

Basic Detail Report



Spirit Figure

Date

late 19th to early 20th Century

Primary Maker

Baule

Medium

Wood, bead, paint and kaolin

Description

Standing female figure sculpture from the Baule culture in Côte d'Ivoire, one of the largest groups of the Akan peoples. The Baule sculpt and create many forms of art, with wooden sculptures and masks allowing the Baule into closer contact with the supernatural world. Baule sculptures are usually standing on a base with legs slightly bent, hands resting on the lower abdomen and elongated necks supporting a face with raised scarification, bulging eyes and open mouth with sharp teeth. The coiffure is typically very detailed and is usually

divided into plaits with braids. Baule sculptures serve to two types of devotion. The first type of devotional figure depicts the "spiritual" spouse who requires the creation of a shrine in the personal hut of the individual, in order to be appeased. A Baule man will own his spiritual spouse called the "blolo bian," and a Baule woman will own her spiritual spouse called the "blolo bla." The Baule believe that before they were born into the world, they existed in a spirit world where each individual had a spouse. The "blolo bian" and the "blolo bla" are created because the Baule believe that the spiritual spouse becomes jealous of their earthly mate having another mate, thus causing marital discord unless appeased. A shrine is created with earthly signs of attention. The second type of devotional figure depicts ritual figures representing the spirits associated with an ancestor cult. These wooden sculptures typically are in the form of a monkey called "gbekre." These monkey sculptures have protruding jaws and sharp teeth, with the monkey holding either a mortar or a pestle. The monkey sculptures are said to either protect against sorcerers, protect for agrarian rites, or intervene in a divination ritual.

Dimensions

Overall: 10 1/2 x 3 1/4 x 3 1/8 in.