

Langston University Libraries
Melvin B. Tolson Black Heritage Center
2014 & 2015 African Artifact Collection

Collection Overview

Title: 2014 and 2015 African Artifact Collection

Date Range: 1700's - 2000's and undated

Abstract: This collection contains 61 sculptures representing 18 tribes/people in 9 countries on the African continent. The sculptures vary in size and use; the collection contains reliquary figures, equestrian figures, other religious sculptures and ceremonial masks.

Creator: Various African artists

Extent: N/A- On- Display

n/a (see note below)

Note: Items have been on display since acquisition and accession; extent will be updated once items are removed from exhibit

Donors: Bill Gwin, Dr. Robert Gwin, Jim Gwin, Dr. Kevin and Antoinette Marks, Dr. Ron and Irene Johnson, Will Richardson III, Karen Briggs Gwin, Linda J. Webb, Adam Gwin, Janita Klo, Barry Weiner and Tiffany Jen Palmer

Access: On exhibit at the Melvin B. Tolson Black Heritage Center

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Related Collection: Glenn Sitzman African Artifact Collection, donated to the Melvin B. Tolson Black Heritage Center

Biographical Statement:

This collection includes standing sculptures of wood and metal, various masks, and specific tribal ceremonial pieces. The date that these pieces were created varies. The dates of the pieces known are dated as the 17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

African sculpture art is most often figurative, representing the human form and fashioned primarily from wood but it can also be stylized and abstracted and carved from stone. African sculpture art spans centuries and be as ancient as the advent of tools and as modern as today.

Traditional or tribal African sculpture typically may be religious or spiritual in nature, dealing primarily with the human form and sometimes animal or mythical.

The portrayal of the human form is not necessarily proportional but often strives to emphasize or exaggerate specific bodily characteristics that the sculptor is interested in communicating. The items are crafted by the artists and then given their power by religious practitioners who make contact with the spirit worlds of their gods and ancestors.

Their purposes are very varied; bringing fertility, rain, good harvests; warding off disease, natural calamities, evil spirits; helping with social decisions and judgments; commemorating important events and making political statements.

This collection features a variety of African masks. In different cultures, masks usually have a spiritual and religious meaning and are used in ritual dances, and social and religious events. In many areas, a special status is attributed to the artists that create masks and to those that wear them in ceremonies. In most cases, mask-making is an art that is passed on from father to son, along with the knowledge of the symbolic meanings conveyed by such masks.

In most traditional African cultures, the person who wears a ritual mask conceptually loses his or her human identity and turns into the spirit represented by the mask itself. This transformation of the mask wearer into a spirit usually relies on other practices, such as specific types of music and dance, or ritual costumes that conceal the mask-wearer's identity. The mask wearer thus becomes a sort of medium that allows for a dialogue between the community and the spirits (usually those of the dead or nature-related spirits). Masked dances are a part of most traditional African ceremonies related to weddings, funerals, initiation rites, and so on.

The people of Senegal, Mali, use *Kpelie* mask. *Kpelie* masks combine human and animal forms and although worn by men, the masks represent the concept of feminine beauty and fertility. The mask has an oval form with a pointed chin beneath a jutting mouth and linear nose. The forehead with a vertical scarification below stylized animal horn, suggests a reference to a ram which was a common but significant ceremonial beast. The mask is used at initiation rites of the Poro Society and at funeral rituals, in which they are designed to lead the spirit into the land of the dead, and at harvest festivals to thank the ancestors for a good crop.

Among the Punu, of Gabon, *The Lady* is a dance mask with triangular black coiffure with striations and predominately white facial features-the whiteness of the face is associated with beauty and the spirit world. The eyes are oval and the lips are red. The mask is usually worn by men who dance on stilts.

This collection also features maternity female sculptures and male fertility power sculptures. For example, one figure that is well known from the culture of the Congo is the *Nkishi*. *The Nkishi* is a common representation of African sculpture art that one may find in various countries and cultures of Sub-Saharan Africa. The *Nkishi* are figures that protect the community and mediate between humans and spirits. It is believed that they cure ailments and provide fertility and good fortune. When not in use the figure is placed in a sanctuary under the care of a guardian.

This collection also contains maternity sculptures. These sculptures tend to have exaggerated features in the torso, the abdomen and breast area. This is to promote fertility and good health for the female members of the family who are in the child bearing years.

Scope & Content: This collection contains sculptures and masks created by African artisans. The materials used in the creation of these pieces include wood, metals (bronze and copper), hair, animal horn, shells, beads, and leather.

Arrangement: This Collection is arranged by series according the country of origin which the material comes from. The materials are further broken down into the tribes or communities that may use or have used the artifacts for their distinct cultures. Finally, the collection is also arranged by when the artifacts were received.

Series List 2014-2015:

Series 2014

I. Series: Cameroon

Sculpture from anonymous artist from Cameroon West Africa

A. Subseries: Keaka

1. 20th Century Wood, Pegs, Ancestor Figure 20 ¼” high Dr. R.I.J 8.00

II. Series: Congo

Sculptures from various artist from Congo, Africa.

A. Subseries: Buyi

1. 20th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 13 ½” high W.R 3.00

B. Subseries: Hembra

1. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 20 ½” high Dr. K.A.M. 3.00
2. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 20 ¼” high Dr. K.A.M. 4.00
3. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 23 ½” high Dr. K.A.M. 5.00

C. Subseries: Kuyu

1. 19th Century Wood Cult Head 20” high J.G 5.00

D. Subseries: Lega

1. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 20 ½” high B.G 5.00
2. 19th Century Wood Cult Mask 10 ¼” high W.R. 8.00
3. 20th Century Wood Dance Mask 10 ½” high W.R. 9.00

E. Subseries: Luba

1. 19th Century Wood Divination Figure 14” high R.G 1.00
2. 19th Century Wood Divination Figure 19” high R.G 2.00

F. Subseries: Songye

1. 19th Century Wood Power Figure 28 ½” high Dr. K.A.M 1.00
2. 19th Century Wood, Metal Power Figure 21 ¾” high Dr. K.A.M 7.00
3. 19th Century Wood, Horn Power Figure 16” high Dr. K.A.M 2.00
4. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 9 ½” high Dr. R.I.J 4.00
5. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 10 ¼” high Dr. R.I.J 5.00
6. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 7” high W.R. 2.00
7. 19th Century Wood Male Cult Figure 15” high B.G 6.00
8. 19th Century Wood Female Cult Figure 15 ¼” high B.G 7.00

III. Series: Gabon

Sculptures from anonymous artist from Fang, Gabon, West Africa.

A. Subseries: Fang

1. 19th Century Wood Reliquary Guardian Figure 25 ½” high J.G 3.00
2. 19th Century Wood, Metal Reliquary Guardian Figure 21” high J.G 4.00
3. 19th Century Wood Reliquary Guardian Figure 22 ½” high W.R 1.00

IV. Series: Guinea

Sculpture from anonymous artist from Baga, Guinea, West Africa.

A. Subseries: Baga

1. 19th Century Wood Nimba Male Figure 20” high Dr. R.I.J 1.00

V. Series: Liberia

Sculptures from anonymous artist from Dan, Liberia, West Africa.

A. Subseries: Dan

1. 20th Century Wood, Fiber Dance Mask 19” high Dr. K.A.M 6.00
2. 19th Century Wood Dance Mask 14” high W.R 4.00
3. 19th Century Wood, Hair Dance Mask 9 ½” high W.R 6.00
4. 20th Century Wood, Hair, Shell Dance Mask 16” high W.R 7.00

VI. Series: Ivory Coast (Cote D’Ivoire)

Sculptures from numerous artist from the Ivory Coast, Africa.

A. Subseries: Baule

1. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 15” high R.G 5.00
2. 20th Century Wood Female Ancestor Figure 16 ¾” high Dr. R.I.J 2.00
3. 20th Century Wood Male Ancestor Figure 17” high Dr. R.I.J 3.00

B. Subseries: Senufo

1. 19th Century Wood Fertility Figure 21 ¼” high Dr. R.I.J 6.00
2. 19th Century Wood Staff 20 ¼” high Dr. R.I.J 7.00

VII. Series: Mali

Sculptures from anonymous artist from Dogon, Mali, West Africa

A. Subseries: Dogon

1. 19th Century Wood Female Ancestor 18 ½” high R.G 4.00
2. 19th Century Wood Hermaphrodite Figure 31” high J.G 2.00

VIII. Series: Nigeria

Sculptures from various artist from Nigeria, West Africa.

A. Subseries: Benin

1. 18th Century Bronze Dwarf 26” high B.G 1.00
2. 19th Century Bronze Soldier 18” high B.G 2.00
3. 19th Century Bronze Executioner 42” high B.G 3.00
4. 18th Century Bronze Altar Head 8 ½” high B.G 4.00
5. 19th Century Bronze Equestrian Figure 22” high J.G 1.00

B. Subseries: Mumuye

1. 19th Century Wood Ancestor Figure 29” high R.G 3.00

IX. Series: Tanzania

Sculpture from anonymous artist from Tanzania East Africa

A. Subseries: Tanzania

1. 19th Century Wood Dance Mask 9 ½” high W.R 5.00

Series 2015

I. Series: Cameroon

Sculpture from anonymous artists from Cameroon West Africa

A. Subseries: Keaka

II. Series: Congo

Sculptures from various artists from Congo, Africa.

B. Subseries: Buyi

C. Subseries: Hembra

C. Subseries: Kuyu

D. Subseries: Lega

1. Unknown Date Ritual Wood Mask 12" high L.W 1.00

2. Unknown Date Ritual Wood Mask 7 ½" high L.W 2.00

3. Unknown Date Ritual Wood Mask 10" high L.W 3.00

4. Unknown Date Ritual Wood Standing Figure 8" high A.G 1.00

E. Subseries: Luba

1. Unknown Date Ritual Maternity Figure 19 ½" high K.G 1.00

2. Unknown Date Ritual Maternity Figure 14" high T.J.P 2.00

F. Subseries: Songye

1. 19th Century Wood, Metal Power Figure 18" high J.G 6.00

2. 19th Century Wood Standing Figure 17 ½" high J.G 7.00

3. 19th Century Wood Male Power Figure 10 ½" high J.G 8.00

G. Subseries: Songhai

H. Subseries: Sungai

I. Subseries: Yombe

1. Unknown Date Wood Maternity Figure 20" high T.J.P 1.00

III. Series: Gabon

Sculptures from anonymous artists from Fang, Gabon, West Africa.

A. Subseries: Fang

1. 18th Century Ritual Wood, Metal Head 9 ½" high R.G 12.00

B. Subseries: Punu

1. Unknown Date Ritual Wood Mask 11" high J.K 1.00

2.

IV. Series: Guinea

Sculpture from anonymous artists from Baga, Guinea, West Africa.

A. Subseries: Baga

V. Series: Liberia

Sculptures from anonymous artists from Dan, Liberia, West Africa.

B. Subseries: Dan

VI. Series: Ivory Coast (Cote D'Ivoire)

Sculptures from numerous artists from the Ivory Coast, Africa.

A. Subseries: Baule

1. Unknown Date Wood Standing Female Figure 23" high K.G 2.00

B. Subseries: Senufo

VII. Series: Mali

Sculptures from anonymous artist from Dogon, Mali, West Africa

A. Subseries: Dogon

1. 18th Century Wood Equestrian Figure 32”high R.G 7.00

B. Subseries: Senufo

1. 19th Century Ritual Rhythm Pounder 27” high R.G 13.00

2. Unknown Date Ritual Wood Mask 11” high J.K 2.00

VIII. Series: Nigeria

Sculptures from various artists from Nigeria, West Africa.

A. Subseries: Benin

1. 15th to 17th Century Copper Alloy Head 9” high R.G 6.00

2. 17th Century Copper Alloy Leopard Head 8 ¾” high R.G 8.00

3. 17th Century Copper Alloy Female Leopards Pair 16” R.G 9.00

4. 17th Century Copper Alloy Rooster 16” high R.G 10.00

5. 18th Century Copper Alloy Warrior 16” high R.G 11.00

B. Subseries: Mumuye

IX. Series: Tanzania

Sculpture from anonymous artist from Tanzania East Africa

A. Subseries: Tanzania