



Pioneers of
Modern Aesthetics

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OF MODERN AESTHETICS

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For more than 100 years connoisseurship, publications, and exhibitions have passed on knowledge on African sculpture. Art dealers, collectors, and museums published, wrote, and presented works at different times in different settings, leading to a profound understanding of African Art.

Today – with a look to the past and a glance into the future – offered is the affirmation of time, while still allowing surprise and discovery.

In this catalogue we present 11 works:

The Jacques Kerchache *gomintogo* Dogon Mask, a work that captivates by the elegance with which the characteristics of its type are presented. Jacques Kerchache selected it for his publication *L'Art Africain*, published by Mazenod.

The Jacques Kerchache *samana* Dogon Mask, whose importance is based on the brilliancy with which its artist knew how to treat sculpted form and empty space – perfected by separating, along its entire length, the nose from the body of the mask.

The Ijo ancestor spirit statue, a rainmaker, the work of an artist from the western Ijo who mastered the play of the planes. Marie-Louise Bastin selected it for the *Introduction aux Arts D'Afrique Noire* and Pierre Harter published it in an essay on the sculpture from the lower Niger.

The Emil Storrer Dan Mask, that was danced for generations – a time during which its relevance grew. With that came an alternation of function that led to the transformation of the eyes. In this aspect it was compared to the Dan mask once in the collection of Paul Guillaume in a recent online study by the Musée du Quai Branly.

The Charles Ratton Dan Mask, for which one can follow the explanations of Charles Ratton himself. See page 12.

The Goemai *gugwom* Mask, used in rituals in relation to the installation and burial of chiefs, as well as in annual agricultural ceremonies to assure good harvest. It comes from the Alex Ignatius collection; the same provenance as for a Goemai sculpture wearing a *gugwom* mask in the collection of the Musée du quai Branly.

A work by **Il maestro dei sorrisi** – the master of the smile, active in the late 19th, early 20th century in the north-east of the Hembra territory, where a stylistic influence of the Kusu is present.

The Dan-Gio Mask, characterized by an elongated form that emphasizes the tube eyes, the cheekbones and the balance between the forehead and the mouth. Acquired *in situ* in north-eastern Liberia from the Dan-Gio, its recorded name is *tio-gli*.

The Kofler-Erni Wobe Mask, as the embodiment of a female spirit-being, manifesting traits of idealized feminine beauty.

The Hélène Leloup Ejagham Headdress, a work that masters the balance between reality and imagination: the sensibility of the face and its realism on one hand, the take of the artist on the ideal of beauty and elegance on the other.

The Punu-Spoon, discussed by Léon Siroto in the Musée Dapper publication that is so aptly named *Cuilleres Sculptures*, showing a female figure carrying a basket full of fruits – a metaphor for the abundance of food.





Dogon *gomintogo* Mask, Mali
H. 66cm

Selected Collection History:
Jacques Kerchache, Paris

Publication:
Jacques Kerchache, Jean Paudrat, Lucien Stéphan, *L'Art Africain*,
Citadelles & Mazenod, 1988, n° 285



Dogon *samana* Mask, Mali
19th century
H. 50cm

Selected Collection History:
Jacques Kerchache, Paris
Collection Philippe Solvit, Paris

Publications:

Elsy Leuzinger, *Die Kunst von Schwarz Afrika*, Kunsthaus Zürich 1970, n° A59 (*listed*)
Elsy Leuzinger, *Art de L'Afrique Noire*, Société Française du Livre, 1979, p. 236



Ijo ancestor spirit statue, *duen*, Nigeria
H. 91 cm

Selected Publication:

Marie-Louise Bastin, *Introduction aux Arts D'Afrique Noire*,
1984, n° 210, p. 216

Dan Mask, Ivory Coast
H. 22.5cm

Selected Collection History:
Emil Storrer, Zürich

Selected Publication:
Eberhard Fischer, Hans Himmelheber, *Die Kunst der Dan*, 1976,
Museum Rietberg Zürich, p. 61



"This mask comes from the Dan tribe inhabiting the frontier of Liberia and the Ivory Coast at the upper part of the Cavally River.

The delicate shape of the face, which is boldly crossed by the tattoo lines, its elongated eyes and its large size make it particularly interesting. To my knowledge, it is unique in its kind. The mask of the same origin with the round eyes that I lent to the Arts Club of Chicago for the *African Negro Art* exhibition in 1935, was far from being equal to this one, which I consider one of the five most beautiful Dan masks known."

– Charles Ratton, Paris, October 1st 1953

Dan Mask, Ivory Coast
H. 25cm

Selected Collection History:

André Level, Paris, before 1933
Galerie Charles Ratton, Paris

Publication:

Galerie Percier, *Catalogue D'Objets D'Art Nègre*, Paris, May 1933,
n° 3475, p. 16





Goemai *gugwom* Mask, Nigeria
L. 54cm

Selected Collection History:
Alex Ignatius, Austria

Hemba/Kusu ancestor figure, DRC
H. 43cm

Collection History:
Boris Kegel-Konietzko, Hamburg

Publication:
Beppe Berna, *Il „Maestro dei Sorrisi“ Il mistero di un artista transculturale*, in: *Archeologia Africana* n° 18/19, 2012-2013, p. 10





Dan-Gio Mask, Liberia
Tio-Glū
H. 47cm

Selected Collection History:
Acquired *in situ* in north-eastern Liberia, ca. 1960s, (old label)



Wobe Secret Society Mask, Ivory Coast
H. 26cm

Collection History:

Mathias Lemaire, Amsterdam
Collection Max Kofler-Erni, Basel

Selected Publications:

Elsy Leuzinger, *Die Kunst von Schwarz Afrika*, Kunsthau Zürich 1970, n° F15
Elsy Leuzinger, *Art de L'Afrique Noire*, Société Française du Livre, 1979, p. 228 and 230



Ejagham Headdress, Nigeria
H. 37.5cm

Selected Collection History:
Hélène Leloup, Paris and New York

Selected Publication:
Arnold Rubin, *African Accumulative Sculpture: Power and Display*, 1974, n° 75

Illustrated on backcover
Punu Spoon, Gabon
H. 22cm

Selected Publication:
Musée Dapper, *Cuilleres Sculptures*, Paris, 1991, p. 130

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