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Lwena Mask (pwevo)

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LWENA ARTIST

Angola

Late 19th–early 20th century

Mask (pwevo)

Wood, fiber, beads

h. 31.2 cm

12 ¼ in.

Provenance

Collected by Maurice Matton in Kinda, Kamina territory, South Shaba 1939;
Collection of Annie and Jean-Pierre Jernander, Brussels;
de Quay/Lombrail, Paris, *Collection A. et J.-P. Jernander*, 26 June 1996;
Collection of Michael Oliver, New York;
Sotheby's, New York. *African, Oceanic and Pre-Columbian Art*. 15 May 2015, lot 114;
Private collection, New York.

Literature

Bastin, Marie-Louise, "L'Art d'un Peuple d'Angola, II: Lwena ", *African Arts*, Vol. II, no.2, 1969, cover.
Leuzinger, Elsy. *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*. Zürich: Kunsthaus Zürich, 1970. p. 294, #U21.
Leuzinger, Elsy. *The Art of Black Africa*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1972. p. 310-311, fig. U22.
Leuzinger, Elsy. *Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika*. Recklinhausen: Aurel Bongers, 1972. p. 310-311, fig.U22.
Winizki, Ernst. *Gesichter Afrikas: Visages d'Afrique: Faces of Africa*. Zürich: Kunstkreis, Luzern, 1972. p.170-171.

Exhibitions

Die Kunst von Schwarz-Afrika, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland. 31 October 1970-17 January 1971.
Oerkunsten van zwart Afrika/Arts Premiers d'Afrique Noire. Crédit Communal de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium. 5 March-17 April 1977.

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Collected in 1939 by Maurice Matton at Kinda and first published in 1969 on the cover of *African Arts*, the Jernander Lwena Mask is a masterpiece of Angolan art, epitomizing the finest qualities of classic Lwena aesthetics. With its blend of curvilinear naturalism, cubist abstraction and beautiful exposition of the natural color and grain of the wood medium, this is the finest Lwena mask in existence.

In comparison to other old Lwena masks the Jernander Mask is distinguished by its exceptionally refined, delicate features. Deeply-incised geometric symbols, signs of ideal feminine beauty, adorn the face, which is bracketed on either side by C-shaped ears in high relief. In characteristic Lwena style, the sculptor has chosen to showcase the natural color and grain of the wood, which has gained a rich patina from a long period of handling and use.

Lwena *pwevo* masks were part of a complex masquerade, integral to pre-colonial Lwena cosmology. Owing to the small population of the Lwena people, Lwena art is extremely rare.

Comparanda



Musée Barbier-Mueller, Genève, Switzerland, 1028-21



Museu do Dundo, Angola, 1 104.

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