



Dance mask

On display**Title/Description:** Dance mask**Object Type:** Mask**Materials:** Cowrie, Fibre, Raphia, Shell, Wood**Measurements:** h. 340 x w. 240 x d. 22 mm**Accession Number:** 594**Historic Period:** 20th century**Production Place:** Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo**Cultural Group:** Kuba**Credit Line:** Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1974

Kuba royal masks are characterised by composite construction: here we have a wooden face mask painted in a design of light and dark triangles, combined with separately carved wooden ears and a painted and beaded hood of woven raphia cloth and blue calico. The principle royal mask, *mosh'ambooy mu shall*, representing Woot, the mythical ancestor-hero of the Bushoong ruling dynasty, is the most elaborate and spectacular of these. This mask is *Ngady a mwaash*, his sister-wife and co-founder of the Bushoong line (Cornet, 1978:198).

The *Ngady a mwaash* mask is said to have been introduced by a Queen Mother who according to tradition, lived in the late sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century. She wanted to improve women's status by means of a dance-mask; even so she was constrained to find a man and ask him to dance in imitation of a woman's steps.

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. 195.

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from Kamer & Cie S. A., Paris in 1974 out of funds provided by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury.
