

MARC ASSAYAG

African & Oceanic Art



Reflections



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To my knowledge, it is the Greek philosopher Protagoras who first observed that "*Man is the measure of all things; of what is, that it is; of what is not, that it is not*".

While this might be the first record of Man conceiving of himself as a creator, it is clear that, in practice, he had been doing so for millennia before Protagoras spoke the words.

Primitive man painted hieroglyphics of hunting scenes on cavern walls and ancient cultures adorned utilitarian objects with basic designs, but one can't help but wonder about the first time an object was seen as something more. Not something that Man could use but, rather, something that reflected an aspect of his world and, possibly, his divinity.

Was this first 'contact', the notion that divinity might be something outside of himself, something primitive man realized suddenly? Was it an Archimedes like "Eureka" moment? Or did it take place as a result of a long and slow process? Either way it is arguably by this little step that mankind took its biggest spiritual leap. It was this seed first planted that yielded the forest of his many systems' of belief. It was the birth of the ritual object.

No matter how it began we continue, in the same way and by the same process, to enjoy this same connection today. Moreover, although we now understand something about the objects that we collect, we still collect something greater than can be rationalized.

Just like primitive man, then, we continue to reverberate to the *Reflections* of our varied spirits.

It is my hope that the following pages illustrate this point through 35 selected objects. Combining age, provenance and artistry the objects are, to my eye, bound by another common thread that you are invited to enjoy..

The *Reflections* of ancient beliefs and ancient spirits.

African Art



Ijaw

1.

Hippopotamus Mask

ex Bernard Coll., Paris

A fine and rare Ijaw Hippopotamus mask
with superb encrusted patina.

Ca. 20th Cent

14 in - 35 cm





Lobi

2.

ex Campbell Coll., Canada

This is a classic large Lobi figure with a fantastic accumulation of lines.

Combining round and square planes in perfect unison, the body culminates in a sensitively carved face.

Carved by the "Master of Pentagonal Ears", the figure is in dense hardwood that has acquired an excellent patina over time.

Ca. 20th Cent

34 in - 100 cm







Yoruba

3.

ex Michael Oliver, Usa

This is a fine old Yoruba Shango wand featuring a beautifully carved woman's face in deep relief.

With traces of Reckitts blue in it's encrusted pigment, the wand has beautiful chocolate brown patina.

Ca. 20th Cent.

22 in - 54 cm





Senoufo

4.

ex Private Coll., Be

ex Monbrison Gallery, Paris

A very fine cubistic Senoufo figure with superb patina throughout.

With a hunched posture adding to its sensitive expression, the entire figure exudes a calm, serene feeling.

Ca. 20th Cent

12 in - 30 cm





Kran

5.

ex Private Collection, Usa

According to verbal history, this mask was brought back by a family relative prior to 1910.

Several features of this mask support his dating, the first being its tight diminutive size.

Intricately carved and with excellent expression in each of its three sets of eyes, the mask is both powerful and sensitive.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

8.5 in - 21 cm





Senufo

6.

ex Llewyn Coll., Uk

This charming Senufo pulley has a wide stance and an engaging geometric bird head as its main feature.

Well used for decades, the pulley has superb patina.

Ca. 20th Cent

5" - 12.5 cm





Dogon

7.

ex Oliver Castellan, Paris

This is a classic Dogon figure with a regal stance and encrusted patina.

With a rounded head above a columnar body, the figure has elongated arms and hands curling forward.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

9 in - 24 cm



Gaanda



8.

These iron currencies are beautifully stylized equine forms. Of well oxidized iron and with a sharpened cutting edge, the 'neck' of the horse is decorated with incised linear designs.

Ca. 20th Cent.

22 in - 53 cm





Chokwe

9.

Passport Mask

ex Drs. Jean & Noble Endicott Coll., Ny

This tight little mask is beautifully balanced in execution. With coffee bean eyes under an M shaped brow, the mask has a sweeping slender nose.

Ca. 20th Cent

4 in - 10 cm





Tabwa

10.

ex Drs Jean & Noble Endicott Coll., NY

Publications:

Hair in African Art and Culture

Roy Seiber, Frank Herreman

January 2003

Pg 34, Illus. 12

A beautiful little Tabwa doll with fine raised carving detailing its arms, coiffure and scarification marks.

Ca. 20th Cent

7 in - 17.5 cm





Chokwe

11.

ex Private Collection, Canada

This old axe has a finely carved head and an old hand hammered blade protruding from its mouth.

With superb patina, the axe shows considerable signs of handling.

Ca. 20th Cent

16.5 in - 41 cm





12.

ex Rossi Coll, Usa

This is a fine old Karamajong headdress from Kenya.

Woven in human hair and with carved wooden pegs forming a spinal ridge, the headdress is quite animal like in form.

Ca. 20th Cent

10 in - 25 cm (Hat only)

Karamajong





Lobi

13.

ex Dagan Coll., Canada

Publications:

African Dolls, For Play & Magic
Dagan, E, 1990
Gallery Amrad, Montreal

Pg. 53, illus 5.6

This is a great little Lobi figure with a deeply carved, expressive face.

With a pleasant twist to its body, the figure has superb encrusted patina throughout.

Ca. 20th Cent

8 in - 20 cm



Boni



14.

ex Drs. Jean & Noble Endicott Coll., Ny

One sees many Boni headrests out there but few are as finely balanced and intricately carved as this example.

With superb patina this headrest is beautifully carved and decorated with precise, intricate scrolling designs.

Ca. 20th Cent

6 in - 15 cm



Oceanic Art

Pora Pora

15.

ex Douglas Newton Coll, NY

ex Marcia & John Friede Coll, Rye, Ny

Publications:

Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco,
2005

New Guinea Art
Masterpieces from the Jolika collection
of Marcia & John Friede.

Pg. , Illus. 111

A rare and striking mask constructed on
the breastbone of a cassowary bird and
overmodeled with encrusted red clay.

Adorned with a slender wooden nose
and sensitive in expression, the mask is
quietly powerful.

Ca. 20th Cent

8" - 20 cm







Admiralty Islands

16.

ex Galerie Meyer, Paris

ex Private Coll., Usa

Ritual daggers from the Admiralty
Islands are exceedingly rare.

Of elongated form the dagger is
composed of wood, seeds and serrated
ray barbs.

18 in - 45 cm





Papuan Gulf

17.

Collected by Thomas Schultze Westrum

ex Marcia & John Friede Coll.,
Rye, NY

A striking and expressive bark Gope
board from Wapo Creek, in the Papuan
Gulf of New Guinea.

Please see the Metropolitan Museum
collection for a very similar board gifted
by Evelyn A. J. Hall and John A. Friede
in 1983

Ca. 20th Cent

44 in - 110 cm





Sepik River

18.

ex Marcia & John Friede Coll., Rye, Ny

This axe like instrument is a sago hammer
from the Middle Sepik region.

Of simple bird form, when seen from the
side, the hammer is terminated by a superb
ancestral face.

Ca. 20th Cent.

28 in - 70 cm



Papuan Gulf

19.

Bioma Figure

ex M. Hamson, Usa

This is a great expressive Bioma figure from New Guinea's Papuan Gulf. With hands raised and deep carving offset by white kaolin, the figure displays stylized female genitalia.

Ca. 20th Cent.

20 in - 50 cm





Abelam

20.

This is a fine stone carved Abelam magic bone.

Incised with geometric designs throughout, the bone features an ancestor's face in its center.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

5 in - 12.5 cm





Humboldt Bay

21.

ex Anthony Meyer Gallery, Paris

ex Marcia & John Friede (Jolika) Coll.,
Rye, NY

A rare and intricately carved Dugong
harpoon shaft from the Humboldt Bay.

Incorporating two ancestor figures and
a rising fish, the shaft is intricately
carved with deep curvilinear designs.

Publications:

Oceanic Art
Anthony Meyer, 1995
Pg 67, Illus 46

Ca. 20th Cent

56 in - 142 cm





Middle Sepik

22.

ex Wayne Heathcote, Uk

ex Private Coll., Usa

This is a superb early food hook from the Middle Sepik region of Papua New Guinea.

Used for decades, the hook shows great wear around its back hanging lug and both hook tines.

With superb encrusted patina, the hook has a great old feel to it.

Ca. early 20th Cent

10.5 in - 26 cm



Massim

23.

ex Harry Beran, Uk

ex Anthony Meyer, Paris

ex Marcia & John Friede Coll., Rye, Ny

Coconuts have been used as water containers for centuries in New Guinea.

This example is deeply carved and mimics an open mouthed face.

Collected by Anthony Meyer and Harry Beran in 1989 in Gumawana, Amphlett Island, the nut is dated 1972.

Ca. 20th Cent

5 in - 12.5 cm





Middle Sepik

24.

ex Douglas Newton Coll, NY

ex Marcia & John Friede Coll, Rye, Ny

This engaging mask was collected by Douglas Newton in
Sagwup Village, Middle Sepik.

Almost Inuit like in appearance, the teardrop shaped bark is cut
out in tree bark (Spathe) and painted in original pigments.

Ca. 20th Cent

36 in - 90 cm



Abelam

25.

ex John & Marcia Friede Coll., Rye, NY

A superb bird form flute carved integrally from the main and side growths of a natural bamboo shoot. Brilliantly conceived the flute has an airy feel, a genial expression and, as can be readily seen, superb usage patina throughout.

Publications:

Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 2005

New Guinea Art

Masterpieces from the Jolika collection of Marcia & John Friede.

Illus. 312

13 in - 31 cm







Karawari

26.

ex Jean-Edouard Carlier, Paris

ex Marcia & John Friede Coll., Rye, Ny

Carved in deep relief around a thick curling bark, this ancestor figure is expressive and full of dynamic tension.

With its arms bent upon its chest and tongue on the edge of its lips, the ancestor has mischievous eyes underlining its considerable presence.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

16 in - 40 cm





Chambri Lakes

27.

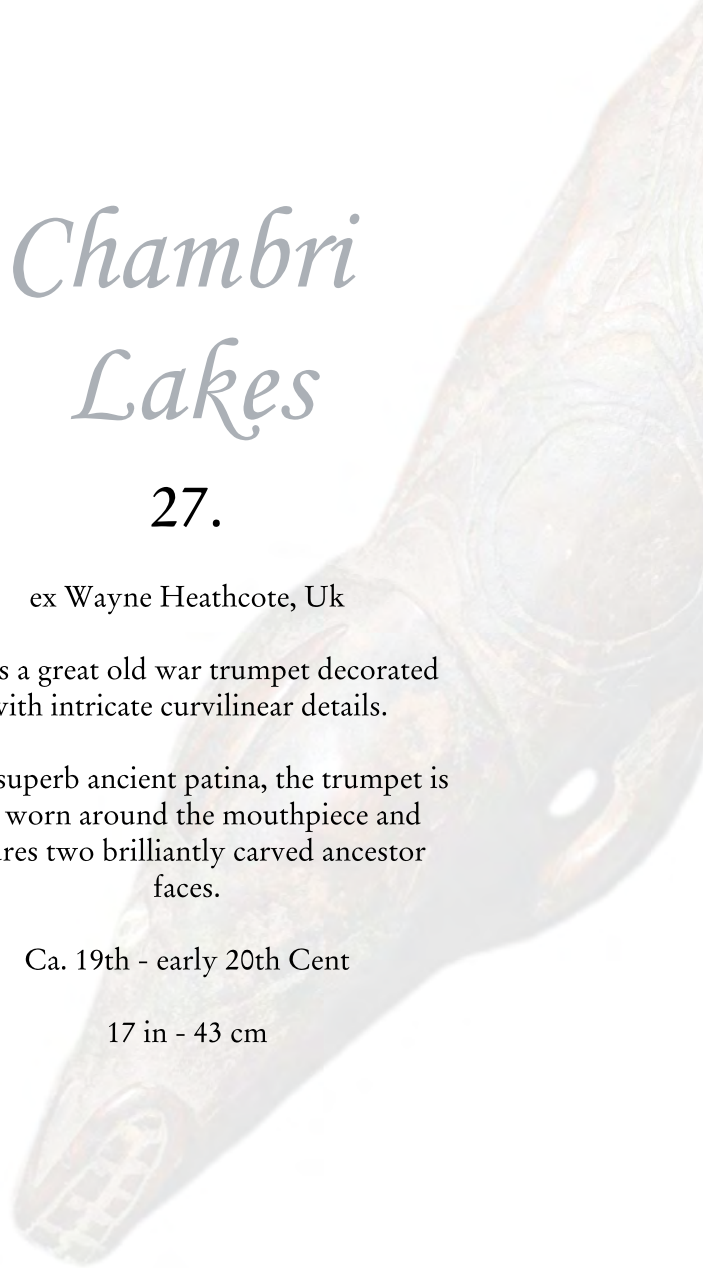
ex Wayne Heathcote, Uk

This is a great old war trumpet decorated with intricate curvilinear details.

With superb ancient patina, the trumpet is well worn around the mouthpiece and features two brilliantly carved ancestor faces.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

17 in - 43 cm





Huon Gulf

28.

ex Marcia & John Friede Coll., Rye, Ny

This is a tight little bowl from the Tami Islands in New Guinea's Huon Gulf.

While one sees many bowls from this area, few are terminated with totemic heads like this one with its stylized bird form.

Superb lustrous patina serves as a backdrop to the complex incised designs.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

12 in - 30 cm





Asian
&
Southeast Asian Art



Nepal

29.

ex St-Denis Coll., Canada

ex B. Brundage, Usa

This is a superb ancient mask from the Middle Hills of Nepal.

Of circular form, the mask has a defined brow line above the eyes and a large imposing nose.

With remnants of a goat hair mustache, the expressive protector has an open grimacing mouth.

Ca. 19th Cent

9 in - 23 cm





Nepal

30.

Butter Churn

ex Frederic Rond, Paris

This fantastic figural butter churn has seen decades of use.

With a male figure on one side and a female on the other, the churn's patina speaks of antiquity.

Ca. 19th Cent

7 in - 17 cm





Sumba

31.

ex Wild Coll., Uk

This is a very pleasant old Sumba hairpin featuring a male figure holding his hands out with palms up.

The long stem, obviously hand carved like the rest, has nice oil stains indicating years and years of usage.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

11 in - 27 cm





Dayak

32.

ex Private Coll., Spain

This is an exceedingly rare ritual rice seed basket from West Kalimantan, Borneo.

Standing with arms to its side, and with a surprisingly regal bearing, the human form basket is tightly woven in old, beautiful rattan.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

14 in - 35 cm





Dayak

33.

ex Aldridge Coll., Au

This excited little Dayak charm figure is pulling out his tongue while raising his skirt to show off his genitalia. A curious combination but engaging nonetheless.

Beautifully carved and with a lug hole at its base, the charm would have been hung on a sorcerer's bag or clothing.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

7 in - 17 cm





China

34.

ex Drs Jean & Noble Endicott Coll.,
Ny

This very fine and ancient Chinese marionette head has a wry smile and great expressive eyes.

With ancient black lacquer, the engaging head shows wonderful age and, somehow, has great soulful depth.

Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

10 in - 25 cm





China

35.

ex Drs Jean & Noble Endicott Coll., Ny

This is a fine old menacing Chinese monkey form toggle.

Seated in a hunched posture and with inset red painted eyes, the figure clutches his nut with some intent.

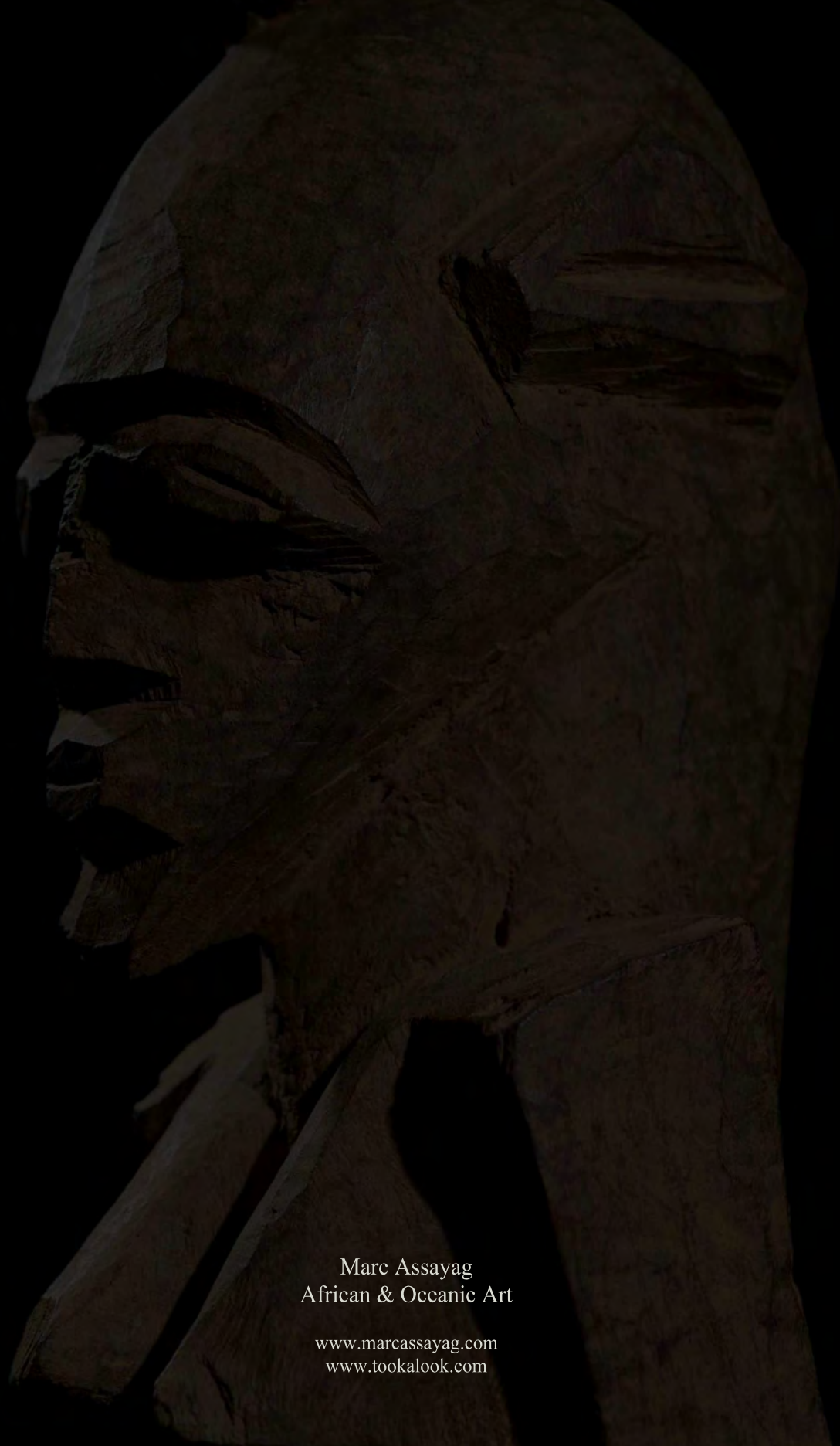
Ca. 19th - early 20th Cent

2 in - 5 cm



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