



Face Mask (Gunyege)

Date

early 20th century

Primary Maker

Dan people

Medium

wood, stain, aluminum, iron and encrustation

Description

Gunyege is worn in a masquerade in which the young men in the village race each other to see who is fastest. The winner then has the right to wear the gunyege mask in the next race since it is believed that the mask's spirit has deserted the previous winner in favor of someone new. Thus, gunyege functions as a trophy. In form, the mask is oval and displays the idealized beauty typical of many Dan masks, especially those with slit eyes. But unlike the slit-eyed masks, masks with round eyes are considered aggressive and masculine, a quality most appropriate for a mask used in the highly competitive

rites. The metal around the eyes enhances the effect of a glaring, threatening gaze.

Dimensions

Overall: 8 7/8 x 5 3/4 x 2 5/8 in. (22.5 x 14.6 x 6.7 cm)