



Miniature mask

Not on display

Title/Description: Miniature mask

Born: 1850 - 1950

Object Type: Mask

Materials: Elephant ivory

Measurements: h. 45 x w. 24 x d. 17 mm

Accession Number: 260

Historic Period: 19th Century - Late, 20th Century - Early

Production Place: Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Cultural Group: Katandu chiefdom, Pende

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Minyaki, or *ikhoko* (carved things) are ivory miniatures which were worn on a necklet to armlet by men who had undergone the initiation rites of the Mbuya secret society. To some extent, they were protective amulets, but their main purpose was to remind the initiate of his symbolic death and rebirth into adult society and the lessons and obligations that he learned during his period of seclusion in the bush. They were generally worn on a string of red or blue glass beads.

This mask is almost featureless from much wear, and is stained a deep coffee brown from camwood and oil on the wearer's skin. The three-pointed head-dress represents a chief's cap. It has been broken down the middle and repaired.

Margret 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. 191.

Provenance

Formerly belonging to Sydney Burney.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1949.

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