

Finch & C^o



AN AFRICAN 'SANDE' OR 'BUNDU' MASK
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ATTRIBUTED TO THE SOGANDE (OR SU GANDE) WORKSHOP, KENEMA

RICH DARK BROWN, 'TREACLY' OVERALL PATINA

WOOD

MENDE SIERRALEONE / LIBERIA

20TH CENTURY

SIZE: 45CM HIGH - 17¾ INS HIGH

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LITERATURE

THE WOMEN'S SANDE, OR BUNDU, SOCIETY, WHICH CAN BE FOUND IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE, TRADITIONALLY INITIATED YOUNG GIRLS INTO WOMANHOOD BY PREPARING THEM FOR MARRIAGE, FAMILY LIFE, AND PARTICIPATION IN THE 'FEMALE SPHERE' OF COMMUNITY LIFE. UPON THE TIME WHEN THEY WERE DEEMED READY, THE SOCIETY LEADER WOULD INTRODUCE THE 'ADULT' WOMEN TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY. THE 'WATER SPIRIT' AND 'GUARDIAN DEITY' OF THE SANDE SOCIETY WAS CHANNELLED THROUGH THE LEADER, WEARING A COSTUME, INCLUDING A WOODEN HELMET MASK, EMBODYING THE AFOREMENTIONED 'SOWEI'. ALTHOUGH IN MOST SOCIETIES, ONLY MEN WOULD CARVE AND WEAR MASKS, SANDE MASKS ARE AN EXCEPTION, EXCLUSIVELY BEING WORN BY WOMEN; HOWEVER, THE MALE MEMBERS STILL CARVED THE MASKS.

IT IS SURMOUNTED BY AN ELABORATE HAIRSTYLE, TYPICALLY WORN BY THE WOMEN DURING THE MID 20TH CENTURY. A HIGH FOREHEAD CROWNS THE 'DOWNCAST' EYES, AND THE PARTLY CLOSED MOUTH SIGNIFIES A SILENCE AND 'INNER SPIRITUAL' CONCENTRATION. THE 'MASK' IS A POWERFUL CONDUIT TO REPRESENT THE FEMALE 'PERFECTION' AND PERSONIFIES WOMEN'S POWER.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE LONDON COLLECTION

LITERATURE:

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