

GALERIE GOLCONDA

ARCHÉOLOGIE MUSÉALE
FOSSILES – BIJOUX RARES ET ANCIENS
CABINET DE CURIOSITÉS DES GRANDES CIVILISATIONS

CERTIFICATE

EXCELLENT “SOWEÏ” MASK MENDE PEOPLE - SIERRA LEONE

From JOSEF MUELLER'S private collection

MATERIAL AND TECHNIQUE: black wooden mask representing a feminine face, with a very elaborate hairstyle consisting of six sinuate plaits encircling the head and jutting out above in the shape of an animal. The face is concentrated in a rather small space in the first third of the mask. Holes drilled at the bottom of the collar to fix raffia. The patina is obtained by rubbing it with ficus leaves and the black tint by a concoction of leaves. Before wearing, it is the custom to grease it with some palm oil to make it more shiny.

Excellent state of preservation, good patina, traces of xylophagous insects, small damage due to use.

ORIGIN: Sande is the only female society with initiation rites in Western Africa to wear masks during dances or funeral rituals. These masks represent the feminine spirit of water and although sculpted by men they have always been linked to idealized beauty. We find here the main elements, namely a very elaborate hairstyle (a sign that somebody helped you to adorn yourself), a small face with almond eyes as a symbol of humility and shiny skin like the patina of the wood.

DIMENSIONS: Height: 45.5 cm /17.92’’ – Width: 24.5 cm / 9.65’’

EXPORT LICENCE: supplied with a Passeport Culturel issued by the French Ministry of Culture Number 176911, allowing this piece to travel worldwide.

PROVENANCE: Former collection of Josef Mueller, Solothurn, Switzerland. Christies, Tribal Art from the collection of the late Joseph Mueller, 20 Mars 1979, lot 23.

MUSEOGRAPHY: Exhibited at the Musée de Montélimar, France, Mai to september 2014. Published in the catalogue at page 12.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: published in “Collecting Masterpieces” Part one of Beryl Cavallini at pages 88/89.

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