

# MASKS OF THE WORLD

■ BY ROBERT IBOLD  
WITH TROY YOHN



AFRICA | INDIA & HIMALAYAS | EAST ASIA | BALI & JAVA | OCEANIA | EUROPE | NATIVE AMERICA  
MODERN AMERICA | MEXICO | GUATEMALA | CARIBBEAN | SOUTH AMERICA | PROTECTION & PROTEST | STEAMPUNK & SEX





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To my wife  
Regine  
who has generously shared our home  
with me  
and hundreds of masks  
for many years.



*“Masks are a blend of painting and sculpture that dramatically reflect  
the creativity of different cultures.”*

K. D. L. Khan, *The Mask Heritage of India*



**Antelope mask – Dogon people, Mali**  
**17 inches, wood**

Old and used, the coloring worn off, this abstract design would have been carved by the participant in a village ceremony. Sometimes the antelope's horns are made much longer. The Dogon have a long tradition of masquerade and utilize many different characters and styles.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The seed for this book was planted in late 2000 when Cindi Morrison, then Director of the Lancaster Museum of Art, saw my mask collection and decided to schedule a show for two years later. The show broke all attendance records and gave me the confidence to begin MasksoftheWorld.com.

In 2013 I met Troy Yohn, a corporate executive in internet marketing with an interest in tribal art and other collectibles and asked him for some help. I got way more than expected, including the idea of doing a book. *Masks of the World* would not have happened without his encouragement and constant assistance throughout the long process of research, photography, writing and production.

The book's great look would not have happened without the direction of Doug Hershey, an agency executive and accomplished advertising graphic designer. Thanks to our editor, Tim Price, we got an introduction to the rules of book publishing as well as clear language. And finally, for the production work, which nowadays is done entirely on computers, we have the hard-working Joe Dietrich to thank.

Thanks must also go to Bryan Stevens, a child psychiatrist whose other passion in life is Mexican masks. Famous for his outstanding collection and the book *Mexican Masks and Puppets*, he has been an inspiration to me for many years and was kind enough to write the preface to this book. Another person who keeps me going is the generalist collector, Aaron Fellmeth, who does what I like to do with masks, but usually does it much better. In addition, he has contributed photography and critiqued some of the chapters. Jim Pieper, the well-known collector and author of *Guatemala's Masks and Drama* and other books on Guatemalan folk art, has been equally generous to me and my project.

Thanks to Lee Rubinstein and Rand who together founded the African Art & Culture discussion group at yahoo.com back in 2005. It has continued to be an important source of information for me. I wish there were similar groups focused on other cultures around the world.

Photography: Most of the 1000 masks illustrated and described in this publication were bought, photographed, and sold by me. Others were "mystery masks" sent in to the Ask the Mask Man blog. However, there were some mask types not represented that I wanted to include. Fortunately, I was able to borrow additional photography from WikiMedia Commons and a few other sources such as Gi Mateusen from Belgium, Arnaud Hambresin of The Tribal Art Gallery, James Eddy of Colonial Arts, The Cobbs Auctioneers in New Hampshire, RAND Tribal, Aaron Fellmeth, Jim Pieper and others. You will find all of them mentioned in the captions.

## PREFACE

Bob Ibold and I live about 25 miles apart. I do not remember just when we first met, but we were already friends with a shared interest in masks when Bob produced his show, *Masks from around the World* in the Fall of 2002. That presentation, held at the Lancaster Museum of Art in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was accompanied by Bob's newly published catalogue of the same name, illustrating the masks in the show.

Bob and I had overlapping interests, although I was more highly focused on fewer areas, being most interested in masks from Mexico and Guatemala. I also had a few masks from Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia, and Europe. In the early 1970's I started to collect African masks, but was intimidated by the number of decorative masks that were coming from that continent. Of course I later ran into the same problem with Mexican masks, but I found that there were many books and other resources available to help me to surmount that problem.

As you may already know from visiting Bob's website, he has a different attitude from mine on the subject of decorative masks. While I wish to focus on authentic material because I can enjoy it in the context of related costumes, music, and cultural beliefs, Bob is more interested in the artistic qualities of folk art, and less prejudiced against invented or decorative objects.

I attended that show, bought the catalogue, and noted with great interest that Bob had assembled an impressive collection. Given my preferences, I was able to evaluate the masks from some areas, and I found much to like. Eventually I purchased the Guatemalan mask that Bob had used to illustrate the appearance of "wear and repairs" in the "Beginner's Guide" section of the catalogue.

Later that same fall, I displayed a number of my Mexican masks in a gallery at the Franklin and Marshall University, also in Lancaster. I remember that Bob attended that show and expressed his enthusiasm.

Over the years that followed, I occasionally bought masks from Bob—from both Mexico and Guatemala. Bob had not yet started his website, and some of those masks do not appear in his archives. Indeed, it was in that period that Bob began to correspond with me about his plan for such a site. We discussed language and definitions, such as, "what is a decorative mask?" Eventually Bob realized this dream, and began publishing *MasksoftheWorld.com*, initially as a store where he sold masks. After many sales, Bob's next step was to offer an archive of all the material that had been sold. Then he added another feature, "Ask the Mask Man," offering advice about masks that lacked provenance and inviting other readers to do the same. The mask archive suddenly became larger, and even more varied.

In 2008, a local mask collector and mutual friend, Gary Collison, died. Gary had been an English professor at the York campus of the Pennsylvania State University, and his widow donated to the campus library that part of his collection which hung in his office. She wished to sell the rest. By that time the website was well established, and Bob asked me to write up the material as a guest consultant. Together we sold a number of really nice Mexican masks.

If you are familiar with the “Masks For Sale” section of the website, then you already know that Bob’s interests have grown well beyond traditional dance masks. I will list a sampling of additional categories: Halloween masks, masks worn by actors in films or other theatrical productions, masks that have the purpose of protection, masks that are designed for use in medical assessments, masks made by artists as intentional works of art, and masks used by adults in fantasy play, such as leather or rubber masks that are associated with fetishistic costumes and related practices. I imagine that all of these categories will show up in this book. You have been warned!

In recent years I have become increasingly impressed with the breadth of Bob Ibold’s knowledge. As the list in the last paragraph suggests, he seems to know something about almost everything. I feel certain that this book will serve as an excellent introductory volume to a vast subject—masks of all types from everywhere in the world. Read it for knowledge or inspiration!

Bryan Stevens



**Bob Ibold – author**

After acquiring his first Mexican mask at a flea market in the 1970’s, the hobby began. About 30 years later he retired and started MasksoftheWorld.com, an internet business that buys, sells and appraises all kinds of masks. Now the book.

**Troy Yohn**

In the past he authored a comic strip that ran in a weekly newspaper and created numerous quirky animated TV commercials. While oftentimes he spends his days developing advanced algorithms, analyzing game mechanics and fostering technological innovation, he has always had an enthusiasm for ethnographic items from around the world.

He’s continually drawn to the interesting and unique - whether that be people or artifacts. This has driven him to explore Inca ruins, dig for emeralds, and journey to the Everest base camp. When the opportunity arose to visit Robert “Bob” Ibold (nicknamed “The Mask Man”), there was no way he could turn it down. When he first walked into Bob’s house - which feels more like a museum dedicated to masks, books, and other artifacts from across various continents than a house - his imagination was inspired. Not long after their first meeting, they joined forces to work on MasksoftheWorld.com and subsequently began collaborating on Masks of the World.



# INTRODUCTION

The story of masks began when man decided to impersonate something he wasn't. It goes back to a time when our ancestors masqueraded as animals in order to sneak up on prey they were trying to kill. Prehistoric drawings on rock cliffs and cave walls demonstrate this. Much later, Egyptians carved and painted wooden faces to help the mummified dead make their way into eternity. Still later, Greek actors wore masks so they could portray characters much different from themselves. But *Masks of the World* is not about history or



ethnography. Those subjects are well-covered in many books, most of which focus on a limited number of cultures. We will try to supplement those excellent sources with one that touches on all masks, from the forests of Africa to the mountains of South America. It will be a picture book of over a thousand different masks.

They will be from a period spanning the 20th and the early 21st centuries and they will come from almost everywhere. Africa has hundreds of tribal cultures who still use masks for the rituals, ceremonies and celebrations that add great meaning to their lives. In India and the Himalayas, the Buddhist and Hindu religions use masks for many spiritual reasons. All of East Asia has strong traditions of masquerade, some of which are still being practiced.

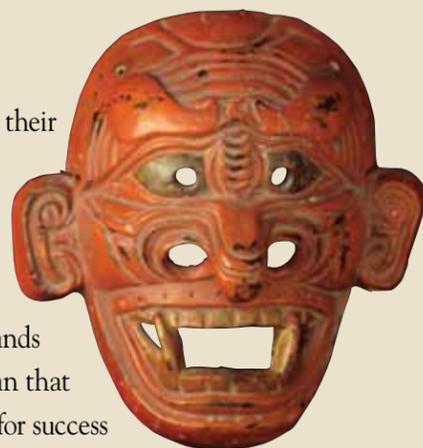
Bali and Java have their popular dance dramas that rely on a fantastic array of masks.

Then there are islands in the Pacific Ocean that still rely on masks for success in agriculture, fertility, and health.

Europe is important for the wonderful masks associated with Christmas, New Year and Easter celebrations.

And that is just half of the world. Native Americans including Eskimos, Northwest Coast tribes and Indians from the Southwest to the Eastern U.S. are still creating traditional masks. Almost all Mexican villages celebrate important holidays with special masked dances, and their national Day of the Dead also involves masquerade. Masquerade is even more important to the tiny country of Guatemala, so we will devote an entire chapter to it. Another chapter explores the Caribbean area including coastal Central America and part of the coast of South America. South America also has two other important areas for masks; the great Amazon basin and the Quechua-speaking Andes mountain areas that run from Colombia to Southern Chile.

We will also delve into miscellaneous categories that include Halloween, art, steampunk, and maybe some you've never heard of before now. Most of these masks are meant to disguise the wearer's identity. Some of the art masks can be worn but a few are made only for display. Please note that most of the masks you are apt to see on the internet, at a flea market, or in a souvenir shop for tourists are not traditional masks; they were not made to be worn for a ceremonial purpose. The primary focus of this book will be on those masks that do have a specific purpose within a traditional performance. They are neither objects d'art nor decorative accessories.



Finally there is the Protection chapter which will show masks made for purposes other than masquerade, such as protection from cold weather, poisonous gas, a hockey puck, a sword blade and other dangers. There are even a few for protest, punishment, sex games, and other uses.

We will try to live up to the title and show masks from all over the world. Name, culture, country, size, material and a brief description of usage accompanies every picture. The size is the vertical measurement in inches. The material used to make these masks is most commonly wood, but you will find that some others are made of papier-mâché, bone, leather, metal, clay, and various other substances. In modern first-world societies plastic and latex have become popular. Wood is the favorite material among second- and third-world societies because of its availability, though this is beginning to change due to lumber harvesting. Wood is also durable and easy to shape with a minimum of tools and training. Many cultures attribute spiritual qualities to certain species of trees. Some of them even have special rituals for harvesting the wood.

When properly shaped the masks are usually colored with natural pigments or paint. This desire to add color goes way back in history. However, in the modern era some carvers of wooden masks learned that they could often sell more to tourists if the masks are left unpainted. Some of these will show up in the Africa section. You will also notice that decorations and accessories can be added. These include feathers, fur, horns, raffia, shells, beads, metal, glass, cloth and almost anything else you can think of.

There are plenty of excellent books that will go into more detail than *Masks of the World*. We have tried to show you as many different masks as possible in this book.

These include a wide range of designs and styles, all of the basic purposes for which a mask can be used, and most of the cultures and countries where masquerade is practiced. Of course, there are parts of the world without this art form. Aboriginal Australia, Central Asia, and

(far left)

### Yellow Cat mask

Carved by Herminio Candelario from Colima, Mexico. He is one of the five carvers honored in the book *Great Masters of Mexican Folk Art*.

(far right)

### Shaman's mask

Made by the user himself, hardwood masks like this would be used in ceremonies to protect the local villagers in the Himalayan highlands in Nepal.

(above left)

### Oni mask

This is a mid-20th century reproduction of a Gyodo demon from Japan. Masked processions and ceremonies are a tradition that goes back almost 1000 years in Japanese history.

(below)

### Bird mask

The Mossi people of Burkina Faso, West Africa, are related to the Bwa and the Bobo, all of whom make great looking animal masks. From The Cobbs Auctioneers LLC



Southern Africa come to mind. There are also places we have not examined such as Iceland and Polynesia, where native masks exist but are difficult to find nowadays.

Most of the photographs are of masks bought and sold by MasksoftheWorld.com since 2002. These were low- to-mid-priced masks. Others were sent in to the Mask Man's blog for identification, and a few more are from dealers of tribal art and museums, the monetary value of the latter group being much higher. All of them, both affordable and expensive, show the wide range of craftsmanship and creativity we could expect from any art form, and they reflect well on the esthetics of the cultures from which they come. So, if we have whetted



your appetite for ethnographic and other artistic masks, where do you go from here? Today collectors spend more time on smart phones and computers than anything else.

Start with the Internet. Google Images is a truly amazing resource. There are also social media such as Facebook and Pinterest. Let's not forget the old sources of information. There are probably both public and college libraries not far from where you live. Art museums often have interesting ethnographic collections that include masks, as do anthropology, natural history and children's museums. In the larger cities there are dealers, galleries and sometimes tribal art shows which have masks on display and helpful people.



*(above right)*

**Steampunk mask**

Steampunk is science fiction that typically features machinery, especially in a setting inspired by the 19th century. These fantasy masks have become very popular in recent years.

*(left)*

**Kendo protective mask**

One of Japan's martial arts based on the two-handed sword of the samurai, kendo is now a system of mental and physical training practiced using bamboo sticks.

*(above center)*

**Party mask**

Dating back to 1967, this is a popular, albeit lesser known, Japanese anime character. In the US these colorful plastic masks are sold in stores for Halloween and parties.

# ■ AFRICA



*(right)*

**Mbangu mask – Pende people, Bandundu, Congo  
12 inches, painted wood, cloth**

This represents a hunter who has suffered a stroke from the curse of a sorcerer. Collectors would call it a sickness or deformity mask. From the Musee Royal de l'Afrique Central, photo by Ji-Elle.

# AFRICA

When we talk about Africa, we will be concentrating on the western and central regions that extend from Guinea Bissau, down the coast to the northern parts of Angola, and east to Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Mozambique. Mask usage occurs here rather than in the north or south due to the limited wood supply, the spread of both Islam and Christianity, and other historical and anthropological reasons.

We'll be dealing with the work of cultures located in the following areas: West African Coast, Mali & Burkina Faso, Nigeria & Cameroon, Gabon & the Congo and East Africa. African masks from these various regions are amazingly diverse in design and style. However, you will also detect some similarities. Designs are typically frontal and symmetrical. To Westerners they are universally artistic, combining the features of both sculpture and painting. Perhaps that is why we love hanging them on our walls so much.

The range of expressive design in Africa is remarkable. Abstract is preferred over realism and even the most naturalistic representations of human and animal faces are almost always stylized. The same is true of textures and colors. Expect them to be exaggerated or simplified, but never realistic. As you study the many masks in the following pages, try to recognize similarities between cultures. There are some, but as the geographical separations increase, the difference in their art becomes more apparent.

Art in Europe was changed forever by African culture. Back in the 19th century, travelers to Africa began bringing back masks and other traditional art to their homelands. It was not long before artists like Matisse, Picasso, Modigliani and Derrain began mixing these African ideas with those of the Impressionists. They did not recognize the true meaning and function of these totally foreign pieces, but they were certainly influenced by what they saw. Thus began the most profound changes Western art has experienced since the ancient Greeks introduced realism.

These changes continue to have a powerful impact still today, as we are exposed to this art in books, museums, the media and the internet. People who buy their first mask are often artists or lovers of art. Soon they buy another and their collection begins.

Beginning collectors of African masks are entering a huge market where hundreds of examples can be found in nearby shops and flea markets, in addition to several thousand available on the Internet on any given day. They are plentiful and this is good news. The bad news is that prices vary greatly, and it is easy to make a mistake. African masks range in price from under \$100 to over six figures. So let's examine the most common and least expensive, to the rarest and most expensive.

**Airport art.** These look like real masks and can be quite attractive, but their sole purpose is to be bought by tourists looking for souvenirs or people who wish to decorate their walls. They are not meant to be used in

any kind of ritual or celebration. Cultural tradition is usually not evident. You will not see masks of this type in this book.

**Replicas.** Unlike airport art, the replicas do follow the tradition of a particular African culture, though not always with complete accuracy. The quality of the carvings ranges from good to bad, and they are often finished to look old and used. Some are carved in the cultural area they represent while others are made elsewhere.

**Fakes.** These are high-quality reproductions that have been artificially antiqued. If accompanied by fake provenance, the price can be very high. Some find their way into museum collections. Most end up being sold for less, but the price is still higher than what an experienced collector would pay. We recommend buying fakes at reasonable prices when the quality of the carving rivals what one might find on an old and traditional mask, because the latter can be almost impossible to find or to afford. The most important potential difference between replicas and fakes is quality.

**New or lightly used.** Not many of these show up on the market mainly because tribal masquerade has diminished as Africa modernizes. Another reason is that most collectors prefer the older look of the masks shown in books or museums. It is rumored that when new or lightly used masks show up in the African market centers, they are immediately roughed up and coated with stained varnish to make them appear old. The authentic new or used masks on the world market are often painted in bright enamels and decorated with ornamental additions. Collectors should realize that African traditional masquerade has evolved and that Africans have been making their masks (the ones they plan to wear) with modern tools and materials.

**Museum quality.** This is what the big city dealers and auction houses usually sell. You can see a few of them here. The provenance of their objects is very

important, and owning them can be a very expensive proposition.

*(far left)*

#### **Kple Kple mask**

Created by the Baule people of Ivory Coast, this famous mask is ritually of minor importance and is used to amuse the audience early in the dance performance.

*(left)*

#### **Gelede mask**

For celebrations in the spring to honor female spirits which can bless the crops, or curse them with drought. Yoruba male farmers from Nigeria dress like women in this tradition. From Arnaud Hambresin of Asiantribalart.com

*(below)*

#### **Ngil mask**

Sometimes called gorilla masks, it is said these were danced at night while illuminated by a hand-held torch to scare away evil spirits by the Fang people of Cameroon. From the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde München, photo by Daderot.





**WEST AFRICAN COAST**

**01 Nimba mask – Baga people, Guinea  
43 inches, stained wood**

Usually the tallest man in the village dances this large, heavy mask by holding it on his shoulders. A long, raffia skirt hangs from just below the breasts of the mask, all the way to the ground, completely hiding the dancer who looks out through the small gap just below the breasts.

**02 Banda mask – Baga people, Guinea  
55 inches, stained wood, raffia**

Called a Banda or Kumbaruba depending whether it was made by the Baga or Nalu of Guinea. This mask is huge and nowadays used for entertainment. The dancer would be hidden under the raffia skirt.

**03 Lovely lady mask – Mandingo people, Guinea –13 inches, painted wood, raffia**

Collected by a friend who attended a funeral in his childhood village outside of Tiguibir. This brightly painted mask was worn during festivals and ceremonies and used for entertainment purposes. It is a genuine, contemporary mask.

**04 Bundu mask –Mende people, Sierra Leone  
14 inches, wood**

The Sande Society guides girls in their transition to womanhood. This is the only important mask-wearing tradition in Africa exclusively for women. In fact, masks are hardly ever worn by women anywhere in the world. They embody Soweï, the guardian water spirit and are made to fit over the head.

**05 Bundu mask – Mende people, Sierra Leone  
15 inches, wood**

Could come from the Vai or Bullom. Sande Society masks usually include an elaborate hairstyle in an attempt to represent feminine beauty, with high foreheads, small, compressed facial features, and voluminous neck-rings, depicting the desirable full-figured woman.

**06 Poro mask – Toma people, Liberia,  
18 inches, stained wood**

A Toma or Loma design from Liberia or Guinea used for boys' coming of age ceremonies in the Poro Society. Usually these masks have two horns with a large raffia skirt coming down over the dancer's body

**07 Racer mask – Dan people, Liberia  
10 inches, stained wood**

With its classic round eyes, the elegant lines of the lips, nose and forehead, and the beautiful proportions, this wonderful design is a favorite of collectors everywhere.

**08 Dan face mask – Dan people, Ivory Coast  
10.5 inches, wood, teeth**

This is a well carved example of an older Dan mask with a dull finish and none of the glossy patina common to the genre. But like most Dans it has the concave face and pointed chin, a protruding mouth, and a high-domed forehead.

**09 Face mask – Dan people, Ivory Coast  
8.5 inches, wood, metal, fur**

Aluminum-rimmed eyes which, in combination with the open mouth, give this character a startled expression. The more recently replaced beard is held in place with home-made glue.

**10 African hyena mask –  
Baule people, Ivory Coast  
18 inches, painted wood**

One of the oldest entertainments in Baule country is a masked dance portraying many human and animal characters from everyday life. It is performed by costumed young men who mimic hunting and eventually pretend to kill the animal impersonator and carry him off in triumph providing some lessons in hunting and social control.



**11 Headdress mask –  
Baule people, Ivory Coast  
22 inches, painted wood**

Brightly painted with enamel, this large mask of a female spirit would have been partially held in place with the bite bar tied to the rear. The Baule are one of the Akan peoples, one of the larger ethnic groups in West Africa. They have a variety of masking styles.

**12 Kple kple masks –  
Baule people, Ivory Coast  
16 inches, painted wood**

The circular face represents the life-giving force of the sun, while the horns symbolize the great power of the buffalo. Masks like this can be seen danced during harvest festivals as well as Goli, a day-long spectacle that normally involves the whole village.

**13 Portrait mask – Baule people, Ivory Coast  
12.5 inches, painted wood**

These fall into a special grouping that honor a person of the village or an ancestor who is celebrated during a ceremonial dance known as Mblo. The mask was worn with a multicolored costume and danced by either the person it represents or a relative.

**14 Goli glin mask –  
Baule people, Ivory Coast, West Africa  
33 inches, painted wood**

For the Baule this is a very popular mask. It represents a buffalo and is danced in both nocturnal religious ceremonies and daytime entertainments. The Baule have many characters for masquerade.

**15 Gu mask – Guro people, Ivory Coast  
19 inches, painted wood**

A fowl eating a worm or small snake is occasionally seen on Guro masks. The three welts on the forehead symbolize the female sex. Modern masks like this utilize bright, store-bought enamel, and sometimes other manufactured materials.

**16 Gu mask – Guro people, Ivory Coast  
11 inches, stained wood**

Gu is a family cult that involves a beautiful female spirit. The elaborate coiffure with large combs would be something only a stylish rich woman could afford. The mask is kept by a family member who is obliged to perform special duties and observe certain taboos.

**17 Passport mask – Guro people, Ivory Coast  
2.5 inches, wood**

We tend to call all West African miniatures passport masks because some tribes are known to carry small ones on their belts or in leather pouches-- for religious purposes, not for crossing borders.

**18 Bush cow mask – Guro people, Ivory Coast  
24 inches, wood**

This is a full-size, beautifully sculpted version of the Gye, the most powerful mask of the Northern Guro. It is performed alone and without music, usually by a single man with a whip. It is worn on the head with the dancer seeing through the mouth.

**19 Zamble mask – Guro people, Ivory Coast  
16 inches, painted wood**

Zamble is a mythical male being who combines antelope and leopard features. He is in turn complemented by his beautiful wife, Gu. Note the double mouths on this one specimen.

**20 Antelope mask – Guro people, Ivory Coast  
16 inches, painted wood**

As with their famous Gu masks which represent a human spirit, the Guro animal masks are elegant, graceful and beautiful. In modern times we can expect them to be brightly colored as well.



**21 Kpelie mask – Senufo people, Ivory Coast**  
14 inches, stained wood

A central concept in Senufo religion is a female ancestral spirit known as ancient mother, the sacred guiding spirit of each Poro Society member. A human face with projections all around, this mask is intended to remind initiates of human imperfection.

**22 Kpelie mask – Senufo people, Ivory Coast**  
13 inches, stained wood

Two Kpelie masks are shown here. Very popular with collectors, note how greatly they can differ in detail and complexity.

**23 Kponyugo mask – Senufo people, Ivory Coast**  
30 inches, wood

This photo of a 19th to mid-20th century helmet mask turned up in Too Much Art in tumblr. The Senufo are agriculturalists who reside in the southern parts of Mali and Burkina.

**24 Face mask – Bete people, Ivory Coast**  
10 inches, wood

This highly abstracted face is sculpturally a bit more complex than most Bete masks. Note the artistic and deeply carved facial features.

**25 We mask –We people, Liberia**  
9.5 inches, wood

Simple in design with a very interesting shape, there are more than 40 holes around the back of this mask, into which a raffia skirt would have been attached. The patina is handsome and it appears to be old.

**26 Colored We mask –We people, Liberia**  
10.5 inches, wood

This is an authentic piece that appears to have been used and painted several times. Though the condition is rough, the bright colors make a powerful statement.

**27 War mask – Guere people, Liberia**  
13 inches, wood

This mask measures 13 inches with the jaw closed. Many of the frightening mask designs of this area (We, Grebo, Kran, etc.) have their origin in tribal warfare.

**28 War mask – Guere people, Liberia**  
12.5 inches, painted wood, fiber brush

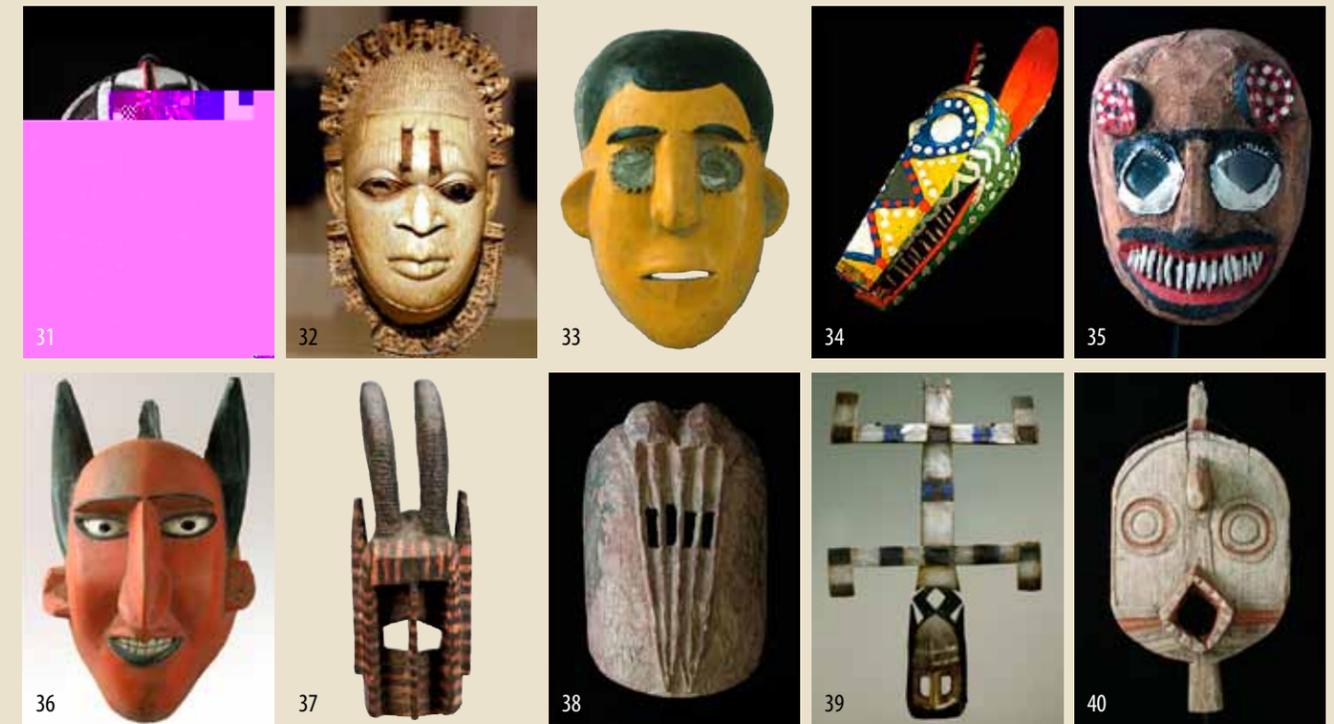
Worn primarily during funerals, the staring eyes, nose spike and nasty teeth are very scary, especially at this large size. Shells, bells, nails and other hardware are sometimes attached as well.

**29 Yocouba mask – Kran people, Ivory Coast**  
11 inches, stained wood

From the village of Benique near the town of Danane, this type of mask is used during many celebrations. The Kran are sometimes referred to as We, and much of the area is often described as Dan.

**30 Bedu plank mask – Bondoukou region, Ivory Coast**  
45 inches, painted wood

The Bedu Association only dates back to the 1930s and has spread throughout several tribes including the Nafana, Degha, and Kulango peoples. Though small in number, less than 50,000, they are scattered over parts of Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Burkina Faso, and are mainly hunters and fishermen.



**31 Traditional mask – Akan people, Ghana**  
11.5 inches, painted wood

This style is based on traditional masks made by the Akan people. The crude, bright paint job suggests the possibility of ritual usage in remote areas of the country, and not intended for the tourist market. Many other decorative, round masks are made in Ghana for sale to tourists and for export, but they are usually fancier than this.

**32 Edo mask – 16th Century Benin Kingdom**  
9 inches, carved ivory

A magnificent example of traditional African art, this mask was not actually worn over the face, but rather as a pendant for the king. It is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Creative Commons Attribution.

**MALI & BURKINA FASO**

**33 Big dance mask – Bozo people, Markala, Mali**  
14 inches, painted wood, glass

Unlike the Bamana who are agriculturalists and one of the largest ethnic groups of Mali, the Bozo live near the Niger River where they make their living as fishermen. The Bozo are Muslim, yet they preserve a number of Animist traditions including masquerade.

**34 Sogo kun mask – Bozo people, Seguo, Mali**  
15 inches, painted wood, glass

Used in both masquerades and puppet plays, (put on by young men's associations), this mask is expressive and strongly colored with oil paints. These types of masks are now used in many Bamana communities as well. Photo courtesy of suagacollection.com.

**35 Leopard mask – Bozo people, Mali**  
14 inches, wood, plastic, glass mirror

This large, heavy mask from Mali is possibly of Bozo origin. Bozo mask makers are creative and routinely experiment with new subjects, shapes, designs and color schemes.

**36 Devil mask – Bozo people, Markala, Mali**  
15 inches, painted wood

Bozo masks are recognized for their vivid colors as well as their realistic, yet stylized execution of carving.

**37 Old dogon mask – Dogon people, Mali**  
19 inches, wood

This traditional dance mask at one time may have had longer horns and some paint (probably black and white). The Dogon people are admired for their fine masquerades and their handsome architecture.

**38 Funeral mask – Dogon people, Mali**  
12 inches, wood

The Dogon are well-known for their spectacular and dramatic funerary rituals known as Dama. They are presented by initiated males, members of the men's secret society known as Awa, who dance the masks that give life and form to Dogon myths.

**39 Kanaga mask – Dogon people, Mali**  
28 inches, wood, fabric

Masquerade is widely used in Dogon culture and this mask represents its most famous character. Supposedly invented by a hunter who killed a similar-looking bird, this classic example is black, white, and a little blue.

**40 Old bird mask – Bobo people, Burkina Faso**  
14 inches, painted wood

The 100,000-strong Bobo people are just one of the tribes who speak the Gur language, collectively known as the Gurunzi. The Bobo carve masks to symbolize animals or spirits of the bush, which are then worn during ceremonies associated with a new crop, initiations or funerals.



**41 Antelope mask – Bobo people, Burkina Faso**  
28 inches, painted wood

This classic form has become so popular among collectors, that many are made to be sold. Unlike most however, this antelope mask has not been antiqued, that is, darkened to make it look old and used.

**42 Bird mask – Mossi people, Burkina Faso**  
16 inches, wood, glass

The Mossi are the largest tribe living in Burkina Faso. Elders are honored with elaborate funerals and dances. Due to its size, this mask requires great skill on the part of the wearer to keep it upright.

**43 Chi wara – Bamana people, Mali**  
26 inches, wood, beads, leather

Worn by dancers celebrating agricultural ceremonies, this is more headdress than mask. It represents an antelope, the mythic founder of the tribe, who also taught them agriculture. Males and females dance together in the ceremonies. Shown here is a male mask.

**44 N'tomo mask – Bamana people, Mali**  
25 inches, wood

This is an unusual mask because of its large size and wooden attachment on the back, allowing the mask to fit over the head like a helmet. The two additional holes on the top of the head are for a total of six horns to be installed.

**45 Sun mask – Bobo people, Burkina Faso**  
28 inches, painted wood

These circular masks, known as rain masks and sun masks, may also represent animal spirits. The circular and very repetitive design pattern is quite dramatic and unique to this particular style of mask.

**46 Kable mask – Toussian people, Burkina Faso**  
22.5 inches, wood

This mask is danced at funerals and other important occasions to drive away evil spirits. With its hollowed dome surmounted by a standing water buffalo with a bird between its curving horns and four stacked zoomorphic creatures above the hindquarters, it is a very complex piece of sculpture that is difficult to carve. Toussians also have another style that is flat and more like an abstract painting and is highly sought after by collectors.

**47 Chi wara – Bamana people, Mali**  
22 inches, wood, pounded brass

A little smaller than most, this is a reproduction of a male Chi Wara mask. Female versions replace the penis with a second smaller figure that represents a baby antelope.

**48 Iron mask – Bamana people, Mali**  
9 inches, forged iron

From southern Mali near the great Niger bend, this is a powerful example of simple yet abstract design. Unlike conventional wooden masks, very little is known about the significance and function of these iron masks.

**49 Helmet mask – Bamana people, Mali**  
16 inches, wood, cloth

Probably of Bamana origin, this mask could also be Bozo or Marka. It was most likely made to be sold. Almost all of the masks that come out of Africa in the 21st century are some shade of brown and appear to have been used. This "authentic" look is what the tourist and collector markets demand.



**50 N'tomo mask – Bamana people, Mali**  
22 inches, painted wood

With the head of the woman in front of the horns, this style of mask comes from Bougouni, in Mali. The number of horns refer to gender; three or six horns for males, and four or eight horns for females. This mask would be danced by mature men to protect the boys of the tribe.

**51 N'tomo mask – Bamana people, Mali**  
14 inches, wood

This is a simple mask used in society rituals, agricultural festivities and also to prevent illness. N'tomo masks often have more than two horns.

**52 Nyanga mask – Bobo people, Burkina Faso**  
27 inches, painted wood

This large antelope mask is a beautiful example of Bobo art in its use of color, patterns, design, and the skill with which it was made. It shows some signs of wear and has a nice, soft patina.

**53 Rooster mask – Bwa people, Burkina Faso**  
25 inches, painted wood

Like the popular hawk mask, this strange-looking creature is considered to be a protective spirit. In addition to a rooster, the eel-like Kobiay can also be represented. Neither, however, are seen on the market very often.

**54 Antelope mask – Kurumba people, Burkina Faso**  
38 inches, painted wood

A classic mask worn not only at agricultural festivities, but also by dancers acting out the role of mythical teachers who came from heaven. The headdress represents Yirige, the cultural hero who drove away evil spirits at the first tilling of the land.

**NIGERIA & CAMEROON**

**55 Gelede mask – Yoruba People**  
12 inches, painted wood

Gelede is a cult in Benin and Western Nigeria concerned with the appeasement of witches. The masquerades are in honor of mother—whose power, Ashe, is especially manifested in elderly women, female ancestors, and the female Orisha.

**56 Gelede mask – Yoruba People, Nigeria**  
12 inches, painted wood

This mask is used by the Yoruba, who live along the boundary between southwestern Nigeria and present day Benin. It shows a female with a large rounded coiffure, reflecting local traditions of facial marking and symbolic headdress.

**57 Gelede mask – Yoruba people, Nigeria**  
23 inches, painted wood

Masks such as the one shown here are worn by men in an elaborate masquerade performance known as Gelede. This ritual takes place at the beginning of a new agricultural season. The purpose of the performance is to pay tribute to the special powers of women.

**58 Egungun mask – Yoruba people, Nigeria**  
17 inches, painted wood, cloth

The Egungun association honors ancestor spirits and invokes protection. At one time, this piece included a colorful costume of which there are still remnants. This is an authentic piece that has seen a significant amount of ritual use.

**59 Crowned mask – Urhobo people, Nigeria**  
14.5 inches, painted wood

A large, well-used mask painted white, blue and yellow using store bought enamel. It would be worn high on the head, possibly by performers such as poets and social critics, who speak out against wrongdoers.