



Cup on foot

Not on display

Title/Description: Cup on foot

Born: 1900 - 1950

Object Type: Cup

Materials: Copper, Wood

Measurements: h. 184 x w. 100 x d. 100 mm

Accession Number: 566

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Cultural Group: Kuba

The ceremonial drinking of palm wine seems to have been one of the most important, and doubtless one of the most enjoyable, activities of Kuba men's clubs, which may explain the large variety of cups found. It is almost impossible to find one that is not good to look at. They come shaped as tumblers or goblets or mugs, sometimes with the handle in the form of an arm or a man. Such cups are covered in a variety of interlacing patterns, showing the Kuba love of intricate design which finds its fullest expression in embroidered raphia cloth. Other cups may come as a manikin standing with arms akimbo: many, like this, are formed like a human head open at the crown. Head-shaped cups often come from the Lele, living just to the west of the Kuba in Kasai province, but this cup is rather more Kuba than Lele.

The head is plain to the point of austerity; in profile the line of the jaw and ear seems to echo the eyebrow line; the jutting nose, mouth and Adam's apple (umbilicus?) are balanced by the spreading toes and heel of the foot below. A copper strip, part applied, part inlaid, down the centre of forehead and nose is a rendering of the tribal marking often shown as a beaded strap on masks, but appearing less commonly on drinking cups or figures.

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. 197.

Exhibitions

'Power Plants: Intoxicants, Stimulants and Narcotics', Sainsbury Centre, UK, 14/09/2024-02/02/2025

Provenance

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from Merton D. Simpson, New York in 1974.

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