN FIGURE

LUMBU, GABON

LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENT.

WOOD, GLASS, COPPER, PIGMENTS

31,5 CM

## PROVENANCE

EX COLONIAL FRENCH COLLECTION

GALERIE BERNARD DULON, PARIS

PRIVATE COLLECTION, PARIS

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

ANNA DEMINA COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

- LES LUMBU. UN ART SACRÉ, CHARLOTTE GRAND-DUFAY, 2016, P. 151
- UN'AVVENTURA ESTETICA, GALLERIA DALTON SOMARÉ, MILAN, 2018, PP. 9-11
- TENDENCIAS DEL MERCADO DEL ARTE, MADRID, JUNIO 2018, N. 114, FRONT COVER PAGE
- CULTURES, THE WORLD ART FAIR, BRUXELLES, JUNE 2018, CATALOGUE, P. 23

## EXHIBITIONS

- BRAFA ART FAIR, GALERIE BERNARD DULON, BRUXELLES. JANUARY 2016
- WINTER BRUNEAF. BRUXELLES, JAN. 2017
- AMART, PALAZZO DELLA PERMANENTE, MILANO, MAY 2018



## THE LUMBU GUARDIAN FIGURE

THE USE OF COLOUR, SO RARE IN THE WORKS OF ART FROM WESTERN AFRICA, IS ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ART FROM EQUATORIAL AFRICA, WHICH COMBINES PAINTING AND CARVING. IN THIS RARE LUMBU HEAD THE COLOURS USED ARE WHITE, RED AND BLUE. WHITE (KAOLIN) SYMBOLISES MOON, PEACE AND REPRODUCTIVE CAPACITY. RED (*TUKULA*) STANDS FOR POWER, ANGER AND MATURITY. BLUE (GUIMET - FROM THE NAME OF ITS INVENTOR) WAS WIDELY USED IN CENTRAL AFRICA AS A TEXTILE DYE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

THIS WOMAN'S HEAD, CARVED WITH GREAT CARE AND ATTENTION TO DETAILS, HAD THE TASK TO WATCH OVER THE BASKET THAT CONTAINED THE MEMORIES OF THE ANCESTORS. THE USE OF POLYCHROMY CONCURS TO THE STRENGTH OF THE VIGILANT GAZE OF ITS BIG GLASS EYES.

THE SWEETNESS OF THE EXPRESSION OF THE FACE IS TRANSFIGURED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE RED STRIPES WHICH CROSS THE FOREHEAD AND THE CHEEKS AND CONVERGE TOWARDS THE WIDE OPEN EYES, HIGHLIGHTING THE AMAZEMENT OF THE HALF OPEN MOUTH.

THE HAIR IS COLLECTED IN A BRAID KNOWN AS *KODIA*, NAMED AFTER THE CONCH OF WHICH IT REMINDS THE SHAPE.

THE GREAT ELEGANCE AND SENSIBILITY OF THIS SCULPTURE MAKES IT AN OUTSTANDING EXAMPLE OF THIS STYLE.







MATISSE, MRS MATISSE (DETAIL), 1914  
HERMITAGE MUSEUM, SAINT PETERSBURG

## MASK

LUMBU, GABON

LATE 19TH CENT.

WOOD, PIGMENTS, KAOLIN

50 CM

## PROVENANCE

COLLECTED BY THE COLONEL LE MEILLOUR BEFORE 1914

GALERIE PIERRE DARTEVELLE, BRUXELLES

GALERIE ALAIN DE MONBRISON, PARIS

TAO KEREFOFF COLLECTION, PARIS

GALERIE RATTON, PARIS

ANNA DEMINA COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

- PUNU, PERROIS & GRAND-DUFAY, MILAN, 5 CONTINENTS ED., 2008, N°36

GEO-Graphics: A MAP OF ART PRACTICES IN AFRICA, BOZAR CENTRE FOR FINE ARTS  
BRUSSELS, 2010, P. 240

- FLEUVE CONGO. ARTS D'AFRIQUE CENTRALE: CORRESPONDANCES ET MUTATIONS DES  
FORMES, F. NEYT, PARIS, MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY/FONDS MERCATOR, 2010, P. 298, N°192

- ART BASEL HONG KONG, GALERIE MONBRISON, CHINA, 24-26 MARCH 2016, CAT FIG. 15

- GABON, GALERIE RATTON, PARIS, 2017, PP. 84-85

- LES FORÊTS NATALES, ARTS D'AFRIQUE ÉQUATORIALE ATLANTIQUE, MUSÉE DU QUAI  
BRANLY - JACQUES CHIRAC, PARIS, 3 OCT. 2017-21 JAN. 2018, P. 153, N°295



## THE LUMBU MASK

THIS BEAUTIFUL MASK WHICH COMBINES GRACE AND WILDERNESS IS AN EXTREMELY RARE EXAMPLE OF LUMBU HORNED MASKS.

AS A MATTER OF FACT JUST VERY FEW ANTHROPOZOOMORPHIC POLYCHROME LUMBU MASKS ARE KNOWN AND THIS EXPLAINS WHY THE MUSÉE DU QUAI BRANLY PRESENTED THIS EXAMPLE TWICE. THIS TYPE OF MASK WAS PART OF THE INITIATION RITUALS AND IT IS CONSIDERED A MALE ONE FOR THE LACK OF THE KELOIDS IN THE FORM OF SCALES ON ITS FOREHEAD AND TEMPLES WHICH CHARACTERISED THE FEMALE ONES.

THE PARTICULARITY OF THIS SCULPTURE COMES FROM THE PRESENCE ON IT OF TWISTED MALE ANTELOPE HORNS TO EVOKE THE SPIRITS OF THE FOREST WHILE USUALLY THE BUFFALO ONES WERE PREFERRED.

LOUIS PERROIS IN HIS BOOK ON THE PUNU DESCRIBES THIS MASK AS FOLLOWS: « THIS MASK, COLLECTED BY COLONEL LE MEILLOUR IN THE FRENCH CONGO SOMETIME BEFORE 1914, HAS LONG CURVED MONOXYLOUS HORNS. THIS BLACK ANIMAL HEADDRESS IS FLANKED BY SMALL LONGITUDINAL PLAITS AND SLANTING TRESSES. THE TRIANGULAR FACE WHITENED WITH KAOLIN HAS HALF-CLOSED EYES, A SHORT NOSE AND A PURSED MOUTH. A THICK BRAID FORMS A "HANDLE" UNDER THE CHIN. THIS TYPE OF MASK MAY COME FROM THE COASTAL REGION OF THE LOWER NYANGA. »







PABLO PICASSO, HEAD OF THE HORSE PARADE, 1974

## ANTELOPE MASK

KWELE, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENT.

WOOD, PIGMENTS, KAOLIN

62,2 CM

## PROVENANCE

COLLECTED IN THE FRENCH CONGO BY ALEXANDRE PETIT-RENAUD BETWEEN 1901 - 1930

P. & L. DODIER COLLECTION, AVRANCHES

MICHAEL OLIVER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

RICHARD SCHELLER COLLECTION, SAN FRANCISCO

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

LEINUO ZHANG COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

SALON INTERNATIONAL DES ARTS PREMIERS, PARCOURS DES MONDES,

CATALOGUE, PARIS, 2013



## THE KWELE MASK

THE KWELE ANTELOPE MASKS ARE HIGHLY APPRECIATED FOR THE ABSTRACTION OF THEIR FORMS AND THEY ARE INVARIABLY PRESENT IN MUSEUMS' COLLECTIONS (I.E. MUSÉE BARBIER-MUELLER, GENEVA - BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON - MUSÉE DAPPER, PARIS - CULTUREN MUSEUM, LUND - ETNOGRAFISKA MUSEUM, GOTHENBURG).

AS FOR OTHER KNOWN EXAMPLES OF THIS TYPE OF MASKS THE ONLY PIGMENTS USED TO DEFINE THE DIFFERENT AREAS OF IT ARE WHITE (KAOLIN) AND CHARCOAL BLACK.

FROM A MORPHOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW THE MASK IS DIVIDED IN TWO PARTS: THE HORNS WITH ROUNDED SECTIONS AND CURVED LINES (WHICH FIT WELL WITH THE LOWER PART CONTOUR OF THE MASK) AND THE ANIMAL'S SNOUT WHICH IS REDUCED TO A PURE GEOMETRIC CONSTRUCTION CONSISTING OF A REFINED PLAY OF ANGLES AND SLIGHTLY INCLINED PLANES SEPARATED BY FIELDS OF BLACK COLOUR.

AS IT HAS BEEN ASCERTAINED THE ANTELOPE MASKS, WHICH EMBODY THE BUSH SPIRITS, WERE FREQUENTLY NOT CARVED TO BE WORN. IN THIS EXAMPLE, THOUGH, THE WOODEN PEGS THAT SURROUND THE SNOUT WERE INTENDED TO SUPPORT THE DANCER'S SET AND THEREFORE TESTIFY IN FAVOUR OF ITS USE IN THE RITUAL SPHERE.

THE GREAT FORMAL RIGOUR AND THE REFINED AND MYSTERIOUS PRESENCE OF THIS MASK MAKES IT AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF KWELE ART.







HENRY MOORE, HEAD IN RELIEF, 1923

## MASK

KONGO-YOMBE, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENT.

WOOD, PIGMENTS, KAOLIN, STUDS

26,7 CM

## PROVENANCE

KAMER-LELOUP GALLERY, PARIS

LEE & DONA BRONSON COLLECTION, LOS ANGELES

SOTHEBY'S, NEW YORK, 18 NOVEMBER 1986, LOT. 74

PRIVATE COLLECTION, LOS ANGELES

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

LEINUO ZHANG COLLECTION, MILAN

## PUBLICATIONS

- A SURVEY OF ZAIRIAN ART. THE BRONSON COLLECTION, J.A. CORNET, NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF ART, RALEIGH, 1978, P. 50, FIG. 15
- AFRICAN ART IN AMERICAN COLLECTION. SURVEY 1989, W.M. ROBBINS AND N.I. NOOTER, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION PRESS, WASHINGTON, 1989, P. 361, FIG. 937
- ART BAKONGO. LES MASQUES, R. LEHUARD, VOL. 3, ARTS D'AFRIQUE NOIRE, ARNOUVILLE, 1993, P. 791



## THE YOMBE MASK

THIS ANCIENT AND FAMOUS MASK OF DIVINER-HEALER (*NGANGA DIPHOMBA*) IS AMONG THE MOST IMPORTANT AND REPRESENTATIVE YOMBE WORKS OF ART.

IN THIS SCULPTURE THE FAMOUS REALISM OF THE GREAT CONGOLESE ART IS MITIGATED BY THE ALMOST ABSTRACT RIGOUR OF THE FACIAL FEATURES,

THE PRESENCE OF STRONG BLACK TRIANGLES THAT CROSS THE CHEEKS AND THE CHROMATIC CONTRAST OF THE BLACK CAP WITH THE WHITENESS OF THE FACE INTRODUCE A MARKEDLY GRAPHIC ELEMENT.

THIS MASK IS ACKNOWLEDGED FOR THE POWER AND DEPTH OF ITS EXPRESSION AND IT IS KNOWN FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COLLECTIONS AND EXHIBITIONS IN WHICH IT HAS BEEN PRESENTED, AS A TRUE MASTERPIECE OF CONGOLESE ART.







CARLO CARRÀ, COMPOSITION, 1915  
PUSHKIN MUSEUM, MOSCOW

## **MASK, *LUKWAKONGO***

LEGA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENT.

WOOD, FIBRE, KAOLIN

17 CM

## **PROVENANCE**

JACQUES TILLIEU COLLECTION, PARIS

GALERIE CHRISTINE VALLUET, PARIS

DALTON SOMARÉ GALLERY, MILAN

LEINUO ZHANG COLLECTION, MILAN

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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## THE LEGA MASK

THE LEGA "MASKS" FALL INTO THE CATEGORY OF *BWAMI* INITIATION OBJECTS.

THE WESTERN DEFINITION OF MASKS ARE BASED ON THEIR FUNCTION AND THEREFORE NORMALLY IT DESCRIBES AN OBJECT THAT COVERS THE FACE AND TRANSFORMS THE WEARER.

ACCORDING TO THIS DEFINITION THE LEGAS HAVE VERY FEW, IF ANY, TRUE MASKS.

MOST OF WHAT WE KNOW AS LEGA "MASKS" ARE SCULPTURES OF HUMAN FACES THAT ARE RARELY WORN OVER THE FACE AND NEVER FOR TRANSFORMATION PURPOSES.

IN BWAMI CEREMONIES THESE MASKS WERE DISPLAYED FIXING THEM TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE BODY, PILING THEM IN STACKS, HANGING THEM ON FENCES, DRAGGING THEM ON THE GROUND AND OCCASIONALLY WEARING THEM ON THE FOREHEAD.

THESE SMALL WOODEN MASKS, OF WHICH THIS IS AN IMPRESSIVE FINE EXAMPLE, WERE IMPORTANT MARKS OF RANK, IDENTIFYING THE OWNERS AS MEMBERS OF SPECIFIC *BWAMI* INITIATION LEVELS.

THE *LUKWAKONGO* MASKS PORTRAY IN A STYLISED MANNER AN IDEALISED LEGA MAN.

AN HIGH RANK MEMBER GIVES TO THE INITIATE A *LUKWAKONGO* MASK IN A CEREMONY DURING WHICH ALL MEMBERS OF THIS LEVEL OF THE SOCIETY DISPLAY THEIR OWN MASKS.

THE EXTREME SYNTHESIS AND THE EXTRAORDINARY MODERNITY OF THIS MASK EASILY MAKES CLEAR WHY THE EYES OF A CONTEMPORARY ART COLLECTOR CAN FIND IN IT THE SAME EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE USED BY MANY MASTERS OF THE 20TH CENTURY ART.





GALERIE  
PAUL  
GUILLAUME  
108, FG. ST-HONORÉ, PARIS



ACHAT ET VENTE  
DE TABLEAUX DE

A. DERAIN  
GAUGUIN  
H. MATISSE  
LAURENCIN  
MODIGLIANI  
PICASSO  
RENOIR  
UTRILLO  
VLAMINCK

SCULPTURES  
NÈGRES

COVER OF THE REVIEW "ARTS À PARIS", N.5, 1920



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