

LEMPERTZ

1798

Art of Africa, the Pacific
and the Americas
1 July 2026
Brussels





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Art of Africa, the Pacific
and the Americas

Brussels 1 July 2026
Lempertz Sale 1296



Lot 22

Preview

Brussels
6 rue du Grand Cerf
Vernissage Thursday 18 June, 5 pm
Thursday 18 — Tuesday 30 July, 10 am — 6 pm

Selected preview in Cologne, Neumarkt 3
Friday 19–Saturday 20 June, 10 am — 5 pm

Sale

Brussels
Wednesday 1 July 2026
2pm

The auction will be streamed online. We kindly ask you to place your bids – if possible at least 48 hours prior to the auction – online, by telephone or as an absentee bid. Detailed descriptions, and additional photographs available online.

Grote Hertstraat 6 Rue du Grand Cerf Brussel 1000 Bruxelles Belgium
T +32.2.51 40 58 6 F +32.2.51 14 82 4
brussel@lempertz.com



Lot 39



Lot 26

1

A YORUBA EQUESTRIAN FIGURE

Nigeria

Wood, polychrome, metal

H 45 cm

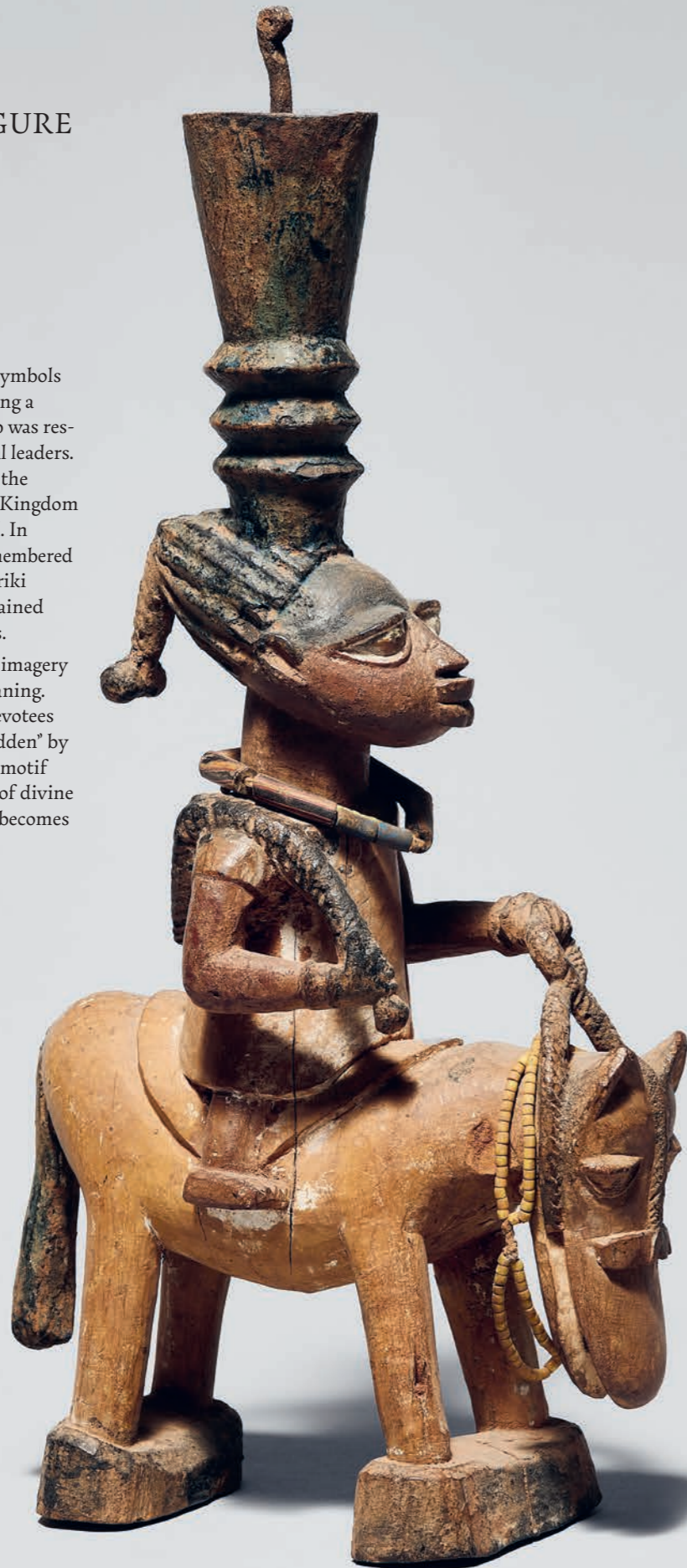
Provenance

Private collection, Belgium

€ 4,000 – 6,000

Equestrian figures are potent symbols of power in Yoruba art, reflecting a history where horse ownership was restricted to warriors and political leaders. This figure represents Shango, the deified fourth king of the Oyo Kingdom and a brilliant military general. In Yoruba tradition, Shango is remembered as a master horseman whose oriki (praise poems) claim he maintained a stable of ten thousand horses.

In the context of a shrine, this imagery takes on a deeper spiritual meaning. During religious rituals, the devotees are said to be “mounted” or “ridden” by the deity. The horse-and-rider motif therefore symbolizes the state of divine possession, where the devotee becomes a vessel for the king’s power.



2

AN EARLY CHIWARA ANTILOPE MASK, BAMANA PEOPLE

Mali

Wood

Early 20th century

H 82 cm

Provenance

Phillipe Guimiot, Brussels (old label
under the body)

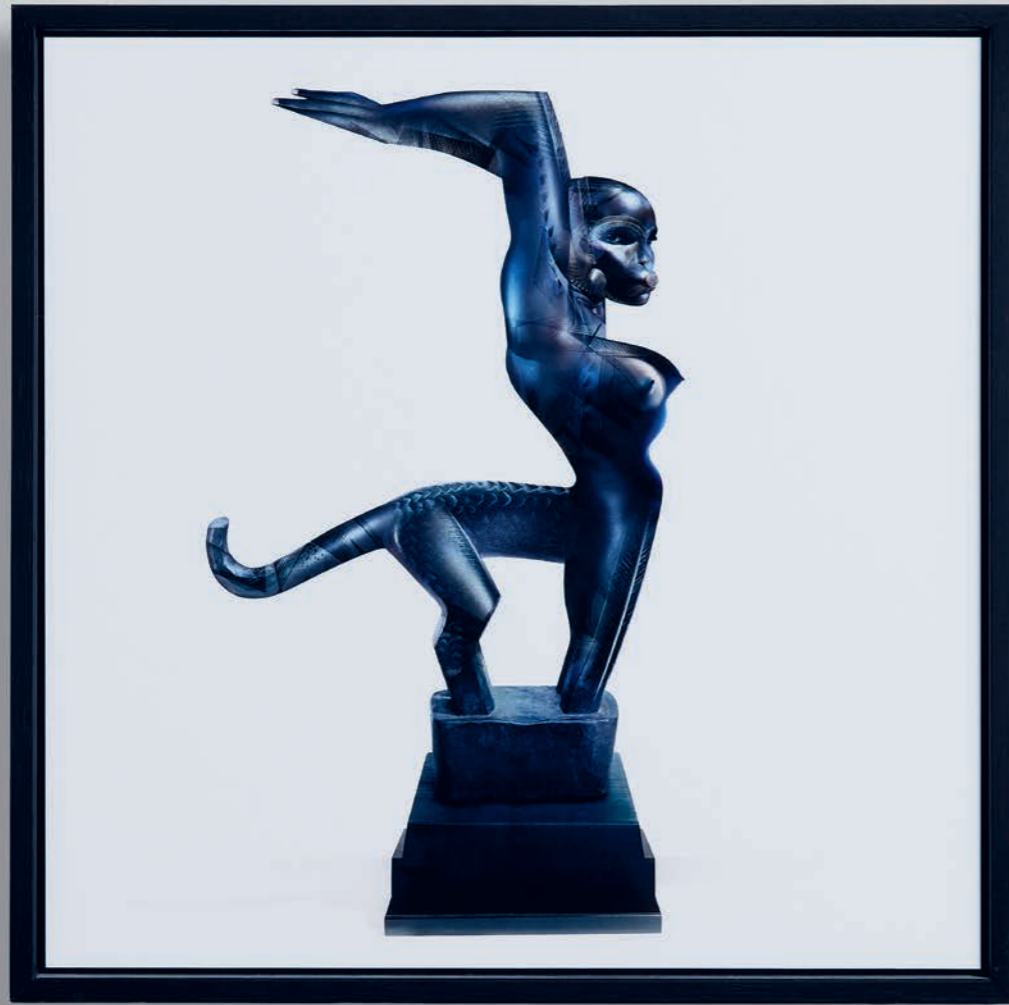
Bernd Muhlack, Kiel

Private collection Germany

€ 3,000 – 5,000

This headdress represents the ancestors believed to have introduced agricultural techniques to the Bamana. Carved in a highly stylized manner, the work functions as a physical manifestation of the mythological ancestors who oversee the cultivation of the land. The chiwara is utilized during fertility festivals and agricultural rites to ensure a successful harvest. This mask demonstrates the rigorous formal abstraction and rhythmic verticality characteristic that appealed to many modern artists in the early 20th-century.





3

**“CHI WARA” BY
INGRID BAARS**

Photographic dibond print 2/50

Signed on the back, 2012

35 by 35 cm

€ 800 – 1,200



4

**AN OLD NTOMO
MASK**

Mali

Wood, sacrificial patina

19th century

H 58 cm

Provenance

Private Collection, Dusseldorf

€ 3,000 – 4,000

5

A DAN SPOON

Ivory Coast

Wood

H 46 cm

Provenance

Robert Temple, Ghent

Jo de Buck, Brussels

€ 3,000 – 4,000

Known as wunkirmian or wakemia (“spoon associated with feasts”), these oversized ladles are prestigious signs of honour. Commissioned by women — to acknowledge her generosity and her role as the provider of hospitality during village festivals.

This example features an abstraction of the human form, utilizing stylistic elements typically found in Dan masks and figures. The handle is sculpted as the lower half of a female body, while the oversized bowl symbolically replaces the torso and head. The quality of the carving and the complexity of this anthropomorphic design reflect the high esteem in which the owner was held by her community.



6

A KRAN KAOGLE MASK

Liberia

Wood

Early 20th century

H 26 cm

Provenance

Léon (1904–1994) & Louise Lippel/Lippel Gallery, Montreal, Quebec

Merton Simpson (1928–2013), New York (collection number 1915)

Published in the Lippel Gallery catalogue “African Masks” 1974; 20

€ 3,500 – 4,500

This kaogle (or kagle) mask, characterized by its deep-set eyes and angular, protruding features, represents the powerful spirit of a chimpanzee. Among the Kran — a subgroup of the Dan — these masks are the property of the Gla secret society, an organization responsible for maintaining social order. Historically, the mask was used to invoke the strength and cunning of the chimpanzee to prepare men for war and to execute judicial functions. The mask’s “cubist” or geometric structure is designed to impress and intimidate, reflecting its role in conflict resolution and social control.





7

A VERY IMPORTANT TOGOUNA FIGURE

The Village of Anakila Mali

Hard wood

19th century

H 169

Provenance

Collected by Roger Lefebvre in Anakila Mali in 1992

Private Belgian collection

€ 18,000 – 25,000



This monumental caryatid figure once served as a primary structural support for a "Togu na", or "great shelter." Positioned at the heart of a Dogon village, these public buildings are characterized by exceptionally low roofs supported by carved pillars. This deliberate architectural design forces participants to remain seated, a physical constraint intended to discourage aggression and maintain decorum during community debates. As a vital centre for customary law and social discourse, the Togu na is the domain of village elders, who gather in its shade to mediate disputes and deliberate on communal affairs. The sculpted figure on this post represents the ancestral presence that oversees these discussions, grounding the village's legal and political decisions in spiritual tradition. The eroded base of the post reflect its long-standing service as both a literal and symbolic pillar of Dogon society.



8

AN EARLY COLLECTED BAMANA CHIWARA

Mali Djitoumou region

Wood

Around 1900

H 40.5 cm

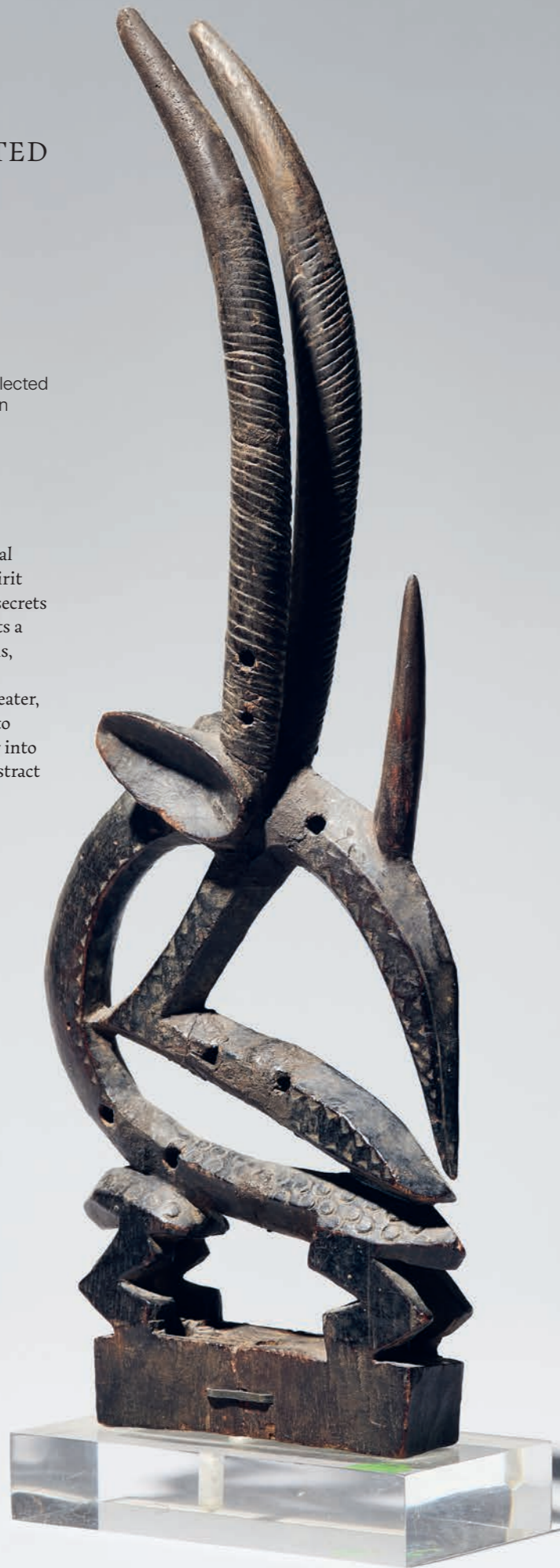
Provenance

Private collection, Dusseldorf

Cf. This Chiwara is similar to one collected by F.H. Lem in the Djitoumou region

€ 2,200 – 2,800

This chiwara crest serves as a physical manifestation of the agricultural spirit that taught the Bamana people the secrets of cultivation. The sculpture presents a sophisticated fusion of animal forms, superimposing the silhouette of an antelope with the features of an anteater, representing the strength required to work the earth. These elements flow into one another, creating a seamless, abstract composition that symbolises the relationship between nature and labour. The abstraction and rhythmic verticality of chiwara crests impacted the development of 20th-century European Modernism, as artists sought new visual languages in African sculptural traditions.



9

A FINE TELLEM FIGURE WITH RAISED ARMS

Mali

Wood and sacrificial patina

14th–16th century

H 49 cm

Provenance

Helena and Ladislav Segy, NYC.,
acquired February 1962

Estate of Dr. Walter Wallace, Princeton,
N.J.

Collection Baudoin de Grunne, Brussels

Published in: L. Segy, "African Sculpture
Speaks", 1969, p. 153, fig. 120

€ 3,500 – 4,500

This abstract figure with cubist simplified, clear-cut geometric shapes shows a dense, powerful silhouette. It belongs to a corpus attributed to the Tellem, a population inhabiting the Bandiagara cliffs prior to the arrival of the Dogon. Bernard de Grunne identifies the "raised arm" as the Iréli style, traditionally interpreted as the gestures as a demand for rain. While this motif was later integrated into Dogon sculptural traditions, current research indicates its origin within the Tellem aesthetic.





12

A KORO HEADCREST

Nigeria
Wood
H 21 cm

€ 1,800 – 2,500

One of the oldest known Ngamdak masks we know, this crest mask reflects the unique aesthetic constraints of the Kafanchan Plateau. As one of the first regions in the area to come under Islamic influence, Koro artists moved away from literal representation, favouring an abstract geometry. The serrated edges and burnished ridges are not merely decorative; they provide a rhythmic emphasis to the mask's form, replacing realistic features with symbolic power.

11

A VERY RARE IGBO-AFIKPO FIGURE

West of the Cross River, Southeast, Nigeria

Wood

Early 20th century

H 33 cm

Provenance

Private Collection Dusseldorf

€ 3,500 – 4,500

Most Afikpo sculptural is dedicated to the Ogo secret society's masking traditions. This figure shows a high degree of abstraction, with the four-eyes. This ocular doubling shows heightened spiritual perception and the ability to see into multiple realms. The figure is likely an eke okongo, representing the specialized class of masked jurors who historically enforced communal laws. The stark, non-representational features reflect the "faceless" nature of these judicial figures, whose identity was hidden by their legal and spiritual office.



13

AN EARLY DAN MASK, IVORY COAST

Wood

Around 1900

H 25 cm

Provenance

Lucien Van de Velde, Antwerp

Samir Borro, Brussels, 1995

Bernd Muhlack, Kiel

Auctions

Sotheby's, London, 11 July 1988. Lot 49

Campo, Antwerp, 23 October 1991.

Lot 88

Sotheby's, New York, "Important Tribal Art", 14 November 1995

€ 2,800 – 3,500

The round, tubular protruding eyes of this Dan mask distinguish it as a representation of Gunyege, a spirit known for its extraordinary speed. In the northern Dan region, these masks are central to highly competitive races held during the dry season. Masked runners compete against unmasked adversaries; if a masked runner is caught, he must pass the mask to the winner, who then personifies the spirit as the community's champion.

The mask's surface is shiny, the result of repeated applications of organic materials — including food, oils, and occasionally sacrificial offerings — which soften its facial planes. A lustrous, dark finish was achieved through vegetable dyes and oils, typical of the "idealized" Dan aesthetic but rendered here with the masculine aggression suited for competition. A hole on the top once secured tufts of hair while the perforations along the ridge fastened a cloth headband, to keep the mask secure during the race.





14

AN EARLY MBLO BAULE MASK

Ivory Coast

Wood

H 30 cm

Provenance

Paolo Morigi (1939–2017) collection,
Magliaso-Lugano, Switzerland

Georges Frederick Keller(1899–1981),
Davos/Paris, Switzerland/France

Paolo Morigi (1939–2017) collection,
Magliaso-Lugano, Switzerland

Italian private collection, Torino

Exhibitions

Bern, Switzerland: "Kunst aus Afrika und
Ozeanien. Eine unbekante

Privatsammlung", Kunstmuseum Bern,
22 August–2 November 1980

Published in Morigi (Paolo), "Raccolta
di un amatore d'arte Primitiva", Kunst-
museum Bern, 1980:141, #143

Expo cat.: "Kunst aus Afrika und Ozeanien.
Eine unbekante Privatsammlung/Art
d'Afrique et d'Océanie. Une collection
privée inconnue", Bern: Kunstmuseum/
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Berne, 1980:
Cat. #143

€ 9,000 – 12,000

This mblo mask embodies the Baule ideals of composure and respect, featuring a broad forehead and downcast eyes that signify a quiet, reflective intellect. The serene expression is framed by an elaborate coiffure, signalling the high social standing of the person it represents. In Baule tradition, these masks served as the finale for mblo, a sophisticated form of public entertainment. The performance moved through a series of dances, building in complexity until it reached its peak: a tribute to a distinguished member of the community. The mask acted as an artistic double for the person being honoured, celebrating their character and presence within the village.



15

AN EARLY KPEKPLE GOLI MASK, BAULE

Ivory Coast

Wood

Around 1900

H 42 cm

Provenance

Private Collection Dusseldorf

With an old exhibition label on the back
(Z 18)

€ 3,500 – 4,500

The Kplekple is part of the Goli performance cycle, a complex four-stage masquerade family representing the son of the senior masks, Goli Glin and Kpwan. This specific type is categorized as kplekple yaswa (masculine) with black pigment typically signifying the male and red the female. Functionally, the Goli complex acts as a spiritual intercessor during periods of societal crisis, such as epidemics or funerals. These masks mediate between the human realm and the anwin (supernatural forces), serving to appease potentially malevolent spirits and secure communal stability. Formally, the kplekple is distinguished by its flat, circular facial plane and integrated horns, representing a highly abstracted zoomorphic entity.

This small and expressive mask is one of the earliest types.



16

AN EARLY IDIOK EKPO MASK

Nigeria

Wood and ceramics

H 26 cm

Provenance

Leon Underwood (1890–1975), London, UK

John J. Klejman (1906–1995), New York,
NY, USA, 1973

The Milton D. Ratner Family Collection,
Chicago, USA

Private collection, Belgium

Exhibitions

Washington, D.C., USA: "Traditional Art
of the Nigerian Peoples; The Milton D.
Ratner Collection", Museum of African
Art 1978

Published Drewal (Henry J.), "Traditional
Art of the Nigerian Peoples; The Milton
D. Ratner Collection", Washington, D.C.:
Museum of African Art, 1977:45, #44

Robbins (Warren M.) and Nooter (Nancy
Ingram), "African Art in American
Collections, Survey 1989", Washington/
London: Smithsonian Institution Press,
1989:272, #711.

€ 3,500 – 4,500

“ Ekpo, the Ibibio word for ‘ancestor’, was also the name of the most important men’s society with governmental, judicial, and economic functions. Masks used for festivals and masquerades for Ekpo were either dark coloured masks called idiok, or light coloured masks called mfon. Such masks were thought to evoke both benign and malevolent ancestors, which were responsible for protecting their descendants. The asymmetrical face and twisted nose of this mask suggest it could possibly be adiaha unak, assisting the leader of Ekpo masks.”

Cole, Herbert "Invention and Tradition:
The Art of Southeastern Nigeria". Munich
2012





This monumental sculpture embodies the Dogon aesthetic ideals. The high, rounded forehead marks the figure as a vessel of intelligence, while her youthful anatomy and rounded abdomen emphasize her potential for childbearing and the continuity of the lineage. Depicted in a devout kneeling posture with fingers directed toward the fertile earth, the figure mirrors the stance assumed by Dogon women during funeral rites to express both grief and gratitude for a life well-lived. The sculpture's encrusted surface is a testament to its long history of ritual use. Carved from a single block of wood, the piece is saturated with layers of organic offerings. Besides acting as a preservative, this thick, oily patina serves as a physical receptacle for Nyama — the potent, underlying life force that the Dogon believe can be harnessed and directed through sacred objects.



17

A LARGE FEMALE FIGURE, DOGON

Mali

Wood, aged patina

A.D. 1318–1430 (QED 1904/C-0101)

H 59 cm

Provenance

René Rasmussen (1912–1979), Paris

Gaston de Havenon (1904–1993),
New York

Michel and Liliane Durand-Dessert, Paris

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago,
IL, USA, seller 1987

Réginald Groux, Paris 1987

Collection Liliane & Michel Durand-
Dessert, Paris

Private collection, Belgium

Pierre Darteville, Brussels

Exhibitions

Washington, D.C., USA:

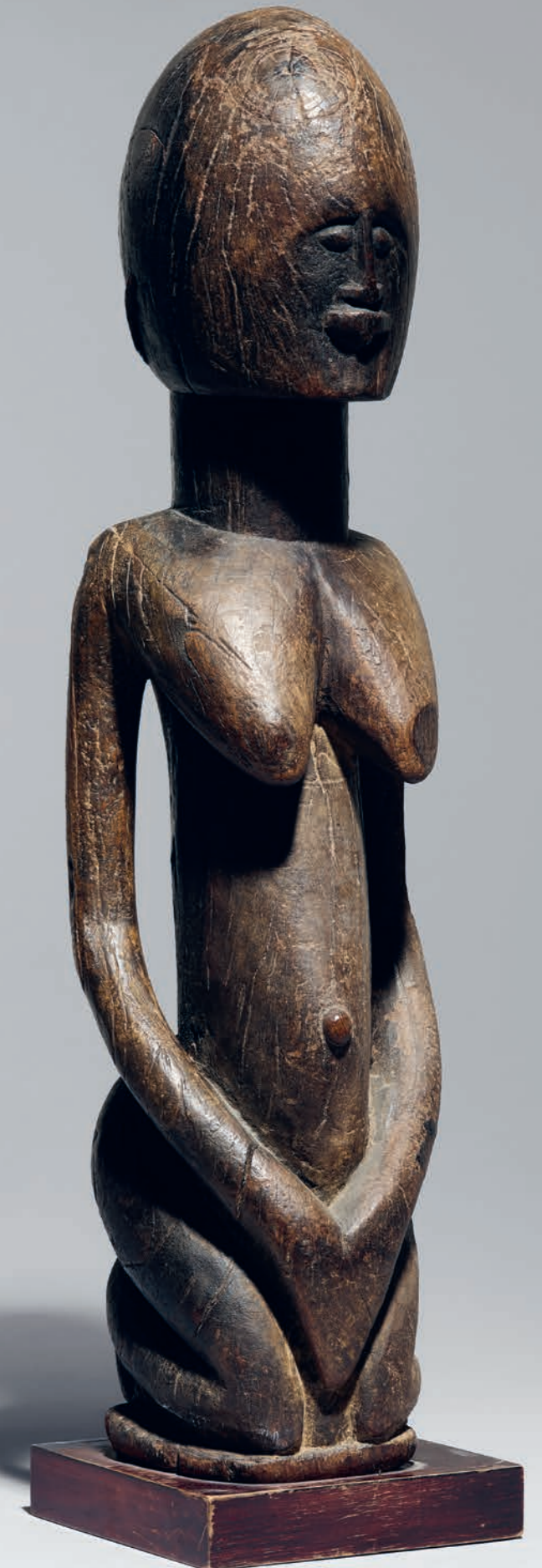
"African Art: The de Havenon Collection",
Museum of African Art, 30 May–
3 October 1971

Published in "The de Havenon Collection",

by Robbins (Warren M.), Washington,
D.C.: Museum of African Art, 1971: #10

Auction catalogue Sotheby's,
New York, "Important Tribal Art",
10 November 1987. Lot 4

€ 25,000 – 30,000





18
AN ANTHROPOMORPHIC
FIGURE (IRÉLI STYLE)
TELLEM PEOPLES

Mali
Wood and traces of sacrificial patina
11th–16th Century
H 65 cm

Provenance
Private collection, Dusseldorf

€ 3,000 – 4,000

19
A LARGE HERMA-
PHRODITE FIGURE,
DOGON

Mali
Wood and sacrificial patina
18th–19th century
H 74 cm

Provenance
Private collection, Dusseldorf

€ 5,000 – 6,000

This sculpture comes from the caves of the southeastern Bandiagara Plateau. The stable, arid environment and relative inaccessibility of these sites facilitated the preservation of the timber, protecting it from both organic degradation and environmental erosion over several centuries. The work utilizes a characteristically geometric and “cubistic” formal language to represent a hermaphroditic entity. In Dogon cosmology, spiritual perfection is achieved through reunification of what is separated. This figure represents the primordial ancestors of humanity, embodying the belief that the male and female principles are intrinsically nested within one another. The attenuated verticality serve as a visual manifestation of this philosophical unification and the balanced order of the Dogon universe.





20

AN EARLY BETE/GURO MASK

Ivory Coast
Wood
Around 1900
H 26 cm
Provenance
German private collection
Kim Redlich, Dusseldorf

€ 4,000 – 6,000

This rare mask combines the geometric “cubist” aesthetics of Bété sculpture with the iconographic traditions of the neighbouring Guro people. Characterized by a prominent forehead ridge, slit eyes, and oblique scarification, the work depicts a high-ranking elder. In Guro culture, the unbraided state of the figure’s beard signifies a period of profound mourning, as such features would normally be plaited. Though the specific ritual functions of these masks began to vanish during the colonial era, they remained sacred clan heirlooms. Clans only brought them into public view for the funerals of esteemed members or during significant ceremonial cycles occurring every seven or twenty-one years.

21

AN EDO HEAD

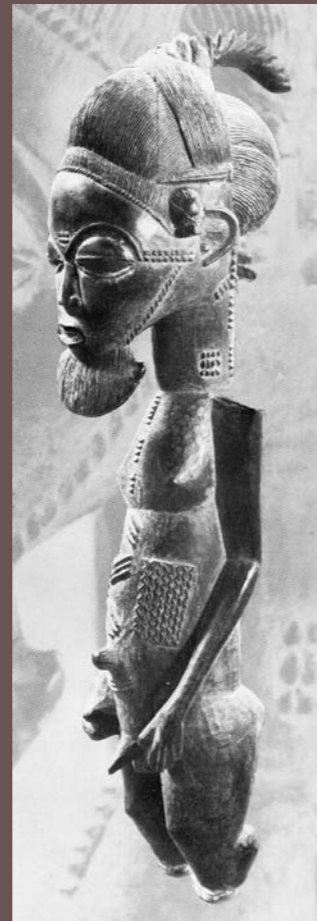
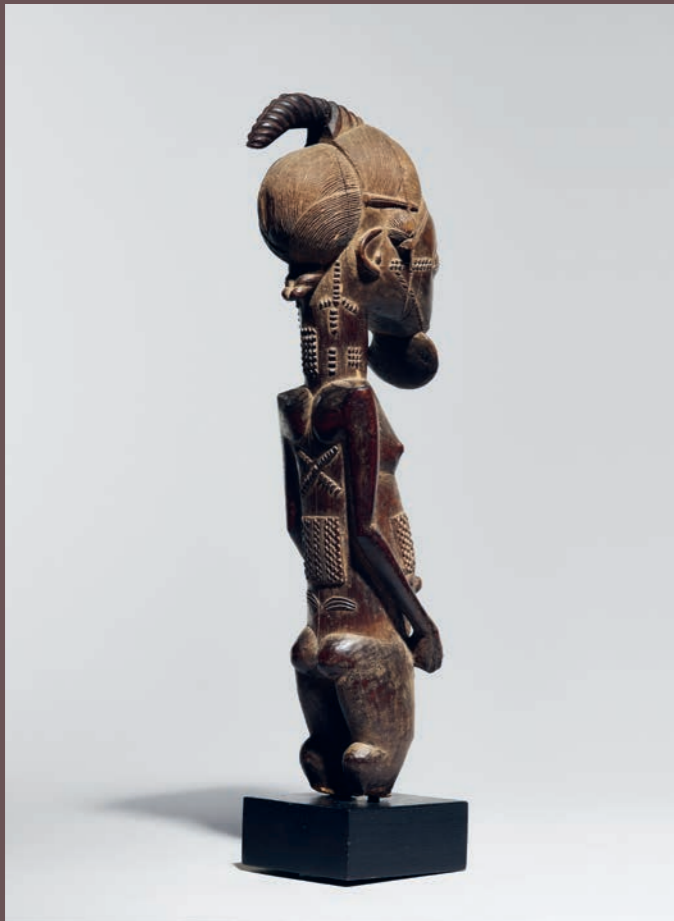
Nigeria
Terracotta
15th–17th century
H 16 cm
Provenance
Comte Baudouin de Grunne (1917–2011)
Cf. Comes with an analysis by
Dr. Francine Maurer, TL test

€ 6,000 – 8,000

Baudouin de Grunne was one of the leading collectors of African ceramics. His private collection was renowned and many of the objects are published in numerous catalogues and books, partially now in the Fondation Dapper, Paris.

According to oral histories, the earliest commemorative heads for the ancestral altars of Benin’s kings were fashioned from terracotta. As the kingdom’s wealth and hierarchy evolved, royal altars shifted to using more prestigious brass, leaving ceramic works for different ceremonial contexts.





22

AN IMPORTANT BAULE “SPIRIT SPOUSE” OR BLOLO BIAN

Ivory Coast
Wood
19th century
51 cm

Provenance
Collection Bernd Muhlack (1937–2020),
Kiel

Private collection, Hamburg

Literature
Published in Schaedler, Karl-Ferdinand,
“Afrikanische Kunst in deutschen
Privat-Sammlungen/African Art in
Private German Collections/L’art africain
dans les collections privées alle-
mandes”, München: Münchner Buch-
gewerbehaus, 1973:107, #139

€ 35,000 – 40,000

In Baule cosmology, every individual is born into this world having left behind a spirit spouse in the otherworld (Blolo). This figure represents a Blolo Bian, a male “spirit lover” who may become jealous or cause misfortune if neglected. To appease this spirit, a person commissions a highly idealized carving to serve as a physical vessel for offerings and devotion.

The figure displays quintessential Baule aesthetic ideals, including a high-crested coiffure, a groomed beard, and intricate scarification in relief on the face and torso. The coiffure is particularly remarkable, featuring meticulously incised textures

that simulate individual strands of hair crowning the serene face. Such rigorous attention to detail was not merely decorative; it was a ritual necessity, as the Baule believed a figure must be flawlessly beautiful to entice a spirit into embodying the figure.

These details signify a person of status and civilized beauty — traits believed to attract the spirit and encourage domestic harmony and fertility. To maintain its spiritual presence, the figure would be regularly anointed with oil and adorned with beads or cloth.



23

A PANGOLIN IJO MASK

Nigeria

Wood, large woodchips, paint
H 133

Provenance
Private collection, Brussels

Cf. A similar one is in the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., USA
Inventory nr 2014-32-2

€ 1,800 – 2,500

These Ijo zoomorphic masks are the central figures in the Egbukere, a major cultural masked festival celebrated by the Ijo people of the Niger Delta. During this grand procession, dancers appear in a diverse array of headdresses representing aquatic life, forest mammals, and human figures to honour the spiritual and natural worlds.

Emerging from the forest in the late afternoon, the pangolin masquerade performs a specific ritual dance. In Ijo cosmology, the armoured pangolin represents the blacksmith of the animal kingdom; the dancer's movements are carefully choreographed to imitate the rhythmic actions and symbolic power of a smith at work.

▶ 24

A BAULE FIGURE

Ivory Coast

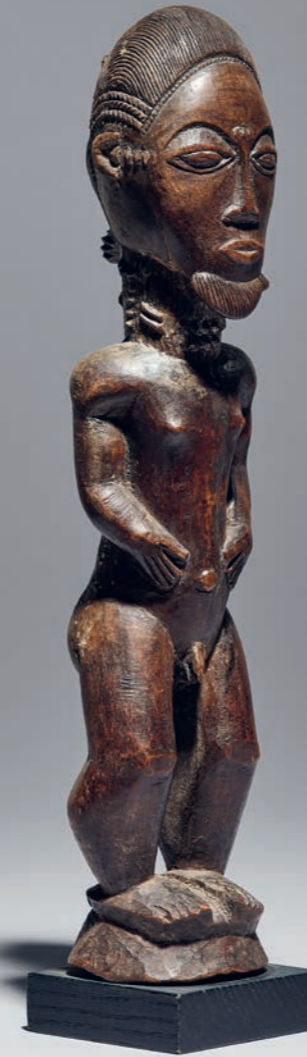
Wood

Early 20th century

H 31 cm

Provenance
Maria Wyss, Bazel (1924/1992) (see label)
Private Collection Dusseldorf

€ 2,500 – 3,500



25

A CUBIST OKULI FIGURE, KORO PEOPLE

Nigeria

Wood

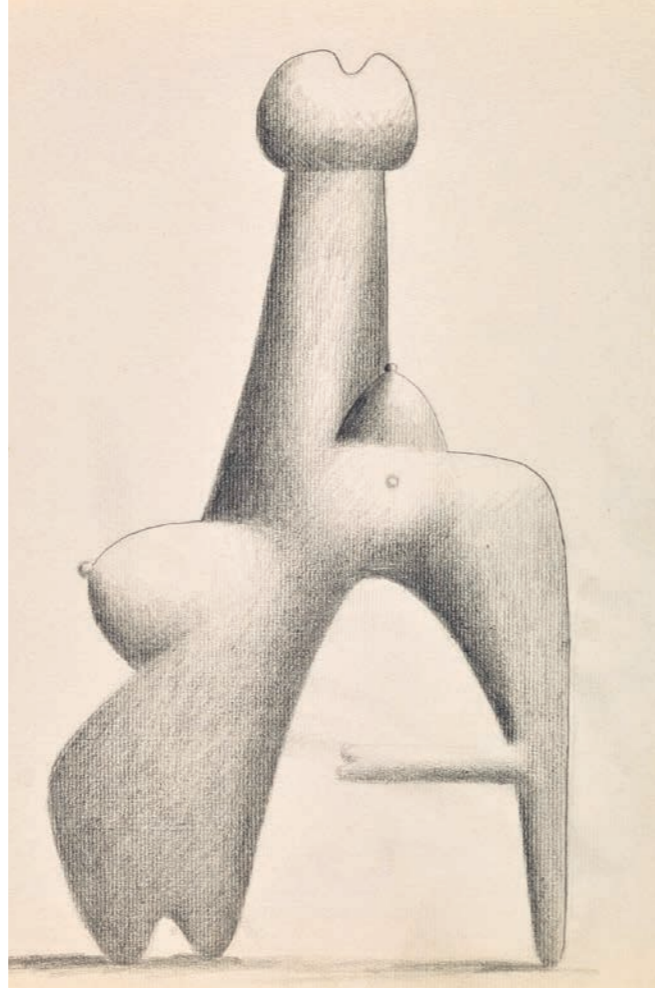
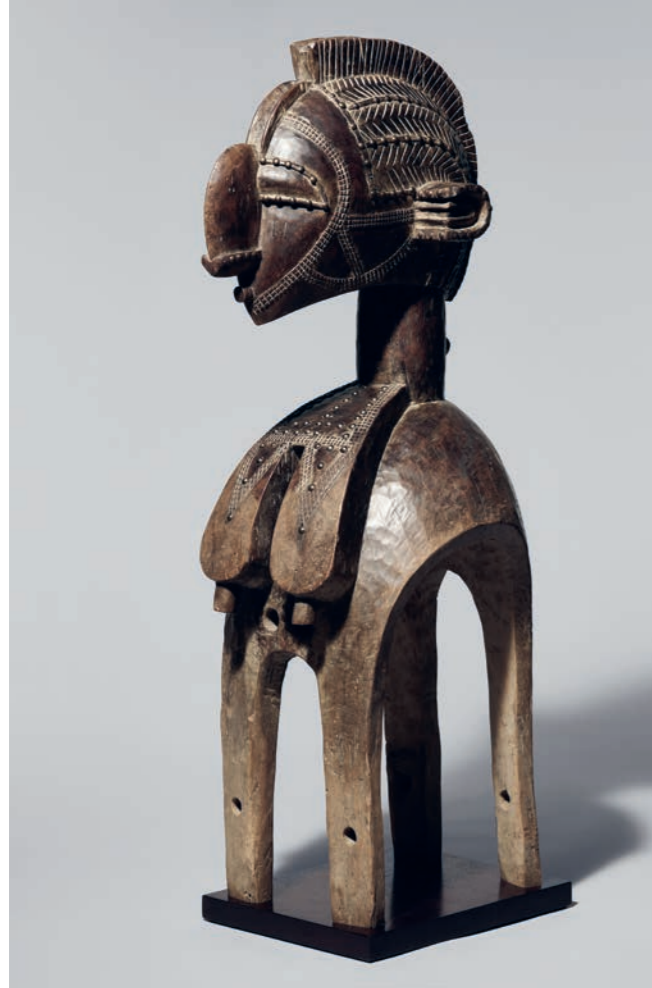
H 124 cm

Provenance
Julien Flak, Paris
Kellim Brown, Miami
Private collection, Belgium

€ 3,600 – 4,500

As the form suggests, these "Okuli" were used to ritually pound the ground during important ceremonies.





26

A BAGA D'MBA-YAMBAN MASK

Boffa Region, Guinea

Wood

H 102 cm

Provenance

Martha and Stuart Struever Collection, Santa Fe with objects in the cat.: Art of the Baga. A Drama of Cultural Reinvention. By Dr. Frederick Lamp, New York, 1996.

Brian Nault, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Allen A. Davis, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Donated to The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, USA

Deaccessioned by the Baltimore Museum of Art 2024

Cf. This mask is similar to the one from Musée Barbier-Muller inventory nr #1001-1, with the same vertical facial scarification, photographed in Monchon by Béatrice Appia in 1938

€ 65,000 – 80,000

The D'mba represents the Baga ideal of female strength and grace, characterized by its majestic scale and prominent, aquiline nose. This specific profile had a profound influence on Western modernism; Pablo Picasso famously drew inspiration from these forms for his series "Head of a Woman" between 1931 and 1932.

The mask's surface tells the story of its ritual life. It was carved from light-coloured wood, the upper sections were darkened with a mixture of charcoal, oil and plant juices. The lower portion remained untreated, as it was concealed by a thick raffia and fabric costume.

The mask's aesthetic is inseparable from its function. Richly decorated with copper and iron tacks, elaborate coiffure and nurturing breasts show the function of this mask as an appreciation of a benign female deity. The apertures between the breasts allowed the dancer to navigate the ceremony, while holes at the base secured the framework.



27

A LUBA KINGDOM CEREMONIAL BOW STAND

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

Late 19th century

H 74,5 cm

Provenance

Merton Simpson, New York

Roland de Montaigu, New York

Alfred L. Scheinberg, New York

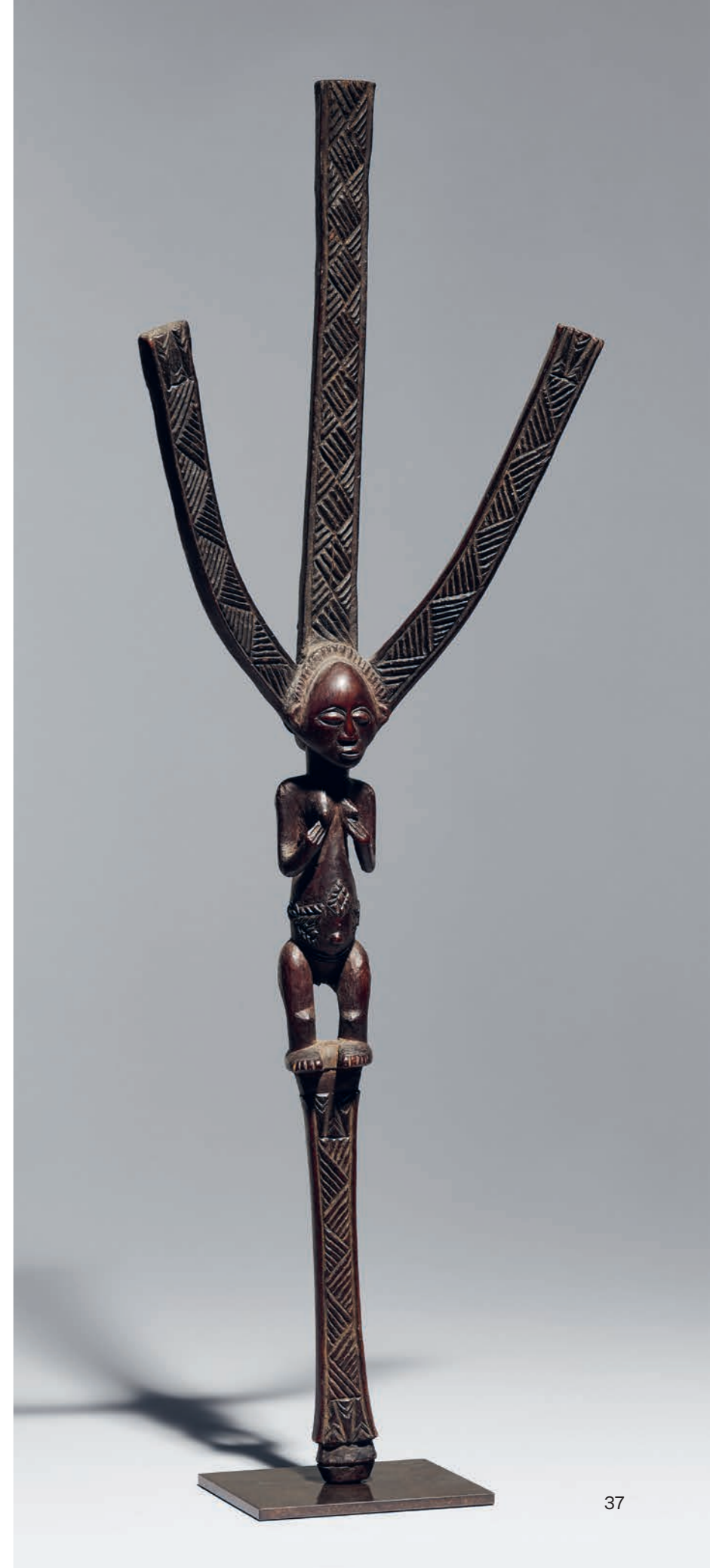
Collection privée, Chicago

In the catalogue Sotheby's "Tribal Art"
Paris, 25 June 2020

€ 22,000 – 28,000

This elegant bow stand is a primary insignia of Luba divine kingship, serving as a visual link to the culture hero Mbidi Kiluwe. According to tradition, this foreign prince founded the sacred Luba dynasty, introducing a new era of enlightened leadership. Unlike other royal regalia, bow stands were strictly private objects; they were kept within the king's residence under the watchful protection of a high-ranking female dignitary.

The central figure on the shaft highlights the essential role of women in Luba political and spiritual life. Conceived as sacred receptacles for the spiritual power that upholds the kingdom, women are depicted as the literal and figurative pillars of authority. This figure's elaborate coiffure and intricate scarification represent the highest standards of beauty and cultivation, embodying the civilized ideals of Luba society.





28

RELIQUARY GUARDIAN (EYEMA BYERI)

Fang peoples, Rio Muni Gabon
Wood, metal, and organic pigments
Around 1900
H 43.5 cm

Provenance
Collected in situ by Inigo Xavier de
Aranzadi Cuervas-Mons, Madrid
One of the first to do ethnological work
in Gabon and seen as one of the
founders of ethnography, he documented
Fang art and oral traditions during his
years in Equatorial Guinea.
Antonio Casanovas, Madrid
Pace Primitive, New York
Private collection, France

Published in Aranzadi, Inigo de (1998).
Cosas del Bosque Fang. Ayuntamiento
de Madrid, Junta Municipal de Retiro

€ 50,000 – 60,000



In the early 1900s, the “primitive” art label
was shattered when European avantgarde
artists encountered the extraordinary
abstraction of Fang sculpture.

It became an icon of the modern movement.
For modernists seeking to break away
from traditional realism, these figures
offered a revolutionary new geometric
abstraction: The cylindrical limbs and
concave, heart-shaped faces directly
informed the fragmented planes of
Cubism.

To the Fang themselves, the figure repre-
sents a “spiritual sentry” — a guardian of
ancestral wisdom that blends the propor-
tions of an infant with the features of an
adult to symbolize the full cycle of life.



29

A YAKA FETISH FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

Early 20th century

H 39 cm

Provenance

Marceau Rivière, Paris

Private collection Belgium

€ 9,000 – 12,000

These magical figures are used by a Nganga (spiritual specialist) to protect, heal, or punish, often acting as a “hunter-healer” of conflicts.



30

A RARE TUMBWE FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

Early 20th century

H 43 cm

Provenance

Jean-Pierre Jernander, Bruxelles

Exhibitions

Tribal Antiques, New York, May 2002

€ 8,000 – 12,000

A distinct separate group, the Tumbwe live in the same geographic region (south-eastern Congo) as the Tabwa people. The Tabwa themselves were influenced by the Luba Empire, and both groups share cultural, artistic, and historical similarities, such as matrilineal descent and shared artistic motifs.



31

AN EARLY COLLECTED LUBA HIGH PRIESTESS VESSEL

Democratic Republic of Congo

Terra Cotta

19th century

H 34 cm

Provenance

Collected in situ by Georges De Maegd,
an art critic who lived in the Congo
between 1911 and 1936

French private collection

Published in "Visages", Galery Bovis,
Paris, 2003, n°1, p. 6

€ 9,000 – 12,000

Luba bowl figures commemorate the first mythical Luba diviner, Mijibu wa Kalenga, and were primarily the preserve of royal diviners, who used them as oracles. In addition to the many ways that Luba women were deemed beautiful, bodily transformations such as scarification and elaborate hairstyles rendered them effective vessels to capture and hold potent spiritual energies and establish communication with the other world. This is one of the very rare surviving vessels used by these royal diviners for predicting the future. While Luba artistic prestige is often associated with wood and metalwork, the tradition of ceramic sculpture represents a rarer, more hidden facet of court life. This vessel features a finely modelled spout in the form of a woman's head, characterized by the serene expression and elaborate coiffure typical of Luba aesthetic ideals.

Such containers were not utilitarian, but served as "spirit houses." The inclusion of the female form suggests the piece belonged to a high priestess, who acted as a vital intermediary between the physical and spiritual realms. In Luba culture, the female body was considered the only vessel strong enough to hold the potent spirits of kings and ancestors.





32
**A VERY EARLY
 COLLECTED LEGA
 MASK**

Democratic Republic of Congo
 Wood, traces of Tukula
 Mid 19th century
 H 25 cm

Provenance
 Collected by Lieutenant Colonel Baron
 Charles Adolphe Marie Liebrechts
 (1858–1938), during his tenure as chief
 of the territory of Leopoldville, 1887–1888
 René Withofs, Brussels, Belgium
 (written on the back in white ink
 collection # N° 1072A)

€ 2,500 – 3,500

One of the oldest known Lukwakongo mask, this was an insignia of rank within the Bwami society, a hierarchical association that governs the social and moral structure of Lega life. The object is defined by a concave, heart-shaped face. The aesthetic contrast between the white kaolin clay face and the dark, burnished patina of the forehead signifies specific levels of spiritual maturity and ancestral wisdom. Within Bwami ritual contexts, lukwakongo masks are not utilized on the head but rather are secured to the arm or displayed collectively on wooden fences to signal the presence and grade of the initiated members.



33
**A LUBA KIFWEBE
 PANEL MASK,
 KALENGULA**

Democratic Republic of Congo
 Wood, polychrome
 Early 20th century
 H 31 cm

€ 1,200 – 1,800

These cubist heads function either as planks or shields, referring to the Kifwebe secret society, were hung in the house where the sacred masks were stored.

34

A KONGO MASK

Democratic Republic of Congo
 Wood and metal
 Mid 19th century
 H 24 cm

Provenance
 Collection Dierickx
 Collection Marc Felix, Brussels

Exhibitions
 Congo Gallery exhibition "Women in
 Congo", Brussels 2009

Cf. Comes with a certificate from Marc
 Leo Felix, 2010 nr FX07 0059

€ 4,000 – 5,000

This Yombe mask, with its naturalistic and evocative features, was owned by a nganga — a ritual specialist and healer. The surface is heavily coated in white kaolin clay, a pigment that serves as a visual bridge to the realm of the dead. For the Yombe, white symbolizes the presence of ancestral spirits and represents the essential virtues of the nganga: justice, moral order, and the clairvoyant insight required to navigate the spiritual world. The mask's serene expression reflects the state of "invulnerability" and "truth" that the ritual expert sought to embody. When worn in performance, it functioned as a vessel for spiritual communication, allowing the nganga to maintain social harmony and detect potential harmful spirits within the community.



35

**A RARE MANGBETU
TERRACOTTA FIGURE,
SUNDU**

Democratic Republic of Congo

Terra cotta

H 34 cm

Provenance

Jean & Fernande
Verheyeweghen (1910–1965),
Brussels

Collected before 1940 by Werniers,
Tielt

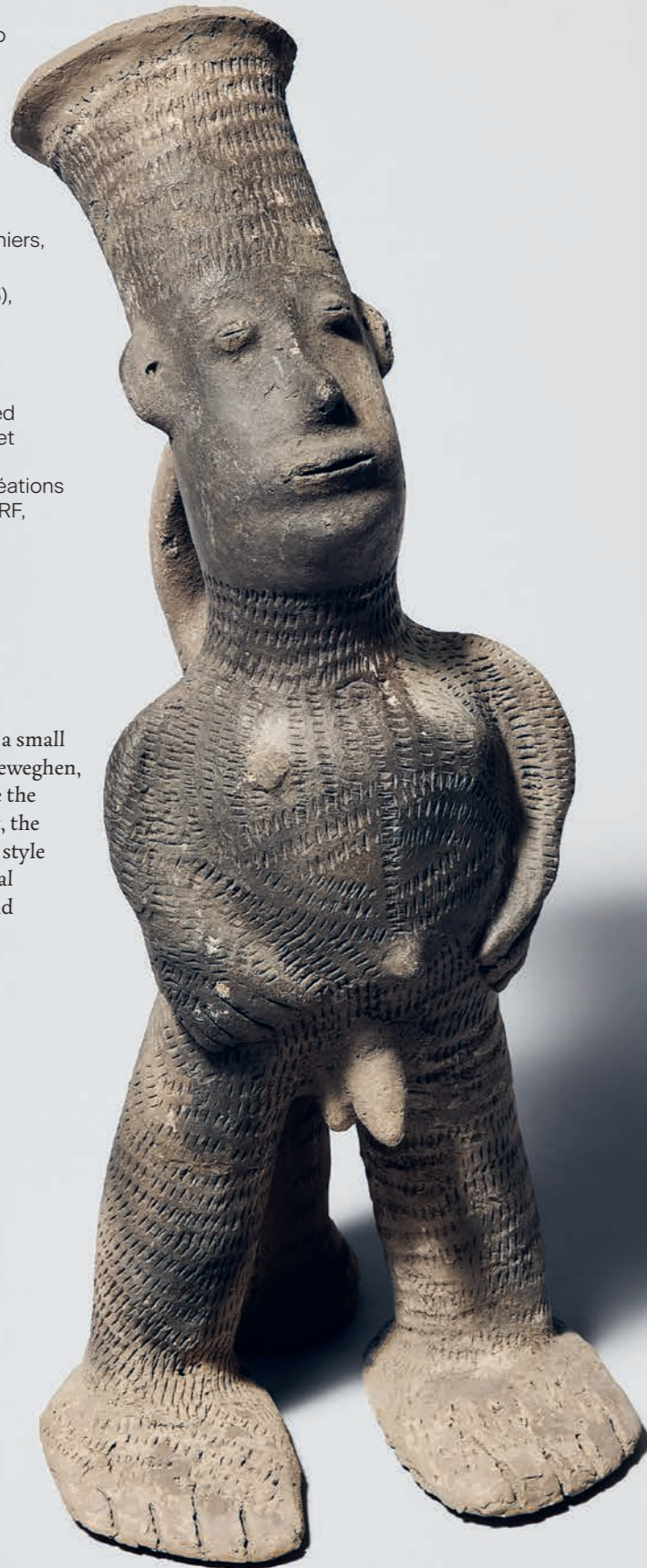
Jef Vander Straete (1907-1985),
Lasne

Comte Baudouin de Grunne
(1917–2011), Brussels

Cf. The other figure is published
in Delange (Jacqueline), "Arts et
peuples de l'Afrique noire:
Introduction à l'analyse des créations
plastiques", Paris: Gallimard/NRF,
1967: #159

€ 2,400 – 2,800

This Mangbetu figure is part of a small
group collected by Jean Verheyeweghen,
one of a handful known. Unlike the
finely decorated vessel for court, the
nobility favoured the figurative style
as a marker of prestige and social
status, these figure are rough and
expressive. They were probably
used for a cult similar to the
neighbouring Yanda cult from
the Zande.



36

**A VERY FINE AND
DETAILED BEMBE
FIGURINE**

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood and ceramic

H 10 cm

Provenance

Private collection, St Niklaas
Galerie Alain Lecomte

Published R. Lehuard, "Babembé:
Statuaire, sculpture" 5 continents,
Paris 2010

€ 2,000 – 3,000



37

A GREAT ABSTRACT
LEGA MASENGO
FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

H 13.8 cm

Provenance
Piet Blanckaert, Brugge
Private collection, St Niklaas

Cf. Biebuyck "Lega Culture"
(Berkeley 1973)

Auctioned: Lot 83, Sotheby's, Paris
June 2012 Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie

€ 5,000 – 8,000



Masengo are the powerful, sacred sculptures used in the Bwami society of the Lega people. The Bwami association, a socio-political institution, used these objects to pass on knowledge. The damaged, "raw" appearance of the legs and base indicated the object was "alive" and actively used for medicinal or initiation functions.

The most powerful ones like this figure were used for medicinal purposes and show cuts or perforations on the leg and face. These abrasions are not accidental but rather the result of ritual preparation. Particles of wood or ivory were scraped from the sculptures and mixed with water to create a decoction to heal or empower members.

38

A FINE LEGA SECRET
SOCIETY FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

H 15 cm

Provenance
Private collection, St Niklaas

€ 9,000 – 12,000





39

A RARE TETELA MASK

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood, pigments, ochres
Early 20th century
H 46 cm

Provenance
Kellim Brown, Brussels
Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

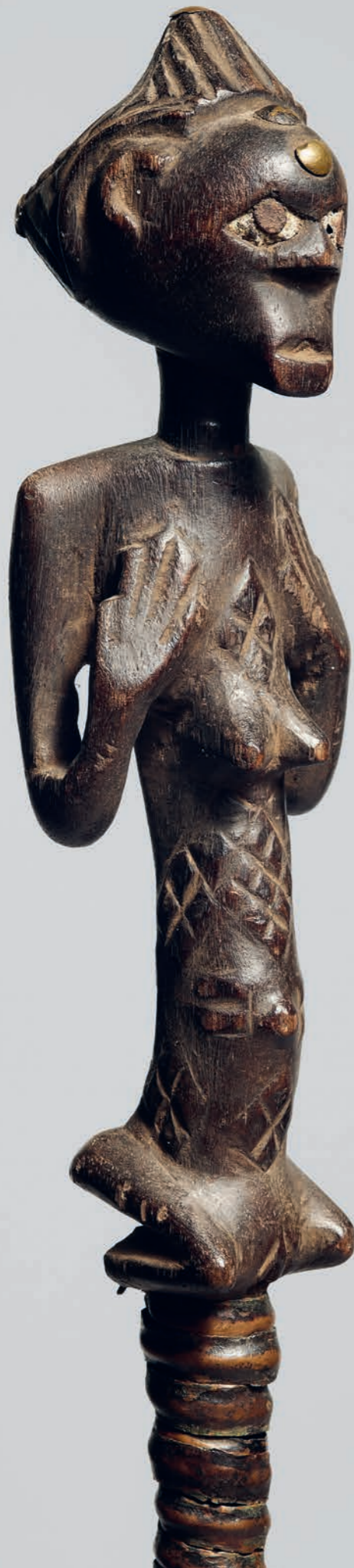
Cf. Another similar mask can be found
in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Inventory nr 1977.219.1

€ 7,000 – 12,000

This rare mask originates from the Tetela people, situated between the Songye and Luba territories, and reflects a masterful synthesis of both artistic traditions. Its formal structure — characterized by a boxy shape, bulging forehead, and jutting mouth — draws heavily from the Songye kifwebe tradition. Simultaneously, the specific use of contrasting pigmentation and the refined treatment of the surface relate closely to Luba aesthetics.

The mask is defined by two bold, striped planes that frame the face, accentuating the large, almond-shaped eyes and strong colours from natural pigments. A remarkably similar example was collected by Emil Torday during his 1908 expedition and is now held in the British Museum (inv. no. Af1908,0622.177). The mask represent a unique exchange, blending the aggressive power of Songye sculpture with the sophisticated finish associated with Luba courtly arts.





40

A KIBANGO STAFF, HEMBA

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood and metal
H 104 cm

Provenance
Alain Naoum, Brussels, Belgium
Private collection, Belgium
Lucas Ratton, Paris, France
Didier Claes, Brussels, Belgium

Beaulieux (Dick), "Belgium collects
African Art", Bruxelles: Arts et
Applications, 2000:273

Auctions
Native, Brussels, 23 January 2016

€ 3,000 – 4,000

An unusual dignitary staff with a female figure and spear. The female form is the preeminent motif in Luba visual arts, reflecting the vital roles women held as priestesses, advisors, and spirit mediums within a kingdom that flourished from the 17th to 19th centuries. It was believed that only women's bodies possessed the spiritual strength necessary to serve as receptacles for the spirits of deceased kings. Because of this sacred purpose, female imagery appears on nearly all major regalia, including staffs of office, stools, and headrests.

According to Marc Felix, an axe in this style that was obtained with certainty from the Luba chief Kasongo-Niembo.

41

AN EXCEPTIONAL CONGO CEREMONIAL GONG, N'KOKO

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood
H 59 cm

Provenance
Bequested by a missionary father to
the Abbaye Notre-Dame de Langonnet,
France, in 1925

Abbaye Notre-Dame, Langonnet, France
Collection Armand Charles, France
Philippe Laremans gallery, Brussels
Mark Eglinton, New York (inv.3840)

Auctions
Enchères Rive Gauche, Paris,
2 December 2009. Lot 63

€ 5,000 – 6,000

This is an exceptional early example of a ritual wooden gong with a fine and expressive face. In the Congo region, these slit gong serves as both a ritual tool and a visual metaphor for the healer-diviner. The instrument's design harmonizes gendered dualities: its exterior is typically phallic in shape, while the hollowed-out interior represents a symbolic womb.

A diviner's gong is an extension of their professional identity, utilized at every stage of their practice. Its rhythmic pulse announces the healer's arrival to a village and continues throughout the diagnostic session, where the diviner (Nganga) may even sit upon the instrument to establish a spiritual connection. Beyond percussion, smaller versions are used as vessels to administer liquid medicine. Finally, at the passing of a peer, the gong is played one last time to celebrate a life spent bridging the gap between the physical and spiritual realms.





42

AN EARLY KONGO- DONDO NKISI NKONDI FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood, nails

H 51 cm

Provenance

Collected in the Loango Region in 1894 by Rev. Father Rémy and given to the Abbaye Notre-Dame de Langonnet Museum, Morbihan (erroneously Romy in text of Sotheby)

Galerie Künzi, Solothurn-Oberdorf, Switzerland

Anonymous seller 1986

Anonymous seller 1987

Galerie Patrik Fröhlich, Zürich, Switzerland (2012)

Auctions

Loudmer, Paris, "Arts Primitifs", 27 June 1986. Lot 416

Tribal Art/Art Tribal, Nr.63, 2012:37 (adv. Galerie Patrik Fröhlich, Zurich)

€ 20,000 – 25,000

This "hunter spirit-vessel" acted as a spiritual guardian and enforcer of the law. To activate its power, a ritual expert would "load" the figure with sacred medicines, transforming the wood into a living entity.

The nails, screws, and blades covering its surface are not merely decorative; each represents a specific plea or legal contract. By driving metal into the figure, a petitioner "stirred up" the spirit to hunt down thieves or those who broke their word. Today, the figure stands as a physical archive of the community's shared pursuit of justice.



43

A RARE LUBA CEREMONIAL VESSEL

Democratic Republic of Congo
Terracotta, beads
H 31 cm

Provenance
Phillipe Laeremans, Brussels

Cf. A similar one can be found in the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA
Inventory nr 2005.283

€ 3,000 – 4,000

This vessel has been fully given over to the human form, depicting a woman with her arms on her abdomen. Such vessels usually hold water or alcohol, whether palm wine, home-brewed beer, or even distilled liquor. They are used to pour libations in honour of ancestors or may be placed on shrines or graves.



44

A LARGE NGBAKA FIGURE

Democratic Republic de Congo
Wood, metal rings
H 63 cm

Provenance
Collection de Lombaerde, Dendermonde
Didier Claes, Brussels
Phillipe Laeremans, Brussels

€ 18,000 – 25,000

This large figure represents Nabo, the mythical sister-wife of the primordial ancestor Seto. In Ngbaka tradition, such sculptures were often carved in pairs to honor these foundational figures of their creation myth.

The sculpture is defined by a powerful sense of abstraction, a characteristic of Ngbaka artistry. A classic feature is the vertical row of notched scarification running down the forehead and the bridge of the nose. This aesthetic treatment, along with the figure's sturdy, balanced proportions, identifies it as a vessel for ancestral presence.





45

A LARGE TEKE BUTI FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood, sacrificial material

Around 1900

H 65 cm

Provenance

Private Collection, France

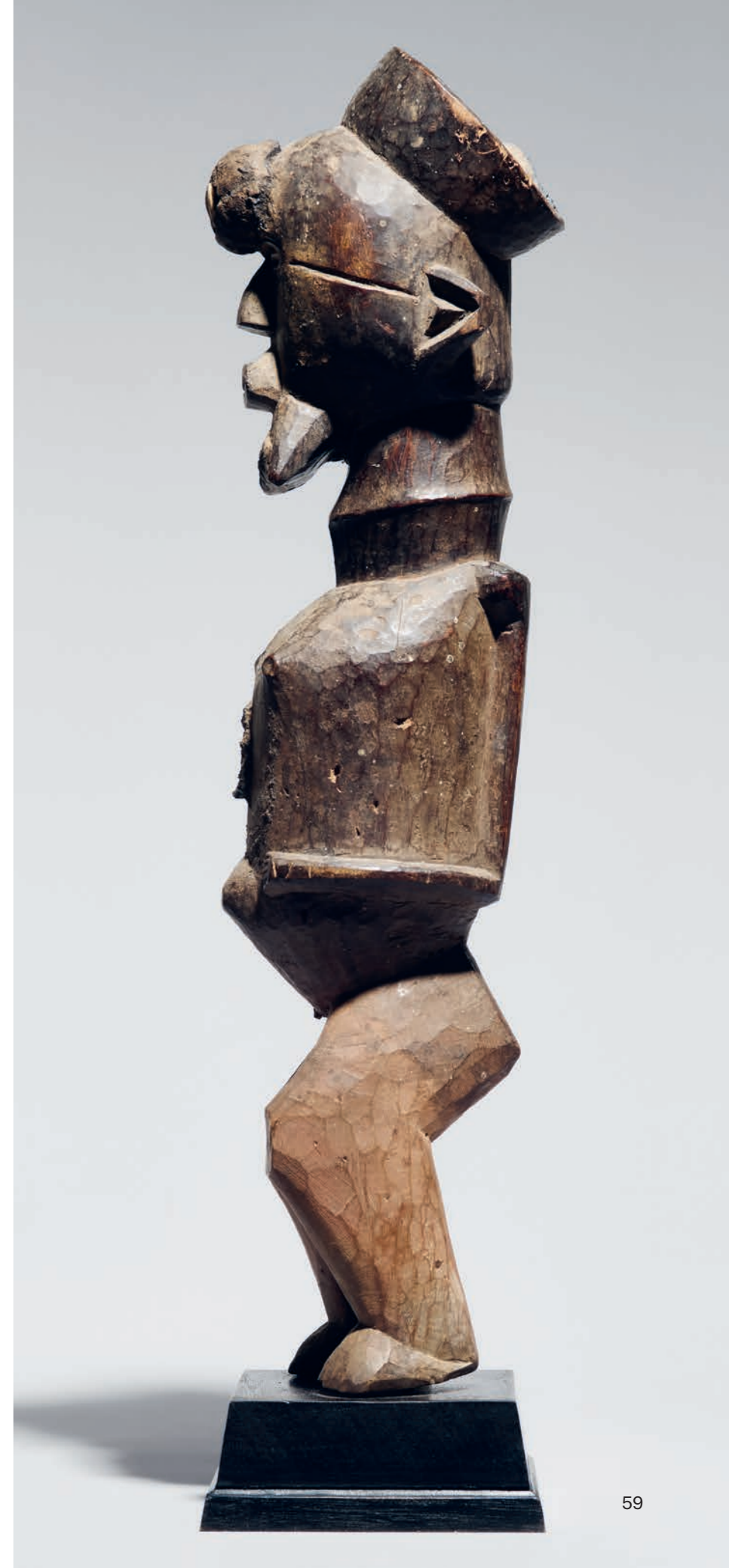
Philippe Laeremans, Brussels, Belgium
(2020)

Expo cat.: Winter BRUNEAF, Brussels
Non European Art Fair", Brussels:
BRUNEAF, 2020:45

€ 18,000 – 25,000

A large Buti figure like this one were commissioned to protect an entire Teke village. The sculpture serves as a container for an ancestor's spirit, activated by the "magical charge" embedded in its forehead.

This charge consists of bonga — a potent mixture of medicinal and symbolic substances. By uniting this sacred material with the carved wood, the community creates a bridge between the living and the dead, ensuring social harmony and protection.





46

A ZULU BEER POT
"UKHWAMBA"

South Africa
Terracotta, glazing
Diameter 33 cm

€ 1,800 – 2,500

The ukhwamba is a vessel for the consumption and communal sharing of utshwala (traditional sorghum beer), a beverage central to Zulu social and spiritual life. Within Zulu society, ceramic production is an exclusively female artistic domain, with specialized techniques and aesthetic sensibilities transmitted through matrilineal apprenticeship over generations.

This vessel is notable for its substantial scale and refined spherical geometry. The surface is traditionally blackened through a secondary firing process in a reduced-oxygen environment and then burnished to a high metallic sheen using a smooth stone. While the minimalist silhouette and rhythmic, incised decorations may evoke modern abstract forms, they are deeply rooted in indigenous philosophies of utility and hospitality.



47

A ZULU BEER POT
"UKHWAMBA"

South Africa
Terracotta, glazing
Diameter 19 cm

€ 1,800 – 2,500

48

A ZULU BEER POT
"UKHWAMBA"

South Africa
Terracotta, glazing
Diameter 38 cm

€ 1,800 – 2,500





49
ZULU HAT (ISICHOLO)

Msinga District, South Africa
Human hair, fibers, red ochres
Diam. 55 cm

€ 1,000 – 1,600

The isicholo is a profound marker of maturity and marital status among Zulu women. Historically, this form originated as a permanent hairstyle; women would grow their hair long and weave it into a distinctive conical or disc-like shape, often spanning significant widths. Over time, this evolved into a removable headpiece, though it retained its original symbolic weight as a sign of respect (hlonipha) toward the wearer's husband and his lineage.



50
ZULU HAT (ISICHOLO)

Msinga District, South Africa
Human hair, fibers, red ochres
Diam. 52 cm

€ 1,000 – 1,500

This great example is made of human hair that has been meticulously treated with a mixture of red ochre—a natural iron oxide – and animal fat. This application gives the deep crimson hue and serves to preserve the structure of the fibres. While originally worn daily, modern iterations of the isicholo are primarily reserved for weddings and other significant cultural ceremonies, where they remain a vital expression of Zulu identity and feminine dignity.

▶ 51
ZULU HAT (ISICHOLO)

Msinga District, South Africa
Human hair, fibers, red ochres
Diam. 56 cm

€ 1,200 – 1,600





52
2 MURAL PAINTINGS
BY FRANCINA
NDIMANDE

Signed on the lower right by the artist "F. Ndimande".

On woven paper (papier vélin) the works are 56 x 77cm each, frames 77 x 108

€ 1,200 – 1,800

This specific work was created by Francina Ndimande at the Mabhokho camp in Kwandebele. In Ndebele culture, mural decoration is a sacred prerogative of women, serving as a visual language that denotes their social standing and intimate connection to the indlu (home). This tradition, passed down through generations from mother to daughter, transforms domestic architecture into a "magic-religious" canvas. A renowned practitioner of this vibrant art form, Ndimande —

assisted by her two eldest daughters — decorated the entirety of her family's dwellings with bold, graphic compositions.

While Ndebele murals are celebrated for their complex geometric abstraction, they frequently incorporate modern pictorial motifs. Ndimande sifts through the everyday imagery of her environment, reinterpreting objects and animals into the rhythmic, symmetrical patterns seen here.

53
A VERY FINE ZULU
SPOON

H 31.5 cm

Provenance
 Alain Guisson, Brussels
 Patrick Mestdagh, Brussels
 Private Collection, St Niklaas

€ 3,500 – 5,000



In 19th-century Zulu society, these carved wooden spoons were personal prestige objects, often passed down through generations as ancestral heirlooms. This example demonstrates the refined geometric sensibility of Zulu carvers, featuring a stylised human form, a slender body and arms, elongated handle with a symmetrical bowl. The dark, lustrous finish comes from polishing it with animal fats, a technique that both preserved the material and enhanced its tactile appeal. Beyond their domestic function for serving curdled milk or grain, these spoons were often treated with great reverence, as the act of sharing food was a sign of hospitality.

Found in the remote limestone caves of the Sepik region, these “hunter-helper” figures represent some of the most ancient surviving wood sculptures in Oceania. The figure is characterized by a distinctive profile of symmetrical hooks that strip the human form down to its most essential morphological elements. At the centre of these abstract ribs is a prominent knob representing the “vital centre” as the navel or heart of the spirit. These figures functioned as powerful intermediaries for hunters; they were kept in caves or spirit houses to ensure success in the hunt and protection for the community.

54

A KOREWORI FIGURE

Papua New Guinea

Wood

18th–19th century

H 63 cm

Provenance

Phillip Goldman, London

Comte Baudouin de Grunne, Brussels

Private

€ 4,000 – 5,500



In the Gulf of Papua, gope boards serve as essential physical manifestations of imunu, or powerful ancestral spirits. These spirits are believed to inhabit diverse landscapes, residing in the forests, water holes, and the surrounding sea. As the spiritual foundation of the community’s religious framework, the boards are kept in communal longhouses to safeguard family lineages, ensuring their collective prosperity and survival. Beyond their protective role for the household, they act as vital spiritual companions, guiding and shielding men throughout their daily activities and ritual life.

55

A GOPE VOTIVE BOARD, WAPO

Province Papua New Guinea

Wood and ochre

H 158 cm

Provenance

A private Scottish collection

Sold at Lyons & Turnbull, 2019

Belgian private collection

€ 3,000 – 4,000

This hei-tiki is carved from pounamu (nephrite), a stone utilized by Māori practitioners for its density and spiritual significance. Classified as taonga (heirlooms), these pendants were transmitted through generations, functioning as repositories for a lineage's mana. The enlargement and wear of the suspension apertures show prolonged use over several generations. The original meaning of the Māori hei tiki pendant is obscure. One theory is that hei tiki represent Hine-te-iwaiwa, a celebrated ancestress associated with fertility and the virtuous qualities of Māori womanhood. Another theory is that hei tiki represent Tiki, the mythical first human.

This object was previously in the collection of the artist Arman in New York, whose collection focused on the structural and formal elements of non-Western sculptural traditions.

56

AN EARLY MAORI HEI
TIKI, NEW ZEALAND

Nephrite

18th–19th century

H 8.5 cm

Provenance

Arman collection, New York

Lance Entwistle, London

Binoche, African and Oceanic Art,
Nov. 2020, lot 15

€ 15,000 – 18,000





57

A MARQUESAS
ISLANDS STILT STEP,
TAPUVA'E

Marquesan Islands

Wood and coconut fibre (kaha)

Around 1900

H 34cm

Provenance

Jean-Pierre Laprugne, Paris

€ 9,000 – 12,000

These ceremonial stilt stirrups, known as Vaeake, were used in ritualized jousting matches held during the funeral ceremonies of high-ranking individuals. Secured to long wooden poles with braided coconut fibre, the stilts elevated the performer both physically and symbolically.

The tiki figure supporting the step acts as a mediator between the realms of the living and the dead. This specific example features a caryatid-style tiki with traditional stylistic markers: an oversized lower body signifying ancestral strength, hands resting delicately on the abdomen, and a finely sculpted face detailed with scarification marks. Such ornamentation transformed a functional object into a sacred guardian.



58

A MARQUESAS
ISLANDS STILT STEP,
TAPUVA'E

Marquesan Islands
Wood and coconut fiber (kaha)
Around 1900
H 29 cm

€ 9,000 – 12,000



59

A FINE IATMUL
SACRED FLUTE
STOPPER

Papua New Guinea
Wood
Early 20th century
H 40 cm

Provenance
Maurice Bonnefoy

Exhibitions
Afrique – Océanie, Ader Picard Tajan
21 mai 1990, lot 6

€ 8,000 – 12,000



In the Sepik River region, sacred flutes were essential to initiation rites and community life. Crafted from hollow bamboo, these side-blown instruments were played similarly to a Western concert flute. To protect the spiritual voice of the flute, its upper end was often sealed with an ornamental stopper.

This stopper portrays a stylized bird spirit. For the people in the Sepik river deltas, these avian figures were more than decoration; they served as a vital bridge between the living world and the realm of the ancestors.



60
**A VERY EARLY
SEPIK MASK
COLLECTED BY OTTO
FINSCH AROUND 1885**

Sepik river, New Guinea
H 28 cm

Provenance
Collected by Friedrich Hermann Otto
Finsch en 1885
On the inside is the original 127/
Neuguinea/Kaiserin Augusta Fluss label

€ 16,000 – 18,000

This mask was acquired during the early period of German exploration in New Guinea. Following the 1884 establishment of the colony of German New Guinea (Kaiser-Wilhelmsland), the region became the focus of numerous scientific and economic expeditions supported by the Imperial Navy and various academic societies.

Otto Finsch, a German ethnologist and explorer, was the first European to navigate the Sepik River, traveling 50 km upstream in 1885. His work, along with subsequent expeditions led by Eduard Dallmann and Georg von Schleinitz, aimed to catalogue the region's diverse cultures.

This mask is a central participant in the 19th century Tambuan festivities, ritual dances where the spirit world and the community met. The elongated, beak-like nose is a hallmark of Sepik artistry, merging the features of a human with those of a bird.

For the people of the Sepik River, these "bird-man" features represent the communication between clan totems and ancestors.





This mask functioned as a manifestation of mythological entities, often ancestors within the Ramu River cosmological system. Such objects were utilized during ritual performances and afterwards were strictly sequestered from non-initiated members of the community. The elongated, avian-form nose is a specific iconographic reference to the perceived capacity of birds to navigate the boundaries between the terrestrial and spiritual realms.

61

A RAMU MASK

Papua New Guinea

Wood, pigments

Around 1900

H 38 cm

Provenance

Karl Woermann, Hamburg (before 1950)

Goerke Collection, Hamburg (1970s)

Sieghart Ott, Munich (1934–2005)

€ 8,000 – 12,000





62

A RARE SUMBA STONE FIGURE

Indonesia

Limestone

18th–19th century

H 64 cm

Provenance

German private collection, around 1980

Galerie Simonis, Dusseldorf

Private Collection, Dusseldorf

€ 8,000 – 12,000

This stylised male figure represents a mythological ancestor and is carved from porous limestone, a material central to the megalithic traditions of Sumba. Such figures are integral to marapu (ancestral religion), functioning as intermediaries between the living and the deceased. These objects were commissioned to honour the nobility and to provide a physical locus for ancestral veneration. While Sumba's history involves the trade of sandalwood and horses, its internal social structure was governed by lineage-based prestige and a history of territorial defence. This sculpture is a good example of the islands monumental stones and architecture.





A very fine and rare Lake Sentani drum. Sentani culture, located around Lake Sentani in Northern Papua, experienced significant disruption under Dutch colonial administration, particularly regarding its material culture and spiritual practices. Many of the central house posts were thrown in the lake to protect them from the Dutch protestant missionaries.

63

A VERY EARLY COLLECTED LAKE SENTANI DRUM

West Papua

Wood, monitor lizard

19th century

H 40 cm

Provenance

Collected by W.E.C. Veen (1890–1940), Assistant-Resident Watampone-Bone, Celebes en related regions.

€ 4,000 – 6,000





The tifa is a central instrument in Asmat ceremonial life. This example features a drumhead made from the skin of a monitor lizard, traditionally adhered with a mixture of lime and blood and secured by woven rattan bands. Because each drum produces only a single pitch, musicians perform in ensembles to create complex rhythmic patterns. In Asmat society, drumming is a sacred activity restricted to men; when the instruments are not in use, they are housed within the community's Great House (jeu).

This example is a very fine handle with stylised bird heads.

This object was acquired by Dr. Willem Visser, received as a gift by his patients. By the 1920s, Dutch physicians were increasingly active in the region, conducting examinations to combat the spread of malaria, tuberculosis, and yaws

64

AN EARLY COLLECTED ASMAT DRUM OR "TIFA"

West Papua, Indonesia
Wood, Monitor lizard skin
Early 20th century
H 103 cm

Provenance
Collected in the field by Dr. W.M.Visser
M.D. around 1947-1948

Donated to the Royal Museum for
Ethnography Leiden with inventory
number RV-B239-102

Deaccessioned from the World Museum
Leiden in 2024

Through inheritance Michils-Visser
Private collection Brussels

€ 3,000 – 4,000





A very sophisticated and rare "Geelvinckbaai" tifa with double korwar heads. One of the foremost musical-ethnologist in New Guinea, Freerk Kamma spent decades navigating the coastal waters of the Raja Ampat islands and the interior jungles of the Bird's Head Peninsula, documenting languages and oral traditions that were previously unknown to the West. He conducted research among the Moi in the far west, the Tehit on the southwest coast near Teminabuan, the Mejbrat in the Ajamaru area, the Karoon in the north and the Arfak Papuans in the east.

He learned to speak the Biak language fluently and also to express himself in other local Papuan languages. He started collecting traditional stories, musical recordings and objects.

Kamma sought to preserve the cultural integrity of the communities he served, often recording music on-site to ensure the rhythmic soul of the region was not lost to history. This piece entered the collection following Kamma's final return to the Netherlands in 1962, shortly before the administrative transfer of West New Guinea.

Many of his recordings can be found at papuacollecties.nl/freerk-kamma/

65
A RARE CENDER-AWASHI DRUM

West Papua
Wood
Around 1900
H 48 cm
Provenance
Collected in Arfak or Biak by Dr. Freerk C. Kamma (1906–1987)
Collection Lemaire, Amsterdam

€ 3,000 – 5,000



66
AN ARCHAIC BELLA COOLA MASK

British Columbia
Late 19th century
H 22,5 cm
Provenance
French Private Collection
Published in "Arte Primitiva Americana", Harmer Johnson, 1992

€ 6,000 – 8,000



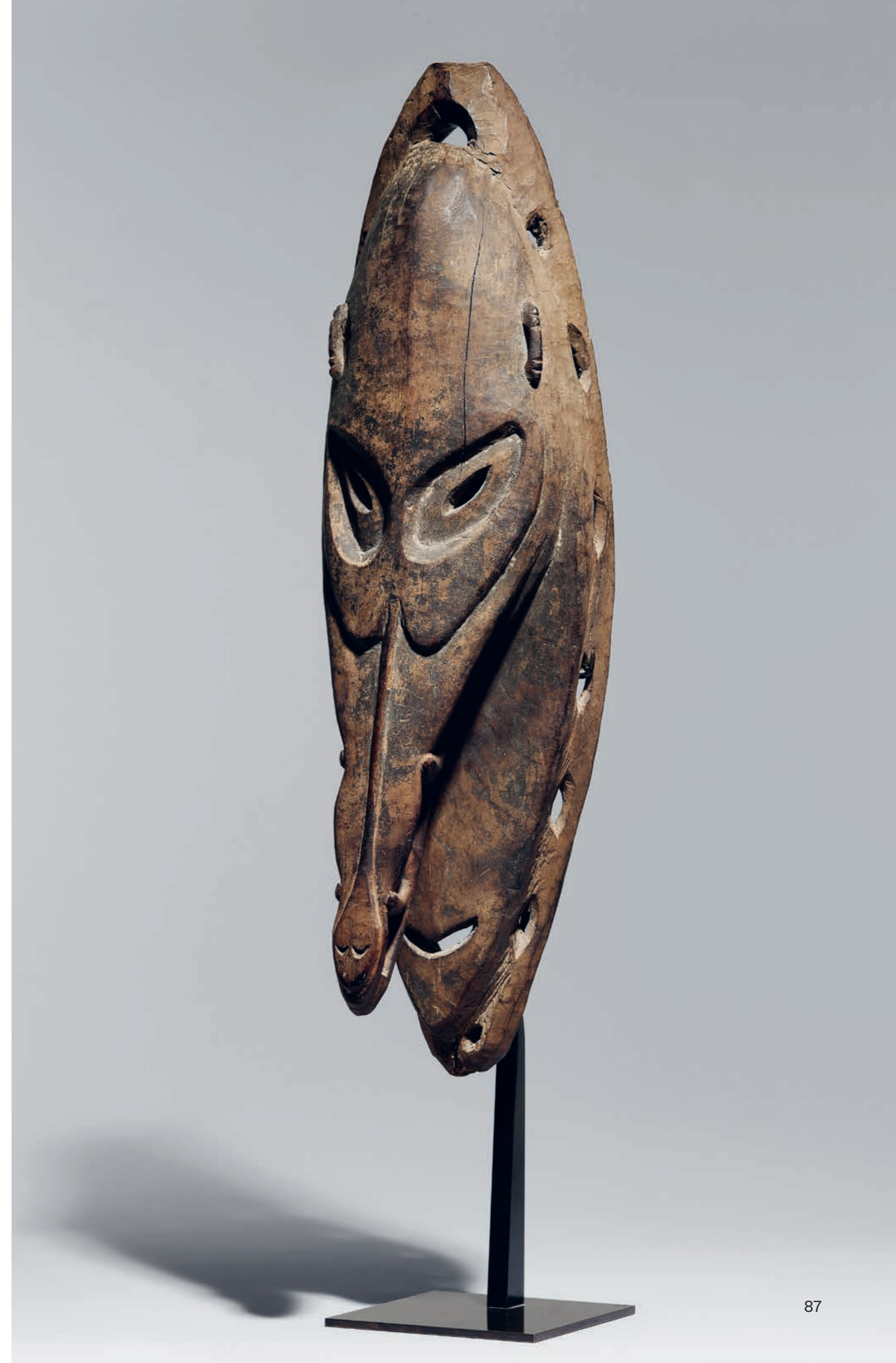
67
**AN IMPORTANT
 GRAND SEPIK MASK**

Papua New Guinea
 Wood, pigment
 late 19th century
 H 64 cm

Provenance
 Collected in the field by Axel Bojsen
 Møller (1888–1965) in 1958–59
 Laurits Sunde (1910–1978), Copenhagen

€ 14,000 – 18,000

This exceptional stone carving comes from a renowned Danish collector, Laurits Sunde. It features an elongated, beak-like nose, an iconographic reference to the bird's perceived capacity to navigate the boundaries between the terrestrial and spiritual realms. A small figure of a cuscus—a nocturnal marsupial, seen as a "ghost of the forest"—clings to the tip of the nose. Used exclusively during ritual performances, such masks were considered highly sacred and were strictly sequestered from non-initiated members of the community. The inclusion of the cuscus underscores the mask's role as a spiritual intermediary.



Patrons of the Arts

The Kuba Kingdom developed an extraordinary material culture that was fueled by fierce, institutionalized political meritocracy. Founded by King Shyaam the Great, the empire replaced hereditary power with a complex bureaucratic court. Because these positions were earned rather than inherited, commoners could rise to the highest echelons of society through military, administrative, or artistic brilliance. When a titleholder died, their office and accumulated wealth reverted to the crown, forcing families and rivals into a continuous cycle of status seeking.

In a society without a written constitution, art became the legal tender of political authority. To hold power, a noble had to visually prove it by acting as a wealthy art patron, commissioning local artisans to produce ultra-luxurious objects that validated their social rank.

This competitive drive is vividly clear in the evolution of wooden ceremonial drinking cups used by elites to drink palm wine during tense court assemblies. To capture attention and outdo rivals, nobles commissioned carvers to create cups shaped as stylized human heads that mimicked elite hairlines and shaved temples. To signal aggressive political ambition,

these vessels frequently integrated ram or goat horns and were deeply engraved with the idam geometric pattern.

A similar dynamic drove the production of embroidered raffia cloth (mbal), or „Kuba velvet,“ which served as the currency. Woven by men and meticulously embroidered by women using a laborious cut-pile technique, these textiles were famous for their disrupting geometric symmetry halfway through a cloth. During major festivals, nobles wrapped dozens of yards of these heavy textiles around their waists; the sheer physical volume and asymmetrical design told onlookers exactly how much merit and labor the wearer controlled.

And the central figures, the king (Nyim) commissioned a wooden figure called Ndop to serve as his spiritual double and defend his supreme authority against ambitious titleholders. Each king's sculpture had a personal emblem (ibol) carved on the pedestal. This competitive pursuit of artistic validation did not end at death; during monumental funeral rites, families buried deceased nobles under mountains of luxury textiles to prove their lasting economic security.

Kuba Kingdom

68

AN EARLY NDENGESE FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood, scarificial patina, palmoil
Around 1900
Old de Havenon label underneath
H 24 cm

Provenance
Gustav de Havenon, New York
Evert rassiga, New York
Baudoin de Grunne, Brussels
Cf. A similar figure with high comb is in the Royal Museum for Central Africa Inventory nr EO.1956.18.11

€ 5,000 – 7,000

The Kuba Kingdom, which flourished from the 17th to the 20th century in the fertile grasslands of the modern-day Democratic Republic of the Congo, stands as one of Africa's most brilliant artistic civilizations. This creative output was not a product of a sole master carver. Instead, it was the direct engine and byproduct of a fierce, institutionalized political meritocracy.

By replacing inherited, lineage-based tribal power with a sprawling bureaucratic state, the Kuba court transformed artistic patronage into an arena for social advancement. In the Kuba empire, great art was created because status had to be earned, defended, and visually proved.



69

AN IMPORTANT THRONE OR IPON, KUBA KINGDOM

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood
Early 20th century
H 42 cm

Cf. Another similar Ipon, collected by Torday in 1909 is now in the British Museum inventory nr. Af1909,0513.3

€ 4,500 – 6,000

This hourglass-shaped throne is a primary insignia of office, reserved exclusively for high-ranking Kuba rulers, such as kings, chiefs, or lineage heads. Beyond its function as a seat, the throne serves as a token of the legitimacy of their reign. Such objects are essential to investiture ceremonies. The sculpture features a kneeling female figure on one side and a sculpted hand on the other. As the Kuba

trace succession through the female line, the inclusion of the woman at the base of the throne symbolizes the king's right to rule as inherited from his female ancestors. This iconography reflects a broader regional belief—shared with the neighbouring Luba—that the female body is the ultimate vessel for the spiritual power of divine kingship.





70

**A VERY FINE LELE
(KUBA) ROYAL
PALMWINE CUP**

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood, small nails in the base
H 20 cm

Provenance
Field collected by Emile Lejeune,
1906–1914
Collection 'de Starosvietsky', by descent
Dinant, Belgium.
Collection Jo De Buck, Brussels
Published
Nathalie Depadt "La collection Emile
Lejeune" Brussels 2012 page 44/45
Jo de Buck "Treasures of the Kuba
Kingdom" Brussels 2025

Cf. Same workshop and form as on
the cup collected by Torday (British
Museum, 1910.4-20.21)

€ 6000 – 8000

This early collected vessel is a significant example of Lele carving, once part of the collection of Emile Lejeune. Arriving in the Kasai region in 1905, Lejeune was among the first Europeans to recognize the artistic dimension of Central African objects. Between 1906 and 1914, he acquired a collection for himself and on behalf of the Belgian government, many of which were showcased at the 1910 Universal Exposition in Brussels. The cup features the complex stylised knots and organic lines characteristic of the Lejeune collection's quality. Its exceptional elegance, early provenance and exhibition history mark it as a vital document of the era when Kuba art first gained recognition for its formal sophistication.





In the 19th-century Kuba Kingdom, power was largely merit-based rather than inherited. This led to a highly competitive court culture where nobles used elegant, commissioned accessories to signal their rank and personal achievements.

This portrait cup is a good example of such regalia, functioning as a symbol of the owner's prosperity and upward mobility. The cup's design emphasizes Kuba ideals of leadership and restraint. The features are meticulously symmetrical, featuring a small, closed mouth that reflects the belief that careful thought should always precede speech.



71
ROYAL PORTRAIT CUP
(MBWOONGNTEY)
KUBA-BUSHOONG
PEOPLE

Democratic Republic of the Congo
Wood
19th century
H 24 cm

Provenance
English collection
Taylor Dale, Santa Fe
Collection Jo De Buck, Brussels

€ 7,000 – 9,000

This exceptional vessel is a masterpiece of Kuba courtly art, likely commissioned for the Nyim (king) or a member of his immediate circle. In the highly stratified Kuba Kingdom, the consumption of palm wine was a social as well as ritualized activity; a vessel of this calibre served as a prestigious emblem of wealth, hospitality, and sophisticated taste. The surface is carved with motifs that indicate the ob-

ject has an aristocratic identity. Notably, it features the itaang (sun symbol), a direct reference to the royal court's brilliance. The handle is adorned with the Nbul knot motif, the specific heraldic symbol of Woot—the primordial founder of the Bushoong dynasty. Reinforced with brass tacks, a precious material representing wealth, every element of this vessel confirms its status as a sacred repository of sovereign authority.

This royal vessel was once part of the collection of Adolphe Stoclet, the Belgian Maecenas who commissioned the Palais Stoclet and its murals by Gustav Klimt. Stoclet was a prominent early 20th-century patron who collected African art alongside Medieval and Modernist works, valuing the shared geometric complexity between these traditions.



72

A ROYAL BUSHOONG
CUP WITH A HANDLE
SHAPED AS A 'NBUL'
KNOT

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood, brass tacks
Late 19th century
H 22.5 cm

Provenance
Ex Baron Adolphe Stoclet collection,
in Brussels before 1918
Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

Published in Jo de Buck "Treasures of
the Kuba Kingdom", Brussels 2025
page 135

Cf. A very similar cup was exhibited in
Antwerp at the 1930 Olbrechts exhibi-
tion, from the Van Opstal collection

€ 10,000 – 15,000



73

A VERY IMPORTANT
19TH CENTURY
BWOOM MASK
(MUSEUM QUALITY)
WITH HIS TRADI-
TIONAL DECORA-
TIONS

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood, copper, beads, hair, cowrie shells
19th century
H 34 cm

Provenance
James Silberman, Alexandria (USA)
Jo De Buck, Brussels

Published in "Treasures of the Kuba
Kingdom", Jo De Buck, 2025, pp. 45-46

€ 60,000 – 80,000

Old Bwoom helmet masks as this spectacular one are very rare. Only very few can be found in museum collections. They are made in wood and are heavily decorated with copper sheets, cowrie shells and glass beads, which only the highest nobles can use in their costumes or adornments. The Bwoom mask represents one of the 3 royal ancestral identities that represent the founding of the Bushoong royal dynasty. Bwoom is born out of the incestuous fusion of Ngady Amwash (mother) and Woot (father), same as his brother 'Njim' (the ruling king). The monkey hair,

beadwork and shells are symbolising his wealth and upper hierarchy. He is a good, wise and powerful presence from the same ancestral level in the royal hierarchy as the Njim and therefore the only one that can correct him in case of bad ruling. He appears in the most important ritual gatherings or for speaking justice. To prove his neutrality, his eyes are blinded with a band of white beads. He is a very important asset to the royal court and only dances there between the ruling group called 'Bushoong'.

A UNIQUE ROYAL NGONGO FIGURE

Northern Kasai-Occidental, Democratic
Republic of the Congo

Wood

19th century

H 51 cm

Provenance

Collected by M. Braekman, Cataractes
District, Congo, 1894–1910 ;

By descendance M. Tits

By descendance M. Houtrast, a cousin
of M. Tits

Collection Tara, London

Collection Patricia Withofs, London

Pace Primitive, New York

Collecting African Art, Werner Gillon,
Studio Vista/Christie's,

London, 1979, n°142, p.115

Important Tribal Art from Africa, the
Pacific & North America,

catalogue exposition, Arnold Herstand
& Company, New

York, 1988

Treasures of the Kuba Kingdom,
Jo De Buck, 2025

"Important Tribal Art from Africa, The
Pacific & North America", Herstand,
November–December 1988

Tokyo, Japan: "20th Century Western
Fine Arts and African Sculpture Collec-
tion Exhibition" / 20世紀の西洋美術と
アフリカの彫刻コレクション展 (20th
Seiki no seiyō bijutsu to Afurika chōko-
ku korekushon-ten), Yoshii Gallery, 10
January–12 February 1994

Collecting African Art, Werner Gillon,
London, 1979, n°142, p.115

"Treasures of the Kuba Kingdom",
Jo De Buck, Brussels 2025

Cf. Only one other figure is photo-
graphed in situ, by Emile Torday
(1875–1931) during the British Museum
expedition, published in "Land and
Peoples of the Kasai": It is titled
The Hunting Fetish, Misumba

€ 120,000 – 150,000

This rare and striking figure depicts a nobleman of the Kuba court, characterized by elongated, fluid limbs and a commanding presence. In Kuba society, positions of power were earned through personal achievement rather than inheritance. Consequently, members of the aristocracy sought to distinguish themselves through the display of elegant accessories that signalled their prosperity and upward mobility.

The figure serves as a powerful testimony to the intersection of prestige and ritual. While full-bodied figures with rams' horns are exceptionally rare, the motif is frequently seen on royal palm wine cups. In the courtly environment, the distribution of palm wine was a key performance of wealth and generosity. The figure's shaved hairline and exposed forehead reflect the Kuba aesthetic of beauty and intellect; the forehead is considered the seat of wisdom, while the raised cicatrization on the temples serves as a hallmark of cultural refinement.

These signs of cultivation are deliberately countered by the inclusion of sweeping rams' horns. The ram represents a dominant, aggressive force that brooks no rivals—a fitting metaphor for the high-stakes, competitive atmosphere of Kuba political life.

Beyond its courtly associations, this figure functioned as a hunting fetish or charm. Such objects were essential for ensuring success in the hunt. Historical records from the Torday expedition document similar Ngongo charms housed in village enclosures, where they served as the focus for sacrifices both before the hunt and in celebration of its conclusion. This object represents the ideal Kuba leader: a man who balances the sophistication of a courtier with the fierce ambition and prowess of a master hunter.





75
ROYAL PORTRAIT CUP
(MBWOONGNTEY)

Kuba-Bushoong people
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Wood
Around 1900
H 20 cm

Provenance
Old Californian private collection
Gallery DeRoche, San Francisco
Jo De Buck private collection, Brussels

€ 3,000 – 3,800



A rare Kuba Bushoong commemorative sculpture of a young noble man. This refined portrait of an important noble man was made at the turn of the century for ritual offerings and mourning ceremonies. The Kuba kingdom, established around 1700, flourished as a sophisticated multi-ethnic confederation led by the Bushoong people. Characterized by a period of sustained prosperity and relative isolation from the external slave trades, the kingdom developed a prestigious court system where art served as a primary vehicle for political status and royal favor. This environment fostered a professional class of artisans whose technical mastery extended from monumental architecture to the refined prestige items.

When he was visiting the Kasai region in 1905, German historian Leo Frobenius remarked that every object—from the ceremonial copper weapons to common cups—possessed an aesthetic refinement comparable to European Romanesque tradition.

This collection came together over almost 40 years by the leading expert in the field. His passion and tenacity shows the finesse of the region's master carvers, objects that show that both in the king's shrine or a young noble family residence, Kuba art reflects a "moral canon" of dignity and grace that defined an entire civilization.



76

A KUBA BUSHOONG COMMEMORATIVE PORTRAIT (1910-30)

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

H 35 cm

Provenance

A private collection, Antwerpen,
Belgium, before 1940

Private collection Jo de Buck, Brussel

€ 6,000 – 8,000





77
**AN OLD KUBA BOX
 WITH A STYLISED
 HAND**

Democratic Republic of Congo
 Wood, traces of Tukula
 19th century
 23 by 24 cm
 Provenance
 Pascal Vernimmen Collection, Ghent
 Private collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

€ 2,500 – 3,500

This ornately carved vessel was designed to hold tukula (red camwood powder), beads, or small personal tools. The lid is surmounted by a hand with a sun motif – symbols of prestige and authority specifically associated with the Kuba royal court. The box's surface is covered in nnaam, a complex pattern of interlocking lines inspired by the tangled vines and creepers of the Kasai forest. In a display of artistic virtuosity, the carver has translated the appearance of flexible, woven basketry into the rigid medium of wood, a "playful invention" characteristic of Kuba personal arts.



78
**A FINE KUBA BOX
 WITH A STYLISED
 FACE**

Democratic Republic of Congo
 Wood, traces of Tukula
 Around 1900
 19 by 10.5 cm
 Provenance
 Pierre Dartevelle, Brussels
 Private collection, Brussels

Published in Treasures of the Kuba Kingdom 2025 by Jo De Buck, page 130

€ 3,800 – 4,500

This crescent-shaped vessel, a form strictly reserved for the Kuba elite, served as a repository for tukula – a red powder derived from camwood heartwood. When blended with oil, the powder formed a ceremonial paste used for ritual anointing during celebrations, medicinal rites, and funerary passages.

The lid is carved with a female countenance, characterized by high-relief features and framed by the imbol (interlocking geometric) patterns synonymous with Kuba prestige and status.



79
**AN EARLY COLLECTED
 KUBA TUKULA BOX
 WITH SPIDER AND
 SUN MOTIVES**

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood; traces of Tukula

33 by 16 cm

Provenance

Field collected by Leo Frobenius,
 before 1920

Julius Carlebach, New York

Ward Mount and by descent Marshall
 Mount, New York

Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

€ 3,500 – 5,000

This half-moon shaped vessel was used to store tukula, a crimson cosmetic powder derived from ground camwood. The lid is surmounted by an insect finial, while the sides are incised with three sun motifs – both potent symbols representing the authority and lineage of the Kuba royal dynasty.

This object was collected between 1904 and 1906 by the German ethnologist Leo Frobenius (1873–1938) during his foundational research in the Kasai-Sankuru region. Frobenius was among the first European scholars to document the high level of technical sophistication in Kuba craftsmanship, noting the artistic intentionality present in even the most utilitarian objects.

80

**A KUBA-NGONGO
 RITUAL FLUTE WITH
 MASK**

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

H 37 cm

Provenance

Collection Jo de Buck

Published in Jo De Buck “Treasures
 of the Kuba Kingdom”, 2025 Brussels
 p.166

Cf. for another Kuba flute see
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art,
 New York

Inventory nr 2006.390

€ 2,800 – 3,500

This rare ritual instrument combines the musical traditions of the Kete and Ngongo subgroups within the Kuba kingdom. The base of the flute features a finely carved Bongo mask identifying it as a sacred object rather than a common tool. Typical of Kuba aerophones, the instrument features a single finger-hole, allowing the performer to shift between two distinct pitches to communicate across distances or during forest ceremonies. The deep patina and visible wear on the flute indicate extensive use and generations of handling by its owners.



81

LELE FIGURATIVE CUP
(KUBA SUBGROUP)

H 21 cm

Provenance
Institut des Pères Joséphites de Melle,
Belgium
Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

€ 3,000 – 4,500



This cup shows a classic Kuba hairstyle: a high, shaved hairline that frames the forehead. For the Kuba, this was a mark of nobility and status. By drawing attention to the brow, the carver highlights the forehead as the “seat of wisdom.” These cups were used for drinking palm wine, allowing leaders to display their rank and taste during social gatherings. Notable other examples are from the Brooklyn Museum, Museum Expedition in 1922.

82

KUBA-KETE CUP OF A
CROUCHING FIGURE
ON BASE

H 18 cm

Provenance
Philippe Laeremans, Brussels
Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

Published in Treasures of the Kuba
Kingdom, 2025 by Jo De Buck, p. 88

Cf. A similar cup can be found in the
collection of the 19th century banker
Adolphe Stoclet, Brussels.

€ 6,000 – 8,000



This cup shows a noble in a crouching pose, reaching up to touch his temples. It's a classic “pensive” look more often seen in Lulua tobacco containers, meant to show the figure is deep in thought. The focus here is all on the forehead. In this region, the brow is seen as the “seat of wisdom,” so the gesture of touching the temples highlights the person’s intelligence and status. It is a very fine example of the creative range of the carvers of these prestigious cups.



83
**AN EARLY
 COLLECTED KUBA
 NGEENDE PWOOM
 ITOK MASK**

Democratic Republic of Congo
 Early 20th century
 H 27 cm (H 43 cm with hat)

Provenance
 Institut des Pères Joséphites de Melle,
 Belgium
 Private collection, Brussels, Belgium
 Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

€ 5,000 – 6,000

This Pwoom Itok is a principal mask type utilized in Kuba masculine initiation rites. It represents an elder or wise counsellor, serving as a pedagogical figure within the ritual performance. The mask is characterized by its distinctive chameleon eyes: projecting cones situated within recessed sockets and perforated with small apertures to facilitate the dancer's vision.

The formal surface treatment consists of polychromatic patterns, including ochre stripes and white pigment dots intended to emulate the plumage of the guineafowl. Historically, such feathers were restricted to high-ranking titleholders within the Kuba hierarchy. This very early collected mask still has the original hairpin.



This itombwa, or friction oracle, served as a diagnostic tool for diviners. By moistening the animal's flat back with oil and juices, a diviner would slide a wooden knob (or "rubber") across the surface while posing questions about illness or theft. If the knob moved smoothly, the answer was negative; if it suddenly stuck or resisted, the spirit had confirmed the truth.

The animal forms — commonly dogs, crocodiles, or bush pigs — were chosen for their symbolic role as hunters and "rooters". Just as a dog tracks prey, the diviner uses the itombwa to track the hidden cause of misfortune. Traces of red tukula (camwood) powder remain in the carvings, a sacred finishing touch that symbolized active power and transformation in Kuba culture.

84
**AN EXCEPTIONAL
 KUBA FRICTION
 ORACLE WITH A
 NOBLEMAN'S
 PORTRAIT**

H 37 cm

Provenance
 Ex Michael Rhodes collection, New York
 C., USA.

Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels
 Published in Jo De Buck "Treasures of
 the Kuba Kingdom" Brussels 2025
 page 191

€ 6,000 – 8,000

85

A FINE ROYAL DENGESSE CUP

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

H 17 cm

Provenance

Michel Koenig, Brussels

Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels,
Belgium.

€ 4,500 – 5,500



A small Dengese cup representing an important male figure wearing a typical Dengese hat. The combination of human head with horns is a sign that the cups owner was a member of the royal family, as only royalty could possess an object decorated in this form.

86

A RARE FEMALE FIGURE KUBA-KETE MORTAR

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

H 21.5 cm

Provenance

Lucas Raton, Paris

Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

€ 4,500 – 5,500



This mortar is in the form of a young woman. While mortars were used for tukulula, tobacco or medicine, an elaborately carved example such as this was reserved for specialized ceremonial contexts. It was primarily utilized by ritual specialists for the preparation of potions and substances essential to divination oracles. The integration of the female figure into the mortar's design underscores the cultural significance of the feminine in Kuba spirituality and lineage. Much like the prestigious portrait cups (mbwoongntey) used by the nobility, this vessel emphasizes the status of the ritual act.



87
A BUSHOONG KUBA
“ITOMBWA” IN
THE FORM OF A
CROCODILE

Democratic Republic of Congo
 Wood, beads, copper
 L 37 cm, H 7.5 cm

Provenance
 Michael Rhodes, New York
 Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

€ 2,500 – 3,500

Itombwas are often shaped like dogs, hunters for truth but occasionally they are crocodile shape. According to William Sheppard, the first outsider to visit the Kuba capitol at Nsheng in 1892, “The [diviner] rubs the button-like attachment over the back of the animal. If it sticks the person in question is guilty, otherwise innocent ... [The] crocodile never lies – is the native saying.”



88
A DENGESSE FRICTION
ORACLE “ITOMBWA”

Democratic Republic of Congo
 Wood
 L 29 cm, H 9 cm

Provenance
 Ex Talyor Dale gallery, Santa Fe, USA
 Jo De Buck, private collection, Brussels

€ 2,500 – 3,500

This complete Itombwa is carved in the form of a dog, a frequent motif in Central African divinatory arts. Considered infallible instruments of revelation, itombwa were utilized by the Kuba, Dengese, and neighbouring groups to mediate between human diviners and the all-knowing spirits of the forest. By rubbing a wooden plug across the animal’s flat back, the diviner sought to identify the root causes of ill-

ness or settle legal dispute. The choice of a dog as the vessel’s form is symbolic; the dog represents the diviner’s own “hunt” for truth. Just as a hound roots out prey, the oracle “hunts” for the invisible agents of misfortune. The preservation of the original friction tool with the figure is notable, as it represents the functional integrity of an oracle that was once essential to maintaining social and spiritual order.

89

AN EXTREMELY RARE DENGESSE ORACLE STAFF IN THE SHAPE OF A SNAKE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Liana wood

19th century

H 71 cm

Provenance

Field collected by Jean Coene, a Belgian diplomat

Alex Arhur, Brussels

Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels

Published in Treasures of the Kuba Kingdom, 2025 by Jo De Buck, p. 192

€ 7,000 – 8,000

Dengese (and Kuba) ceremonial staffs are often termed staff of authority or justice. They are frequently characterized by a central wooden shaft depicting a snake (python), sometimes crowned by a human head or figure.

The serpent represents the progenitor of water spirits and is used by dignitaries as a symbol of judicial power and wisdom.

This rare magical wand is used for speaking justice and determinate the wrongdoer.



90

A FINE KUBA WOODEN PRESTIGE BELL

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

19th century

H 10 cm

Provenance

Ex collection John Dintenfass, NY, collection Jo De Buck, Brussels

Exhibited during the Civilisations 'Treasures of the Kuba' exhibition at Lempertz, June 2025

€ 1,400 – 1,800



This rare wooden sculpture, carved in the form of a bell, was an essential component of a Yet, the elaborate, heavy belt reserved for the highest echelons of the Kuba-Bushoong nobility. In Kuba court culture, the grandest and most complex regalia was the sole prerogative of the king (nyim) and his immediate family. The yet belt served as a highly visible display of status, weighted with numerous pendants that mirrored objects central to royal life. The bell represents the instrument used for courtly communication and proclamation. The royal sun emblem is also visible underneath.

AN IMPORTANT KUBA NDOP FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood

Early 20th century

H 65 cm

Provenance

Joseph Christiaens, Brugge

Collection L. Sanders, Dendermonde

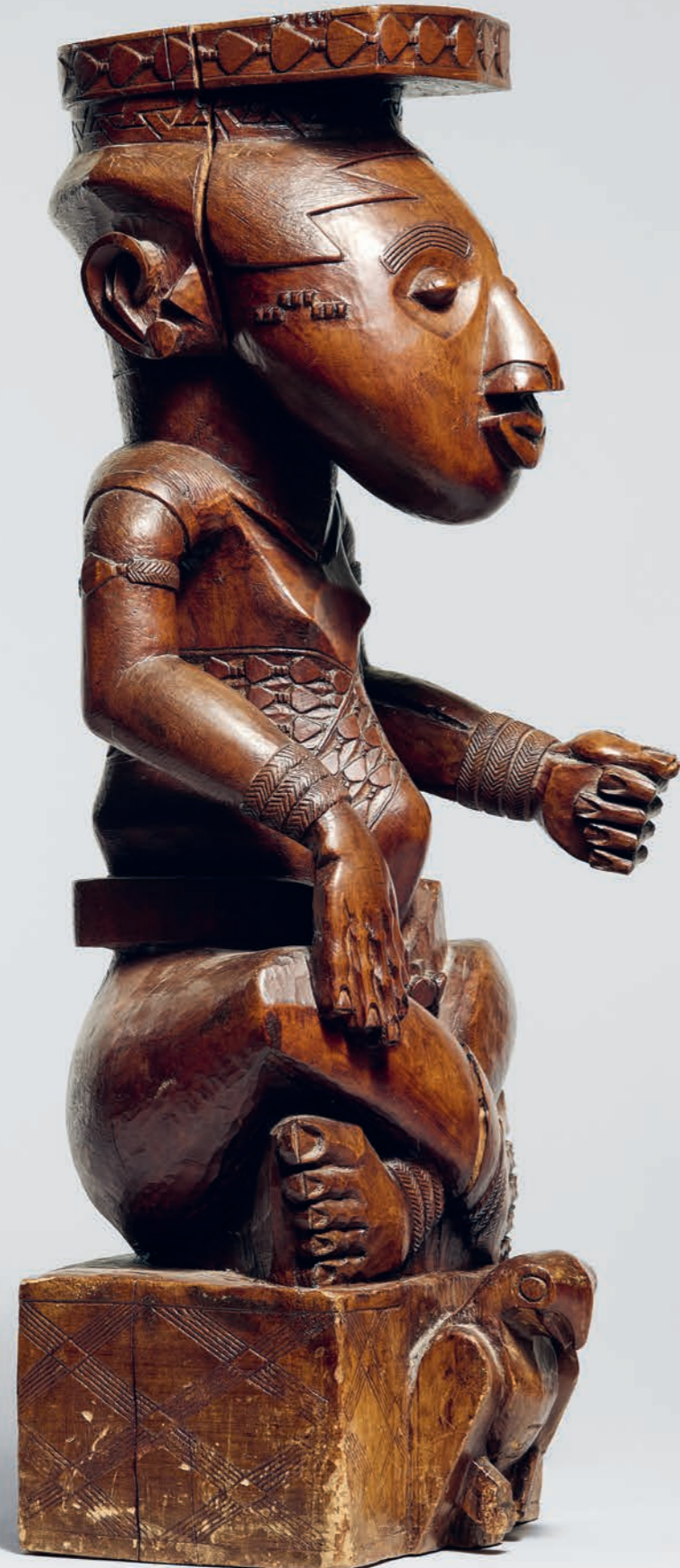
Collection Jo De Buck, Brussels

€ 20,000 – 28,000

This commemorative portrait, known as an ndop, serves as a spiritual vessel for the essence of Kuba kingship. The figure is depicted in a state of serene detachment, seated cross-legged on a yiing (pedestal) adorned with geometric vine motifs. He wears the formal regalia of the Kuba court, including a hoe-shaped headdress (shody), cowrie-shell belts, and woven shoulder hoops.

Ndop sculptures were not intended as literal likenesses but as idealized representations of the monarch's reign. Each is identified by a unique emblem (ibol) located in front of the platform; here, the red tail parrot (nkusu) signifies the specific ruler's identity.

In Kuba belief, these figures held the king's "royal charms" and magical potency. During the king's absence from the capital, the sculpture was ritually rubbed with oil and red camwood powder to maintain the stability of the kingdom. It remained in the royal shrine after his death, serving as a permanent surrogate for his authority.





92

A KUBA ROYAL PIPE WITH DOUBLE HEAD

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood, bone

H 55 cm

Provenance

François Rati, Liège, Belgium

Collection Jo De Buck, Brussels

Cf. For a similar pipe with a single head see the Metropolitan Museum inventory nr. 1978.412.546

Kuba dubbele pijp (ex F. Rati)

€ 3,000 – 4,500

In Kuba iconography, the ram's horn is a strictly guarded symbol of the nyim (the Bushoong king). While other nobles could commission high-quality pipes and cups, the use of the ram motif was a royal prerogative, representing the king's persistence, physical strength, and his role as the "unyielding head" of the nation.

On this pipe, the presence of horns — especially on a dual-facing heads — serves as a signature of sovereign power.

It identifies the object not just as a prestigious item, but as a piece of the royal regalia, that shows that the king is both a wise judge and can see in the future and the past.



93

A SET OF TWO REFINED KUBA CUPS IN CLASSIC BUSHOONG MOTIVES

Democratic Republic of Congo

2 Cylinder vormige Kuba bekers

H 17 and 16 cm

Provenance

Old colonial collection, Brussels

Collection Jo De Buck, Brussels

One is published in Jo de Buck "Treasures of the Kuba Kingdom" 2025 Brussels, page 115

€ 2,000 – 2,500



94
A LELE MASTER-
CARVERS KNIFE

Democratic Republic of the Congo
Wood, metal
19th century
H 32 cm

Provenance
Collection Jo de Buck, Brussels
Published Jo de Buck "Treasures of the
Kuba kingdom", Brussels 2025

€ 4,000 – 5,000

This knife was a specialized tool used by Lele carvers to hollow out the interiors of wooden cups and bowls. While most carving tools were functional, this example features a handle carved into a human figure. This representation likely depicts the master carver or serves as a reference to his ancestral lineage. In the Kasai region, high-ranking carvers often used tools with figurative handles to signal their professional status and connection to their craft.

95
A LELE KNIFE WITH
FIGURE

Democratic Republic of Congo
Wood and metal
19th century
33 cm

Provenance
Fernando Pujol, Barcelona
Jo De Buck, private collection, Brussels
published in Jo de Buck 'Treasures of
the Kuba Kingdom' Brussels page 156

€ 4,800 – 5,500

This exceptional adze handle is sculpted in the form of a young man, featuring the distinctive, high-relief coiffure with the double plaid, characteristic of Lele aristocratic fashion. The figure is depicted in a contemplative posture, with a hand raised to the cheek—a gesture that, in the visual language of the Kasai region, denotes reflection, mourning, or deep intellectual engagement. The adze was not a functional tool for woodworking, but a prestigious emblem of office, often carried by high-ranking men as symbols of their social standing. This piece is of remarkable rarity; only a small number of comparable Lele figurative handles are known to exist in global collections, marking it as a significant masterwork of Central African sculpture.



This large helmet mask originates from the Kete, a group whose artistic traditions heavily influenced the broader Kuba complex. The distinctive structure at the summit of the mask represents a food bowl, a direct reference to the vessels used by newly initiated men during their transition into adulthood after their vast. The mask features protruding, conical chameleon eyes, a diagnostic trait indicating that the object represents a powerful bush spirit (ngesh). In this cultural context, the chameleon is admired for its ability to perceive in all directions and move between realms.

96

A KUBA KETE MULWALWA MASK

Democratic Republic of Congo

Wood, ochres, raffia

H 51 (without the beard)

Provenance

Collection Damien Reeners, Charleroi

Collection Jo De Buck, Brussels

Published in Jo de Buck "Treasures of the Kuba kingdom", Brussels 2025
page 65-66

€ 8,000 - 12,000



These cloth begins in the palm groves, where the Kuba would collect leaves from raffia trees. The highly skilled women would spin the strands across their thighs into thread and weave single panels on inclined looms. Once the base fabric leaves the loom, women take ownership of the transformation. They dye the threads with pigments from roots, mud, and earth to establish tones of black and tan. The narrative unfolds through embroidery and applique. The artists invent interlocking geometric shapes from imagination, layering cutouts onto the backing to construct patterns like the knot of Woot.

Kuba Royalty commissioned these textiles to assert authority during political transitions. The objects took two distinct paths in royal ceremonies. Nobility wrapped twenty-foot skirts around their bodies to create movement during festivals. Meanwhile, rectangular panels measuring two feet square hung behind thrones to transform spaces and project prestige. While the names of the makers are lost, these fabrics remain a testament to community identity and creativity.

97

A NGONGO NTSJAK

Democratic Republic of Congo

Raffia cloth

Early to mid-20th century

77 x 250 cm

A high dignitary male loincloth, made in the typical Ngongo applique technique.

Provenance

Belgian private collection

Published in "Treasures of the Kuba Kingdom" Brussels 2025, Jo de Buck, page 274

€ 8,000 – 12,000





98

A VERY RARE
BUSHOONG CHILD-
DRENS LOINCLOTH,
KUBA KINGDOM

Democratic Republic of Congo

Raffia

Early to mid-20th century

52 x 250 cm

A very fine small red Bushoong loincloth,
made for a child.

Provenance

Belgian private collection

Published in "Treasures of the Kuba
Kingdom" Brussels 2025, Jo de Buck,
page 268

€ 4,000 – 6,000





99

A ROYAL BUSHOON APRON

Democratic Republic of Congo

Raffia

Early to mid-20th century

54 by 129 cm

An exceptional good quality Kuba-Bu-shoong apron. This great Bushoong skirt is decorated with classic geometric designs on the central panel, referring to their royal ownership.

Provenance

Belgian private collection

€ 3,500 – 5,000

A Dengese minimalistic prestige cloth, the kuba would produce raffia prestige cloths for trade with the Dengese. These were never as souple and tightly made as the ones they made for their own use but artistically, they still would have challenging compositions. Raffia. 62 x 130 cm.

100

A REGAL DENGESSE PRESTIGE CLOTH, KUBA

Democratic Republic of Congo

Raffia

Early 20th century

77 by 250 cm

An exceptional good quality Kuba-Bu-shoong apron. This great Bushoong skirt is decorated with classic geometric designs on the central panel, referring to their royal ownership.

Provenance

Belgian private collection

Published in "Treasures of the Kuba Kingdom" Brussels 2025, Jo de Buck, page 276

€ 3,000 – 5,000



Conditions of sale

I. In General

The art auction house, Lempertz N.V. (henceforth referred to as ‘Lempertz’) conducts public auctions as commissioning agent in its own name and on behalf of the accounts of the submitter. The identity of the submitter remains in principle unknown.

These conditions of sale are applicable to all contracts concluded by Lempertz. Anyone who makes a commitment with Lempertz or who attends an art auction, viewing day or any other similar event, acknowledges and accepts these conditions of sale.

These conditions of sale are originally drawn up in the Dutch language. In case of conflict or discordance between the Dutch version and the translated version, the Dutch version is conclusive.

The lots are sold in the state in which they are found at the moment of the allocation (‘as is’). The absence of any reference to the state of the lot does not mean that the lot is in a good state or is free from damages, defects or restorations.

The United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods is not applicable.

II. The Auction process & the process of bidding

II.1. Submission of bids

1. Bids in attendance – The floor bidder receives a bidding number on presentation of his identity card. Lempertz reserves the right to grant entry to the auction. Lempertz reserves the right to deny access to her premises or participation in the auction.

2. Bidding in one’s own name and on one’s own account – Every bidder is considered to act in his own name and on his own account and is personally liable for making the payment.

3. Bids in absentia – Bids can also be submitted either in writing, telephonically or via the internet. The placing of bids in absentia must reach Lempertz at least twenty four (24) hours before the beginning of the auction to ensure the proper processing thereof.

The lot must be mentioned in the bid placed by the bidder, together with ticket number and lot description. In the event of ambiguities, the listed ticket number becomes applicable. The instruction to bid must be signed by the bidder. The buyer does not have a right of withdrawal (art. VII 53,11° and VII 73,11° Belgian economic law code).

Telephonic bids – Lempertz cannot vouch for the establishment and maintenance of a connection. In submitting a bid placement, the bidder declares that he agrees to the recording of the telephone conversation.

Bids via the internet – Lempertz only considers bids via the internet if the bidder has registered himself on the internet website beforehand. Lempertz treats these bids in the same way as placed bids in writing. Lempertz cannot vouch for the establishment and maintenance of a connection.

4. Bank guarantee and other guarantees – Lempertz has the right to require a bank guarantee or any other guarantee from the bidder to prove his creditworthiness.

5. Obligation to provide information (anti-money laundering legislation) – The bidder provides a copy of the identity documents of the bidder and, as the case may be, of the actual buyer on whose account the bidder occurs.

II.2. Carrying out the auction

6. Allocation – The hammer will come down when no higher bids are submitted after three calls for a bid. In extenuating circumstances, Lempertz is entitled to refuse the acceptance of a bid or to reserve the allocation.

The bidder, who places the highest bid (the buyer), himself or through a third person, buys the lot at the hammer price. The sales contract is concluded between Lempertz and the buyer.

7. Bids for an absentee bidder – Bids for absentee bidders are only played to an absolute maximum by Lempertz if this is deemed necessary to out-bid another bid.

8. Reserve – Lempertz can bid on behalf of the submitter up to the agreed limit without revealing this and irrespective of whether other bids are submitted.

9. No liability of Lempertz – Even if bids have been placed, Lempertz is not liable if the hammer has not come down, except in the case of wilful intent.

10. Dispute or error with respect to the allocation – Lempertz decides to whom the lot is allocated in case of error or dispute with respect to the allocation. If several individuals make the same bid at the same time, and after the third call, no higher bid ensues, then the case is decided by lot/fate.

If a higher bid that was submitted on time, was erroneously overlooked and immediately queried by the affected bidder, or if any doubts arise regarding its allocation, Lempertz can cancel the sale and reoffer and resell the lot in dispute.

11. The refusing of bids – Lempertz reserves the right to refuse certain bids.

12. Lempertz’s discretion – Lempertz has the right at its absolute and sole discretion to withdraw any catalogue lots from the sale, to offer any lot in an order different from that given in the catalogue, to transfer the catalogue lots to a later auction, and to divide or combine any catalogue lots.

13. Once a lot has been knocked down, the successful bidder is obliged to buy it – The bidder to whom the lot was allocated, is obliged to buy the lot at the purchase price. If a bid is accepted conditionally, the bidder is bound by his bid until four (4) weeks after the auction unless he withdraws from the conditionally accepted bid at the latest one day after the auction.

14. Transfer of ownership and risk – The risk relating the allocated lot is directly transferred to the buyer upon the fall of the hammer. The transfer of ownership to the buyer takes place after the reception of the full purchase price by Lempertz.

III. The Completion of the auction transaction after the allocation of the lots

15. Calculation of the purchase price – The purchase price consists of the hammer price, plus the premium, the VAT and the resale right.

16. Buyers’ premium – **The Buyer pays a premium of 26 % calculated on the hammer price up to a hammer price of € 700.000 and 22 % on any amount surpassing.** In case of bidding through an internet platform like Drouot live an extra premium may be added.

17. VAT – Lots sold under the margin scheme (no asterisk) are subject to 21 % VAT on the buyer’s premium only (Article 58 §4 W.BTW).

Lots marked with an asterisk (*) are sold under the normal VAT regime. In such cases, VAT is charged on the hammer price plus buyer’s premium at the rate applicable to the nature of the goods. For works of art, collectors’ items and antiques, the reduced rate of 6 % applies; for other goods the standard rate of 21 % applies.

The exports to third countries (i.e. non-EU) are exempted from VAT, and so will be exports made by companies from other EU member states if they state their VAT identification number.

If an auction participant personally exports a lot to a third country (i.e. non-EU), Lempertz refunds the VAT as soon as Lempertz has received the proof of export and import, and provided that it was included in the purchase price.

18. Reservation for invoices – An invoice issued during the auction or immediately after the auction requires verification. Lempertz cannot be held liable for errors in these invoices.

19. Payment – Successful bidders attending the auction in person pay the purchase price to Lempertz immediately after the auction. The purchase price is immediately due and payable, also for buyers who did not attend the auction in person.

Bank transfers are to be made exclusively in Euros. Cheques cannot be accepted. When the purchase price amounts to €3.000,00 or more, the buyer cannot pay in cash (anti-money laundering legislation). This also applies when the purchase price of different lots together amounts to €3.000,00 or more.

The payment is not deemed to have been effected before Lempertz has received it in cash or before the bank account of Lempertz has been duly credited. The payments of the buyer to Lempertz always firstly serve for the settlement of the oldest outstanding debt of the buyer to Lempertz.

20. An invoice corresponding to another client – The request to issue an auction invoice in the name of a client other than the bidder has to be made immediately after the auction. Lempertz reserves the right to refuse such a request. The bidder and the buyer are jointly and severally bound by all obligations arising from that bid.

21. Late payment and non-payment – In case of late payment, interests amounting to 1% of the purchase price a month are, automatically and without any prior notice of default, charged from the due date onwards.

In case of non-payment within five (5) working days after the auction, Lempertz is entitled (at its discretion):

o to insist on performance of the agreement; and/or

o to dissolve the purchase agreement by simple written notification, without any prior notice of default and without any intervention by the courts. Lempertz can reoffer and resell the lot at an auction; and/or

o to claim damages for non-performance from the buyer in default, such as – but not limited to – the payment of the difference between the agreed purchase price and the new purchase price of the lot after a new auction, plus the cost of resale Under no circumstances the defaulting buyer is entitled to the possible surplus when the lot is sold at a higher purchase price at the new auction; and/or

o to retain the lot as well as any lot allocated to the buyer at the same auction or at any other auction. Lempertz has the right to release the lots only when the total amount due for all the lots has been duly paid. Lempertz can transport, store and insure the lots at the expense of the buyer.

Lempertz has the right to reject or not take into account any bids placed by or on the account of the defaulting buyer during future auctions.

22. Collection of purchased lots – The buyer is obliged to collect the purchased lot immediately after the auction. The lot will not be surrendered to the buyer until the reception of full payment by Lempertz. Lempertz is not liable for the purchased lots, except in the case of wilful intent.

23. Transport, dispatch or shipping – Every transport, dispatch or shipping of purchased lots is organised by the buyer on his own responsibility. Without any exception the transport, dispatch or shipping takes place at the expense and the risk of the buyer.

24. Failure to collect purchased lots – In case the buyer does not collect the purchased lots within four (4) weeks after the auction, Lempertz is entitled to store and insure the not-collected lots at the expense of the buyer. In that case, the store and insure costs are 1% of the hammer price a month. Lempertz is not liable in the event of loss or damage, except in case of intentional acts.

IV. State of the purchased lots

25. The Buyer’ duty to investigate – All lots put up for sale at the auction can be viewed and inspected prior to the auction. The buyer undertakes to inspect and investigate the lots before the auction. The buyer is considered to be fully and personally informed at its own risk about the state and quality of the lots, as well as about the authenticity of the lots and the conformity of the lots with the description in the catalogue. The buyer bears the risk of the identification of the lot.

26. The awareness of the buyer – The buyer acknowledges that it is not possible for Lempertz to examine all lots in detail. The buyer acknowledges that Lempertz is reliant upon the information of the submitter for the description of the lots such as for example in the catalogue.

The buyer acknowledges that every statement in the catalogue, the brochures or any other publicity, as well as in any condition report from Lempertz, in relation to authorship, origin, creation, age, attribution, quality and state of the lot is only an opinion and not a fact. The buyer acknowledges that Lempertz does not warrant and cannot give any warranty as to the authenticity of the lot.

The buyer acknowledges that the lots submitted are usually from a certain age, so that it is impossible that the lots are in perfect condition.

27. statements and descriptions of the lots – All statements and descriptions in the catalogue and related specifications on the internet are compiled in good faith. They are derived from the status of the information available at the time of compiling the catalogue.

Every statement or description in the catalogue, the brochures or any other publicity, as well as in any condition report from Lempertz, in relation to authorship, origin, creation, age, attribution, quality and state of the lot is an opinion and not a fact and cannot be considered as a reality. The statements and descriptions in the catalogue are provided for information purposes only, without any warranty. The same applies for illustrations and images in the catalogue, as well as any other oral or written information.

The statements, descriptions and illustrations are no part of the contractual agreed characteristics. The certificates or certifications from artists, their estates or experts are no part of the agreement, unless if they are explicitly mentioned in the catalogue text.

28. The state of the lot at the moment of the allocation (‘as is’) – The buyer purchases the lots in the state in which they are found at the moment of the allocation, with their defects and imperfections. The state of the lot is not always mentioned in the catalogue. The absence of any reference to the state of the lot does not imply that the lot is in a good state or that the lot is free from damages, defaults or restorations.

V. Copyright

29. Photography and publicity – The submitter and the buyer grant the right to Lempertz to photograph and publish each lot in its possession in relation to the auction and in any other relation. Lempertz acquires and preserves the copyright on all images and can use them at its own discretion, even after the lot has been sold.

VI. Liability and warranty

30. The nature of the obligations – The obligation of the buyer and the submitter resulting from the contractual relation are result obligations (*‘obligation de résultat’*), unless expressly provided otherwise. The obligations of Lempertz arising from the contractual relation are best efforts obligations (*‘obligation de moyen’*).

31. Joint and several liability – The buyer, the bidder and anyone who buys for joint account, are jointly and severally liable for all obligations arising from the sale.

32. No liability/warranty for the lots – The buyer buys the lots in the state in which they are found at the moment of allocation, with their defaults and imperfections. Lempertz does not give any warranties in this regard. Lempertz cannot be held liable for the damages resulting from a default, a loss or a damage to the purchased lot, irrespective of the legal basis, except in the case of wilful intent.

33. No liability for the catalogue or condition report – Lempertz is not liable if the lots differ from the statements, descriptions and illustrations in the catalogue or from any other information (for example online). Lempertz is not liable for a condition report drawn up at the request of bidder.

34. No liability/warranty for non-authenticity – Lempertz does not warrant the authenticity of the lots and is not liable for non-authenticity of the lots, except in case of wilful intent. The liability for bodily injury or damages caused to health or life remains unaffected.

35. Limitation of liability – In any case the liability of Lempertz is limited to the total purchase price which was effectively paid by the buyer.

36. Claims against the submitter – In the event of variances from the catalogue descriptions which result in negation or substantial diminution of value or suitability of the lot, Lempertz is entitled to pursue its rights against the submitter through the courts. In the event of a successful claim against the submitter, Lempertz does only reimburse the buyer the total purchase price paid. Under no circumstances this amount exceeds the amount of the claim against the submitter which was granted and effectively paid.

Lempertz, has the right to transfer its claim for damages against the submitter for any damage arising from the inauthenticity of the auctioned lot to the buyer, without any further liability.

VII. Miscellaneous

37. Place of performance – The place of performance of the obligations resulting from the contractual relations is Brussels.

38. Applicable law – Belgian law is applicable to the contractual relations. The provisions of the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG) are not applicable.

39. Dispute settlement – All disputes resulting from or relating to the contractual relation will be resolved exclusively by the courts and tribunals of Brussels.

40. waiver of set-off or merger confusion – The buyer and the submitter waive their right to invoke set-off or merger confusion. The buyer is not entitled to invoke article 1653 of the Belgian Civil Code in relation to buyer’s disturbance.

41. Partial nullity – If one or more provisions of these conditions of sale would be declared completely or partially null and void, then this nullity is limited to this provision and the remaining provisions of these conditions of sale are not affected, unless otherwise provided.

Shipping Instructions

Lempertz SA is prepared to instruct Packers and Shippers on your behalf and at your risk and expense upon receipt of payment and instructions.

For information:
Phone +32.2.5140586 bruxelles@lempertz.com

- Surface Mail
- Airmail
- Shippers/Carriers
- Insurance
- Air Freight
- I will arrange collection

Lots to be packed and shipped to:

Telephone
Charges to be forward to:

Date and signature:

Versandanweisung

Der Versand der ersteigerten Objekte wird auf Ihre Kosten und Gefahr nach Zahlungseingang auf Ihre Anweisung vorgenommen.

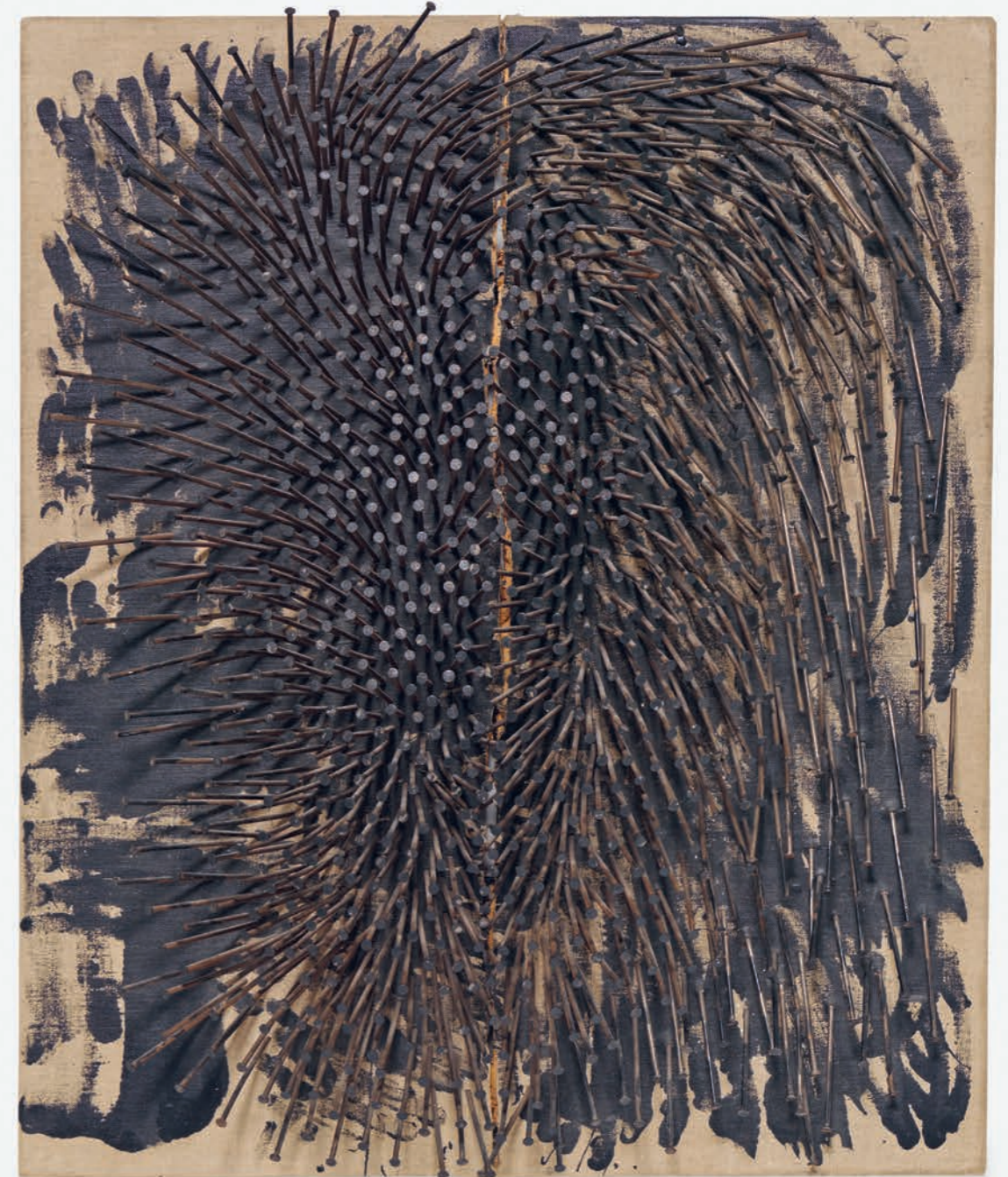
Bei Rückfragen:
Tel +49.221.92 57 29-19 shipping@lempertz.com

- Post/DHL o.a.
- Luftpost
- Luftfracht
- Abholung persönlich
- Versicherung (nur zum vollen Rechnungsbetrag)

Versand an:

Telefon
Rechnungsempfänger:
(wenn abweichend von Versandadresse)

Datum und Unterschrift:



GÜNTHER UECKER STURZ. 1988. Nägelung und Schultafellack auf Leinwand auf Holz 90 x 75 x 17 cm.

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MODERN ART 5/6 JUNE 2026, COLOGNE

Preview 30 May – 3 June, 4 June by appointment

modern@lempertz.com



MAURICE UTRILLO.
ÉGLISE DE MURATO, CORSE. CIRCA 1940. Oil on canvas, 54,3 x 65,2 cm. ESTIMATE € 40.000 – 45.000

MODERN ART 5/6 JUNE 2026, COLOGNE

Preview 30 May – 3 June, 4 June by appointment

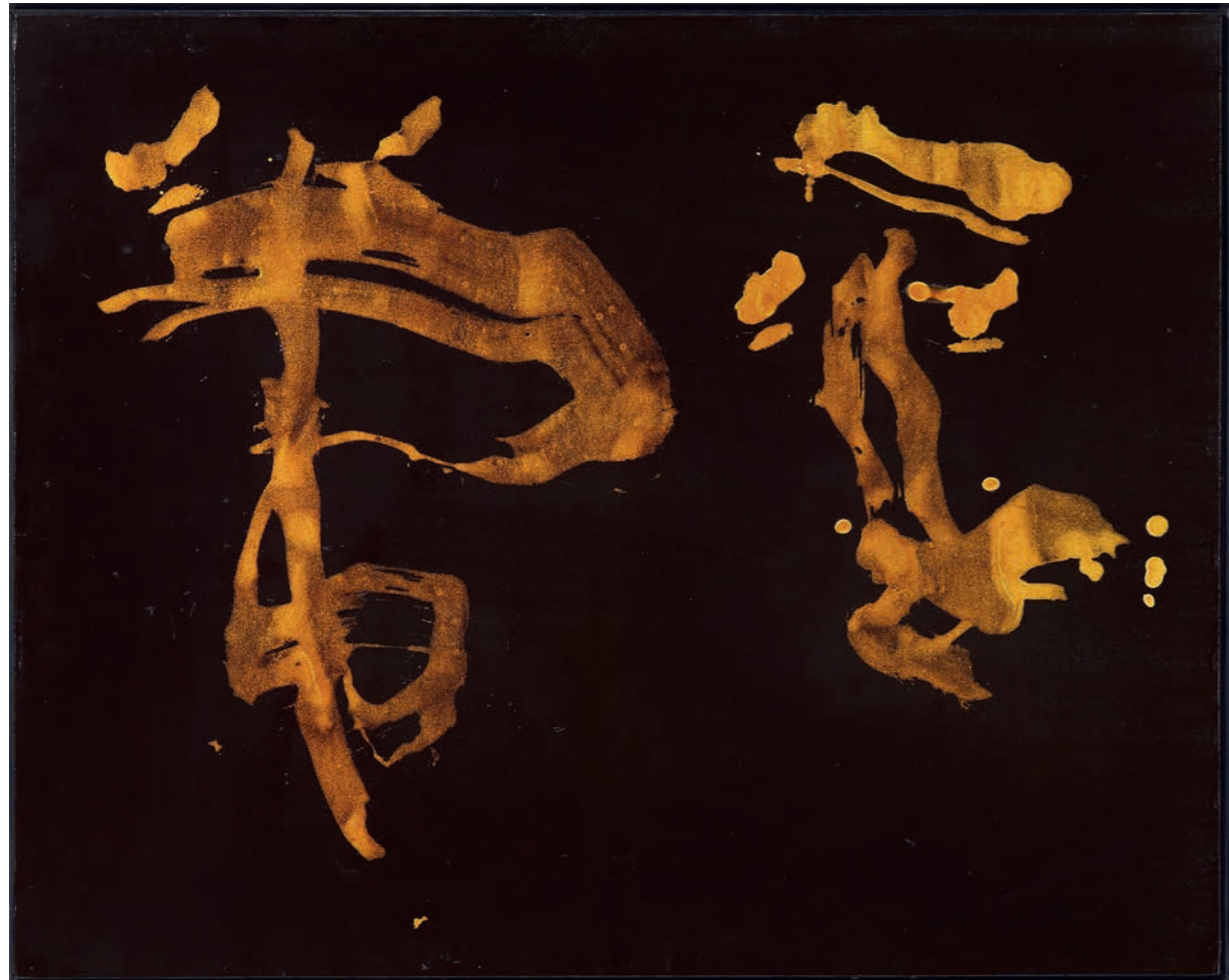
modern@lempertz.com



PIERRE-AUGUSTE RENOIR COCO MANGEANT SA SOUPE. 1905. Oil on canvas, 46,3 x 37,9 cm. ESTIMATE € 500.000 – 600.000

ASIAN ART
13 JUNE 2026, COLOGNE

asian@lempertz.com



MORITA SHIRYŪ HEIJŌ (ALLTAGSGEIST). 1964. ESTIMATE € 15,000 – 20,000



LAYERS OF BEAUTY
THE HEINZ AND ELSE KRESS COLLECTION - PART 1
10 DECEMBER 2026





LEMPERTZ

1798