



Face Mask (Nganga Ntshemi)

Date

ca. 1926-1940

Primary Maker

Bushoong people

Medium

wood, pigment, raffia, cowrie shells, copper alloy and glass beads

Description

According to tradition, Moshambwooy symbolizes Woot, the founder of the Kuba. Among the various groups that comprise the Kuba Kingdom, the Bushoong people provide the king, Nyimi, and it is their royal masks that represent the ideal dramatization of the legend of the founding of the Kuba and the establishment of the Kingdom. The female mask, Nganga Ntshemi, represents the ideal beautiful woman and sister/wife of the king,

Moshambwooy. She also represents the practice of divination associated with royal women among a number of Central African peoples. Bwoom represents a primeval antagonist of the Kuba king, possibly modeled on the indigenous Pygmy people, who challenged the rule of Moshambwooy. The Moshambwooy mask is rare in American and European collections. More familiar is a provincial Kuba variation with a stylized elephant trunk and correctly known as Mukyeem or Mukenga.

Dimensions

Overall: 15 1/4 x 13 5/8 x 12 3/8 in. (38.7 x 34.6 x 31.4 cm)