

Basic Detail Report

**Title**

Headdress: Mukenga

Artist

Kuba Peoples

Date

early 20th century

Dimensions

H. 21 3/4 in. (55.3 cm); W. 13 1/8 in. (33.3 cm).

Medium

Raffia, wood, beads, shells, leopard skin, palm fibers.

Classifications

Sculpture

Credit Line

Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey

Object number

1973.13

Published References

African Arts, vol. 5, no. 4, Summer 1972, repr. p. 68.

"African Art," *Toledo Museum of Art Museum News*, vol. 16, no. 2m 1973, p. 42, repr. fig. 15.

"La chronique des arts," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. 83, no. 1261, Feb. 1974, p. 251.

Roberts, Mary Nooter, *Facing Africa: The African Art Collection of the Toledo Museum of Art*, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, 1998, pp. 56-57, repr. (col.).

Comparative References

See also Cornet, Joseph, *Art of Africa: Treasures of the Congo*, New York, Phaidon, 1971, pp. 120-148.

cf. Leiris, Michel and Jacqueline Delange, *African Art*, New York, Golden Press, 1968, p. 343, pl. 395.

cf. Willett, Frank, *African Art*, New York, Praeger, 1971, p. 191, ill. 185.

cf. Friedman, Martin, *Art of the Congo*, Minneapolis, Walker Art Center, 1967, pp. 36-38.

cf. Robbins, Warren M., *African Art in American Collections*, New York, Frederick Praeger, 1966, p. 220, fig. 318.

Collections

Sculpture

Label Text

During the 19th century, Kuba rulers traded elephant ivory through long-distance trade routes, resulting in great wealth and establishing Kuba as a regional power. The Mukenga mask takes the form of an elephant to symbolize rulership. A Kuba proverb states, “An animal, even if it is large, does not surpass the elephant. A man, even if he has authority, does not surpass the king.” Mukenga appears at funerals for deceased members of the Kuba men’s initiation society. The abundant cowrie shells on the mask’s “trunk” are a sign of wealth and indicate that the ruler or officeholder is descended from Woot, the founding ancestor of Kuba culture who came from the sea.

Not On View