

# The Inner Eye

## Vision and Transcendence in African Arts

Mary Nooter Roberts

**“THE INNER EYE:  
VISION AND TRANSCENDENCE IN AFRICAN ARTS”  
CURATED BY MARY NOOTER ROBERTS  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART  
RESNICK PAVILION, FEBRUARY 26—JULY 9, 2017**

*Oro*, the essence of communication, takes place in the eyes.  
(Yoruba axiom cited in Abiodun 1994:77)

**T**he Inner Eye: Vision and Transcendence in African Arts” features a cross-cultural constellation of sculptures—many of them iconic in the corpus of African art—and eye-catching textiles. The exhibition explores how works of art and the visual regimes through which they have been created and performed enable transitions from one stage of life to the next and from one state of being to another. Themes address diverse ways of seeing: “Envisioning Origins” to “Maternal Gaze,” “Insight and Education” to “Beholding Spirit,” “Patterning Perception” to “Visionary Performance,” and “Vigilant Sentinels” to “Seeing Beyond.” These groupings will encourage viewers to notice how works were made to look upon, gaze within, and see beyond in myriad ways that signal transitions of identity, experience, and perception. The exhibition’s figures and masks, initiation objects and royal emblems, reliquary guardians and commemorative posts from west, central, and eastern Africa and spanning from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries CE, have guided humans to spirit realms, to the afterlife, and to the highest levels of esoteric wisdom.

MARY (POLLY) NOOTER ROBERTS is Professor in UCLA’s Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, Consulting Curator for African Art at LACMA, and a co-editor of African Arts. She was Senior Curator at the Museum for African Art in New York until 1994 and Deputy Director and Chief Curator of UCLA’s Fowler Museum until 2008. Her award-winning works include *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History* (1996) and *A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal* (with Allen F. Roberts, 2003). In 2007, she was decorated by the Republic of France as a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters. [proberts@arts.ucla.edu](mailto:proberts@arts.ucla.edu)

“The Inner Eye” draws attention to African individuals, such as rulers, mothers, and healers, as well as spirit beings who exhibit heightened senses of awareness, while acknowledging artists and performers as visionaries who bring works to life. A number of artists are identifiable master hands, and in some cases sculptures are shown in clusters to appreciate the remarkable ingenuity that each artist brings to a single genre. Ultimately, in their own settings and, one can hope, museum spaces as well, these objects empower people to transcend human limitations and boundaries and envision their own potentialities and possibilities (Fig. 1).

Most works of art encourage viewers to gaze upon them in all their multidimensionality. In fact, museum experience is predicated upon looking. When we see art in most Western museum settings, the assumption is that objects are meant to be scrutinized and beheld, and in a sense consumed by visitors’ eyes and caressed by their gaze. Yet, *looking* is a culturally determined activity of visuality with its own expectations, limitations, capabilities, and epiphanies varying from one community to another.<sup>1</sup> In many cases, staring at works is not the intended experience for which they were produced and used in original settings. Looking directly at something or into its eyes (if an object has them) may be discouraged, and in many contexts, direct eye contact is regarded as impolite, inappropriate, and perhaps even perilous.

As Rowland Abiodun discusses in a seminal article on Yoruba art and aesthetics, “because *ase* [vital force] is believed to emanate from *oju* [eyes/face], children and young people are forbidden to look straight into their parents’ or elders’ faces. It is even more dangerous to stare at the face of an *oba* [king], which is usually veiled” (1994:77). Somewhat similarly, Susan Vogel holds that

in Baule visual practice, the act of looking at a work of art, or at spiritually significant objects, is for the most part privileged and potentially dangerous. Even an inadvertent glimpse of a forbidden object can make a person sick, can expose them to huge fines or sacrifices, or can even be fatal. The power and danger of looking lie in a belief that objects are potent ... [and so] there is an explicit etiquette of the gaze. Younger people do not look directly at their elders—it is disrespectful (1998:110).



1 Ngï mask  
 Gabon, Fang peoples, 1850  
 Wood, kaolin and fiber; 62.2 cm x 29.5 cm x  
 20.3 cm  
 Private collection

possess piercing power and offer protection; and multiplicities of eyes may extend the ken beyond ordinary human perception (Figs. 2–3). These manifestations of vision are produced for and by objects in a broad range of contexts that this exhibition explores. In each context, the eyes are at work, enabling, energizing, and effecting transitions from one state of being to another.

Vision may be understood in most African art contexts as more active than static, with emphasis on locally inflected vocabulary for both casual seeing and careful looking. The idea that with many African arts, process is privileged over product, has been brilliantly demonstrated by Herbert M. Cole (1969) through his case studies of Igbo *mbari* shrines and masquerade arts. Following his reasoning, aesthetics may be understood as “a verb”—as an action, that is, that informs notions of culturally determined visibility. In this exhibition, emphasis is given to how looking can provoke and promote transitions and transcendence from human to spirit realms, this world to the next. Visibility often has multiple levels of philosophical articulation, then, whether directed from inside out or from outside in; in most cases, this kind of distinction is blurred and multidimensional as reflected by the echoing forms of a Kwele mask whose eyes, eyebrows, head, and horns all share the same arcs in their radiating and retracting visual play (Fig. 4).

“The Inner Eye” invites contemplation and consideration of how seeing is defined differently in diverse contexts, emphasizing that vision and visibility are culturally specific constructions with very particular meanings and potentialities. Among Baule people of Côte d’Ivoire, for example, Susan Vogel finds four modalities of vision. The first is expressed by a word meaning “to look” and “to watch” in casual observation of an entertaining dance, soccer match, or television program. This term is not restricted in its use and is associated with mundane things and circumstances. Two other types of vision are related to glimpses that people may steal of objects possessing efficacy and meaning, and implies a

Abiodun, Vogel, and a number of other scholars of African art histories (see Nooter 1993) have expounded upon the intricacies of culturally specific notions of seeing, then, and have elucidated the paradox that while works may be made by artists with skill and inspired brilliance, they are not necessarily for human eyes alone, or even primarily so. Still, the natural human inclination when we look at other living beings is to look into their eyes (cf. Lacan 2007). What is the magnetic force that links eye to eye, gaze to gaze? The works in this exhibition possess many approaches to the gaze: downcast or indirect eyes of inward contemplation may be associated with spiritual reverence; projecting eyes may



2 Mask  
Liberia, Grebo/Kru Peoples, 19th century  
Wood and pigment; 88.9 cm x 23.8 cm x 18.4 cm  
Private collection

3 Mask  
Liberia, Grebo/Kru Peoples, mid 19th century  
Wood, blue, black and white pigments; 50.8 cm x  
20.6 cm x 13.7 cm  
Private collection

kind of trespassing into private spaces with one's eyes. A fourth mode refers to seeing things never meant to be discussed, such as potent masks, ancestral or spirit figures, funeral rooms, or objects in gold. In such contexts, "seeing should be discreet, it should not be the result of deliberate looking, and it should not be mentioned as such.... [for] reticence expresses respect for the gods ..., the dead, and the bereaved" (Vogel 1998:91–92).

In addition to cultivating an appreciation for culturally specific notions of vision such as these, the exhibition asks if the action of seeing is really about *what* we see, or rather what we *could* see, *might* see, and what we *cannot* physically see but can only imagine in the mind's eye. As Jonathan Unglaub (2012) writes, ways of seeing may invoke a "tripartite sequence and hierarchy of vision ...: the physical vision of sensible phenomena through the bodily eyes; the imaginative vision based on mnemonic and fantastic images lodged in the mind; [and] the intellectual vision that conjures and perceives abstract concepts." These and other distinctions may "correlate to different levels of spiritual knowledge and visionary enlightenment," and one of the key goals of "The Inner Eye" exhibition is to consider how artists may reify the "invisible divine" (Unglaub 2012), even as works of art assist the viewer to experience spiritual contemplation.

Each work in "The Inner Eye" has been selected for the depth of meaning and philosophical insight it can impart about particular African visual epistemologies. From serene Dogon origin figures with eyes directed to the past (Figs. 9–10) to Kongo protective power figures with assertive stares (Fig. 29), and from Lega initiation objects with multiple eyes for all-seeing vigilance (Figs. 13–15) to the downcast eyes of female Luba spirit receptacles that look inward rather than out (Figs. 16–18), objects in the exhibition demonstrate how art is created and rendered, not just as highly innovative forms, but to permit original artists, owners, and users to transcend states of being and bridge among realms of perception. The exhibition will have ramifications for many fields of cultural study that seek to understand visual and performative regimes from culturally specific points of view.

"The Inner Eye" also acknowledges synaesthetic dimensions of visual and performance arts. Tactility and tonality, olfactory and gustatory dimensions of the arts are central to aesthetic intentionalities.<sup>2</sup> Valuing sight as associated with other senses is crucial to a more informed understanding of visual experience (Jay 1988), as provocatively expressed by a Yoruba aphorism, "What do we call food for the eyes? What pleases the eyes as prepared yam flour satisfies the stomach? The eyes have no food other than spectacle" (Lawal 2001:517). Given such



4 *Beete* mask: Ram (*Bata*)  
 Gabon, Kwele peoples, early–mid 19th  
 century  
 Wood and pigments; 38.1 cm x 44.8  
 cm x 5.4 cm  
 Private collection

#### SEEING FROM THE INSIDE OUT: “THE INNER EYE”

It is rare to see a mask from the back, and yet, when a spirit appears as a masked dancer, or when such an acrobatic young performer takes to the dance arena, what is behind the mask informs what gods and actors see as they look through the eyes of the mask itself (Fig. 8). This hidden interior connects the performer and his material accoutrements referred to so reductively as “a mask” in the West.<sup>3</sup> The material object that covers the face is only one element of a persona performing, and sometimes a minor one at that. “Masks” must be understood as synaesthetic totalities of wooden sculpture or other materials (fiber or basketry, cloth, leather, metal) worn on the face or atop the head; carefully constructed dress and props; virtu-

Downloaded from [http://direct.mit.edu/afar/article-pdf/50/1/60/1737515/afar\\_a\\_00332.pdf](http://direct.mit.edu/afar/article-pdf/50/1/60/1737515/afar_a_00332.pdf) by guest on 08 September 2023

perceptiveness, it is critical to understand cultural constructions of African visuality from nuanced *African* perspectives (see Abiodun 2014).

The gaze of many African sculptures is indicative of the efficacy of such objects—that is, they may be imbued with life and possess their own abilities to look at viewers as viewers look to them—as well as complex philosophical and cosmological approaches to understanding one’s place in the universe. Through such expressive vehicles, the gaze to and from African masks and figures links us to our mothers and other kin, opens access to our ancestors, and enables us to envision and expand human capacity through spiritually charged forms of performative virtuosity. Furthermore, in all their cultural and aesthetic diversity, the works in “The Inner Eye” celebrate the many vantage points from which they may be appreciated: those of beholders, both in earlier circumstances and museum contexts; of the artists and performers as visionary agents of creativity and transformation; and of those who owned and used the objects and often exhibited heightened senses of spiritual awareness and intellectual capacity. Through conceptualizing, creating, possessing, deploying, consecrating, activating, beholding, and appreciating, these works transcend human limitations to envision and materialize potentiality and possibility. These same objects encourage museum visitors to contemplate acts of seeing and looking as they observe the formal integrity of the works, challenging themselves to extend their own perception beyond the visible as so many of these works are intended to do, and so to reach beyond the readily grasped to engage diverse modes of being and becoming.

tuosic choreographies, song lyrics, rhythmic accompaniments, and audience participation; and keen attention to local-level politics according to which dramas are adapted (Cole 1969:36).<sup>4</sup>

Masks are donned in many circumstances, and much of what can be said of African practices can be extended to societies around the world and across great stretches of time. Many masked performances dramatize philosophical and sometimes poetic relationships and intentions, often as they instigate reflection upon contemporary political economy. Equally important is that the capacity for sight is not just a question of the eye slits permitting dancers to see their audience and, even more important, where to put their feet; instead, what matters most is that through the mask’s and the masker’s experience, spirit is made manifest. Many works of African art come into being through inspirational dreams, for instance. Among Dan peoples of Liberia, artists create masks for the Poro men’s association through guidance from spirits called *du*, who visit the sculptors in their dreams. Forest spirits must be given tangible form through masking so that they can participate in community life, and “the maskers ... are the spirits and not merely their impersonations” (Fischer 1978:18–19).

While a mask’s agency may be oneiric and transmitted to an artist from the spirit world, the capacity for vision is understood in different cultures through language and practice. For Yoruba peoples of Nigeria, an artist with enhanced perceptual capabilities is said to possess *ojú inú*, or “the inner eye” (Fig. 5). Those with such a gift have the capacity to see the most essential quality or *iwa*, the essence or character of a thing or person, as well as to grasp deep senses of poetry called *oriki*, which gives the



other aspects of Yoruba culture, the eyeball is thought to have two aspects, an outer layer (literally external eye) or naked eye, which has to do with normal, quotidian vision, and an inner one called *ojú inú* (literally, internal eye) or mind's eye. The latter is associated with memory, intention, intuition, insight, thinking, imagination, critical analysis, visual cognition, dreams, trances, prophecy, hypnotism, empathy, telepathy, divination, healing, benevolence, malevolence, extrasensory perception, and witchcraft, among others. For the Yoruba, these two layers of the eye combine to determine *iwòran*, the specular gaze of an individual (Lawal 2001:516).

Lawal continues that “what we see (animate or inanimate) also ‘sees’ us and has a particular way of relating to our eyes.” As such, a portrait can stare back at the viewer, turning him or her into someone seen, and even into a representation in her or his own right. Finally, “what attracts and nourishes the eyes is the

5 Mask for the Gelede ceremony  
Nigeria, Yoruba peoples, 19th century  
Wood and polychrome; 31.8 cm x 18.4 cm x 24.1 cm  
Private collection

6 Eshubiyi Akinyode (Nigeria, b. ca. 1840)  
Female figure with child  
Nigeria, Yoruba peoples, late 19th–early 20th century  
Wood and glass beads; 23.9 cm x 11.4 cm x 14.2 cm  
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Walt Disney World Co., a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company  
Photo: courtesy of National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution

artwork “the power to respond.” Only with the inner eye can an artist master a special aesthetic consciousness that imbues his creations with the life force called *ase*, thus fulfilling “the artistic intention with precision” (Abiodun 1994:73).

Yoruba scholars explain how their culture’s approaches to vision are enlightening and ennobling. The word in Yoruba for bringing a work of art into being is *àwòrán*, yet, due to the tonality of Yoruba language, the same term pronounced with different tones can mean “the beholder of the beheld” (*awòran*). The term refers to the creative act of representation and to an object’s beholder and that person’s experience of response. Looking is an act of creation. Indeed, as Babatunde Lawal explains (2001:513), when an individual passes away, it is said that s/he becomes a beautiful sculpture—a person without the blemishes real people always are prone to manifest. And when someone dies, family members may implore the deceased’s soul not to stay in the afterlife for too long before agreeing to become reincarnated as a new human being (Lawal 2001:517). In other words, the life cycle itself is embodied in art, with sculptures as evocations of departed ones, and childbirth as the rebirth of ancestors (Fig. 6).

Lawal further explains the concept of the inner eye:

Since the face is the seat of the eyes, no discussion of representation, especially portraiture, would be complete without relating it to the act of looking and being looked at, otherwise known as the gaze. To begin with, Yoruba call the eyeball a refractive “egg” empowered by *ase*, ... enabling an individual to see. As with



beauty, creativity, or tour de force manifested in a given spectacle, portrait, or a work of art in general. Any striking evidence of the beautiful or the virtuosic is said to magnetize the eyes, fit the eyes, becoming that which compels repeated gaze, or that which moors the gaze” (Lawal 2001:516).

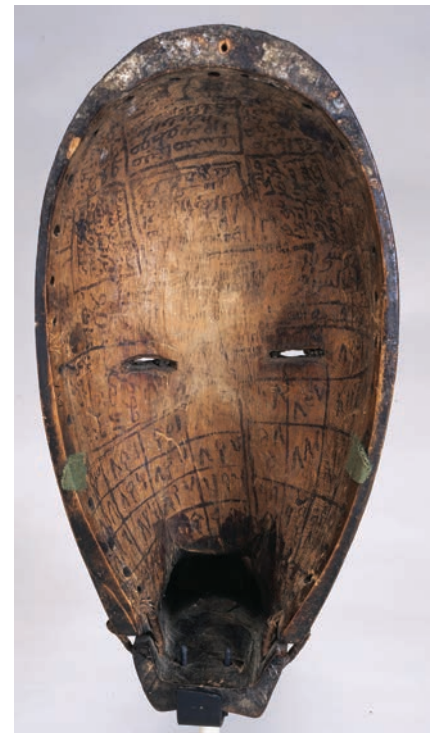
While the inner eye as *ojú inú* is a concept specific to Yoruba culture, the concept nevertheless resonates across many African aesthetic idioms with their own nuances of meaning and reference. The inner eye sees not what is plainly in sight, nor what is apparent to the ordinary human eye, but, rather, that which is interior and inherent. In other words, to possess an inner eye is to possess *insight* as expressed in a variety of ways by different peoples (see Pemberton 2000). For example, in cultures that have blended with Muslim traditions, the concept of *batin* refers to the hidden side of every visible reality (Laibi 1998; A. Roberts and M. Roberts 2003). For everything that we see clearly before us, discrete yet powerful dimensions exist within. *Batin* may refer to the *baraka* holy blessing energy that resides within and is conveyed by the portrait of a Sufi saint (A. Roberts and M. Roberts 2003), or it may manifest more tangibly as mystical writing on the inside of a Poro men’s association dance mask to enhance the potentialities of the dancer and to offer protection to the community for whom the mask performs (Seligman 1980; M. Roberts and A. Roberts 1997:68) (Figs. 7–8).

Made and performed by Mano men, a remarkable mask called Kpala displayed in “The Inner Eye” was collected in northeastern Liberia. The mask is an *event* unto itself, insofar as it combines references to Mano cosmogony with the blessing protections of Muslim devices inscribed on its inner surface that only the performer will see or even know about. The mask depicts a ground hornbill (*Bucorvus abyssinicus*), a species of large birds that stride about the forest with an oddly human gait, emitting uncanny lion-like calls. In Poro, as a society that “educates and trains young men in the skills and demeanor expected of adults” (Kreamer 2007:135), hornbill masks bring raw powers of the wilderness to bear upon local-level politics during given performances. Inside the mask, *khatem* numerological squares and invocations in Arabic (or pseudo-Arabic, which bears the same intentions) are inscribed that “increased the mask’s already considerable mystical and protective properties” (Kreamer 2007:135). As René Bravmann has written of a different inscribed mask of the same genre, “whatever else is expected of this Poro mask, it surely stands as an obdurate sentinel ever ready to defend the organization and its members” (1983:44).

Seeing from the inside out reinforces how important it is to understand visuality from African perspectives (Abiodun 1994:69), for doing so can offer deep comprehension of the aesthetic principles underlying particular works of art. Even in contexts where less research has been undertaken, rules and regulations always guide the act of seeing, and one must not assume that the ways of looking in which most museum visitors engage are the norm for all cultures or that seeing is in any way a “natural” or “universal” act. Culturally determined philosophies inform all aesthetic phenomena in ways that implicate vision and its relationships to transcendence.

7 Hornbill mask for Poro Society  
Liberia, Mano peoples, 19th century  
Wood, metal, cloth, vegetable fiber, and ink; 30.5  
cm x 14.6 cm x 38.1 cm  
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum  
purchase, gift of the Museum Society Auxiliary  
Photo: © Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

8 Interior of Figure 7





#### ENVISIONING ORIGINS

“Envisioning Origins” is the first theme of “The Inner Eye.” How do art forms render distant pasts as visible realities to be revered and performed? (see LaGamma 2002). One artistic tradition through which such a question is approached is that of Dogon peoples of Mali as well as their regional predecessors, the Djenne and Tellem. In the rocky outcrops of the Bandiagara Escarpment, Dogon have perpetuated a culture of rich philosophical foundations, often expressed through an astonishing array of sculptural genres.<sup>5</sup> Acknowledging the dynamic meaning-making and constantly changing adaptation of stories to meet circumstances of the moment (cf. M. Roberts and A. Roberts 1996), shared references to mythico-historical themes underscore a strong sense of origins among Dogon peoples. Such accounts describe the descent of an ark and eight proto-human beings called Nommo who brought life to earth.

Iconic figural representations characterize the Dogon sculptural repertoire. The ambiguous hermaphrodite with both male and female attributes is a hallmark of Dogon art and aptly embodies visions of blurred beginnings, and the figure seen



9 Hermaphrodite figure  
Mali, Dogon peoples, 18th–early 19th century  
Wood; 69.9 cm x 15.2 cm x 16.2 cm  
Private collection

10 Horse and rider  
Mali, Dogon peoples (Soninke), ca. 1400  
Wood; 54.3 cm x 16.5 cm  
Private collection

here is physically supported by founding ancestors who brought humanity to the Earth (Fig. 9). With beard and breasts and incised marks around the neck and arms, the figure seems to gaze far beyond this world, as if to another place and time and a world apart. Dogon also depict equestrians (Fig. 10). When the Supreme Being sent an ark from the heavens to establish humanity on earth, a horse was the first beast to exit the ark, thus introducing the animal’s exceptional abilities and prestige to the world (Kreamer 2012). Equestrian figures may represent village priests, mythical characters, primordial beings, or agents of historical change (Nooter 1993:209). Such works envision mythico-historical origins and show how the beginnings of humankind can be made present through spiritual connections.

### THE MATERNAL GAZE

Many African works of art depict mother and child as the most essential relationship of human engagement and intimacy (Cole 1990). For many rural peoples, there is no wealth greater than a child, for when infant mortality rates are high, birth is a gift of the gods. In the sculptures chosen for “The Inner Eye,” artists have emphasized the maternal gaze to express the potency of this bond. From the deeply moving relationship of a Bamana mother and child (Fig. 11) to the otherworldly meditative demeanor of a Mbembe muse (Fig. 12), and from a Yoruba mother’s protective eyes of life force (Fig. 6) to a Yombe mother’s eyes of reflective impenetrability, mother-and-child are inseparable, as reflected in gazes of nurturing love.

With monumentality, engaging presence, and a demeanor of dignity and maternal dedication, an ancient West African sculpture embodies the continuity of generations. Gwan figures made by Bamana peoples of Mali (Fig. 11) possess exceptional attributes of fertility and force and have long helped women through the physical challenges of conception and childbirth (see Ezra 1986). “Gwan” alludes to ardent will and supernatural powers and was the name also given to the tall furnaces in which iron was smelted and “born” to provide raw metal forged

into essential tools and weapons (see McNaughton 1993). At an annual Day of Gwan, public displays of sculpture greet the new agricultural season. Women promise to dedicate their children to Gwan should they be so fortunate as to give birth safely in the year to come.

Gwan figures are imposing presences, and like all African art, they are conceptual rather than simply naturalistic, for their forms offer an aesthetic of ideas and efficacy. This figure incarnates strength and pride in its upright bearing, elegantly elongated neck, broad shoulders, and lithe torso to which a newborn eagerly clings. Downcast eyes and sublime composure bespeak spiritual grace, while an offered breast and the slightest tilt of the head toward the infant lend palpable humanity. A knife strapped to the upper arm and an amulet-studded headdress convey physical and mystical capacities: She is the mother of and for all.



11 Mother and child figure for the Gwan Association  
Mali, ca. 1279–1395  
Wood; 96.5 cm × 29.2 cm × 30.5 cm  
Gift of the 2013 Collectors Committee, with additional  
funds provided by Kelvin Davis and Bobby Kotick  
Photo: © Museum Associates/LACMA

12 Mother and child figure  
Nigeria, Cross River, Mbembe peoples, 1744–1788  
Wood; 88.9 cm × 59.7 cm × 73.7 cm  
Private collection







**13** Multi-headed figure  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lega Peoples,  
late 19th–early 20th century  
Wood and paint; 31.5 cm × 14.5 cm × 13 cm  
Fowler Museum at UCLA, Gift of Jay T. Last  
Photo: © Fowler Museum at UCLA

**14** Bust  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lega Peoples,  
late 19th–early 20th century  
Ivory and cowrie shell; 17.7 cm × 8.1 cm × 8 cm  
Fowler Museum at UCLA, Gift of Jay T. Last  
Photo: © Fowler Museum at UCLA

Nearby sits an equally regal mother and child, its wood deeply weathered and worn from generations of outdoor use as the insignia of a monumental slit drum once employed by Mbembe peoples of southeastern Nigeria (Fig. 12). As documented by Alisa LaGamma (2013), fewer than twenty such figures are known, and while most depict men, several are mother-and-child figures. Of these, this sculpture presents a most commanding female, with upward gaze and a profoundly introspective visage. The upright pose befits her role as the spouse who gave birth to the first male descendent of the lineage, and her simultaneous pride in and protection of her infant are expressed by the artist’s brilliantly sensitive approach. The vertical emphasis of her torso merges with the horizontality of the baby, as LaGamma points out, softening the evocatively eroded representation of maternal love. The baby suckles her mother’s breast as she sits at the ready, contemplative yet dynamically sure in her courage and purpose.

### INSIGHT AS EDUCATION

One of the most potent ways that works of African art convey insight is through their use in educational contexts. Among Lega peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, life is understood as stages of learning. An association called Bwami is dedicated to teaching moral codes and ethical standards by which behavior and integrity are judged.<sup>6</sup> However, unlike many initiation associations that bridge from childhood to adulthood, Bwami never ends. It is a lifelong learning association, with five levels for men and three for women, and death and afterlife provide ultimate erudition (Biebuyck 1973:136). The older one becomes, the higher one ascends through the ranks of Bwami, affirming the extraordinary respect and love that community members have for their elders.

Lega sculptures that teach initiates moral precepts through verbal arts are carved from wood and ivory, with natural objects included in object displays to enrich meaning-making. Human and animal forms are the most prominent subject matter, with human figures, busts, and masks emphasized in “The Inner Eye.” The goal of such works is to envision philosophical concepts. For example, figures known in Lega proverbs as “Mr. Many Heads” (Fig. 13) allude to the all-seeing powers of those who have ascended the stages of Bwami and whose acquisition of knowledge enables them to remain wise and fair-minded (Biebuyck 1973:220–21).

Great elders are honored by works in ivory, and busts with eyes alluding to or set with cowrie shells portray the extended ken of those whose age and experience bring them profundity (Fig. 14). As Elisabeth Cameron writes, “of all the initiation objects, the Lega consider *maginga* (ivory busts) to have the strongest innate power, and they often use bits of the ivory





15 Mask  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lega Peoples,  
late 19th–early 20th century  
Wood and pigment; 26.4 cm × 15.5 cm × 6.8 cm  
Fowler Museum at UCLA, Gift of Jay T. Last  
Photo: © Fowler Museum at UCLA

features sometimes realized in such streamlined elegance as to avoid rendering eyes altogether (Fig. 15). Such masks may illustrate the saying, “Big-One of the men’s house, the guardian, has no eyes” (Biebuyck 1986:77), and “although this important high-level Bwami member does not see with his eyes, he sees with his heart and guards the affairs of the community” (Cameron 2001:209). In other words, introspective wisdom results from “inner eyes,” as Yoruba might say.

#### BEHOLDING SPIRIT

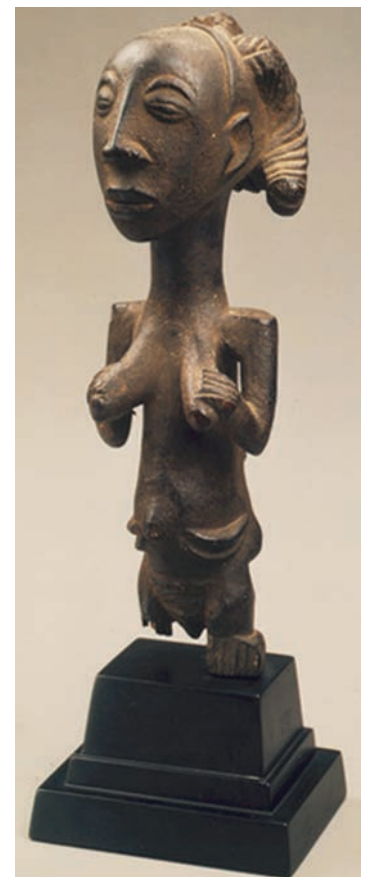
In cultures of southeastern DRC, many sculptural works envision interaction with the spirit world. For example, objects associated with Luba kingship such as thrones, scepters, ceremonial axes, and female figures, are embodiments of spiritual capacity that empower the ruler and the community as a whole (Figs. 16–17). Female images attract spirits to reside within them, and their gazes are not intended for human eyes so much as the otherworldly eyes of the *bavidye*—twinned tutelary spirits who regulate the human realm and oversee the doings of kings (M. Roberts 2013). Kings join the *bavidye* at death, but they are also incarnated by sacred women who assume the title of the

scraped from these figures to mix in a drink intended for medicinal purposes” (2001:120–25, citing Biebuyck 1973:174). Many Lega masks convey similarly heightened perception through their chalk-laden faces that manifest the spirit world, and with



16 Female figure  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Luba peoples, 18th to 19th century  
Wood, textile remains, and metal projection at the back of the head, plant fiber cordage and metal beads at waist, traces of red pigment on the headdress; 31 cm × 11 cm × 12 cm  
Fowler Museum at UCLA, Gift of The Wellcome Trust  
Photo: © Fowler Museum at UCLA

17 Female figure  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Luba peoples, ca. 1820–1850  
Wood; 25.7 cm × 9.5 cm × 9.8 cm  
Private collection





18 Royal throne  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Luba peoples,  
18th–19th century  
Wood, glass, and fiber; 42.4 cm x 23.2 cm x 21.4 cm  
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and  
Anthropology, Philadelphia  
*Photo: courtesy of Penn Museum*

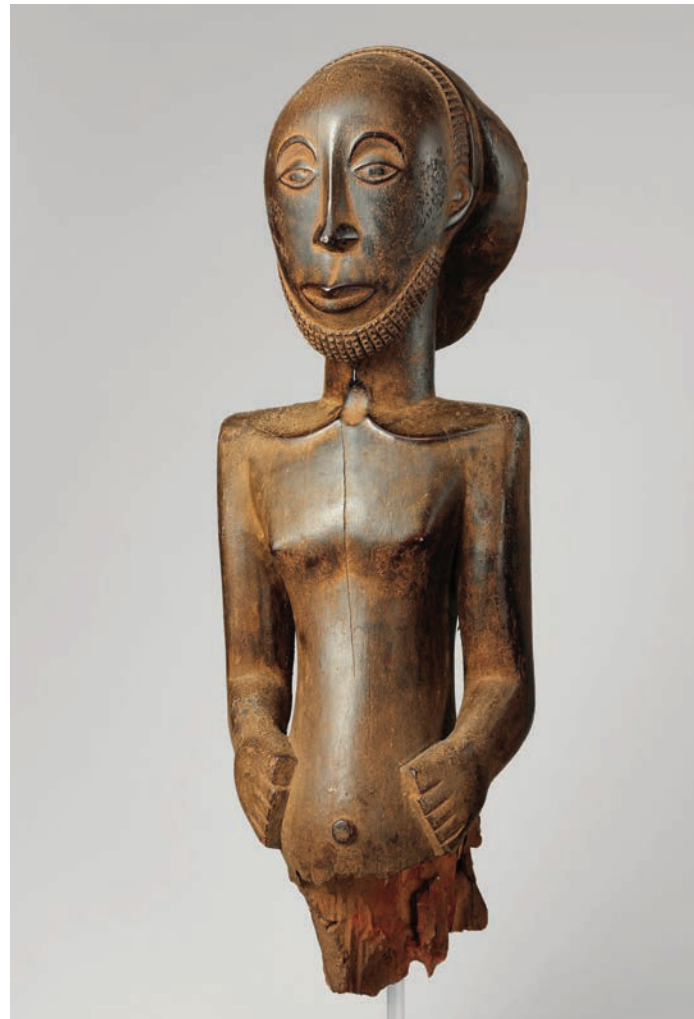
19 Male commemorative figure  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Hema peoples,  
18th–19th century  
Wood; 67.3 cm x 22.9 cm x 19.1 cm  
Private collection

#### PATTERNS OF PERCEPTION

Approaches to inner eyes and outward gazes are not restricted to sculpture in the arts of Africa. Textiles are a most dynamic artistic expression that may convey perception through visionary patterns. “The Inner Eye” features a display of fourteen woven and embroidered panels made by Kuba artists of the DRC. This group, of which a selection is shown here (Figs. 20–21), was chosen from an outstanding collection of 117 Kuba textiles acquired by LACMA in 2009. These striking works represent the visionary versatility of Kuba artists, for their designs are not only aesthetically brilliant, they are embedded with secret knowledge and esoteric wisdom. Used for trade and tribute in precolonial times, such panels were objects of transaction and

deceased king and ensure that his memory is perpetuated.<sup>7</sup> A Luba throne depicts a woman who peers into another realm and is a connecting point between the living ruler and his ancestors (Fig. 18). Her inward gaze is one of transcendence as she ensures the continuity of the kingdom and upholds the realm as the seat of power. Many such thrones were rarely if ever shown in public and were kept swathed in white cloth and hidden in an adjacent village in reverence and to protect them from theft by political adversaries (M. Roberts and A. Roberts 1996).

Regal male figures made by Hema peoples are evocations of heroic leaders of society and lineage heads who guided people through the challenges of everyday existence while providing their communities with nurturing, protective care (Neyt 1977, LaGamma 2011). The stance of hands to abdomen is a sign that these figures are gesturing to the memory of their mothers (Fig. 19). Hema and related groups such as Kusu remember their maternal ancestors with downcast eyes and contemplative demeanors and reinforce the powerful connection between rulers and their predecessors that is the lifeline to human survival and continuity.





20 Textile panel  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kuba Culture,  
Shoowa people, late 19th to early 20th century  
Raffia palm plain weave; cut pile and embroidery;  
70.8 cm x 67 cm  
Gift of the 2009 Collectors Committee  
Photo: © Museum Associates/LACMA

21 Textile panel  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kuba Culture,  
Shoowa people, late 19th to early 20th century  
Raffia palm plain weave; cut pile and embroidery;  
59 cm x 56 cm  
Gift of the 2009 Collectors Committee  
Photo: © Museum Associates/LACMA

transfer central to securing alliances, creating affiliations, and expanding the influence of the kingdom (Binkley and Darish 2010:127).

Such cut-pile cloths combined Kuba men's and women's labor and creativity (M. Adams 1978). Men wove the cloth of raffia fiber, and then women embroidered the remarkably complex designs. "To create the velvety effect, the seamstress drew a strand of fiber through the already woven cloth, and then cut and brushed the ends so that short tufts were formed" (M.J. Adams 1981:232, verb tense changed). As women executed the designs, they did not strive for regularity, but instead achieved astonishing asymmetrical alternations of tone, pattern, and texture. Names for the designs known only to women made esoteric and gendered symbolic references. These striking works are related to other types of Kuba skirts and panels, some long and used for status and prestige, tribute, dowries, funerals, and other ceremonial occasions.

While these exhibited examples date from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, they have a contemporary spirit of design and a dazzling geometry resonant with jazz as an idiom of purposeful dissonance, improvisation, and virtuosity (Thompson 1974:10–11). The renown of Kuba textile panels

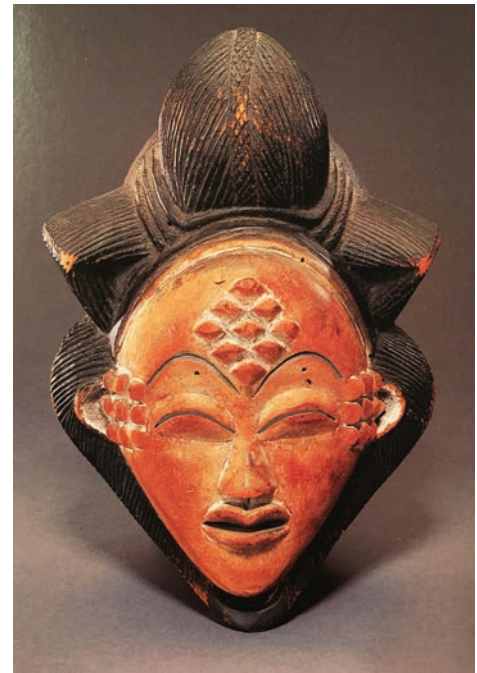


in the West has grown because of their Escher-like compositions, and they have become an inspiration for a wide range of manufactured fabrics and domestic products such as sheets, pillows, and garments. In such non-African contexts, designs are esteemed, copied, and adapted, yet the profound landscapes of pattern conjoined with layers of perceptive knowledge that informed the visuality of Kuba cloths are specific to the textiles made for use and display in Kuba contexts of epistemological insight.

#### VISIONARY PERFORMANCE

The performance of masquerades exists in many African cultures historically, yet manifestation of spirit presence through masked performances is astoundingly diverse (see A. Roberts 2016). "The Inner Eye" presents a suite of masks that represents such aesthetic range, yet each has a particular lesson to impart about vision (Fig. 26). Masks, more than any other art form, are imbued with the inner eye, in the sense that masks imply a dual identity—that of the dancer and that of the spirit or presence that is awakened and made manifest through masquerade performance. As Yoruba say, every person has an inner eye and an outer eye, and in a sense a masquerader is the ultimate embodiment of this dialectical concept.

Three female masks articulate diverse visualities, despite the fact that all three are depictions of idealized womanhood: a Baule Mblo portrait mask surmounted by three bird heads, a Chokwe mask called Pwo, and a Punu mask known as *mukudj*. Amidst the many mask forms of the Baule, Mblo maskers appear in sequence toward the end of a performance, one by one. Male dancers evoke the most beautiful female dancers of the community, and such masks are escorted by "namesake" women whenever possible (Fig. 22). The clean surfaces, embellishments of jewelry and scarves, beautiful cloth, and fresh green leaves of Mblo costuming announce that the best of Baule culture is on display. Meant for entertainment, Mblo are not secret or



(clockwise from top left)

22 Mask with three bird heads  
Côte d'Ivoire, Baule peoples, 19th Century  
Wood and pigment; 25.4 cm x 15.6 cm x 10.2 cm  
Private collection

23 Female mask: Pwo  
Angola, Chokwe peoples, ca. 1820  
Wood, metal and fiber; 37.5 cm x 17.1 cm x 26.7 cm  
Private collection

24 Female mask  
Gabon, Punu peoples, 19th century  
Wood and pigment; 34 cm x 23 cm  
Jerry Solomon, Los Angeles  
Photo: © Fowler Museum at UCLA

25 Mask  
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Teke/Tsaye peoples, ca. 1850  
Wood with polychrome; 29.8 cm x 26.4 cm x 7.6 cm  
Private collection



off-limits as many Baule sacred objects are, yet they are not displayed publicly between performances. As the performer Kalou Yao explained to Susan Vogel, "If we don't look at it, it is because of women. It is a beautiful thing. The day it comes out .... the woman who is its *ndoma* (namesake) and the other women think how beautiful it is. I dance the mask for those women. It is not for yourself, a man, that you take it out" and perform it (Vogel 1998:166).

Rapt anticipation of fleeting moments of masquerade, when the sequence of masks presents an orderly world and the beauty of masks is ephemeral, is the essence of many African performance idioms. Chokwe peoples of the DRC, Zambia, and Angola also have masks that honor women, but rather than being portraits like Mblo, these are representations of female ancestors who incarnate ideal womanhood in Chokwe society (Jordán 2000). Called Pwo, such masks with inward gaze depict proud and accomplished female characters honored by the community (Cameron 1998) (Fig. 23). They are performed at

the culmination of boys' initiation rites into adulthood and are especially beloved, for they encapsulate the shifting relationship of a mother to a boy as he ascends the ranks to manhood. Pwo masks embody the beauty and integrity of women as pillars of the community and the ancestral bedrock of society.

*Mukudj* masks made by Punu peoples of southwestern Gabon are idealized portraits of beautiful women of "refined physiognomy" (LaGamma 2015a:208) (Fig. 24). Raised patterns of scarification were once inscribed on women's faces to denote and enhance their charms and social standing. White clay adorning a *mukudj* is associated with the spirit realm "and, in the context of the dance, transforms the subjects represented from mere mortals into transcendent beings who command formidable powers" (LaGamma 2015a:208). Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of such masquerades is that they are performed upon ten-foot-tall stilts by young men who accomplish acrobatic choreographies with astounding agility.

In this, the athleticism of *mukudj* masquerade is somewhat

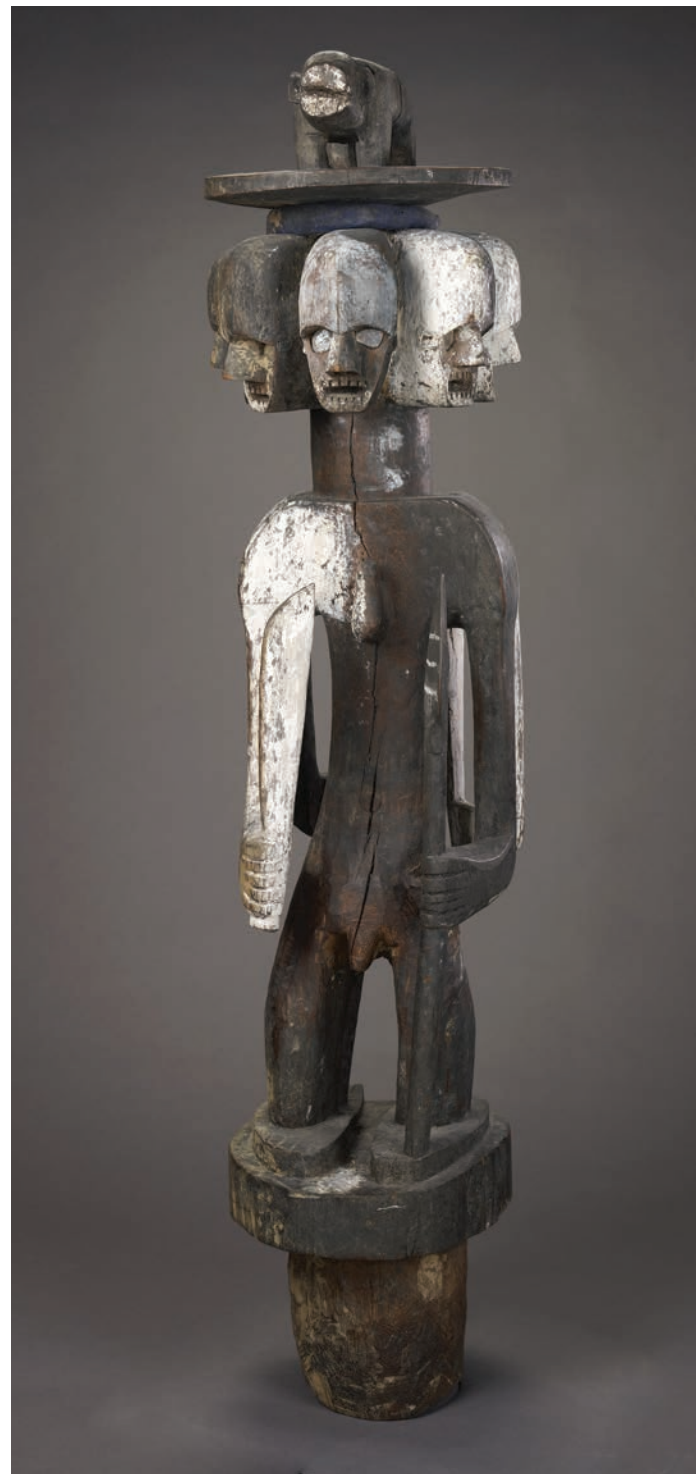


similar to that of men dancing *kidumu* among Teke Tsaayi people living in the borderland between Gabon and the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville) (Fig. 25). As observed in the 1960s, young men wearing colorful face masks “cartwheeled many times, turning upside down as best they could, [in] a movement difficult to perform because the mask is only held in place by a string which the dancer grips tightly between his teeth” (Dupré 1991:217). *Kidumu*, derived from a word for “the noise of thunder and the fame of chiefs,” are circular, flat masks adorned with red, white, and black motifs divided horizontally by a raised line called “the roof beam.” This structure in turn divides upper realms of human activity from a mirror spiritual plane beneath, and the somersaults of young men wearing such masks bring hallowed ancestral forces into dynamic visibility and to bear upon human circumstances of the here and now.<sup>8</sup>

#### VIGILANT SENTINELS

The eyes perform many roles via the arts of Africa, but among the most important are to “see” and so promote wellbeing and protect individuals and communities from misfortune and peril. In many instances, it is critical to call upon the spirit world for assistance in the deflection of malevolence and the maintenance of social harmony. Some of the most monumentally striking sculptures are made for such purposes, and they often compellingly render evident eyes complemented by “inner eyes” that apprehend invisible forces at work for and against those devoted to such spiritual presences.

A most commanding protective figure is a multiheaded forest spirit figure (Fig. 27) made by Ijo people of the Niger Delta. The



26 Face mask  
Gabon, Tsogo peoples, late 19th–early 20th century  
Wood and paint; 32 cm x 21.3 cm x 8.5 cm  
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Walt Disney World Co., a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company  
Photo: courtesy of National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution

27 Shrine figure  
Nigeria, Ijo peoples, late 19th–20th century  
Wood, glass eyes and paint; 172.7 cm x 35.6 cm x 45.7 cm  
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, gift of Phyllis C. Wattis and the Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for Major Accessions  
Photo: © Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco



**28** Power figure  
Democratic Republic of the  
Congo, Songye peoples, ca.  
1870  
Wood, antelope horn and  
fiber; 90 cm x 22.2 cm x  
36.8 cm  
Private collection

**29** Power figure: *nkisi nkondi*  
Democratic Republic of  
the Congo, Kongo peoples,  
1850s  
Wood, metal spikes, cowrie  
shell, cloth and porcelain;  
118.1 cm x 43.2 cm x 27.9 cm  
Private collection



artist has directed the capricious powers of the forest to community ends, for the imposing being with seven heads protected a community from wilderness dangers. Militaristic themes are depicted as an invincible warrior is equipped with weapons and black and white paint, as well as a quadruped surmounting the upper platform to ward away malicious forces (cf. Horton 1965). The imposing figure's fourteen eyes, embedded with glass, provide haunting warning to any who would dare commit an offense by making ever so tangible the fact that nothing escapes this spirit's panoptic surveillance.

Two other compelling works demonstrate how vigilance can be expressed in the most assertive of ways. A Songye *nkishi* power figure (Fig. 28) is riveting for its horns extending from the top of its head and its right eye. Such horns project strength and authority and are widely used in central Africa to contain potent medicinal substances for healing, but also for circumventing or combating evil forces. For Songye peoples of southeastern DRC, such devices further direct the arcane wisdom of elders toward community needs (Hersak 1985:130). Songye figures of this size and stature were not personal possessions, but rather reflected "the collective desire" of an entire community; they had their own houses and were cared for by designated guardians who interpreted dreams and messages regarding threats from malevolent spirits or trespassers. Songye *nkishi* were often so laden with powerful substances that they could not be handled with human hands, but instead were manipulated with long wooden

poles attached under the figure's arms, which attendants held as they assisted the figure to "walk" through town and confront "malign spirit invaders" (Hersak 1985:132). Doing so emphatically announced that the *nkishi*'s eyes were not just vigilant but spiritually empowered and enhanced by the efficacies of animals from which the horns and other accouterments were derived. Like a channel for sight to travel from this world to the next, this artist masterfully expressed the power of inner vision through the potency of its outward manifestation of a power-packed right eye.

Extended vision is expressed by other central African societies through some of the boldest of all sculptures—the great *nkisi nkondi* of Kongo and related peoples. There are few object types in the world that have garnered as much curiosity and inspired as much awe as these blade-studded, broad-shouldered pronouncements of power, capacity, and transcendence. Such figures were communally owned if of monumental scale, and they could "inoculate their communities from an onslaught of

threats to their well-being,” including warding off “the ravages of colonialism” and imposing justice by punishing criminal acts through spiritually sanctioned means (LaGamma 2015b:265).

Knowledge about these works is complex and detailed, as documented most recently by Alisa LaGamma (2015b) and earlier by Wyatt MacGaffey (1993) in his perceptive essay on “the eyes of understanding” and Robert Farris Thompson (1981) in his seminal study situating Kongo arts in cosmology. From the specific wood used for the sculptural framework to the many types of hand-forged blades and European nails hammered into figures during invocations, the process of outfitting such a spiritual presence was intense and always required an *nganga* practitioner to create the medicinal bundles and consecrate the work. Three primary locations held such materials: an abdominal cavity (Fig. 29), around the chin, and within the eyes. “The semicircular or oval eyes [of many such figures] were cut from a buff-colored ceramic tile with lead-tin glaze ... The tiles were drilled to provide a hole for an iron-nail pupil and then covered with the resin mixture as a hermetic sealant” (LaGamma 2015b:260–61). Deposits of empowering matter were hidden in cavities behind the reflective surfaces and within the eyes, bestowing great visual acuity. The external eye, then, is but a shield for the inner eye of transformative potentialities.

#### SEEING BEYOND

One of the most important messages of “The Inner Eye” is that the visual is often a conduit to the invisible, and that seeing implies unseen insights. The last moments of a visit offer an eloquent statement about the power of art to transport us to the past and to propel us toward a future. An intimate gallery space fosters reverence and respectful viewing as a shrine of objects

that commemorate family members and loved ones who have passed on to become benevolent ancestors. A Baule figure from Côte d’Ivoire presents a man’s wife in the other world, while reliquary guardians of Fang and Kota peoples of Gabon once guarded the souls of the departed. Commemorative posts of Malagasy people honored the leaders of great lineages and still stand in testament to the immortal eye. Each speaks to the ways that every culture cherishes those who came before, and creates a pathway between worlds that can transcend loss to restore hope and resilience.

Works selected for this last section demonstrate how the invisible is made visible as contact is maintained with another world. Baule spirit figures can sometimes be difficult to identify as there are two types: those made for nature spirits who can disrupt peoples’ lives until divination is undertaken and a sculpture is made, and spirit-spouse figures that give tangible form and presence to the helpmates that every individual had in the other world before being born into this one (Vogel 1981). A spirit-spouse figure is commissioned from an artist when a person is suffering marital or fertility problems that may be attributed to the jealousy of a neglected husband or wife in the other world. A composed and elegant figure (Fig. 30) depicts a mature woman who has borne children and acquired wealth, as evidenced by the bracelets she wears. These honorific criteria are essential to placating a spirit spouse’s wrath and then “bringing down” the invisible mate to tangible form (Ravenhill 1994: 27). Once ensconced in a shrine in the human spouse’s bedroom



30 Female figure  
Côte d’Ivoire, Baule peoples, 19th century  
Wood, glass beads and carnelian stone beads;  
44.2 cm x 10.2 cm x 10.9 cm  
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian  
Institution, Gift of Walt Disney World Co., a  
subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company  
Photo: courtesy of National Museum of African  
Art, Smithsonian Institution

31 Reliquary guardian head: *byeri*  
Gabon, Fang peoples, 1800  
Wood; 40.6 cm x 15.9 cm x 10.8 cm  
Private collection







32 Reliquary guardian figure  
Gabon, Kota peoples, ca. 1860–1880  
Copper, brass, iron and wood; 66 cm x 45.7  
cm x 10.8 cm  
Private collection

and offered food and drink, love and attention, the spirit spouse becomes a highly personal, discreet, and invisible object to all but its owner. As Vogel writes, “Baule sculpture is mostly viewed in constrained, orchestrated circumstances. The usual experience is less one of *seeing* the work than of apprehending it in a multisensory way that involves what one *knows* as much as what one sees” (1998:111–22).

In contrast to “bringing down” an invisible being to earthly purpose, some works are concerned with keeping invisible what should be unseen by serving as guardians of human remains—although the examples in “The Inner Eye” are no longer associated with ancestral relics as they once were. Fang and Kota guardian figures provide powerful physical and metaphysical connection between the living and the dead. As Alisa LaGamma has eloquently expressed, “Fang believed that a ritual death

was a prerequisite for an initiate to be admitted to the ancestor cult, for only in that way would he gain exposure to the miracles ... that the ancestors were capable of performing. Access to this desired state of exalted awareness is referred to as ‘having one’s head opened,’” and as LaGamma further states, the lifelike sculpted heads of the Fang personify this enlightenment (2007:190).

Fang sculpted heads and related busts and full figures (Fig. 31) are characterized by dark stained wood, often gleaming with the residue of palm oil applications made as offerings to and blessings of the deceased. The eyes were often covered with copper or brass forms pierced with iron pupils, and even those that have lost such features still emanate the otherworldly yet “relentless gaze” of eyes once inset with polished metal that flashed from the dark corners where the figures were kept, to keep out



33 Commemorative male figure  
Madagascar, Vezo peoples, ca. 1800  
Wood; 55.9 cm x 15.9 cm x 15.2 cm  
New York private collection



34 Commemorative female figure  
Madagascar, Vezo peoples, ca. 1800  
Wood; 44.5 cm x 17.1 cm x 13.3 cm  
New York private collection

Downloaded from [http://direct.mit.edu/afar/article-pdf/50/1/60/1737515/afar\\_a\\_00332.pdf](http://direct.mit.edu/afar/article-pdf/50/1/60/1737515/afar_a_00332.pdf) by guest on 08 September 2023

intruders (Fernandez 1981). Kota reliquary figures offered similar protection, for their lozenge-shaped forms surmounted by a brilliantly sculpted wooden head sheathed in shining copper or brass repelled trespassers from the shrine house while ensuring harmonious interaction between the dead and their descendants. A Kota *mbulu* commemorative figure embodies the efficacy of dually directed vision as well as external and inner eyes (Fig. 32). “As guardians of influential ancestors, southern Kota *mbulu* figures assured the happiness and well-being of descendants that cared for them. Janus *mbulu viti* were considered especially efficacious given their ability to anticipate danger from either direction .... It has been suggested that the oppositions embraced by such works are meant to evoke the existential polarities of life and death” (LaGamma 2007:252).

Finally, life and death, this world and the other, love and loss,

are poetically and poignantly articulated in one of the most remarkable male/female couples in African art. A pair of choreographically kinetic figures made from wood that has been weathered and washed through the sunshine and storms of every season for generations speaks to the passing of generations and the continuity of the Vezo peoples of Madagascar (Figs. 33–34). Funerary practices are critically important to many peoples of Madagascar, and links between the large Indian Ocean island and South Asia explain a different aesthetic than is common in much of sub-Saharan Africa (Mack 1986). Yet, while most Malagasy tomb sculptures that are displayed in groupings on hillsides and plateaus in the country are more frontal, monumental, and static in their stances, this pair seems to envision the dance of time’s passage and the transcendence of earthly existence to a place apart.

## Notes

Warm thanks are extended to Leslie Jones, editor of African Arts, for her patient help in bringing this exhibition preview to print; to colleagues at LACMA for their assistance in realizing the “The Inner Eye” exhibition; to the exhibition lenders for generously sharing their works; and to Allen F. Roberts for his brilliant editorial vision. For my parents, Nancy and Robert Nooter, and our children.

1 In his landmark explanation of the heuristic distinction between vision and visuality, Hal Foster notes that “although vision suggests sight as a physical operation, and visuality as a social fact, the two are not opposed as nature to culture: vision is social and historical too, and visuality involves the body and the psyche” (1988:ix). Such ambiguities are to be understood as both implicit to and as sources of empowering reflection in the works presented in “The Inner Eye.”

2 Among relevant writings, see Blier 2004, Drewal 2005, Lamp 2004, M. Roberts 2009, and Strother 2000.

3 While the great majority of masked performers are men in sub-Saharan Africa, there are very important exceptions; see Kasfir 1998.

4 In a two-volume Batch from MIT Press Journals available for e-readers (A. Roberts 2016), theories of masks and masquerade performances are reviewed and case studies presented in eighteen articles selected from the more than two hundred on the topic presented in *African Arts* over its fifty years of publication.

5 A healthy controversy exists in African Studies regarding the documentation of Dogon origin stories and related lore by French ethnographers beginning in the 1930s; see Ezra 1988, Nooter 1993:205–206. More recent scholarship has addressed the polyvalent nature of interpretation and oral tradition via Dogon narrative epistemology, stressing that diverging visions and versions are outcomes of social organization among dispersed, small, acephalous communities; for an excellent review of these matters as well as a comparative study of Dogon and Yoruba “deep thought,” see Apter 2005.

6 Tragically, Lega people live in lands long wracked by civil strife. It is not clear what if any Bwami practices and artistic productions mentioned here continue in our days.

7 It is not clear if this practice continues; see M. Roberts and A. Roberts 1996, 2007.

8 Teke up-and-over dancing is related to movement practices of other central African peoples that were brought to Brazil through the trans-Atlantic slave trade, where they became *capoeira*; see A. Roberts 2013:96–98.

## References cited

- Abiodun, Rowland. 2014. *Yoruba Art and Language: Seeking the African in African Art*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1994. “Understanding Yoruba Art and Aesthetics: The Concept of Ase.” *African Arts* 27 (3):68–78, 102–103.
- Adams, Marie Jeanne. 1981. “Kuba Skirt Wrapper.” In *For Spirits and Kings: African Art from the Paul and Ruth Tishman Collection*, ed. Susan Vogel, pp. 232–33. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Adams, Monni. 1978. “Kuba Embroidered Cloth.” *African Arts* 12 (1):24–39, 106–107.
- Apter, Andrew. 2005. “Griaule Legacy: Rethinking ‘la parole claire’ in Dogon Studies.” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 45 (177):95–130.
- Biebuyck, Daniel. 1986. *The Arts of Zaïre, Vol. 2, East-ern Zaïre*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1973. *Lega Culture: Art, Initiation and Moral Philosophy Among a Central African People*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Binkley, David, and Patricia Darish. 2010. *Visions of Africa: Kuba*. Milan: 5Continents.
- Blier, Suzanne, ed. 2004. *Art of the Senses: African Masterpieces from the Teel Collection*. Boston, MA: MFA Publications, Boston Museum of Fine Arts.
- Bravmann, René. 1983. *African Islam*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Cameron, Elisabeth. 2001. *Art of the Lega*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. “Potential and Fulfilled Women: Initiations, Sculpture, and Masquerades in Kabompo District, Zambia.” In *Chokwe! Art and Initiation Among Chokwe and Related Peoples*, ed. Manuel Jordán, pp. 76–83. Munich: Prestel for the Birmingham (AL) Museum of Art.
- Cole, Herbert. 1990. *Icons: Ideals and Power in the Art of Africa*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969. “Art as a Verb in Iboland.” *African Arts* 3 (1):34–41, 88.
- Drewal, Henry. 2005. “First Word: Senses in Understandings of Art.” *African Arts* 38 (2):1, 4, 6, 88, 96.
- Dupré, Marie-Claude. 1991. “Colours in Kidumu Masks of the Teke Tsaayi.” In *Body and Space: Symbolic Models of Unity and Division in African Cosmology and Experience*, ed. A. Jacobson-Widding,

Uppsala Studies in Cultural Anthropology, no. 16, pp. 217–35. Uppsala: Uppsala University.

Eck, Diana. 1998. *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ezra, Kate. 1988. *Art of the Dogon: Selections from the Lester Wunderman Collection*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1986. *A Human Ideal in African Art: Bamana Figurative Sculpture*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Fernandez, James. 1981. “Reliquary Head, Gabon, Fang.” In *For Spirits and Kings: African Art from the Paul and Ruth Tishman Collection*, ed. Susan Vogel, p. 189. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Fischer, Eberhard. 1978. “Dan Forest Spirits: Masks in Dan Villages.” *African Arts* 11 (2):16–23, 94.

Foster, Hal. 1988. “Preface.” In *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster, pp. ix–xiv. DIA Art Foundation, Discussions in Contemporary Culture, No. 2. Seattle, WA: Bay Press.

Hersak, Dunja. 1985. *Songye Masks and Figure Sculpture*. London: Ethnographica.

Horton, Robin. 1965. *Kalabari Sculpture*. Lagos: Nigerian Federal Department of Antiquities.

Jay, Martin. 1988. “Scopic Regimes of Modernity.” In *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster, pp. 1–23. DIA Art Foundation, Discussions in Contemporary Culture, No. 2. Seattle, WA: Bay Press.

Jordán, Manuel. 2000. “Revisiting Pwo.” *African Arts* 33 (4):16–25, 92–93.

Kasfir, Sidney. 1998. “Elephant Women, Furious and Majestic: Women’s Masquerade in Africa and the Diaspora.” *African Arts* 31 (2):18–27, 92.

Kreamer, Christine. 2012. “African Cosmos: Performing the Moral Universe.” In *African Cosmos: Stellar Arts*, pp. 114–53. New York: Monicelli Press for the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2007. “Inscribing Power/Writing Politics.” In *Inscribing Meaning: Writing and Graphic Systems in African Art*, ed. C. Kreamer, M. N. Roberts, E. Harney, and A. Purpura, pp. 126–45. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Lacan, Jacques. 2007. “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience.” In *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. B. Fink, pp. 75–82. New York: Norton.

- LaGamma, Alisa. 2015a. "Punu Mukudj Mask." In *African Art in the Barnes Foundation*, ed. Christa Clarke, pp. 208–209. New York: Skir Rizzoli for the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2015b. *Kongo: Power and Majesty*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013. "Silenced Mbembe Muses." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 48 (1). [www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/675318](http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/675318).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. *Heroic Africans: Legendary Leaders, Iconic Sculptures*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. *Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2002. *Genesis: Ideas of Origin in African Sculpture*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Laibi, Shakur. 1998. *Soufisme et art visuel: Iconographie du sacré*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Lamp, Frederick. 2004. *See the Music, Hear the Dance: Rethinking African Art at the Baltimore Museum of Art*. Munich: Prestel for the Baltimore Museum of Art.
- Lawal, Babatunde. 2001. "Àwòrán: Representing the Self and Its Metaphysical Other in Yoruba Art." *The Art Bulletin* 83 (3):498–526.
- MacGaffey, Wyatt. 1993. *Astonishment & Power: The Eyes of Understanding: Kongo Minkisi*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Mack, John. *Madagascar: Island of the Ancestors*. London: British Museum Press.
- McNaughton, Patrick. 1993. *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Neyt, François. 1977. *La Grande Statuaire Hembra du Zaïre*. Brussels: Institut Supérieur d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art.
- Nooter, Mary, ed. 1993. *Secrecy: African Art that Conceals and Reveals*. New York: Museum for African Art.
- Pemberton III, John, ed. 2000. *Insight and Artistry in African Divination*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Ravenhill, Philip. 1994. *The Self and the Other: Personhood and Images Among the Baule, Côte d'Ivoire*. Monograph Series No. 28. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.
- Roberts, Allen F. 2016. *African Masks and Masquerades: A Batch from African Arts*, Parts 1 and 2. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/page/batches>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2013. "Histories Made by Bodies." In *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo*, pp. 76–98. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Roberts, Allen F., and Mary N. Roberts. 2003. *A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.
- Roberts, Mary N. 2013. "The King Is a Woman: Shaping Power in Luba Royal Arts." *African Arts* 46 (3):67–81.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. "Tactility and Transcendence: Epistemologies of Touch in African Arts and Spiritualities." In *Religion and Material Culture: The Matter of Belief*, pp. 77–97. New York: Routledge.
- Roberts, Mary N., and Allen F. Roberts. 2007. *Visions of Africa: Luba*. Milan: 5Continents.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997. *A Sense of Wonder: African Art from the Faletti Family Collection*. Seattle: University of Washington Press for the Phoenix Art Museum.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Memory: Luba Art and the Making of History*. Munich: Prestel for the Museum for African Art, New York.
- Seligman, Thomas. 1980. "Animism and Islam: A Mask from North-East Liberia." *Apollo* 111 (216):143–45.
- Strother, Z.S. 2000. "Smells and Bells: The Role of Skepticism in Pende Divination." In *Insight and Artistry in African Divination*, ed. John Pemberton III, pp. 99–115. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Thompson, Robert Farris. 1981. *Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Arts in Two Worlds*. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1974. *African Art in Motion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Unglaub, Jonathan. 2012. "Vision and the Visionary in Raphael by Christian K. Kleinbub (2011)" [book review]. *CAA Reviews*, [www.caareviews.org/reviews/1920](http://www.caareviews.org/reviews/1920), accessed November 12, 2015.
- Vogel, Susan. 1998. *Baule: African Art Western Eyes*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1981. "Female Figure, Ivory Coast, Baule." In *For Spirits and Kings: African Art from the Paul and Ruth Tishman Collection*, ed. Susan Vogel, p. 73. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.