



Dance Headpiece (Chi Wara)

Date

20th century

Primary Maker

Bamana people

Medium

wood, pigment, shell buttons, glass beads, cotton string, plant fiber, raffia and wicker

Description

Ci-wara is a legendary composite creature that is credited with introducing agriculture to humans. Confusion abounds as to his physical form but the antelope is the most prominent element. This unusual Ci-wara is a composite of several of the various forms of the headdress. It combines an essentially vertical format with the antelope head and horns associated most frequently with the horizontal variant. It also combines male and female symbolism usually seen separately. The basketry base is intact and is covered with blackened raffia fibers like those that comprise the costume that covers the body. When the costume is worn, the raffia fibers are sprinkled with water to symbolize rain. The male antelope symbolizes the sun. The female figure with a child on her back conveys the idea of fertility usually conveyed more typically by a separate female antelope headdress with a baby antelope on her back. This was worn by members of the Ci-wara initiation society in agricultural ceremonies and perhaps for public entertainment.

Dimensions

Overall: 26 1/2 x 9 5/8 x 9 3/4 in. (67.3 x 24.4 x 24.8 cm)