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THE COLLECTION OF EDWIN & CHERIE

SILVER

ART OF AFRICA, OCEANIA, AND THE AMERICAS

NEW YORK 13 NOVEMBER 2017

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AUCTION IN NEW YORK
13 NOVEMBER 2017
SALE N09620
11:00 AM
LOTS 1-71

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10 am-5 pm

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Saturday 4 November
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APPRECIATING ART AND LIFE WITH ED AND CHERIE

JEAN FRITTS
STACY GOODMAN

Visiting Ed and Cherie Silver meant entering a world filled with art, music, generous hospitality and lively discussion. During our twenty years of friendship, we were always warmly welcomed into their home, where we had the pleasure of experiencing one of the great American collections of African and Pre-Columbian art. We shared a mutual appreciation of beautiful objects and the richness they add to daily life.

Arriving at their modernist home was a special experience: perched high above Los Angeles, the Silvers had a stunning view toward what is now the Getty Center, the sprawling city, and the ocean beyond. One was immediately struck by the diversity of art throughout the home. The magical Calder mobile arced gracefully over the magnificent Kota figures which had been carefully displayed on the Steinway grand piano. African sculptures encircled the room and stood out dramatically against the backdrop of the brilliant colors of their Sam Francis, the large Jalisco seated couple presided quietly at the side. One's eye was drawn to the wall of statuesque West Mexican ceramic figures, before seeing the magnificent Chilkat blanket, which hung in easy proximity to a suite of Picasso prints. It was a family home enhanced by the refined and intelligent aesthetic of Ed and Cherie.

At each visit, whether over Ed's Gimlets or at breakfast in the family room, we thoroughly discussed the art world, and learned about their adventures: the family trips to Mexico to visit important museums, or flying into Tikal, or the search for the perfect African sculpture in Paris. Through the lively banter between Ed and Cherie, it was clear they each brought their distinct perspective to building the collection. Cherie's love of clay and her pursuit of her own ceramic work gave her an impressive insight into the ancient Mexican figures which she shared with us. It was Ed who researched the obscure publications in which the pieces in the collection had appeared. He wrote to any and all museums or scholars when he thought they could uncover more about an object. Over forty years their unassuming but persistent pursuit led Ed and Cherie to see many great art collections around the world, whether on trips organized by the Museum of African Art, or with their friends in New York, Paris, and Brussels. From their lifetime commitment to learning and connoisseurship, they absorbed the stories behind each sculpture, print or painting, and developed a distinctive and cohesive vision as collectors. Ed and Cherie always intended for the collection to return to the market so that others may engage in their own journey.

Ed and Cherie greatly enriched our lives, not only through their passion and knowledge of art, but through their graceful appreciation of their life and family.



Edwin and Cherie Silver in their home in Los Angeles. Photograph courtesy of Bobbie Entwistle

THE SILVER COLLECTION: A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE

DAN SILVER

DONNA SILVER FRAJND

KAREN SILVER HOROWITZ

For our parents, Ed and Cherie Silver, art was part of a life well lived – and life was unimaginable without it. Their shared passion for both Western and non-Western art was part of an overall approach to living that focused on aesthetics and beauty. Our family home in Los Angeles was designed in the prevailing 1960s modernist style to accommodate their ever-expanding art collection. The Steinway grand piano in our living room became a pedestal for their extraordinary collection of Kota reliquary figures. The architecture blended with the art, and opened upon the spectacular hilltop view of the Santa Monica Mountains and the expansive Los Angeles basin below.

The house was surrounded by nature and filled with greenery; the large koi pond our father designed, his landscaping of the gardens around the house, and the orchids and other plants he cultivated provided year-round indoor blooms. Our mother's extraordinary cooking and warm hospitality enlivened their frequent dinner parties, and our father's superb Bloody Mary's and the melodies of their favorite opera arias animated our regular Sunday brunches.

Their early interest in contemporary ceramics developed into a serious pursuit for our mother, who created studio ceramics professionally. Raised in this environment, the three of us children learned from their extraordinary taste in art and design. We appreciated and shared in the power, beauty, and quality of the extraordinary sculptures, prints and paintings they loved and collected.

From our earliest memories, our parents were passionately involved in Los Angeles cultural institutions. We saw their interests develop from modern, contemporary, and German Expressionist art and expand to diverse non-Western art forms: Japanese prints, South Asian bronzes, Native American Indian baskets, blankets, and totem poles, Pre-Columbian ceramic figures, African sculptures and masks, and Oceanic works of art. They held a special love for African art, which they instinctively felt embodied the essence of modern expressionism, and knew to have been so influential on the modern masters they admired. During these years they got to know the major West Coast dealers in modern and contemporary art, as well as what was then called "primitive" or "ethnic" art. We know from personal experience because they dragged us with them all the time! In the 1960s, Monday nights were for "art walks", when we would visit all of the galleries on La Cienega Boulevard.

Our family vacations were focused on art. When we were still quite young, we traveled to American Indian reservations in New Mexico, and flew to the jungles of Tikal, Guatemala on a single engine open-doored plane which reminded our father of those he navigated during World War II. Our parents brought a scholarly approach to the pursuit of collecting, assembling an excellent library of reference books. They joined numerous collectors groups, the "Ethnic Art Council", and saw and handled as much art as they could. More than once a phone call from an art dealer arriving in Los Angeles resulted in a family dinner left unfinished. It was important to get there first!



While they remained committed supporters of their hometown institutions, they ambitiously expanded their horizons beyond Los Angeles, seeking out auctions and dealers in New York and Europe. They met museum curators, dealers, and like-minded collectors across the U.S. and Europe, with whom they developed deep, long-lasting friendships. Together with these kindred spirits, they regularly socialized and traveled, including to the regions where the art they collected originated: Mexico, Central and South America, Africa, India, Nepal, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, the Middle East, Australia, New Guinea, and New Ireland. Our mother always said that collecting gave their lives depth and meaning that she greatly cherished; they both found it a privilege to be part of this little "world," and always took pleasure in sharing with us their amazing experiences and never-ending enthusiasm for collecting. We never grew tired of "the phone call"; with each and every purchase - no matter what we were doing, no matter where we were in the world - each of us received the call, urging a visit home to make the acquaintance of their latest acquisition.

Despite their relentless enthusiasm, they were not gamblers. They collected cautiously, and this restraint allowed them to focus on acquiring the very best pieces, and they made few mistakes. While they always strove to learn everything they could about regions, objects, functions, and cultures, this never compromised their primary focus: aesthetics. The works of art that entered the Silver Collection are expressions of our parent's individual tastes, and their eye for both elegance and strength of form.

The Silver Collection is the result of their dedication and shared passion for these extraordinary art forms. Each object has a voice in the chorus. Each acquisition bears a story evoking happy memories of our parents, and of the unique and wonderful experience of growing up amidst these stunning objects. These remembered experiences are those that shaped our family and our lives, and continue to enrich the three of us to this day.



Edwin and Cherie Silver in their home in Los Angeles. Photograph courtesy of Bobbie Entwistle

DAN MASK

CÔTE D'IVOIRE OR LIBERIA

Height: 9 ¾ in (23.8 cm)

PROVENANCE

John J. Klejman, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on May 19, 1972

\$ 6,000-9,000

Throughout their long journey together as collectors, Edwin and Cherie Silver developed close relationships with many of the most influential art dealers, scholars, fellow collectors, and connoisseurs in both Europe and the United States. Among them was the Polish-born art dealer John J. Klejman (1906-1995), who served as a historical bridge between the European art world as it existed before the Second World War and the budding art market in prosperous post-war America. Klejman would become one of the most important New York dealers of his day, and one of the most influential figures in developing American appreciation of African art.

As a pre-medical student in Paris, Klejman had first discovered African art as a young man in the 1930s, not long after it had become fashionable with members of the artistic avant-garde (see Van Dyke, *African Art from The Menil Collection*, 2008, p. 21). From a Jewish family in Warsaw, he made his business selling antique European decorative arts before the Second World War. Surviving the horrors of the war, Klejman and his family were displaced and ultimately settled in New York. He found that he was able to acquire African art of high quality

at relatively reasonable prices in both Europe and in New York, and thus he began to rebuild his business and capitalised on the art world's growing enthusiasm for arts of world cultures. In the late 1950s, Klejman opened his New York gallery at 982 Madison Avenue in the Parke-Bernet building. The gallery would become the site where many of the great American collectors of the twentieth century had their first exposure to African Art, with the benefit of Klejman's famously refined taste and intuition for quality.

Ed and Cherie Silver acquired numerous pieces from Klejman, including this very fine Dan mask of classic *deangle* form. As Klejman described it in his characteristic style: "A mask carved in hard wood with a convex forehead, large slit eyes with simplified boat shaped lids and eyebrows, small delicate nose with flaring narines, pursed mouth with highly stylised lips and pointed chin. Along the edge of the face on the recessed surface are deep grooves and along the outer edge and above the forehead are perforations for the attachment of fibers. Excellent highly polished smooth patina. Nineteenth century."



John J. Klejman (1905-1995), 1964



1

2

DAN ZOOMORPHIC MASK

LIBERIA

Height: 11 ½ in (29,2 cm)

PROVENANCE

Reportedly collected *in situ* by George Way Harley
Bill Moore, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above circa 1975

This archaic mask may represent a rare type of *kaogle* (or chimpanzee) mask used in the *kagle* masquerade, an attribution made on the basis of certain similarities with a more modern mask observed *in situ* in the western Dan country by Fischer and Himmelheber. They described it as an "unusual *kagle*" (Fischer and Himmelheber, *The Arts of the Dan in West Africa*, 1984, p. 71, fig. 67). The authors note that *kaogle* masks generally have either "deep-set triangular apertures or tubular forms" for eyes, and that "the forehead is very low, but bulges pronouncedly over the powerful cheeks which are usually pyramidal in shape. The large, protruding mouth has no lips, but is sometimes equipped with formidable teeth" (*ibid.*, p. 67). We may note the presence of certain of these features – the bulging forehead and prognathic, toothsome jaw – in this bestial mask, which combines an alert air with a leer of inexpressible cunning.

According to notes in the Silver archive, Ed and Cherie were told that it had been collected by George W. Harley, the Methodist Missionary noted for the collections he formed for the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, and for his publications on the Dan and their neighbors. In one of his publications, Harley illustrates a similar mask, with bulging forehead, narrow eyes, and projecting jaw with bared teeth. He describes it as "the dog – a forager for the *Poro*" (George Schwab, George W. Harley, ed., "Tribes of the Liberian Hinterland", *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University*, Vol. XXXI, 1947, fig. 90 f.). This interpretation is supported aesthetically by a canine-like mask in Charles Ratton, *Masques Africains*, Paris, 1930, pl. 5, from the collection of the writer Paul Morand, although the scant text provides no ethnographic context. Ratton himself owned another similar mask, illustrated by Philippe Dagen and Maureen Murphy, *Charles Ratton. L'invention des arts «primitifs»*, Paris, 2013, p. 167, fig. 137 (mis-captioned).

2

\$ 6,000-9,000



3

BAULE MASK

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Height: 15 in (38.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Jean Negulesco, Paris and Los Angeles

Bob Willoughby, Los Angeles

Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on September 5, 1972

\$ 10,000-15,000



4 | BAMANA FEMALE FIGURE

MALI

Height: 18 in (46 cm)

PROVENANCE

John J. Klejman, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on April 8, 1972

\$ 40,000-60,000



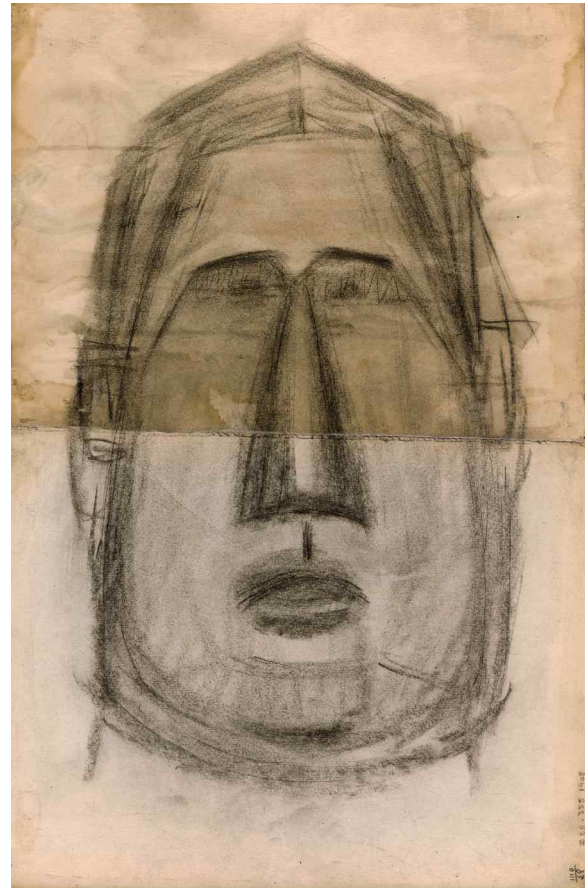
4



4



Detail



Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire*, August 1908.
© 2017 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Nyeleni female figures played an important role in the initiation ceremonies of the *Jo*, a religious society that helped to provide social cohesion and order in many southern Bamana communities. Once every seven years, young Bamana initiates who have been studying the rites and ideas of the *Jo* and preparing for their ceremonial “re-birth” are lead to a secluded bush where a symbolic “killing of the *Jo*” takes place. This event marks the attainment of adulthood for the initiates - known as *jodenw* - after which they travel to various villages demonstrating their knowledge of the *Jo* society through song and dance in exchange for gifts. On their travels, the *jodenw* carry these stylized *nyeleni* figures, which “evoke the young girl in her ideal state with the highest degree of physical attraction” (Ezra, *Figure Sculpture of the Bamana of Mali*, 1983, p. 11-12). As such, *nyeleni* figures represent the canons of Bamana female beauty.

While these canons of beauty are bound up in Bamana tradition, their sculptural expression in this figure bears affinity to Cubist aesthetics of early twentieth century Western artists. The figure of the torso is elongated and cylindrical, framed by slender and angular arms. Two sharply conical breasts protrude from the top of the torso’s concentrically patterned surface, which evokes the scarification found on the bodies of young Bamana women. The drastically shortened lower body of the figure is defined by the rounded, exaggerated buttocks that provide a geometric counterbalance to the breasts. The facial features of the figure are flattened and stylized while the narrow and geometrically shaped head are accentuated by a pair of metal earrings. The dark patina on the surface of the wood, sometimes enhanced by the anointment of oils in *Jo* rituals, harkens to the bodies of young female dancers (Ezra, *Bamana Figurative Sculpture*, 1986, p. 17).

5 MANO MASK

LIBERIA

Height: 9 ¼ in (23.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Merton D. Simpson, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on November 21, 1972

\$ 20,000-30,000

Like their better-known neighbors the Dan people, the Mano of northeastern Liberia produced stunningly refined sacred masks in a sculptural tradition of their own. Many of them were used in rituals by the *Poro* society, an initiatory group most prominent among the Mano, which imposed strict discipline on the entire social order, providing adjudications in disputes and overseeing a rigorous initiatory process for boys. As in the practices of other West African cultures, *Poro* rituals often featured masks as part of a full-bodied costume that embodied the spirit of an ancestor or in nature.

This Mano mask is distinct for the aesthetically soft and flesh-like texture of its surface. The subtlety of the sculptor's rendering of the human flesh is most impressive in the area around the slit-like eyes, above which the eyebrows are depicted with the mere suggestion of two ridges and under which the cheekbone structure is sensitively represented by the contours of the wood's surface. The area around the mouth and the pointed chin is similarly naturalistic; the artist has even etched vertical lines to depict minute natural folds on the upper lip. Furthermore, the broad and flat forehead and the lower two-thirds of the face are on intersecting planes, making the mask curved at the back. According to Monni Adams, this curvature in the mask "provides the most significant structural difference between the Dan and Mano face masks" (Adams, 'Locating the Mano Mask', *African Arts*, Vol. 43, No. 2, Summer 2010, p. 29).



5

6 DAN BIRD MASK CÔTE D'IVOIRE OR LIBERIA

Height: 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ in (26.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Charles Rattton, Paris
Carlo Monzino, Lugano, acquired from the above
Private Collection, acquired from the above
Sotheby's, London, June 17, 1991, lot 104,
consigned by the above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired at
the above auction

PUBLISHED

Susan M. Vogel, *African Aesthetics: the Carlo
Monzino Collection*, New York, 1986, p. 39, fig. 33

EXHIBITED

The Center for African Art, New York, *African
Aesthetics: the Carlo Monzino Collection*, May 7 -
September 7, 1986

\$ 150,000-250,000



6

The sublimely beautiful masks of the Dan people are among Africa's most refined sculptural styles. Inhabiting the region bisected by the border between present-day Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia, the Dan participated in masquerades which have important judicial, political, religious, and social functions. The masks worn by the dancers in such masquerades represent a diverse pantheon of characters that embody particular spirits. These take on human and animal forms, or as in the case of the present mask, a fantastic mixture of both. The mask as an object is endowed with spiritual power, and distinguished masks may be passed on from generation to generation, their potency increasing with age.

This large mask has a profound black glossy patina, the result of repeated anointment and use, with encrustations of ritually-applied materials. The voluminous downward curved beak recalls that of a hornbill, and is enhanced by small serrated teeth, a feature which the sculptor has borrowed from another animal. The mask's anatomy is human also, with heavily lidded eyes facing forward above angular cheekbones. Above the eyes is a diadem of points, which recall a costume headband, or a formation of feathers, or perhaps a highly-abstracted interpretation of a headband of vertical mammal horns worn by Dan warriors and referenced in other bird masks (Vogel, *African Aesthetics*, 1986, p. 39).

The sculptor has built the volumes of this mask in a masterful arrangement of cubistic planes. The highly stylized radiating points of the diadem rise in an arched row from the forehead, predicting the exuberant Art Deco crown structures such as Manhattan's Chrysler Building; beneath this the bone structure of the human eyes and cheeks are formed by sophisticated polyhedrons, bilaterally symmetrical and divided by a strong ridge at the center of the brow. The central ridge continues down into the patiently-smoothed mass of the enormous beak, the upper mandible of which is underscored by two deeply inscribed parallel lines. The elegant slits of the eyes project feminine beauty, fused with the solidity and strength of a powerful bill, structured cheekbones, and spiked diadem.

These aesthetics no doubt appealed to the mask's previous owner Charles Ratton, the preeminent dealer of indigenous cultures' art in twentieth century Paris, who propelled the evolution of taste in this type of art among Western audiences. With close ties to the Parisian avant-garde, including André Breton, Tristan Tzara and Paul Eluard, Ratton helped to elevate the status of so-called "primitive" arts, which he considered worthy of equal attention in the canons of world art.

continued





Max Ernst (1891-1976), collage from *Une semaine de bonté ou les sept éléments*, 1934. The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The iconography of a part-human, part-bird is a powerful artistic concept which has appeared across various world cultures. Bird-human hybrids appear in Oceania and Papua New Guinea, and the surrealist Max Ernst famously drew inspiration from the bird men of Easter Island reliefs and wood sculpture. According to Maurer, "The Primitive aspect that Ernst saw in himself [...] not only enabled him to live in harmony with nature, but helped him explore all her mysteries and appropriate the secrets of her creative powers. In both classical and tribal mythology, animals and their anthropomorphized variants appear as symbols of both the spiritual forces of nature and man's mystical relationship to these forces. These types of images appear throughout Max Ernst's oeuvre - a bizarre menagerie of insects, fish,

animals, and fantastic hybrids that constitute his personal bestiary. The bird, however, is by far his favorite and most frequently represented creature, and in his intimate association with birds we find Ernst's most significant association with the Primitive" (Mauer, in Rubin, ed., *Primitivism*, vol. II, 1984, p. 553). Ernst went so far as to identify himself with a mythical character named Loplop, a bird-man who frequently recurred in his drawings, paintings, and collages. Ernst's famous 1934 collage-novel *Une semaine de bonté* is rich with references to classical mythology as well as forms inspired by the arts and myths of primary cultures, and especially bird-headed human figures, expressions of a powerful spiritual and artistic affinity across distant cultures.



6



7

7 | **MANO MASK**
LIBERIA

Height: 10 in (25.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Loed van Bussel, Amsterdam
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on January 2, 2004

\$ 6,000-9,000



8

DAN MASK
CÔTE D'IVOIRE OR LIBERIA

Height: 9 ¾ in (24.8 cm)

PROVENANCE

Private Collection
Laurin, Guilloux, Buffetaud & Tailleur, Nouveau
Drouot, Paris, June 21, 1984, lot 126, consigned
by the above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
at the above auction

\$ 10,000-15,000

8

DAN MASK

CÔTE D'IVOIRE OR LIBERIA

Height: 10 in (25.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Emil Storrer, Zurich
 Josef Mueller, Solothurn, acquired from the above in the early 1950s
 Barbier-Mueller Museum, Geneva, by descent from the above
 Merton D. Simpson, New York, acquired from the above
 Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on November 15, 1979

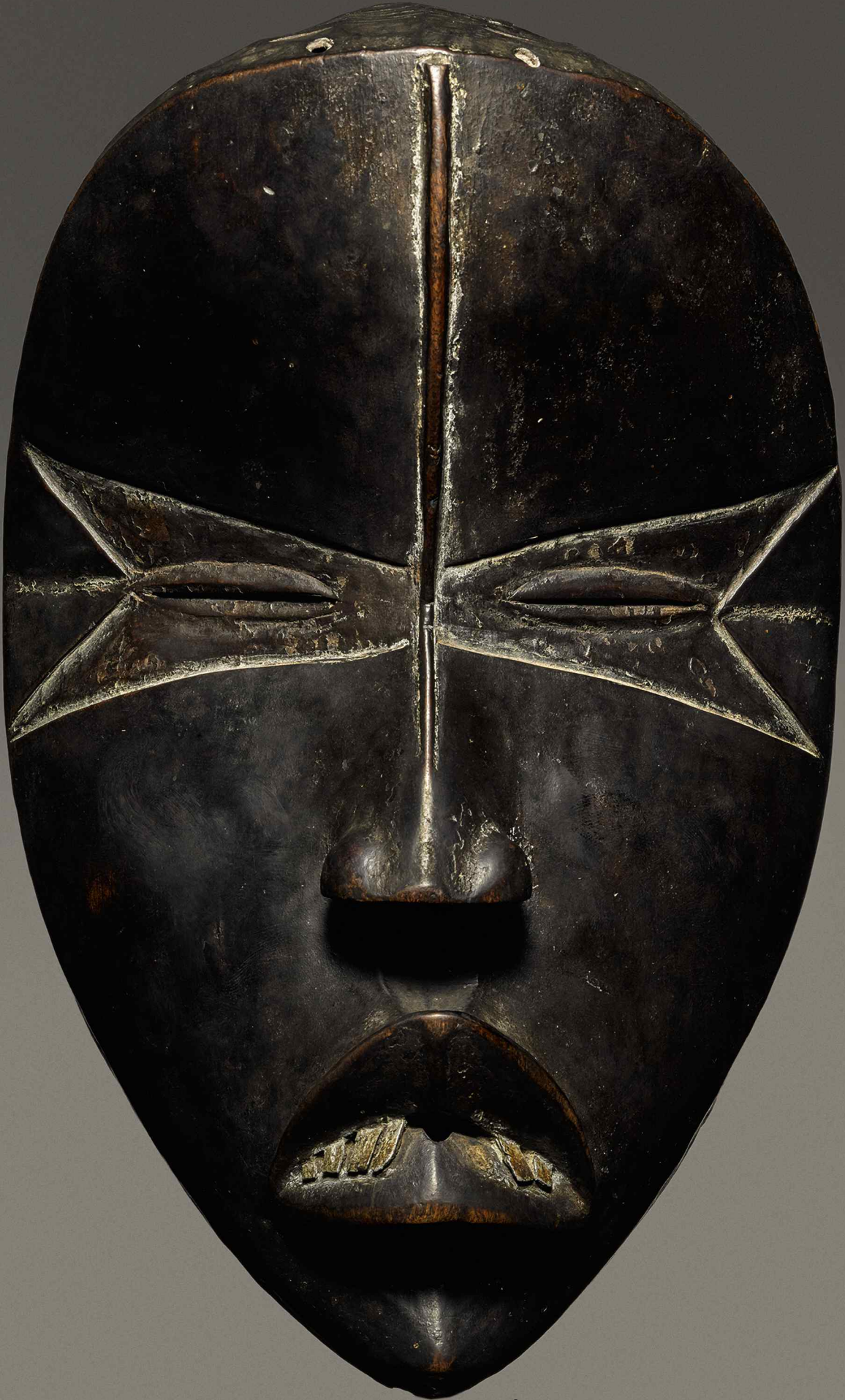
PUBLISHED

Museum der Stadt Solothurn, ed., *Allerlei Schönes aus Afrika, Amerika und der Südsee*, Solothurn, 1957, cat. no. 278
 Warren M. Robbins and Nancy Ingram Nooter, *African Art in American Collections, Survey 1989*, Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 159, no. 296
 Mary H. Nooter, *Secrecy: African Art That Conceals and Reveals*, New York, 1993, p. 149, cat. no. 65

EXHIBITED

Kunstmuseum, Solothurn, *Allerlei Schönes aus Afrika, Amerika und der Südsee*, 28 September - November 10, 1957
 The Museum for African Art, New York, *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals*, February 13 - August 15, 1993, and travelling:
 Bermuda National Gallery, Hamilton, September 11 - December 31, 1993
 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, February 1 - March 27, 1994
 The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, May 1 - July 24, 1994
 Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, January 21 - April 9, 1995

\$ 100,000-150,000





Herreman notes that "The mythology of the Dan peoples, who live on both sides of the border between Ivory Coast and Liberia, tells us that they received the mask, named *ge*, from their creator, Zlan. As an independent supernatural being, the mask serves as a tool of communication both between humans, and between humans and their ancestors, to help resolve problems of all kinds. For the Dan, the sacred mask acts as an independent character that is unpredictable and needs to be pleased and treated with respect. Otherwise, it may take revenge. Many Dan masks have idealized and stylized human features that are smoothly sculpted with a large domed forehead, a fine nose, slightly modeled cheekbones, and a small mouth with filed teeth" (Herreman, *Facing the Mask*, 2002, p. 39).

The present mask is of unusually large size, with impressive depth and volume, and extraordinary sculptural quality. Within the classification proposed by Eberhard Fischer and Hans

Himmelheber, the Silver mask can be identified as a *deangle* type, a mask which "[...] has an oval face; a high forehead which is usually articulated with a central, vertical scar; narrow, slitted eyes which are often painted white [...] and a small mouth" (Fischer and Himmelheber, *The Arts of the Dan in West Africa*, 1984, p. 11 et. seq.).

The Silver mask previously belonged to Josef Mueller, a collector of modern paintings and an early promoter of non-Western art whose holdings would form the seed for the famed Barbier-Mueller Museum in Geneva. It was first published and exhibited in Mueller's hometown of Solothurn in 1957.

Stylistically the mask relates closely to another major Dan mask illustrated on the cover of Fischer and Himmelheber's definitive study of Dan art, *Die Kunst der Dan*, published in 1976 as a catalogue to the exhibition of the same name held at the Rietberg Museum in Zurich. The ridge bisecting the forehead - which represents

a cosmetic scarification - flows downward into the ridge of the nose. This line is crossed by a lateral recessed field, once painted white, which circumscribes the narrow slitted eyes and flanges out into four points, also representative of scarification patterns seen on high-status Dan individuals. Beneath the nose, an elegantly stylized philtrum descends in a sweeping curve into a dramatically upturned upper lip. The ridge of the forehead is echoed in the voluminous faceted mouth, which retains most of its metal-applique teeth. The upward point of the top lip is mirrored below by a pointed chin, completing the extraordinarily elegant composition of this classic Dan face.

On the ritual function of such masks, Fischer and Himmelheber note that "*Deangle*, also known as *bonagle*, is a character whose names mean 'joking or laughing masquerade', indicating that this is a friendly, attractive spirit, one who makes men joyful when he appears" (*ibid.*, p. 11).

10 WÈ-GUÉRÉ MASK

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Height of mask: 10 ½ in (26.7 cm); height with accoutrements: 17 in (43.1 cm)

PROVENANCE

Merton D. Simpson, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on June 8, 1977

PUBLISHED

Warren M. Robbins and Nancy Ingram Nooter,
African Art in American Collections, Survey 1989,
Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 168, no. 329

\$ 30,000-50,000





11 DOGON JANIFORM FIGURE

MALI

Height: 15 in (38.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

Philippe Guimirot, Brussels
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on June 28, 1976

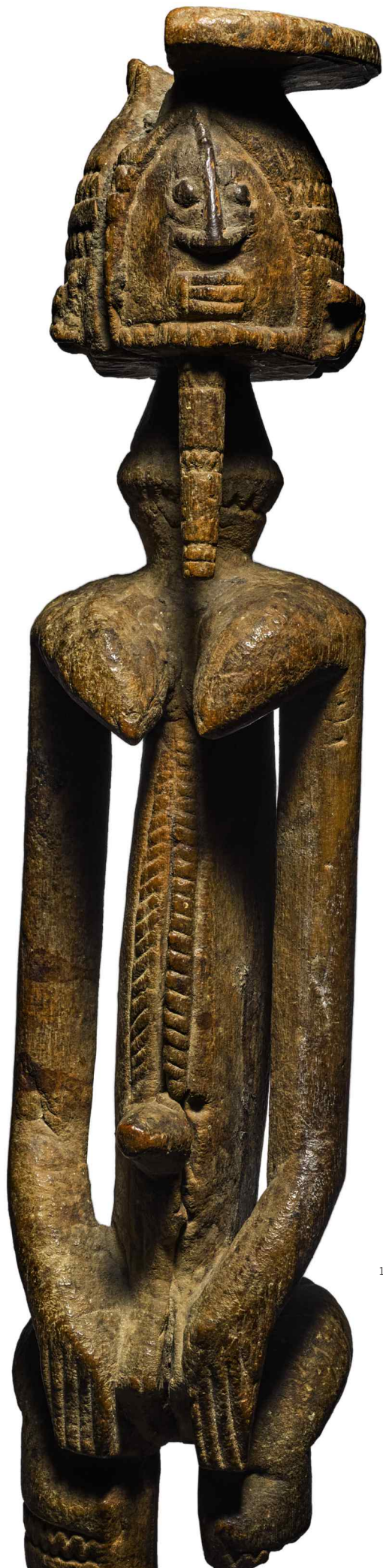
EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, *Male and Female: the Couple in African
Sculpture*, February 12 - September 1, 1983

PUBLISHED

Herbert M. Cole, *Male and Female: the Couple in
African Sculpture*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 12, fig. E
(cat. no. 19)

\$ 25,000-35,000



12 | BWA MASK BURKINA FASO

Height: 74 ¼ in (188.6 cm)

PROVENANCE

Emil Storrer, Zurich, collected *in situ* in the 1950s

René Rasmussen, Paris, presumably acquired from the above

Ralph Nash, London, acquired from the above

Alexander Martin, London, acquired from the above

Harry Franklin, Los Angeles, acquired from the above

Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on March 17, 1975

PUBLISHED

Hans Himmelheber, *Negerkunst und Negerkünstler*, Braunschweig, 1960, unpaginated, col. pl. III (*in situ* photograph by Emil Storrer)

Alexander Martin, *Fine African Sculpture*, London, 1971, unpaginated, pl. 5

Christopher D. Roy, *Art of the Upper Volta Rivers*, Meudon, 1987, p. 275, cat. no. 234

EXHIBITED

Alexander Martin, London, *Fine African Sculpture*, May 25 - July 2, 1971

\$ 30,000-40,000



The present lot *in situ*, circa 1950s. Photograph by Emil Storrer



12

According to Christopher Roy (letter to Edwin and Cherie Silver, January 12, 1985), the present mask originates from the villages of Boni or Dossi, which are located in present-day Burkina Faso. In his discussion of this type, Roy notes: "The most impressive Bwa masks are the great plank masks, named *nwantantay* in Boni and Dossi. These are carved on two basic patterns: the majority of plank masks consist of a large oval facial area with a protuberant round mouth through which the performer can see. [...] above are two great target eyes. The face is connected to the plank by a diamond or lozenge form from which protrudes a downward-curving and very prominent hook" (Roy, *Art of the Upper Volta Rivers*, 1987, p. 274).

Elsewhere Roy notes, when describing a similar mask: "The downward curving hook represents the beak of a hornbill, a bird associated with witchcraft and divination, a messenger of the dead" (*ibid.*, p. 240, caption to cat. 199). He continues: "The plank is a large, vertical rectangle marked with geometric patterns in black and white, and sometimes red. This is, in turn, surmounted by a large crescent with the opening turned up" (*ibid.*, p. 276).

Wheelock adds that plank masks such as the present example "are the major artistic expression of the southern Bwa. The masks are signboards or tablets on which the graphic patterns communicate the ethical and moral values of the community. [...] The black and white checkerboard [...] represents the value of lifelong learning" (Wheelock, *Land of the Flying Masks*, 2007, p. 410, text to pl. 140).





SHAPES IN THE FOREST

KOTA RELIQUARY SCULPTURE

Dazzling abstract faces covered with shining brass and copper plates seem to float in space; geometric abstraction of remarkable ingenuity and variety present expressions of sublime, ferocious, startled, or subdued emotion; rigorously organized designs, always symmetrical, present the human form reduced to its most basic visual elements.

These extraordinary sculptures once rose above the sacred ancestral reliquaries of the peoples generally referred to today as the Kota, in the regions straddling the borders of modern-day eastern Gabon and western Republic of the Congo. Over the course of several decades, Edwin and Cherie Silver devoted themselves to gathering an exceptional assemblage of sculptures representing the quality, variety, and aesthetic strengths of Kota traditions. They famously displayed this group, the heart of their collection, atop a Steinway grand piano in their Los Angeles modernist home, beneath another artwork comprised of geometric metal panels: an iconic mobile by the twentieth-century abstract American sculptor Alexander Calder.

Reliquary sculpture of central Africa has been rightfully “considered to occupy the very summit of African creativity.”¹ Kota reliquary figures, in particular, have become icons of world art, and are today instantly familiar to Western viewers as one of the key visual traditions of pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa. The basic elements of this tradition are distinctive and do not exist elsewhere in Africa; carved in wood, the human head is rendered with graphic geometrical shapes in a flattened, mostly two-dimensional shape, rising verti-

cally on an integrally carved cylindrical neck above an open lozenge. The front of the sculpture (and sometimes also the back) is covered with an arrangement of flattened metal attachments, often in varying colors and with chased geometric motifs. No two figures are entirely identical, but the tradition conforms to certain basic and often quite formulaic canons: a vertical, flat, oval face, with a coiffure rendered as lateral wings on either side, sometimes terminating in pendants, other times in duck-tail curls; and the face surmounted by a horizontal crescent-shape. In the minds and hands of Kota artists, these canons were subject to an astonishing diversity of formal improvisation, reduction, embellishment, and invention.

Among the first sub-Saharan African artworks to be displayed in the West, Kota reliquary sculptures would play a key role in the appreciation and understanding of pre-colonial African art by the outside world. The narrative of their “discovery” broadly followed the well-told story of that of African art generally: first removed from Africa and brought back to Europe as ethnographic specimens; then discovered by artists excited by the aesthetic solutions they revealed; and finally esteemed in their own right within the canons of world art. Recent studies and exhibitions such as *Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary*, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2007-2008, have shed new light on Kota art, enhancing our understanding not only of these sculptures as they relate to Western art but also within their own rich cultural context. (Edwin and Cherie Silver loaned three of their Kotas to that exhibition: see lots 13, 14, 24.)

continued



Two men holding reliquary figures, 1917. Photograph by Rev. G. A. Jacobsson, Svenska Missionskyrkans Arkiv, Stockholm





From the first arrival of Europeans in the Kota regions of central African in 1874, to the earliest voyages into the Kota heartland by European explorers such as Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza (1852-1905) and his brother Giacomo di Brazza (1859-1888), and through the work of missionary-ethnographer Efraim Andersson (d. 1990), scholars have direct ethnographic accounts of the life and culture of the Kota from the period when traditional beliefs were still observed.² According to the leading scholar on Kota art, Louis Perrois, the traditions and practices of ancestor worship largely died out between 1930 and 1940 under the pressures of colonial intervention and a changing world.³ Perrois himself studied amongst the Kota beginning in the 1960's, and was able to conduct precious ethno-historical research, gathering "a wide range of information, carefully preserved in the memories of the elderly, and otherwise destined for oblivion."⁴

The typological analysis of Kota styles is a dizzying undertaking, with an astonishingly varied array of very specific formal traits, which correspond and diverge with great complexity. Scholars have attempted ambitiously detailed geographical and chronological classifications which, as Perrois has noted, "even lengthy books have not been able to achieve."⁵ However, we do have the benefit of broad classifications of styles, associated with certain cultural groups which have come to be lumped

together under the imperfect heading of Kota. Represented in the Silver collection are the very distinctive skeletal style of the Sébé River, in its highest expression in the hand of the "Master of Sébé" (lot 51); the inventive Obamba styles, thought of as the most 'classic' types, situated in Southern Gabon (lots 13, 14, 22, 50, 51, and 52); and the richly decorated variants of the Ndassa group of the northeastern edge of present day Gabon, and the northwestern Republic of the Congo (lots 23 and 24).

As William Rubin proved, Kota reliquary figures bear not only an affinity to the works of century modernist abstraction, but indeed played a key role in its propulsion. Examples of Kota sculpture were visible at the musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro at the time of Pablo Picasso's famous visit there in 1907, and according to Rubin, contributed to the stunning breakthrough seen in *Les Femmes d'Alger* of that year. According to Rubin: "Though the three 'masked' femmes of Picasso's picture have little direct relation – except for scarification markings – to any masks Picasso could have seen at the time, they bear affinities, at least in the daring of their abstraction (as well as in aspects of their surface patterning), to a type of tribal object that was indeed visible very early at the Trocadéro and available even before the turn of the century in the curio shops, namely, the copper-covered reliquary guardian figures of the Kota and Hongwe [Mahongwe] people.

The Kota figures, which both Barr and Golding have associated with the *Demoiselles*, are found in impressive variety [...] some of this range was already evident in those in the Trocadéro at the time of Picasso's visit. Their heads range from quite realistic visages streaked symmetrically by diagonals that are not scar marks and are sometimes called stylized 'tears' to exceedingly abstract conceptions where the face consists of nothing but a relieved vertical running centrally from top to bottom between two hemispheric eyes. Others contain a wide variety of parallel line designs that derive from scarification patterns. The shapes of the heads usually are roughly oval (sometimes slightly pointed at top or bottom or both), extended occasionally into stylized lozenges. [...] Taken together, the Kota and Hongwe reliquary figures – certainly the most abstract of the tribal sculptures Picasso encountered – constitute, along with Baga figures, and Fang masks, and reliquary heads, the most important African prototypes for his art from June 1907 until the summer of the following year.”⁶

Rubin describes the specific formal traits that Picasso borrowed from Kota reliquary sculpture, in addition to the parallel lines like those seen in Ndassa figures (see lot 24). The openwork diamond-shaped lozenges, which typically form the lower part of Kota figures, were misinterpreted as radically bent legs, and quoted in paintings such as his *Dancer of Avignon*, also of 1907.⁷ Rubin concludes: “More important, however,

than any visible borrowings was Picasso's sense of tribal objects as charged with intense emotion, with a magical force capable of deeply affecting us. This went hand in hand with his understanding of the reductive conceptual principles that underlie African representation. On this level, Picasso's debt to African art was not superficial but profound.”⁸

The iconographic designs of Kota figures reference the faces, and in some cases the skulls, of those whose sacra they watched over. The surfaces of copper and brass – as highly valued as gold in nineteenth century Gabon – were kept gleaming by repeated sand polishing, and evoked the sparkling surface of a body of water, beyond or beneath which was the world of the deceased. For their creators, these sculptures embodied a mystical conduit between the living and the dead. In the best examples we still feel powerfully the distillation of an ancestor's gaze, through which comes an unmistakably transcendent presence. The highest examples of this artistic practice reveal to us artists whose formal ingenuity, use of materials, and artistic skill resulted in a condensation of spiritual force in league with the great sacred sculptures of the world.

1 LaGamma, *Eternal Ancestors*, 2007, p. 3

2 See Perrois, *Kota*, 2012, p. 13 et. seq.

3 Perrois, *ibid.*, p. 10

4 Perrois, *ibid.*, p. 9

5 Perrois, *ibid.*, p. 20

6 Rubin, *Primitivism*, vol. I, 1984, p. 266

7 Rubin, *ibid.*, p. 269

8 Rubin, *ibid.*, p. 268

13 KOTA-OBAMBA RELIQUARY FIGURE

GABON

Height: 17 1/8 in (43.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Max Itzikowitz, Paris, acquired at the marché aux puces, Saint-Ouen in 1979
Private Collection, acquired from the above
Daniel Hourdé, Paris
Roland de Montaigu, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on September 15, 1986

PUBLISHED

Alain Chaffin and Françoise Chaffin, *L'art Kota. Les figures de reliquaire*, Meudon, 1979, pp. 156-157 and p. 330, cat. no. 65
Louis Perrois, *Arts du Gabon. Les arts plastiques du bassin de l'Ogooué*, Arnouville, 1979, rear cover and fig. 198
Daniel Hourdé, advertisement, *Arts d'Afrique Noire*, No. 46, Summer 1983, p. 45
Daniel Hourdé, advertisement, *Arts d'Afrique*

Noire, No. 47, Autumn 1983, p. 31
Gérard Delorme, 'Réflexions sur l'art funéraire KOTA', *Arts d'Afrique Noire*, No. 122, Summer 2002, pp. 33 and 38 (line drawings)
Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, 2007, private view invitation
Alisa LaGamma, *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, New York, 2007, p. 241, cat. no. 70

EXHIBITED

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, October 2, 2007 - March 2, 2008

\$ 50,000-70,000



This unusual Kota figure displays a range of stylistic elements, demonstrating the complexity of the hallmarks which scholars use in attempting to classify Kota sculpture. The dominant visual element is a vertical band of reddish copper bisecting the forehead, starkly differentiated from the yellow brass behind. A similar medial ridge in copper against brass is seen in the works given to the Sébé River region (see lot 51). The small, heart-shaped face is seen in figures attributed to the Obamba, and also those given to the Ndassa; the out-swept pendants of the coiffure on either side also recall Ndassa forms.

Much rarer are the characteristics that classify this work as unique, or a unique survival: the dramatic overall form of the figure, with a lozenge comprised of kinetically-bowed lines and terminating in a downward-pointed conical knob, reminiscent of a drop of water. Narrow openwork separates the crescent from the top of the head; and the back of the figure bears an echo of the lozenge form in fine diamond motif, with the center deeply carved.

This charming sculpture was selected for the landmark exhibition *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, 2007-2008. In the accompanying catalogue, Alisa LaGamma noted: "This elegant creation features crisp contours underscored with double rows of incised dots. At its core is an especially elongated convex forehead encased in brass and

bisected by a narrow copper band stretching from its apex to the tip of the nose. The facial features are concentrated in a heart-shaped configuration at the base of the head. Stippled bands accent the curve of the brow and the horizontal apertures of the eyes and mouth. The tips of the horizontal crescent extend downward to connect with the triangular projections at the sides of the face. A narrow sliver of negative space is exposed at their interstices. The representation is delicately balanced at the base by the openwork lozenge. Associated with fertility, that motif is repeated prominently on the reverse side of the head, where it appears as an abstract design carved in relief" (LaGamma, *Eternal Ancestors*, 2007, p. 240).

Overall the style is most closely associated with those of the Southern Kota regions. As Perrois notes: "Rare though they are, the works of the Southern Kota (Obamba and Wumbu) caught the attention of the discoverers of 'Art Nègre' in the 1920s, perhaps on account of their noticeably more 'cubist' appearance than other objects in French Congo." (Perrois, *Kota*, 2012, p. 150).

In its exceptional stylistic character, its lyrical headdress, and its distinctive stippling design, the present work relates closely to a famous Kota figure with round eyes in the Barbier-Mueller collection (see Perrois, *Art ancestral du Gabon*, 1985, cover), which also bears a raised diamond motif on the reverse.



13

14 KOTA-OBAMBA RELIQUARY FIGURE

GABON

Height: 21 ¼ in (54 cm)

PROVENANCE

Probably collected *in situ* before 1910 by Hubert-Antoine Bure (1867-1935)

Thence by family descent

Sold at auction in Marseilles, June 5, 1994

Alain de Monbrison, Paris, acquired at the above auction

Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above in July, 1994

PUBLISHED

Sharon F. Patton, 'Treasures: Aesthetic Discoveries and Visual Delights', *Tribal*, Vol. 4, No. 37, Spring 2005, pp. 70-71

Sharon F. Patton, *Treasures*, Washington, D.C., 2005, unpaginated portfolio

Alisa LaGamma, 'Exhibition Preview: Eternal

Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary', *African Arts*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Winter 2007, p. 41, fig. 12

Alisa LaGamma, *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, New York, 2007, pp. 246-247, cat. no. 74

EXHIBITED

National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C., *Treasures*, November 13, 2004 – August 15, 2005

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, October 2, 2007 - March 2, 2008

\$ 250,000-350,000





14

This astonishingly abstract sculpture ranks among the greatest surviving expressions of Kota visual ingenuity. With little actual resemblance to a face, the form manages to instantly announce itself as an attentive human presence. The balanced symmetrical design is as pleasing in its geometric elegance as it is in its formal novelty, employing an economy of form rarely found elsewhere in world sculpture.

In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, Alisa LaGamma discusses the present figure: "This representation is so abstract that its reference to the human form is not obviously apparent. Individual passages of the composition are articulated as distinct forms whose elemental character is underscored through contrasting fields of color. Despite the precision devoted to delineating each of these forms, the contours are gentle curves and the composition emphasizes bilateral symmetry. Its focal point is the central lozenge configuration, which has no hard edges. This slightly convex passage is bisected by a broad vertical band with a raised circular ridge spanning its length. That axis subdivides the face into two crescents that mirror one another. Positioned at the outer edges of this midpoint are convex circular eyes pierced by iron pupils. An outer lateral recessed crescent projects beyond either side of the face."¹

"The dialectic created by the dominant vertical band is underscored by the use of two distinct metals - the rich red copper of the band, eyes, and vibrant horizontal flourishes projecting from the upper and lower reaches of the head and the brass applied to the rest of the surface. In regional cosmology and ritual, red refers to the passage from this world to the next as well as to the rising and setting of the sun. Eugenia Herbert suggests that its use in relation to reliquaries served to augment their power by addressing both their associations with worldly wealth and their position of mediation between life and death. While most Kota designs feature variations on a unitary crescent spanning the crown of the head, this interpretation displays two distinct elements that curve outward and resemble horns or wings. The brief cylindrical neck unifies this fantastical head with a crisp openwork lozenge base that echoes the form of the face."²

A small group of comparable works help to situate this sculpture within the Kota corpus, and confirm its antiquity and archaic status:

The first is a work of great historical importance which is today in the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris (inv. no. 71.1884.37.22). Collected by 1884 by Schwebish and Tholon, during one of the earliest European forays into Kota lands, it is composed of a vertical diamond face

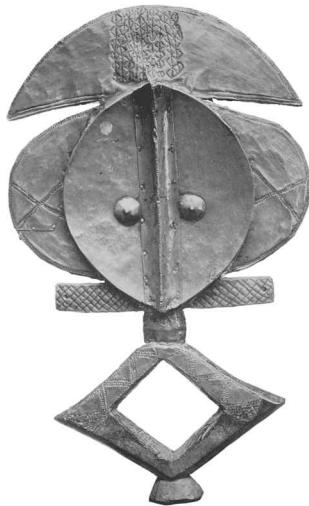
continued



Kota Reliquary Figure, Gabon. Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris (inv. no. 71.1884.37.22); Collected by 1884



Kota Reliquary Figure, Gabon. Ex Jacqueline Loudmer, Paris



Kota Reliquary Figure, Gabon. Ex Georges de Miré, Paris, Helena Rubinstein, Paris and New York, and William Rubin, New York



Kota Reliquary Figure, Gabon. Jean Willy Mestach, Brussels

with rounded edges, like the Silver figure, pointed at top and bottom and devoid of facial features aside from circular projecting eyes and a ridge down the center suggesting the bridge of a nose.

The second is the famous and much-discussed work previously in the collections of Helena Rubinstein and William Rubin, which was included in the 1935 exhibition *African Negro Art* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The nearly round central medallion comes to a subtle point at top and bottom, and is divided vertically with a copper band very much like the Silver figure, and is likewise punctuated with bulbous copper eyes.

The third is a work from the collection of the artist Jean Willy Mestach, Brussels, which like the Rubinstein figure bears a rounded central medallion with subtle points at top and bottom; however it differs in that the eyes are made of horizontal crescent shapes.

The fourth was previously in the collection of Jacqueline Loudmer, Paris (sold Christie's, Paris, June 23, 2016, lot 116). It shares with the present lot and the Mestach figure the feature of "rabbit ears", but has a more vertical central face, and is unique in this small group in that it has a horizontal band behind the eyes.

While the mixture of shared traits and key differences seen in this charming and mysterious style testifies to the enigma of Kota classification, it is instructive to compare the Silver figures with these examples, each of distinguished status and pedigree. We may never know what art historical progression resulted in the variations observed, but it is clear that in a moment of genius, a small group of Kota artists achieved an astounding breakthrough and created a visual device of special artistic status. Simplicity of design relies on perfection of form; the artist has nowhere to hide. The extraordinarily exemplars of this, the rarest of Kota styles, express a purity and openness which transcend their origins.

1 LaGamma. *Eternal Ancestors*, 2007, p. 246

2 LaGamma, *ibid*



HELENA RUBINSTEIN

ICONIC COLLECTOR

One of the great collectors of the twentieth century, the name Helena Rubinstein has a special aura in the field of African art. Her iconic collection contained countless masterpieces, from the Bangwa "Queen" immortalized by Man Ray to one of the greatest of all Fang heads.

Known respectfully simply as *Madame*, Rubinstein was introduced to African Art in London. There she had met the sculptor Jacob Epstein, who acted as a cicerone for Rubinstein and who himself formed a legendary collection. We do not know when Rubinstein bought her first African sculpture, but it was perhaps not until after she moved from London to Paris in 1918. Certainly by the early 1930's her collection was well established. Although he listed her as "Helena Rubinstein, New York" in the catalogue for *African Negro Art* in 1935, James Johnson Sweeney, the exhibition's curator, observed that Rubinstein's best objects were in Paris, and her collection reflected the French style of collecting of the period: what William Rubin described as "the Guillaume-Ratton taste."¹ This is defined by "what Robert Goldwater called 'an intellectual primitivism': the preference for geometric forms, balance, and a smooth, dark finish."² This taste is evident in the lustrous patina and calligraphic form of the Bamana headdress (lot 16). We know that this object was collected *in situ* by Frédéric Henri Lem, and was acquired by *Madame* sometime after 1936 (see catalogue note for further discussion). The early history of the distinctive and expressive Kota-Wumbu reliquary figure (lot 15) remains enigmatic, as it does for many objects in Rubinstein's collection.

continued



Helena Rubinstein (1872-1965), photographed in Paris, 1960, with works from her collection, including: Punu Mask, Gabon; Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957), *Négresse blanche II*, 1928; Joan Miró (1893-1983), *Oiseaux dans la nuit*, circa 1944



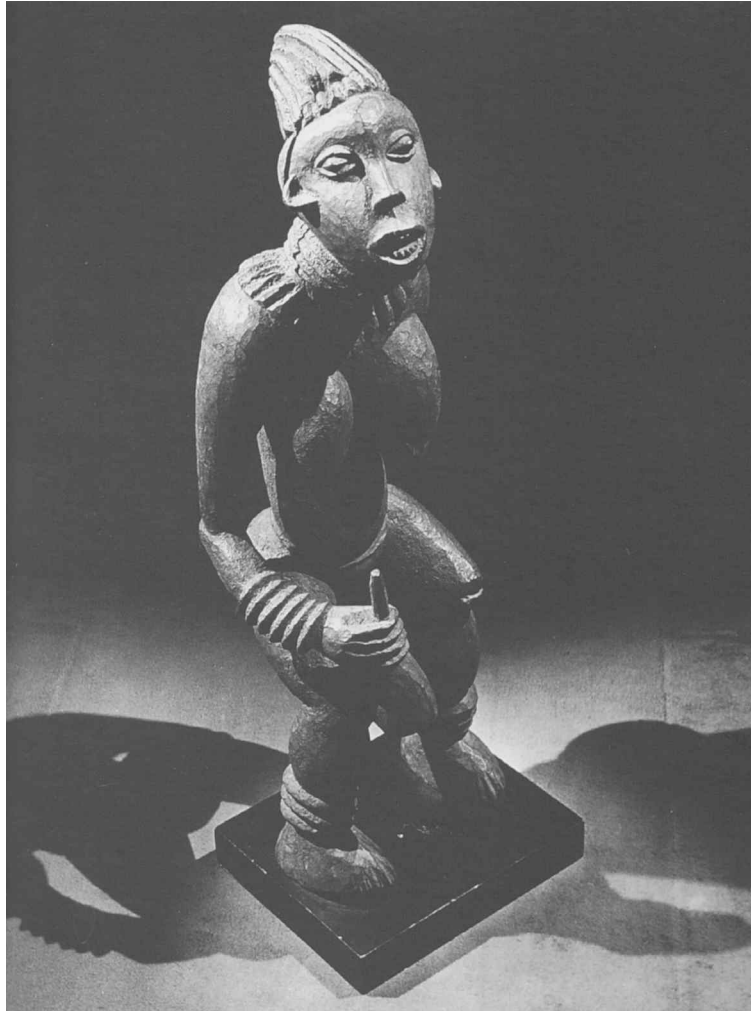
Fang Reliquary Head, Gabon. Illustrated in James Johnson Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, 1935

Rubinstein relished visiting flea markets with her friend Baroness d'Erlanger,³ although there is no clear indication of any African objects having been among her discoveries. Rubinstein bought objects – some of which she knew were coveted by Epstein – at the Eluard-Breton and de Miré sales in Paris in 1931, and at other auctions. The Bangwa “Queen” (Fondation Dapper, Paris, inv. no. 3343) was bought from Charles Ratton, who served as another of her advisors, while the great Fang head came from Ratton’s friend Ernst Ascher. Regardless of her sources, the attachment of Rubinstein’s name to an object is today itself an imprimatur, and the auction of her collection at Sotheby Parke Bernet in New York in 1966 remains legendary. The two Rubinstein objects in the Silver Collection were among the sculptures acquired at that sale by Harry Franklin of Beverly Hills, who fully appreciated the importance of her collection.⁴

Rubinstein was justly proud of her African art, which was perhaps the most intellectual and avant-garde part of her art collection. The collection’s quality demonstrates not only her great wealth, but also the still greater instinct she displayed in any field she chose to pursue. She sought the best, and invariably acquired it. As *Madame* herself said, “when I followed [...] my own ‘inner eye’, my purchases were invariably good.”⁵



Inagaki's stamp with his artist's name, *Yoshio*



Man Ray, *Untitled* (Bamileke Figure, *njuindem*, "Bangwa Queen", Bangwa Kingdom, Cameroon), circa 1934. © Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/ADAGP, Paris, 2017

A NOTE ON INAGAKI

With the exception of some wall mounted objects, nearly all objects in Rubinstein's collection were mounted by the Japanese ébéniste Kichizô Inagaki, whose work as a base maker was first eulogized by his client Charles Ratton (Christie's, London, *African Art from the Collection of the late Josef Müller of Solothurn*, June 13, 1978, p. 8). It has been studied more recently by Charles-Wesley Hourdé ('Kichizô Inagaki, Dans l'ombre des Grands du XX^e siècle', *Art tribal*, No. 66, Winter 2012, pp. 96-105).

Both objects offered here bear the distinctive stamp of his artist name, *Yoshio*, as well as the equally unmistakable stamp of his refined *shibui* aesthetic. The base of lot 15, the Kota reliquary figure, is in red-brown lacquer. This finish appears on a number of Inagaki

bases, although it is perhaps less associated with him than dark cerused oak (see lots 16, 23, 51). The lacquer bears an unmistakable resemblance to the work which Inagaki and Seizo Sugawara produced for Eileen Gray in the 1910-1920s, whose first patron, the couturier and collector Jacques Doucet, was a friend of Helena Rubinstein, which may suggest that these bases were made at around the same time.

- 1 Rubin, ed., *Primitivism*, vol. 1, 1984, p. 17
- 2 Le Fur, in Suzanne Slesin, ed., *Over the Top*, 2003, p. 106
- 3 Klein, *Helena Rubinstein: Beauty is Power*, 2014, p. 61
- 4 Franklin also acquired the Bangwa "Queen" at the Rubinstein auction.
- 5 Clifford, 'Helena Rubinstein's Beauty Salons, Fashion, and Modernist Display', *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 38, Nos. 2-3, Summer - Autumn, 2003, p. 105

15 | **KOTA-WUMBU
RELIQUARY FIGURE
GABON**

on a base by the Japanese wood artist Kichizô Inagaki (1876-1951), Paris
Height: 19 ½ in (49.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Helena Rubinstein, Paris and New York
Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, *The Helena Rubinstein Collection*, April 29, 1966, lot 196
Harry Franklin, Los Angeles, acquired at the above auction
Valerie Franklin, Los Angeles, by descent from the above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above in 1989

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, *Portraits of Madame*, 1976

\$ 70,000-90,000



15



The present lot illustrated in *The Helena Rubinstein Collection: African and Oceanic Art, Parts One and Two*, Sotheby Parke Bernet, New York, 1966

The eccentric aesthetic of this Kota, once in the collection of cosmetics magnate Helena Rubinstein, and which Edwin Silver referred to as his "harlequin", conveys a quizzical expression with bright, slightly uneven, copper diamond-shaped eyes. These are placed on a concave face quartered by thick overlapping brass strips on a copper ground, with a pyramidal nose above a small cross-hatched almond shaped mouth. The crest is bisected by a vertical field of interlocking design of stacked repoussé bars separated by chased crosshatching and punctuated with hammered pins. A line of vertically pointed circles crowns the top edge, each affixed with a central pin; these irregular circular attachments also dot the front of the figure's 'body'. The unique, archaic style of this figure suggests particularly great age, a supposition supported by the presence of a native binding repair, made *in situ* before the figure left its original context, as well as the greatly weathered bottom part of the lozenge. On the reverse, a highly stylized abstract human face is composed of simple arched brows above horizontal hatch marks for eyes, on a raised narrow vertical diamond, reminiscent of the aesthetics of the iconic masks of the Kota's neighbors, the Kwele.



15 (REVERSE)

16 BAMANA HEADDRESS MINIANKA REGION, MALI

on a base by the Japanese wood artist Kichizô Inagaki (1876-1951), Paris
Height: 31 1/8 in (79 cm)

PROVENANCE

Acquired *in situ* in the Minianka Region by
Frédéric Henri Lem in 1934 or 1935
Helena Rubinstein, Paris and New York, acquired
from the above
Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, *The Helena
Rubinstein Collection*, April 21, 1966, lot 70
Harry Franklin, Los Angeles, acquired at the
above auction
Sotheby's New York, *The Harry Franklin Family
Collection of African Art*, April 21, 1990, lot 22
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
at the above auction

PUBLISHED

Frédéric Henri Lem, *Sculptures soudanaises*,
Paris, 1948, p. 74, pl. 28
Frédéric Henri Lem, *Sudanese Sculpture*, Paris,
1949, p. 74, p. 28
Dominique Zahan, *Antilopes du soleil. Arts et
rites agraires d'Afrique noire*, Vienna, 1980, pl.
12, cat. no. IF 33

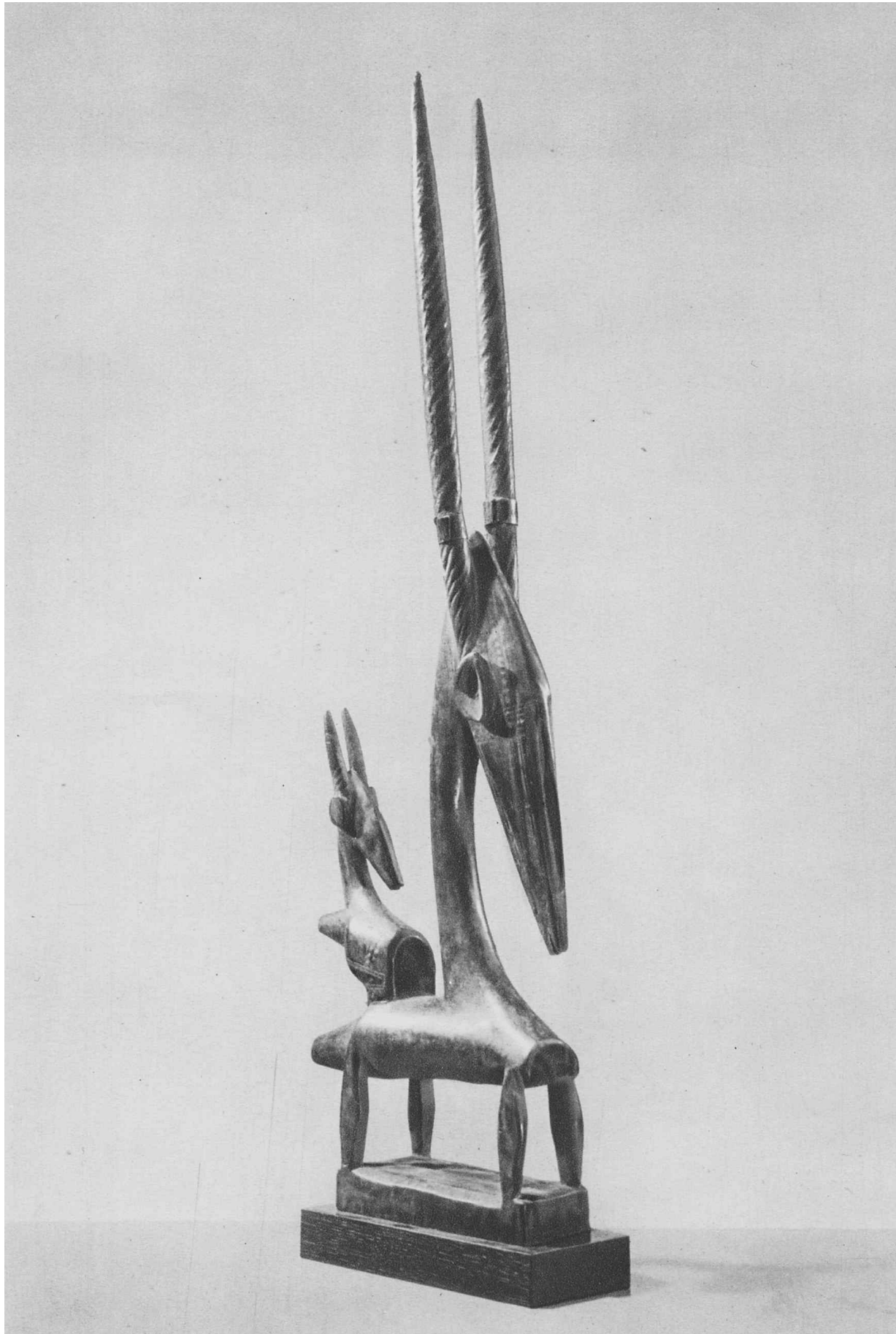
Jean-Baptiste Bacquart, *The Tribal Arts of Africa*,
London, 1998, p. 67, fig. B
Jean-Baptiste Bacquart, *L'art tribal d'Afrique
noire*, Paris, 1998, p. 67, fig. B
Alissa LaGamma, *Genesis: Ideas of Origin in
African Sculpture*, New York, 2002, p. 87, fig. 41

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, *Antelopes of Africa*, 1974-1975
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, *Portraits of Madame*, 1976
University Art Museum, University of California,
Santa Barbara, *Deceptive Realities: Authenticity
and Quality in African Art*, January 15, 1991 -
February 24, 1991
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Genesis:
Ideas of Origin in African Sculpture*, November
19, 2002 - April 13, 2003

\$ 150,000-250,000





The present lot illustrated in Lem, *Sculptures soudanaises*, Paris, 1948

One of the most recognizable works of art from the Bamana culture, and indeed, in all of African art, is the *ci wara* antelope headdress. As a largely agricultural society, the Bamana venerated the *ci wara* as a divine being who gifted the knowledge of farming to those in the mortal realm. While this being was not thought to represent a particular animal, most headdresses are depicted with a combination of features from antelopes, anteaters, or pangolins for use in rituals that celebrated and encouraged the physical toil of agricultural work. Although the present lot represents a female antelope carrying her fawn, vertical styles of *ci wara* headdresses were sculpted and utilized in male and female pairs. During ceremonies held in the fields, two dancers wore full bodied raffia capes topped with either the male or female *ci wara*, in a performance that “[evoked] the elemental union of fire, earth, and through the rivulets of the raffia costume, water.” (LaGamma, *Genesis*, 2002, p. 82)

The present lot is distinguished in the corpus of *ci wara* sculptures for its illustrious pedigree and minimalist forms. Collected *in situ* in the Minianka region of modern day Mali by the French field collector Frederick H. Lem, the object was illustrated in Lem’s catalogue of finds he made during his travels in then-French

West Africa in 1934-35. By presenting high quality examples of works of art in a more comprehensive ethnographic context, Lem hoped to advance the scholarly and artistic appreciation of art indigenous to that region, though his wishes for a museum in Dakar never came to fruition. This *ci wara* eventually entered the collection of cosmetics magnate Helena Rubenstein and was sold in the landmark auction of her African art collection at Sotheby Parke-Bernet in 1966.

LaGamma described the simple beauty of this *ci wara*: “This example is especially lithe and delicately attenuated. The mother’s body is supported by legs that are unusually long and slender, and the arc of her neck, represented as a curve extending from the base of the head to the lower body, is comparatively gradual. The muzzle is oriented directly downward rather than at a 45-degree angle. The horns, impressive for their length and spiral surface texture, boast sharply pointed tips that could be lethal weapons. Except for its abbreviated horns, neck, and muzzle, the fawn is almost a mirror of its mother. The artist depicts it leaning back, delicately balanced on the mother’s posterior, a posture that evokes how Bamana children, while securely carried on their mothers’ backs, are also pulled away gently by gravity” (*ibid.*, p. 87).



17

YAKA FIGURE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF THE CONGO

Height: 17 ¼ in (43.8 cm)

PROVENANCE

George Terasaki, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on February 14, 1974

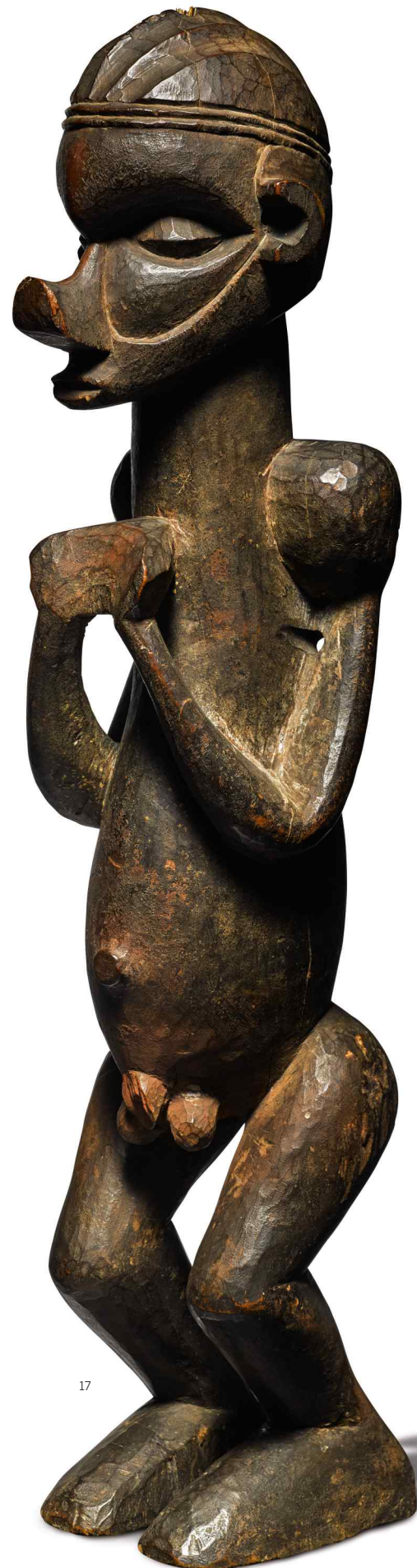
PUBLISHED

Arthur P. Bourgeois, *Art of the Yaka and Suku*,
Meudon, 1984, p. 265, fig. 245
Warren M. Robbins and Nancy Ingram Nooter,
African Art in American Collections, Survey 1989,
Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 412, fig. 1049

The Yaka people of southwestern D.R. Congo made figurative sculptures, called *biteki*, which contained charges that endowed the statuette with curative and protective powers when activated by a diviner or ritual specialist. Materials for the charge were hidden within body cavities, partially visible on the present figure through the remaining plant fibers in the top of the coiffure and the small round holes on its back and between its buttocks. According to Yaka scholar Arthur Bourgeois, the way that a *biteki* was carved sometimes literally depicted the physical ills suffered by a patient under its ritualistic power (Bourgeois, *Art of the Yaka and Suku*, 1984, p. 109). In the present lot, this seems to suggest that an unfortunate Yaka victim was hoping to rid himself of a swollen abdomen.

Sculpturally, the figure's rounded torso is supported by its two enormous and stabilizing feet and powerfully rendered legs, flexed at the knee in a position of tension. The hands of the figure, merged into one concave panel, are clasped just below the long cylindrical neck. Although not representative of any particular person, the facial features and coiffure are simple and highly refined. The combination of the slightly upturned nose, a signature form of the Yaka sculptural tradition, and the downcast eyes sunken deep into the facial plane instills the figure with a somber and contemplative expression, as if it introspectively preparing for a spiritual journey.

\$ 20,000-30,000



18 KONGO POWER FIGURE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Height: 14 in (35.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

English Private Collection, acquired in 1923
Mrs William A. Creeth, Highcliffe-on-Sea,
Hampshire, by descent from the above
Sotheby's, London, July 13, 1971, lot 251,
consigned by the above
Ralph Nash, London, acquired at the above
auction
John J. Klejman, New York, acquired from the
above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on April 8, 1972

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, *Ancestors: Art and the Afterlife*,
October 25, 1998 - June 14, 1999

\$ 40,000-60,000

The Kongo people occupied a vast territory in west central Africa, north and south of the mouth of the Congo River in today's Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cabinda, and Angola. While Kongo subgroups shared a common culture, social organization and language – Kikongo – southern groups were subject to the larger Kingdom of Kongo, whereas the northern Kongo, on the Loango coast, were organized in the smaller Kingdom of Loango. Both empires were highly developed states established well before the arrival of Portuguese navigators in 1483. At the center of wide spanning trading networks, they existed until the nineteenth century.

At the center of Kongo societal order were spiritually powerful and sculpturally dynamic *minkisi* figures (sing. *nkisi*). The guiding principle behind the creation of *minkisi* was that a ritual specialist, known as *nganga*, could manipulate the sculpture to release powerful malevolent or benevolent forces. These mystical forces were believed to have the ability to solve problems ranging from ill health, infertility, and other

physical issues to more abstract difficulties such as asocial behavior, legal dispute, and crime. The ritualists activated these forces by filling body cavities with a mix of spiritually potent "medicinal" materials, including animal, vegetal, and mineral materials known as *milongo* or *bilongo*.

This present lot is small in size within the corpus of *minkisi* sculptures, meaning that it was probably in the possession of a specific individual rather than that of a large clan or the whole community. The most prominent feature on this figure is a large rectangular charge protruding from its torso, through which some ritual materials in the form of plant fibers are visible. On top of the figure's head is a frenetic arrangement of feathers and a bulging cap, known as *mpau*, filled with mud and other ritual materials. The face is sculpted with a somber expression, from which the eyes – made out of mirrors and acting as charges – cast their omnipresent gaze upon the world, on guard for the misfortunes and dangers that lurk in the mortal realm.



19 | **KONGO-VILI
KNEELING FEMALE FIGURE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

Height: 9 in (22.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

John J. Klejman, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on May 19, 1972

PUBLISHED

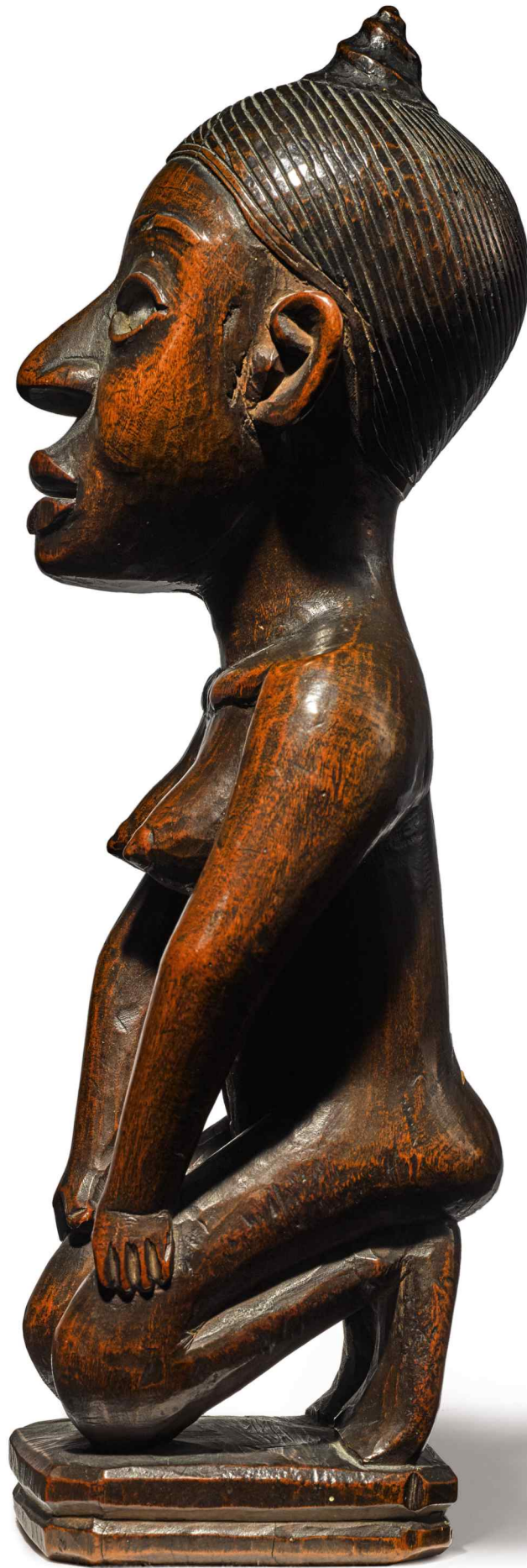
Raoul Lehuard, *Arts Bakongo. Les centres de
style*, Arnouville, 1989, vol. 1, pp. 232-233, fig. D
3-3-4 and detail

\$ 60,000-90,000



Female strength and beauty have a special place in the highly refined art of the Kongo Kingdom. Kongo power figures, or *minkisi* (sing. *nkisi*), took many different human and animal forms, including powerful female subjects which project virtues of stability, fecundity, physical beauty, and the propagation of family lineage. These were carved by a professional sculptor, and then activated to their full function by a diviner (*nganga*) through the addition of magical materials taken from the natural world. The present figure once bore a charge on the abdomen, which has since been removed, as is the case with many examples now in Western collections - either by deliberate de-consecration, or by a European collector most interested in the sculptural form. The eyes, which also contain magical substances, are covered with glass. These serve as a window onto the world of spirits, to which this figure acts as intermediary.

The highly refined, fleshy naturalistic style of this kneeling female *nkisi* relates closely to another fine kneeling figure in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. Lehuard identifies this as substyle "D 3" of the Kongo-Vili, noting that this group of female figures shares in common a distinctive cone-shaped form atop the summit of the head. Notably, the elbows are in an unusual position, slightly inverted, which probably had specific symbolic meaning, now unknown. Lehuard considers the point atop the head to be a coiffure, representative of one actually worn by Vili women, and made of a twisted braid of hair. Comparison with larger scale Kongo *nkisi* figures such as the famous Mangaaka corpus of nail power figures suggests that this could also represent a cap called *mpu* (see LaGamma, *Kongo*, 2015, p. 241), also actually worn by Vili people. In either case, the conical element is another locus of magical potency; the twisted spiral form of the point on the present figure recalls that of a gastropod shell.



19



HEMBA

THE ANCESTOR KALALA LEA

20 HEMBA-NIEMBO STATUE OF THE ANCESTOR KALALA LEA DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Height: 37 ¼ in (94.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Pierre Darteville, Brussels
Baron Frédéric Rolin, Berceuil, Grez-Doiceau and New York, by 1977
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on July 15, 1983

Alisa LaGamma, *Heroic Africans: Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures*, New York, 2011, p. 237, fig. 205
Alisa LaGamma, *Helden - Ein neuer Blick auf die Kunst Afrikas*, Zurich, 2012, p. 237, fig. 205

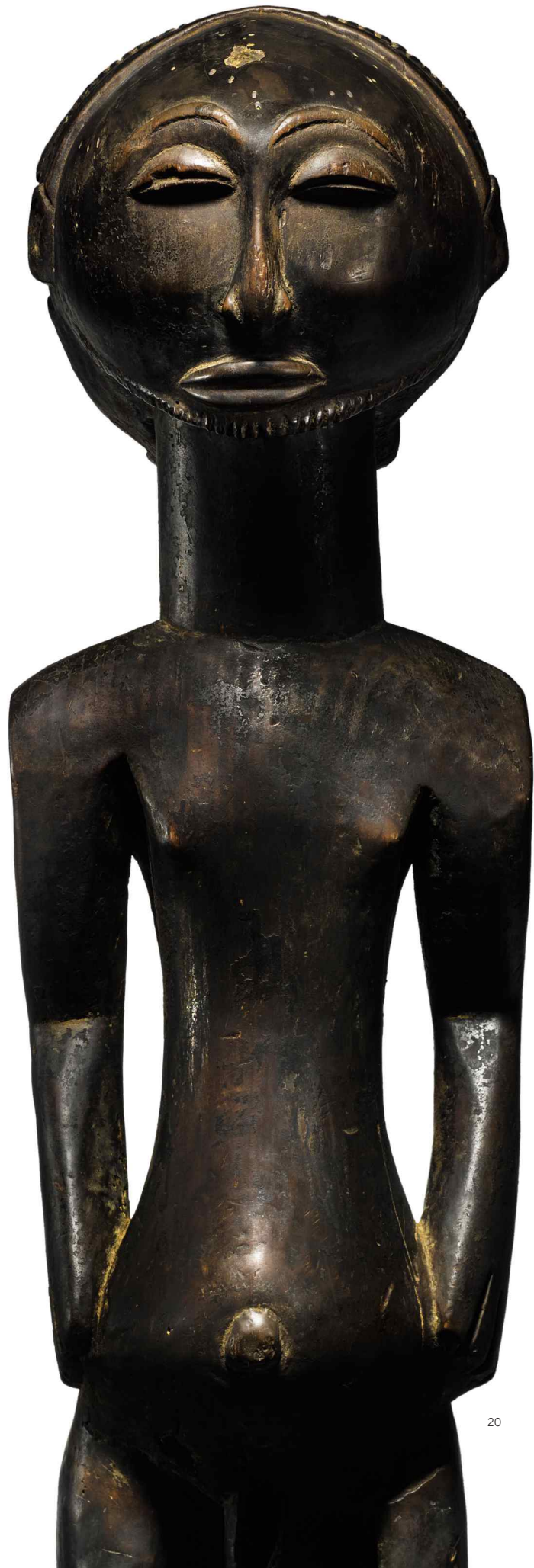
PUBLISHED

François Neyt and Louis de Strycker, *Approche des arts Hemba*, Villiers-le-Bel, 1975, p. 27, pl. 24
François Neyt, *La grande statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, Louvain-La-Neuve, 1977, p. 82, ref. I, no. 11
Marie-Eliane d'Udekem and Marguerite Klobe, *Luba Hemba*, New York, 1979, pp. 26-27, cat. no. 32
Warren M. Robbins and Nancy Ingram Nooter, *African Art in American Collections, Survey 1989*, Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 457, fig. 1176
Alisa LaGamma, 'Exhibition Preview: Heroic Africans: Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures', *African Arts*, Vol. 45, No. 1, Spring, 2012, p. 61, fig. 20

EXHIBITED

F. Rolin & Co., New York, *Luba Hemba*, April 20 - May 26, 1979
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Heroic Africans: Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures*, September 21, 2011 - January 29, 2012

\$ 400,000-600,000



This profound and resolute statue of the ancestor Kalala Lea stands sentinel, his gaze serene and omniscient. Published in the most important monographs on Hemba statuary,¹ Kalala Lea is perhaps the most monumental and certainly one of the finest sculptures in this highly distinguished corpus.² At the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York in 2011, the statue stood as the centerpiece of a display of Hemba ancestor figures in the landmark exhibition *Heroic Africans: Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures*. In the accompanying exhibition catalogue, Alisa LaGamma described the sculpture as possessing “quiet power, impressive for its considerable scale.”³

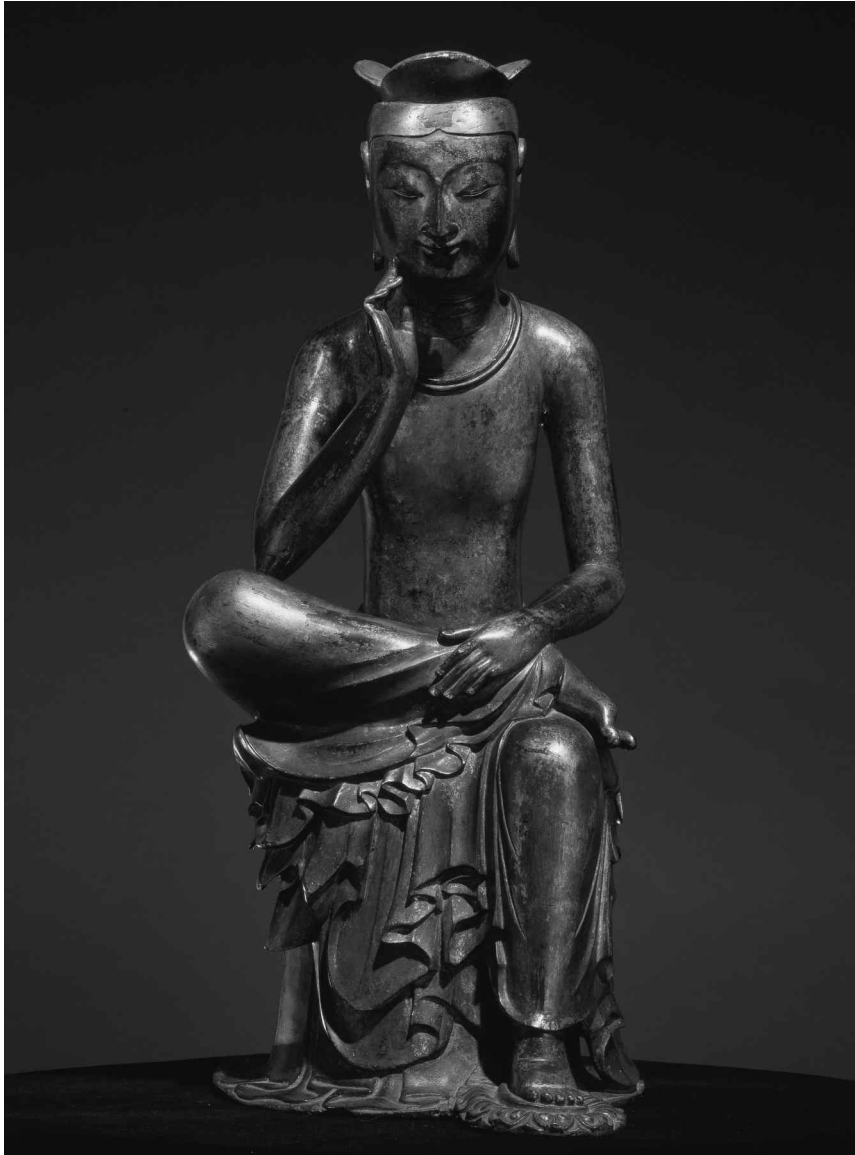
In the plains of the eastern Congo, the Hemba people live in the land which extends to the north and south of the Luika River, bounded to the west by the Lualaba, the greatest head-stream of the Congo River. Their villages were “named for titular heads, well-remembered ancestors, or particular lineages”, and were “autonomous entities [within] which individuals identified themselves primarily in relation to their extended families and clans.”⁴ Among the Hemba, the family relationship transcended death in an eternal bond. Ancestors continued to exist in a realm distinct from that of the living, but accessible nevertheless, and their spirits watched over the lives of living. The sculptures, known as *lusingiti* (sing. *singiti*), which the Hemba made to honor these ancestral bonds, are among the greatest forms of African sculpture. Only within the last forty years, however, primarily through the work of François Neyt and Louis de Strycker, has Hemba sculpture been identified as an original style distinct from

that of the neighboring Luba people, with whose iconic sculpture it shares many qualities, not least a deeply meditative appearance. However, while Luba sculpture represents the beauty of the female form, Hemba statuary almost invariably celebrates the power of the male founders of great lineages, with each *singiti* a posthumous commemorative portrait of the sovereign of a particular Hemba chiefdom. François Neyt calls these sculptures “irrefutable genealogical markers”⁵, but it is rare for the name of the venerated ancestor to remain known. When this monumental and elegiac sculpture was collected its name was recorded as Kalala Lea, “a celebrated ancestral leader of the Kitunga clan from a village north of Mbulula.”⁶

In his monograph *La grande statuaire Hemba du Zaïre*, Neyt provides a morphological analysis of Hemba sculpture and distinguishes eleven “stylistic centers.” He attributes this statue to the first group in his classification – the Niembo style of the southern Hemba country – which has been described as “the most accomplished and classical” of all Hemba styles.⁷ Like all *lusingiti*, this sculpture was not conceived as a portrait in a literal sense. LaGamma notes that although these sculptures were intended to represent “specific former leaders in a relatively naturalistic idiom, the representations themselves do not literally reproduce those individuals’ specific physiognomies.”⁸ Instead the ancestor was represented through an idealized rendition of the qualities which the Hemba valued in their leaders, with the ancestor’s “likeness” revealed by his deeds.

continued





Gilt-bronze Maitreya in Meditation, Silla Kingdom, Korea, late sixth – early seventh century. National Museum of Korea, Seoul (National Treasure No. 83)

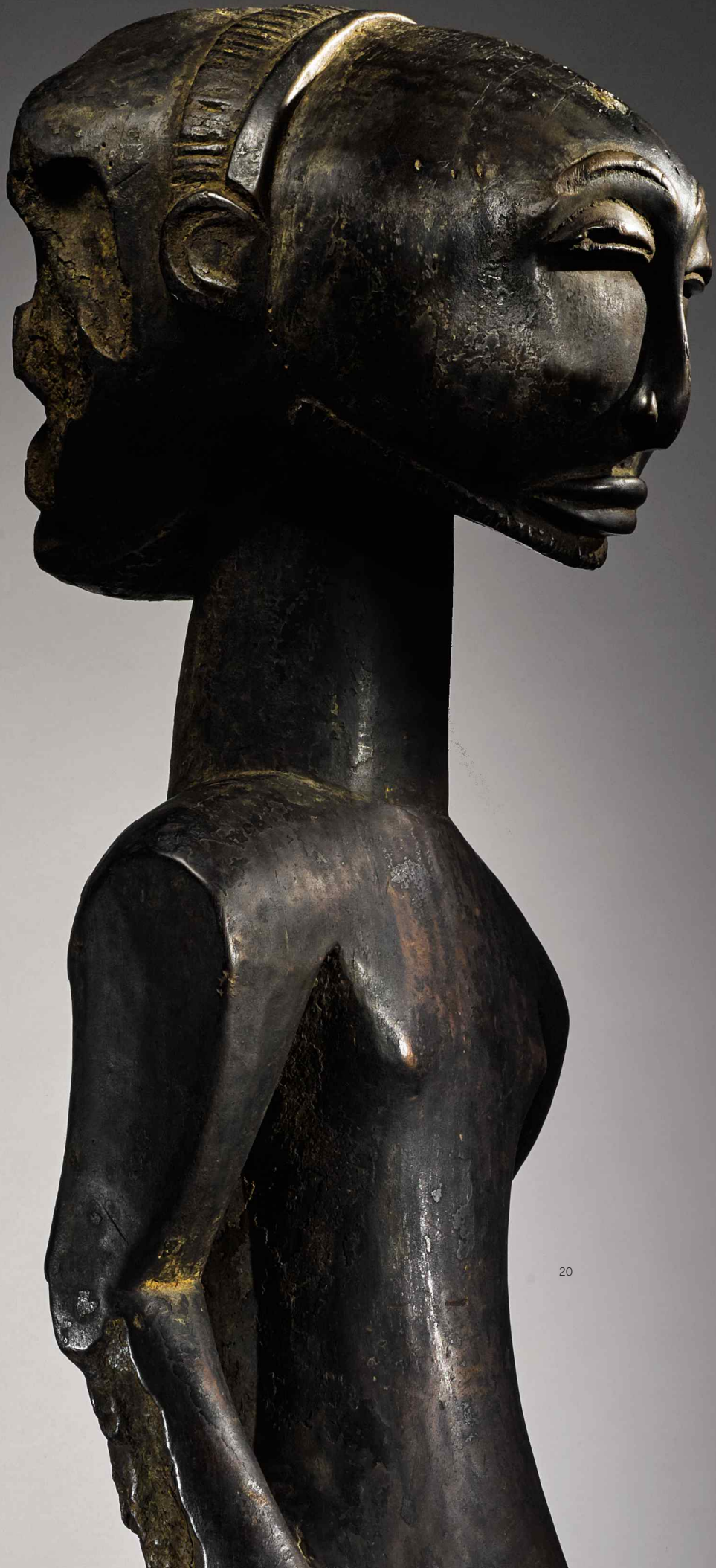
Although the Hembra artist would follow certain accepted canons of representation, each sculpture is highly individualized, with the head, and particularly the face, the source of distinction, rather than the posture or body. The imperious, orb-like head of Kalala Lea is a magnificent illustration of the care which Hembra artists devoted to the head as the site of intellect; Louis de Strycker has also suggested that the large heads of Hembra statues serve to emphasize the importance of the skull of the ancestor,⁹ which would have been conserved in a special enclosure.

In this statue, the head is of extraordinary volume, its fullness accentuated by the broad, high forehead, the coiffure swept back. The limit of the facial plane is defined by the arched brows, below

which the rounded ocular cavities delicately indicate the line of the cheekbones and underline the quiet yet intense gaze of the eyes, half closed under languid eyelids. The limpid gaze conveys an air of deep contemplation which we can associate with the Hembra concept of *ubatizha*, the visual acquisition of knowledge. The Hembra privileged the gaze above all other senses and held that through long and unhurried scrutiny one could acquire the most profound knowledge of a person, object, or event. The slight bowing of the head, created by the parallel lines of the forehead and the jaw, furthers the impression of a state of tranquil contemplation and recalls certain representations of *bodhisattvas* which, like the honored Hembra ancestor, help and guide those in the phenomenal world.

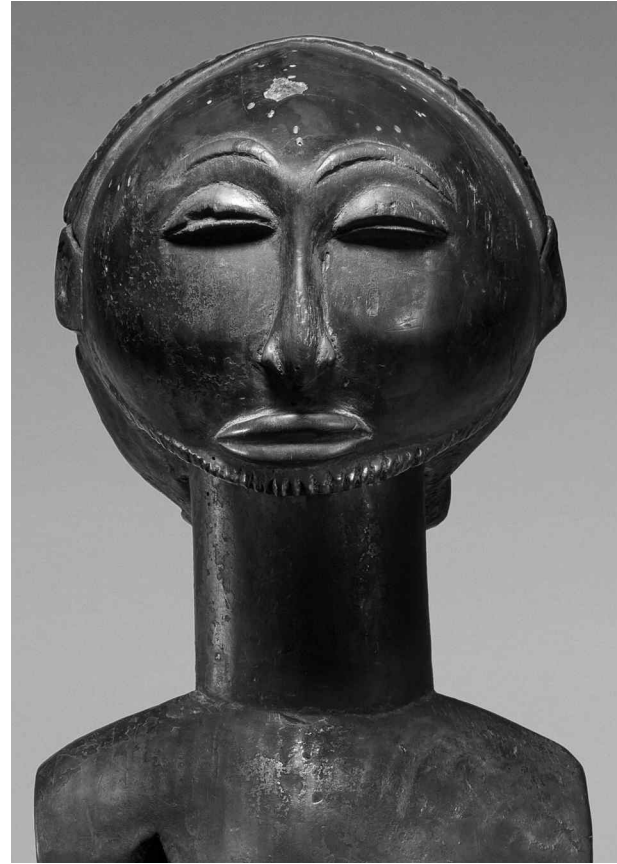
continued







Hemba Ancestor Statue by the Master of Buli, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Malcolm Collection



Detail

The acute angle formed by the crisp line of the jaw is counterbalanced beautifully by the sweep of the coiffure, the two planes intersecting at the robust column of the neck. The imperious quality of the head is heightened by the signs of Kalala Lea's high social status: a fine diadem of two bands, an elaborate backswept coiffure, which is arranged in two horizontal and vertical braids, and his finely incised beard.

In addition to remarking on the sculptural quality of the head, Neyt states the body of this statue places it amongst "the finest Niembo works."¹⁰ The torso is amphora-like, the narrow trunk swelling into an ample stomach which suggests plenitude. The precisely delineated surfaces of the powerful arms and legs unfold rhythmically and contribute to the statue's feeling of vigor and steadfast resolve. The stylized hands rest on either side of the stomach at the level of the umbilicus, which is the symbol of hereditary succession. Recourse to Kalala Lea's intercession is evident in the rich and varied patina, which attests to the offerings made to this statue during the invocation of the ancestor's intercession in the land of the living, during which 'the celebrant, surrounded by his family, begins a long dialogue

with the ancestor. He recalls the ancestor's great deeds, invokes his goodwill and his attachment to the family, and reminds him how close he is to them, and that they do not forget it."¹¹

On careful inspection of the modelling of the eyes and of the aquiline nose, with its arrow-like tip, we can see that Kalala Lea bears a resemblance to the figure by the Buli Master in the Malcolm Collection.¹² This impression is increased by the similar bowing of the head in both statues. The sculptor created this impression by placing the apex of the line of the forehead well ahead of that of the chin. This characteristic exists, in less dramatic form, in certain other Hemba-Niembo statues, including one of the masterpieces of the corpus, the ex Béla Hein statue in the Etnografisch Museum, Antwerp (inv. no. A.E.0864).

In the statue of Kalala Lea we perceive a defining quality of the best Hemba sculpture. For all its formal "classicism" and rarefied *noblesse*, great Hemba sculpture does not merely express the somewhat impersonal and gelid perfection of an ancient marble. Looking at Kalala Lea one feels the presence and vigilance of the ancestor whose spirit is enshrined in this sublime sculpture.

1 Neyt and de Strycker, *Approche des arts Hemba*, 1975, p. 29, described as "an exceptional work"; and Neyt, *La grande statuare Hemba du Zaïre*, 1977, p. 82

2 Neyt and de Strycker, *ibid.*

3 LaGamma, *Heroic Africans*, 2012, p. 234

4 Reese Blakely, 'Material Culture in a Hemba Village', Master's Thesis, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1978, p. xi, cited by LaGamma, *ibid.*, p. 225

5 Neyt, *ibid.*, p. 479

6 LaGamma, *ibid.*, 2012, p. 234

7 de Grunne, ed., *Mains des maîtres/Masterhands*, 2001, p. 182

8 LaGamma, *ibid.*, p. 266

9 de Strycker, 'La Statuaire Hemba du culte des ancêtres. Eléments de différenciation des Hemba par rapport aux Luba et Luba-Hemba', Thesis, Brussels, 1974-1975, p. 123

10 Neyt and de Strycker, *ibid.*

11 Neyt, *ibid.*, p. 488

12 The Buli figure is said to represent an ancestor named Kalala Luhembwe, another rare instance of this information being recorded upon collection.

21 | LUBA FEMALE CARYATID STOOL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Height: 19 ½ in (49.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Pierre Darteville, Brussels
Merton D. Simpson, New York, acquired from
the above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 11, 1975

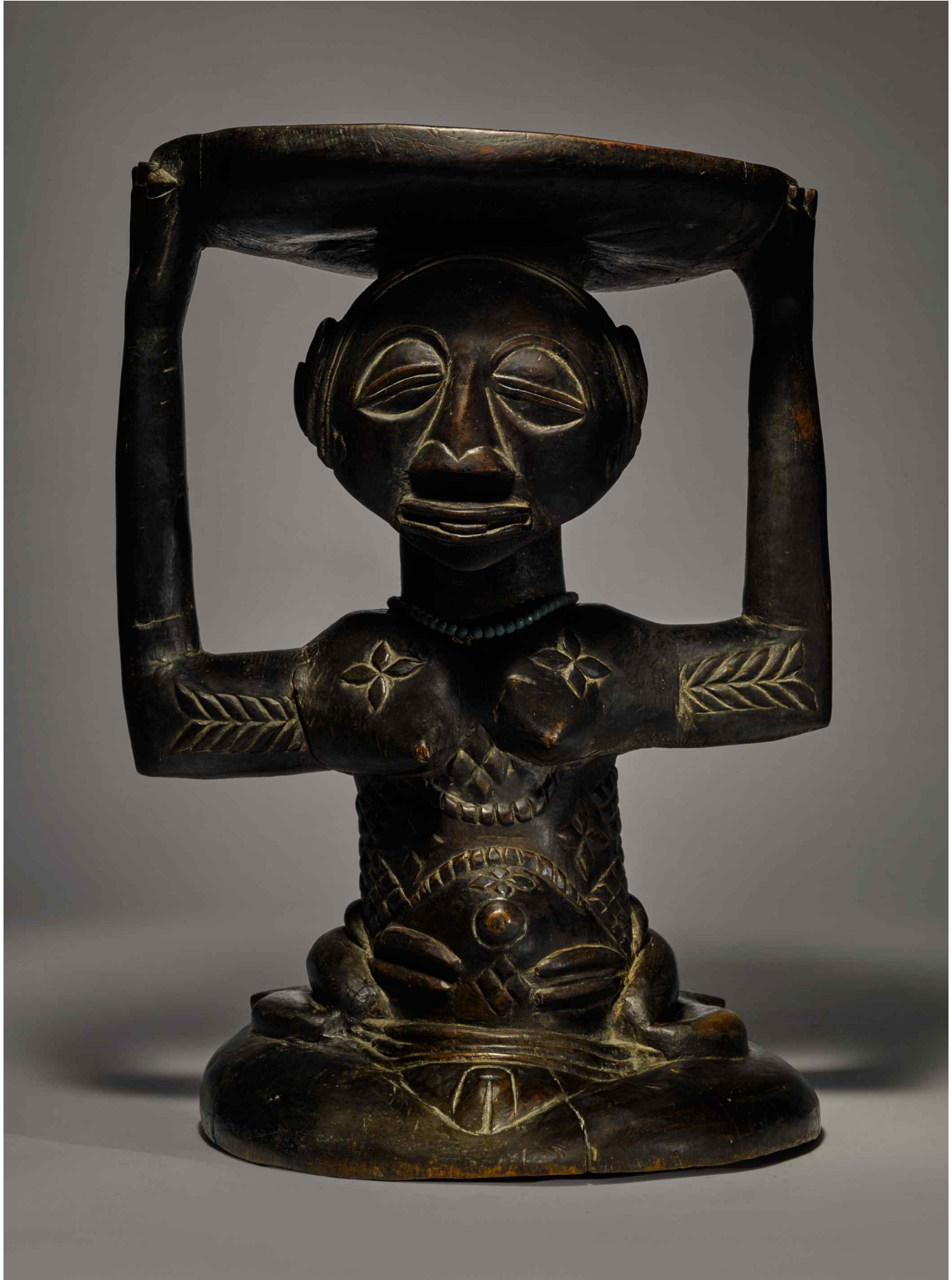
PUBLISHED

Warren M. Robbins and Nancy Ingram Nooter,
African Art in American Collections, Survey 1989,
Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 441, fig. 1139
Polly Nooter Roberts, *Body Politics: the Female
Image in Luba Art and the Sculpture of Alison
Saar*, Los Angeles, 2000, p. 5, p. 40, fig. 49

EXHIBITED

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, Los Angeles,
*Body Politics: the Female Image in Luba Art and
the Sculpture of Alison Saar*, November 12, 2000
- May 13, 2001

\$ 150,000-250,000



21



Detail

According to Roberts and Roberts, the Luba were a cluster of “overlapping clan and lineage groupings that were consolidated as kingdoms and important chiefdoms from around the seventeenth century” by the mythical hero, king Kalala Ilunga (Roberts and Roberts, *Luba*, 2007, p. 7). “Luba political strength lay in an aura of prestige derived from spiritual power and reflected in material and performance arts. Indeed, the arts played a crucial role in Luba political expansion, as kings conferred objects and the ritual practices associated with them to extend their influence into outlying areas” (*ibid.*, p. 9).

Female caryatid stools were part of each Luba king’s treasury and the most important emblem of his kingship. Stools figured prominently in royal investiture rites where “the new ruler swore his oath of office and addressed his people for the first time as king” (Roberts and

Roberts, *Memory*, 1996, p. 18, text to cat. 2). The purpose of caryatid stools was, however, not as much functional as it was symbolic. The female figure made reference to the matrilineal dynastic succession.

When a Luba king died his residence was preserved as *lieu de mémoire* where his spirit was alive and incarnated by a human medium, called *mwadi*. Objects from the deceased king’s royal treasury became objects of devotion and were ritually venerated. Roberts and Roberts note: “The soul of each Luba kingship is literally enshrined in a throne. When a Luba king died, his royal residence was preserved for posterity as a ‘spirit capital’...This site became known as ‘kitenta,’ or ‘seat’ – a symbolic seat of remembrance and power, which would continue the king’s reign. The king’s stool, a concrete symbol of this larger and more metaphysical ‘seat,’ expresses the most fundamental precepts

of Luba power and dynastic succession” (*ibid.*, p. 17, text to cat. 1)

The stool from the Silver Collection, collected *in situ* by Pierre Darteville, is of ample proportions and unusual sculptural style. Prominent scarification rendered in high relief melds with highly stylised and exaggerated anatomical details. The head presents a face of classic Luba form, with arched eyebrows, and smooth rounded forehead, plucked to the crest. The openwork four-braided hairstyle is particularly remarkable: of deep volume and great width, the horizontal braid is exaggerated and the vertical braid compressed. The iconography of the tongue emerging between slightly parted lips is seen in Luba figures of the highest style. Mary Nooter Roberts suggests that a slightly protruding tongue could be interpreted in Luba culture as an invitation to courtship and an indicator of readiness for marriage.



21

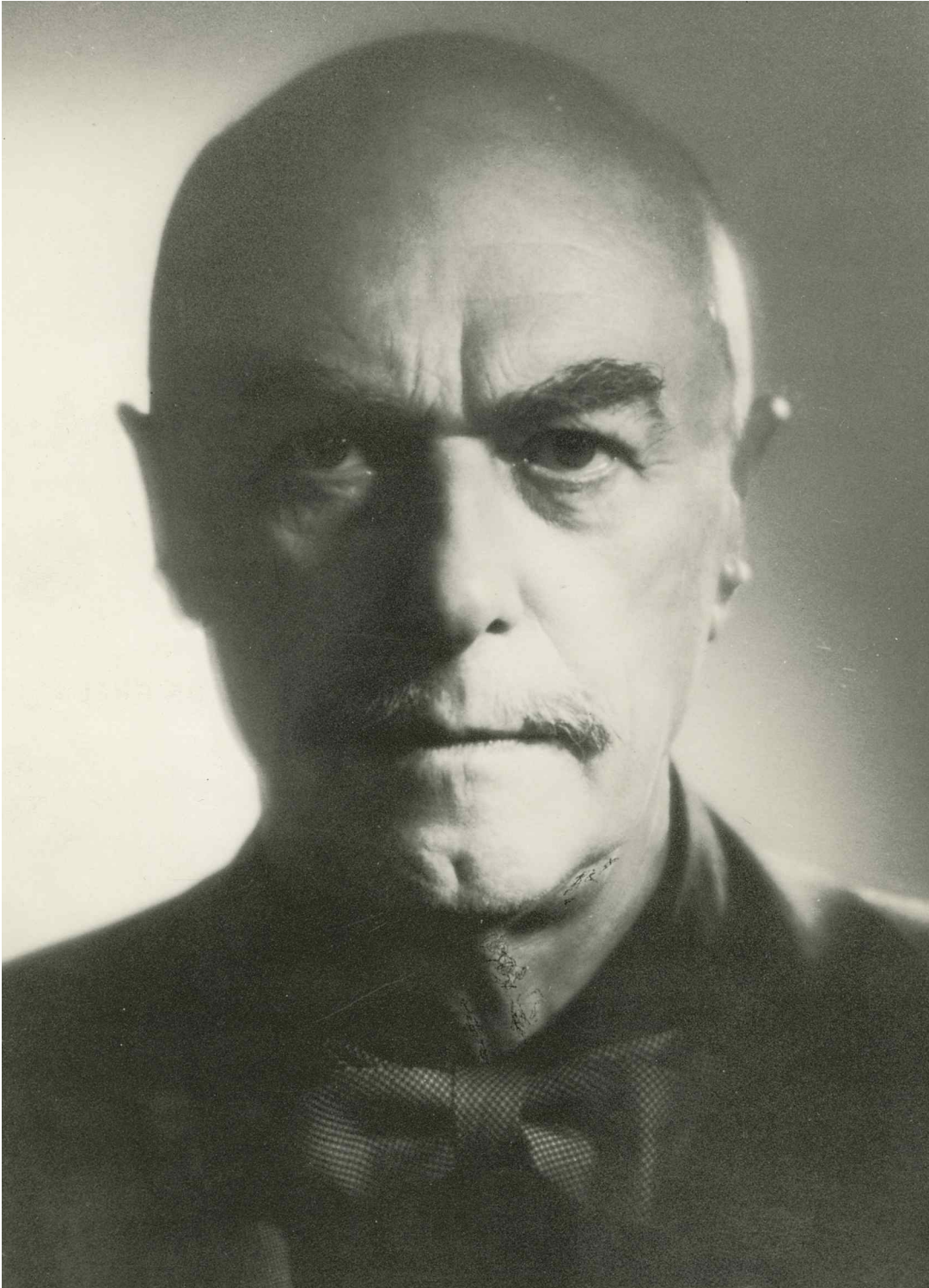
SAVANTS OF THE AVANT-GARDE

JOHN GRAHAM AND FRANK CROWNINSHIELD

The African art collection of Frank Crowninshield was in effect the work of his friend John Graham, artist and avant-garde savant, who was almost entirely responsible for the selection of objects. An emigré from Tsarist Russia, Graham was an aesthetic patrician who introduced the American avant-garde to developments in Paris and served as influential guide in the careers of Adolph Gottlieb, David Smith, Jackson Pollock – who sought Graham out after reading his 1937 article *Primitive Art and Picasso* – and Willem De Kooning, who thought him one of “the smartest men on the scene” when they met in the 1930s.¹ Graham’s “eye” and incisive aesthetic judgments were equally sought by collectors. The Cone sisters of Baltimore and Duncan Phillips, founder of the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., gave him stipends to spend his summers in Paris, where he painted and exhibited. Graham apparently first met Crowninshield in 1925² and began acquiring African sculpture on his behalf soon thereafter. Graham was himself a collector and was familiar with the preeminent dealers of the period – Louis Carré, Paul Guillaume, and Charles Ratton – as well as with vanguard artists, intellectuals, and collectors, including the critic and anarchist Félix Fénéon, who owned the Kota figure which appears as lot 22 in the present catalogue. Graham spent the summer of 1935 in Paris engaged almost exclusively in buying African art, principally for Crowninshield, although Adolph Gottlieb stated that Graham also “did a lot of things [...] for Helena Rubinstein.”³ The following year Graham organized *Exhibition of Sculptures of Old African Civilizations* at the prestigious Jacques

Seligmann Gallery in New York. The exhibition was a “reunion” of sorts, gathering around 140 sculptures from collectors who Graham advised, including the artist Edgar Levy, Helena Rubinstein, and Frank Crowninshield.

While Graham was at the heart of the avant-garde, Crowninshield had his own impeccable credentials as a promulgator of Modernism. Crowninshield helped organize the New York Armory Show of 1913, was a founding trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, and in 1926 appeared as a witness for the defense in the legal case to prove that Brancusi’s *Bird in Space* was a work of art and not a utilitarian object subjective to a prohibitive rate of tax. As the editor of *Vanity Fair* from March 1914 to its end in February 1936 he presented a high modernist aesthetic to a refined audience.⁴ The New York “slick” reproduced works by Braque, Modigliani, and Picasso, and published the photographs of Sheeler, Steichen, and Stieglitz, considered as works of art accompanied by critical texts. Crowninshield printed Gertrude Stein’s ‘*If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso*’; John Quinn, the pioneering collector of Modern and African art defended the work of his friend James Joyce; Carl Van Vechten wrote monthly on the Harlem Renaissance. African sculpture, not least objects from Crowninshield’s own collection (see lot 22), appeared in *Vanity Fair*, which Crowninshield described as “foster-parent of African sculpture and a cheer-leader for its increasing good name in America.”⁵ Crowninshield was one of the earliest enthusiasts to form a large and serious collection; by his own



John D. Graham, no date. John D. Graham Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



**IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND OCEANIC
ART, I THINK HIS KNOWLEDGE AND APPRECIATION
IS SECOND TO THAT OF NO OTHER IN AMERICA.**

Frank Crowninshield on his friend John Graham, 1938 

account he owned around “a hundred and fifty African masks and sculptures.”⁶ Objects from his collection were first exhibited in January 1930 in *African Sculpture from the Collection of Frank Crowninshield and John Graham* at the Valentine Gallery in New York. Six of Crowninshield’s African sculptures were included in *African Negro Art* in 1935, and with Helena Rubinstein and Tristan Tzara, he was one of three collectors to lend African sculptures to *Cubism and Abstract Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1936. After the exhibition at the Seligmann Gallery in of the same year, Crowninshield’s collection would be exhibited a final time, in its entirety, as *African Negro Art from the Collection of Frank Crowninshield* at the Brooklyn Museum in the spring of 1937.

The spread of modernist ideas is perhaps Crowninshield’s greatest achievement as editor at *Vanity Fair* and as a collector of African art, which this impresario of pre-war café society introduced to an audience intrigued by – if not necessarily part of – the avant-garde. As the critic Helen Appleton Read wrote in 1930, Crowninshield’s “ability to sense the psychological moment when new ideas and new forms in art are emerging from unpopular radicalism [...] to recognizable and acceptable expressions of the spirit of the age is a species of clairvoyance.”⁷

- 1 Stevens and Swan, *De Kooning: an American Master*, 2004, p. 93
- 2 Clarke, ‘John Graham and the Frank Crowninshield Collection of African Art’, *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 30, No. 1, Spring 1995, p. 28
- 3 Adolph Gottlieb interviewed by Dorothy Seckler for the Archives of American Art, October 25, 1967. <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-adolph-gottlieb-12369>. Accessed October 5, 2017
- 4 The present-day incarnation of *Vanity Fair* was revived by Condé Nast Publications in 1983.
- 5 *Vanity Fair*, December 1935, p. 89, quoted in Clarke, *ibid.*
- 6 Hellman, ‘Last of the Species - I’, *The New Yorker*, September 19, 1942, p. 23
- 7 Quoted in Clarke, *ibid.*



KOTA-OBAMBA RELIQUARY FIGURE

GABON

Height: 19 ¼ in (49 cm)

PROVENANCE

Félix Fénéon, Paris
 Frank Crowninshield, New York
 Annie Laurie Crawford Aitken, New York
 Russell B. Aitken, New York and Newport, Rhode Island, by descent from the above
 Christie's, New York, *The Russell B. Aitken Collection of African, American Indian and Oceanic Art*, April 3, 2003, lot 73
 Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired at the above auction

PUBLISHED

Eckart von Sydow, 'Ahnenfiguren aus Französisch-Äquatorial-Afrika', *Der Cicerone*, Vol. XXII, January 1930, p. 217
 'Exhibition of African Art', *Vanity Fair*, March 1935, p. 31
 Probably John Graham, *Exhibition of Sculptures of Old African Civilizations*, New York, 1936, listed
 Probably Brooklyn Museum, ed., *African Negro Art from the Collection of Frank Crowninshield*,

New York, 1937, listed
 The Brooklyn Museum, ed., *Masterpieces of African Art*, New York, 1954, p. 48, no. 149 (listed)
 Ingeborg Bolz, 'Zur Kunst in Gabon: Stilkritische Untersuchungen an Masken und Plastiken des Ogowe-Gebietes', *Ethnologica: Beiträge zur Afrikanischen Kunst*, Vol. 3, 1966, pl. XLIII, fig. D
 Louis Perrois, *Kota*, Milan, 2012, p. 95, pl. 14, and p. 147

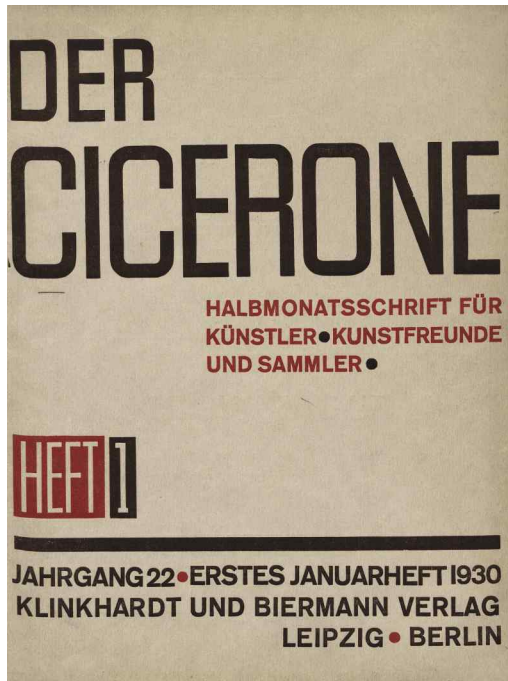
EXHIBITED

Probably Jacques Seligmann Gallery, New York, *Exhibition of Sculptures of Old African Civilizations*, January 4 - January 22, 1936
 Brooklyn Museum, New York, *African Negro Art from the Collection of Frank Crowninshield*, March 20 - April 27, 1937
 Brooklyn Museum, New York, *Masterpieces of African Art*, October 21, 1954 - January 2, 1955

\$ 70,000-100,000



22



Cover of *Der Cicerone*, January 1930



The present lot illustrated in *Der Cicerone*, January 1930

The present richly-decorated Kota-Obamba reliquary figure was first published in 1930 by Eckart von Sydow, who recorded that it was then in the collection of the famed art critic and anarchist Félix Fénéon, an important early enthusiast of the arts of primary cultures. Coining the designation *les arts lointains* ('arts of faraway places'), Fénéon had asked the question: "seront-ils admis au Louvre?" ("will they be allowed in the Louvre?") in a 1920 editorial published in *Bulletin de la vie artistique*. As de Sabran has described, his avant-garde position long pre-dated the manifesto published by Jacques Kerchache in 1990, "Pour que les chefs-d'œuvre du monde entier naissent libres et égaux..." ("Masterpieces from the entire world are born free and equal") (de Sabran, in Sotheby's, ed., "The 'Fénéon' Fang Mabea Figure", 2014, pp. 11-12). Kerchache's persistent devotion to this idea would set in motion the events that indeed finally led to African, Oceanic, Pre-Columbian, and Native North American artwork taking their rightful place in the Musée du Louvre at the turn of the 21st century.

Frank Crowninshield likely acquired the present figure from Fénéon through their mutual friend, the painter, collector, and theorist John Graham, another enormously influential figure in the development of the 20th century artistic avant-garde. LaGamma notes: "A member of the earliest generation of American connoisseurs of African art, Graham organised the pioneering 'Exhibition of Sculptures of Old African Civilizations' in 1936 at the Jacques Seligmann Gallery in New York. In doing so, he sought to stimulate interest in the formal qualities of African sculpture and to develop a system for aesthetically relating individual works to distinct regional traditions as well as to the broader history of art" (LaGamma, *Eternal Ancestors*, 2007, p. 152). Several 'Bakota brass masks' are listed, unillustrated, in the accompanying catalogue, and the present lot was most likely among them.

Perrois defines a style group of Kota reliquary figures which he situates on the right bank of the Ogooué River, between the Doumé

rapids and Franceville, to which he assigns this accomplished sculpture. He notes that this reliquary figure "from the former Russell B. Aitken Collection and formerly in the famous Frank Crowninshield Collection (exhibited in 1937 at the Brooklyn Museum of New York) is [a] magnificent instance of this variant sometimes attributed to the 'Northern Obamba': the striking oval face has a motif projecting longitudinally on the front panel; two large plates are set in the centre of the face in the form of a cross, on which are affixed the nose and almond-shaped eyes. Fine strips stretch out to form a radiating motif in each quarter of the face created by the cross design; the side-buns are not very wide and are ornamented with a repoussé 'cord' motif, with diagonal projections. The beautiful crescent-shaped hairstyle stands out and its sharply tapering 'horns' drop down to touch the side-buns. A series of vertical points on the crescent recall the coils on the tops of Mahongwe figures" (Perrois, *Kota*, 2012, p. 58). He continues that this "series of little spikes mark where the feathers would have been fitted to signal the wearer's social status" (*ibid.*, p. 147).



22

KOTA-OBAMBA RELIQUARY GUARDIAN FIGURE GABON

on a base by the Japanese wood artist Kichizô Inagaki (1876-1951), Paris
Height: 20 ½ in (51.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

Frank Crowninshield, New York
Russell B. Aitken, New York
Christie's New York, *The Russell B. Aitken
Collection of African, American Indian and
Oceanic Art*, April 3, 2003, lot 70
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
at the above auction

PUBLISHED

Probably John Graham, *Exhibition of Sculptures
of Old African Civilizations*, New York, 1936,
listed
Brooklyn Museum, ed., *African Negro Art from
the Collection of Frank Crowninshield*, New York,
1937, listed
Sharon F. Patton, *Treasures*, Washington, D.C.,
2005, unpaginated
Louis Perrois, *Kota*, Milan, 2012, p. 102, pl. 21,
and p. 148

EXHIBITED

Probably Jacques Seligmann Gallery, New
York, *Exhibition of Sculptures of Old African
Civilizations*, January 4 - January 22, 1936
Brooklyn Museum, New York, *African Negro
Art from the Collection of Frank Crowninshield*,
March 20 - April 27, 1937
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian
Institute, Washington D.C., *Treasures*, November
13, 2004 - August 15, 2005

\$ 70,000-100,000





23

Perrois considers this type of Kota to be the most "classical", noting that examples "have been found since the end of the nineteenth century in the upper Ogooué area, to the south of Franceville-Masuku (the valleys of the rivers Passa, Lebombi, Lékédi, Leyou and Lébiyou) and the neighboring area of north-western Congo (near Zanaga, Sibiti and Mossendjo)" (Perrois, *Kota*, 2012, p. 60).

Regarding the present example, Perrois continues that this kota "from the former Russell B. Aitken Collection (which was in the famous Frank Crowninshield Collection, prior to 1930) [...] is an example of 'classical' work produced by the 'Obamba-Ndumu', with its beautiful oval face decorated with fine strips radiating out from the sharply-angled tetrahedral nose; the crescent shaped eyes are rendered in relief and overlap the broad central plate. At the top perches a large, transverse crested headdress, with two very broad, straight-bottomed

side-buns supporting two vertically-hanging cylindrical pendants and a very conspicuous, wide diamond-shaped base covered with metal" (*ibid.*, p. 60).

Outside of the perfectly balanced and meticulously decorated convex central medallion, the sculptor-blacksmith has employed wide, blank planes, patiently flattened but undecorated, in what could be called a minimal sculptural style; dramatically different from the wholly elaborate styles such as that seen in the previous lot. These broad forms are delineated by boundaries of narrow repoussé motifs, in a configuration which calls the viewer's attention to the rigorous architectural forms of the sculpture and the well-defined silhouette. The lozenge-base is of particularly solid structure, made of tapering quadrilaterals, with the top half covered with brass plaques, also of minimal form.



THE SILVER

NDASSA





KOTA-NDASSA RELIQUARY FIGURE REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Height: 27 1/8 in (69 cm)

PROVENANCE

René Rasmussen, Paris
Henri Kamer, Paris and New York, acquired from the above in 1974
Lance and Roberta Entwistle, London, presumably acquired from the above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on January 18, 1978

PUBLISHED

Elliot Picket, 'L'art africain conglomere', *Arts d'Afrique Noire*, no. 10, Summer 1974, p. 29, no. 10
Henri Kamer, advertisement, *Arts d'Afrique Noire*, no. 23, Autumn 1977, pp. 36-37
Alain Chaffin and Françoise Chaffin, *L'art Kota. Les figures de reliquaire*, Meudon, 1979, p. 201 and p. 331, cat. no. 102

Louis Perrois, *Arts du Gabon. Les arts plastiques du bassin de l'Ogooué*, Arnouville, 1979, fig. 194
Warren M. Robbins and Nancy Ingram Nooter, *African Art in American Collections, Survey 1989*, Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 339, no. 882
'Through African Eyes', *The New York Times*, Friday, October 5, 2007, p. A1
Alisa LaGamma, *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, New York, 2007, p. 261, cat. no. 83

EXHIBITED

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, *Eternal Ancestors: the Art of the Central African Reliquary*, October 2, 2007 - March 2, 2008

\$ 1,000,000-1,500,000



Of the great variety of styles observed in the corpus of Kota reliquary sculpture, the grandest and most ambitious examples belong to a group which is today attributed to the people known as the Ndassa Kota of eastern Gabon and north-western Republic of the Congo. Distinguished first and foremost by their especially large scale and ornate richness of decoration, these Ndassa figures also share what Louis Perrois has described as “a certain graphic naturalism, contrasting with the stylizing impulse of most other Kota variants.”¹ Discussing the Ndassa group, which they classified as Group 16 in their landmark publication *L'Art Kota*, Alain and Françoise Chaffin observed: “These pieces are among the most sought after by lovers of Kota art. [...] One finds sculptures from the Rasmussen, Ratton, Chadourne and Girardin collections that are known the world over.”² Previously in the collection of René Rassmussen, the Silver Kota Ndassa Figure is unquestionably this masterpiece of the Ndassa style and among the most magnificent artworks in the entire Kota corpus.

The hallmark of the Ndassa style is a generally oval face of relatively naturalistic proportions. As compared with most other Kota styles, the volume of the central element representing the face is of particularly generous convex volume. The face is surmounted by a broad crescent and flanked by ample side-coiffures, terminating in duck tails or pendant cylinders representing braids, all atop a cylindrical neck and well-proportioned diamond-shaped lozenge. Ndassa sculptor-blacksmiths mastered the use of multi-colored metals to create dazzling visual contrasts, employing reddish copper, yellow brass, and grey-black iron. The eyes, in brass, are centered vertically on the face, and depicted in perfectly horizontal lidded coffee-bean shape, often with iron pins that read as pupils. Arching double brows in copper and iron dramatically rise above the eyes and give the visage an expression of noble alertness. Most strikingly the faces feature up to three diagonal bands of iron from eye to jaw, traversing fleshy red copper cheeks. These have been described as “tears” as they seem to cascade down from the eyes, and can be read as if the subject is weeping.

Within the overall Ndassa “weeping” style are several janiform examples, which feature faces of the above-referenced convex style on one side, and a classic but very differently-conceived convex Ndassa face on the reverse, similar to that seen on the Kota-Ndassa figure from the Silver collection previously in the collections of Frank Crowninshield and Russell Aitken (lot 23 of the present catalogue).

continued



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Fig. 1. Kota-Ndassa Reliquary Figure, Gabon. Sold by Sotheby's, New York, May 11, 2012, lot 131

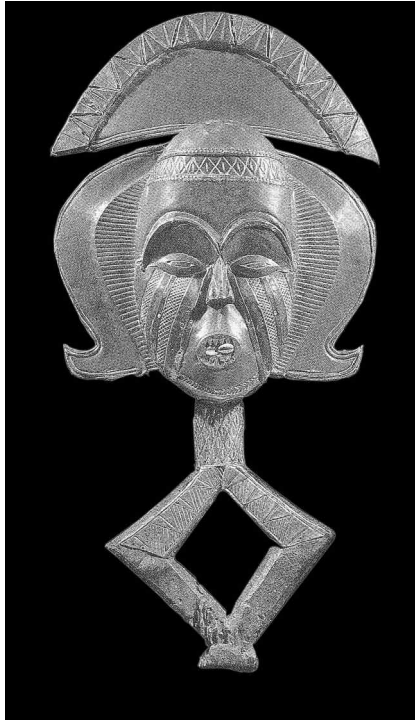


Fig. 2. Kota-Ndassa Reliquary Figure, Gabon. Ex Jay C. Leff, Uniontown, Pennsylvania

Considering both the Janus and the single-face examples, the variations within this overall group are wide enough to conclude that they represent an overall style region, or type, but not simply one atelier, or even one generation. However, within this classification, there are a small number of works which are so similar in their overall conception as well as in very specific details that they must emanate from the same atelier if not the same individual artist. The Silver Kota Ndassa is one of four works which Perrois considers to be made by the same atelier.³ Most useful for comparison to the Silver figure are two of these examples: the first "of truly superb quality and great age."⁴ formerly in the collections of Morris J. Pinto, New York, and the artist Arman (sold Sotheby's New York, May 11, 2012, lot 131, see fig. 1); and the second previously in the collection of Jay C. Leff, Uniontown, Pennsylvania (see fig. 2). The similarities of these three works are seen not only in their nearly identical shape and proportions, but extend also to the specific motifs in the design and handling of the repoussé. Each bears a border at the top of the crescent inscribed with a pattern of vertical and diagonal lines, with fields of both copper and brass, with a wider band allowing two rows of triangles in the Silver figure. Each has a band of copper bounded by rows of dots across the forehead; with the Leff figure repeating the de-

sign seen in the border of the top crescent, while in the Pinto/Arman figure and the Silver figure the band is undecorated; only the Silver figure bears a cowrie shell inlaid at the center, probably a mark of wealth and status. The design of the ducktail-shaped side coiffure is the same in all three figures, except that the Silver and Leff figures feature a field of tightly spaced horizontal lines emanating from just beside the face, producing an impressive radiating effect (and a chance affinity with an Egyptian Pharaonic "nemes" headdress). Proportions of the brows, nose, eyes, cheeks, "tears" and small round mouth are nearly identical; as are the pattern of crosshatching repousse on the upper part of the lozenges, and that of the cylindrical neck of the Silver and Pinto/Arman figures.

The differences between these three figures are fewer than their similarities; while the Pinto/Arman and the Silver figure have iron pins which read very successfully as pupils and give the sculpture a present, living expression, the Leff figure is without pointed pupils and therefore projects a more distant or blind gaze. The Pinto/Arman figure bears a slightly thinner, leaner face with brows lower down on the forehead; and the Leff figure features a pattern of cross-hatched lines on the cheeks between the bands of "tears", seen in neither other figure.

continued



24



Regarding the geographic origin of the Pinto/Arman Figure, and by extension the Leff figure and the present figure from the Silver collection, Perrois notes:

“In his monumental 1953 work *Contribution à l’ethnographie des Kuta I*, pastor-ethnographer Efraim Andersson, the great expert on the ‘Kuta’ or ‘Kota’ peoples of equatorial Africa, illustrated a closely reliquary figure with a convex face, a broad transverse headcrest, and side-coiffures terminating in volutes [Andersson, *Contribution à l’ethnographie des Kuta I*, 1953, p. 341, fig. 37], closely related to the present majestic figure, formerly in the collections of Morris J. Pinto and the artist Armand Arman. He noted that this important *mbuli-viti* had been collected *in situ* in the 1920s by the pastor Karl Laman for the Svenska Missionförbundets Museum in Stockholm. The same object, with its convex face, is also seen in a photograph taken by The Reverend Jacobsonn before 1912, showing young Kota men wearing bark cloth aprons, carrying traditional weapons, and displaying reliquary figures (see p. 45). [...] Particularly significant to our study is Andersson’s indication that the related work comes from the Mossendjo region of the former French Congo (southwest of present-day Congo-Brazzaville), the epicenter of the missionary activities of Swedish evangelists before the Second World War. It was also in the southern part of the Kota region that The Reverend Efraim Andersson conducted the bulk of his ethnographic surveys from 1935 until the 1950s, amongst the Wumbu, the Ndassa, and the Obamba [Andersson, *Contribution à l’ethnographie des Kuta I*, 1953 and Andersson, *Contribution à l’ethnographie des Kuta II*,

1974]. The area within the triangle formed by the towns of Mossendjo, Sibiti, and Zanaga (all in present-day Republic of Congo) was among others populated by Kota groups, namely the Wumbu and the Ndassa. In this context it is worth remembering that the designation ‘Kota’ is only a collective name of convenience, as each cultural group of equatorial Africa referred to by the name ‘Kota’ also bears a more specific name. The Ndasa are culturally and linguistically distant cousins of the Northern Kota, the Mahongwe, the Shamaye, and the Shaké of the Ivindo basin. Already centuries ago, their migratory movement had already brought them from Southern Cameroon to present-day Congo, traversing the whole of eastern Gabon from North to South. Some Ndasa communities, with small populations, remained behind in the region of the Upper Ogooué River in Gabon.”⁵

The large size, richness of materials, refined design, and elaborate decoration of the Silver Kota Ndassa Reliquary Figure suggest it was associated with an individual or clan of particularly great power and wealth. The Ndassa “weeping” group, as the most highly refined of Kota reliquary styles, is a testament to the great sophistication of Kota artistry. The Silver figure is the apex of this group and among the most impressive representatives of the pre-colonial art of central Africa.

1 Perrois, in Sotheby’s, ed., *African, Oceanic & Pre-Columbian Art*, May 2012, lot 131, p. 116

2 Chaffin and Chaffin, *L’Art Kota*, 1980, p. 199

3 See Perrois, *ibid.*, pp. 116-118

4 Perrois, *Kota*, 2012, p. 151

5 Perrois, in Sotheby’s, ed., *African, Oceanic & Pre-Columbian Art*, lot 131, p. 116

**25 TLINGIT CEREMONIAL ROBE
PACIFIC NORTHWEST COAST**

Width: 72 in (183 cm)

PROVENANCE

Douglas Ewing, New York
Adelaide de Menil, New York, acquired from the above
James Economos, New York, acquired from the above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above in 1975

PUBLISHED

Herbert M. Cole, *Symbols of Prestige: Native American Arts of the Northwest Coast from Los Angeles Collections*, Los Angeles, 1985, pp. 10-11, cat. no. 20

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, *Symbols of Prestige: Native American Arts of the Northwest Coast from Los Angeles Collections*, March 21 - October 20, 1985

\$ 30,000-40,000





25

The weaving of "Chilkat" blankets originated with the Tsimshian people, specifically, with the women of the Nass River region known as the Nishga. Over time, this weaving tradition spread to the Tsimshian's neighbors on the Northwest Coast - the Haida and the Tlingit - who would become the most prolific weavers in the region. The name "Chilkat" derives from the prolific production of blankets by the Chilkat subgroup of the Tlingit culture, who were largely populated in the present-day Alaskan panhandle. In the native Tlingit language, Chilkat blankets were called *naaxiin*, which roughly translates to "fringe about the body."

Prior to the introduction of commercial yarn by white settlers into native Northwest Coast communities in the latter half of the 19th century, Chilkat blankets were woven from two-ply mountain goat wool and yellow cedar bark, which improved their durability. Due to size, artistic intricacy, and volume of raw materials required, the production of each blanket was an extremely laborious and time-intensive process. This process began with a male artist creating a painted pattern board of the blanket's design, which a female weaver transposed into textile form. The present lot contains characteristics of the classic Chilkat blanket type: its pentagonal outline resembles the façade of a house turned upside down; its thick black and yellow borders frame three clearly defined panels, with a primary design filling the central panel, flanked by two mirrored and symmetrical side panels. The forms present within each panel are highly geometrical and symbolic, depicting animals and animal parts ubiquitous in Northwest Coast art and mythology, though a detailed interpretation of the meaning of each can be challenging, if not impossible.

Their exquisite beauty and the effort involved in the production process made Chilkat blankets the preserve of the Northwest Coast nobility, who possessed the wealth to make or to own a blanket. Blankets endowed their possessor with great prestige and were worn as ceremonial robes by both men and women. Often, the blankets were featured in dances, during which the rich colors, dynamic lines, and complex patterns came alive with a dancer's movements. At the conclusion of potlatches - elaborate ceremonies consisting of speeches, singing, feasting, and dancing to observe an important occasion or affirm social status - the host presented "the rights or privileges he claimed - such as the right to display a certain crest, to own a name, or to raise a totem pole. His ownership of these privileges required validation by the invited guests, who witnessed his presentation and who received payment from him in the form of gifts" (Samuel, *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket*, 1990, p. 34). To give a blanket away at a potlatch was an act of great largesse, since none but the richest chiefs could afford to give away such valuable articles. Emmons notes, "during a potlatch, whole blankets may be presented to the most honored guest, but generally they were cut in strips and distributed; and such pieces are esteemed far beyond their intrinsic value (Emmons, *The Chilkat Blanket*, 1907, p. 345).





SCULPTURE OF ANCIENT WEST MEXICO: THE SILVER COLLECTION

KRISTI BUTTERWICK

The Silver Collection of prehispanic art contains striking ceramic figures that reflect the rich cultures of ancient West Mexico. Created more than 2,000 years ago by the early peoples of Nayarit, Jalisco, and Colima, these sculptures serve as windows into a heritage of power within the early societies. Ceramic figures convey social differences and inequalities that undoubtedly reflected the early cultures of West Mexico. In societies without a written record such as in ancient West Mexico, their art is a narrative record from the past.

From 300 BCE to AD 400, the peoples of West Mexico built villages in the highlands that featured with fresh water lakes and fertile, volcanic soils for farming. Obsidian and agave were rare local resources. Villagers settled in family groups and produced pottery, tended crops, made pulque, wove textiles, and mined obsidian from local volcanoes. The honored dead were buried in shaft tombs underneath the family home. The burials staked a familial claim to the valuable lands that were passed down through kin groups. Discoveries such as shells from both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and jade from southern parts, demonstrate trade and economic interaction both locally and regionally.

The ceramic art is classified into three main styles referred to by the geographic areas of Nayarit, Jalisco and Colima. Potters, both masters and craftspeople, incorporated and borrowed traits and styles from throughout the greater West Mexican region. The mix of pottery styles often buried together suggests that ancient trade included the ceramic sculptures.

REGIONAL STYLES

The heritage of West Mexican pottery figures derived in part from techniques refined by the Chupícu-

aro people of nearby Guanajuato (lots 26, 27). The Chupícuaro ceramic style is distinctive with thickly applied red slip with white geometric designs. Similar to the Chupícuaro culture, later West Mexican artists also created ceramic figures in apparent local workshops.

The Nayarit ceramic style of Ixtlán del Rio is strongly represented in the Silver Collection. These Ixtlán del Rio figures are distinguished by their thin and solid arms as well as facial features that include a pinched, protuberant nose, open mouth with teeth etched, and scars of cheek scarification. Both male and female sculptures are sumptuously adorned with modeled and painted costume and adornments. In subject matter, the large Nayarit figures include musicians (male figures in lots 35, 39), ancestor pairs (lots 35, 38, 39), and warriors (lots 36, 37). The cups and bowls that a few figures in the Silver Collection hold communicate ritual feasting, a practice similar to potlatches well known in native groups of the Pacific Northwest.

Ceramic sculptures from the Jalisco style are large, hollow, and well made. As demonstrated in the impressive couple in the Silver Collection, male and female sculptures frequently appear as pairs that seem to reflect efforts at portraiture (lot 33).

In Colima, ceramic artists created figures in lustrous orange and red slips and elegant, diverse, and abstract forms refined in their simplicity. The Silver Collection showcases Colima figural sculptures that depict important roles in the ancient societies such as shamans identified with a "one-horned" head-dress (lots 29, 30). Mythic roles include hunchbacked dwarfs (lots 30, 34), and figures holding rattles distinguish ceremonial or musician roles (lot 30). Many

effigy figures have spouts indicating a functional purpose for pouring ceremonial liquids such as pulque, a fermented brew from the juice extracted from the hearts of the agave or maguey plant.

MEANING IN THE CERAMIC FIGURES

The legacy of ceramic sculpture is a primary source of information about the ancient people of West Mexico. The overlapping of some stylistic traits indicates regional and social interaction and perhaps political cohesiveness throughout the region. While stylistic nuances differentiate the pottery-making centers of Nayarit, Jalisco and Colima, the themes of this art are strikingly similar.

HUMAN FIGURES

A preponderance of West Mexican art, including the sculptures in the Silver Collection, is the human figure. The figures express differentiation in gender and age, elemental aspects of human social organization and kinship. Gender is specified through the modeling of physical features or through dress. While the Silver Collection portrays mainly male and female ancestral pairs, it also contains dwarfs whose specific body shape may evoke the spirit world. Other ceramic figures seem to accurately portray physical abnormalities (lot 38), or illness and mourning (lot 41).

ANCESTRAL PAIRS

Within the Silver Collection, and West Mexico in general, the pairing of male and female pottery figures is a predominant social statement. The West Mexican couple theme may represent siblings, the original brother and sister of a founding lineage, or a founding marriage pair. This essay uses the term “ancestor pairs”, which allows for both interpretations.

Reckoning descent through bloodlines of both the mother and father may have structured ancient West Mexican societies rather than strict patrilineage or matrilineage. Several indigenous groups of the Americas recognized genealogy from both parents in determining kinship status. Not surprisingly, pairs of large sculptures show male and female figures wearing parallel adornments, status symbols of extensive body paint and multiple forms of jewelry. That generations of kin told stories describing the founding ancestors would explain the artistic repetition.

continued



GARMENTS & ACCOUTREMENTS

Ancient members of kin groups surely wore emblematic costumes that were also portrayed on their ceramic figures. From the adorned skeletal remains as well as depicted in the sculptures, it is clear that both men and women wore the emblems of their lineage. The primary female garment is a woven skirt, often decorated with elaborate checkered patterns, chevrons and designs. Upper body nudity is common in female figures of West Mexico.

Male figures frequently wear a short trouser secured with a wrap. Few male figures wear the loincloth traditional to ancient Mexico. The plainness of the male shorts hints that actual trousers were made from animal pelts rather than woven. Not uncommonly male garments have a codpiece for extra padding. The scoop-shaped codpiece perhaps represents a shell or gourd (lots 36 and 37). Male figures may wear a shirt or tunic, and others wear a cloak or mantle on one shoulder. Female figures may also wear a mantle.

As is common in traditional Mexican societies still today, textiles for tunics, mantles and skirts were woven on small looms using cotton and maguey fibers spun on spindle whorls.

A variety of artistic methods were used to render garments on the ceramic figures including painting the costume, incising or etching the outline of the garment, or sculpting the garment with added clay.

Weaponry carried by warrior figures (lots 36, 37) includes spears, clubs, and back racks. Costumes with such specialized accoutrements correspond to a specific societal role, such as warrior, shaman and in other instances, musicians.

JEWELRY

In addition to garments, the human figures frequently donned personal adornments on the nose, ears, neck, shoulders, chest, arms and legs, depicted in appliqué and/or painted. Complementary archaeological discoveries of objects of shell armbands, greenstone pendants, obsidian ear spools, and beads of greenstone, quartz, other minerals, bone and shell demonstrate that the personal adornments and jewelry worn by the ceramic figures reflected reality.

Many ceramic figures wear appliqué nose rings (lots 35, 36, 37, 39). Appliquéd and painted earrings come in many styles and are worn by male and female figures, particularly in the Jalisco and Nayarit styles. Earring types include round discs, earpools, hoops and a fan-shaped multiple disc and hoop combination. Figures in lots 35-39 demonstrate a most elaborate form of earrings from Ixtlán del Rio in Nayarit. Some earlobes simply have empty holes that originally may have held missing stones or perishable earrings made of feathers or flora.

Appliquéd or painted neckwear comes in several styles including rounded beads, shells and plain bands of twine or leather. Armbands, sometimes in multiples, generally clasp the upper arm, and are plain or may be embellished with small discs or shell symbols.

BODY ART

Polychrome designs painted on the ceramic figures are a primary record of prehistoric body art practices. Whether tattoos, stamped design or body paint freely designed, the symbols seem to communicate social identification among the early peoples. The diamonds, chevrons, zigzag lines, dots, checkered squares, steps, and swirls on the ceramic figures' body are the same motifs as the depicted textiles. The prevalence of distinct patterns suggests that the designs reflected the social order and coded a person's village, ethnic or kin identity. A particular tattoo style is the patches of raised pellets that may represent raised scarification tattoos, or a cluster of shells sewn together and worn like a shoulder mantle.

Facial scarification and piercing were an important variant of body art; piercing was not simply for beauty and identity but also to let blood. In prehispanic cultures, bloodletting announced one's heritage, a practice especially critical following the death of an honored ancestor when the inheritance of wealth and status were at stake. Bloodletting became part of the mourning process. Spines from the agave plant and obsidian lancelets were commonly used to let blood and readily available in West Mexico.

HAIR AND HEAD ADORNMENT

Headgear expressed social, political, hierarchical and regional messages, with the restricted styles of headgear denoting higher status. Male figures wear several types of headgear, while female figures don only the headband, at times elaborately decorated (lot 38). Elaborate headbands feature an added long braid or rope that hangs down the back, additional decorative elements include discs, pendants, cross-wrapping, sashes or tassels. Cone-shaped hats have a headband base and fold together in back. Their flexibility and hatched pattern suggest that actual headgear was probably made of material woven from cotton or maguery threads, or basketry. Cone-shaped hats may have a brim of feathers, tassels or other ornamentation (lots 35, 36, 37)

A few headgears undoubtedly signaled key societal roles. For example, only shamans wore the "one-horned" headdress that was usually integrated into a headband (lots 29, 30). The horn may represent the antler of a deer, as in worldwide shaman symbols, the deer personifies the sun deity. The "horn" may also represent an attached shell spire. The shape may have served a protective function, and in a like vein, the helmet was perhaps made of a tough material such as reinforced animal hide. The warrior and shaman sculptures afford an artist's perspective on the heritage of power in ancient West Mexican societies.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANCESTORS IN WEST MEXICAN ART

The essence of ancestor veneration, as seen in ancient West Mexican art and archaeology, is a belief that communication exists between the living and the souls of the dead. The living prays to their ancestors, and asks that the spirits speak to the gods on their behalf. Prehispanic peoples of the Americas shared beliefs that the ancestors never disappeared but were essential players in day to day life. For the living, their blood rights of inheritance are conferred during rituals that recognize the ancestors. Indeed, the pottery sculptures of the Silver Collection represent not only the mythic past but the ancient societies in West Mexico.



26 CHUPÍCUARO FEMALE FIGURE

LATE PRECLASSIC, 300 - 100 BC

Height: 11 ½ in (29.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

David Stuart, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on February 10, 1973

PUBLISHED

Richard F. Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico: Art and Archaeology of the Unknown Past*, Chicago, 1998, p. 256, fig. 5, cat. no. 169

EXHIBITED

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, *Ancient West Mexico: Art and Archaeology of the Unknown Past*, September 5, 1998 - November 22, 1988, continuing to
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, December 20, 1998-March 29, 1999

\$ 15,000-20,000

Chupícuaro figures are notable for the extensive covering of the body for symbolic ornamentation. Servain-Riviale examined how body modifications of both permanent forms such as tattooing, and transitory designs of body-painting, convey non-verbal communication (Servain-Riviale, in Beekman and Pickering, eds., *Reassessment*, 2016, pp. 163-173). The step-fret design so distinctive of Chupícuaro figures, can be seen as one form of the quincunx, the four part emblem of Mesoamerican iconography symbolic of cardinal directions and the levels of universe linked by a central point. As typically painted on Chupícuaro figures, the eyes and mouth form the center of the quincunx design, thus sight and language are symbolically the center or *axis mundi* of this directional emblem as used on figures. The carefully modelled diamond-shaped eyes also suggest the sculptor's intention of a four-part symbolic reference (*ibid.*, p. 171).

This female figure also has elaborate repeat patterning across her pelvis and upper legs which may be markers to a particular kin group or lineage. These repeat designs may have been applied by stamps.



26

27 CHUPÍCUARO FEMALE FIGURE

LATE PRECLASSIC, 300 - 100 BC

Height: 11 ½ in (29.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

John Jordan, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above circa 1968-1970

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 48*

\$ 12,000-18,000

As noted in the study of the extensive Natalie Wood collection at UCLA, (originally the Mildred and Edgar Dorsey Taylor collection acquired in the 1940's), McBride writes, "The ceramic complex associated with the classic Chupícuaro figurines is spectacular to say the least... That this powerful ceramic tradition greatly influenced the contemporary ceramics of a vast adjacent region seems undeniable" (McBride, *Natalie Wood Collection*, 1969, p. 38).

As noted in the previous lot, the step-fret body design is a directional reference and a highly distinctive emblem for all Chupícuaro ceramics. The quincunx pattern is strongly represented on the face and on this figure, the design is repeated in simpler form only on the front and back of the torso, leaving the thighs bare.



28 | **COLIMA HEAD VESSEL,
COMALA STYLE**
PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250

Height: 8 ¾ in (22.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

Douglas Hague, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on June 14, 1967

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 1*

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, *The Shaft Tomb Figures of
West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1974, p. 109, fig. 56
Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 49, fig. 37

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, January 28 - June 30, 1975 (ex.75.21)
Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983

\$ 12,000-18,000

The head vessel was a particular genre within the wide variety of zoomorphic, phytomorphic and abstract spouted vessels, and was exclusive to the Colima region. Similar vessels, such as the one in the Proctor Stafford collection are distinguished by the forehead projection, prominently modeled on this vessel attached to a rimmed cap or headband (Kan, Meighan, and Nicholson, *Proctor Stafford Collection*, 1970, fig. 123). The large spout at the back indicates a ritual or performative use. On this finely modeled head, the face is highly stylized with tiny diamond-shaped eyes under raised brows and a slender aquiline nose, in marked contrast to the voluminous face. The protruding mouth bears a distinct row of clenched teeth.



28

29 | **COLIMA SEATED FIGURE
OF A CHIEF, COMALA STYLE
PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250**

Height: 15 in (38.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

James Bodisbaugh, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above between 1968-1969

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 24*

PUBLISHED

Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 47, fig. 32
Richard Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico: Art
and Archaeology of the Unknown Past*, Chicago,
1998, p. 177, fig. 17

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, Temporary Loan, January 28 - June 30,
1975, (ex. 75.22)
Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, *Ancient West
Mexico: Art and Archaeology of the Unknown
Past*, September 5, 1998 - November 22, 1998,
continuing to
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, December 20, 1998- March 29, 1999

\$ 50,000-70,000



29



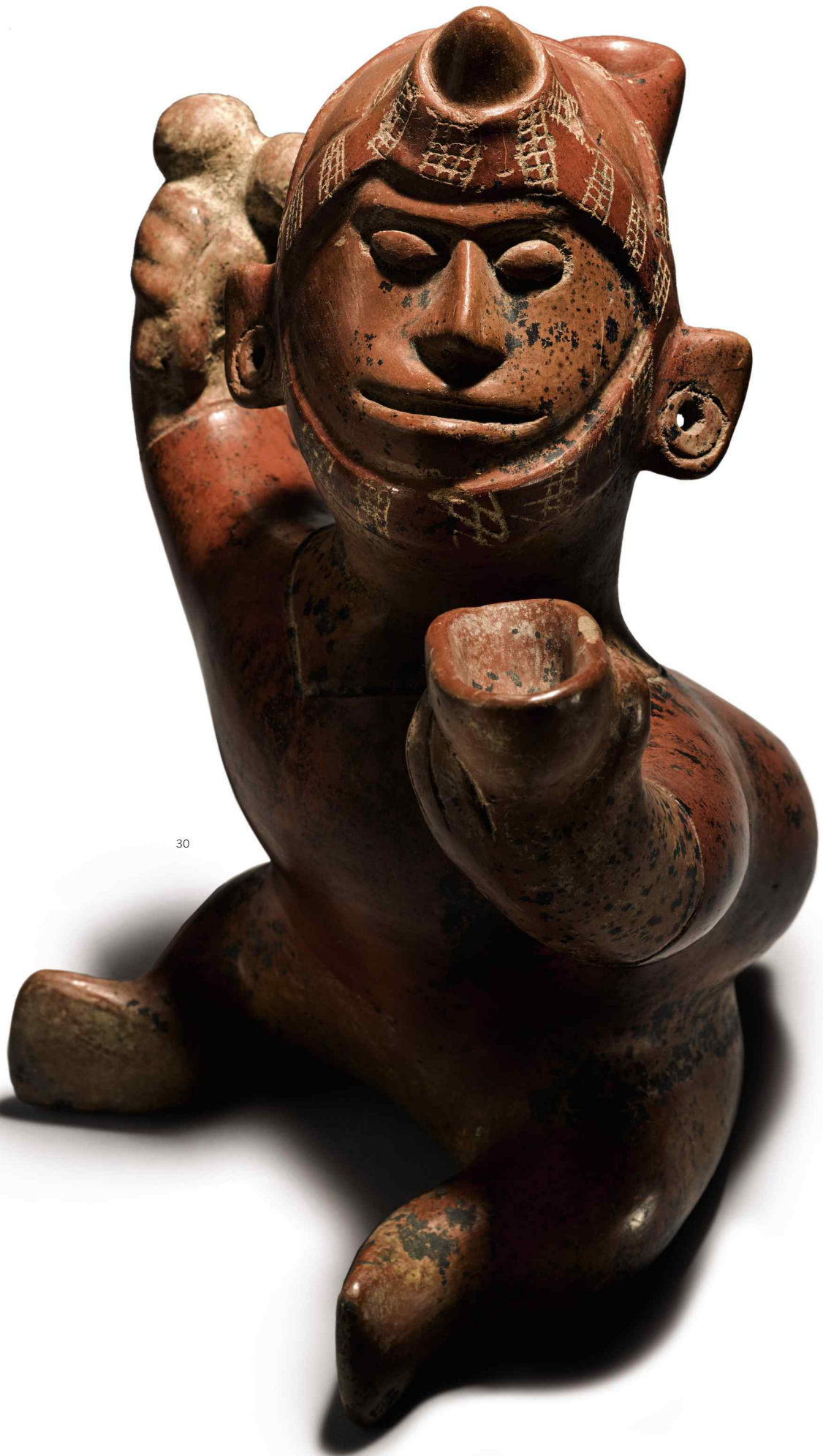
The dignified, proud, and confident posture of this figure marks him as a ruler or individual of "superordinate political rank," indicated foremost by the seated posture and the modified conch shell spire carefully attached as a headdress (Graham, in Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico*, 1998, p. 200). The precise modeling of his body, face and headdress ornament, along with the seamless and gleaming burnish of the ceramic surface, are signatures of a masterful ancient artisan and further evidence of a portrayal of an important individual.

The figure sits erectly with legs folded right over left and his hands slightly clenched at the thighs. His youthful torso leans slightly forward in attention with the pectorals marked and his broad shoulders are adorned with a collar of seven slightly graduated oval cut shells. His slender head is ornamented with a large tapering shell spire, most likely from the conch shell species *Stombus* imported from the Caribbean or Gulf Coast. The shell is secured with a long narrow band marked by regularly spaced crosshatched designs (perhaps indicating a netted cord with solid plaques) which wraps around the spire to the back and top of the figure's head and under the chin. His face is solemn, with a pronounced jawline, firmly set lips and modeled oval eyes deeply outlined. The ears are pierced for ornaments.

Much debate has surrounded the "horned" projections on Colima figures, which are considered diagnostic of shaman since Peter Furst's studies in the 1960's. Shamanic activity or ritualized ecstatic behavior was relevant to the rise of political authority. Graham convincingly showed it is the conch shell that has been a symbol of authority and rulership from early Olmec times continuing through the Teotihuacan, Maya and Aztec era (*ibid.*, pp. 196-198). Rather than representing a "horn", the projection can be seen as a modified shell obtained from outside the region.

The seated position, while a seemingly obvious posture, was itself a symbol of attained status and authority in Mesoamerican art. Graham notes, "Seating is the most common verbal and visual metaphor for rulership in Mesoamerica" (*ibid.*, p. 200). As explicitly shown on the fine Dumbarton Oaks Olmec jade pectoral, the incised figure of a heavily adorned lord wears a shell within his headdress with the glyphic text referring to his "seating" or accession to office (*ibid.*, p. 197).

For a closely related figure in The Art Institute of Chicago, with similarly pursed lips, shell collar, and whose headband has the addition of a dog's head, see Townsend, ed. *ibid.*, p. 202, fig. 17, accession no. 1997:363.



30

COLIMA SEATED SHAMAN, COMALA STYLE

PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250

Height: 11 3/4 in (29.8 cm)

PROVENANCE

Douglas Hague, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above between 1966-1967

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 23*

PUBLISHED

Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 46, fig. 31

EXHIBITED

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983

The hunchback holds an oval vessel and
shakes double rattles in his lively role within
a feasting ritual. Feasting was one of the four
most important themes portrayed in West
Mexican art, along with kinship, status, and
power (Butterwick, *Heritage of Power*, 2005, p.
12). Feasting ceremonies were an integral part
of a community that solidified economic and
social interaction within and between villages,
engaging all levels of the society.

It is suggested that the rattles were peyote
buttons which would be integral to any shamanic
activity surrounding a religious feast. The known
intoxicating liquids included *octli*, or pulque from
agave plants, or *tesvino*, maize beer (Butterwick,

in Townsend, ed., Ancient West Mexico, 1998,
p. 103). This figure also wears the insignia of
rank with the shell projection on the forehead
secured with the incised band wrapped carefully
around the chin and head. The large ears are
pierced for ornaments and he wears a short-
sleeved tunic delineated by the high burnish and
incised edges.

For similar seated figures with bowl and rattles,
see Holsbeke and Arnaut, *Offerings for a New
Life*, 1998, cat. no. 9; Gallagher, *Companions of
the Dead*, 1983, fig. 33; and the Proctor Stafford
Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
in Townsend, ed., Ancient West Mexico, 1998,
p. 210, fig. 16.

\$ 15,000-25,000



**31 COLIMA SEATED FEMALE FIGURE
WITH BOWL,
COAHUAYANA STYLE**

PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250

Height: 22 ½ in (57.1 cm)

PROVENANCE

David Stuart, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on April 25, 1967

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 6*

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, *The Shaft Tomb Figures of
West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1974, p. 108, fig. 51
Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 53, fig. 46
Gérald Berjonneau, Emile Deletaille, and Jean-
Louis Sonnerly, *Rediscovered Masterpieces of
Mesoamerica*, Boulogne, 1985, p. 184, fig. 266
Richard F. Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico:
Art and Archaeology of the Unknown Past*,
Chicago, 1998, p. 130, fig. 33

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, Temporary Loan, January 28 - June 30,
1975, (ex. 75.23)
Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, *Ancient West
Mexico: Art and Archaeology of the Unknown
Past*, September 5, 1998 - November 22, 1998,
continuing to
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, December 20, 1998- March 29, 1999

\$ 70,000-100,000





The Silvers' Coahuayana female is an exceptional example of the most distinctive of all the Colima styles which originated on the southwest coast of Colima near the Michoacán border. Most Coahuayana figures are of rounded, naturalistic form; this sculpture is a dynamic and fluid interplay of contrasting proportions, and expressions of tension and poise. As a large hollow sculpture covered in rich red slip, dense resist design, applied body ornamentation, and in a satin burnish, she defines the finest qualities of the "Intermediate" variant of the Coahuayana style. As Emmerich commented in the early 1960's, Colima art is imbued with dignity, grace and presence. The artisans "produced masterpieces which are among the high points of Pre-Columbian art" (Emmerich, *Art before Columbus*, 1963, p. 37).

Coahuayana figures include a large percentage of women of high status as indicated by their sitting on the short stools reserved only for revered ancestors or high-ranking figures. Women are typically shown naked with elements of jewelry and tattooing; the Silver figure is adorned with finely applied jewelry of disk earrings, a single strand bead necklace, and raised shoulder tattoos that are edged by a segmented armband. There is a tension and balance in her contrasting physical attributes: her minimal breasts and prominent genitalia, the voluminous legs fluidly bent, ending in the large flat paddle-shaped feet, the short arms and elongated flattened torso. The toes and fingers are outstretched and clenched but her left hand gently holds a shallow bowl. Her face is an economy of form, the reserved, trance-like expression is conveyed with applied straight bands completing the mouth, eyes and brows, and the nose is prominent and thin.



The head is forming the spout to her hollow body, while serving as the firing vent it is symbolically a reminder of the body as a sacred vessel. Ceramic figures as a type of spirit vessel were explored by Rebecca Stone, who suggests that ceramic figures could have been the designated receptacles for intangible essences, the *teotl*, the omnipresent life force (Stone, in Beekman and Pickering, eds., *Reassessment*, 2016, p. 188). Looking at the relationship of visionary experience and material containers, the figures could be part of a ritual performance, providing a form for the priest or shaman's altered self to enter as desired (*ibid.*, p. 190).

For a closely related Coahuayana figure formerly in the Saul and Marsha Stanoff Collection, see Sotheby's, New York, May 17, 2007, lot 58; for a solid standing male figure in the Proctor Stafford Collection, see Kan, Meighan, and Nicholson, *Proctor Stafford Collection*, 1970, fig. 135.





“

THE SCULPTORS OF COLIMA...
WERE ABLE TO TRANSCEND THE
LIMITATIONS OF THEIR MEDIUM.

Emmerich, *Art Before Columbus*, 1963, p. 37

”

32 TWO ZACATECAS FIGURES

PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250

Heights: 15 ¼ in and 14 ¼ in (38.7 cm and 36.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

Male Figure:

David Stuart, Los Angeles, by 1967

Sidney Newman, Los Angeles, acquired from the above

Edwin & Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on May 5, 1968

Female Figure:

Stendahl Galleries, Los Angeles

Edwin & Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above in 1970

Male inventoried by Hasso von Winning, November 2, 1972, no. 95; female figure inventoried March 28, 1970, no. 8

\$ 15,000-20,000

Zacatecas figures are considered by many to be the most stylized and celebrated of the paired figures of West Mexico. Found in the northeastern Jalisco-Zacatecas region, this distinctive subgroup was probably produced for only a few generations. Their extreme form is highly consistent, depicted with the stark pierced eyes, thin looped arms, and red and cream slip paint. They are also of feather weight compared to other West Mexican types. The male figures have a unique hairstyle in which the hair was wrapped around upright supports giving the appearance of mushroom-like stalks. Pairs typically wear identical ornaments such as the serrated earrings of this couple. The male taps his drum and the openwork mouths of both figures give the appearance of chanting participation.

See Kan, Meighan, and Nicholson, *Proctor Stafford Collection*, 1970, figs. 39-42; and Holsbeke and Arnaut, *Offerings for a New Life*, 1998, fig. 88.



32

33 **JALISCO SEATED COUPLE, AMECA-ETZATLÁN STYLE**

PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250

Heights: 24 ¼ in and 24 ½ in (61.6 cm and 62.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

Ray Ramirez, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above in 1973

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, October 22,
1973, no. 103, a and b*

PUBLISHED

Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 95, fig. 123

EXHIBITED

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983

\$ 80,000-120,000





“

... THE LARGE
HOLLOW SCULPTURE
OF JALISCO IS
UNIQUE. THE MOST
STRIKING ASPECTS
ARE THE SIMPLICITY
OF THEIR POWERFUL
AND SENSUOUS
FORM, AND THE
NOBLE DIGNITY
PORTRAYED IN THEIR
STANCE AND FACIAL
FEATURES.

Alsberg, *Ancient Sculpture*, 1968, p. 104

”



Few Jalisco sculptures surpass the quality and stature of the Silvers' seated couple. Their unadorned, forthright demeanors exemplify the powerful and compelling attributes that define the Ameca-Etztatlán marriage or sibling pairs.

In the canon of the Ameca style, the figures share realistically formed bodies in creamy gray tones with careful attention to areas offset in matte black pigment, specifically the outlined wide-rimmed eyes, lips, and plain coiffure. The male's forearms are also blackened as if in bands or cuffs. Her youthful breasts are painted with geometric designs, each composed of four sections in a spiral formation. As opposed to permanent raised tattoos, painted decoration may be a body modification that was pertinent to a specific ritual or period of life.

The striking gesture of the female's straightened right arm and lifted left hand is a marked counterpoint to her male companion. As Gallagher noted, seemingly basic gestures carry symbolic and ritual connotations. As shown only on female figures, the gesture of one hand extended straight outward was recently studied by Rebecca Stone, whereby the 'stop' gesture is considered an instruction to spirits to prevent them from leaving a mortuary context and reentering the realm of the living (Stone, in Beekman and Pickering, ed., *Reassessment*, 2016, p. 182). Of note were the numerous ethnographic sources describing the anxiety created by spirits and souls lingering presence.

The Jalisco region was one of the first areas of West Mexico explored by the intrepid British artist Adela Breton in her extensive travels through Mexico beginning in 1895. Her numerous volumes of sketchbooks with drawings, watercolors and notes were remarkable records of the Jalisco region and also of the Maya ruins in the Yucatan, (see the Adela Breton archives in the City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, England). She was the first to record an important site in the Tequila Valley recognized in current research as one of the largest ceremonial and residential complexes of the region. Visiting a local hacienda she sketched two Jalisco female figures, each with finely painted geometric designs on the breasts (Fig. 1). In her short article published in 1903, she commented on the specific arm gesture also seen on the Silvers' female figure, "...[she] clutched her hair with one hand while the other was outstretched in seeming effort to ward off some terrible fate" (Breton, 'Some Mexican Portrait Clay Figures', *Man: a Monthly Record of Anthropological Science*, Vol. 3, No. 75, 1903, p. 132).

Christopher Beekman's work in the Tequila Valley has used an interdisciplinary approach with art historians, archaeologists, and conservators contributing to the "reassessment" of how ancient ceramic figures related to ceremonial and residential areas, and how authority functioned in ancient society (Beekman and Pickering, eds., *Reassessment*, 2016; Beekman, in Kurdick and Baron, eds.,

Political Strategies, 2016, pp. 97-119). The Tequila valley was particularly rich in resources enabling sophisticated settlement areas with residential compounds, ball courts, and a specific form of public ceremonial space known as a *guachimontón*. These were circular clusters of houses arranged around a tiered central platform that was accessed by stairways placed in directional axes. The *guachimontón* provided a dedicated space for performative rituals, lineage ceremonies, funerals, agricultural ceremonies, and feasting events, participated in by the community but organized by the ranking lineages or shaman. Beekman suggested that certain ceramic figures had a "use-life", they could have been displayed or even used in public ceremonies. Those who controlled the space with sacred knowledge could mediate the supernatural with the specific rites performed (Beekman, *ibid.*).

Of note is the Aztec reference to the Jalisco region as Cihuatlan, "the place of women" (Holsbeke and Arnaut, *Offerings for a New Life*, 1998, p. 135). For a male figure of highly similar style, see von Winning, *Pre-Columbian Art*, 1968, color plate, p. 131.



Fig. 1 Adela Breton (1850-1923), Watercolor of a Jalisco seated female figure, circa 1895. © 2017 Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, Bridgeman Images



34

**COLIMA SEATED FIGURE
WITH EFFIGY PENDANT,
COMALA STYLE**

PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250

Height: 12 5/8 in (32.1 cm)

PROVENANCE

Joseph Haddad, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 9, 1972

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, November 2,
1972, no. 102*

PUBLISHED

Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 46, fig. 30

EXHIBITED

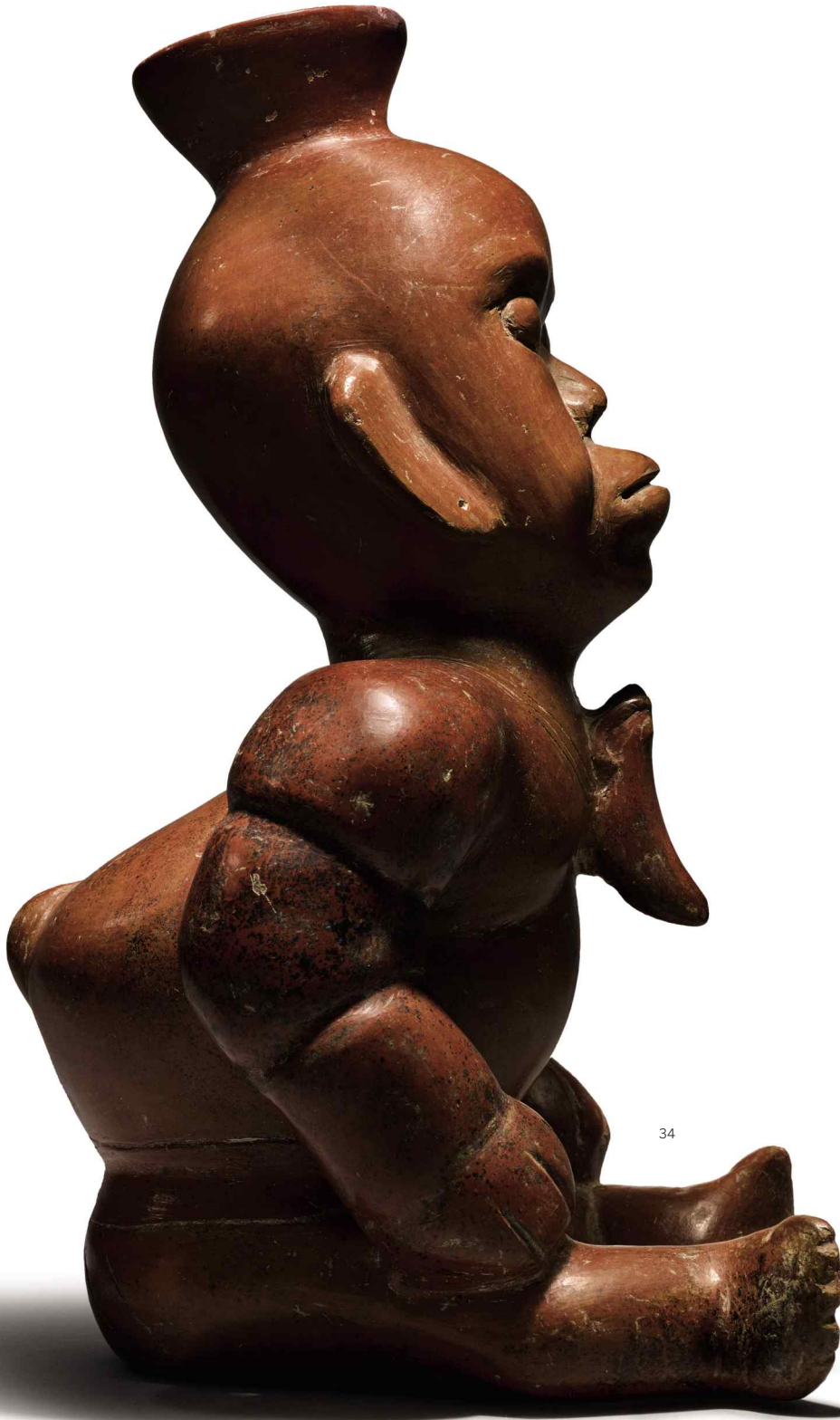
Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983

Hunchbacks were frequent actors in the array
of Colima figures of socio-religious significance.
Their exaggerated form was considered a sign
of enhanced consciousness and supernatural
ability, engendering them to a shamanic role.
They were depicted later in Maya art as royal
court attendants and in Aztec times they lived
in specially appointed quarters. It was said
they were Moctezuma's confidants in religious
matters (Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead*,
1983, p. 39).

The subject figure denotes a position of
status, wearing a large effigy pendant of a
coatimundi requiring triple necklace strands
for support. The pendant animal has slender
forearms grasping its snout and a tapering
body (exactly as carved on the greenstone
pendant at the Metropolitan Museum of Art,
MMA 1978.412.239). The dwarf's overall posture
belies an intense concentration, leaning forward
with muscled arms and shoulders, a fixed gaze,
and finely modeled mouth. He wears a loincloth
with tasseled ties in the front.

For a hunchback figure in the Art Institute of
Chicago, see Townsend, ed., *Ancient West
Mexico*, 1998, p. 83, fig. 14; for two figures in
the UCLA Museum of Cultural History, see
Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead*, 1983, figs.
28 and 29.

\$ 20,000-30,000



34



34

DIEGO RIVERA AND PEGGY GUGGENHEIM

ANCIENT MEXICAN ART

Elements of Pre-Columbian art, particularly Aztec stone sculpture and West Mexican ceramics, had a specific appeal to and resonance with twentieth century artists and collectors. This relationship was the subject of Barbara Braun's book, *Pre-Columbian Art and the Post-Columbian World, Ancient American Sources of Modern Art* (1993), which closely examined the influence of Pre-Columbian art on modern artists including Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Miguel Covarrubias, and Henry Moore, and on the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. The recent exhibition and catalogue *Picasso and Rivera: Conversations Across Time*¹ took a new look at these two artists, particularly how their respective European and Pre-Columbian artistic heritages influenced their work, and the development of modernism in Europe and Latin America.² Diana Magaloni explored Rivera's deep connection with indigenous antiquity and how he "interpreted and integrated the legacy of the Mesoamerican past in mural, graphic, architecture, and wall mosaics."³

Diego Rivera (1886-1957) was the first internationally recognized modern artist to acquire an extensive collection of Pre-Columbian art, ultimately totaling nearly 60,000 objects ranging from small Preclassic figurines to Aztec stone figures. Rivera bequeathed the collection to Mexico in the Museo Anahuacalli, which he designed and planned for over 20 years. Rivera studied, catalogued, and sketched the collection meticulously and began to incorporate Pre-Columbian figures into the civic murals commissioned by the Ministry of Public Education from 1923-1928.

continued

OPPOSITE Peggy Guggenheim with Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), *The Poet* (1911, PGC), and two Nayarit figures. Photographed at the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, Venice, early 1960s. © 2017 Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Photo Archivio Cameraphoto Epoche. Gift, Cassa di Risparmio di Venezia, 2005



Nayarit standing figure, Peggy Guggenheim Collection (inv. no. 76.2553 PG 265)





THE ABSTRACT CATEGORY OF IXTLÁN MATERIAL HAS BEEN TERMED ‘ABSURD’ AND ‘BRUTAL’ BUT IT IS ONE OF THE MOST SPONTANEOUS AND EXPRESSIVE TRADITIONS OF CLAY SCULPTURE EVER PRODUCED...

Kan, in Kan, Meighan and Nicholson, eds., *Proctor Stafford Collection*, 1970, p. 12



Rivera featured Nayarit figures in some of his most important and influential murals (see facing page); the huge scope and bold imagery of the murals became one of his most enduring legacies. Rivera’s idealized view of ancient cultures as simple nonhierarchical communities fed into the political and social message of his murals within the context of Mexican nationalism in the 1930-1940s.

Rivera was also influenced by important art theorists of the period such as André Breton, who believed that ancient Mexican art had an inherent Surrealist element.⁴ He was drawn to the ancient figures’ “extraordinary plastic and expressive power.”⁵ West Mexican terracottas, with their contrasting abstract and realistic forms, and exaggerated gestures formed the core of his vast collection, first published in 1941 in *Art in Ancient Mexico* by Oxford University Press. His West Mexican sculptures were the primary focus of the exhibition in Mexico City in 1946 at the Palacio de Bellas Artes; it was the first major exhibition featuring ancient West Mexican art, accompanied by a catalogue of scholarly essays. Michael Kan noted, “The Bellas Artes exhibition...was responsible not only for the recognition of West Mexico as an aesthetic and art-historical entity but also for focusing the attention of Mexican and North American archaeologists on this area.”⁶

Peggy Guggenheim (1898-1979) was a major twentieth century art patron whose fascination with the exotic inspired her to collect Pre-Columbian and African

art. While she was involved with the avant-garde art world since 1930’s, her in-depth introduction to ethnic art came during her tumultuous relationship with the Surrealist artist Max Ernst between 1941 and 1943. In the late 1950’s, Guggenheim turned to Ernst’s longtime dealer Julius Carlebach after her trip to Mexico and acquired a dozen works from Carlebach, including Oceanic, African and three Nayarit figures (Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, 76.2553 PG 264, 76.2553 PG 265, and 76.2553 PG 266). She brought the works to her Venice home in the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, where she arranged and rearranged “tableaus” of various ancient sculptures with her modern art masters.⁷ John Alsberg described Nayarit artists as the “fauves” of Mexico: “Observing the exuberant vitality of their figures one feels their ‘expressionistic’ impact.”⁸ In Guggenheim’s New York gallery, *Art of This Century*, opened in 1942, she attempted to change the way people looked at art, to have “a cerebral and sensory *experience*.”⁹ Her collection of Nayarit figures and African art illustrated an important component of her eclectic, visionary style.

OPPOSITE Detail of Diego Rivera (1886-1957), *The Tarascan Civilisation*, 1942. © 2017 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

1 Magaloni and Govan, eds., *Picasso and Rivera: Conversations Across Time*, 2017

2 Govan, *ibid.*, p. 25

3 Magaloni, *ibid.*, p. 251

4 Magaloni, *ibid.*, p. 65

5 Braun, in Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico*, 1998, p. 268

6 Kan, *Proctor Stafford Collection*, 1989, p. 15

7 Borrellini, in Campione ed., *Ethnopathosion*, 2008, p. 35

8 Alsberg, *Ancient Sculpture*, 1968, p. 98

9 Prose, *Shock of the Modern*, 2015, p. 135



35 | **NAYARIT FAMILY,
IXTLÁN DEL RÍO STYLE
PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250**

Height: 15 ½ in and 18 ¼ in (39.4 cm and 46.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

Joseph Haddad, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 9, 1972

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, November 2,
1972, no. 98, a and b*

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, *The Shaft Tomb Figures of
West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1974, p. 163, fig. 274
(female figure)

Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 113, fig. 143

Richard F. Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico:
Art and Archaeology of the Unknown Past*,
Chicago, 1998, p. 237, fig. 8

EXHIBITED

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, *Ancient West
Mexico: Art and Archaeology of the Unknown
Past*, September 5, 1998 - November 22, 1998,
continuing to

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, December 20, 1998- March 29, 1999

\$ 70,000-100,000

“

PERHAPS THE MOST UNIVERSAL
GENRE OF FIGURES, IN ALL THE
STYLES AND GEOGRAPHICAL
AREAS OF WEST MEXICO ARE
PAIRS OF FESTIVE MEN AND
WOMEN.

”

Townsend, in Holsbeke and Arnaut, ed.,
Offerings for a New Life, 1998, p. 26



35

This family group is the most elaborate and ornately decorated of the Silvers' West Mexican couples, a tour de force of form and color, and a defining model of the Ixtlán del Rio style of elite ancestor figures. With lively and vibrant identical expressions, poised in their respective roles (holding a nursing child and playing a rasp), they portray a youthful couple that have fulfilled their achievements and celebrate the continuity of their status. The couple is a confirmation of "gender complementarity," described as the idealized portrayal of male and female roles as separate but interdependent and supportive spheres of activity (Pirtle, in Beekman and Pickering, eds., *Reassessment*, 2016, p. 159). Pirtle's study of attributes denoting gender and status in Ixtlán figures emphasized how status and gender were shown by the frequency of both male and female figures participating in all rituals.

The "imperceptible difference in adornments between the sexes may indicate that participation in ritual was about status or families and less about gender" (*ibid.*).

Ancestor worship was an important practice and belief system throughout West Mexico, and was integral for establishing status and

power (Butterwick, *Heritage of Power*, 2004, p. 11). Townsend describes the "festive pairs" as commemorating marriage and referencing the primordial union of male and female creative forces. Butterwick refers to the ancestral couple, possibly sibling ancestors, as the highest ranking individuals as they established land territories and control of the resources within the area.

Founding ancestor ceramics reinforced their kinship ties through their shared facial features, elaborate body designs, jewelry, and clothing. On this couple, both their faces are covered in curvilinear and segmented designs highlighting their open mouths and wide, rimmed eyes. Their excessive jewelry includes the dense arc of earrings, beaded necklaces, and crescentic pendant, as well as effigy nose ornaments. The female nurses a child clinging to her bare chest which is highlighted by zigzag designs. Her tight fitting skirt is patterned with alternating squares of diagonal stripes and scroll motifs which are repeated on the man's short-sleeved tunic. He plays an effigy rasp that is humorously modeled as a couple engaged in lively conversation, their joined elongated bodies forming the rasp with their feet projecting at the bottom. The male wears a peaked cap with a stiff segmented brim that is secured with an animal pelt showing paws at each side.

continued



Clothing details on ceramic figures such as these are the only source of insight into the textiles of ancient Mexico, the actual fabrics long lost in the archaeological record. In addition, textile exchange was part of the larger trade networks along the Pacific coast whereby the valuable, and in some cases sacred, raw materials such as spondylus and obsidian available in Mexico were traded to Ecuador and the larger Andean region. There is a distinct similarity of textile styles found in Ecuadorian Chorrera and Bahia phase figures (spanning 1500 BC-AD 500) and the Ixtlán del Rio figures (see Figs. 1 and 2). Patricia Anawalt extensively studied textiles of ancient Mesoamerica, with particular research on the textile patterns of the Tarascan empire (AD 900-1500s) as shown in the sixteenth century colonial document *Relación de Michoacán*. She showed that distinct designs on Ixtlán

figures are the same as clothing illustrated in the *Relación*. She further concludes, "Within Mesoamerica the tradition of Ecuadorian-style clothing marked into geometric squares is known only in West Mexico, both at Ixtlán del Rio and, over a thousand years later, among the sixteenth-century Tarascans" (Anawalt, in Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico*, 1998, p. 242). Besides specific jewelry such as tusk pendants, she observed that short breeches, short-sleeved tunics, women's wraparound skirts, and the step-fret motif are key attributes shared in both Ecuadorian and Ixtlán del Rio figures (*ibid.*, p. 237).

There is joy and a celebration of life conveyed by this couple with their infant. They are participants in a timeless affirmation of the community and the accomplishments of broader societal roles.



Fig. 1. Chorrera standing figure, Ecuador, wearing patterned skirt and trunks. Illustrated in Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico*, 1998, p. 238, fig. 11. Photograph by Thomas Cummins



Fig. 2. Guangala female figure, Ecuador, wearing patterned clothing. Illustrated in Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico*, 1998, p. 242, fig. 19. Photograph by Museo del Banco Central, Guayaquil



36 NAYARIT STANDING FIGURE WITH CLUB, IXTLÁN DEL RÍO STYLE PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250

Height: 20 ½ in (52 cm)

PROVENANCE

Douglas Hague, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above in June 1967

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 2*

PUBLISHED

John L. Alsberg and Rodolpho Petschek, *Ancient Sculpture from Western Mexico: The Evolution of Artistic Form*, Berkeley, 1968, p. 99, fig. 46
Hasso von Winning, *The Shaft Tomb Figures of West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1974, p. 150, fig. 221
Richard F. Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico: Art and Archaeology of the Unknown Past*, Chicago, 1998, p. 24, fig. 14, cat. no. 199

EXHIBITED

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, *Ancient West Mexico: Art and Archaeology of the Unknown Past*, September 5, 1998 - November 22, 1998, continuing to
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, December 20, 1998 - March 29, 1999

\$ 30,000-40,000

Carl Lumholtz was the first to publish figures in the Ixtlán del Río style. Lumholtz was a Norwegian explorer/anthropologist who traveled by mule from Arizona down through Mexico in 1892, recording and studying indigenous groups including the Huichol and Cora of the Sierra Madre Occidental. *Unknown Mexico*, 1902, a two volume tome, was a landmark oeuvre with illustrated, highly personal accounts of West Mexico customs and art. The figures illustrated (Fig. 1) include a male warrior and female figure of the types within the Silver collection.

The Silvers' warrior stands firmly with a cluster of clubs or possibly an *atlatl*, balanced on his right shoulder. His elaborate attire includes the boldly painted tunic of alternating stepped and scrolled motifs, an example of the textile motifs seen on ceramic figures from Chorrera, Ecuador (see discussion in lot 35). He wears short trunks with a long scoop belt and conch shell fastener. He is adorned with rows of tiny bead necklaces, a massive nose ornament, and a tight row of overlapping earrings; all the accoutrements and clothing are finely modeled and elaborately detailed.

As a defining example of a Nayarit warrior, this figure was featured in John Alsberg's 1968 large format book with elegant black-and-white photographs by Rodolfo Petschek, *Ancient Sculpture from Western Mexico: The Evolution of Artistic Form* (Figs. 2 and 3). Alsberg declared he had no intention of comparing ancient and contemporary art; he discussed the sculptures purely for their artistic form. Through a limited and now dated approach of promoting there was a coherent shift in West Mexican art styles from archaic to sensuous and fluid (Alsberg, *Ancient Sculpture from Western Mexico: The Evolution of Artistic Form*, 1968, Preface). Alsberg nonetheless provided an engaging commentary on a wide range of figures.

He found the sculptures "spontaneous and strong, but unrefined and frequently unruly." Describing this figure in the Silver collection, he writes, "It shows a brutal energy which is the salient feature of the familiar figures of warriors and ballplayers planted on colossal legs...the figures are sensuous, uncontrolled and fascinating" (*ibid.*, pp. 98, 100).

For a closely related figure in the Proctor Stafford collection, see Kan, Meighan, and Nicholson, *Proctor Stafford Collection*, 1970, fig. 16.





36



Fig. 1. Nayarit figures. Illustrated in Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, Vol. II, 1902, plate V

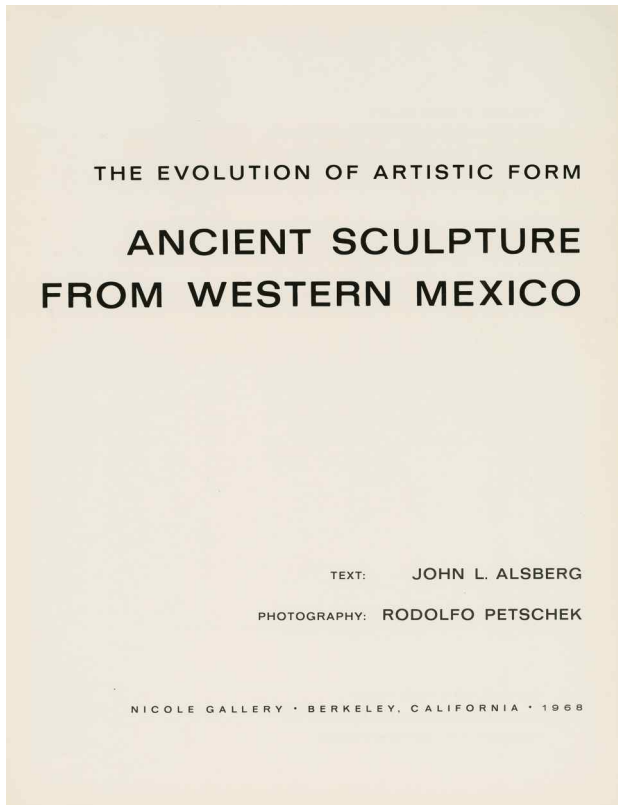


Fig. 2. Title page of Alsberg, *Ancient Sculpture from Western Mexico*, 1968



Fig. 3. The present lot as illustrated in Alsberg, *Ancient Sculpture from Western Mexico*, 1968, p. 98, fig. 46. Photograph by Rudolfo Petschek

37 | **NAYARIT STANDING FIGURE WITH SPEAR,
IXTLÁN DEL RÍO STYLE
PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250**

Height: 19 ½ in (49.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Ed Primus Gallery, Los Angeles
Joseph Haddad, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 9, 1972

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, November 2,
1972, no. 97*

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, *The Shaft Tomb Figures of
West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1974, p. 150, fig. 220
Richard F. Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico:
Art and Archaeology of the Unknown Past*,
Chicago, 1998, p. 24, fig. 14, cat. no. 199

EXHIBITED

Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, *Ancient West
Mexico: Art and Archaeology of the Unknown
Past*, September 5, 1998 - November 22, 1998,
continuing to
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, December 20, 1998- March 29, 1999

\$ 20,000-30,000



The Silver collection has two of the finest examples of Ixtlán del Río style "warrior" figures in full regalia. Figures brandishing clubs or batons are one of the most important and frequently depicted types next to family couples within all of West Mexican styles. This figure and preceding lot 36 are wearing the peaked headdress with stiff spiked brim versus the bi-horned helmet style.

While seemingly warriors in action, the figures may commemorate ritual warfare or institutionalized conflict and thus proclaim a rite of passage for powerful local chiefs. Townsend described "warrior ceremonialism" and the seasonal timing of conflicts (Townsend, *Ancient West Mexico*, 1998, pp. 113-114). The Aztecs initiated warfare after a harvest after which victorious young warriors were initiated through sacrificial rites during the subsequent planting season.

This figure holds a long spear pointed at both ends, decorated with clinging strips of animal pelt at the center. Of particular note is the back armor rising up behind the shoulders, most likely an animal pelt with the pair of curving projections representing legs. This specialized backrack or armor is a type rarely depicted, seen on only two other figures (von Winning, *Pre-Columbian Art*, 1968, color plate 184; Holsbeke and Arnaut, *Offerings for a New Life*, 1998, cat. no. 66). He wears the classic short trunks with a scoop loincloth secured by a prominent conch shell and his chest is boldly painted with concentric squares framing circles. The face is covered in black resist circular designs and nearly obscured by the oblong nose ornament attached through the septum. His gritting teeth are shown recessed in the mouth.

For a seated warrior with spear of the fringed headdress type, see von Winning, *Shaft Tomb Figures*, 1974, fig. 226.



38 | **NAYARIT SEATED COUPLE,
IXTLÁN DEL RÍO STYLE
PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250**

Heights: 11 ¼ in each (28.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Joseph Haddad, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 9, 1972

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, November 2,
1972, no. 100, a and b*

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, *The Shaft Tomb Figures of
West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1974, p. 167, fig. 290
Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 114, fig. 145

EXHIBITED

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983

\$ 25,000-35,000

“

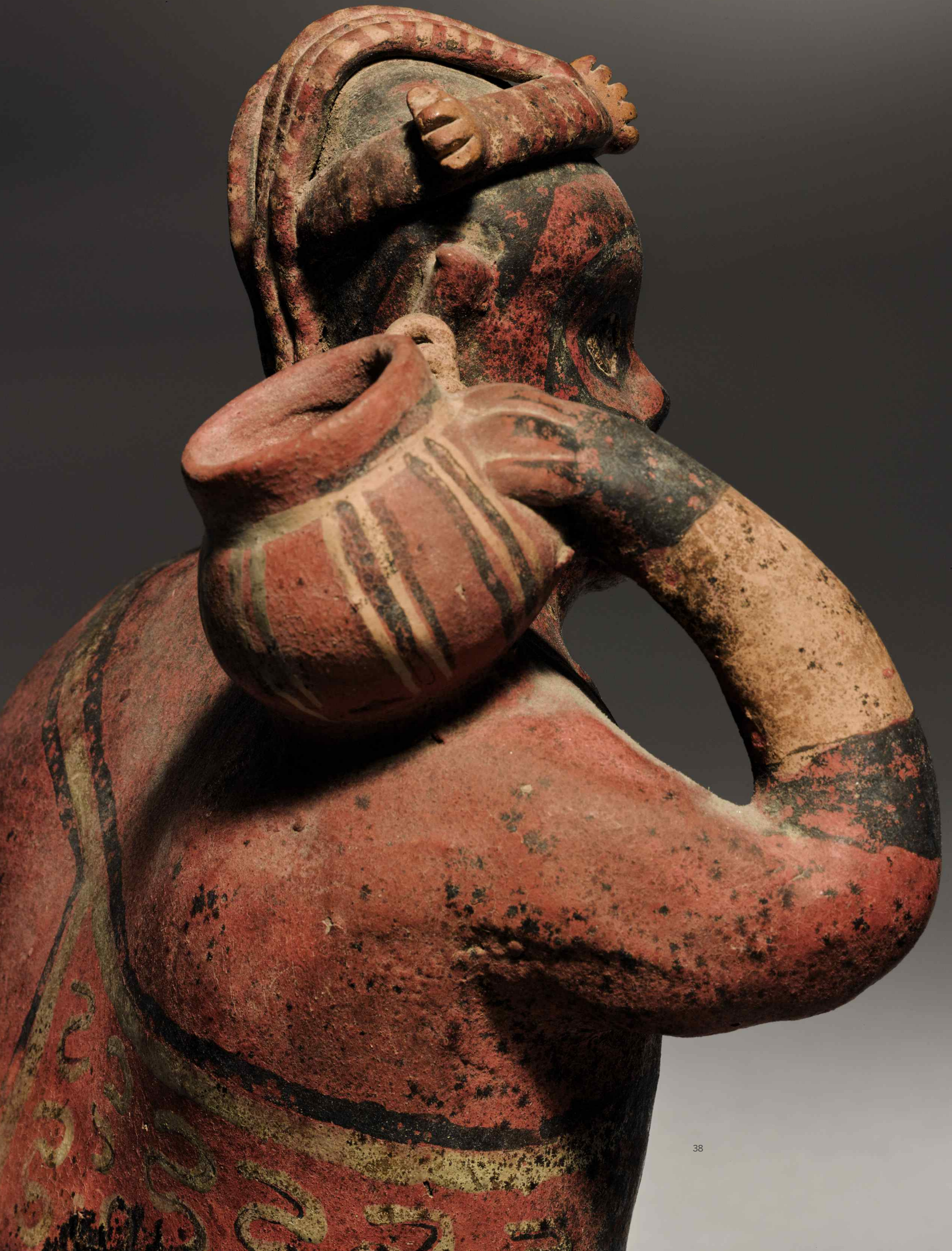
ALL THE TIME THE PREPARATIONS
ARE IN PROGRESS...THE HIKULI-
SEEKERS AND THEIR WIVES PAINT
THEIR FACES WITH VARIOUS
DESIGNS...

Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, vol. II, 1902, p. 141

”



38



The high level of workmanship and attention to detail in this unusual couple attests to their ancestral and social significance. Within the types of Ixtlán figures, "perhaps the most distinctive substyle consists of male-female pairs with broad, square bodies and small rounded heads" (Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead*, 1983, p. 106).

This couple is one of three pairs known, all physically anomalous yet displaying the conventional attributes and accoutrements for male/ female pairs. With heads cocked and enlarged whitened eyes, they portray otherworldly qualities. Each has black geometric facial tattoos covering the entire face with raised shoulder tattoos framed within dark diamond-shapes. Lumholtz illustrated the facial designs of the Huichol during certain pilgrimages (Fig. 1) and described them as the masks of gods, with specific designs representing elements such as serpents, clouds and rain (Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, 1902, p. 141).

The figures have identical tiny overlapping earrings cascading along the lobes; the female's finely striated coiffure is held with a single striped band while the male figure has a pelt headband with triple extensions over the back of the head. Her wraparound skirt is patterned with undulating serpents with triangular heads, the design completely covering her skirt underneath; his shoulder tunic (known ethnographically as a *tilmatli*) is similarly patterned. The male does not wear a scoop loincloth.

For the two closely related couples, see Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead*, 1983, p. 115, fig. 146, and von Winning, *Shaft Tomb Figures*, 1974, fig. 286; for a joined figure of this style in the Diego Rivera collection, see *Artes de Mexico, Anahuacalli, Museo Diego Rivera*, numero 64/65, p. 96.

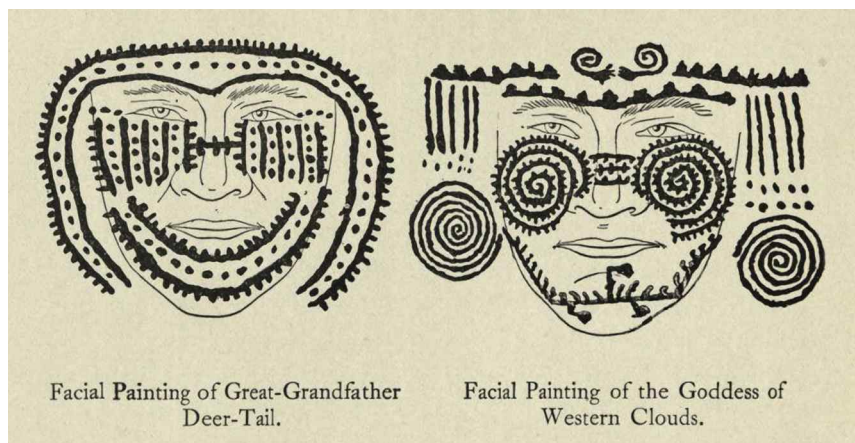


Fig. 1 Drawing of Huichol Indian facial designs. Illustrated in Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, Vol. II, 1902, p. 142



Fig. 2 Nayarit joined couple from the collection of Diego Rivera. Illustrated in *Artes de Mexico, Anahuacalli, Museo Diego Rivera*, nos. 64/65, p. 96.



39 | **NAYARIT SEATED COUPLE
WITH TURTLE SHELL,
IXTLÁN DEL RÍO STYLE
PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250**

Heights: 16 ¼ in and 16 ½ in (41.2 cm and 41.9 cm)

PROVENANCE

John Jordan, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above between 1968-1970

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, *The Shaft Tomb Figures of
West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1974, p. 158, fig. 254
and p. 165, fig. 282

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 42, a and b*

\$ 25,000-45,000





ALL THAT WE SHOULD CALL ORNAMENT ON THEIR CLOTHING AND IMPLEMENTS OWES ITS VERY EXISTENCE TO THE PRAYFUL THOUGHTS IT EXPRESSES.

Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, vol. II, 1902, p. 475



This male figure playing a large turtle carapace with an antler is a prominent display of the musicality of ritual feasting ceremonies. A turtle's carapace served as an ideal resonant object, and their use as instruments was well documented through the Aztec period; the instrument was known as a *ayotl* used during monthly feasts. Turtles were associated with rain and water in ethnographic ceremonies and thus ideal for agricultural ritual events.

The male figure wears an alternate type of headdress seen on Ixtlán figures, of a broad striped cloth or likely an animal pelt, folded at the back with tapered ends. His armbands

include a shell tucked onto the right arm and disk on the left. The female has carefully painted fingernails and her legs are tucked beneath a long striped skirt. She is adorned with tasseled armbands, multiple necklaces and the identical stiff nose rings and overlapping disk earrings of her mate. The detailed treatment of her headgear reveals the twisted headband is actually a thick cord wrapped with an additional slender dotted band with ties extending at the back, possibly also of an animal pelt.

For another figure playing a turtle shell as part of a feasting couple, see Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico*, 1998, p. 127, fig. 29.





40 | **COLIMA FLUTED VESSEL,
COMALA STYLE**
PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250

Height: 9 1/2 in (23.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Sidney Newman, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on April 16, 1968

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 13*

PUBLISHED

Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead:
Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West
Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 77, fig. 95

EXHIBITED

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los
Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic
Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*,
October 11 - November 27, 1983

\$ 8,000-12,000

Within the corpus of Comala phase
phytomorphic vessels, fluted gourds and
pumpkins were some of the most popular
vegetal forms, given that *cucurbita* were a major
food source next to maize. The vessels were
typically modeled to float just above ground level
on the tripod supports of parrots nibbling in the
sides. The realistic forms of plants and various
animals, as well as the distinctive red slip, are
considered indicators of the influence and
contact from the Chorrera people of Ecuador.

For highly similar examples see Holsbeke and
Arnaut, *Offerings for a New Life*, 1998, fig. 40,
and Townsend, ed., *Ancient West Mexico*, 1998,
p. 213, fig. 21.



40

41 | **NAYARIT SEATED 'MOURNER',
SAN SEBASTIAN STYLE
PROTOCLASSIC, 100 BC - AD 250**

Height: 7 in (17.8 cm)

PROVENANCE

Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired prior to 1970

Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28, 1970, no. 37

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, *Shaft Tomb Figures of West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1974, p. 155, fig. 243

Jacki Gallagher, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 112, fig. 142

EXHIBITED

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los Angeles, *Companions of the Dead: Ceramic Tomb Sculpture from Ancient West Mexico*, October 11 - November 27, 1983

A classic example of the "mourner" type, this figure blends the exaggerated style of extended knees with a realistically rendered face hidden behind his folded arms. He is adorned with a beaded headband and multiple earrings, otherwise naked. It is suggested the "mourners" may represent individuals in a narcotic state from a peyote or hallucinogenic ritual; the ethnographic literature notes that the contemporary Huichol in a peyote trance assume this position (Kan, Meighan, and Nicholson, *Proctor Stafford Collection*, 1970, p. 30).

For examples of figures in the Proctor Stafford Collection at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, see *ibid.*, figs. 54-58.

\$ 3,000-4,000



41

42 | MAYA BASAL-FLANGED LIDDED POLYCHROME BOWL

EARLY CLASSIC, AD 250 - 450

Diameter: 12 ¼ in (31.1 cm)

PROVENANCE

Stendahl Galleries, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles,
acquired from the above in 1971

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, April 25, 1971,
no. 86*

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, *The Magnificent Maya*, November 14,
1975 - June 30, 1976

\$ 15,000-25,000

Voluminous lidded bowls were important vessels in the Early Classic era. Cylinder vessels primarily illustrated narrative mythology, and large two-part lidded vessels, used to store food offerings, provided a three-dimensional form to portray important iconography. This vessel features four panels of the stylized fish monster or shark, known as *xoc*, each separated by panels of vertical bands with crenelated edges. The domed lid is decorated with three panels of dotted and interwoven emblems representing water, the handle rising above is painted with a star sign.

The *xoc* fish monster was the mysterious and most powerful creature of the sea, idealized from Olmec through Aztec times. The supernatural fish monster was vividly depicted in San Lorenzo Monument 58 in 1000 BC (Benson and de la Fuente, eds., *Olmec World*, 1996, cat. no. 16), portrayed with the large head, toothy mouth, and bifurcated tail as shown here. The *xoc* monsters on this vessel are enlivened by human eyes, with the body elaborately decorated with stylized piscine scaly elements. Actual shark teeth have been found in caches and burials not only on coastal sites but far inland.

For basal flanged lidded bowls, see Schmidt, de la Garza, and Nalda, eds., *Maya*, 1998, cat. nos. 225-226.



42, LID

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THE MAYA CONCEPTUALIZED, COMMODIFIED AND EXPERIENCED SHARKS—BOTH REAL AND FANTASTICAL—IN WAYS THAT SIMULTANEOUSLY MAINTAINED A SENSE OF WONDER WITH NATURAL PHENOMENA, WHILE SERVING GRANDER COSMIC PURPOSES.

Sarah Newman, 'Sharks in the Jungle, Real and Imagined Sea Monsters of the Maya', *Antiquity*, Vol. 90, No. 354, 2016, p. 1523 ”



42

43 | **COLIMA POSTCLASSIC SEATED
FIGURE WITH HEADDRESS,
EL CHANAL**

POSTCLASSIC, AD 1250 - 1521

Height: 27 3/8 in (69.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

James Bodisbaugh, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above between 1969 -1970

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March
28, 1970, no. 26, and further documented by
Hasso von Winining on June 18, 1968, (personal
communication to Edwin and Cherie Silver)*

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, 'Der westmexikanische
equipal-Stuhl. Ein ethnologisch-archäologischer
Vergleich', *Indiana*, vol. 9, 1984, p. 184, fig. 3b, &
p. 185, fig. 3e

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, January 27 - June 30, 1975

\$ 20,000-30,000







Three Colima Postclassic figures in the Silver Collection, photographed while on loan to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1975. The present lot is the center figure, lot 44 is the figure on the right. Photograph courtesy of Edwin and Cherie Silver

This figure and lot 44, are part of an important group of four known Postclassic figural censurs from the northern Colima region of El Chanal. Their eccentric and stylized faces and rope-like arms echo earlier West Mexican figural styles, but it is the round woven cane stools (known as *equipales*) which are of particular distinction. Hasso von Winning first studied the three figures in the Silver collection in 1968; his later article discussed the ethnographic importance of the cane and bamboo round seats used by the Huichols of Nayarit (von Winning, 'Der westmexikanische equipal-Stuhl', *Indiana*, 1984, pp. 175-187). An important source was the early work of the Norwegian explorer/anthropologist Carl Lumholtz. Lumholtz traveled from Arizona down through Mexico in 1892, recording and studying indigenous groups including the Huichol and Cora of the Sierra Madre Occidental. His two volume publication in 1902, *Unknown Mexico*, was a landmark oeuvre with illustrated, highly personal accounts of West Mexican customs and art.

Round stools held special importance as nearly all depictions of seats are rectangular. Lumholtz describes the *equipales* for shaman and their attendants as seats of divine power, an indispensable accessory for shamanic customs (Lumholtz, *Unknown Mexico*, vol. II, 1902, pp. 30-31). Lumholtz records, "The singing shaman who was the leader, sat in a peculiar arm-chair used by the tribe" (*ibid.*, p. 7). He

refers to shaman sitting for days, "...on all festive occasions the shaman and the principal men use such chairs and after the feast is over, everyone takes his chair home with him." A smaller version of the cane stool was called a "Gods chair" (*ibid.*, p. 30-31).

Veneration of deities included long celebratory rituals involving combinations of performance, feasting, fasting, sacrifice, and divinations. Within the framework of Postclassic iconography, von Winning noted the figures can be compared to the deity *Mixcoatl*, God of the Hunt, as illustrated in the codices Magliabechiano and Vaticanus, which show impersonators with costume elements similar to the Silver's figures including the stiff broad collar, headband with applied medallions, and twisted armbands (*ibid.*, p. 179).

Postclassic figural censurs depicting a skeletal deity or the rain god Tlaloc are from a different region and were of very blocky proportion. The Silvers' figures are a refined and vivid reference to the ritual behavior of elite individuals.

For the closely related fourth and companion figure, see Elizabeth Kennedy Easby and John Scott, eds. *Before Cortes, Sculpture of Middle America*, 1971, fig. 264, (also Sotheby's, New York, May 15, 2009, lot 140), currently on loan to the Yale University Art Gallery (ILE2010.17.1).

44 | **COLIMA POSTCLASSIC
SEATED FIGURE ON A STOOL,
EL CHANAL**

POSTCLASSIC, AD 1250 - 1521

Height: 25 ¾ in (65.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

James Bodisbaugh, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above between 1969-1970

*Inventoried by Hasso von Winning, March 28,
1970, no. 28, and documented by Hasso von
Winning, June 18, 1968 (personal communication
to Edwin and Cherie Silver)*

PUBLISHED

Hasso von Winning, 'Der westmexikanische
equipal-Stuhl. Ein ethnologisch-archäologischer
Vergleich', *Indiana*, vol. 9, 1984, p. 184, fig. 3c

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, January 27 - June 30, 1975

\$ 10,000-15,000

This figure is one of the trio in the Silver
collection of the Postclassic El Chanal group; see
the discussion in lot 43.

Here the figure is minimally adorned with only
the stiff broad collar and a simple headband.
However, he sits on a particularly high version of
the *equipal* with the vertical slats well supported
on the broad lower frame.



44

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**...ART OF WEST MEXICO
PARTICIPATES IN ONE
OF THE DEEPEST AND
OLDEST STRATUMS OF
BELIEF, SYMBOLISM
AND ART SHARED BY
THE FAMILY OF PEOPLES
IN MESOAMERICAN
CIVILIZATION.**

Townsend, in Holsbeke and Arnaut, ed., *Offerings
for a New Life*, 1998, p. 15

”





45

MASK

COASTAL SEPIK RIVER,
EAST SEPIK PROVINCE,
NORTHEAST PAPUA NEW
GUINEA

Height: 14 1/8 in (36 cm)

PROVENANCE

Arthur Speyer, Berlin
Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Cologne, inv. no.
37 636, acquired from the above in 1924
Deaccessioned by exchange in 1969
European Private Collection
Harry Franklin, Los Angeles, acquired from the
above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on March 17, 1975

\$ 6,000-9,000

46

BATAK STAFF
INDONESIA

Height: 67 in (170.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

Merton D. Simpson, New York
The Purchase Gallery, Purchase, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 25, 1975

See catalogue note at SOTHEBYS.COM

\$ 3,000-5,000



47 KANAK MASK

CENTRAL OR SOUTHERN GRAND TERRE, NEW CALEDONIA

Height: 13 in (33 cm)

PROVENANCE

Édouard Nicolas Antoine Marie Imhaus (1856-1928), Baker City, Oregon, probably collected *in situ* between 1882-1885

The Free Museum, Portland City Hall, Portland, acquired from the above on October 26, 1912
Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Portland, acquired upon closure of the above, circa 1959

Robert W. Campbell, Corvallis, Oregon, and Tully, New York, acquired at auction circa 1964 (deaccessioned by the above)

George Terasaki, New York, by July 1973

Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on September 24, 1973

\$ 20,000-30,000

This expressive mask is a fine example of the style prevalent in central and southern Grande Terre, the main island of New Caledonia. The style is at once distinct from and derived from the masks of northern Grande Terre, a style exemplified by the following lot. Among the clear indicators of the southern style are the use of a relatively flat and wide piece of wood and a sculptural language that tends towards the depiction of angular features in low relief. Also characteristic is the form of the mouth, made here as an open rectangle; masks in the southern style seldom depict lips or teeth. The wearer would look through this aperture, the eyes of the mask itself never being pierced for sight. The deep, dark surface, almost oily in appearance, was created with a powder made from burnt and crushed candle nuts (*Aleurites moluccana*); (Boulay, *La grande case des Kanaks*, 1984, p. 86).

The purpose of southern masks varies from their northern counterparts. Kasarhérou notes that they "were never used in funerary rites" (Kasarhérou, *Le masque Kanak*, Marseilles, 1993, p. 53), southern masks having largely lost the social significance and religious function they had in northern Grande Terre. Kasarhérou has observed that southern masks "are often called 'war masks' in 19th century descriptions" (*ibid.*, p. 54), and the present mask was indeed so described. Although such descriptions may reflect certain prejudices prevalent at the time of collection, it is possible that "like other symbols of chiefdom, such as the monstrance axe, the mask could have been taken to war without actively participating in combat, for which

purpose it was ill-adapted" (*ibid.*, p. 55). He goes on to note that "in the south the mask seems to be linked to the magic of invisibility and double-vision used in war. For example, in Houaïlou, it appears to have been associated with the magic which enabled one to see the movements of the enemy through the mountains" (*ibid.*).

In all likelihood, this mask was collected *in situ* by Édouard Nicolas Imhaus between the years 1882 to 1885, whilst he worked for the *Compagnie calédonienne des Nouvelles-Hébrides* in Nouméa in southern Grande Terre. By 1890 he had returned to Paris, where he published *Les Nouvelles-Hébrides*, an account of his time in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) and New Caledonia. The book contains little ethnographic detail and no mention of objects Imhaus which collected, although his obituary notes that he "pioneered in the South Seas [...] and collected many things." (*The Oregon Journal*, August 14, 1928, unpaginated).

Imhaus arrived in the United States in 1896. By 1900 he was manager of a French owned mine in Flagstaff, eastern Oregon, an area which had experienced a gold rush. He was to remain in Oregon for the rest of his life. In 1912 he sold his "collection of arms and curios of the New Hebrides" to the city of Portland, which put the items on view in the city's public museum. Imhaus' collection was dispersed at auction after the museum closed; other objects he collected in New Caledonia are now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the American Museum of Natural History, New York.



48

KANAK MASK
NORTHERN GRANDE TERRE,
NEW CALEDONIA

Height: 21 ¼ in (54 cm)

PROVENANCE

Merton D. Simpson, New York
The Purchase Gallery, Purchase, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 25, 1975

\$ 100,000-150,000



48





Kanak Mask, Northern Grande Terre, New Caledonia. Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris (inv. no. 71.1950.30.201) © musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris

With its bulbous nose, bulging eyes and polychromatic red and white highlights, this superb mask embodies the classical style of mask made in northern Grande Terre during the nineteenth century. The mask is carved from a single piece of wood which extends in a tapering form above the forehead and below the mouth, the upper section concealed beneath the headdress. The facial features are concentrated at the center of the vertical axis defined by the bulging forehead, low brow, and the most striking feature: an exceptionally broad nose which fills almost the entire width of the face. The mouth of the present mask is depicted with the characteristic rictus grin of the northern style, in which both lips and teeth are invariably indicated. As the wearer would look through the mouth, one occasionally sees masks in which it appears that some of the teeth were deliberately broken to improve the wearer's vision, as appears to be the case here. An interesting feature of the mask is that the tapering upper section is pierced with a centrally placed hole which is threaded with a suspension cord fashioned from strips of cloth. Kasarhérou states that a single hole such as this in the upper portion of the mask "appears to have allowed the [complete] costume to be suspended by its strongest and densest part, the wooden face [...] this invisible characteristic is not found on more

recent masks, where the section above the face is of rectangular form" (Kasarhérou and Boulay, *Kanak. L'art est un parole*, 2013, p. 234). The woven fibre headdress (covered in the upper part by cloth) which conceals this rare feature is itself a rare survival. A mask with very similar features, formerly in the collection of Pierre Loti (Julien Viaud) is now held by the musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac, Paris (inv. no. 71.1950.30.201; on long-term loan to the musée Hèbre de Saint-Clément, Rochefort).

As Kasarhérou notes, the concept of how Kanak masks were used, "developed by Maurice Leenhardt and expanded by Jean Guiart, has not come into question as the result of the latest studies, which tend rather to refine the details of [their] approach" (Kasarhérou and Boulay, *Kanak. L'art est un parole*, 2013, p. 232). In *Mythologie du masque en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Jean Guiart demonstrated that in northern Grande Terre masks were closely associated with leadership and chiefdom, with the mask serving as a "plastic symbol that, together with the symbols of word and deed, publicly expressed the existence of the chiefdom" (Guiart, *Mythologie du masque en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, 1966, p. 150). The supernatural power of the mask as a symbol of social and political authority meant that it was also used in

establishing the authority of new chief, as Alban Bensa has noted: "in the Cèmuhi area [northeast Grande Terre] the mask is tied to the owners of the land, and is transferred to the newcomer chosen by them to become chief" (Boulay, ed., *De jade et de nacre*, 1990, p. 150).

As an important part of this association with the power of chiefdom, the masks of northern Grande Terre were always closely associated with the mythology and symbolism of the land of the dead. Masks played a significant role during mourning rituals for deceased chiefs, where they would appear as the images of the departed who had returned to the land of the living. The human hair which is attached to the sides of this mask would have been cut from the heads of male mourners. After having carried out the mortuary rites, the mourners were not allowed to cut their hair before the ceremony closing the period of mourning took place, an event which might occur several years after the death. Leenhardt observed that masks such as this, attached to the names of divinities which related to the land of the dead, were a "personification of the mystery of life" (Leenhardt, 'Le masque calédonien', *Bulletin du musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*, 1933, p. 19).

FANG-NTUMU RELIQUARY FIGURE

GABON

Height: 20 ½ in (52 cm)

PROVENANCE

Aimé Maeght, Paris and Saint-Paul-de-Vence
Ader Picard Tajan, Nouveau Drouot, Paris,
Collection Aimé Maeght. Haute curiosité,
October 25, 1982, lot 139
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
at the above auction

PUBLISHED

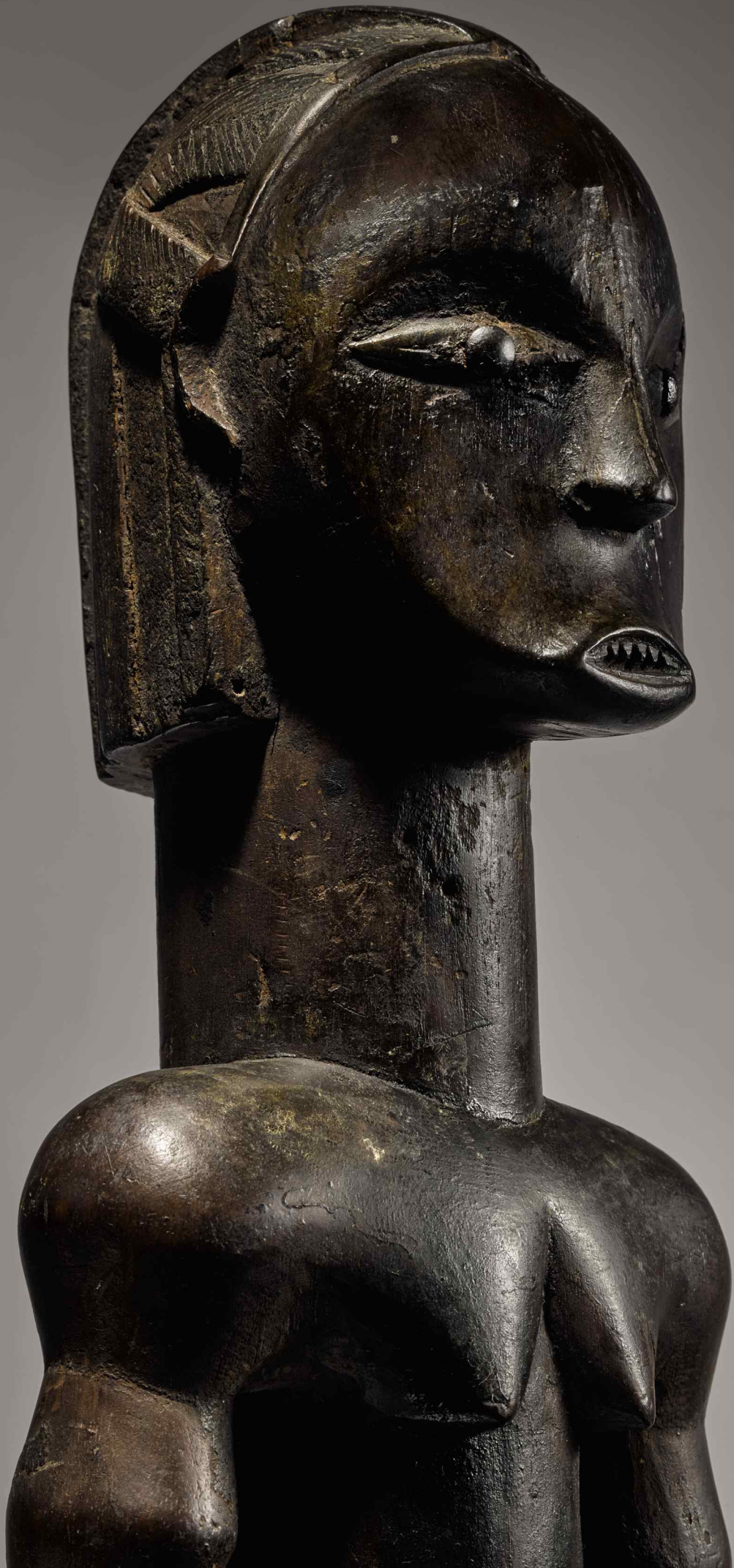
Wendy Goodman, 'L'art, une affaire de famille',
Architectural Digest, December 2006/January
2007, p. 96 (archival photograph)

\$ 150,000-250,000



Aimé Maeght's apartment on the Avenue Foch, Paris, circa 1960s. The Fang figure is visible on the mantle, alongside artworks including Giacometti's *Le chien* (1957) and Miró's *Oiseau lunaire* (1946).

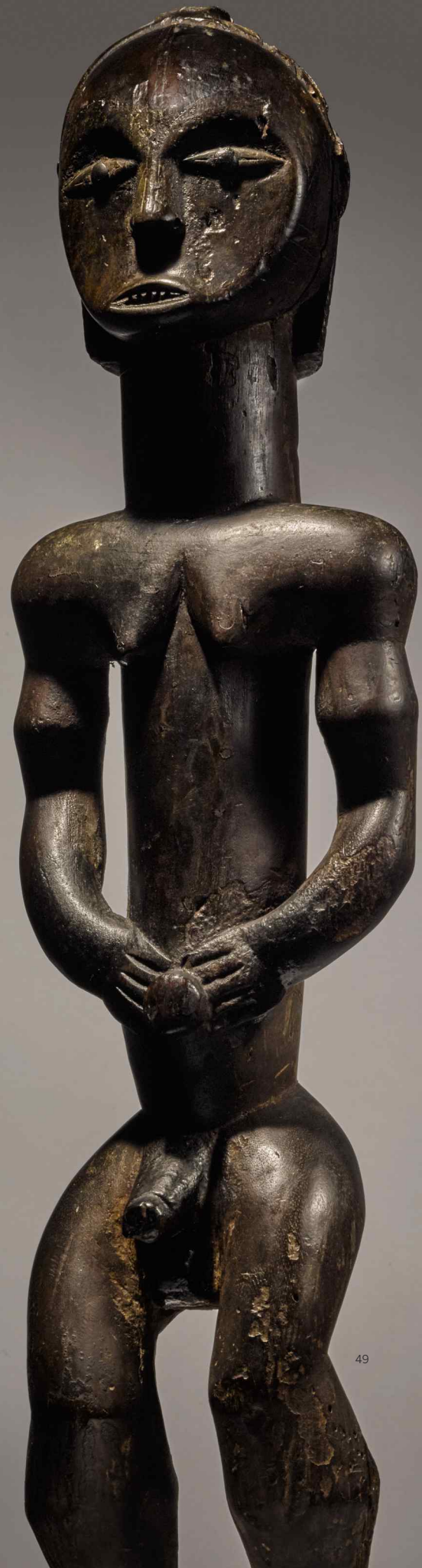




In his discussion of the Fang Ntumu substyle the scholar Louis Perrois observes that "a painstaking comparative study shows that all [Ntumu] statues are different, there being an infinite number of combinations of details and decoration" (Perrois, *Fang*, 2006, p. 37). There are, however, certain characteristics which define the work of Ntumu artists and which allow us to attribute the present figure to the group, whilst noting some features more associated with the Nzaman-Betsi style.

The elongated form of the torso, which is carved as a long cylinder, is a classic indication of the Ntumu style. In this figure the cylinder, which bisects the strong horizontal line formed by the shoulders and breastbone, continues into a powerful neck which supports the commanding head. The columnar strength of the central passage of the sculpture is contrasted by the slender and lithe limbs, which are nevertheless muscular and well defined. They are clearly separated from the central axis of the figure and provide a lissome outline which conveys a certain alert air. The hands are placed at the protruding navel, paying homage both to the spirit of the dead and reminding us of the bond from one generation to the next, with the fecundity of the lineage further emphasized by the depiction of the sex.

This Fang-Ntumu figure was formerly in the collection of the dealer, collector, and lithographer Aimé Maeght. The eponymous Galerie Maeght was one of the most creative and influential galleries of Modern art and Maeght a seminal figure in the post-war art world. Amongst the artists he represented were Braque, Calder, Giacometti, Matisse, and Miró, and he was one of the first dealers to exhibit Abstract Expressionism in Europe. Maeght's particular *métier* was printmaking and publishing, and he encouraged his artists to produce ceramics, prints, and illustrated books. Major exhibitions at the gallery were accompanied by an issue of his magazine *Derrière le miroir*, which combined original lithographs alongside essays by leading writers, fulfilling Maeght's ideal of bringing the work of artist and writer together. As an example, the May 1954 exhibition of sculptures, paintings, and drawings by Alberto Giacometti at the Galerie Maeght was accompanied by an issue of *Derrière le miroir* with essays by Jean Genet and Jean-Paul Sartre.



50

**KOTA-OBAMBA
RELIQUARY FIGURE**

GABON

on a base by the Japanese wood artist Kichizô Inagaki (1876-1951), Paris
Height: 15 3/8 in (39 cm)

PROVENANCE

Morris J. Pinto, Paris and New York
Sotheby's, London, *African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian Art from the Pinto Collection*, May 9, 1977, lot 130
British Rail Pension Fund, acquired at the above auction
Sotheby's, London, July 3, 1989, lot 136, consigned by the above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired at the above auction

PUBLISHED

Raoul Lehuard, 'Les Ventes', *Arts d'Afrique Noire*, No. 23, Autumn 1977, p. 44

\$ 50,000-70,000





Kota Reliquary Figure, Gabon. Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris (inv. no. 73.1963.0.727)

The downturned eyes of this fine and early reliquary figure lend its face a somewhat plaintive and meditative air. The eyes are formed as long slit ellipses below the pronounced triple arches of the brows, which delineate the upper limit of a characteristically heart-shaped face narrowing towards a sharply pointed chin. The slightly concave face balances the ample forehead, which is bisected by a prominent medial ridge that widens into a short geometric nose. Alternating plates of brass and copper define the geometric forms of the upper lip, stylized cheekbones, and chin. Small rectangular teeth are indicated within the slightly pursed mouth. The brass plates on reliquary figures of this style often appear to have a crinkled texture (see also lot 13); the Chaffins note that this due

to the particular thinness of the brass used, a type mysteriously named "Neptune" (Chaffin and Chaffin, *L'art Kota*, 1980, p. 148).

Perrois has identified the figures in this striking corpus as "Southern Kota (Obamba and Wumbu)" (Perrois, *Kota*, 2012, p. 150), while LaGamma suggests "Obamba or Mindumu" (LaGamma, *Eternal Ancestors*, 2007, pp. 234-239). Reliquary figures in this style have long been prized for their Cubistic architecture; see Sotheby's, New York, May 15, 2017, lot 110, for an example once in the collection of André Lefèvre, an avid collector of the work of Picasso, Braque, and Gris. Félix Fénéon's fine collection of Kota sculpture (see lot 22) included at least one of this type, and others were published and

exhibited in the 1920s and 1930s, including two from Paul Guillaume: the figure now in the Malcolm Collection, first published in *Cahiers d'art* in 1927, and another in *Negro Anthology Made by Nancy Cunard*, 1934, p. 708. While the early provenance of the present figure is unknown, the Inagaki base suggests that it was once in the same Parisian milieu.

A reliquary figure in the collection of the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris (inv. no. 73.1963.0.727) is so astonishingly similar to the present lot that they must surely have been made by the same hand. The museum's figure appears in a photograph, reportedly taken before 1930, with six other reliquary figures, including one from the same very rare corpus as lot 52 in this sale.



50



The background is a solid blue color. Overlaid on this are several thin, white, continuous lines that form abstract, organic shapes. These lines sweep across the frame, creating a sense of movement and depth. Some lines form closed loops, while others are open and trail off towards the edges of the image. The overall effect is minimalist and modern.

SEBE

**RIVER MASTER
OF THE SKULL HEAD**





51 KOTA-OBAMBA RELIQUARY FIGURE BY THE SEBE RIVER MASTER OF THE SKULL HEAD

GABON

Height: 21 ¼ in (54 cm)

PROVENANCE

Private Collection
Loudmer-Poulain, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, June 14, 1979, lot 116, consigned by the above
British Rail Pension Fund, acquired at the above auction
Sotheby's London, July 3, 1989, lot 134, consigned by the above
Armand Arman, New York and Vence, acquired at the above auction
Alain de Monbrison, Paris, acquired from the above in 1998
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired from the above on October 2, 1998

PUBLISHED

Raymonde Wilhelem, *Le guidargus de l'art primitif. 1965-1985, 20 ans d'art primitif en ventes publiques*, Paris, 1985, p. 164
Alain Nicolas, ed., *Arman et l'art africain*, Marseilles, 1996, p. 10, p. 115, cat. no. 70
Frank Herreman, ed., *African Faces, African Figures: the Arman Collection*, New York, 1997, p. 10, p. 134, cat. no. 112
Sharon F. Patton, *Treasures*, Washington, D.C., 2005, unpaginated portfolio

EXHIBITED

Musée d'arts africains, océaniens et amérindiens, La Vielle Charité, Marseilles, *Arman et l'art africain*, June 23 - October 30, 1996, and travelling: musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris, December 3, 1996 - February 17, 1997
Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Cologne, *Afrikanische Kunst – Die Sammlung Arman*, March 21 - August 10, 1997
Museum for African Art, New York, *African Faces, African Figures: the Arman Collection*, October 9, 1997 - April 19, 1998
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C., *Treasures*, November 13, 2004 - August 15, 2005

\$ 1,200,000-1,800,000





Six sculptures by the Sebe River Master of the Skull Head, taken during the exhibition *Mains des Maîtres*, Brussels, 2001. Photograph courtesy of Bernard de Grunne

This superb brass and copper-covered Kota wooden sculpture from the Collection of Edwin and Cherie Silver belongs to a very small corpus of works carved by one of the most extraordinarily gifted Kota master sculptor-metalsmiths from pre-colonial Gabon, named by Dr. Louis Perrois the *Maître à la tête de mort* – “Sébé River Master of the Skull Head”.¹

His attribution was included in an essay published on the occasion of *Mains des Maîtres*, my 2001 exhibition identifying artists and ateliers from fourteen different tribes covering the entire field of sub-Saharan statuary from the Soninke in Mali to the Nguni in South Africa.² African art history could now follow methodologies similar to those used in Greek, Medieval to early Renaissance art history to identify the hand of an individual master carver and assemble an oeuvre based on stylistic evidence, identifying the artist by a name of convenience, generally the name of a village where some of his work was collected.

For the arts of Gabon, I selected and exhibited a group of six Kota reliquary figures which I considered aesthetically the most perfect and art historically the most prototypical.

Since my 2001 exhibition, I have included four more works by this artist and his workshop. Starting from left to right in my photo of the six sculptures gathered together for the *Mains des Maîtres* exhibition, here is the complete list:

Alain et Alexia Freylich Collection, Brussels
Height : 55 cm
Collected in 1928 by a Colonial Officer
(*Mains de Maîtres*, p. 156, cat. no. 41)

Felix Collection, Brussels
Height : 53 cm
Collection of colonial officer A. Baudon, acquired in the Oubangui-Chari region before 1914.
(*Mains de Maîtres*, p. 156, cat. no. 40)

Sidney and Bernice Clyman Collection, New York
Height: 53 cm
(*Mains de Maîtres*, p. 152, cat. no. 37)

Private Collection
Height: 50 cm
(*Mains de Maîtres*, p. 154, cat. no. 39)

Fondation Dapper, Paris
Height: 52 cm
Paul Eluard, Paris, before 1929
(*Mains de Maîtres*, p. 157, cat. no. 42)

Private Collection
Height: 51.8 cm
Collected by French Colonial Officer before 1920
(*Mains de Maîtres*, p. 153, cat. no. 38)

Based on my research, the first illustration of a work by the Sébé River Master of the Skull Head was published in 1929 in André Portier and François Poncetton's *Les Arts Sauvages. Afrique*, in which the authors illustrated a detail of a Kota which was then the property of French poet Paul Eluard. Thus, he was the first *amateur* to recognize the aesthetic importance of works by the Sébé River Master of the Skull Head.

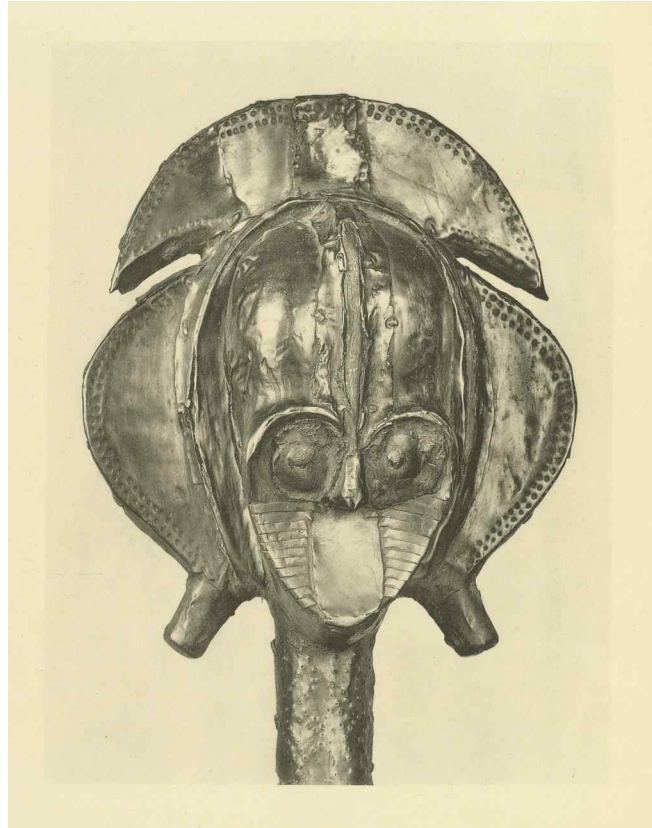
We have very little information on Paul Eluard's African art collection but we do know that he worked closely with André Breton, and started to chase some *sculptures nègres* as early as 1919.³ Both Eluard and Breton were buying and selling actively before 1935.⁴ Since Helena Rubinstein purchased the famous Nias Island seated figure belonging to Breton included at the Eluard-Breton auction in Paris in July 1931,⁵ there is a strong possibility that she may have also purchased directly from Eluard his famous Kota figure at the time.

continued





52



Kota Reliquary Figure by the Sébé River Master of the Skull Head, Gabon. Illustrated in Portier and Poncetton, *Les Arts Sauvages. Afrique*, 1929

Sébé River Master of the Skull Head, active probably between circa AD 1750 and 1800, was a master of convexity in a sculptural universe in which concavity and two-dimensional or bas-relief quality were more the norm. Perrois located his workshop in the northern part of Kota territory in the region of the Sébé River in the southeast corner of Gabon, somewhere between the villages of Doume, Okondja, and Masuku. The fact that this style may have originated in southern Gabon becomes logical since some of these groups were the first to migrate from the north into the rainforest region as they were pushed further and further inland by new waves coming from Cameroon. This hypothesis is coherent with the concept of a very early style which evolved into the baroque flourishes we are familiar with in the more elaborate styles.

The Sébé River Master of the Skull Head produced very few works, but these are of exceptional quality and his oeuvre has now been recognized as one of the most desirable styles among the large corpus of Kota sculpture.

The sculptor dramatized his subject by carving his reliquaries with an emaciated and relatively naturalistic head with eyes retreating into their sockets and an emphasis on the impressive relief of the forehead. The Sébé River Master of the Skull Head masterfully plays off of a full volumetric face with a profusion of curved contours against the flat two dimensional lower half of the lozenge base. The face is also elegantly framed by a raised band covered by red copper strips that circumscribe its perimeter and set it apart from the decorative coiffure made of crescents on the sides and the summit. The broad convex forehead is enhanced by the concavity of the eye sockets and the chin. Indeed if one visually isolated the face of the figures by Sébé River Master of the Skull Head from the top of the forehead to the end of the neck, one can visualize a *byeri* Fang head with its heart-shaped face, as both Perrois and Chaffin have suggested.⁶

The eyes are rendered open using bone or metal discs set in deep orbits which give them a severe and intense quality suggestive of the skull that is at the core of the reliquary ensemble. A protruding vertical line divides the forehead into two parts and reinforces the gravity of the expression.

All figures in this corpus are decorated with a small demi-lune crescent protruding from the top of the cranium. This crescent shows a variety of subtle decoration on each figure with small rows of punched dots on the edges on the best ones and sometimes rows of parallel striated lines on others. In the most accomplished works of the corpus, the sculptor manages to strike a perfect balance between the voluptuous volumes of the skull and the elegant simple two-dimensional lower lozenge.

continued



Fang Reliquary Head, Gabon. Illustrated in Einstein, *Negerplastik*, 1915

According to research carried out on exhaustive stylistic analysis of the Kota style by Frédéric Cloth, there are more than 2,000 published Kota figures.⁷ Of this known universe, one finds fewer than ten figures by the Sébé River Master of the Skull Head. These numbers are, of course, relative since Perrois estimated that for the Mahongwe style alone there were probably close to 2,000 figures at the end of the nineteenth century, of which roughly 150 survived in museums and private collections.⁸

Frédéric Cloth has also suggested that for each of the great convex Kota which is considered to be male, this Kota artist carved at least two concave ones to be understood as female. He proposed to expand the corpus of the Sébé River Master of the Skull Head by attributing to him a series of simple concave Kota which would enlarge the corpus to thirty works. I am not sure to fully grasp the subtleties of his method based on complex statistical analysis but what is certain is that what makes this artist unique and remarkable is his total mastering of the interplay of concave and convex forms, an essential stylistic trait which is completely absent in the simple concave ones.

The Sébé River Master of the Skull Head group and related works could represent a prototypical or archaic Kota style from which all the other varieties emerged. The fully three-dimensional convex head then became, in the eye of these first gifted Kota artists, powerfully suggestive of the human skull of the ancestor that they were meant to protect, and could also relate to the *byeri* heads from the neighboring Fang. The Kota Figure by the Sébé River Master of the Skull Head from the Collection of Edwin and Cherie Silver must then be understood as a one of the few surviving prototypes of the Kota style, and a superb testimony of the complexity of the interpenetration of styles and historical depth to this art form. This work shows the great imagination of the Sébé River Master of the Skull Head, an artist who played so well the concave and convex, the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, as well as the chromatic possibilities of various metals. William Fagg paid homage to this great artist, connecting his works as exercises in abstraction based on very subtle planes in low relief comparable in modern art to the work of the British artist Ben Nicholson.⁹ The surrounding forms are still flat but serve as a contrasting surface from which the massive three-dimensional head projects, rendered with a coolness which gives way to the warmth and energy of the human form.

Dr. Bernard de Grunne
September 2017

- 1 Perrois, 'Le Maître de la Sébé: les figures de reliquaire kota "à tête de mort" de l'est du Gabon', in de Grunne, ed., *Mains de Maîtres: A la découverte des sculpteurs d'Afrique*, 2001, pp. 141-159
- 2 de Grunne, ed., *Mains de Maîtres: A la découverte des sculpteurs d'Afrique*, 2001
- 3 Amrouche, 'Les arts primitifs dans Collection Breton', in Breton, *Arts Primitifs*, Auction Catalogue, Paris Drouot-Richelieu, Etude Calmels-Cohen, April 17, 2003, p. 15
- 4 A first auction of works of art owned by Eluard took place in 1924. See Hôtel Drouot, Paris, *Collection Paul Eluard*, July 3, 1928, lot 58, nine "bois nègres". I would like to thank Professeur Jean-Louis Paudrat for this information. Also of course, see Paris, Hôtel Drouot, *Collection André Breton et Paul Eluard: Sculptures d'Afrique, d'Amérique, d'Océanie*, July 2 & 3, 1931, with 30 lots from Africa and 134 lots from Oceania. A mediocre Kota (lot 16) which also belonged to Paul Eluard was purchased with numerous other lots by a mysterious Mr. de la Rancheraye, who may have been a *transitaire* used by Mrs. Titus (a.k.a. Mrs. H. Rubinstein)
- 5 The Nias sculpture, lot 173, was originally purchased at the auction by Paul Chadourne perhaps as a front for Mrs. Rubinstein. It is now in the collections of the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac. Cfr. Kerchache and Bouloré, *Sculptures: Africa, Asia, Oceania, Americas*, 2001, p. 228
- 6 Chaffin and Chaffin, *L'Art Kota: les figures de reliquaire*, 1979, p. 322 and Perrois, 'Le Maître de la Sébé: les figures de reliquaire kota "à tête de mort" de l'est du Gabon', in de Grunne, ed., *Mains de Maîtres: A la découverte des sculpteurs d'Afrique*, 2001, p. 151.
- 7 Cloth and van Dyke, *Kota: Digital Excavations in African Art*, 2016
- 8 Perrois, 'L'art Kota-Mahongwe', *Arts d'Afrique Noire*, No. 20, Winter 1976, p. 25
- 9 Fagg, *African Majesty: From Grassland and Forest, The Barbara and Murray Frum Collection*, 1981, p. 142



52

**KOTA-OBAMBA
RELIQUARY FIGURE**

GABON

Height: 17 1/8 in (43.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Lance and Roberta Entwistle, London
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 22, 1991

\$ 50,000-70,000





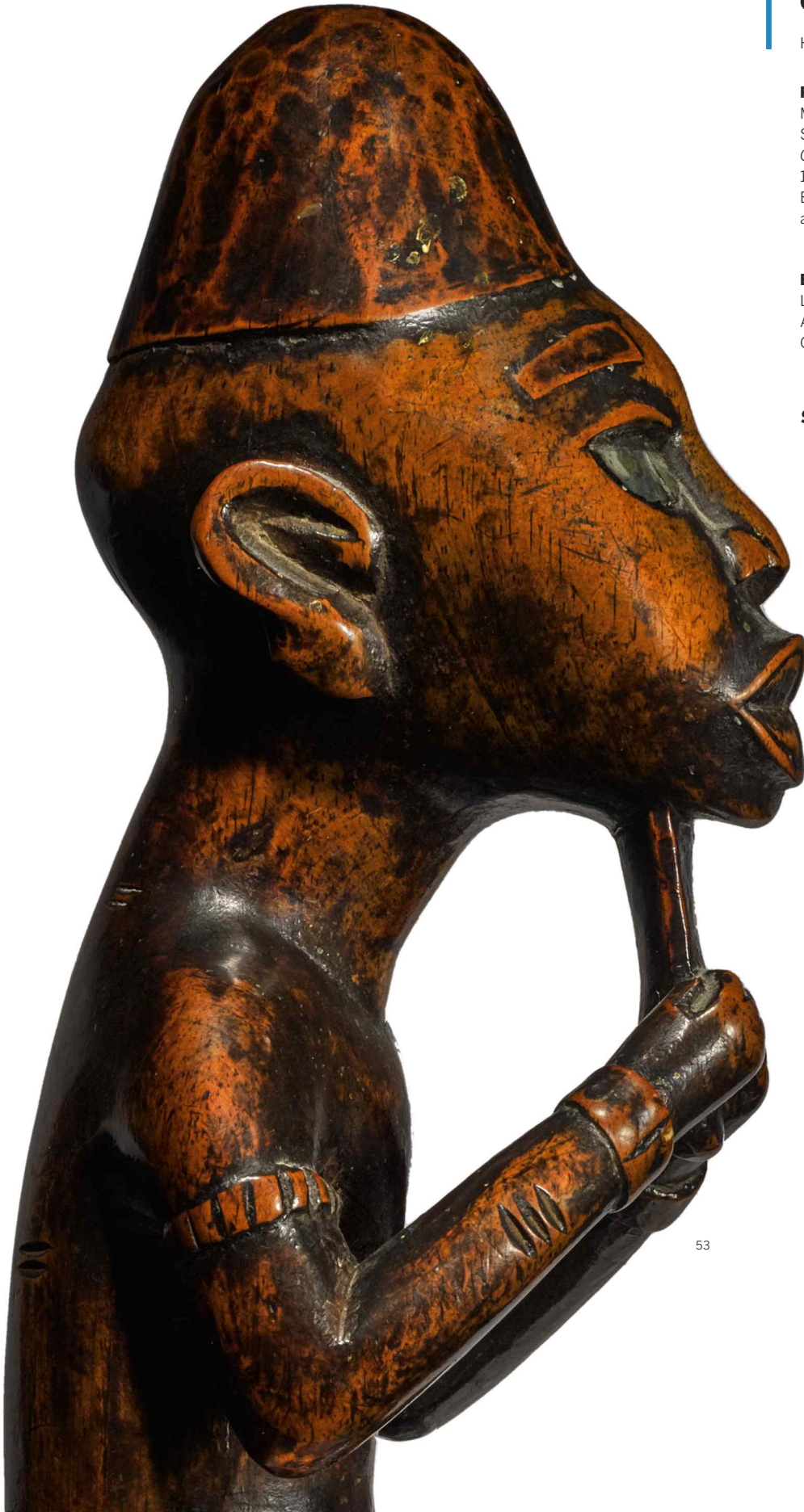
Kota Reliquary Figure, Gabon. Fowler Museum of Cultural History, University of California, Los Angeles, Gift of the Wellcome Trust (inv. no. X65.3802)

This reliquary figure is part of a very distinctive corpus which consists of just four known figures, all from the area between the "Obama of the Otala" and Okondja in eastern Gabon (Perrois, *Kota*, 2012, p. 148). Perrois notes that the people in this region "have inherited the cultural characteristics of the Mbete of neighboring [Republic of the] Congo," (*ibid.*) and we may detect a resemblance to Mbete reliquary sculpture in the very concentrated arrangement of the facial features and the treatment of the mouth of this reliquary figure.

The other three figures in the corpus are: a figure once in the collections of André Breton and Sir Henry Wellcome, now in the Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los Angeles (inv. no. x65.3802); a figure in the collection of the musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris (inv. no. 73.1963.0.200); and a figure from the Laprugne collection (sold at Christie's Paris, April 4, 2017, lot 66). Cloth has christened this style the "Otala Sun", a purely formal reference which is nevertheless justified on the basis of the generally rounded forms and radiating motifs of these figures. (Cloth in *Kota: New Light/ Nouveaux éclairages*, 2015, p. 52).

The four figures are so similar in style and execution that they may have been created by the same hand. All four have a vertical strip of copper which bisects the forehead; this strip is defined by a pronounced ridge, on either side of which the copper is somewhat concave. This characteristic, particularly noticeable in the Silver figure, serves to define the volume of the forehead. The vertical band is bisected in turn by a median strip of copper, the two forming an inverted "T" that anchors a composition otherwise almost entirely composed of rounded forms. The sculptor appears to have always created the eyes by cutting elliptical holes in the copper, with very thin pieces of iron placed underneath. Ridged forms recur in the headdress, the eyebrows, and the lower edge of the face. The stippled decoration is similar to that of lot 13 in this catalogue, but differs in that it is almost entirely created by repoussé work, with only the semi-circular band delineating the curve of the lower part of the face chased. The top of the crescent of all four figures is set with ingots of copper which have been bent to form double spirals that perhaps represent curls of hair, a highly inventive flourish by a very individualistic sculptor.





53

YOMBE SEATED FIGURE

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Height: 8 ³/₈ in (21.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

Morris J. Pinto, Paris and New York
Sotheby's, London, *African, Oceanic and Pre-
Columbian Art from the Pinto Collection*, May 9,
1977, lot 94

Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
at the above auction

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, *Ancestors: Art and the Afterlife*,
October 25, 1998 - June 14, 1999

\$ 40,000-60,000



53

54 | **KONGO-VILI
MATERNITY FIGURE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF THE CONGO**

Height: 9 1/2 in (24 cm)

PROVENANCE

John J. Klejman, New York
Harold Kaye, Great Neck, New York, acquired
from the above
Alphonse Jax, New York, acquired from the
above
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above circa 1970

PUBLISHED

Raoul Lehuard, *Les phemba du mayombe*,
Arnouville, 1977, p. 121
Warren M. Robbins and Nancy Ingram Nooter,
African Art in American Collections, Survey 1989,
Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 357, fig. 930
Herbert M. Cole, *Icons: Ideals and Power in the
Art of Africa*, Washington, D.C., 1989, p. 90, no.
101

EXHIBITED

National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian
Institution, Washington, D.C., *Icons: Ideals and
Power in the Art of Africa*, October 25, 1989 -
September 3, 1990

\$ 70,000-100,000





54

The sculptural subject of a mother and child - the first and most fundamental human relationship - is found in many cultures, and has a special universal transcendence. A particularly sensitive tradition of maternity sculpture emerged in the last millennium among the peoples of the Kongo kingdom in the western Congo. Wood sculptures known as *phemba* were created for use in association with women's cults. These exquisitely refined sculptures had great religious significance for their creators and original owners, and have been highly prized by Western collectors for their sublime humanistic power.

Koloss has noted that "a Yombe wooden mother-and-child figure in the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in Tervuren is reported by its collector, Léo Bittremieux, to have been owned by a powerful male diviner for whom it represented the source of his own divinatory and generative powers. It was called *phemba*, a word that Bittremieux thought to be derived from *kivemba*, meaning to broadcast or eject, as in the seeds of potential children which accumulate in either a man or a woman. Thus, rather than representing a particular woman and child, or even a concept as specific as motherhood, the Yombe image of a nurturing woman may express the more general idea of fertility and creativity as it applies to all people, male as well as female" (Koloss, *Art of Central Africa*, 1990, p. 34).

Dumouchelle notes that the KiKongo term *phemba* means "white", and that it "suggests kaolin, a white chalk that is considered a symbol of fecundity and is often used in a diviner's, or *nganga*'s, invocations. [...] Despite

its outwardly intimate, nurturing pose, this piece demonstrates the regal passivity of many varieties of mother-and-child carvings; rather than representing a particular woman or even a human relationship, the pair is thought to function on a metaphorical plane, representing and celebrating womanhood as the archetypal (and, in this case, aristocratically ideal) source of creative power. As such, it certainly would have served to stimulate and strengthen the *nganga*'s practice" (Dumouchelle, in Siegmann, ed., *A Century At the Brooklyn Museum*, 2009, p. 194).

Furthermore, Dumouchelle relays that "A missionary's field report from early in the twentieth century recounts encountering a *nganga* who claimed his *phemba* represented his 'mother' and carried the figure, maternally, in a cotton sling" (*ibid.*, p. 194).

The Silver Kongo Maternity is of an expressive and freely composed style, depicting the child as a full-bodied standing participant in the scene. The mother grasps her daughter by the arms, as if supporting and encouraging her as she sets out into the world. This is not the child as infant, seen in some Kongo depictions of nursing children, but rather a youth who has already received cosmetic scarification. Both figures have mirrored glass eyes, sacred windows onto another world; the surface bears thick encrustation of ritually applied pigments and materials from many years of devotional use. The head of the mother is surmounted by a worn cavity, and may have been used as a mortar in the preparation of magical substances for ritual practice.

55

**TEKE JANIFORM
POWER FIGURE
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

Height: 12 ¾ in (32.4 cm)

PROVENANCE

Phillip Goldman, London
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on September 3, 1971

PUBLISHED

Raoul Lehuard, *Les arts Bateke. Congo-Gabon-
Zaire*, Arnouville, 1996, p. 309, cat. no. 44.1.2

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, *Art of Black Africa*, May 30, 1972 - May
1973

\$ 10,000-15,000



55

56

SONGYE POWER FIGURE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Height: 14 ³/₈ in (36.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Alan Brandt, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on February 18, 1972

© \$ 25,000-35,000



56

57 | **KONGO-VILI POWER FIGURE** **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

Height: 24 ¼ in (61.6 cm)

PROVENANCE

Robert Visser, Düsseldorf, collected *in situ*
before April 1904
Linden-Museum, Stuttgart, (inv. no. 35625),
donated by the above in 1904; deaccessioned
in 1969
Probably Merton D. Simpson, New York
Anthony Ralph, London
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on March 23, 1979

PUBLISHED

Raoul Lehuard, *Fétiches à clous du Bas-Zaïre*,
Arnouville, 1980, p. 178, fig. 989
Raoul Lehuard, *Arts Bakongo. Les centres de*
style, Arnouville, 1989, vol. 2, p. 502, fig. J 8-1-1

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los
Angeles, *Ancestors: Art and the Afterlife*,
October 25, 1998 - June 14, 1999

\$ 150,000-250,000

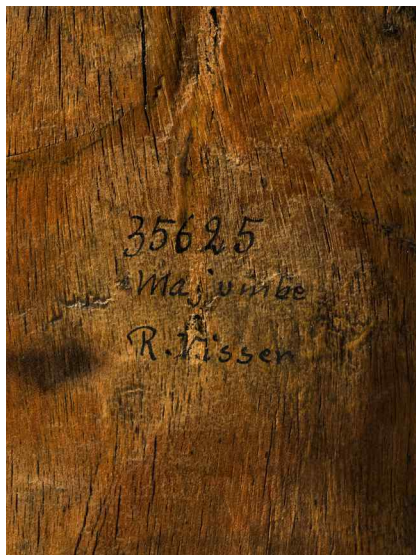
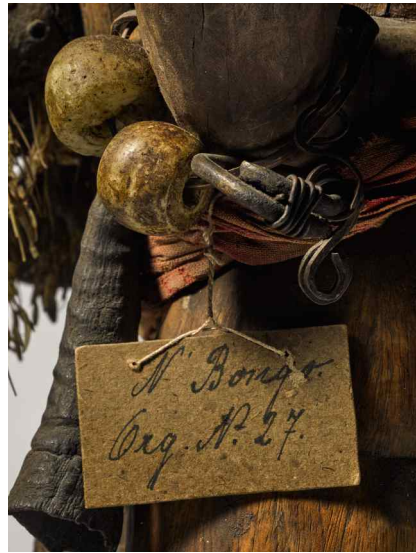
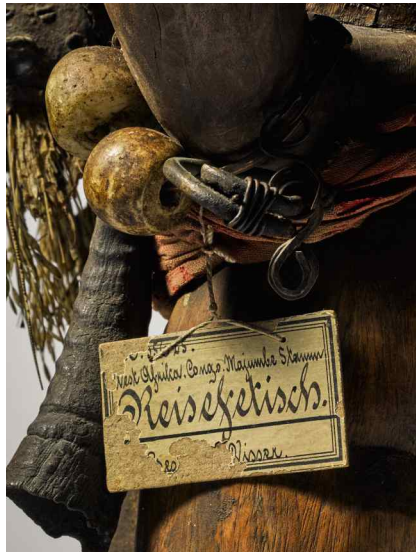


...
...
Nesegetisch.
...



Kongo sacred sculptures called *minkisi* (sing. *nkisi*) are among the most powerful and refined of all Sub-Saharan art forms, and rank among the iconic genres of African art. The most imposing category of *minkisi* are those which bear an accumulation of inserted nails and metal objects, remnants of their ritual use. In the West, these have been called *fétiches à clous* or nail power figures, and were featured prominently in the 2015 exhibition *Kongo: Power and Majesty*, held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The result of a collaborative procedure between a sculptor, a ritual specialist, and the people they served, these sculptures have a special resonance not only as sensitively-modeled representations of the human form, but also as physical testaments to the religious experience of Kongo communities.

Alisa LaGamma notes that “the most influential class of Kongo *minkisi* often took the form of formidable wood figures bristling with added hardware.[...] Along the coast, from northern Angola to southern Gabon, they were known as *mbau*, or ‘ready to fight’, while in the interior as far as Kinshasa they were called *n’kondi* (pl. *minkondi*), or ‘hunter’. Unlike more specialized *minkisi*, *minkondi* were credited with assisting regional chiefs in maintaining public order. Rare pre-eighteenth-century descriptions of the invocation of an *n’kondi* refer to the *nganga* [ritual specialist] striking two anvils together and inserting wood pegs into the sculpture. In more recent times, this call to action has taken the form of hammering in a nail, *koma nloko*. Each inserted element, which might take the form of blades, nails, or screws, subsequently served as a memorandum of sorts relating to a specific case - the signing of particular vows, or the sealing of covenants. Disputing individuals, whether divorcing spouses or warring factions of neighboring communities, finalized a binding agreement by coming together before an *nganga* and inserting hardware into an *n’kondi*. A fee was paid for the addition of each element” (LaGamma, *Kongo: Power and Majesty*, 2015, p. 37).



Details



Robert Visser (1860-1937)

"An *n'kondi*'s imposing stature, aggressive stance, and omniscient gaze as well as its associations with deadly afflictions and natural forces such as thunderstorms, fire, and birds of prey deterred antisocial behavior. If its ability to prevent transgressions failed, an *n'kondi* was carried to a crime site and deployed in pursuit of the culprit. These regulatory instruments were credited with controlling life-threatening bodily ailments, violence, and even death. Accordingly, *minkondi* could punish violators with the full force of those same afflictions" (*ibid.*, pp. 37-39).

Robert Visser was born on December 2, 1860 as Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Robert Visser in Düsseldorf. After joining the Dutch trading company Nieuwe Afrikaanse Handels-Vennootschap, Visser settled permanently in the

Loango region, situated in present day Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) and the Angolan enclave Cabinda, where he would remain for the next 22 years (Hein in Deimel and Seige, *Minkisi: Skulpturen vom unteren Kongo*, 2012, p. 35). Working as director of several coffee and cacao plantations, Visser became fascinated with local traditional culture which at the time was still alive but already quickly eroding as a result of Western influence. Visser married the daughter of a local chief, with whom he had a son, Robert Anton Visser (*ibid.*, p. 36). After the death of his wife, Visser returned to Germany in April 1904. Visser collected more than 1,000 objects during his time in Loango, which he donated in several installments to the Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, the Museum für Völkerkunde, Leipzig, and the Linden-Museum, Stuttgart.







IJO

THE GIANT OF SEVEN HEADS



58



58



58



58

MONUMENTAL IJO FOREST SPIRIT FIGURE

NIGERIA

Height: 85 7/8 in (218 cm)

PROVENANCE

Ulrich von Schroeder, Zurich
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on October 19, 1982

PUBLISHED

Werner Gillon, *Collecting African Art*, London, 1979, p. 54, pl. IX
Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, *Ways of the Rivers: Arts and Environment of the Niger Delta*, 2002, private view invitation
Martha G. Anderson & Philip M. Peek, *Ways of the Rivers: Arts and Environment of the Niger Delta*, Los Angeles, 2002, cover and p. 24, fig. 1
David Pagel, 'Dreaming of Africa', *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 2002, section F, p. 1

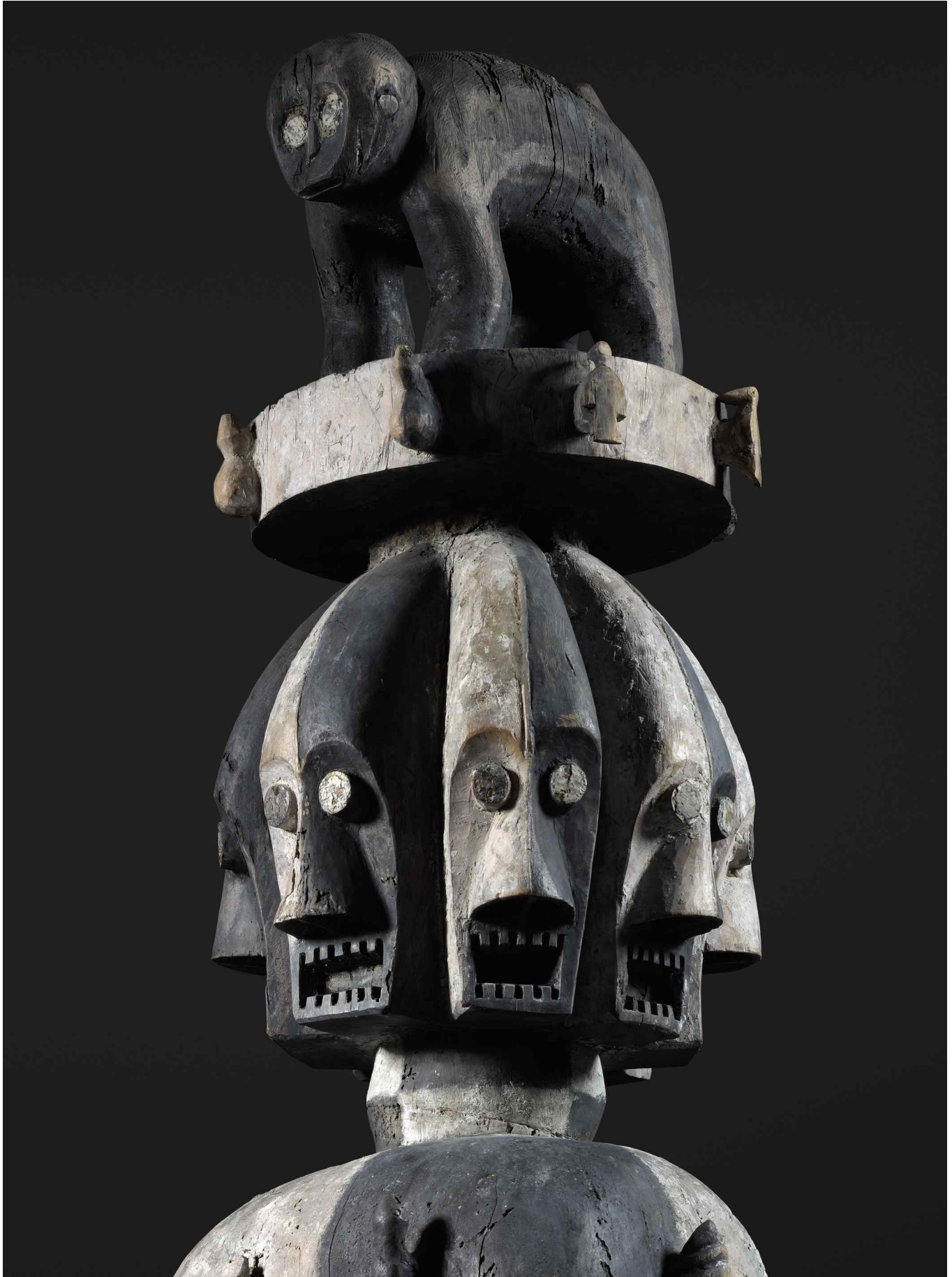
Anne-Marie O'Connor, 'Now, Africa', *Los Angeles Times*, January 29, 2008, section E, p. 5

Ekpo Eyo, *From Shrines to Showcases: Masterpieces of Nigerian Art*, Abuja, 2008, p. 252, cat. 196

EXHIBITED

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los Angeles, *Ways of the Rivers: Arts and Environment of the Niger Delta*, May 19 - November 17, 2002
LACMA, Los Angeles, *Tradition as Innovation in African Art*, January 27 - November 2, 2008

\$ 700,000-1,000,000



58

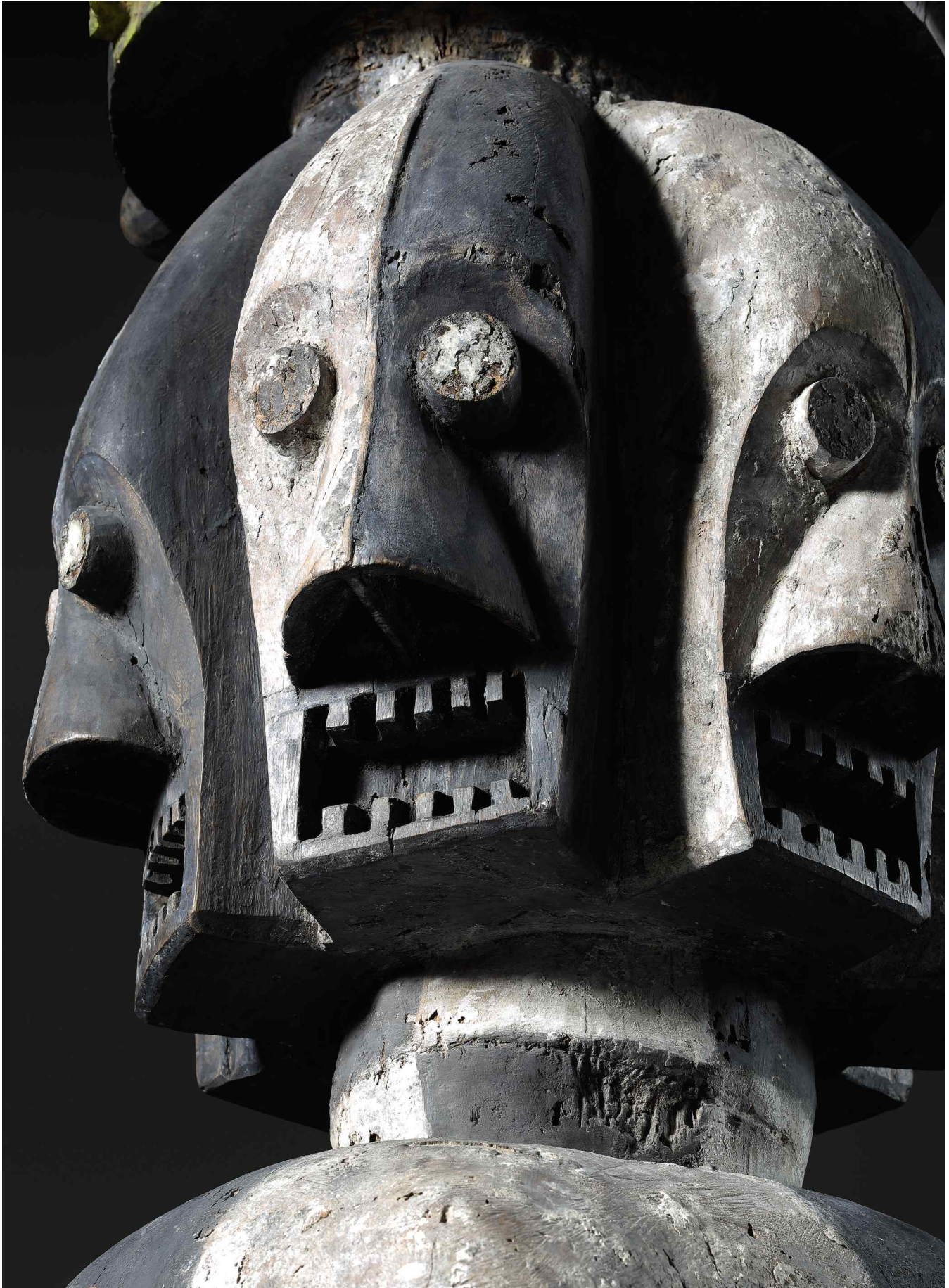
THE SEVEN HEADS OF THIS FEROCIOUS AND IMPOSING STATUE APPEAR ALMOST TO SPIN, THEIR STARING, BULGING EYES NEVER RESTING, EVER WATCHFUL. THE STARTLING FACES, DEEPLY CARVED WITH CURVED AND RECTILINEAR FORMS, CREATE DEEP, DRAMATIC SHADOWS, ACCENTUATING THE TREMENDOUS VOLUME OF THE HEAD. AWE-INSPIRING IN ITS SCALE AND ARRESTING IN ITS SHEER SCULPTURAL VIGOR, THIS TOWERING FIGURE IS BOTH THE APOGEE OF ITS CORPUS AND ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST IMPRESSIVE SCULPTURES OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA.

THE WARRIOR ETHOS

Draining into the Bights of Benin and Biafra, the great rivers of West Africa converge in the vast swampland of the Niger Delta, bounded by a comparatively narrow belt of low-lying sandridges, which give way to an expansive sweep of mangrove forest and freshwater swamps. Within this area the population consists predominately of the forty or so sub-groups of the Ijo people.¹

Within this landscape, the Ijo recognized the power of water and forest spirits. Water spirits (*bini oru*) were generally considered benign (although there were exceptions²), whilst forest spirits (*bou orumo*) were often described as volatile and violent. Anderson notes that figurative sculptures were not required for most water spirits (usually more associated with masks), and nor were they required for 'gods from above' (*suwo oru*), including clan war gods.³ However, unruly forest spirits of the psychically and physically dangerous wilderness often became the subject of shrine sculptures.

The egalitarian Ijo professed allegiance solely to their clan war gods and to no authorities in the earthly realm. Their settlements were barricaded against invaders both earthly and supernatural with "sculpted sentinels [...] and potent medicines."⁴ Outside of the villages, travelling posed another set of dangers: "piracy, slave raiding, and assaults on strangers once made travel along the Delta's waterways so treacherous that the Ijo regarded trading as a dangerous activity to be undertaken by only the bravest of men [...]. Older inhabitants of the area still speak of a time when conflicts between villages made even local excursions risky, for small-scale wars continued to erupt well into the twentieth century."⁵ These disputes seldom led to the conquest of land or other property, and it appears that the Ijo fought foremost to demonstrate their strength and courage. Their acephalous society is inextricably linked with a certain individualism which appears to have supported conflict as a means of self-accomplishment, with the supreme virtue being courage, displayed by pitting one's prowess against that of an equal opponent. The *peri* warrior society was the principal means for men to obtain status within Ijo society. The *peri* title was "a distinction clan war gods bestowed on men for killing either human beings or animals – such as leopards, hippopotami, manatees, and sharks – that the Ijo consider to be like human beings"; and membership afforded certain privileges.⁶ "Among the Ijo, the intangible rewards [of *peri*] clearly outweighed the tangible ones, for recipients simply earned the right to drink with their left hands, wear special costumes, which differed from clan to clan, and perform a special *peri* 'play' at the funerals of other title holders."⁷



58



THE INDOMITABLE TEBESONOMA: LIKE A TREE HE STOOD

This monumental sculpture from the Silver Collection of a bellicose seven-headed giant may depict the war-like, seven-headed forest spirit *Tebesonoma*, an antagonist in the myth of the Ijo culture hero *Ozidi*. *Ozidi*'s accomplishments were traditionally celebrated among the Western Ijo,⁸ and the Nigerian poet-playwright John Pepper Clark was the first to draw attention to the tradition, later publishing *The Ozidi Saga*, a version of the myth which he had collected, translated, and edited.⁹ The identification of this statue with *Tebesonoma*, the "indefatigable fighter,"¹⁰ is supported by its seven heads as well as by its sheer size: the giant *Tebesonoma* is described as "so tall that he almost disappeared in the air, like a tree he stood."¹¹ This allusion could mean that the statue depicts not only a single powerful entity, but that he represents the power of the entire forest; as the Nigerian novelist Isidore Okpewho observes, "*Tebesonoma* the giant of seven heads is a fitting image of the numerous branches at the tops of many a forest tree."¹² This interpretation is further supported by the creatures of the forest which are carved on this all-powerful figure.

Regardless of an attribution to a specific spirit, this figure represents the apogee of the corpus of Ijo shrine sculpture, which consists primarily of an exceptionally small number of figures with seven heads, and a larger number of shrine figures with four heads or less. Within this entire corpus no other recorded example approaches the majestic scale of this sculpture; in quality and rarity only the seven-headed figure in the collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco can begin to compare (inv. no. 2004.93; height: 68 in, 172.7 cm).

Anderson notes that Ijo sculptors presented the forest figures as warriors who have multiple heads, which signify "clairvoyance, vigilance, and superhuman powers."¹³ The number of heads of this sculpture is important, as seven is a number with mystical significance in Ijo cosmology. Okpewho, for instance, notes that "The Ijo believe [...] that the essence of life inheres in the fusion of *seven* complementary elements: of these, four are female and three male," and the number occurs and reoccurs throughout Ijo ontology.¹⁴ These sculptures are closely tied to war. Despite their ferocious and dangerous reputation, forest spirits were enshrined by the Ijo, who believed that the spirits' belligerent and raucous nature could be harnessed and re-directed: "Enshrined spirits have to project qualities like ruthlessness and volatility to convince followers of their ability to protect them."¹⁵

CREATURES OF THE FOREST: SYMBOLS OF POWER

Each of the seven heads is painted in dividing fields with contrasting black and white pigment, bisected by a ridge running down the central axis of the face. The colors may refer to membership of the *peri* society and to the chalk and charcoal which warriors applied to themselves in the shrine before entering combat. Bared teeth, a sign of truculence and assertive personality, may refer to verbal aggression; they may also be a reference to the fact that great warriors commanded both magical knowledge, known as *atamgba*, and magical speech, *aunbibi*. This language was unintelligible to most Ijo, and those who commanded it were able to accomplish miraculous feats, such as becoming invisible from attack or 'bulletproof', "simply by uttering a few words."¹⁶ The gourd medicine bottles, *atu*, which adorn the figure, "probably represent 'bulletproofing medicines', like the smoking pot, one celebrated warrior suspended from his neck to devour enemy bullets [...] Charms of this sort could also render people invisible, seek out, or ensnare enemies and destroy them."¹⁷

The animal which stands on top of the head may be a leopard, which is associated with leadership and warfare. Anderson and Peek remark that "numerous Delta shrines [...] display real leopard skulls,"¹⁸ and the leopard's presence might also refer to the stories of warriors who could transform themselves into powerful animals. The leopard is the largest of the number of symbols of the water and forest which appear on the figure. Others include a crocodile, a tortoise, a snail, two

snakes, two lizards, and three birds. Anderson records the tale of "how Snail, who lacks hands and feet, prepares for war by asking to be covered with a leaf to hide him from his enemies. His ploy recalls the medicines and shape-shifting strategies Ijo warriors employed to avoid detection."¹⁹ Arnold Rubin notes that a bird which appears on the figure in San Francisco may be "regarded as [a] 'messenger of the spirits,' alternatively the motif may derive from the practice of priests and dancers wearing a live chick suspended from a string to avert evil influences."²⁰ While the precise significance of these creatures is sometimes opaque, they seem intended to contribute to the power of this statue, which has absorbed the peculiar qualities of all the creatures of land and water.

The janiform upper body of the sculpture illustrates the massive physique appropriate to a redoubtable warrior and emphasizes his supernatural abilities. The hulking chest heaves under the weight of his seven heads, and the four arms are held out from the body in an assertive gesture which further expands the sculpture's volume and its all-encompassing vigilance. Each knotted fist brandishes a symbol of war and power: a cutlass, a rifle, a spear, a stout cudgel. This alert warrior has control of every available weapon, from the mysterious forces of the forest to an imported gun. The formidable torso is supported by a pair of truncated massive, muscular legs. He is assertive and defiant, prepared to take on all-comers.





Grebo/Kru Mask, Liberia (to be offered by Sotheby's, Paris, December 12, 2017)

IJO ABSTRACTION: BEYOND THE NIGER DELTA

As Arnold Rubin notes, "The impact of Ijo style may even have extended as far as southeastern Liberia, where similar conventions are found as a small enclave amidst more naturalistic traditions."²¹ During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Kru people of southeastern present-day Liberia often worked as laborers on European ships or at trading stations along the Guinea coast, where they would have come into contact with the artistic traditions of the Niger Delta. As these people returned to their home villages, they may have introduced stylistic conventions such as "the rigorous abstraction of the forms of the human face typical of the Niger Delta."²² Rubin notes a precisely documented mask collected at Cape Palmas in Liberia before 1849, which has been published as Ijo. The Grebo mask illustrated here shares the formal qualities, in particular, the abstract representation of multiple cylindrical eyes and rectangular mouths.

The arresting power of this awe-inspiring Ijo statue is also manifest in Jean-Michel Basquiat's striking and primal *Untitled (Two Heads on Gold)*, 1982. Beyond their aesthetic affinities – apparent in the pulsating, aggressive faces and the gesticulating bodies – both works evince an enthralling psychological essence. In their fascination with the wonder and horror of the human head they show how the visceral power of the imagination transcends time and space.



Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988), *Untitled (Two Heads on Gold)*, 1982. © The Estate of Jean-Michel Basquiat / ADAGP, Paris / ARS, New York 2017

1 Joe Alagoa, 'Ijo Origins and Migrations (I)', *Nigeria Magazine*, No. 91, p. 279

2 See the multi-headed water spirit probably representing "Angala Pele", or "mangrove cutter", who is so hostile that he must be restrained by ropes or surrounded by attendants armed with sticks. Anderson and Peek, *Ways of the Rivers*, 2002, p. 148

3 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, p. 105

4 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, p. 92

5 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, p. 93

6 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, pp. 94-95

7 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, p. 95

8 Okpewho, *Blood on the Tides: the Ozidi Saga and Oral Epic Narratology*, 2014, p. 55

9 Pepper Clark, *The Ozidi Saga: Collected and Translated from the Oral Ijo Version of Okabou Ojobolo*, 1977

10 Okpewho, 'Performance and Plot in the *Ozidi Saga*', *Oral Tradition*, Vol. 19, No. 1, March 2004, p. 68

11 Pepper Clark, *ibid.*, p. 236

12 Okpewho, *ibid.*, p. 3

13 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, p. 107

14 Okpewho, *ibid.*, p. 17

15 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, p. 106

16 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, p. 96

17 Anderson and Peek, *ibid.*, pp. 96-97

18 Anderson and Peek, 'Exhibition Preview: Ways of the Rivers: Arts and Environment of the Niger Delta', *African Arts*, Vol. XXXV, No. 1, Spring 2002, p. 20

19 Anderson and Peek, *Ways of the Rivers*, 2002, p. 107

20 Rubin, *Figurative Sculptures of the Niger River Delta*, 1976, p. 20

21 Rubin, *ibid.*, p. 22

22 Rubin, *ibid.*

59 | **YORUBA HOUSEPOST
WITH MOUNTED WARRIOR
BY AGBONBIOFE ADESHINA
FOR THE PALACE OF THE ALAAYE OF EFON,
EFON-ALAAYE, EKITI, NIGERIA**

Height: 68 in (172.7 cm)

PROVENANCE

Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired in 1971

PUBLISHED

William Fagg and Margaret Plass, *African Sculpture: an Anthology*, London, 1964, p. 92 (*in situ* photograph)

William Fagg, *African Tribal Images: the Katherine White Reswick Collection*, Cleveland, 1968, unpaginated, accompanying cat. no. 125 (*in situ* photograph)

William Fagg and Margaret Plass, *African Sculpture: an Anthology*, London, 1973 (reprint), cover and p. 92

Herbert M. Cole, *Riders of Power in African*

Sculpture, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 23, cat. no. 10 (listed)

Robert Farris Thompson, *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas*, New York, 1993, p. 321, cat. no. 17

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, *Riders of Power in African Sculpture*, November 23, 1983 - May 6, 1984

The Museum for African Art, New York, *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas*, September 22, 1993 - February 19, 1994

\$ 60,000-90,000





The present lot *in situ*, 1958. Photograph by William Fagg

In Yoruba palace architecture, richly carved posts are incorporated into open-air verandas in courtyards, audience chambers, and façades, portraying elaborate stacked compositions of idealized characters of admirable virtues. Royal palaces were ambitious in scale and scope, and carvers received major commissions for such projects. These carvers often learned in family ateliers, with distinct styles developed over generations. The most distinguished individual carvers achieved great fame. According to the great historian of Nigerian art William Fagg, former keeper of Anthropology at the British Museum, “the fuller forms typical of most Yoruba carving are evident in the work of a master from Efon-Alaye, one of the greatest centers of carving nearly in the center of Yorubaland. This great artist’s name was Agbonbiofe. He was one of a famous family of carvers and makers of beaded crowns for the kings of Yorubaland, the Adeshina family” (Fagg, *in* Biebuyck, ed., *Tradition and Creativity in Tribal Art*, 1969, p. 54).

Fagg records that Agbonbiofe and his atelier received a commission for the sculptural elements of the royal palace of Efon-Alaye, which they executed in 1916. The posts he created depict “the two typical subjects in Yoruba house posts, a scene depicting a mother with one or more children [... and] the mounted warrior, or Jagunjagun as he is called in Yoruba. These carvings do not represent gods or earth mothers or anything like that; they are simply generalized representations of warriors and of mothers with children. Agbonbiofe’s work is representative of the best in the typical style of Efon carving” (*ibid.*).

Fagg visited the palace at Efon-Alaye in 1958, and photographed the present post *in situ*. Publishing this photo in 1968, Fagg stated: “This photograph, which I took in the palace at Efon-Alaye in 1958, demonstrates the architectural function of these posts in the massive mud palaces of old Yorubaland. This is one of the best of the posts carved by Agbonbiofe in 1916 for the then Alaye (King) of Efon.” (Fagg, *African Tribal Images*, 1968, text to cat. no. 125).



60

**YORUBA
KNEELING SHRINE FIGURE
PROBABLY OSOGBO AREA, NIGERIA**

Height: 31 7/8 in (81 cm)

PROVENANCE

Harry Franklin, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on July 31, 1971

PUBLISHED

Arnold Rubin, *Yoruba Sculpture in Los Angeles
Collections*, Claremont, 1969, cat. no. 40
Nooter Roberts, *Imaging Women in African
Art: Selected Sculptures From Los Angeles
Collections*, Los Angeles, 2000, p. 63, fig. 1

EXHIBITED

Montgomery Art Center, Pomona College,
Claremont, California, *Yoruba Sculpture in Los
Angeles Collections*, March 10 - April 6, 1969
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *Mother and
Child*, September 15, 1973 - June 15, 1974
Fowler Museum of Cultural History, Los Angeles,
*Imaging Women in Africa: Selected Sculptures
from Los Angeles Collections*, November 12,
2000 - May 13, 2001

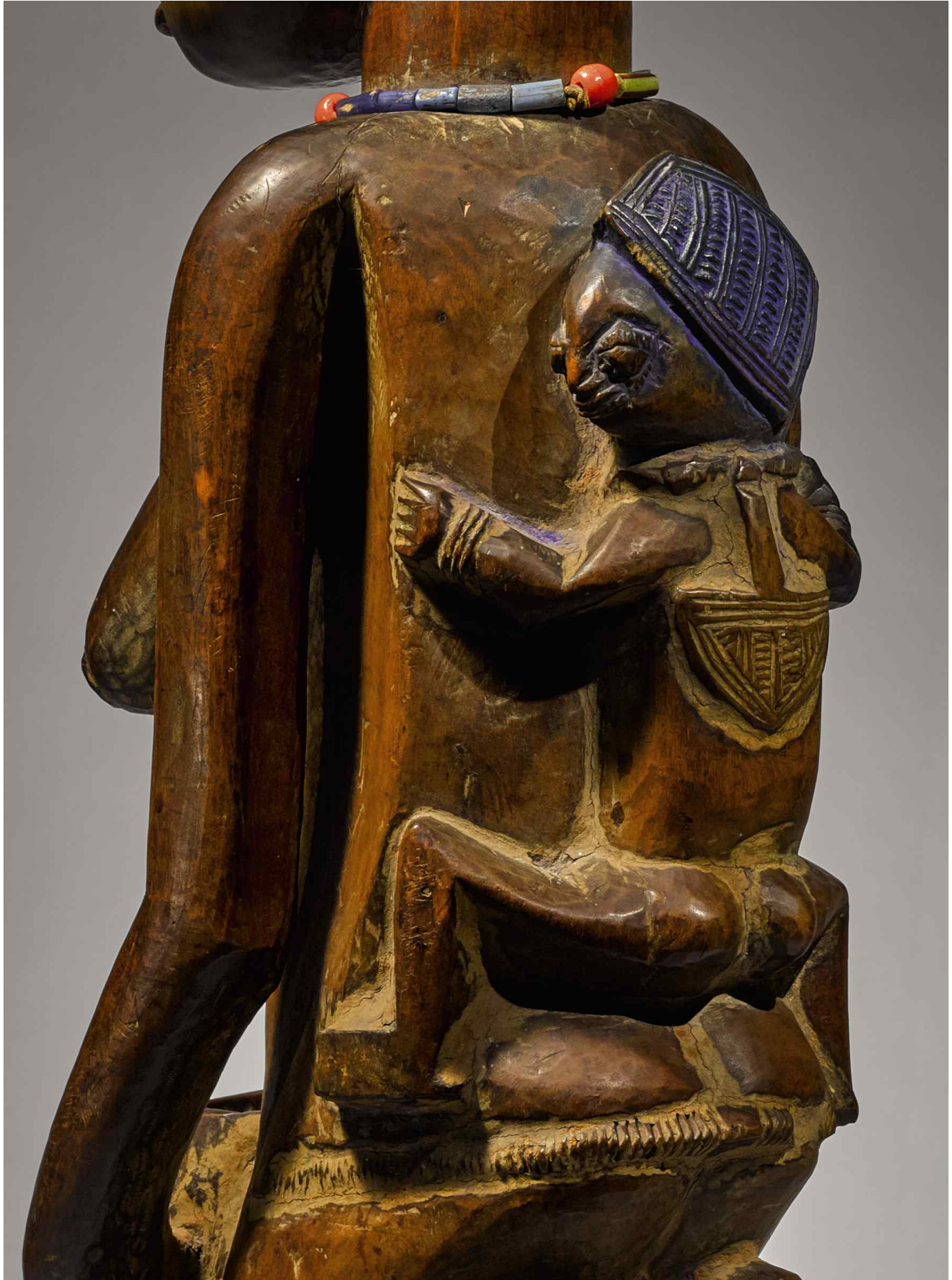
\$ 60,000-90,000



The vibrant sculptural traditions of the Osogbo region of central Yorubaland was first brought to the attention of the Western eye by writer and scholar Ulli Beier, who, along with his wife Susanne, immersed himself in Yoruba life and became one of its most prolific cultural advocates in the late 1950's. In his 1957 *Nigeria Magazine* feature 'The Story of Sacred Wood Carvings from One Small Yoruba Town', Beier describes figural sculptures as "[t]he real glories of Ilobu" carving types (Beier, 'The Story of Sacred Wood Carvings', *Nigeria Magazine*, 1957, unpaginated). In particular, he calls shrine figures "the real treasures...All of them are of great beauty and power. It is amazing indeed, that there is not a single mediocre work among them" (*ibid.*).

Unlike more recognizable religious sculptures of Christianity and the Far East, Yoruba shrine figures were, in most instances, not icons of devotion or worship themselves. Instead, they were placed in the shrines of different *orishas* but depicted priests or other worshippers endowed with earthly spiritual authority. In Yoruba mythology, an *orisha* is a deified being who partially embodies the divine powers of the omniscient God but who rules over a particular natural force or element in a manner similar to the pantheon of Hellenistic gods who each had his or her own special portfolios. Far from being representations of morality or the universal good, they retain the flawed character traits of human beings, and according to Yoruba scholar John Pemberton, "are deeply ambiguous figures, endowed with remarkable creativity capacity, but capable of violent behavior" (Pemberton, in Sotheby's, ed., *African, Oceanic & Pre-Columbian Art*, May 2012, lot 127, p. 110).

Shrine figures, like most other types of Yoruba sculpture, are generally naturalistic. The present lot depicts a kneeling woman carrying an infant on her back and holding a round hollow bowl in front of her with relaxed but elongated arms. True to classic Yoruba form, her disproportionately large eyes and eyelids bulge out of her ovoid face, imbuing the figure with a spiritual intensity that is enhanced by her rigid taut lips. In striking visual contrast to the light brown patina of the rest of the sculpture, the striated surfaces of the mother and child's voluminous coiffures are covered with deep blue pigment. In his aforementioned 1957 essay, Beier states: "The Yoruba sculpture readjusts the proportions of the human body to suit his artistic intentions" (Beier, 'The Story of Sacred Wood Carvings', *Nigeria Magazine*, 1957, unpaginated). This artistic license with proportion is certainly evident here, most visibly in her prominent pointed breasts and the oversized feet which support the back of the sculpture. Despite the figure's skewed physical proportions, the feet, breasts, and the gently bent forearms run in parallel planes, unifying the sculpture in a muted harmony uniquely suited for the devotional setting in which they resided.



60

61 | ASHANTI STOOL

GHANA

Height: 19 ¾ in (50.2 cm)

PROVENANCE

Pace Primitive, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above in March 2003

\$ 2,000-3,000



62

**PAIR OF YORUBA
MALE AND FEMALE
TWIN FIGURES**

NIGERIA

Heights: 11 1/8 in (28.3 cm) and 10 7/8 in (27.6 cm)

PROVENANCE

James Willis, San Francisco
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above, circa 1975

\$ 8,000-12,000



62

63 | ASHANTI STOOL

GHANA

Height: 18 5/8 in (47.3 cm)

PROVENANCE

Amyas Naegele, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on April 10, 2003

\$ 2,000-3,000



PAIR OF YORUBA FEMALE TWIN FIGURES

YAGBA, NIGERIA

Heights: 8 in (20.3 cm) and 8 ¼ in (20.9 cm)

PROVENANCE

Morton Dimondstein, Los Angeles
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above circa 1972

PUBLISHED

Henry John Drewal, John Pemberton III, and
Rowland Abiodun, *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of
African Art and Thought*, New York, 1989, p. 176,
fig. 198
Elisabeth L. Cameron, *Isn't S/He a Doll?: Play
and Ritual in African Sculpture*, Los Angeles,
1996, p. 68, fig. 88

EXHIBITED

The Center for African Art, New York, *Yoruba:
Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*,
September 20, 1989 - January 7, 1990, and
travelling: the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago,
February 10 - April 1, 1990; the National
Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution,
Washington, D.C., May 8 - August 26, 1990; the
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, September
26 - December 9, 1990; the New Orleans
Museum of Art, New Orleans, January 11 - March
24, 1991 the High Museum of Art, Atlanta,
April 23 - June 16, 1991; Phoenix Art Museum,

Phoenix, July 1 - October 11, 1991

Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA,
Los Angeles, *Isn't S/he a Doll?: Play and Ritual
in African Sculpture*, November 17, 1996 -
November 16, 1997, and travelling:
Minneapolis Institute of Art, November 14, 1998
- January 17, 1999

\$ 5,000-7,000



65 | HEHE STOOL

TANZANIA

Height: 11 ¼ in (28.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Amyas Naegele, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on April 10, 2003

\$ 800-1,200



PAIR OF YORUBA MALE AND FEMALE TWIN FIGURES BY AREOGUN OF OSI-ILORIN

EKITI, NIGERIA

Heights: 10 ¾ in each (27.3 cm)

PROVENANCE

Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired circa 1980

PUBLISHED

Herbert M. Cole, *Male and Female: Couples in African Art*, Los Angeles, 1983, cat. no. 6 (listed)
 'Isn't S/He a Doll?', UCLA Fowler Museum News, Fall 1996, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 8
 Elisabeth L. Cameron, *Isn't S/He a Doll?: Play and Ritual in African Sculpture*, Los Angeles, 1996, cover (male figure only) and p. 69, fig. 92
 Fowler Museum of Cultural History, symposium program, *Play and Ritual in African Art*, Los Angeles, 1996, cover (male figure only)
 Kim Jones, 'Oh, You Beautiful Doll!', *LA Weekly*, November 15-21, 1996, p. 67
 Joe D. Horse Capture, 'What is a Doll?', *Arts*, November, 1998, p. 4

EXHIBITED

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, *Male and Female: Couples in African Art*, November 3, 1983 - May 6, 1984
 Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, Los Angeles, *Isn't S/he a Doll?: Play and Ritual in African Sculpture*, November 17, 1996 - November 16, 1997, and travelling:
 Minneapolis Institute of Art, November 14, 1998 - January 17, 1999

Areogun (circa 1880 - 1954) was a Yoruba artist from the village of Osi in the Ekiti region of northeastern Nigeria. Together with his contemporary, Agbonbiofe Adeshina (see lot 60), Areogun is considered one of the greatest Yoruba artists. His artistic talent, which earned him commissions across the northern Ekiti region, is reflected in his name; born Dada, he earned the "praise name" Areogun, a shortening of "areogunbunna", meaning "one who gets money with the tools of Ogun and spends it liberally" (Carroll, *Yoruba Religious Carving*, 1967, p. 79); Ogun is the Yoruba deity of iron and of those who use iron tools, such as blacksmiths, warriors, hunters, and carvers.

\$ 10,000-15,000



67 | **FON SILVER COVERED STAFF**
REPUBLIC OF BENIN

Height: 23 ¼ in (59 cm)

PROVENANCE

Alfred L. Scheinberg, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above circa 1990

\$ 4,000-6,000



67

68

GURUNSI STOOL

BURKINA FASO

Height: 30 ½ in (77.5 cm)

PROVENANCE

Wright Gallery, New York
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above on April 20, 1990

\$ 2,500-3,500



68

69 | **SENUFO BED**
CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Length: 78 in (198.1 cm)

PROVENANCE

Yves Develon, Paris
Edwin and Cherie Silver, Los Angeles, acquired
from the above circa 1980

\$ 7,000-10,000



70 | THE AFRICAN ART LIBRARY

Approximately 500 books, journals, and auction catalogues.

\$ 3,000-5,000

71 | THE PRE-COLUMBIAN ART LIBRARY

Approximately 140 books, journals, and auction catalogues.

\$ 500-700

End of Sale



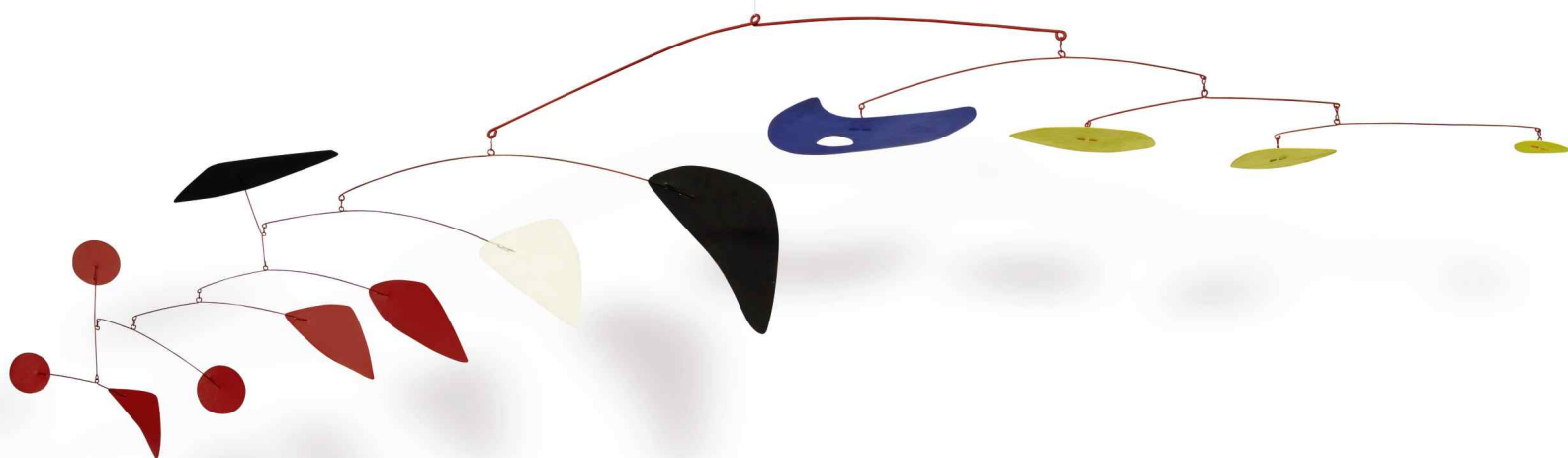
69





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Property from the Collection
of Edwin & Cherie Silver
ALEXANDER CALDER
Untitled, 1965



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SILVER

Contemporary Art Evening Auction
New York 16 November 2017

Viewing 3–16 November

1334 YORK AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10021

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Sotheby's EST. 1744
Collectors gather here.

African & Oceanic Art
Auction Paris 12 December 2017

Fang head, Gabon
Height. 20 3/4 in (53 cm)
Ex-collection Charles Ratton
Published in Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, 1935
Estimate €1,500,000 – 2,500,000

Viewing 9-12 December

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By participating in any sale, you acknowledge that you are bound by these terms and conditions.

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therewith. Prospective bidders should also consult sothebys.com for the most up to date cataloguing of the property in this catalogue.

By participating in the sale, you represent and warrant that any bids placed by you, or on your behalf, are not the product of any collusive or other anti-competitive agreement and are otherwise consistent with federal and state antitrust law.

In order to bid on "Premium Lots" you must complete the required Premium Lot pre-registration application. Sotheby's decision whether to accept any pre-registration application shall be final. You must arrange for Sotheby's to receive your pre-registration application at least three working days before the sale. Please bear in mind that we are unable to obtain financial references over weekends or public holidays.

Sotheby's may require such necessary financial references, guarantees, deposits and/or such other security, in its absolute discretion, as security for your bid(s).

7. Online Bids via BIDnow or other Online Platforms:

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8. **Bids Below Reserve** If the auctioneer determines that any opening bid is below the reserve of the article offered, he may reject the same and withdraw the article from sale, and if, having acknowledged an opening bid, he determines that any advance thereafter is insufficient, he may reject the advance.

9. **Purchaser's Responsibility** Subject to fulfillment of all of the conditions set forth herein, on the fall of the auctioneer's hammer, the contract between the consignor and the purchaser is concluded, and the winning bidder thereupon will immediately pay the full purchase price or such part as we may require. Title in a purchased lot will not pass until Sotheby's has received the full purchase price in cleared funds. The purchaser's obligation to immediately pay the full purchase price or such part as we may require is absolute and unconditional and is not subject to any defenses, setoffs or counterclaims of any kind whatsoever. Sotheby's is not obligated to release a lot to the purchaser until title to the lot has passed and any earlier release does not affect the passing of title or the Purchaser's unconditional obligation to pay the full purchase price. In addition to other remedies available to us by law, we reserve the right to impose from the date of sale a late charge of the annual percentage rate of Prime + 6% of the total purchase price if payment is not made in accordance with the conditions set forth herein. Please note Sotheby's reserves the right to refuse to accept payment from a source other than the buyer of record.

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and expenses more fully set forth herein, we, at our option, may (X) cancel the sale of that, or any other lot or lots sold to the defaulting purchaser at the same or any other auction, retaining as liquidated damages all payments made by the purchaser, or (Y) resell the purchased property, whether at public auction or by private sale, or (Z) effect any combination thereof. In any case, the purchaser will be liable for any deficiency, any and all costs, handling charges, late charges, expenses of both sales, our commissions on both sales at our regular rates, legal fees and expenses, collection fees and incidental damages. We may, in our sole discretion, apply any proceeds of sale then due or thereafter becoming due to the purchaser from us or any affiliated company, or any payment made by the purchaser to us or any affiliated company, whether or not intended to reduce the purchaser's obligations with respect to the unpaid lot or lots, to the deficiency and any other amounts due to us or any affiliated companies. In addition, a defaulting purchaser will be deemed to have granted and assigned to us and our affiliated companies, a continuing security interest of first priority in any property or money of or owing to such purchaser in our possession, custody or control or in the possession, custody or control of any of our affiliated companies, in each case whether at the time of the auction, the default or if acquired at any time thereafter, and we may retain and apply such property or money as collateral security for the obligations due to us or to any affiliated company of ours. We shall have all of the rights accorded a secured party under the New York Uniform Commercial Code. You hereby agree that Sotheby's may file financing statements under the New York Uniform Commercial Code without your signature. Payment will not be deemed to have been made in full until we have collected good funds. Any claims relating to any purchase, including any claims under the Conditions of Sale or Terms of Guarantee, must be presented directly to Sotheby's. In the event the purchaser fails to pay any or all of the total purchase price for any lot and Sotheby's nonetheless elects to pay the Consignor any portion of the sale proceeds, the purchaser acknowledges that Sotheby's shall have all of the rights of the Consignor to pursue the purchaser for any amounts paid to the Consignor, whether at law, in equity, or under these Conditions of Sale.

10. **Reserve** All lots in this catalogue are offered subject to a reserve, which is the confidential minimum hammer price at which a lot will be sold. No reserve will exceed the low presale estimate stated in the catalogue, or as amended by oral or posted notices. We may implement such reserve by opening the bidding on behalf of the Consignor and may bid up to the amount of the reserve, by placing successive or consecutive bids for a lot, or bids in response to other bidders. In instances where we have an interest in the lot other than our commission, we may bid up to the reserve to protect such interest. In certain instances, the Consignor may pay us less than the standard commission rate where a lot is "bought-in" to protect its reserve.

11. **Tax** Unless exempted by law, the purchaser will be required to pay the combined New York State and local sales tax, any applicable compensating use tax of another state, and if applicable, any federal luxury or other tax, on the total purchase price. The rate of such combined tax is 8.875% in New York City and ranges from 7% to 8.625% elsewhere in New York.

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In the event Sotheby's in its reasonable opinion deems that the conditions of the Guarantee have been satisfied, it shall refund to the original purchaser of record the hammer price and applicable Buyer's Premium paid for the lot by the original purchaser of record.

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6. Sotheby's reserves the right to refuse or revoke permission to bid via Online Platforms and to remove bidding privileges during a sale.

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1. SYMBOL KEY

□ Reserves

Unless indicated by a box (□), all lots in this catalogue are offered subject to a reserve. A reserve is the confidential minimum hammer price at which a lot will be sold. The reserve is generally set at a percentage of the low estimate and will not exceed the low estimate of the lot. If any lots in the catalogue are offered without reserve, such lots will be designated by a box (□). If every lot in a catalogue is offered without a reserve, the Conditions of Sale will so state and this symbol will not be used for each lot.

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∨ Interested Parties

Lots with this symbol indicate that parties with a direct or indirect interest in the lot may be bidding on the lot, including (i) the beneficiary of an estate selling the lot, or (ii) the joint owner of a lot. If the interested party is the successful bidder, they will be required to pay the full Buyer's Premium. In certain instances, interested parties may have knowledge of the reserve. In the event the interested party's possible participation in the sale is not known until after the printing of the auction catalogue, a pre-sale or pre-lot announcement will be made indicating that interested parties may be bidding on the lot.

◎ Restricted Materials

Lots with this symbol have been identified at the time of cataloguing as containing organic material which may be subject to restrictions regarding import or export. The information is made available for the convenience of bidders and the absence of the symbol is not a warranty that there are no restrictions regarding import or export of the Lot; bidders should refer to Condition 12 of the Conditions of Sale. Please also refer to the section on Endangered Species in the information on Buying at Auction.

Π Monumental

Lots with this symbol may, in our opinion, require special handling or shipping services due to size or other physical considerations. Bidders are advised to inspect the lot and to contact Sotheby's prior to the sale to discuss any specific shipping requirements.

🔒 Premium Lot

In order to bid on "Premium Lots" (🔒 in print catalogue or 🔒 in eCatalogue) you must complete the required Premium Lot pre-registration application. You must arrange for Sotheby's to receive your pre-registration application at least three working days before the sale. Please bear in mind that we are unable to obtain financial references over weekends or public holidays. Sotheby's decision whether to accept any pre-registration application shall be final. If your application is accepted, you will be provided with a special paddle number. If all lots in the catalogue are "Premium Lots", a Special Notice will be included to this effect and this symbol will not be used.

2. BEFORE THE AUCTION

The Catalogue A catalogue prepared by Sotheby's is published for every scheduled live auction and is available prior to the sale date. The catalogue will help familiarize you with property being offered at the designated auction. Catalogues may be purchased at Sotheby's or by subscription in any categories. For information, please call +1 212 606 7000 or visit sothebys.com. Prospective bidders should also consult sothebys.com for the most up to date cataloguing of the property in this catalogue.

Estimates Each lot in the catalogue is given a low and high estimate, indicating to a prospective buyer a range in which the lot might sell at auction. When possible, the estimate is based on previous auction records of comparable pieces. The estimates are determined several months before a sale and are therefore subject to change upon further research of the property, or to reflect market conditions or currency fluctuations. Estimates should not be relied upon as a representation or prediction of actual selling prices.

Provenance In certain circumstances, Sotheby's may print in the catalogue the history of ownership of a work of art if such information contributes to scholarship or is otherwise well known and assists in distinguishing the work of art. However, the identity of the seller or previous owners may not be disclosed for a variety of reasons. For example, such information may be excluded to accommodate a seller's request for confidentiality or because the identity of prior owners is unknown given the age of the work of art.

Specialist Advice Prospective bidders may be interested in specific information not included in the catalogue description of a lot. For additional information, please contact either a Sotheby's specialist in charge of the sale (all of whom are listed in the front of the catalogue), or Sotheby's Client Services Department. You may also request a condition report from the specialist in charge.

The Exhibition An exhibition of the auction property will be held the week prior to the auction on the days listed in the front of the catalogue. There you will have the opportunity to view, inspect and evaluate the property yourself, or with the help of a Sotheby's specialist.

Salesroom Notices Salesroom notices amend the catalogue description of a lot after our catalogue has gone to press. They are posted in the viewing galleries and salesroom or are announced by the auctioneer. Please take note of them.

Registration Sotheby's may require such necessary financial references, guarantees, deposits and/or such other security, in its absolute discretion, as security for your bid. If

you are not successful on any lot, Sotheby's will arrange for a refund (subject to any right of set off) of the deposit amount paid by you without interest within 14 working days of the date of the sale. Any exchange losses or fees associated with the refund shall be borne by you. Registration to bid on Premium Lots must be done at least 3 business days prior to the sale.

3. DURING THE AUCTION

The Auction Auctions are open to the public without any admission fee or obligation to bid. The auctioneer introduces the objects for sale — known as "lots" — in numerical order as listed in the catalogue. Unless otherwise noted in the catalogue or by an announcement at the auction, Sotheby's acts as agent on behalf of the seller and does not permit the seller to bid on his or her own property. It is important for all bidders to know that the auctioneer may open the bidding on any lot by placing a bid on behalf of the seller. The auctioneer may further bid on behalf of the seller, up to the amount of the reserve, by placing responsive or consecutive bids for a lot. The auctioneer will not place consecutive bids on behalf of the seller above the reserve.

Bidding in Person If you would like to bid, you must register for a paddle upon entering the salesroom. The paddle is numbered so as to identify you to the auctioneer. To register, you will need a form of identification such as a driver's license, a passport or some other type of government issued identification. If you are a first-time bidder, you will also be asked for your address, phone number and signature in order to create your account. If you are bidding for someone else, you will need to provide a letter from that person authorizing you to bid on that person's behalf. Issuance of a bid paddle is in Sotheby's sole discretion.

Once the first bid has been placed, the auctioneer asks for higher bids, in increments determined by the auctioneer. To place your bid, simply raise your paddle until the auctioneer acknowledges you. You will know when your bid has been acknowledged; the auctioneer will not mistake a random gesture for a bid.

If you wish to register to bid on a Premium Lot, please see the paragraph above.

All lots sold will be invoiced to the name and address in which the paddle has been registered and cannot be transferred to other names and addresses. Sotheby's reserves the right to refuse to accept payment from a source other than the buyer of record.

Absentee Bidding If it is not possible for you to attend the auction in person, you may place your bid ahead of time. In the back of every catalogue there is an absentee bid form, which you can use to indicate the item you wish to bid on and the maximum bid you are willing to make. Return the completed absentee bid form to Sotheby's either by mail or fax. When the lot that you are interested in comes up for sale, a Sotheby's representative will execute the bid on your behalf, making every effort to purchase the item for as little as possible and never exceeding your limit. This service is free and confidential. For detailed instructions and information, please see the Absentee Bid Form and Guide for Absentee Bidders instructions at the back of this catalogue.

Telephone Bidding In some circumstances, we offer the ability to place bids by telephone live to a Sotheby's representative on the auction floor. Please contact the Bid Department prior to the sale to make arrangements or to answer any questions you may have. Telephone bids are accepted only at Sotheby's discretion and at the caller's risk. Calls may also be recorded at Sotheby's

discretion. By bidding on the telephone, prospective buyers consent thereto.

Online Bidding If you cannot attend the auction, it may be possible to bid online via Bidnow, eBay, Invaluable or other Online Platforms for selected sales. This service is free and confidential. For information about registering to bid via Bidnow, please see www.sothebys.com. For information about registering to bid on eBay, please see www.ebay.com/sothebys. For information about registering to bid on Invaluable, please see www.invaluable.com/invaluable/help.cfm. Bidders utilizing any online platform are subject to the Online Terms as well as the relevant Conditions of Sale. Online bidding may not be available for Premium Lots.

Employee Bidding Sotheby's employees may bid in a Sotheby's auction only if the employee does not know the reserve and if the employee fully complies with Sotheby's internal rules governing employee bidding.

US Economic Sanctions The United States maintains economic and trade sanctions against targeted foreign countries, groups and organizations. There may be restrictions on the import into the United States of certain items originating in sanctioned countries, including Burma, Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Sudan. The purchaser's inability to import any item into the US or any other country as a result of these or other restrictions shall not justify cancellation or rescission of the sale or any delay in payment. Please check with the specialist department if you are uncertain as to whether a lot is subject to these import restrictions, or any other restrictions on importation or exportation.

Hammer Price and the Buyer's Premium For lots which are sold, the last price for a lot as announced by the auctioneer is the hammer price. A buyer's premium will be added to the hammer price and is payable by the purchaser as part of the total purchase price. The buyer's premium will be the amount stated in the Conditions of Sale.

Currency Board As a courtesy to bidders, a currency board is operated in many salesrooms. It displays the lot number and current bid in both U.S. dollars and foreign currencies. Exchange rates are approximations based on recent exchange rate information and should not be relied upon as a precise invoice amount. Sotheby's assumes no responsibility for any error or omission in foreign or United States currency amounts shown.

Results Successful absentee bidders will be notified after the sale. Absentee bidders will receive a list of sale results if they enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope with their absentee bid form. Printed lists of auction prices are available at our galleries approximately three weeks following each auction and are sent on request to catalogue purchasers and subscribers. Results may also be obtained online at sothebys.com.

International Auctions If you need assistance placing bids, obtaining condition reports or receiving auction results for a Sotheby's sale outside the United States, please contact our International Client Services Department.

4. AFTER THE AUCTION

Payment If your bid is successful, you can go directly to Post Sale Services to make payment arrangements. Otherwise, your invoice will be mailed to you. The final price is determined by adding the buyer's premium to the hammer price on a per-lot basis. Sales tax,

where applicable, will be charged on the entire amount. Payment is due in full immediately after the sale. However, under certain circumstances, Sotheby's may, in its sole discretion, offer bidders an extended payment plan. Such a payment plan may provide an economic benefit to the bidder. Credit terms should be requested at least one business day before the sale. However, there is no assurance that an extended payment plan will be offered. Please contact Post Sale Services or the specialist in charge of the sale for information on credit arrangements for a particular lot. Please note that Sotheby's will not accept payments for purchased lots from any party other than the purchaser, unless otherwise agreed between the purchaser and Sotheby's prior to the sale.

Payment by Cash It is against Sotheby's general policy to accept single or multiple related payments in the form of cash or cash equivalents in excess of the local currency equivalent of US \$10,000. It is Sotheby's policy to request any new clients or purchasers preferring to make a cash payment to provide: verification of identity (by providing some form of government issued identification containing a photograph, such as a passport, identity card or driver's license), confirmation of permanent address and identification of the source of the funds.

Payment by Credit Cards Sotheby's accepts payment by credit card for Visa, MasterCard, and American Express only. Credit card payments may not exceed \$50,000 per sale. Payment by credit card may be made (a) online at <https://www.sothebys.com/en/invoice-payment.html>, (b) by calling in to Post Sale Services at +1 212 606 7444, or (c) in person at Sotheby's premises at the address noted in the catalogue.

Payment by Check Sotheby's accepts personal, certified, banker's draft and cashier's checks drawn in US Dollars (made payable to Sotheby's). While personal and company checks are accepted, property will not be released until such checks have cleared, unless you have a pre-arranged check acceptance agreement. Application for check clearance can be made through the Post Sale Services.

Certified checks, banker's drafts and cashier's checks are accepted at Sotheby's discretion and provided they are issued by a reputable financial institution governed by anti-money laundering laws. Instruments not meeting these requirements will be treated as "cash equivalents" and subject to the constraints noted in the prior paragraph titled "Payment By Cash".

Payment by Wire Transfer To pay for a purchase by wire transfer, please refer to the payment instructions on the invoice provided by Sotheby's or contact Post Sale Services to request instructions.

Sales and Use Tax New York sales tax is charged on the hammer price, buyer's premium and any other applicable charges on any property picked up or delivered in New York State, regardless of the state or country in which the purchaser resides or does business. Purchasers who wish to use their own shipper who is not a considered a "common carrier" by the New York Department of Taxation and Finance will be charged New York sales tax on the entire charge regardless of the destination of the property. Please refer to "Information on Sales and Use Tax Related to Purchases at Auction" in the back of the catalogue.

Collection and Delivery
Post Sale Services
+1 212 606 7444
FAX: +1 212 606 7043
uspostalsaleservices@sothebys.com

Once your payment has been received and cleared, property may be released. Unless otherwise agreed by Sotheby's, all purchases must be removed by the 30th calendar day following a sale.

Shipping Services Sotheby's offers a comprehensive shipping service to meet all of your requirements. If you received a shipping quotation or have any questions about the services we offer please contact us.

Collecting your Property As a courtesy to purchasers who come to Sotheby's to collect property, Sotheby's will assist in the packing of lots, although Sotheby's may, in the case of fragile articles, choose not to pack or otherwise handle a purchase.

If you are using your own shipper to collect property from Sotheby's, please provide a letter of authorization and kindly instruct your shipper that they must provide a Bill of Lading prior to collection. Both documents must be sent to Post Sale Services prior to collection.

The Bill of Lading must include: the purchaser's full name, the full delivery address including the street name and number, city and state or city and country, the sale and lot number.

Sotheby's will contact your shipper within 24 hours of receipt of the Bill of Lading to confirm the date and time that your property can be collected. Property will not be released without this confirmation and your shipper must bring the same Bill of Lading that was faxed to Sotheby's when collecting. All property releases are subject to the receipt of cleared funds.

Please see the Conditions of Sale for further details.

Endangered Species Certain property sold at auction, for example, items made of or incorporating plant or animal materials such as coral, crocodile, ivory, whalebone, tortoiseshell, rhinoceros horn, rosewood, etc., irrespective of age or value, may require a license or certificate prior to exportation and additional licenses or certificates upon importation to another country. Sotheby's suggests that buyers check on their government wildlife import requirements prior to placing a bid. Please note that the ability to obtain an export license or certificate does not ensure the ability to obtain an import license or certificate in another country, and vice versa. It is the purchaser's responsibility to obtain any export or import licenses and/or certificates as well as any other required documentation. In the case of denial of any export or import license or of delay in the obtaining of such licenses, the purchaser is still responsible for making on-time payment of the total purchase price for the lot.

Although licenses can be obtained to export some types of endangered species, other types may not be exported at all, and other types may not be resold in the United States. Upon request, Sotheby's is willing to assist the purchaser in attempting to obtain the appropriate licenses and/or certificates. However, there is no assurance that an export license or certificate can be obtained. Please check with the specialist department or the Shipping Department if you are uncertain as to whether a lot is subject to these export/import license and certificate requirements, or any other restrictions on exportation.

The Art Loss Register As part of Sotheby's efforts to support only the legitimate art market and to combat the illegitimate market in stolen property, Sotheby's has retained the Art Loss Register to check all uniquely identifiable items offered for sale in this catalogue that are estimated at more than the equivalent of US\$1,500 against the Art Loss Register's computerized database of objects reported as stolen or lost. The Art Loss Register is pleased to provide purchasers with a certificate confirming that a search has been made. All inquiries regarding search certificates should be directed to The Art Loss Register, First Floor, 63-66 Hatten Garden, London EC1N 8LE or by email at artloss@artloss.com. The Art Loss Register does not guarantee the provenance or title of any catalogued item against which they search, and will not be liable for any direct or consequential losses of any nature howsoever arising. This statement and the ALR's service do not affect your rights and obligations under the Conditions of Sale applicable to the sale.

SELLING AT AUCTION

If you have property you wish to sell, Sotheby's team of specialists and client services representatives will assist you through the entire process. Simply contact the appropriate specialist (specialist departments are listed in the back of this catalogue). General Inquiries Department or a Sotheby's regional office representative for suggestions on how best to arrange for evaluation of your property.

Property Evaluation There are three general ways evaluation of property can be conducted:

(1) In our galleries

You may bring your property directly to our galleries where our specialists will give you auction estimates and advice. There is no charge for this service, but we request that you telephone ahead for an appointment. Inspection hours are 9:30 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

(2) By photograph

If your property is not portable, or if you are not able to visit our galleries, you may bring in or send a clear photograph of each item. If you have a large collection, a representative selection of photographs will do. Please be sure to include the dimensions, artist's signature or maker's mark, medium, physical condition and any other relevant information. Our specialists will provide a free preliminary auction estimate subject to a final estimate upon first-hand inspection.

(3) In your home

Evaluations of property can also be made in your home. The fees for such visits are based on the scope and diversity of property, with travel expenses additional. These fees may be rebated if you consign your property for sale at Sotheby's. If there is considerable property in question, we can arrange for an informal "walkthrough."

Once your property has been evaluated, Sotheby's representatives can then help you determine how to proceed should you wish to continue with the auction process. They will provide information regarding sellers' commission rates and other charges, auction venue, shipping and any further services you may require.

SOTHEBY'S SERVICES

Sotheby's also offers a range of other services to our clients beyond buying and selling at auction. These services are summarized below. Further information on any of the services described below can be found at sothebys.com.

Valuations and Appraisals

Sotheby's Valuations and Appraisals Services offers advice regarding personal property assets to trusts, estates, and private clients in order to help fiduciaries, executors, advisors, and collectors meet their goals. We provide efficient and confidential advice and assistance for all appraisal and auction services. Sotheby's can prepare appraisals to suit a variety of needs, including estate tax and planning, insurance, charitable contribution and collateral loan. Our appraisals are widely accepted by the Internal Revenue Service, tax and estate planning professionals, and insurance firms. In the event that a sale is considered, we are pleased to provide auction estimates, sales proposals and marketing plans. When sales are underway, the group works closely with the appropriate specialist departments to ensure that clients' needs are met promptly and efficiently.

Financial Services Sotheby's offers a wide range of financial services including advances on consignments, as well as loans secured by art collections not intended for sale.

Museum Services Tailored to meet the unique needs of museums and nonprofits in the marketplace, Museum Services offers personal, professional assistance and advice in areas including appraisals, deaccessions, acquisitions and special events.

Corporate Art Services Devoted to servicing corporations, Sotheby's Corporate Art Services Department can prepare appraisal reports, advise on acquisitions and deaccessions, manage all aspects of consignment, assist in developing arts-management strategies and create events catering to a corporation's needs.

INFORMATION ON SALES AND USE TAX RELATED TO PURCHASES AT AUCTION

To better assist our clients, we have prepared the following information on Sales and Use Tax related to property purchased at auction.

Why Sotheby's Collects Sales Tax

Virtually all State Sales Tax Laws require a corporation to register with the State's Tax Authorities and collect and remit sales tax if the corporation maintains a presence within the state, such as offices. In the states that impose sales tax, Tax Laws require an auction house, with a presence in the state, to register as a sales tax collector, and remit sales tax collected to the state. New York sales tax is charged on the hammer price, buyer's premium and any other applicable charges on any property picked up or delivered in New York, regardless of the state or country in which the purchaser resides or does business.

Where Sotheby's Collects Sales Tax

Sotheby's is currently registered to collect sales tax in the following states: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington. For any property collected or received by the purchaser in New York City, such property is subject to sales tax at the existing New York State and City rate of 8.875%.

Sotheby's Arranged Shipping If the property is delivered into any state in which Sotheby's is registered, Sotheby's is required by law to collect and remit the appropriate sales tax in effect in the state where the property is delivered.

Client Arranged Shipping Property collected from Sotheby's New York premises by a common carrier hired by the purchaser for delivery at an address outside of New York is not subject to New York Sales Tax, but if the property is delivered into any state in which Sotheby's is registered, Sotheby's is required by law to collect and remit the appropriate sales tax in effect in the state where the property is delivered. New York State recognizes shippers such as the United States Postal Service, United Parcel Service, FedEx, or the like as "common carriers". If a purchaser hires a shipper other than a common carrier to pick up property, Sotheby's will collect New York sales tax at a rate of 8.875% regardless of the ultimate destination of the goods. If a purchaser utilizes a freight-forwarder who is registered with the Transportation Security Administration ("TSA") to deliver property outside of the United States, no sales tax would be due on this transaction.

Where Sotheby's is Not Required to Collect Sales Tax

Sotheby's is not required to collect sales tax on property delivered to states other than those listed above. If the property is delivered to a state where Sotheby's is not required to collect sales tax, it is the responsibility of the purchaser to self-assess any sales or use tax and remit it to taxing authorities in that state.

Sotheby's is not required to collect sales tax for property delivered to the purchaser outside of the United States.

Restoration and Other Services

Regardless of where the property is subsequently transported, if any framing or restoration services are performed on the property in New York, it is considered to be a delivery of the property to the purchaser in New York, and Sotheby's will be required to collect the 8.875% New York sales tax.

Certain Exemptions Most states that impose sales taxes allow for specified exemptions to the tax. For example, a registered re-seller such as a registered art dealer may purchase without incurring a tax liability, and Sotheby's is not required to collect sales tax from such re-seller. The art dealer, when re-selling the property, may be required to charge sales tax to its client, or the client may be required to self-assess sales or use tax upon acquiring the property.

Local Tax Advisors As sales tax laws vary from state to state, Sotheby's recommends that clients with questions regarding the application of sales or use taxes to property purchased at auction seek tax advice from their local tax advisors.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following are examples of the terminology used in this catalogue. Please note that all statements made in this catalogue are made subject to the provisions of the Conditions of Sale and Terms of Guarantee printed in this catalogue:

GLOSSARY FOR SCULPTURE

Bronze Figure of a Woman, Maurice Giraud-Rivière, CIRCA 1925

This heading indicates that the casting was done by the artist or with his direct authorization or supervision.

Bronze Figure of a Woman, After Maurice Giraud-Rivière, CIRCA 1925

This heading indicates that the casting was done by another, i.e., artisans at a foundry.

Maurice Giraud-Rivière, Bronze Figure of a Woman, CIRCA 1925

This heading indicates that the casting was done by the artist or with his direct authorization or supervision.

IMPORTANT NOTICES

Notice Regarding Endangered Species

• Property containing certain endangered species will require a CITES license upon export from the U.S. and may require an additional license upon import into another country. There is no guarantee that such licenses will be granted. In the case of denial of any license or of delay in obtaining such licenses, the purchaser remains responsible for making on-time payment for the total purchase price.

The artists' names recorded in this catalogue are not to be taken as unqualified attributions to the artists named. No unqualified attributions to any artist or date are made or intended. The current scholarship in the field of Chinese paintings and calligraphy does not permit unqualified statements as to authorship or date of execution. Therefore, the property in this catalogue is sold "AS IS" in accordance with the Conditions of Sale and subject to a limited guarantee of authenticity as set forth in the Terms of Guarantee. Any assistance given by Sotheby's staff to a buyer in selecting a purchase is given without prejudice to the above. Buyers are recommended to take independent professional advice on selection of purchases.

Photography:

Jen Fong
Jon Lam
Elliot Perez

OTHER AUCTIONS

A comprehensive calendar of international auctions, in addition to all sale results, can be viewed at sothebys.com

ARTS D'AFRIQUE ET D'OcéANIE

12 December 2017
Paris

GUIDE FOR ABSENTEE AND TELEPHONE BIDDERS

If you are unable to attend an auction in person, you may give Sotheby's Bid Department instructions to bid on your behalf by completing the form overleaf. This service is confidential and available at no additional charge.

GENERAL

This service is free and confidential.

Please record accurately the lot numbers, descriptions and the top hammer price you are willing to pay for each lot.

We will try to purchase the lot(s) of your choice for the lowest price possible and never for more than the maximum bid amount you indicate.

"Buy" or unlimited bids will not be accepted.

Alternative bids can be placed by using the word "OR" between lot numbers. Then if your bid on an early lot is successful, we will not continue to bid on other lots for you. Or, if your early bids are unsuccessful, we will continue to execute bids for alternative lots until a bid is successful.

Bids must be placed in the same order as in the catalogue.

The form should be used for one sale only – please indicate the sale number, title and date on the form.

Please place your bids as early as possible, as in the event of identical bids the earliest received will take precedence. Wherever possible bids should be submitted at least twenty-four hours before the auction.

Where appropriate, your bids will be rounded down to the nearest amount consistent with the auctioneer's bidding increments.

Absentee bids, when placed by telephone, are accepted only at the caller's risk and must be confirmed by letter or fax to the Bid Department on +1 212 606 7016.

Please note that the execution of written bids is offered as an additional service for no extra charge at the bidder's risk and is undertaken subject to Sotheby's other commitments at the time of the auction: Sotheby's therefore cannot accept liability for error or failure to place such bids, whether through negligence or otherwise.

Successful bidders will receive an invoice detailing their purchases and giving instructions for payment and clearance of goods. Unsuccessful bidders will be advised.

Please note Sotheby's reserves the right to refuse to accept payment from a source other than the buyer of record.

All bids are subject to the conditions of sale and terms of guarantee applicable to the sale printed in the sale catalogue. Buyer's premium in the amount stated in paragraph 3 of the Conditions of Sale in the back of the sale catalogue will be added to the hammer price as part of the total purchase price, plus any applicable sales tax.

In the event that you are successful, payment is due immediately after the sale unless otherwise agreed in advance. Payment may be made by bank transfer, credit card (which may be subject to a convenience fee), check or cash (up to US\$10,000). You will be sent full details on how to pay with your invoice. It is against Sotheby's general policy to accept single or multiple related payments in the form of cash or cash equivalents in excess of US\$10,000.

It is Sotheby's policy to request any new clients or purchasers preferring to make a cash payment to provide: proof of identity (by providing some form of government issued identification containing a photograph, such as a passport, identity card or driver's license) and confirmation of permanent address.

We reserve the right to seek identification of the source of funds received.

DATA PROTECTION

Sotheby's will use information provided by its clients (or which Sotheby's otherwise obtains from eBay or other sources relating to its clients) for the provision of auction and other art-related services, loan services, client administration, marketing and otherwise to manage and operate its business, or as required by law, in accordance with Sotheby's Privacy Policy. This will include information such as the client's name and contact details, proof of identity, financial information, records of the client's transactions, and preferences. Some gathering of information about Sotheby's clients will take place using technical means to identify their preferences in order to provide a higher quality of service to them. Sotheby's may also disclose the client information to other Sotheby's Companies and/or third parties acting on their behalf to provide services for these purposes.

Sometimes, Sotheby's may also disclose this information to carefully selected third parties for their own marketing purposes. If you do not wish your details to be used for this purpose, please email enquiries@sothebys.com.

If the client provides Sotheby's with information that is defined by European data protection laws as "sensitive", the client agrees that it may be used for the purposes set out above.

In the course of these disclosures, personal data collected in the European Economic Area may be disclosed to countries outside the European Economic Area. Although such countries may not have legislation that protects a client's personal information, Sotheby's shall take great care to keep such information secure and in accordance with European data protection principles. By agreeing to these Conditions of Business, the client is agreeing to such disclosure.

Please be aware that Sotheby's may film auctions or other activities on Sotheby's premises and that such recordings may be transmitted over the Internet via Sotheby's website, the eBay website and other Online Platforms. Telephone bids may be recorded.

Under European data protection laws, a client may object, by request and free of charge, to the processing of their information for certain purposes, including direct marketing, and may access and rectify personal data relating to them and may obtain more information about Sotheby's data protection policies by writing to Sotheby's, 34-35 New Bond Street, London W1A 2AA, or 1334 York Avenue, New York, NY 10021, Attn: Compliance, or emailing enquiries@sothebys.com. Sotheby's use of information collected about eBay users may differ and is governed by the terms of the eBay Privacy Policy and Sotheby's on eBay Live Auction Platform Privacy Policy, which can be found on the Sotheby's on eBay Live Auction Website.

IMPORTANT

Please note that the execution of written and telephone bids is offered as an additional service for no extra charge, and at the bidder's risk. It is undertaken subject to Sotheby's other commitments at the time of the auction. Sotheby's therefore cannot accept liability for failure to place such bids, whether through negligence or otherwise. All bids will be executed and are accepted subject to the "Conditions of Sale" and "Terms of Guarantee" printed in the catalogue for the sale. Please note that a buyer's premium in the amount stated in paragraph 3 of the "Conditions of Sale" in the back of the sale catalogue will be added to the hammer price as part of the total purchase price, plus any applicable sales tax.

NEW CLIENTS

Please note that we may contact you to request a bank reference. In addition Sotheby's requires a copy of government issued photo ID in order to generate a new account. If you have opened a new account with Sotheby's since 1 December, 2002, and have not already done so, you will be asked to present appropriate documentation confirming your identity before your lots or sale proceeds can be released to you.

FOR WRITTEN/FIXED BIDS

- Bids will be executed for the lowest price as is permitted by other bids or reserves.
- "Buy" or unlimited bids will not be accepted and we do not accept "plus one" bids. Please place bids in the same order as in the catalogue.
- Always indicate a "top limit" — the amount up to which you would bid if you were attending the auction yourself.
- Alternative bids can be placed by using the word "or" between lot numbers.
- Where appropriate your written bids will be rounded down to the nearest amount consistent with the auctioneer's bidding increments.

FOR TELEPHONE BIDS

Please clearly specify the telephone number on which you may be reached at the time of the sale, including the country code. We will call you from the saleroom shortly before your lot is offered.

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