



Headrest

Not on display

Title/Description: Headrest

Born: 1900 c. - 1970 c.

Object Type: Implement

Materials: Brass, Wood

Measurements: h. 150 x w. 472 x d. 180 mm

Accession Number: 531

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo

The 'Yaka spectacles', mouth full of teeth, and legs double-jointed, with feet tensely gripping the rectangular base, give an impression of latent vigour and ferocity to this animal-shaped headrest.

The creature might be the yellow baboon which occurs in this part of Africa: despite the absence of a tail the pose is quite realistic. A grease mark on the curve of the animal's back shows that the headrest has been used by the original owner, who might even have been the carver. The fingers of the front paws overlap the vertical edge of the base, but the back feet, while executed in perfect symmetry to those in front, defy all anatomical possibilities, since they are turned round in 180 degrees so that the toes face backwards, curling round and under the base.

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. 189.

Provenance

Formerly belonging to Merton Simpson, New York.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1973.

Accessioned into the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia circa 1989.
