



Twin Figure (Ibeji)

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Yoruba

Medium

Wood and metal

Description

This sculpture is one of two standing figures representing the Ibeji. Ibeji is an Orisha name for twins in the Yoruba religion. Twins are considered magical and protected by the Orisha Shango, the royal ancestor of the Yoruba people. This spiritual protection and sacred unity the twins represent were considered to be of the utmost importance to the Yoruba people, and the Ibeji's are regarded as divine and brought affluency to one's household and community. However, if the twins are treated poorly by their parents, they would become impoverished. Also, if one of the twins were to pass away, the family and community would have different kinds of bad luck. Some of these ill-fortunes include future miscarriages, infant mortality, sudden poverty, destruction of property by animals, persistent sickness for either one or both of the parents, etc. The Ibeji gods are represented traditionally as two wooden sculptures,

typically decorated with cowrie shells, paint and beads. The sculptor could carve the appearances of the Ibeji to their liking, except for changing the sex of the Ibeji. In the Yoruba origin, the firstborn twin is called Taiwo, meaning 'first twin to taste the world,' whereas the secondborn twin is called Kehinde, meaning 'the second born of the twins.' The Yoruba people thought Kehinde was the elder twin, who sent Taiwo out first to determine if it was time for them to be brought into the world.

Dimensions

Overall: 11 in. (27.9 cm)