Finch & Co



WEST AFRICAN BAULE-GURU PORTRAIT DANCE MASK OF A WOMAN 'MBLO'

A WEST AFRICAN BAULE-GURU PORTRAIT DANCE MASK OF A WOMAN 'MBLO'
TRACES OF RED WHITE AND BLACK PIGMENTS
LATE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURY
SIZE: 42CM HIGH, 19CM WIDE - 16½ INS HIGH, 7½ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

'MBLO' FACE MASKS ARE USED BY THE BAULE IN ENTERTAINMENT DANCES. THEY ARE ONE OF THE OLDEST OF BAULE ART FORMS AND ARE USUALLY A PORTRAIT OF A PARTICULAR KNOWN INDIVIDUAL. THEY VARY GREATLY, BUT MORE THAN OTHER KIND OF MASK PRODUCED, THE 'MBLO' EMBODY THE CORE BAULE SCULPTURAL STYLE THAT CAN BE FOUND IN FIGURES AND OBJECTS SUCH AS HEDDLE PULLEYS, SPOONS AND COMBS. THE LUSTROUS CURVING SURFACE SUGGESTS CLEAN, HEALTHY, WELL FED SKIN AND IS DELICATELY SET OFF BY THE GEOMETRIC TEXTURED CARVING REPRESENTING SCARIFICATION AND HAIR. THE IDEALISED OVAL FACE WITH HIGH FOREHEAD AND DOWNCAST EYES DENOTES AN INTELLIGENT AND RESPECTFUL PRESENCE TO THE COMMUNITY.
THE BAULE BELIEVE THAT THESE MASKS HAVE ALWAYS EXISTED AND THAT THEY BROUGHT THIS TYPE OF MASK WITH THEM WHEN THEIR ANCESTORS 'EMERGED FROM THE EARTH' OR 'DESCENDED FROM THE SKY'. THE BAULE ARTISTS OF THE PAST SEEM TO HAVE NEVER REPEATED THEIR WORK, EACH MASK IS DIFFERENT, PROBABLY BECAUSE AS PORTRAITS THEY REPRESENT PARTICULAR PEOPLE.