Finch & Co



WEST AFRICAN IVORY COAST DAN CARVED WOOD DANCE AND RACING MASK 'GUNYEYA'

A FINE WEST AFRICAN IVORY COAST DAN CARVED WOOD DANCE AND RACING MASK 'GUNYEYA'
OLD SMOOTH POLISHED PATINA WITH TRACES OF PIGMENT
EARLY 20TH CENTURY
SIZE: 24.5CM HIGH, 14.5CM WIDE – 9¾ INS HIGH, 5¾ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

THE 'GUNYEYA' MASK IS KNOWN AS A 'RACING' MASK WITH AN IDEALIZED POINTED FACE AND LARGE CIRCULAR EYES. IT IS A MAN'S MASK AND THE WEARER WAS PURSUED BY AN UNMASKED RUNNER AND IF CAUGHT, THE UNMASKED RUNNER WEARS THE MASK AND IS IN TURN PURSUED. HISTORICALLY THESE RACES WOULD HAVE TRAINED MEN TO FIGHT, THE WINNER GAINING SOCIAL RECOGNITION.

HOWEVER, DAN MASKS CAN CHANGE THEIR ROLES DURING THEIR CAREER AND BECOME USED FOR OTHER FORMS OF MASQUERADE OR DANCE RITUALS. THE MEN WHO WEAR THE MASKS AND ARE PERFORMERS MUST HAVE HAD A DREAM SENT TO HIM BY THE MASK-SPIRIT. WHILE THE MASK MAY BE HANDED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS BY INHERITANCE, THE MASQUERADE ITSELF DEPENDS ON THE DREAM WHICH IS AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT BY THE MASK. THUS A MASK MAY SPEND A GENERATION 'RESTING' UNTIL A NEW DANCER IS VISITED BY A DREAM. ITS RE-EMERGENCE MAY BE ACCOMPANIED BY A DIFFERENCE MASQUERADE; COSTUME, MOVEMENTS AND MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT AS DICTATED IN THE DREAM.