



Highlights –  
HParcours des  
Mondes



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08.9. – 13.9. 2020



*Illustrated as frontispiece and on page 21*  
Senufo helmet mask, Ivory Coast  
Wood, pigments, H. 64cm

Among the highlights – works of art of exceptional quality – we have selected for *Parcours des Mondes 2020* and present in this online catalogue is a highly important Kota reliquary figure and a female Kusu sculpture of stunning grace. Others include a significant Senufo helmet mask and an archaic very vivid mortar from the Huon Gulf. What these works share is that they were made by a master who perfectly understood to bring the underlying ritual function, the technical perfection and the inspiration of a great artist together to form an artwork of universal quality.

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Once in the prestigious collection of William A. McCarty-Cooper, this fetish figure of the Yombe people is a work of art of a very elegant posture and a calm, self-contained impression. With an assemblage of numerous fetishes that enhanced its magical capability in the form of nuts and shells bound around its neck, its beautiful patina and with the graceful, very precise carving itself, it is a captivating work of art.

Before William A. McCarty-Cooper acquired this Yombe fetish sculpture, it was owned by Philadelphia collectors Vivian and Meyer Potamkin. They collected art with a broad interest and in different fields, among others a small group of African Art.

Yombe fetish figure, DRC

Wood, pigments, nail, numerous fetishes in the form of shells and nuts pendent about the neck, H. 28cm

**Collection History:**

Collection Meyer Potamkin, Philadelphia

Collection William McCarty-Cooper, acquired in 1984

Christie's New York, *Important Tribal Art and Antiquities from the collection of William*

*A. McCarty-Cooper*, May 19, 1992, lot 159

Private collection, UK







This female Kusu sculpture – a work of art of stunning grace – shows the inspiration of its artist in a set of formal solutions that are based on a taste for balanced forms. The vigorous sculptural qualities of the geometry of the body form with the contrast of the calm and subtle expression of the face a highly captivating artwork. The ritual anointment with palm oil – especially on the head – led to a partially sweating, multilayered patina showing the loving care the sculpture received and the medicine-filled cavity in the coiffure still contains the magical substances that enabled the sculpture with its capability to protect and heal.



Kusu figure, DRC  
Wood, pigments, fetish material, sweating patina, H. 29.5cm

Collection History:  
Galerie Künzi, Solothurn  
Private collection Switzerland, acquired from the above









The Kota reliquary figure is a masterpiece, an excellent exemplar of one of the most esteemed types of Kota sculpture. In Alain Chaffins categorization of Kota reliquaries it belongs into Group 6, which is defined as being: " [...] composed of medium-sized pieces (around 45cm) that are dense, slender, and very carefully made. This group is one of the most beautiful of Kota art." More recently, Frederic Cloth published a thesis in which he considered this type of Kota figures to be the female counterpart to the works known as Kota reliquaries from the Sebe River Master. Of relatively small size, exceptionally thin brass panels, a patina in pristine condition and with bone eyes, which are very rare and found only among the earliest Kota reliquary figures, it is the perfection in details – such as the perfect flow of the crescent adorned by two stylized feathers – that constitutes the brilliance of this magnificent work of universal significance.

That the collection history of the Kota figure is including several renowned, historic and prestigious collectors and dealers is hence of no surprise. Ralph Nash – the London based dealer famous as only works of art of the highest quality went through his hands – acquired it from Claus Klausmeyer, whose inventory number is inscribed on the back of the Kota. Klausmeyer had discovered the Art of Africa and Oceania in the early 1920s. While a large part of his collection is nowadays part of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne, he sold a small number of important objects late in his life. It was Alan Mann, another highly distinguished collector of African Art who acquired the Kota reliquary figure from Ralph Nash. For Mann next to the quality of an object, it was the age that he considered to be an important criterion, something that is apparent in this work of art.

In 1979 Ian Auld and Tom Philipps selected this Kota for their exhibition of African sculptures from private collections in London in which they presented the particular strengths of English collections. The next owner of this important Kota work was William McCarty-Cooper, who had also formed a major collection of African Art with a strong focus on the art of Gabon.





Kota reliquary figure, Gabon  
19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier  
Wood, copper, brass, bone, H. 43cm

**Collection History:**

Claus Klausmeyer (1887–1968), Düsseldorf  
Ralph Nash, London  
Alan Mann, London  
William McCarty-Cooper, New York  
Christie's New York, *Important Tribal Art and Antiquities from the collection of William A. McCarty-Cooper*, May 19, 1992, lot 136  
Private collection, UK

**Publication & Exhibition:**

Ian Auld & Tom Phillips, *African Sculpture from Private Collections in London*, South London Art Gallery, 1979, n° 153







The intense latmul mask was lent by the French artist Fernand Devèze – a close friend to André Derain who had built his collection of African and Oceanic art between 1920s and 1950 – to the *Première exposition rétrospective internationale des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie* in Cannes organized by Hélène Leloup and Henri Kamer in 1957; an important and seminal exhibition of African and Oceanic Art that mainly displayed artworks from the early French collections.

The mask – attached to a canoe shield, which protected the war-canoe from enemy spears – was a ritually very important object, as it gave magical protection to the occupants of the canoe during warfare. If the mask was to be hit by an arrow this was such a bad omen that immediate withdrawal was the only solution.

The artist that made this mask perfectly understood to bring form and color into one. The impressive long and pierced nose, the delicate shimmer of the shell eyes and the bulging forehead combined with the white, black and red pigments form a most captivating artwork.

Mask of the Canoe-Shield, latmul  
Middle Sepik region, New Guinea  
Wood, pigments, shell, H. 46cm

**Collection History:**

Collection Fernand Devèze (1895–1962)  
Aguttes, *Collection Devèze-Bergognon*, 23. April 2010, lot 94

**Exhibited:**

Kamer&Kamer, *Première exposition rétrospective internationale des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie*, Palais Miramar, Cannes, 1957, n° 318



For a long time part of the collection of the well-known French Egyptologist Jean Yoyotte and his wife Michèle Yoyotte, who had discovered the Art of Africa in the late 1950s, this Guro mask is a fascinating work of art. It is a mask that offers several fine details, such as the form of the triangle, which is so often and so differently used – starting by the with kaolin highlighted form in the coiffure, to the form of the beard and the form of the coiffure.

It was at Jean Roudillon's and Olivier le Corneur's gallery in Paris where the Yoyotte's had acquired this wonderful Guro mask.

Guro Mask, Ivory Coast  
Wood, pigments, old gallery label, H. 38cm

**Collection History:**

Galerie Le Corneur-Roudillon, Paris, inventory number: 1673  
Collection Jean and Michèle Yoyotte, Paris  
Rennes Encheres, *Arts Premiers*, June 11 2019, lot 60 (Expert Jean Roudillon)







In the area of the Huon Gulf mortars for betel nut are used by older people to crack the hard betel nut that is then mixed with lime to create a powdery substance. Further, those mortars are highly esteemed personal objects that are passed from one generation to the other and thus can be – as is this magnificent example – of considerable age.

Ernst Heinrich – a renowned German collector of Oceanic Art who was already active in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – indicated in his collection records the origin of this mortar as being from the Tami Island. Its complex, archaic and very vivid structure – I interpret it as a Janus praying mantis, both sides of completely different character – might also suggest its origin being from a more inland Papuan culture.

Janus Huon Gulf mortar for betel nut  
Morobe province, Papua New Guinea  
Wood, pigments, H. 15.5cm

**Collection History:**

Ernst Heinrich Collection, Bad Cannstadt, Stuttgart  
John and Marcia Friede Collection, Rye, New York

**Published:**

Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, *New Guinea Art – Masterpieces from the Jolika collection of Marcia and John Friede*, 2005, n°384



In the ritual world of the Kuba Kingdom, different types of masks played an important role. The *ngadi mwaash* is a female mask. Its face is adorned by a complex scheme of geometrical patterns, as well as by carefully attached shell and bead decorations. Under the eyes a set of white, black and yellow lines is symbolizing tears. This is because the mask was danced during funerary rites for a deceased member of the men's initiation society and explains the calm and severe presence of this magnificent and captivating work of art from the Kuba Kingdom.

Kuba *ngadi mwaash* mask, DRC  
Wood, fibres, beads, pigments, H. 27cm

Collection History:  
Private collection, France





The plastic volumes of this bird sculpture are in an incredible composition, where every balance and counter-balance is perfectly adjusted to each other. The continuous line of the legs ending in the tail, the rounded belly at whose center a bold belly bottom stands and the pointed face and wings all perfectly interact with each other. From the noted and early collection of Ernst Heinrich and acquired from his heirs by Loed van Bussel, the significant collection history reflects the quality of this artwork.

Bird figure, Northern Papua New Guinea  
Wood, Pigments, H. 24cm

**Collection History:**

Ernst Heinrich Collection, Bad Cannstadt, Stuttgart  
Loed van Bussel, Amsterdam  
Galerie Bruce Frank, New York







For a long time this Kota belonged to Maurice Nicaud. As a collector and a dealer he became among others well-known as a lender to Elsy Leuzingers seminal exhibition *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika* in Zürich in 1970 for which he contributed several important works of art.

Kota reliquary figures are among the most surprising and most iconic inventions of African Art. It is the distinctive combination of sculpted wood and applied copper and brass that makes these ritual sculptures unique. This Kota reliquary figure from the Nicaud collection is a very well-proportioned work of art. With the contrast of the reddish copper and the yellow brass, the concavity of the face and the convexity of the forehead and the long crescent that is balanced with the bold lozenge, the artist succeeded in creating a highly impressive artwork.

Kota reliquary figure, Gabon  
Wood, copper, brass, pigments, H. 56cm

**Collection History:**

Collection Maurice Nicaud, Paris  
Binoche et Giquello, *Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie*, 14. November 2019, lot 11





Senufo helmet mask, Ivory Coast  
Wood, pigments, H. 64cm

Collection History:  
Collection Emil Storrer, Zürich

Published:  
Till Förster u. Lorenz Homberger, *Die Kunst der Senufo – Museum Rietberg Zürich*, 1988, n°1



For a long time part of the private collection of Emil Storrer and published by the Museum Rietberg in Zürich during their important Senufo exhibition of 1988 this helmet mask can be set in relation – due to its artistic quality, its rarity and its collection history – with three other important Senufo works linked to Emil Storrer that are today part of the permanent collection of the Rietberg Museum. These are the famous *deble* sculpture, the *kagba* mask lastly shown in the *Ex-Africa* show in Bologna, whose characteristic vivid coloring is shared with this helmet mask and further with the acclaimed Buffalo ring, who shows a great closeness to the face of the animal that adorns the helmet mask.

The mask's origin was specified by Emil Storrer as from the central Senufo region. Therefore, it is the only characteristic Senufo mask of a type that is otherwise attributed as Toussian. Consistently this is further supported as it is the only known colorful work of that type – the red, white and blue pigments are characteristic of many early Senufo works. Another unique invention of its artist are the stylized birds that adorn the backside of animal and look in opposite directions. Embodied in a columnar way they are of an incredible poesy. The animal itself is most perfectly balanced, the inclination of the face and the subtle arrangements of the body and the legs give this highly important artwork of the Senufo its vivid stance.





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