

Early Sculpture from
Africa and Oceania



galerie patrik fröhlich

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In search for great art

Homage to the collectors, dealers and researchers who discovered and preserved these sculptures

Hélène Leloup

Ernst Winizki

Elsy Leuzinger

Serge Brignoni

Daniel Cordier

Paul Wirz

Douglas Newton

Eugène Dodeigne

Philippe Guimiot

Mathias Komor

John Friede

Pierre Harter

Helena Rubinstein

André Level

Harry Franklin

Jacques Kerchache

J.J. Klejman

Henri Trilles

Vicente Huidobro

Dr. George Harley

Martin and Faith-Dorian Wright

After the discovery of the art of the Mumuye in the late 1960s, Elsy Leuzinger presented as early as 1970 several highly important Mumuye artworks during her historic exhibition *Die Kunst aus Schwarz-Afrika*, which took place in the Kunsthaus Zürich. Among those was this well-known mask, lent by Hélène Leloup.

Two years later Ernst Winizki selected it for his book, making it to one of the earliest published examples of its type. Offering many fine details – whose intrinsic meaning remains secret – such as the pattern in the coiffure, it is an impressive work of art part of a small corpus of old comparable masks.

Mumuye Mask, Nigeria
Wood, red pigments, kaolin, H. 36cm

Collection History:

Hélène Leloup, Paris, End of the 1960s–1993
Important private collection, USA, collection number: AA 222

Publications:

Ernst Winizki, *Gesichter Afrikas*, 1972, p. 86
Jean-Baptiste Bacquart, *L'art tribal d'Afrique Noire*, 1998, p. 97

Exhibition:

Elsy Leuzinger, *Die Kunst aus Schwarz-Afrika*, Kunsthaus Zürich, 1970, N38



A prototype

With regards to its sculptural finesse and quality, its age and its ritual usage, as well as its collection history, this Mumuye mask that was for several decades part of the collection of H el ene Leloup before it was acquired by an important American private collection in the early 1990s, belongs to a very small and limited corpus of prototype masks.

Next to this one the corpus includes the one formerly in the collection of Jacques Kerchache (illustrated in Kerchache et al, *Art Africain*, Citadelles & Mazenod, n o 126), who was just like H el ene Leloup a pioneer and highly influential dealer in African Art with a key role in the discovery of the art of the Benue river valley.



Between the Bamu and the Turama River in the western part of the Papuan Gulf where an influence of the Kerewa – neighbors to the east – is already noticeable, sculptures such as this example were – as was described by Paul Wirz – tied to the middle post of the men's house during rites often associated with the *moguru* initiation ceremonies. The dynamic of this sculpture whose reduced, armless form is characteristic for its stylistic region, is based on the subtly balanced arrangement of the two faces and the vigor of the torso. Further, the red and the white pigments stand out from the darker tone of the hard wood, adding to the vibrancy of this work of art.

Ceremonial Sculpture, Bamu or Turama River Region
Gulf of Papua
Wood, pigments, kaolin, H. 143cm

Collection History:

Collection Serge Brignoni, Switzerland
Collection Daniel Cordier, Paris

Documentation:

Studio-Photograph in the Serge Brignoni
photo documentation





Serge Brignoni and the Art of the Papuan Gulf

An emphasis of Serge Brignoni's collection was the Art of the Gulf of Papua, which he discovered early thanks to his contact with Paul Wirz. The here for the first time published studio photo – showing this sculpture that later belonged to Daniel Cordier – is part of the Serge Brignoni archive that documents some of his important collection. Together with the *gope* spirit board from the Era River shown on the following pages, both works demonstrate Brignoni's early and deep interest in the art from the Papuan Gulf where he looked for works of exceptional quality and rarity.



Visible in an archive photograph of Serge Brignoni's collection where it can be seen next to several other important works and marked in his personal copy of Paul Wirz' publication, this *gope* spirit board of considerable size – combining age, history and quality – is an outstanding, exceptional example of the art style from the middle of the Papuan Gulf that was formed in the triangle between Urama Island, the Wapo Creek and the Era-River, combining the precision of the relief carving with the usage of an ochre pigment for the background; a rare choice, limited to this region.





In 1934 the publication of Paul Wirz' monograph *Beiträge zur Ethnographie des Papua-Golfes, Britisch-Neuguinea* initiated the constitution of the corpus of the art of the Papuan Gulf, a task that was subsequently pursued by Douglas Newton with his seminal exhibition *Art Styles of the Papuan Gulf* in the Museum of Primitive Art in New York in 1961, accompanied by a catalogue that became a standard work.

This exceptional *gope* spirit board from the Era-River region is part of both publications and was acquired from Paul Wirz by Serge Brignoni – one of the world's most renowned private collectors of Oceanic Art.

Gope Spirit Board, Era River, Gulf of Papua
Wood, kaolin, black and ochre pigments, old label
H. 152.5cm

Collection History:

Paul Wirz, Basel, acquired *in situ* in 1930
Collection Serge Brignoni, Switzerland
Private collection, USA

Publications:

Paul Wirz, *Beiträge zur Ethnographie des Papua-Golfes, Britisch-Neuguinea*, 1934, plate XXI, n° 16
Douglas Newton, *Art Styles of the Papuan Gulf*, The Museum of Primitive Art, New York, 1961, fig. 181

Exhibition:

The Museum of Primitive Art, *Art Styles of the Papuan Gulf*, 1961

With its imposing posture and its fine details this female figure is a significant work of Tsonga sculpture, belonging to one of the rarest sculptural traditions of African art.

It may be for this reason that the avant-garde at the beginning of the 20th century could not find its inspiration in South African sculpture – of the same relevance as Luba or Fang statuary, it was much lesser known. This allows even today to discover a surprisingly unknown concept of sculpture.

Tsonga Sculpture

The initiation institutions of the Tsonga used wooden sculptures in pairs to offer didactic support for the teaching of moral values and were further an insignia of status. Being separated from its male partner, this sculpture belongs to a small group of related works made in the second half of the 19th century of which only a few remain known today¹ that share a set of characteristics: other than the technique of the adze work whose small cuts are visible – which is distinctive for Tsonga sculpture – these include among others their size of around 50cm, the treatment of the ears with the indication of the ear hole, the oval mouth showing the teeth and the pale, natural color of the wood.

¹ A pair in the collection of the Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac is published in *ubuntu Art et cultures d'Afrique du Sud*; a male figure was part of the collection of William McCarty-Cooper.

Female Tsonga Figure, South Africa
19th century
Wood, pigments, H. 53cm

Collection History:
Private collection, USA
Private collection, New York





An iconic photograph

The name of Henri Trilles is deeply linked with the art of Gabon. Living among the Fang from 1893 to 1907 and able to acquire important sculptures, such as the famous, sweating Fang head that is in the collection of the Musée d'Ethnographie in Neuchâtel he further made in the early 1890s this significant *in situ* photograph. Showing the costumed dancer wearing this very mask together with two of his attendants it is a picture that allows a rare glimpse on the appearance of a masked dancer embodying a spirit-being in 19th century Gabon.

An engraving made after this photograph was published in 1895 in volume 67 of the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi* described as *Masque de l'Oukuwé* and in 1903 the Musée d'Ethnographie in Neuchâtel acquired the original photograph from Henri Trilles described as *Ngil, féticheur de second rang* shown on the opposite page. Since the 1980s this picture has become more and more published in publications by authors such as William Fagg, Louis Perrois or Werner Schmalenbach.

Part of the avant-garde – Vicente Huidobro

Born into a wealthy Chilean family and known as the creator of the literary movement *creacionismo* the poet Vicente Huidobro (1893-1948) was further an early and important collector of African Art. Between 1916 and 1925 he was based in Paris where he was an active part of the avant-garde. Close to Guillaume Apollinaire, Pablo Picasso, Paul Eluard and Tristan Tzara, he collected in the environment of early discovery.

Before 1920 he had acquired the Fang head that became known as "*The Great Bieri*" which he sold in 1925 to Paul Guillaume and is today part of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Another highlight from his collection – sold in 1993 by the heirs – is this Galoa *okukwe* mask. If Vicente Huidobro was aware of the iconic *in situ* photograph remains unknown.

Photographed *in situ* before 1895 in what became one of the most iconic pictures of African art, this *okukwe* mask made by an artist of the Galoa in the mid-19th century is the earliest and most well documented example of a small, very limited corpus of Galoa works of art. In pristine condition and of sculptural quality only an important artist at a time when the underling rituals were intact and undisturbed could create, it is an icon of African Art and an archetype of Galoa sculpture.

Galoa *okukwe* Mask, Gabon
19th century
Wood, white and black pigments, raffia, H. 27cm

Collection History:

Photographed by Henri Trilles *in situ* before 1895
Vicente Huidobro, Paris
Guy Loudmer, *Arts Primitifs*, 8. and 10. December 1990, Paris, lot 248
Private collection, Paris

Publications:

Annales de la Propagation de la Foi, Missions d'Afrique: Vicariat apostolique du Gabon.
Lettre du R.P. Monnier, Vol. 67, S. 443, 1895
(drawing after the picture of Henri Trilles)
Henri Trilles, *Ngil, féticheur de second rang*, Musée d'Ethnographie Neuchâtel, P1903.1.1.
Karl-Ferdinand-Schädler, *Encyclopedia of African Art and Culture*, 2009, p. 243

Further publications of the *in situ* Photograph:

William Fagg, *Masques d'Afrique, dans les collections du Musée Barbier-Mueller*, 1980, p. 110
Louis Perrois, *Art Ancestral du Gabon*, 1986, p. 98
Werner Schmalenbach, *African Art. The Barbier-Mueller Collection*, 1988, p. 218
Francine Ndiaye, *Secrets D'Inities – Masques D'Afrique Noire Dans Les Collections Du Musée de l'Homme*, 1994, p. 112
Louis Perrois, *L'Esprit de la Forêt – Terres du Gabon*, 1997, p. 91
Louis Perrois, *Fang – Visions d'Afrique*, 2006, Frontispiece
Nicolas Rolland, *Afrique à l'ombre des dieux*, Paris, 2017, p. 71



This Makonde *n'dimu* mask entered the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, Germany before 1906 and was subsequently acquired by Martin and Faith-Dorian Wright – in whose renowned collection the mask stayed for several decades – from legendary New York dealer J.J. Klejman. Danced at the end of the initiation ceremonies, this mask is the embodiment of a mighty female ancestor and offers a set of alluring signs of beauty, such as the striking lip plug and the delicate scarification marks that are made from beeswax – an attribute only found on the oldest examples of Makonde masks.

Makonde Mask, Tanzania
19th century
Wood, pigments, beeswax, inscriptions, H. 20cm

Collection History:
Linden-Museum, Stuttgart, before 1906
J.J. Klejman Gallery, New York
Collection Martin and Faith-Dorian Wright, New York



This female *bulul* sculpture made by an artist of the Ifugao in northern Luzon with its rich, multilayered sacrificial patina that indicates great age is a marvelous example of its style. Every single line – such as the hearth-shaped form that builds the face or the negative space between the arms – is of uttermost precision. The legendary dealer J.J. Klejman acquired it in 1978 from a Loudmer-Poulain auction in Paris for which Charles Ratton and André Schoeller served as experts and subsequently sold it to an important collection of extra-European art in New York of which it was part for several decades.

bulul

A *bulul* embodies an ancestor and protects the rice harvest. As an art form the renouncement from every decorative element together with the minimalistic reduction to the necessary led to a group of works whose significance is based on their calm, captivating presence. In the 1960s and 1970s – with the gradual abandonment of the old customs in Luzon – *bulul* sculptures became more accessible and known and quickly sought after as examples of an important, individually developed sculptural tradition.

Female *bulul* Sculpture, northern Luzon, Philippines
Wood, pigments, crusty patina, H. 57cm

Collection History:

Espino collection, Manila, before 1978
J.J. Klejman, New York
Private collection, New York

Publication:

Loudmer-Poulain Paris, *Arts Primitifs*, December 16th 1978, lot 97





In situ

As a rare type of Salampasu mask and outstandingly well-documented this work is due to its marvelous combination of form and color, its deep and crusty patina, as well as its sculptural subtlety a significant work of Salampasu art. Julien Volper published the *in situ* photograph of this mask twice, once in the Musée Dapper publication *Initiés – Bassin du Congo* and once in his careful monograph on the art of the Salampasu, where he described the mask on the basis of the photograph:

Ce masque semble être du type mudume wa biseba qui relève clairement du matambu. Ceci laisse à penser que ses masques en bois noirs à rayures rouges n'ont pas seulement dansé pour le matambu mais aussi dans le mfuku. Julien Volper, Si Vis Pacem Para Artem, p. 87

The Salampasu had a reputation as feared warriors, which enabled them in keeping their cultural independence against the more centralized neighboring Chokwe and Luba and further limited their exposure to Europeans. It was not until the mid-1930s that a first and slow contact to missionaries was established and only in the 1950s the old customs were abandoned.

When in the 1950s Belgian photographer Carlo Lamote visited the territory, he was able to see and document old masks that were until that point kept secret, a result of which is the remarkable *in situ* photograph of this mask and its dancer taken in the village of Mukasa during an *mfuku* initiation ceremony.

Salampasu *mudume wa biseba* Mask, DRC
Wood, red, black and white pigments, raphia
H. 30cm

Collection History:

Photographed *in situ* by Carlo Lamote, 1950s
Collection Eugène Dodeigne, Bondues, France

Publication of the *in situ* Photograph:

Carlo Lamote, *Les Salampasu chez eux*, in: *Belgique d'Outremer*, 1958, n° 280, p. 448
Christiane Falgayrettes-Leveau, *Initiés – Bassin du Congo*, Musée Dapper, 2013, p. 147
Julien Volper, *Si Vis Pacem Para Artem*, 2014, fig. 115





Galerie Percier – André Level

In May 1933 André Level – owner of the famous *Galerie Percier* and one of the most significant and earliest advocates of African art as Art per se – published a little catalogue titled *Catalogue D'Objets D'Art Nègre* in which under the inventory number 2712 – also inscribed on the sculpture itself – this Baule heddle pulley is listed. It offers a marvelous sculptural finesse that is amongst others based on the concept of the two buffalo heads. Of different size, the back of the larger head forms together with the attachment hole the horns of the smaller one – an exceptional solution. Helena Rubinstein who built one of her era's great collections of African and Oceanic Art was to acquire it from him.

Baule Janus-Heddle Pulley, Ivory Coast
Wood, pigments, inscriptions, H. 12.5cm

Collection History:

André Level – Galerie Percier, Paris
Collection Helena Rubinstein, Paris and New York
Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, *The Helena Rubinstein Collection: African and Oceanic Art*, April 21 and 29, 1966, lot 21
Collection Nathhorst, Stockholm
Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, *African, Oceanic, Pre-Columbian and American Indian Art*, October 15th 1977, lot 519
Harry Franklin Gallery, Beverly Hills

Publications:

Galerie Percier, *Catalogue D'Objets D'Art Nègre*, Paris, May 1933, n° 2712 (*listed*)
Hans Eklund, *Kongo – Niger. Afrikansk skulptur*, Stockholm 1968, p. 27

Exhibition:

The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, *long-term loan* (1996 – 2018)

The serious presence this sculpture offers is due to the decisive role it had among the Bamileke during the funerary ceremonies of a person of high rank when it was presented by the widow to the *fon*, the king, who placed his offerings in the bowl held by the female figure. The aspect of the graveness of this fundamental event is especially evoked by the striking expression of the face, as well as the posture that emphasizes the facet of receiving.

Collection History
From Philippe Guimiot to John Friede

Philippe Guimiot acquired this Bamileke sculpture *in situ*. Subsequently, it was sold by the Mathias Komor Gallery of New York to John Friede and published twice: once in Pierre Harter's monograph *Arts Anciens du Cameroun* and once in Jacques Kerchaches' seminal publication *Art Africain*, Citadelles & Mazenod. Selected for two highly noted publications and part of the collections of legendary dealers and collectors, the collection history of this sculpture shows that the importance of this sculpture was consistently recognized.

Bamileke Cupbearer, Cameroon
Wood, pigments, H. 48cm

Collection History:
Philippe Guimiot, Brussels
Mathias Komor, New York
John Friede, Rye, New York

Publications:
Pierre Harter, *Arts Anciens du Cameroun*, Arnouville, 1986,
p. 76, fig. 86
Jacques Kerchache, Jean Paudrat, Lucien Stéphan, *L'art Africain*,
Citadelles & Mazenod, 1988, n° 553





This white Salampasu *kakila* mask whose surface is covered by a thick layer of kaolin was for almost half a century part of the collection of Belgian sculptor Eugène Dodeigne and is published in 1967 in *Arts primitifs dans les ateliers d'artistes*, a far-reaching and reference exhibition that presented sculptures of high quality that at the same time spoke for the individual artistic understanding of their owners. With its publication in this exhibition, Dodeignes *kakila* mask became one of the first Salampasu masks included in a publication of African Art and was further in 1987 included by Marc Felix in his *Handbook 100 Peoples of Zaire and their Sculpture*.

Salampasu *kakila* Mask, DRC
Wood, kaolin, raffia, H. 35cm

Collection History:

Collection Eugène Dodeigne, Bondues, France

Publication:

Musée de l'Homme, *Arts primitifs dans les ateliers d'artistes*,
1967, n° 52

Marc Felix, *100 Peoples of Zaire and their Sculpture – The Handbook*, 1987, p. 153, n°2 (as drawing)

Exhibition:

Musée de l'Homme, *Arts primitifs dans les ateliers d'artistes*,
1967

Kunsthalle Nürnberg, *Magie und Abstraktion*, 1968, n°24

This 19th century Dan mask was acquired *in situ* in the early 1930s among the Gio in Liberia by Dr. Georg Harley. With its impressive mouth, the short, pipe-like eyes and the beautifully sculptured row of antelope horns on top of its forehead it is a sculpture of a forceful, captivating appearance. Due to the slight asymmetries incorporated into the mouth, the nose and the eyebrows, the movement of the dance became, even when motionless, an integral part of this sculpture.

Masks as Agents of Social Control

Dr. Georg Harley – who lived in Ganta, Liberia from the late 1920s until the 1960s – was deeply interested in African art that he acquired and studied *in situ*, which he was able to do as a medical doctor who had due to his profession a close relation to the local people. Affiliated with the Harvard University he sold many Liberian masks to the Peabody museum – amongst others this mask, which the museum acquired in 1937 – and had his essays published by the Harvard University Press, the most influential of which was *Masks as Agents of Social Control in Northeast Liberia* of 1950, which described the functions of the masks within the secret societies.

Dan-Gio Mask, Liberia
19th century
Wood, pigments, inscriptions, H. 22cm

Collection History:

Dr. George Harley, acquired *in situ* before 1937
Peabody Museum, Harvard, Boston, 1937–1951
Collection Laurence and Lorna Marshall, New Hampshire, USA



Early Sculpture from Africa and Oceania

It was a great pleasure to handle these twelve magnificent sculptures, each of which is representative of an early style made at a time when the fulfillment of the ritual function had to be unconditional. In the past these works belonged to some of the most renowned collectors and dealers who preserved them and played a crucial role in their discovery as Art per se.

It will be a further pleasure to help to find new homes for these works where they will enrich collections and unfold their beauty in a new environment.

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Text: Theodor Fröhlich
Photos: Katrin Fröhlich
Print: von Ah Druck Sarnen, Switzerland



Ngil, féticheur du second rang.

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