



Dance mask

Not on display

Title/Description: Dance mask

Born: 1900 - 1999

Object Type: Mask

Materials: Pigment, Wood

Measurements: h. 325 x w. 82 mm

Accession Number: 214

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Africa, Côte d'Ivoire

Cultural Group: Guro

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This mask from the northern Guro represents *gu*, the wife of *zamble*, the antelope, in the most celebrated of their mythological masquerades. These masks are very popular, and their appearances are welcomed, the more so because only the most accomplished dancers are entrusted with wearing them. Compared with UEA 213, this example is conceived in a slender, even coquettish mode; the type is among the narrowest of all Guro masks, as is confirmed in a review of the 135 masks in an exhibition at the Rietburg Museum, Zurich (Fischer and Homberger, 1985).

The slenderness of the design helps to place emphasis on the topknot. This is held in place by four square motifs which are identified as leather-covered Koranic charms worn to bring good luck. Fischer and Homberger (1985: fig. 23) illustrate a woman with her hair in a topknot similarly bound with amuletic charms; the five 'fingers' below the topknot must be hair braids converging on the crown.

Margaret Carey, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 126.

Provenance

Acquired by Lisa Sainsbury from Sydney Burney as a gift for Robert Sainsbury before 1939.

Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
