



Female half-figure

Not on display

Title/Description: Female half-figure

Born: 1850 c. - 1950 c.

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Fibre, Fur, Wood

Measurements: h. 370 x w. 225 x d. 240 mm

Accession Number: 532

Historic Period: 19th century, 20th century

Production Place: Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Cultural Group: Kusu

This figure was probably made to surmount a gourd filled with magic substances; examples of such guardian figures certainly occur among the Luba-Hemba and the Songye. This figure has a cavity in the crown, surely for reinforcing magic in the form of a medicine horn, which is consistent with Songye and Luba-Hemba parallels. The coiffure has affinities with the cascade style of the Luba-Shankadi, yet the torso, unlike most Luba female sculptures, shows no scarifications. Ritual anointments with palm oil, designed to strengthen the magical powers, have left the figure black and sticky.

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) pp. 208-209.

Provenance

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

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