



African & Oceanic Art  
from historic collections

galerie patrik fröhlich

*Illustrated on cover and on page 19*  
Sepik River Mask, PNG, 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Height: 51cm

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*Illustrated as frontispiece and on page 24*  
Baule simian *amuin* sculpture, Ivory Coast  
Wood, metal, cloth, pigments  
Height: 66cm


This catalogue is formed by a careful selection of 16 artworks from Africa, Oceania and the Northwest Coast of America. Coming from the collections of renowned, historic and prestigious collectors and dealers – among them Arthur Speyer from Berlin, Jef Vander-Straete from Belgium, André Breton/ Paul Éluard and Tristan Tzara from Paris and Max Kofler from Switzerland – these works of art have been enjoyed by some of the greatest individuals committed to the Art of African and Oceania. Each succeeded in building a very personal collection, where the pursuit of the highest quality was the shared element.

#### The Kofler-Erni Collection

The ten works of art from the collection of the Swiss chemist, Max Kofler, and his wife, Berthe Kofler-Erni, presented here have been in their collection for over 50 years. Based in Riehen near Basel in Switzerland, they built an outstanding collection of African and Oceanic Art beginning in the late 1950s. By the end of the 1960s, their collection was already formed and remained to large extent unchanged for the following decades. Based on their outstanding sense of quality and their good contacts with the established collectors, curators and dealers of their time, they succeeded in building one of the important tribal art collections in Switzerland. Readily lending their artworks to exhibitions – among them Elsy Leuzinger's *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika* held in the Kunsthaus Zürich in 1970 – they were further very active and committed to promoting the Art of Africa and Oceania.

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Guro Mask "gu" attributed to the Bron-Guro Master  
Ivory Coast  
Wood, pigments  
H. 29cm

Provenance:  
Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Publication:  
Eberhard Fischer & Lorenz Homberger: *Die Kunst der Guro, Elfenbeinküste*,  
Zürich, 1985, n° 19, p. 96

Eberhard Fischer: *Guro: Masks, Performances and Master Carvers in Ivory Coast*,  
*Early Guro Masters*, Zürich, 2008, p. 339

Exhibition:  
Elsy Leuzinger, Kunsthau Zürich, *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*, Zürich, 1971, G 66



## The Kofler-Erni Guro Mask

Rarely in African Art has the oeuvre of a master carver been scholarly defined as is the case with this important work of Guro art; a stunning and spectacular *gu* mask attributed to the Bron-Guro Master – which was for over 50 years part of the renowned Kofler-Erni collection, and during this time included in several influential publications and exhibitions.

## The Bron-Guro Master

The corpus of the works of art attributed to the Bron-Guro Master was defined in 2008 by Dr. Eberhard Fischer, formerly director of the Rietberg Museum in Zürich and specialist in the art of the Dan and the Guro peoples. He named this early Guro master after a subgroup of the Guro – the Bron – who live in the southern Guro region and emphasized the link between the Bron-Guro Master and the Buafilé Master. The rather small corpus he defined includes the mask from the Kofler-Erni collection, a double-mask surmounted by a figure formerly in the collection of Myron Kunin, as well as another mask in the collection of Marceau Rivière and a mask now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Further included in the corpus by Eberhard Fischer are a female figure and a heddle pulley.

## The Mask's History

This important mask, dating to the first quarter of the 20th century, was for over five decades part of the Kofler-Erni collection. It was part of Elsy Leuzingers historic exhibition in the Kunsthaus Zürich in 1970, as well as of the seminal Guro exhibition at the Museum Rietberg Zürich in 1985 curated by Lorenz Homberger and Eberhard Fischer. Its most recent publication was in 2008 in the book, *Guro: Masks, Performances and Master Carvers in Ivory Coast* in which Eberhard Fischer defined the corpus of the Bron-Guro Master.

Thus, included in a well-defined corpus and for a very long time part of one of Switzerland's most accomplished collections of African and Oceanic Art, this Guro mask, characterized by expressive and voluminous forms, is a work of art of great rarity and highest artistic quality.

## The Mask

The high quality of the Kofler-Erni Mask shows itself in every detail. As is characteristic for the style of the Bron-Guro Master, the mask has one plait to its proper left side, a dark reddish-brownish patina and a jagged beard with a hole right under the mouth. The latter was used to attach a fiber beard during its ritual usage, a detail that several masks from the Southern Guro region possess. Interestingly, the Kofler-Erni Mask has no eyebrows, which is akin to the mask formerly in the collection of Myron Kunin. Eberhard Fischer suggested that this could reflect the fact that certain Guro women plucked their eyebrows as a sign of beauty.

Of protruding volumes, careful balances and a highly precise use of geometrical lines, this Guro sculptor of great sensibility was able to create a work of art of startling beauty and elaborate harmony. With the voluminous forehead and the perfectly crafted mouth, both balanced by the one-sided coiffure, this long-used mask demands to be seen from every angle.

Belonging to the powerful *komo* society, Bamana staffs with a female figure on top – called *femme en fer* in French – are rare and were considered very powerful objects. To incorporate astonishingly fine details into a sculpture made of iron – as it is the case with this work of art – one had to be a skilled blacksmith and an artist of great sensibility. The female figure on top of this staff that was first published in 1968 is of intense beauty with the characteristic Bamana coiffure and scarifications marks on the body that are still visible under the thick patina.

Bamana ritual staff

Mali

Iron, pigments

H. 82cm

Provenance:

Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Published:

René Wassing, *African Art*, 1968, p. 251

Exhibited:

Elsy Leuzinger, Kunsthau Zürich, *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*, Zürich, 1971, B 44





As a prototype that inspired several objects of the same type that came afterwards, this Bamana ointment jar is of great significance. Published from different viewpoints in Elsy Leuzinger's book, *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*, and for over five decades' part of the renowned collection of Max and Berthe Kofler-Erni, it has the pristine presence of an artwork whose purpose was unconditionally fulfilling its ritual functions.

The woman that surmounts the ointment jar is of impressive posture. She is facing forward, with even her palms turned in this manner. Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that there is movement taking place. Starting in the hands, this continues with the slightly forward-turned neck and concludes in the beautiful coiffure, which balances the posture of the woman. The jar itself, with the sweating patina from the ointment that was once placed in it, is of a perfectly round shape, beautifully adorned by a geometrical design.

Bamana ointment jar

Mali

Wood, pigments, oily patina

H. 46cm

Provenance:

Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Published:

René Wassing, *African Art*, 1968, p. 261

Elsy Leuzinger, *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*, Kunsthaus Zürich, 1970, B 13 (in hardcover p. 50; in softcover p. 46; the ointment jar is published in both editions, however the pictures used are different)

Elsy Leuzinger, *Art de l'Afrique Noire*, Société Française du Livre, 1979, p. 134 (exhibition photo from the Kunsthaus Zürich exhibition in 1970)



The representation of a beautiful woman of high social status – as is visible from the scarification marks that adorn her body – is the elemental concept of Luba caryatid stools. Thereby metaphorically supporting the chief during the royal investiture rites, the underlying religious and political symbolism made these caryatid stools to most important emblems of the chiefs' kingship.

What characterizes this Luba caryatid stool is its nervous expressivity. The striking face – perfectly balanced with the coiffure – has an intense and imposing presence. The scarifications marks beautifully adorn the torso and the hands, holding the seat, fully enhance the underlying symbolism, as the woman and the stool there become one and the same.

Luba royal throne  
DRC  
Wood, black patina  
H. 34cm

Provenance:  
Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Publication:  
La Chaux-de-Fonds, *Afrique Noire – Sculptures des Collections Privées Suisses*, 1971, n°23



Lower Sepik river masks that combine materiality with sculptural elements are always intriguing. The consolidation of vividly sculpted form and the pure, encrusted natural substance results in a dense and intensive work of art, pristine and yet of stunning modernity. A famous mask of this type, published in in William Rubin's seminal publication, "*Primitivism*" in 20th century art, and set by him in context with a painting by Jean Dubuffet (*ibid.* p. 636), serves as a perfect illustration of that.

When researching the lower Sepik river mask from the Bellier sale of 1932, it was by mere chance that we discovered in the Frobenius Archive in Frankfurt long-forgotten records of this mask that came from the legendary collector and dealer, Arthur Speyer, who was once in possession of this highly alluring and captivating Sepik river mask.



KBA 10963/ KBA 11017 © Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt

#### Sepik River Mask

PNG

Wood, thick, encrusted patina human hair, fibers

19<sup>th</sup> century

H. 39cm

Provenance:

Arthur Speyer II, Berlin

Publication:

KBA 10963 and KBA 11017 in the Frobenius Archive Frankfurt, Germany



Sepik River Mask  
PNG  
Wood, pigments, fibers  
19<sup>th</sup> century  
H. 51cm

Provenance:  
Bellier, Paris, *Sculptures Anciennes d'Afrique, d'Amérique et d'Océanie*,  
22 June 1932, lot 37, plate 8



#### ← An Important Lower Sepik River Mask

This pristine 19<sup>th</sup> century lower Sepik river mask of compelling volumes, well-balanced asymmetries and with – as is exceedingly rare – a marvelous totemic animal capturing its whole upper part is a captivating work of art that can be traced back to as early as 1932 when it was part of a historic auction in Paris.

#### The 1932 Bellier Sale

In the early days of tribal art in Paris – in June 1932 – Bellier held a sale with the title, *Sculptures Anciennes d'Afrique, d'Amérique et d'Océanie*. The sale and its accompanying catalogue were rather small, especially when compared to the *Collection André Breton et Paul Éluard – Sculptures d'Afrique, d'Amérique et d'Océanie* auction that was conducted by Bellier a year earlier. However, in terms of quality, it was an outstanding sale that included several artworks fated to become historic thereafter. Among them were the Baule mask sold by Madame Breton that was acquired by Pablo Picasso and subsequently belonged to Jan Krugier and the famous Wè mask that is now part of the collection of the Oberlin College in Ohio, which came from Camille Bondy. As for the Éluard-Breton sale, it was Charles Ratton and Louis Carré who served as experts.

Part of this significant sale was also this lower Sepik River mask, illustrated on plate 8 of the catalogue. Dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is a complex and self-contained mask made at a time when the cultural understanding of the artist was untainted and the mask had to unconditionally fulfill its socio-religious role.

#### The Mask

Masks that originate from the lower Sepik River region and are of considerable size depict supernatural spirit-beings and were danced during ceremonial rites. Throughout those ritual dances, the wearer of the mask embodied the mythical ancestor. As a consequence of this important function, the mask itself had to meet the highest aesthetical requirements.

What characterizes this mask and is responsible for its exceptional standing in the corpus of lower Sepik river masks is the presence of a totemic animal on its forehead. With its hands that functions at the same time as the ears of the mask, this totemic animal – a fruit bat – takes up the full upper part of the mask in a dynamic pose, almost as if the fruit bat is holding the mask. The spiral-shaped nose, an allusion to the totemic bird of the clan – characteristic for the lower Sepik region, as is the perforation of the alar wing – can further be understood as functioning as the body of the fruit bat, which would thus be shown in its sleeping pose.

A similar mask – however, without the totemic fruit bait – that has a certain connection to this mask and was once in the collection of Albert Loeb, exists (Loudmer, Paris, *Arts Primitive*, 3. December 1977, lot 34). As this mask is having the same elongated overall form, protruding mouth and spiral-shaped nose, there is the possible assumption that such masks might have once been danced in pairs.

#### Kwakiutl totemic emblem →

When referring to Paul Éluard and his close friend, André Breton, and their impact on the promotion of the arts of Oceania and America, as well as their vital part played in the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century art, nothing further must be said. When they were in a difficult monetary situation at the beginning of the 1930s and needed to sell their joint collection of the arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, it was Charles Ratton and Louis Carré who organized the sale at Bellier in Paris. Part of this early and now regarded as legendary sale was this Kwakiutl totemic emblem representing a mythical killer whale, a fascinating work of art from the Northwest Coast of America that connects movement, compelling volumes and great sculptural quality.



Kwakiutl totemic emblem  
Northwest Coast, British Columbia, Canada  
Wood, red and black pigments  
19<sup>th</sup> century  
L. 50cm  
Provenance:  
Collection of Paul Éluard/ André Breton, Paris, before 1931  
Mathias Komor, New York  
Publication:  
Bellier, Paris, *Collection André Breton et Paul Éluard –  
Sculptures d'Afrique, d'Amérique et d'Océanie*, 2 July 1931  
lot 219, plate 21



Baule simian *amuin* sculpture  
Ivory Coast  
Wood, metal, cloth, pigments  
H. 66cm

Provenance:  
Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Publication:  
René Wassing, *African Art*, 1968, p. 196

Lorenz Homberger, Verkehrshaus Luzern, *Mensch. Mythos. Maske. Kunstwerke aus Afrika, Ozeanien, Mittel- und Südamerika*, Cover, n° 26

## An Important Baule *amuin* Sculpture from the Kofler-Erni Collection

This Baule sculpture, as the physical representation of a supernatural spirit-being with both simian and anthropomorphic attributes, is an intense and very elaborate artwork that was first published in 1968 in René Wassing's *African Art* and chosen twenty years later by Max Kofler as the cover and poster for the exhibition of his collection in Luzern, Switzerland.

### Baule Simian Sculpture

Within Baule art, which was based on a complex religious belief system, sculptures hosting a mighty spirit played an important role. Such sculptures, be it *asié usu* figures or as is the case for this example, statues of standing monkeys – in the older literature called *gbekre* – were considered most powerful objects and hence needed to be venerated by a Baule priest. Only the most experienced carvers could create them, always outside of the village. Therefore, the sculpture itself became disassociated from its carver.

Characteristic of Baule simian sculpture is the combination of animalistic and anthropomorphic traits. Whereas the face, the hands and the protrusions on its buttocks – the latter in this case hidden under cloth – are true to the nature of the baboon, the standing position while holding a cup is more human-like. When ritually used, offerings were placed in these cups, as well as over the whole figure, resulting in the distinctive encrusted patina.

### The Kofler-Erni Sculpture and its Placement Within the Corpus

The Kofler-Erni Baule sculpture is a superb example of this style, carved by a great Baule sculptor and – as can be seen from the patina – of long ritual usage. The mouth of the monkey is perfectly sculpted with detailed teeth and a visible tongue. As the entire body is slightly turned, movement is created, which gives the simian sculpture its vibrancy. Other particularities of this Baule monkey are the dualistic cup as well as its ears, which are not fully round but in the form of a "C" and of double borders. As such, the Kofler-Erni Baule cup-bearer can be set in context with the known sculptures by the *Maître de la Double Auricule*<sup>1</sup> – defined by Bruno Claessens in his monograph on Baule monkeys. This especially since it's not only the ears that are reminders of that style, but also the protrusions on the buttocks, the presence of nostrils, the hachured eyebrows and the protuberant eyes, among other elements.

Whether one considers these similarities an indication of one artist or rather as one stylistic region or school is difficult to determine and does not matter much. Unquestionably, there is a certain connection between the works, suggesting a form of interaction, one way or another. The Kofler-Erni Baule cup-bearer is at any rate a splendid work of art that stands out from the genre of *amuin* figures because of its sculptural quality and reveals the pristine work of a great Baule sculptor.

<sup>1</sup> The most well-known example of that style is the simian figure from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (1978.412.468)



This Kota reliquary belonged to Tristan Tzara, the poet, essayist and founding member of Dadaism, whose outstanding collection of African and Oceanic art was sold 25 years after his death in 1988 in Paris. Reduced by time to its core, this reliquary of astonishing thickness is a very old, pristine work of art from the Kota people. It is simple to understand why Tzara was drawn to it, as it is an intense work of art of the highest formal quality, very elaborately sculpted and of a presence only few Kota reliquary figures possess.

**Kota reliquary figure**

Gabon

Wood, copper, brass, pigments, ivory

19<sup>th</sup> century

H. 24cm

**Provenance:**

Tristan Tzara, Paris

**Publication:**

Loudmer: *Arts Primitifs-Collection Tristan Tzara et à divers amateurs*, 24. November 1988, Lot 190

**Exhibition:**

Cannes, *Première exposition rétrospective internationale des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie*, 1957, n° 201







Solomon Island bowl, *apira ni mwane, rapo*  
Star Harbor, San Cristobal  
Wood, thick patina, mother of pearl inlay  
End of 19<sup>th</sup> century  
L. 62cm

Provenance:  
Collected during the "*La Korrigane*" expedition in 1935  
Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Publication:  
Maurice Leenhardt, *Arts de l'Océanie*, 1947, p. 48

← Solomon Island bowl

On the Solomon Islands, more precisely on Makira Island – today known as San Cristobal – ritual bowls that evoke the form of a frigate bird holding in its beak a dolphin were used by men for personal sacrifices to their ancestral spirits. With the bowl itself forming the body of the frigate bird, the repetition of the dolphin on both sides and the thick black patina that is set in contrast to the fine shimmer of the inlays, this *rapo* bowl is a magnificent and well-documented work of art. The artist that created it succeeded in setting every single line most precisely, thereby giving this ritual object its high aesthetic quality.

Dating to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and collected between June 28<sup>th</sup> and August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1935 by the “*La Korrigane*” expedition, this *rapo* bowl was for more than 20 years in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris and for more than 50 years part of the collection of Max and Berthe Kofler-Erni. Published in 1947 in Maurice Leenhardt's early publication, *Arts de l'Océanie*, that outlined the different art styles throughout Oceania, it was selected by him from the inventory of the Musée de l'Homme as representative of this art style from the Solomon Islands.

Guro Monkey Mask →

Of remarkably heavy wood, protruding volumes and highly accurate set lines, this Guro mask is an intense representation of the head of a monkey. With the noticeable age of the mask and its rarity – as simian face masks from the Ivory Coast are remarkably scarce – it is a pristine work of art, truly remarkable in its sculptural quality.

Well-documented, the mask was part of Elsy Leuzinger's exhibition in the Kunsthaus Zürich in 1970 and further included by Eberhard Fischer and Lorenz Homberger in their seminal publication about Guro art in 1985. At that time, as well, this intriguing mask was part of the correspondent exhibition at the Rietberg Museum in Zürich.

Guro mask of a monkey

Ivory Coast

Wood, pigments

H. 24cm

Provenance:

Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Publication:

Eberhard Fischer & Lorenz Homberger: *Die Kunst der Guro, Elfenbeinküste*, Museum Rietberg, Zürich, 1985, n°108

Exhibition:

Elsy Leuzinger, Kunsthaus Zürich, *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*, Zürich, 1971, G 61



This *kpelie* double face mask is a highly appealing work of art, very elaborate in every facet. Such double face masks – much rarer than single face masks – are according to Robert Goldwater said to represent the male and female principles of the universe. Hence, based on a concept of duality that was very integral to the belief system of the Senufo, the sculptor of this mask choose to connect both faces with each other by placing the characteristic Senufo bird above them in such a way that its long beak is set exactly in the middle of them. With both faces well-balanced with one another and of subtle expression, the fine sculptural quality of this Senufo mask is remarkable.

Senufo *kpelie* double face mask

Ivory Coast

Wood, pigments

H. 28cm

Provenance:

Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Exhibited:

Lorenz Homberger, Verkehrshaus Luzern, *Mensch. Mythos. Maske. Kunstwerke aus Afrika, Ozeanien, Mittel- und Südamerika*, n°22



This is a beautiful female Pende *mbuya* mask, perfectly carved and exact in every detail. With the filigree coiffure still in perfect condition, the face adorned by fine scarification marks and the protruding mouth with each tooth individually carved, it is a work of art from the Congo that is harmonious in every single regard and of great expressivity. So, it is of no surprise that Elsy Leuzinger chose this mask for her final exhibition held in the Kunsthaus Zürich in 1970 and published it in the accompanying catalogue.

Pende *mbuya* mask

DRC

Wood, pigments, fiber

H. 30cm

Provenance:

Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Publication:

Elsy Leuzinger, *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*, Kunsthaus Zürich, 1971, T16



Rare figure for sacred flute

Biwat or Kambot peoples

Keram / Yuat River region

PNG

Fernwood, Nassa and Conus shells, human hair, pigments, boar tusk, feathers

Height: 30cm

Provenance:

André Fourquet, Paris

John and Marcia Friede, Rye, New York

Published:

*"Beauty will live, not solely in dreams"*, Tribal Art Magazine, Spring/Summer 2004, p. 120

*New Guinea Art – Masterpieces from the Jolika Collection of Marcia and John Friede*, p. 58  
and Fig. 124



## A Masterpiece from the Keram–Yuat River Region

In between the Keram River and the Yuat River, where the Kambot and the Biwat people live, an outstanding artist created this ornament for a sacred flute, which embodies the spirit of a mighty ancestor and is an artwork of universal quality.

### The Flute Ornament Between the Keram and the Yuat River

The sacred flute together with its ornament is – both ritually and artistically – one of the most important creations of the Kambot and Biwat people. Used during the initiations rites of young men, the sacred flute and the ornament that belonged to it were of utmost social, ceremonial and religious significance. The way the ornament for the flute was created, differed between the Keram and the Yuat River. In the Keram River area, the spirit-being was represented by a mask made from clay encrusted with shells, seeds, boar tusks and other found materials. In the Yuat River region, where the Biwat people were based, the spirit-being was represented by a wooden *wusear* figure, which was stuck in the upper end of the flute. What was equivalent for both regions is the ritual connotation of the flute ornament, which was a self-contained spirit-being, embodying a mighty ancestor whose voice was thought to be produced by the flute. Therefore, whereas the ornament for the flute was the actual spirit-being, the flute – or rather the sound produced by it – was its speech.

### The Fourquet–Friede Flute Ornament

As an artistic decision that succeeded in combining influences from the Keram and the Yuat River regions, namely the materiality found in objects originating from the Kambot people and the sculptural presence found in the Yuat River region, this artwork is a highly beautiful and also very rare object. Made from Fernwood, Nassa and Conus shells and red, black and white pigments, Philippe Peltier set it in context with the surrealist collages from Max Ernst. This certainly very interesting analogy was made by him in an introductory chapter to John Friede's seminal publication, whereas Peltier described the discovery of Oceanic art by the Parisian avant-garde, such as Paul Éluard, André Breton or Guillaume Apollinaire. Characterizing this flute ornament as the exact counterpart to the pictorial revolution that Max Ernst initiated in the early 1920s with his collages, Peltier referred to the aspect of this sacred object as a sculptural assemblage of found materials.

Thus, the importance of this New Guinean artwork is two-fold. On one hand, it is the embodiment of an ancestral spirit, a ritual object that held the greatest significance for the people that created it. This religious connotation was the foundation necessary for its existence. On the other hand, it is a work of art, surprisingly close to particular facets of 20<sup>th</sup> century art and thereby universal in its appeal. Hence, that distinguished collectors such as André Fourquet and John Friede enjoyed this artwork is of no surprise.



Jef Vander Straete – a truly outstanding collector of tribal art – was a major contributor to the *Art d'Afrique dans les Collections Belges* exhibition at the Tervuren Museum in 1963. Among the objects loaned by him was this *edan* staff, which served as insignia of office in the Ogboni society. This secret society was one of the most important institutions of the Yoruba, holding judicial power. What distinguishes this elegant example is its truly exquisite sculptural quality, as well as its rare form, representing two kneeling personages placed above each other, both outstandingly sculpted with every single detail of stunning accuracy.

Yoruba-Ijebu *edan*, *ikoekoe oro*

Nigeria

Metal, pigments

H. 37cm

Provenance:

Jef Vander Straete, Lasne, Belgium

Kofler-Erni, Riehen, Basel, Switzerland

Published:

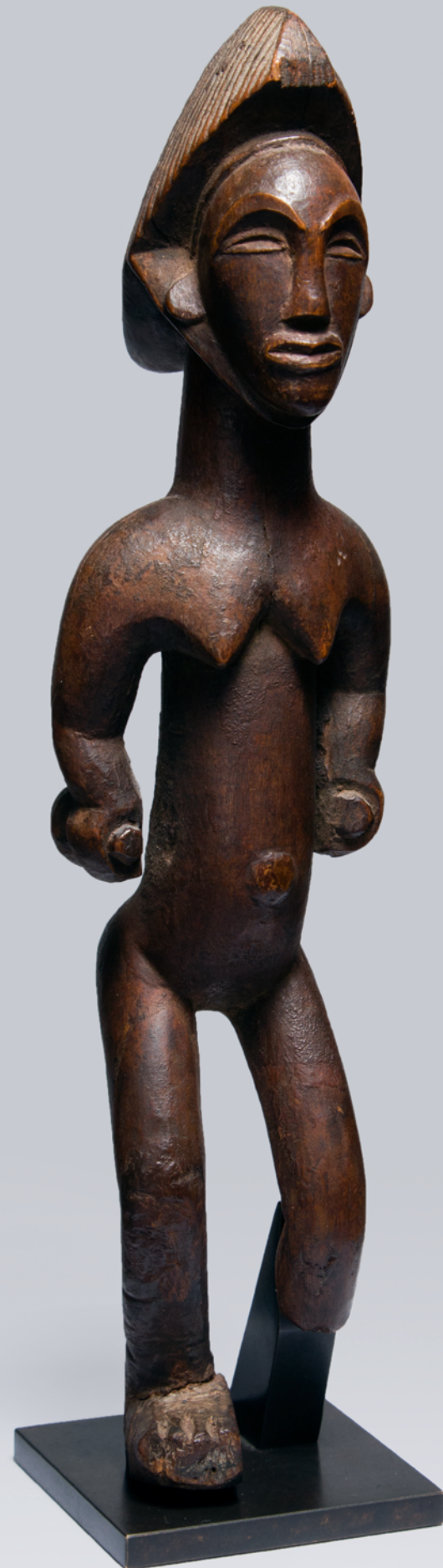
Lorenz Homberger, Verkehrshaus Luzern, *Mensch. Mythos. Maske. Kunstwerke aus Afrika, Ozeanien, Mittel- und Südamerika*, n°32, p. 11

Exhibition:

Albert Maesen and Van Geluwe, *Art d'Afrique dans les Collections Belges*,

Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale Tervuren, 29 Juin au 30 Octobre 1963, n°699





Punu-Lumbu sculpture is rare and not as well-known as the white masks of the *okuyi* dance. Predominantly representing a standing female figure whose facial features and coiffure calls to mind the formal solutions found within the masks, these sculptures provided aid to their owners in difficult situations. Holding in both hands a calabash – symbolizing a gesture of offering to honor ancestors – the balanced movement that is inherent in this sculpture, as well as its delicate composition, constitute the puissance of this impressive artwork from Gabon.

Punu-Lumbu figure  
Gabon  
Wood, pigments  
H. 26.5cm



## Selected Biography

Bellier, Paris, *Collection André Breton et Paul Éluard – Sculptures d'Afrique, d'Amérique et d'Océanie*, 2 July 1931

Bellier, Paris, *Sculptures Anciennes d'Afrique d'Amérique et d'Océanie*, 22 June 1932

Cannes, *Première exposition rétrospective internationale des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie*, 1957

La Chaux-de-Fonds, *Afrique Noire – Sculptures des Collections Privées Suisses*, 1971

Christian Coiffier, *Le voyage de La Korrigane dans les mers du Sud*, 2001

Bruno Claessens & Jean-Louis Danis, *Singes Baule*, 2016

Charlotte Grand-Dufay, *Les Lumbu: Un art sacré*, 2016

Marc Leo Felix, *Masks in Congo*, 2016

Eberhard Fischer & Lorenz Homberger: *Die Kunst der Guro, Elfenbeinküste*, 1985

Eberhard Fischer: *Guro: Masks, Performances and Master Carvers in Ivory Coast*, 2008

John Friede, *New Guinea Art – Masterpieces from the Jolika Collection*, 2005

Robert Goldwater, *Senufo sculpture from West Africa*, 1964

Lorenz Homberger, Verkehrshaus Luzern, *Mensch. Mythos. Maske. Kunstwerke aus Afrika, Ozeanien, Mittel- und Südamerika*, 1988

Jacques Kerchache & Jean Louis Paudrat & Lucien Stephan, *Art of Africa*, 1993

Maurice Leenhardt, *Arts de l'Océanie*, 1947

Elsy Leuzinger, *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*, Kunsthaus Zürich, 1971

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Albert Maesen and Van Geluwe, *Art d'Afrique dans les collections Belges*, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale Tervuren, 1963

William Rubin, «Primitivism» in *20th Century Art, Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, 1985

L. de Sousberghe, *L'Art Pende*, 1959

René Wassing, *African Art*, 1968

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