

African and Oceanic Art

Moving Objects: African and Oceanic Art



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Explore interactive three-dimensional models of select sculptural works from the exhibition and learn more about the artistic techniques used to create them.

All photogrammetry models by:
Timothy Johnson / [tcarneyjohnson](#)



Oceanic Face Mask

[Interactive 3D View](#)

The story of this mask is the story of a “moving object” and contact between ethnic groups over several centuries. Kru sailors worked as migrant laborers on European ships from the mid-17th century, carrying their culture with them. The style of this and other Kru masks suggest a sharing of ideas among people along the west coast of Africa from Ivory Coast to Cameroon (Douala) with an important fulcrum in the Niger Delta among the Ijo.



Maiden Spirit Mask (agbogho mmuo)

[Interactive 3D View](#)

The Maiden Spirit Mask combines ideas of human and spiritual beauty. Fine features and elaborately dressed hair suggest physical beauty while the chalk white face refers to the spirit.



Male Clan Spirit Figure Surmounted by a Hornbill

[Interactive 3D View](#)

The second major institution in an Abalam man's life is the men's spirit cult, with an initiation process that takes 20-30 years. Large clan spirit images (nggwalndu) are used during the final ritual. Though impressive sculptures, the figures are effective in Abalam eyes because they are brightly painted. For the Abalam, as for many cultures in New Guinea, paint is a magical substance that endows its subject with supernatural power and beauty.



Champion Farmer Staff (sejen)

[Interactive 3D View](#)

Champion farmer staffs are trophies given to the leaders of agricultural teams that win farming contests. The “champion farmer” title brought a man respect during his lifetime and special tribute at death. The soaring eagle symbolizes the oversight of elders who protect future generations.



Blacksmith's Mask (hombo)

[Interactive 3D View](#)

Masks define the character of a Bwa masquerade rather than the body costume, since similar costumes are worn with all masks. This mask represents hombo, a spirit associated with Bwa blacksmiths. However, it is often identified as a rooster (kobiay)—a sacrificial animal that facilitates communication with the spirit world.



Mask (Didagur)

[Interactive 3D View](#)

Worn with a full body costume, male didagur masks with their long noses represent spirits of the natural world. They participate in the ceremonies young men undergo leading to manhood.



Altar Vessel

[Interactive 3D View](#)

Altar vessels contain the offerings that help people communicate with the spiritual forces honored with shrines in Lobi homes. The rows of pointed knobs that ‘wrap’ the pot symbolize protection against witchcraft, misfortune, and illness; provide supernatural protection during initiation; and promote having many children and good crops.



Toguna Post

[Interactive 3D View](#)

A Toguna (literally ‘mother shelter’)—the meeting place for elders—stands at the center of every Dogon village. It is intentionally low and open so that men must remain seated and calm during discussions. It is supported by eight posts and thatched with eight tiers of millet stalks, referring to the eight mythical ancestors of the Dogon. The breasts on the posts refer to fertility, and thus the future of the Dogon people.