



Face Mask

Date

not dated

Primary Maker

Lwalu people

Medium

wood and copper alloy

Description

Lwalu may be a sub style of the better-known and nearly identical Lwalwa style. Some say that Lwalwa is simply a misidentification of Lwalu masks. The major difference seems to be that sheets of copper cover Lwalu masks. The confusion seems to be caused by the existence of two kinds of masks in the same style: those in painted wood that are used by the Ngongo society, which is primarily concerned with hunting and anti-witchcraft activity. The metal covered version is associated with chiefs and the ancestors. At one time, ritual murders were a part of the initiation process, reminiscent of the association between

murder and the right to use certain masks that existed among the neighboring Salampasu with whom the Lwalu are closely allied. The Salampasu also use metal covered masks. Large noses that descend straight down from the jutting, very flat forehead characterize Lwalu masks. The eyes are rectangular slits placed low on either side of the nose. The mouth juts out below and the chin is sometimes strongly exaggerated. The mask is held to the dancer's face by a cord passing into the interior just below the nose and gripped in the wearer's teeth. Many metal covered masks were previously used as the plain wood Ngongo masks. When they were later covered with copper sheets, their use changed as well, becoming symbols of authority.

Dimensions

Overall: 13 3/8 x 8 x 5 3/8 in. (34 x 20.3 x 13.7 cm)