

# PERFECT DOCUMENTS

WALKER EVANS AND AFRICAN ART, 1935



The Metropolitan Museum of Art



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Virginia-Lee Webb

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*Front cover:* Walker Evans, American, 1903–1975, untrimmed work print, *Mask [Banda headdress]*, 1935. See page 33, figure 23.

*Back cover:* Page from Walker Evans's notebook, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Walker Evans Archive, 1994 (1994.250.56).

*Inside front and back covers:* Sculptures for "African Negro Art," displayed for customs inspection before installation, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York. See page 28, figure 20.

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## DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

The collections at The Metropolitan Museum of Art are once again the source of wonderful surprises. *Perfect Documents: Walker Evans and African Art, 1935* provides the occasion to celebrate and reveal one of those surprises, by presenting relatively unstudied work by a well-known and historically important American photographer.

In *Perfect Documents*, Virginia-Lee Webb, archivist of the Photograph Study Collection in the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, assembles the pieces—many of them minute—of numerous puzzles in order to elucidate the history, details, and context of this formative work by Walker Evans. The project was a commissioned portfolio of photographs for educational purposes, works that were to be relevant to the overall development of Evans's style and career. *Perfect Documents* begins with the important exhibition of African art that took place in 1935 at the Museum of Modern Art. This exhibition provided the opportunity, setting, and subjects for Evans's photographs. The show also brought together (and put Evans in contact with) scholars Alfred H. Barr Jr., Thomas D. Mabry, and Dorothy Miller, all of whom supported Evans's photographic endeavors. Both the director of the exhibit, James Johnson Sweeney, and a young scholar, Robert Goldwater, were contributors to the catalogue and the descriptive "Index" listing the African art in Evans's portfolio. Years later, in 1957,

Goldwater became the first director of the Museum of Primitive Art, New York, whose collections were transferred to the Metropolitan in 1978. It is Goldwater's copy of Evans's portfolio, given to the Museum in 1961 and 1962, that inspired the research for *Perfect Documents*. Today, the portfolio continues to have a universal appeal, studied both by those interested in African art and by those investigating Evans's photography.

In order for the revelatory narrative of Evans's creation to be complete, examples of his work and writing were brought together from several departments at the Metropolitan Museum: the Photograph Collection, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas; the Department of Photographs; and the Walker Evans Archive. Many other collections and archives were consulted—notably those at the Museum of Modern Art—all of whom graciously facilitated access to information that enabled the story of this important chapter in Evans's oeuvre to be completed. The Metropolitan is grateful to all of the museums, archives, and private lenders that have shared information and their collections for this occasion.

The Museum extends its sincere appreciation to Philip Morris Companies Inc. for its support of the exhibition. The realization of the accompanying catalogue was made possible with the assistance of the Doris Duke Fund for Publications.

*Philippe de Montebello*  
Director

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition has come to fruition due to the expertise and generosity of many people. I offer my sincere thanks to all of the people who responded to my research inquiries and to the institutions and individuals who granted permission to quote or publish material from their collections. I would especially like to thank the lenders who have shared their collections. Their generosity and enthusiasm for the project are greatly appreciated.

Several people deserve a special note of thanks. I am particularly grateful to the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Without the generosity of several departments, this exhibition would not have been possible. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, which includes the Records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, and the Department of the Registrar all granted me access to important documents and allowed me to quote extensively from them. I would especially like to thank Michelle Elligott, Claire Dienes, Diane Farynyk, Carey Adler, and Jennifer Culvert, who provided valuable assistance. In the Department of Photographs, I owe special thanks to Peter Galassi, who generously granted important loans and enabled us to present the entire scope of Evans's African project, and Susan Kismaric, who coordinated many details of the loans. Virginia Dodier also provided assistance. In the Department of Photographic Services and Permissions, Mikki Carpenter and Thomas Grischkowsky graciously accommodated many requests and Jeffrey Ryan helped identify historical photographs crucial to the project. Nancy Kranz in the Department of Publications located the archive copy of Sweeney's book for the exhibition, and Janice Ekdal in the library provided references.

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in lending their copy of the portfolio to the exhibition. Margaret Young-Sanchez, formerly of the Cleveland Museum of Art, was very helpful with many aspects of my research and located relevant documents and photographs. At the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Kerry Dixon, Jennifer Small, and Alison Pinell congenially responded to requests for information and publications. Julia Van Haaften, New York Public Library, and scholar Bonnie Yochelson graciously shared and discussed information about Berenice Abbott with me that enabled me to form conclusions about Evans's work with her. At the J. Paul Getty Museum, my thanks go to Judith Keller, curator, Department of Photographs, and Jacklyn Burns, Photograph Services, for their assistance with research and publication requests. Ellen Handy, International Center of Photography, New York, shared her knowledge of photography with me and made helpful comments on the manuscript.

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The following individuals graciously provided information relating to their collections: Kurt J. Sundstrom, Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire; Elisabeth Schmoeger, Milwaukee Art Museum; Becky Simmons, George Eastman House, Rochester, New York; Diana Haskell, Newberry Library, Chicago; Pam Bernatz, Arts Club of Chicago; Christine Slade, Frederick Lamp, and the library staff of the Baltimore Museum of Art;

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Many colleagues at the Metropolitan Museum provided their expertise and skills. I extend my thanks to all of the staff who worked on the exhibition and publication for the superior level of excellence that they continually provide. I thank all of my colleagues in

the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. I owe very special thanks to Julie Jones, curator in charge, for her continual support and guidance and to Alisa LaGamma, assistant curator, who brought her knowledge of African art to the exhibition. I extend my sincere thanks to Douglas Newton, curator emeritus, for his comments on the manuscript. I am especially grateful to Deborah A. Saleeby, assistant archivist, who catalogued the Evans photographs and assisted with all aspects of my research for the book and exhibition. My research was made much easier through the help of J. Ross Day, associate Museum librarian; Joy Garnett, senior library assistant; and Leslie Preston, assistant librarian, the Robert Goldwater Library. Other staff members of the department deserving thanks are Donald Roberts, supervising departmental technician, James Dowtin, principal department technician, and Kendall McWilliam, assistant for administration. Over several years interns, fellows, and former staff contributed work: Christa Clarke, Camara Dia Holloway, and Alexandra Valdes-Fauli.

This project could not have been realized without the collaboration of the Department of Photographs. I extend my thanks to Maria Morris Hambourg, curator in charge, for the opportunity to present Evans's achievement. I would especially like to thank Jeff L. Rosenheim, assistant curator, who shared his knowledge of Evans's career and facilitated my work in the Walker Evans Archive. I am also grateful to Laura Muir, research associate, and Douglas Eklund, senior research assistant, who helped in numerous ways. In the Sherman Fairchild Paper and Photograph Conservation Department at the Metropolitan Museum, Nora Kennedy, conservator of photographs, and Nancy Reinhold, associate conservator of photographs, coordinated many details. Martin Bansbach, assistant manager for installation and matting, and Ross Chambers, mat cutter, also provided assistance. I thank the conservators and installers in the Sherman Fairchild Center for Objects Conservation for their work.

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Museum librarian, helped with special requests. The staff in Education coordinated many events, and a special note of thanks goes to Kent Lydecker, associate director for education, and to Stella Paul and Deborah Krohn, associate Museum educators.

I give my sincere thanks to the staff of the Editorial department. In particular I extend my personal gratitude to John P. O'Neill, editor in chief and general manager of publications, and Ann Lucke, managing editor, for their guidance. While the ideas proposed in this publication are my own, they have been artfully arranged by Tonia L. Payne, editor, who is also responsible for the design of the book. It has been my great pleasure to work with her on this project. The production of the book has been skillfully handled by Peter Antony, chief production manager, and Elisa Frohlich, production associate.

To all of my colleagues and friends, and especially to Toma Fichter, I extend my thanks.

*Virginia-Lee Webb*  
*Archivist, Photograph Study Collection*

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## INTRODUCTION

This exhibition is about a portfolio of photographs made by Walker Evans (1903–1975) in conjunction with a historic show of African art. In 1935 “African Negro Art” opened at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. It was organized by Alfred H. Barr Jr. (1902–1981), the influential director of the Museum of Modern Art at that time, and James Johnson Sweeney (1900–1986), guest exhibition director, with the assistance of curator Dorothy C. Miller (b. 1904), Robert Goldwater (1907–1973), a young scholar of African art, and several other experts. The show consisted of 603 sculptures on loan from European and American museums and private collections. Many were exhibited for the first time in the United States. The Western canon of African art is said to have been created from this exhibition, as many of the objects are now considered masterpieces.

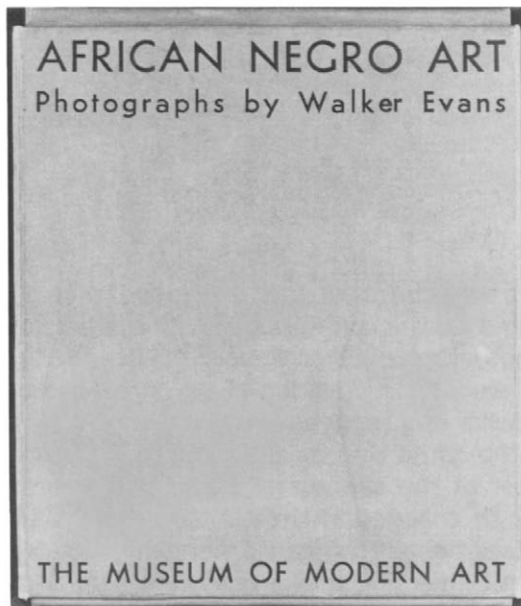
The purpose of the exhibition was to present the sculptures for their formal, artistic, and abstract qualities, not as ethnographic specimens, as was the typical presentation of the time. A minimal installation style was used to enhance the aesthetic aspects of the works, theoretically making them more accessible to Western audiences and emphasizing the influence the carvings had on European and American modern artists. The objects and textiles were presented with short identification labels but without contextual information or elaborate didactic panels. This exhibit set precedents for the way that African art was initially displayed and how it was appreciated in Western art museums until the middle of the twentieth century.

Barr knew that this was a historically important show. He felt that the sculptures in the exhibition should be photographed and used as an educational tool to teach about African art. He sought funding to carry out his idea and received a grant from the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation to prepare a photographic portfolio of the

sculptures in the show. Walker Evans (figure 1) was hired for the commission. With the help of the photographer Peter Sekaer (1901–1950), Evans produced an edition of seventeen portfolios with 477 images in each, which was given the same title as the exhibition (figure 2). Most of the sets were distributed free of charge to colleges in the United States that were traditionally African American, such as Howard University, and a few were sold at a reduced subscription rate to other institutions

1. *Janice Levitt (American, b. 1913), [Walker Evans], 1938–40. Gelatin silver print, 2¾ x 1¾ in. (7 x 4.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of the artist, 1998 (1998.398.4)*





2. Cover of the Walker Evans portfolios. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Photograph Study Collection, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, Anonymous Gift, 1991 (NA.1991.1)

in America and Europe that had an interest in African art. A typed, unpublished checklist that indexed the photographs to the sculptures in the exhibition was prepared by Miller, Goldwater, and Frederick R. Pleasants, another scholar. A copy of Sweeney's exhibition catalogue (plate 57) was included with each portfolio.

Like many situations in Evans's career, the African art commission overlapped with other new jobs that presented themselves. In mid-April 1935 Evans began photographing the sculptures on display at the Modern. In June and July Evans traveled to Washington, D.C., and accepted a project in West Virginia and Pennsylvania offered by John Carter of the Information Division of the Resettlement Administration. This led to further work, and Evans was officially hired by Carter in September or October of that year to take photographs for the Resettlement Administration.<sup>1</sup> Under the supervision of Carter and his successor Roy Stryker, Evans produced what were to become some of his most famous series of photographs made in America's rural South and parts of the Northeast. In

connection with his new employer in Washington, Evans began to travel just as the complex production of the more than eight thousand prints needed for the portfolios of African art was starting in New York. Evans hired as an assistant Sekaer, who supervised and carried out the printing along with the young author John Cheever (1912–1982), in a studio on Bethune Street Evans shared with the artists Ben Shahn (1898–1969) and Lou Block (1895–1969).

The African art project was also an opportunity for Evans to build his relationships with individuals at the Museum of Modern Art who would continue throughout his life to encourage and promote his artistic endeavors. In 1933 his photographs of Victorian architecture were exhibited at the Modern. In 1938 he was offered a retrospective, and the concurrent publication of *Walker Evans: American Photographs* brought him world acclaim. Throughout his career, newly appointed staff at the Modern continued to nourish the relationship. In 1971 John Szarkowski, who headed the Department of Photography from 1962 to 1991, gave Evans his second major exhibition at that institution. Writing about Evans's early artistic accomplishments in the introduction of the accompanying catalogue, Szarkowski observed that, "more often than not, what seemed small opportunities were made the occasion for important works."<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the African portfolio is a small segment of Evans's long and successful career, and until recent years it had received only minor attention, being eclipsed by his images for the Resettlement Administration. Oddly, although his American pictures were applauded as embracing a documentary style, the African art portfolio was historically minimized as merely documenting objects. The subjects often clouded the aesthetic analysis of Evans's depictions of them. However, as Szarkowski correctly noted about Evans's projects of the period, they did result in important work. Specifically, the African art commission not only preserved a record of many masterpieces in a landmark show, it also provided Evans with an important vehicle that facilitated the development of a stylistic bridge between his earlier, less familiar photographs and his widely known pictures for the government. The sculptures provided Evans with subjects



that were as diverse in form as they were in their original function. Evans tailored his representations of the sculptures within his emerging photographic vision, as objects worthy of aesthetic admiration, rendered significant in a Western sense, yet stationary and inanimate in an art-museum context. He framed them in ways that anticipate and replicate his classic "documentary style," seen in work from the two years prior to 1935 and in later photographs. Evans depicted the African sculptures using his highly stylized pictorial vocabulary, with the same concentrated yet sourceless illumination seen in the photographs of sun-soaked facades of American wood-frame houses, with their heated and minimal air. His subjects are fitted tightly into the frame, either at the moment of exposure or later by literally cutting the negatives and prints to the desired size. The style of the photographs of African art is identical to the highly personalized rendering of horseless carriages, empty churches, signs, and other objects of American culture. The African art portfolio is an integral part of the total picture of Evans's artistic career.

The exhibition of African masterpieces came at a time when non-Western art was just being recognized in American art museums. African, Mexican, Oceanic, and Native American objects were first prominently exhibited in New York in the early decades of the twentieth century, and scholars sought to

explain Western abstract modern art via the work from different continents and cultures that often inspired them. The linking of African creations to Euro-American modern and abstract compositions was an attempt to elevate both types of art to the Western canon and to show the affinities of forms.<sup>3</sup> Since that time, museums have continued to strive to find ways to display and understand art far removed from its original contexts. We know, sixty-five years later, that Africa has its own rich aesthetic styles and that renowned experts and traditions exist that cannot always be made parallel to Western preferences, tastes, contexts, and styles. Yet through the 1935 exhibition and through Evans's photographic portfolio, viewers were shown extraordinary and unique works.

The 1935 exhibition title "African Negro Art" was adapted to refer to five distinct projects that occurred between 1935 and 1936: an exhibition of sculptures at the Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition catalogue by Sweeney, the portfolio of photographs by Evans, a smaller circulating exhibition of sculptures selected from the initial show, and a traveling exhibition of Evans's photographs selected from the portfolio. Each had its own purpose, but all were interconnected and had nearly identical titles. The common threads among them are the African sculptures and Evans's photographs. A discussion of each project follows.

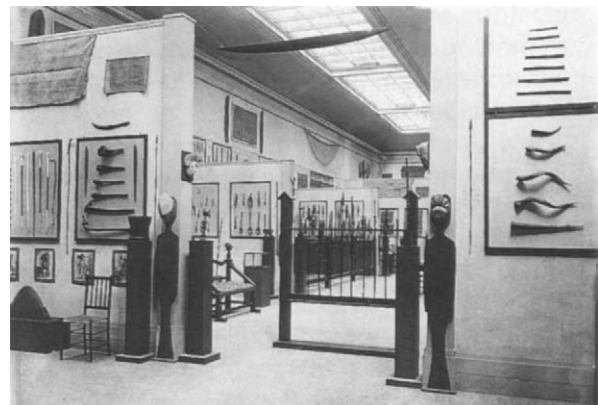
## THE EXHIBITION OF AFRICAN ART

By 1935 African sculpture had been exhibited in New York galleries on many occasions, the more notable shows having been organized by Alfred Stieglitz at the legendary 291 Gallery (1914); by Robert Coady at the Washington Square Gallery (1914); at the Modern Gallery, by Maurice de Zayas (1916); and at the Brummer (1922) and Valentine (1930) galleries, to name a few. During the first decades of the early twentieth century American and European dealers, especially French, Belgian, English, and German ones, had the opportunity to obtain, display, and sell traditional African art because it was actively and systematically being acquired by individuals in countries that had a colonial presence on the African continent. Access to objects kept a steady stream of art flowing into Europe and America.<sup>4</sup> In these early gallery exhibitions sculpture was presented in a variety of ways, often on its own but frequently with European and American paintings, sculptures, and drawings. The well-known 1914 show of African art at Alfred Stieglitz's gallery and a later exhibit, arranged by Edward Steichen in 1915 including works by Picasso and Braque with African art—both exhibitions photographed by Stieglitz—hint at the experimentation with display techniques that would communicate the aesthetic and formal qualities of art. Visitors to these early exhibits were shown African sculpture out of context and displayed like Euro-American art so that its abstract forms would be emphasized. It was felt that isolating these attributes and considering them on a purely "plastic" and formal level was a way for non-African audiences to appreciate the works. This approach also gave validity to modern abstract compositions, which, early in the century, drew on diverse sources.

New York museums had also exhibited African art by 1935, but usually in an ethnographic context to explain the culture and customs from which the works originated. In

1923 Stewart Culin (1858–1929), an ethnologist at the Brooklyn Museum, organized the show "Primitive Negro Art" (figure 3). The exhibit was selected from works Culin had acquired in Europe for the museum during 1921 and 1922 and comprised sculptures mainly from what was then the Belgian Congo (formerly Zaire and now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), with a few sculptures from other countries. The title of the exhibit did not reflect Culin's admiration or revisionist ideas about the sculpture, but his intentions are clearly stated in his catalogue introduction: "The entire collection, whatever may have been its original uses, is shown under the classification of art; as representing a creative impulse, and not for the purpose of illustrating the customs of African peoples."<sup>5</sup> His attempt to explain African objects and differentiate them from displays of utilitarian items with explanations of habitat and culture was meant to move them into the sphere of Western art appreciation. His remarks also located African works in a context that differed greatly from their original purpose. Culin wanted to set African art apart from how

3. Installation view, "Primitive Negro Art," 1923, organized by Stewart Culin, The Brooklyn Museum of Art Archives, New York



it was then being shown in "museum collections of African ethnology," where the aesthetic qualities of the sculptures were not given special emphasis. Culin's reason for displaying the artistic aspects of the collection in a way similar to Western art was so the public would see its sculptural beauty and understand why it exerted influence on a small group of artists in Paris.<sup>6</sup>

Although Culin was trying to change the interpretation of and attitudes toward African art, his display of the work was contemporary but not especially radical. The few surviving installation photographs show that while the mounting and design techniques were modernized, the arrangements were still reminiscent of ethnographic displays. Objects of similar form and function, such as spoons, horns, and clubs, were arranged relative to their size, while others were shown in well-mounted and framed displays, similar to arrangements of paintings. The attempt to connect African art to the everyday life of the museum visitor, rather than to recreate its original context, went so far as to include newly designed and produced textiles based on traditional patterns and used on clothing and furniture.<sup>7</sup> Culin's aesthetic approach did not impress his fellow ethnologists, but historically the show is one of his best-known achievements, as his exhibit is widely regarded as one of the first to present so-called artifacts as objects worthy of aesthetic consideration in an American art museum

4. Installation view, "American Sources of Modern Art," [May 8–July 1, 1933], *The Museum of Modern Art, New York*. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (20.301)



context.<sup>8</sup> The debate about this comparative classification has continued.<sup>9</sup>

In 1929 Barr was appointed the director of the newly formed Museum of Modern Art in New York. It was his vision that guided the institution and its creative staff in its early years. He left a complex and important legacy for museums of today, including a tradition of innovative installation designs for the display of abstract and non-European art. With the assistance of many creative individuals, he promoted the understanding not only of abstract art but of the traditional arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas.<sup>10</sup> Barr organized numerous exhibits that presented modern European and American art in inventive ways and detailed catalogues that pleaded "for understanding and future study of puzzling art."<sup>11</sup>

During the spring of 1933, four years after Culin's exhibit in Brooklyn, non-Western art made its appearance at the Museum of Modern Art. Holger Cahill (1887–1960) was asked to assist with Barr's duties while Barr was on leave and to fill gaps in the exhibition schedule until he returned.<sup>12</sup> Cahill had developed the Newark Museum's American collection and advised Abby Rockefeller on her "American primitive art" collection.<sup>13</sup> One of the two exhibits Cahill organized for the Museum of Modern Art during this period was "American Sources of Modern Art" in 1933 (figure 4). In the catalogue essay he wrote, "The purpose of this exhibition has been to bring together examples of this art which are to be found in collections in the United States, and to show its relation to the work of modern artists."<sup>14</sup> Cahill stated that he did not intend "to insist that ancient American art is a major source of modern art."<sup>15</sup> Rather his purpose was "to show the high quality of ancient American art" and "to indicate that its influence is present in modern art in the work of painters and sculptors some of whom have been unconscious of its influence, while others have accepted or sought it quite consciously."<sup>16</sup> Loans for the exhibit were received from local museums and galleries and included examples of great traditions from West, Central, and South American countries. The arts of the Aztec, Maya, and Inka civilizations were presented, including four textiles from The Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>17</sup> William Zorach (1887–1966) and Max Weber (1881–1961) were among the twelve

contemporary painters and sculptors exhibited and listed in the catalogue as being regular visitors to the American Museum of Natural History.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, illustrations of the contemporary paintings and sculptures were not published in the catalogue. Cahill was trying to elevate the works from the Americas in much the same way that Culin exhibited African objects as a source of inspiration for modern artists. The first sentence of Cahill's essay states his idea succinctly: "Modern art, like everything else in modern culture, has a complex heritage."<sup>19</sup>

The following year, 1934, Sweeney was working at the University of Chicago. He was asked by Barr to organize a major show of African art for the Modern. The presentation was to be the largest of its kind ever seen in the United States, with loans sought from public and private collections in Europe and America. Sweeney accepted. That same year Sweeney wrote to Patrick Henry Bruce, a prospective lender, about the show. "The Museum is planning to spare no pains toward making this exhibition one of the most comprehensive on a high level of quality that has been yet held in this field."<sup>20</sup> Beginning that year and continuing into 1935 Sweeney traveled extensively, visiting public and private collections in the United States, Germany, France, and England. By December 1934 Sweeney listed his itinerary after eight weeks in Europe. "I have already visited Brussels, Berlin, Hamburg, Lubeck, Munich, Frankfurt, Darmstadt."<sup>21</sup>

Sweeney knew several collectors and dealers of African art as a result of his curatorial projects in Chicago. He had seen presentations of African art before 1935, such as one at the Théâtre Pigalle in 1932.<sup>22</sup> He had organized exhibitions of twentieth-century painting and sculpture at the University of Chicago in 1934 immediately before his work at the Museum of Modern Art. One publication by Sweeney from this time, "Plastic Redirections in 20th Century Painting," included African pieces from the collections of Louis Carré (1897–1977), Paris; Charles Ratton (1895–1986), Paris; the Musée du Congo Belge, Tervuren; and Helena Rubinstein (1870–1965), Paris. Three of these sculptures (all except the one from Tervuren) were also included in "African Negro Art" at the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>23</sup> Ratton and Carré, associates and prominent dealers, proved

important to the project and provided access to objects in private collections. Sweeney had known Ratton and Carré from his work in Chicago and asked Ratton to be an advisor to the exhibit. The latter would also serve as a liaison for the French museums.<sup>24</sup> Ratton was a well-known figure among Parisian dealers and collectors of African art.<sup>25</sup> He made introductions for Sweeney that gave him access to private collections. During this period Ratton—along with Paul Guillaume (1891–1934), a dealer who gained prominence a few years before him—is credited with establishing a preferred style or canon of African art in the West that remains influential to the present day.<sup>26</sup>

During the preparations for the show at the Museum of Modern Art both Barr and Sweeney looked at sculptures when possible, often with the help of prominent intermediaries.<sup>27</sup> By the end of 1934 Barr and Sweeney were already receiving positive responses to their requests for information about other collections and possible loans.<sup>28</sup> Sweeney began making his selection for the show, adding and deleting objects as replies came in. When lenders were not immediately forthcoming, Barr enlisted support from noted scholars such as Franz Boas of Columbia University, New York, and Robert Woods Bliss of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C.<sup>29</sup> Barr himself requested loans in letters to noted artists of the day such as Georges Braque, André Derain, and Jacob Epstein, all of whom had collections of African art.<sup>30</sup> Sculptures from their collections and those of Tristan Tzara, Patrick Henry Bruce, Jacques Lipchitz, and Henri Matisse were included in the show and further emphasized the connection that European and American artists made with African sculpture. The museum published a notice concerning the progress of the show and the complex loans in the February 1935 *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*.<sup>31</sup>

Barr did not consider himself an expert in the field of African art, but he and Sweeney did a great deal of research before selecting sculptures for the show. They consulted publications of the period for reproductions of important objects. They used illustrations in existing literature to inquire about sculptures when they could not view them in person. They consulted publications such as *Negro* by Nancy Cunard, *L'art nègre* by Joseph Maes

and Henri Lavachery, and *Kunst der Naturvölker* by Eckart von Sydow, and they took great care in choosing examples of sculpture that were thought to be the best quality available.<sup>32</sup> Sweeney wrote, "We are extremely anxious that this exhibition will be one of the most comprehensive yet held, maintaining at the same time a strict quality level in the selections."<sup>33</sup> After many months of research and viewing collections, Sweeney and Barr selected 603 objects for the show from more than fifty private collections and seventeen museums.<sup>34</sup>

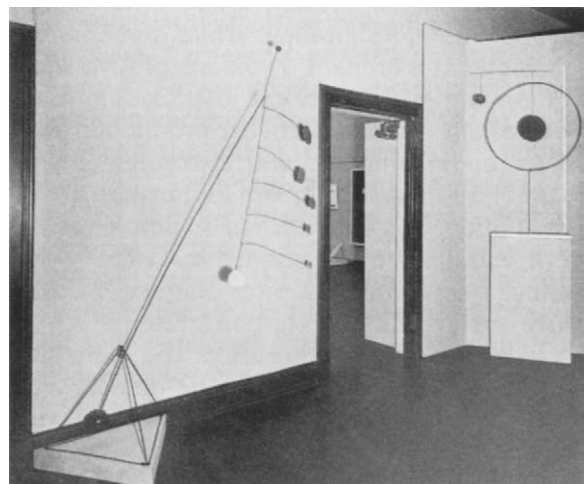
The sculptures were to be presented at the Museum of Modern Art in a very different manner than ever before. Sweeney, like Culin, was trying to position the sculpture within a Western museum context by applauding its relation to modern art and by using new display techniques. He thought that "because its qualities have a basic plastic integrity and because we have learned to look at Negro art from this viewpoint, it has finally come within the scope of our enjoyment."<sup>35</sup> He was obviously enamored of the work and responded directly to its Western aesthetic value with descriptions that cited, for example, "its essential plastic seriousness, moving dramatic qualities, eminent craftsmanship and sensibility to material, as well as . . . the relationship of material with form and expression."<sup>36</sup> He acknowledged that these objects had been previously exhibited but admonished the ethnographic museums for showing them "in a clutter of other exhibits, since their esthetic character was of no interest to their discoverers or possessors at the time."<sup>37</sup> The catalogue essay for the exhibition is full of similar references calling for a revised approach to viewing African art.

There were several inspirations for Sweeney's new display techniques at the Museum of Modern Art: the early gallery installations, Culin's precedent for isolating objects from cluttered ethnographic-style displays, Barr's radical design philosophy, and Sweeney's own creative experience with modern and African art. A model for Sweeney's style in the African installation is seen in a photograph from 1934 depicting his arrangement of sculpture by Alexander Calder in "A Selection of Works by Twentieth Century Artists" at the Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago. Two highly abstract constructions by

Calder are positioned against pale, possibly white walls (figure 5).<sup>38</sup> Calder's linear composition with red circular elements was given a substantial amount of empty viewing space. Clearly Sweeney's experience in installing such formally rigorous abstract art developed his minimalist design sensibility. As previously noted, the inclusion of both African and Euro-American art traditions together in "Plastic Redirections in 20th Century Painting" would have reinforced Sweeney's idea to use similar display techniques at the Modern in 1935.

Undoubtedly Barr's radical design philosophy pushed Sweeney's ideas further. Barr transformed museum presentations by using neutral-color monk's cloth on the walls, hanging paintings at eye level, and placing sculptures on white or neutral pedestals.<sup>39</sup> Barr's designs were undoubtedly an inspiration for Sweeney's minimalist design sense and a style to emulate. His installation for "African Negro Art" brought these ideas to fruition. The design consisted of white walls with the sculptures on white-painted or natural-wood pedestals.<sup>40</sup> Sweeney presented the African works in rooms with white walls so as not to distract the viewer from appreciating its sculptural forms (see figures 6, 7, 9–14). The absence of color in the installations was a deliberate attempt to focus the viewer's attention on the art and thereby produce an aesthetic response.

5. *Sculptures by Alexander Calder installed by J. J. Sweeney, 1934, University of Chicago. From A Selection of Works by Twentieth Century Artists (exhib. cat.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thomas J. Watson Library (107.1/C461)*





6. Installation view, "African Negro Art," March 18–May 9, 1935, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S1006)

In his essay Sweeney stated his respect for African art. He interpreted the extraordinary achievements of the artists as "the mature plastic idiom of a people whose social, psychological and religious outlook, as well as history and environment, differ widely from ours."<sup>41</sup> Further, he said, "The art of . . . Africa is a sculptor's art. As a sculptural tradition in the last century it has had no rival."<sup>42</sup> Although Sweeney also acknowledged that, because of cultural positions, "we can never hope to plumb its expression fully,"<sup>43</sup> he made an attempt to do so by displaying the objects from a singular Western, modernist viewpoint, so that nothing would interfere with the appreciation of the formal qualities of the work.

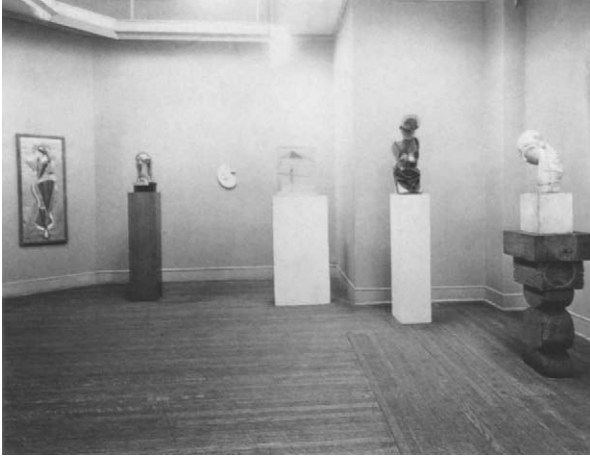
It is important to remember that the understanding of African art in America and Europe was in its infancy. While it seems odd today that the brilliant traditions of African art would need such historical justification, many ideas about Africa and its art production were based on incomplete and extremely biased colonial information, or on supposition where information was lacking. For example, artists were thought to be anonymous, the works purely utilitarian and not unique. In fact, these erroneous assumptions hampered the entry into the United States of the loans that comprised Sweeney's show. The objects were initially refused duty-free entrance because the United States Customs Service believed

that they were not works of art, only replicas and objects of everyday use. Customs supported these incorrect observations with Western criteria: the sculptures did not bear an artist's signature or a date and the place of manufacture could not be documented. The museum was not able to convince the Customs Service of the aesthetic character of the loans and was forced to post \$700 bond.<sup>44</sup> Although the West continues to learn about African history and art, we now realize that artists are not unknown or unappreciated in African culture and that art from the continent has a rich and complex history, which Sweeney and Barr only speculated about. Many attributions have been corrected and details learned about individual artists whose sculptures were included in the 1935 exhibit.

The exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art covered all four floors of the building.<sup>45</sup> It can be partially reconstructed from surviving installation photographs, most by Soichi Sunami. The color, or rather lack of it, is confirmed in newspaper and magazine articles that describe the sculptures as "placed against a background of dead white plaster walls."<sup>46</sup> This sparse, minimal presentation, seen in the installation photographs, is not only devoid of color but of contextual information. Ephemeral materials that often are part of African art are absent, as are didactic panels, which one would now find in museum

7. Installation view, "African Negro Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S1008)





8. Installation view, "Modern Works of Art: Fifth Anniversary Exhibit," November 19, 1934–January 20, 1935, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S867)



9. Installation view, "African Negro Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S1007)

presentations. Three simple maps and an index of ethnic names were published in Sweeney's catalogue and may have been in the exhibit. Upon close examination of the installation photographs, small identification labels can be seen on the white walls near some of the sculptures and textiles.

The arrangement of the sculptures shows several standard configurations. In figure 6 we see the first gallery that the public entered.<sup>47</sup> Two sculptures, which differ widely in their purpose, place of origin, and material, are installed on pedestals. To the left in the photo we see a figure by artist Akati Akpele Kendo, of the Fon people of the Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomey; MoMA cat. no. 237) and on the right an extraordinary mask from the Bamileke Kingdom of Cameroon (MoMA cat. no. 326). Both are displayed on white bases that echo the dominant geometric or round forms of the piece. In another gallery view (figure 7), at left is a headdress from Guinea (MoMA cat. no. 40) and in the back of the gallery are three sculptures from Mali and Gabon (MoMA cat. nos. 11, 366, 34), seen on one pedestal. They are arranged by their form and size, not their function or provenance.

There is evidence that Barr was very involved in the installation of the African show. Dorothy Miller recalled that he "fussed" a great deal with the arrangements, and he is

said to have worked up until the very last moment positioning the sculptures.<sup>48</sup> Further, Barr's biographer states that he was directly involved in every phase of all the exhibitions at the museum. This would be logical, as there were specific ways that Barr felt art should be presented. Also, there is a remarkable similarity between one of Barr's earlier arrangements of European sculptures and a grouping in Sweeney's show. A surviving photograph of "Modern Works of Art: Fifth Anniversary Exhibit" (November 19, 1934–January 20, 1935) shows the same room where African sculptures were displayed two months later (figure 8). In the "Modern Works of Art" installation, sculptures by Constantin Brancusi and others are positioned on bases in a nearly identical arrangement to sculptures from Cameroon in "African Negro Art" (figure 9). Barr's influence is apparent in the subsequent arrangement of the African sculptures, with the white walls and stark lighting added by Sweeney. Again, attention was given to the height of the bases and the placement of the sculptures. Oddly, they are positioned around the perimeter of the room with their "backs" to the wall, in an arrangement that contrasts with Sweeney's objective of viewing them as sculpture, since the visitor would not be able to walk around the entire piece, as in the tradition for showing Western works. Another photograph provides an



10. Installation view, "African Negro Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S1016)

example of Sweeney's minimal design environment and Barr's signature eye-level, top-aligned grouping of textiles by Kuba artists, in conjunction with four painted and decorated masks from different African countries (figure 10). In still another view, panels were painted white and installed over the cloth-covered walls to accommodate a configuration of African weapons (figure 11). Barr's installation technique for sculptures on white or neutral-colored bases was used throughout the African installation.<sup>49</sup>

A case of small ivory sculptures and ornaments is seen in figure 12. The unifying elements in the display are the material and the diminutive scale of the works. This case may have been arranged in deference to conservation and security issues, as ivory must be kept in special conditions so that heat and uneven temperatures are avoided and because all the pieces were small. Because the conservation requirements for the ivories were later listed in the installation instructions for the traveling version of the exhibit, this would seem one plausible reason for the arrangement of the display.<sup>50</sup> Small gold and metal sculptures and ornaments were also installed together (figure 13).

Barr's and Sweeney's new minimal installation techniques proved highly successful for the exhibition of African art. The show was very popular with the public and attendance rapidly increased. Barr was extremely pleased with the public interest and proudly wrote to a lender, "Within two weeks over 15,000 people have visited the exhibition."<sup>51</sup> In fact,



11. Installation view, "African Negro Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S1017)

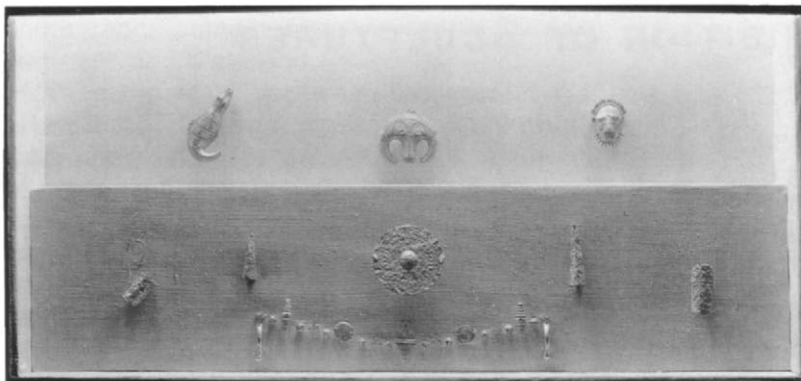
during the first two months 30,330 visitors were admitted to the show.<sup>52</sup> An effort by the museum to bring the installation to the attention of African-American communities in New York also increased the public attendance by six percent.<sup>53</sup> When the exhibit closed in May 1935, it was their most popular presentation to date, with more than 45,000 visitors.<sup>54</sup>

The exhibit also received a great deal of attention in the press, especially while it was on view in New York. Numerous newspaper articles from the period describe the popularity of the show, remarking that "radical artists, society women, collectors and others are flocking to the Museum of Modern Art."<sup>55</sup>

12. Installation view, "African Negro Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S1013)







13. Installation view, "African Negro Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S1014)

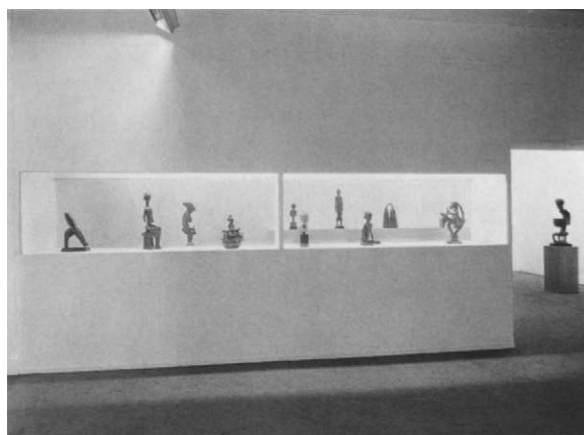
It opened with a private reception on March 18, 1935. Smaller parties in honor of Barr's and Sweeney's accomplishment were hosted by socially prominent lenders such as Helena Rubinstein. She loaned seventeen sculptures to the show and hosted a dinner that included a viewing of the remainder of her African collection, which at the time was reported to number more than four hundred pieces.<sup>56</sup> The innovative look of the installation was also recognized in the press. Jerome Mellquist, writing for the *Amsterdam News* stated that "[Sweeney] had chosen all the specimens so well and arranged them so intelligently one in relation to the other that one felt oneself seeing a whole from which it would be impossible to draw any part. Truly an accomplishment in exhibition making"<sup>57</sup> (figure 14). Many notices were seen in newspapers and magazines ranging from *Arts Magazine* and *Form and Content* to *Vogue*.<sup>58</sup>

Lectures and educational programs were arranged in conjunction with the show. Barr invited the distinguished professor Franz Boas, then head of the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University, to present a lecture. Boas, who had been helpful in securing loans, presented an illustrated slide lecture on African art to museum members and members of the Cosmopolitan Club on April 17, 1935.<sup>59</sup> Hans Himmelheber, a noted scholar from Europe, also inquired about giving a lecture.<sup>60</sup> Ernestine Fantl, a curator on staff at the Museum of Modern Art, presented gallery talks and gave lectures for teachers.<sup>61</sup> The desire to expand the public's knowledge of African sculpture in a specific way is evident in these programs and in the annotation at the beginning of the list of references in Sweeney's catalogue, which solidifies his approach, noting his selections for

the reader were chosen to facilitate study of "art primarily from an esthetic point of view" including "certain fundamental ethnographic works."<sup>62</sup>

In his catalogue Sweeney wrote that African sculpture should be praised on "genuine merits that are purely its own," and he minimized the direct "plastic assimilation" of its forms by European artists as "attempts at interpretation."<sup>63</sup> Through his display techniques he both applauded African art and reinforced the direct visual appropriation of forms by Europeans. The noted scholar Alain Locke astutely summarized the outcome of the project by writing, "Having learned the similarities of African art and modernist art, we are at last prepared to see their differences."<sup>64</sup>

14. Installation view, "African Negro Art," The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S1010)



## THE TRAVELING EXHIBITION OF SCULPTURES

The importance and popularity of "African Negro Art" in New York prompted Barr and Sweeney to arrange for a smaller version of the show to travel within the United States. Not all of the institutional lenders were able or willing to make extensions on their loans, so Barr and Sweeney made the final selection from the available items. The details of the one-year tour were handled by Elodie Courter, secretary in the Department of Circulating Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art. The number of objects seen at several locations changed for various reasons, but anywhere from 104 to 182 sculptures from approximately twenty-six lenders were shown.<sup>65</sup> The itinerary began in June 1935 and continued until April 1936 (see appendix 1). The rapid completion of the tour schedule and an announcement about the exhibit's popularity

were published in a 1935 edition of the *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, which focused on the exhibit.<sup>66</sup>

It was hoped that the success and style of installation of the exhibition would be duplicated at other venues. Art museums, not those for natural history or anthropology, were selected for the tour, in keeping with Barr and Sweeney's concept for the status of the sculpture. The instructions for the traveling exhibit suggest that the host institution follow the same style of presentation used in New York. Installation photographs were even included in the instruction packet.<sup>67</sup> Newspaper reviews provide descriptive information concerning the installation at some venues. Visual documentation about how every museum on the tour presented the sculptures does not seem to have survived, but a few installation

15. Exhibition documentation photograph, "African Negro Art," July 26–September 12, 1935, San Francisco Museum of Art (now San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)



photographs remain from museums in San Francisco and Cleveland.

When the exhibition was presented at the Arts Club of Chicago, November 15 through December 9, 1935, an effort was made to recreate an installation similar to that seen at the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>68</sup> The look of the installation was described in the local newspapers: "The walls of the gallery have been hung with creamy white sateen for the exhibition and new cases of dark wood and dulled brass standing on white foundations . . . have been built for some of the smaller pieces."<sup>69</sup> A man named Arthur Heun may have designed the installation at the Arts Club along with the decor of the receptions and social events that ran concurrent with the show.<sup>70</sup> Public programs were also presented in Chicago, with Sweeney himself lecturing on December 2, 1935.<sup>71</sup>

Dr. Grace L. McCann Morley, then curator at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), supervised the installation there. While the black-and-white photographs reveal some details about how she arranged the sculptures (figure 15), her correspondence provides additional information. Morley described her installation in a

letter to the Pierre Matisse Gallery, which was a lender to the tour:

I am [enclosing] two views of the gallery as it was installed. . . . We installed it against backgrounds of modified yellow and red. The iron War God at the end of the gallery was against a yellow panel; the bronze relief against a red pedestal and the seats on a red platform. That side of the gallery was predominantly red, with yellow accents at intervals. The opposite side, both cases and mounts for the masks, was predominately of the yellow [color]. Visitors to the gallery, who had seen the exhibition also in New York, spoke most enthusiastically of the color installation; and it is true that the particular tones we chose brought out the richness of the pieces in an extraordinary fashion, and permitted one to recognize the full plastic quality in a satisfactory way.<sup>72</sup>

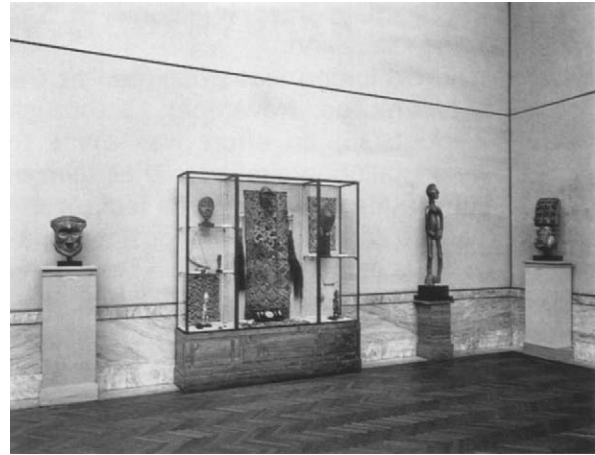
Morley goes on to say that the color was their only option because of their museum's "neutral monks' cloth walls" (figure 16).<sup>73</sup> She regretted not having seen the Museum of

16. Exhibition documentation photograph, "African Negro Art." San Francisco Museum of Art (now San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)





17. Archive photograph, installation view, "African Negro Art," September 28–October 27, 1935, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio (15997)



18. Archive photograph, installation view, "African Negro Art," The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio (15994)

Modern Art's installation of the sculptures and what "the effect was against the white [walls]."<sup>74</sup> One can see from this letter that in Morley's presentation the philosophy for creating interest in African art through display techniques was similar to Sweeney and Barr's. The exhibition was also popular in San Francisco, and the local press noted the arrangement of the artworks.<sup>75</sup>

The installation at the Cleveland Museum of Art can also be reconstructed from surviving photographs. While not as austere as the displays at the Museum of Modern Art, visual symmetry again was constructed by the arrangement of sculptures and textiles according to their shapes and sizes (figure 17). A visual balance of forms in the arrangements of art was achieved by doubling objects of like provenance and size in several parts of the installation. This slight variation in the presentation may have been an attempt to modernize the displays within the confines of the architectural details and cloth-covered gallery walls that could not be changed for the exhibit. Less rigid variations of this mirroring of sculptures were used elsewhere in the installations (figure 18). The photographs also show a panel with a map of the African continent (see figure 19). These graphics only appear in the installation photographs from the Cleveland Museum and greatly resemble the maps used at the end of Sweeney's catalogue. As in New York and elsewhere, very small identification labels are visible near the sculptures.

The exhibition brought African art to the public's attention. The subject was emphasized and extended through the photographic project, which also succeeded in its educational component and provided the young photographer Walker Evans with an opportunity to work at the Museum of Modern Art.

19. Archive photograph, installation view, "African Negro Art," The Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio (15995)



## THE PORTFOLIO OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY WALKER EVANS

The culmination of the new aesthetic approach to African art was epitomized in Barr's idea for an educational component of the exhibit: Walker Evans's photography. The idea of producing a photographic portfolio documenting the contents of a show was not uncommon for the Museum of Modern Art. Before 1935 the museum had organized several circulating presentations that were composed of photographs or reproductions of paintings, watercolors, or drawings and based on previous exhibitions.<sup>76</sup> One event that set a precedent was a show seen January 15–February 25, 1934, titled "International Exhibition of Theatre Art," along with its accompanying catalogue by Lee Simonson. This large exhibit traveled to ten additional venues. A selection of 148 works from it were photographed, and the photographs circulated until 1937 as a new exhibit. This photographic corpus was funded by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>77</sup> Barr had been instrumental in obtaining funding for the Theatre Art photographic project and wanted to prepare a similar photographic compilation of the African sculptures because he knew the importance of Sweeney's show. With the Theatre Art precedent in mind, Barr wrote to David H. Stevens, director of the humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation, outlining his idea:

Do you think that the Rockefeller Foundation would be interested in providing funds for a corpus of photographs of African Negro Art similar to the corpus of Theatre Art recently completed by us on a grant[?] . . . The corpus . . . would be based upon the exhibition which our Museum is opening March 20th under the direction of James Johnson Sweeney. The material in the exhibition has been chosen for its aesthetic value. It will comprise over 400 objects many of them the finest of their kind in the world.<sup>78</sup>

Stevens was quick to respond to Barr's letter and suggested that he provide more details about the proposed project.<sup>79</sup>

At this point in time, February 1935, the exhibition of African art was due to open at the Museum of Modern Art within a month. The majority of the loans had arrived (figure 20), and one can assume that Barr, Sweeney, and the entire staff must have been extremely busy preparing the galleries and sculptures for installation. However, in the midst of this activity, Barr and his staff managed to prepare a budget for the photography project by April 9, only a few weeks after the show had opened.

The key member of Barr's staff who prepared the detailed budget proposal was Thomas Dabney Mabry (1903–1969). Mabry was hired by the museum in 1933 and became executive director in 1935, assisting Barr with his growing administrative and financial responsibilities.<sup>80</sup> Mabry played a key role in the management of the portfolio project, and his role in Evans's career now appears prominent.<sup>81</sup> Mabry had extensive connections in the New York art world; prior to his employment at the museum he worked at the John Becker Gallery and met Evans during an exhibition of the latter's photographs there in 1931.<sup>82</sup> Mabry also was a close friend of Lincoln Kirstein (1907–1966), who became an influential figure in the arts and a promoter of Evans's work, especially at the museum. The interconnected relationships between Barr, Mabry, and Kirstein all contributed to Evans's important projects at the Museum of Modern Art and his growing career. Indeed, Mabry had previously worked for the president of Fisk University, Nashville, and his contacts there may have been significant in the eventual distribution of the African art portfolio.<sup>83</sup>

Mabry's letter and budget of April 9, 1935, to John Marshall at the Rockefeller Foundation outline the purpose and the costs of preparing the photographic portfolio.<sup>84</sup> The narrative



20. *Sculptures for "African Negro Art," displayed for customs inspection before installation, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photograph © The Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA S898)*

summarizes the objectives of the project: "The Exhibition of African Negro Art assembled for the Museum of Modern Art by James Johnson Sweeney is the most important of its kind ever held. . . . It would be a great waste were this Exhibition to be dispersed without adequate photograph documentation. Following the precedent of the Photographic Corpus of Theatre Art prepared by the Museum in 1934 it is proposed to photograph about 450 of the 600 objects in the Exhibition of African Negro Art using some 500 plates since some of the more important works should be shown from different points of view."<sup>85</sup> Part of the proposal lists the suggested distribution of the photographs, with sets of the portfolio to be given "gratis to 3 leading Negro colleges; 1 set gratis to the Harlem Branch [now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture] of the New York Public Library; 5 sets to be distributed at a nominal fee to museums and colleges." The edition, or "corpus," as it was referred to at this point, was to consist of "10 sets." An accompanying "catalog in the form of labels together with indices" was also suggested. The itemized budget attached to Mabry's proposal isolates each expense and notes the amount of funds that the museum would absorb, as the grant request included subsidies from the museum.<sup>86</sup>

A work schedule was proposed for the com-

pletion of the project, giving not only the estimated number of hours for photography and compensation but the restricted time periods in which the photographs could be taken, as the sculptures would have to be photographed when the exhibit was closed to the public.<sup>87</sup> "There are approximately 220 hours work required in the actual photographing. This can only be done before 10 A.M. and after 5 P.M. Assuming 6 hours work a day, 36 days will be required. This brings us practically to May 19th, the closing date of the exhibition."<sup>88</sup>

The initial proposal does not list Walker Evans as the photographer, only the per-unit cost of prints, materials, and photography, but Mabry had discussed the project with Evans on April 9.<sup>89</sup> Evans wrote in his diary that day, "Saw Tom Mabry at Museum may get job photographing 450 pieces exhibition primitive negro sculpture, enormous undertaking for me at this time but would clear \$1000. Said I'd do it for \$2 neg. 15 [cents] print delayed delivery."<sup>90</sup> The names of additional participants, identified as Expert Council "to aid in description and sources," were listed as Ratton, Goldwater, and Sweeney.<sup>91</sup> Of the three, Goldwater's is the name that, along with Ratton's, would be most associated with African art in the following years. Goldwater was then twenty-eight years old and would go on to write important

essays and books about the relationship of African art to modern Euro-American art, such as *Primitivism in Modern Painting* (1938). He also became an influential teacher of both types of art at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts and was the first director of the Museum of Primitive Art, New York.

The sculptures that were to be photographed were already on view at the museum by the time the financial proposals were submitted. The restricted schedule for the project prompted Mabry to ask in a subtle manner for an expedient reply to his request.<sup>92</sup> The response to the grant application was indeed swift and positive. Although the formal letter of notification from W. W. Brierley, secretary of the General Education Board founded by John D. Rockefeller, is dated April 13, 1935, Mabry must have received verbal confirmation on April 12, because Evans wrote in his diary, "Tom Mabry called to say that the museum job went through. That means I'll be swamped [and] frantic for some time to come."<sup>93</sup> A thank-you letter sent to Stevens at the Rockefeller Foundation informed him that "Mr. Walker Evans has agreed to do the work and has already begun with it."<sup>94</sup>

Before 1935 Evans had completed a variety of small commissions, some that included photographing art. In 1930 he photographed sculptures by Wilhelm Lembruck for the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>95</sup> In 1933 Evans wrote to his friend and sometime roommate, painter Hanns Skolle, about "a lot of fifty copies to be made for the Downtown Gallery, of American folk painting and objects."<sup>96</sup> Evans also photographed a private collection of carriages in 1933 for his former patron Oliver Jennings, who in the preceding year had hired Evans as his official photographer on a trip to Tahiti.<sup>97</sup> Kirstein had also suggested that Evans photograph sculptures in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, but that project never came to fruition.<sup>98</sup> Barr's, Kirstein's, and Mabry's admiration for Evans's work during these years and its exposure at the Museum of Modern Art made Evans the logical choice for the African sculpture commission.

The purpose of the photographic portfolio of African art was groundbreaking because it was conceived as an educational project. In conjunction with the free portfolios, the museum was instructed by the General Education

Board to prepare six additional sets, one for the Museum of Modern Art's library and five more to be sold at a nominal subscription rate to other museums. The proceeds would be used "to cover the expense over and above the amount of the Board's grant."<sup>99</sup>

The idea to use the photographs to teach about African art was an original and extraordinary one. Although the American artist Charles Sheeler (1883–1965) had photographed African sculpture in 1918, it was a small project in comparison and did not have any educational mandate. Sheeler had been commissioned by artist and art dealer Marius de Zayas to produce twenty-two portfolios, each with twenty photographs for illustrative and commercial purposes.<sup>100</sup> The project was conceived as a luxurious limited edition showing a specific collection of masks, not as a vehicle for the comprehensive study of the subject.

The selection of museums and colleges designated to receive a portfolio was also important and was compiled by Barr and Mabry with the approval of the General Education Board. Mabry's former position at Fisk University was undoubtedly an important influence in choosing the institutions that would receive the sets.<sup>101</sup> The number of recipients increased as the project took shape. The initial list was provided in the award letter to Mabry; "It is the understanding of the officers that this sum will enable the museum . . . to present sets of these photographs free of charge to Atlanta University, Fisk University, Hampton Institute, Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library and one other institution still to be designated by the Board."<sup>102</sup> The list also included art museums that had collections or an interest in African art (see appendix 2).

Beginning April 13, 1935, Evans spent several days at the Museum of Modern Art, discussing the details of his project with Barr and Mabry. Together they worked out a timetable for the delivery of prints, the payment schedule, the Museum's possession of negatives after the completion of the job, and Evans's ownership of the rights for subsequent use of the photographs. Evans's diary entries recounting the activities of these first few days at the museum reflect his excitement about the project and about the payment of

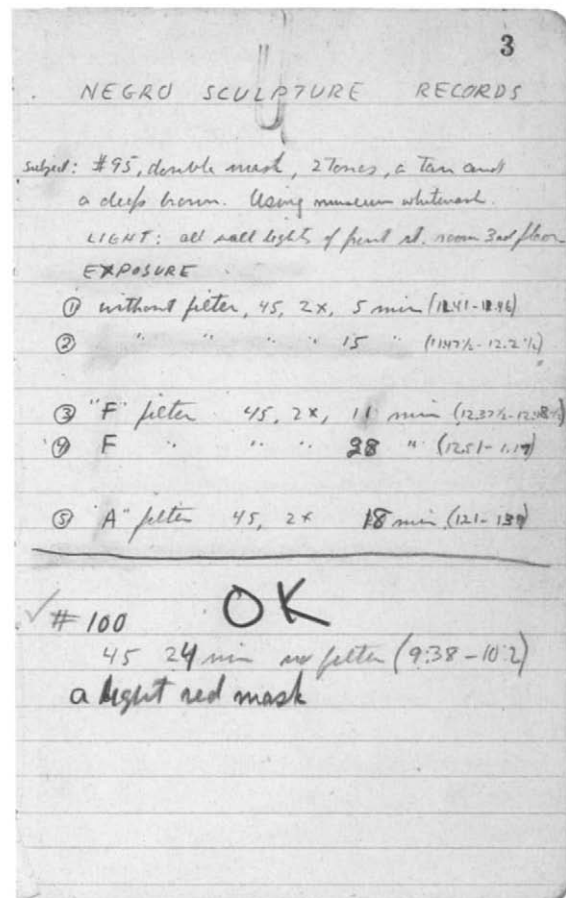
more than \$2,500 that he would eventually receive. Evans was well treated by his hosts, and the days included lunches with Barr, Sweeney, and legendary individuals who visited the museum for other reasons, such as the architect Philip Johnson.<sup>103</sup> Evans lamented in his diary that it was difficult getting started, but he managed to take test photographs on Monday, April 15.<sup>104</sup> Although the actual photography began that day, the formal contract between Evans and the museum was not signed until two days later. It is one of the few documents with his signature that represents their agreement.<sup>105</sup>

The announcement of the portfolio and the choice of Evans as the photographer was published in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*. "The Museum has been fortunate in securing the services of the distinguished photographer Walker Evans, whose series of photographs of 19th century American houses is in the Museum's permanent collection."<sup>106</sup> Enthusiasm for Evans's work was expressed by Barr and Mabry throughout the project. "We feel we have been particularly fortunate in getting Walker Evans to agree to do the photography for the same cost as our ordinary photographer. He is particularly interested in the material in the exhibition and will do the best job of anyone I know in achieving a full third dimensional effect."<sup>107</sup> Mabry wrote, "Mr. Barr and I persuaded Mr. Evans to make the photographs because we considered him one of the outstanding American photographers."<sup>108</sup> Mabry also said, "Walker Evans, the well-known photographer, has spent months on the project and the result, in my opinion, is unsurpassed in contemporary photography."<sup>109</sup> Near the completion of the project Mabry wrote, "I chose Mr. Evans to do the work because of my admiration for him as a photographer and I believe these photographs are in most cases better than any of their kind I have seen before."<sup>110</sup> In notices outside the museum about the project, some journals noted Evans's participation, while others emphasized the funding from the General Education Board. The *Art Digest* recorded, "About 450 objects will be photographed by Walker Evans, the more important from two or three different angles."<sup>111</sup> The *New York Times* noted on April 28, 1935, that "Walker Evans has been engaged to make the photographs."<sup>112</sup> The *New York Herald-Tribune*

published a small article titled "Walker Evans to Make Pictures of Display for Distribution."<sup>113</sup>

Several collections and individuals provided information that survives today about Evans's activities and feelings about the project. The first source is the Walker Evans Archive at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Two notebooks relate to the project. The first is Evans's 1935 diary, which chronicles daily events, records his observations about the commission and the people involved in it, and, importantly, reveals how the African art project became interwoven with his work for the Resettlement Administration. The various entries chart his daily progress (or sometimes the lack of it) each day as well as who was working at a given location, creating an important record of his activities. At times when the museum and the Resettlement Administration projects

21. Page from Walker Evans's notebook. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Walker Evans Archive, 1994 (1994.250.56)





were simultaneous, the diary reveals Evans's struggle to keep both going smoothly. For example, on August 30, 1935, he wrote, "Museum prints. Peter [Sekaer] worked 5 days this week. Met Roy Stryker." The next entry, dated September 1, his diary reads "worked on gov[ernment] prints. Peter did not work today. Drove to Ossining tonight." These references to the juxtaposition of assignments continue throughout that year. A second notebook in the Walker Evans Archive relates exclusively to the African art project (figures 21, 22). In it Evans compiled a shot list of the sculptures he photographed each day (recording Sweeney's catalogue numbers of the sculptures), along with technical information.

Another crucial source of information about the portfolio and the related exhibitions of sculpture and photographs is the correspondence, papers, and records in the Museum of Modern Art Archives, Records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, Department of Photographs, and Department of the Registrar.

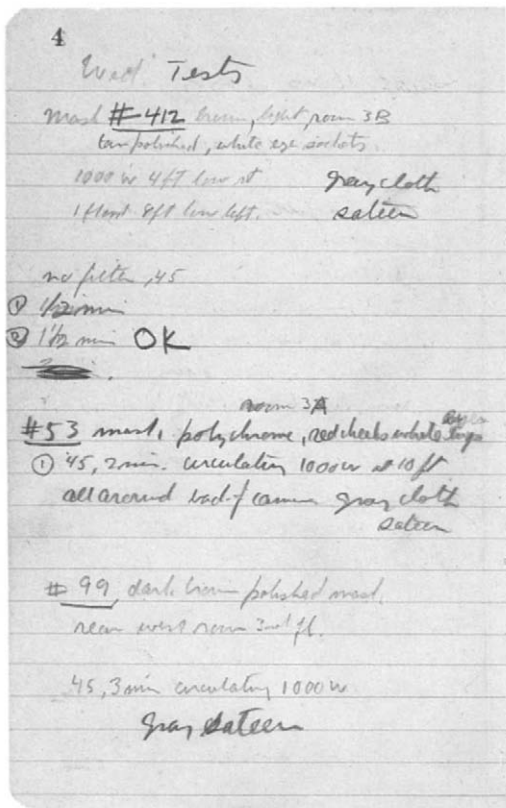
A third important source is the recollections of Dorothy Miller, who was a key figure in the project. She has provided information about Evans's activities, as she coordinated the entire schedule and witnessed Evans working in the museum. Miller began her career at the Newark Museum, where she met (and later married) Holger Cahill.<sup>114</sup> She subsequently assisted him with "American Sources of Modern Art" and worked on the "International Exhibition of Theatre Arts" at the Museum of Modern Art. Barr hired her in 1934, and she spent the rest of her career at the museum, retiring in 1968.<sup>115</sup> She was intricately involved with the exhibition of African art and is credited with assembling Sweeney's catalogue.<sup>116</sup> Her work on that publication and the exhibit made her an integral part of the plans for the Evans portfolio. In addition to her own recollections, we know of Miller's participation from Evans's diary and from surviving documents that were submitted to the General Education Board at the completion of the grant period, which state that "Miss Dorothy Miller, Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture, prepared the forty-eight pages of index which accompany each set. Much effort and time was expended for the Index."<sup>117</sup>

In 1989 Miller recalled her work with Evans.

She said, "I worked with Walker in the galleries after the museum closed to the public, which was about 6:00. . . . Every day I would tell our handlers, our staff . . . which cases to open. Maybe six for the night [but] we would never get through them."<sup>118</sup> The notebook in the Walker Evans Archive confirms Miller's recollections about the number of sculptures that were photographed each night. The daily number of objects photographed ranged greatly. Miller remembers a congenial and loquacious Evans who was "a tremendous talker." She often had to be the kind but efficient manager, saying, "Come on Walker, snap this one and let's put it back in the case."<sup>119</sup>

In Evans's project notebook he used the numbers (1–603) assigned to objects in Sweeney's exhibition and catalogue to denote the sculptures he photographed each day. Those numbers are referred to here as MoMA catalogue numbers. Later a separate set of numbers (1–477) was assigned to the photographs in the portfolio. Here, these are called WE numbers and are cross-referenced with the MoMA catalogue numbers used in the index prepared by Miller. Based on the notebook entries it seems that the first sculpture Evans photographed was MoMA catalogue number 95, a Baule mask then in the Guillaume collection and now in the holdings of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Evans not only described the appearance of the mask but noted the lack of color on the museum walls: "Subject: #95, double mask, 2 tones, a tan and deep brown. Using museum white-wash"<sup>120</sup> (see figure 21). The description of the setting for this sculpture also indicates that it was one of several objects that were rephotographed, as the image that is included in the portfolio has a dark background (plate 14). The test prints that show the mask with a white background, as Evans described in the notebook, never became part of the completed portfolios. The positioning of the sculptures in the test prints is often different from the views used in the portfolio, and the existence of these variant prints reveals that in some instances, especially at the start of the project, Evans took several exposures before he made a final selection.

The answers to questions about the camera and lighting setup used by Evans each day (which had to be dismantled and stored every night because of the museum's public hours)



22. Page from Walker Evans's notebook. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Walker Evans Archive, 1994 (1994.250.56)*

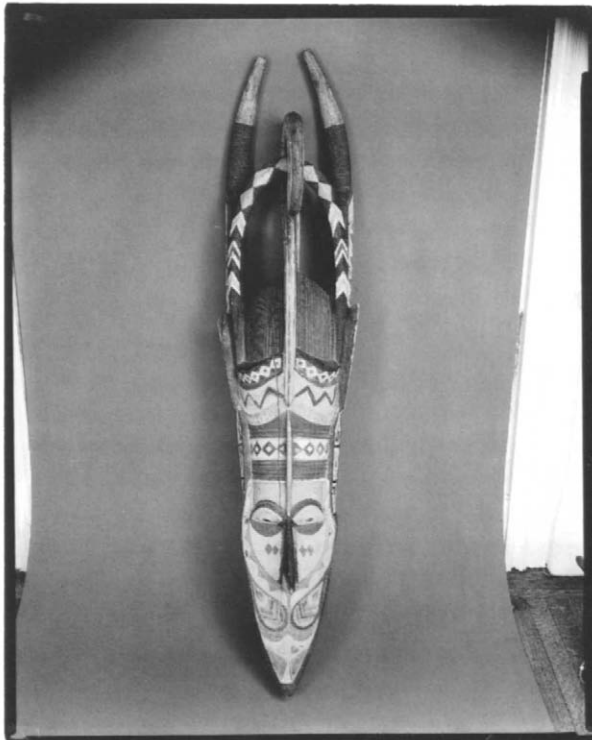
also come from several sources. Miller described general equipment arrangements, and Evans recorded in his notebook the different types of backgrounds he used. Notations include phrases like "museum whitewash," "gray sateen," "new gray blotting paper," "2 pieces of felt," "Thibaut gray," and "blue blotting paper" (see figure 22).<sup>121</sup> An uncropped contact print acquired in 1989 by The Metropolitan Museum of Art of MoMA catalogue number 305, of a *banda* headdress made by a Baga artist, shows one of the background setups. Edges of seamless paper, or perhaps gray sateen, can be seen in the untrimmed print (figure 23).<sup>122</sup> Mabry's final report emphasized the care given to the choice of backgrounds and to their variety: "Mr. Evans showed great interest in the material and spent much time in preparing suitable backgrounds for objects of different textures and surfaces."<sup>123</sup>

As to the camera used by Evans, Miller only

remembered that it was a big standing type.<sup>124</sup> This would point to Evans's use of an 8 x 10-inch view camera. Jerry Thompson has written in his important book on Evans's technical working habits that he used 8 x 10-inch negatives for this project and a view camera during this early period.<sup>125</sup> Evans did record a cryptic "Phils camera" in his notebook about the African art project.<sup>126</sup> The meaning of this notation has yet to be verified, as none of the people working on the project went by that name. However, this may be a reference to artist Ben Shahn's brother Phil, who bought Shahn a Leica around 1934. Evans shared a studio with his friend Shahn (1898–1969) first at 23 and then at 22 Bethune Street during late 1934 through part of 1936.<sup>127</sup> Perhaps Shahn's Leica was used initially for test photographs.

Evans's notebook and diary reveal the number of days he spent photographing the objects at the Museum of Modern Art and at a few other locations. As stated, the first test photography was accomplished on Monday, April 15, 1935. Undated entries in Evans's notebook referring to the remainder of the week indicate that during those first few days sculptures were photographed at both the museum and at the Matisse Gallery, probably because several loans not on view had to be returned.<sup>128</sup> Evans wrote in his diary on April 17 about being at the museum that day and developing test films in the evening. On April 19 Evans laid out his work schedule: "from here to Memorial Day entirely occupied with museum job working with Dorothy Miller."<sup>129</sup> The almost daily photography at the museum began in earnest on Wednesday, April 24, with the last entries of MoMA catalogue numbers recorded in the notebook on May 24, 1935.<sup>130</sup> This schedule is not radically different from the estimate prepared by Mabry. However, the logistics of moving delicate loan objects and the congenial relationship between Evans and Miller certainly slowed their progress. Miller recalled that Evans enjoyed the job and the sculptures. "[He] was crazy about the objects. He was crazy about the job."<sup>131</sup>

The sheer number of sculptures to be photographed must have been overwhelming. Evans counted how many he had done on May 14: "About 240 obj done to here."<sup>132</sup> Miller recalled the slow and careful process that Evans went through. "He was very fussy.



23. Walker Evans, untrimmed work print, Mask [Banda headdress], 1935. MoMA cat. no. 305. [Africa, Guinea, Baga/Nalu peoples]. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Photograph Study Collection, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, Purchase, 1989 (1989.410.1)

Setting up each piece was quite a process, getting it just the way he wanted it, and then lighting it exactly the way he wanted it."<sup>133</sup>

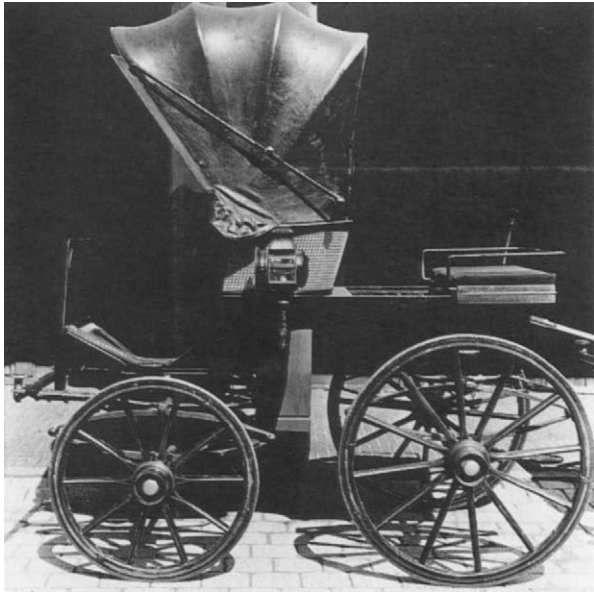
Evans also made technical remarks about exposure, lighting, and bulb wattage in his notebook. Importantly, he notes the fixed placement of lights as right, up, or down. He also records a technique of rotating the lights in a circular motion while making the exposure.<sup>134</sup> This technique for illuminating the sculptures would account for the soft overall lighting. No harsh or well-defined shadows are seen in the photographs; rather, sculptural forms are accentuated, and the direction of the light source is not discernable.

Evans's compositional choices were prompted by his own vision and sometimes by the structure of the objects themselves. The proportions of many objects differ dramatically when seen from front and side views. What is certain is that his symmetrical positioning of the sculptures and cut of the frame was a pre-

view of his later mature style. His method of moving in close, reframing the subject in an often parallel placement to the edge of the negative, and cropping the print to obtain a tight, airless space around the subject is seen in this early commission.

The original proposal called for multiple views of some objects.<sup>135</sup> Of the 603 works of art in Sweeney's exhibit, 404 are shown in 477 photographs in the portfolio. The various views are listed in the index prepared by Miller and described simply as front, back, detail, or profile. Many photographs are further described as "actual size" or "over actual size," and so forth. Barr made the initial selection of objects to be photographed, but no information identifies the individual who selected the sculptures for multiple views or established the criteria for selection. We know that Ratton loaned his collection on the condition that it always be shown in its entirety, and, like the Carré collection, it was for sale during the whole tour.<sup>136</sup> Some choices for alternative views seem logical, because the selected sculpture has several attachments or differs dramatically from another angle. But we can only speculate about who finally decided which sculptures would be photographed from additional angles. The decision must have been made by Evans and Miller, because of their working relationship and especially given Evans's care when positioning the pieces.

Evans's work prior to the African sculpture project had, of course, included many diverse subjects. But his photographs of sculpture, such as the torso of a woman by Wilhelm Lehmbruck, do not hint at the framing style seen in the photographs of African sculpture.<sup>137</sup> A similar compressed space is seen in photographs Evans made in 1933 of Jennings's carriages. One photograph in particular in the series situates the carriage with the perimeters of the wheels and the top of the cab's roof nearly flush with the edges of the picture frame (figure 24).<sup>138</sup> The frontal, parallel positioning of the camera angle and the center eye level of the nearly square print are similar in style to photographs in the African portfolio, such as numbers 269, 271, and 410 in Miller's "Index" (hereafter "Index" numbers are referred to with the prefix WE; plates 28, 30, and 48). A well-known photograph by Evans, *Connecticut Frame*



24. Walker Evans, Jennings Carriages/View of a Jennings Carriage, 1933. Gelatin silver print, 6 x 6½ in. (15.2 x 15.4 cm). The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (84.XM.956.107)

House, from 1933 (which was also included in *American Photographs*, part 2, no. 20; figure 25), has a similar alignment, with the sides of the house close to the boundary of the frame. In the African art portfolio the photographs of many sculptures, especially those with rectangular shapes, are pictured by Evans in a similar way. Evans's intense edge-to-edge framing emphasizes the graphic power of the sculptures and makes many appear larger in scale than they actually are. Years later, in 1955, when Evans worked at *Fortune* magazine, he photographed a series of hand tools with a similar approach.

Evans photographed a small number of pieces from three views, which included details of the entire sculpture. His photographs of the figures by Fon artists Akati Akpele Kendo and Ganhu Huntondji show his very individual way of picturing the works. The figure by Ganhu Huntondji is seen in three photographs (plates 24–26, WE 169, WE 170, WE 171).<sup>139</sup> In the details of this figure Evans departs from his customary, centralized full-length framing of the sculpture by his emphasis on a figurative element, such as the feet and a back view of the head and shoulders. Because of the camera's close proximity, the figure as a

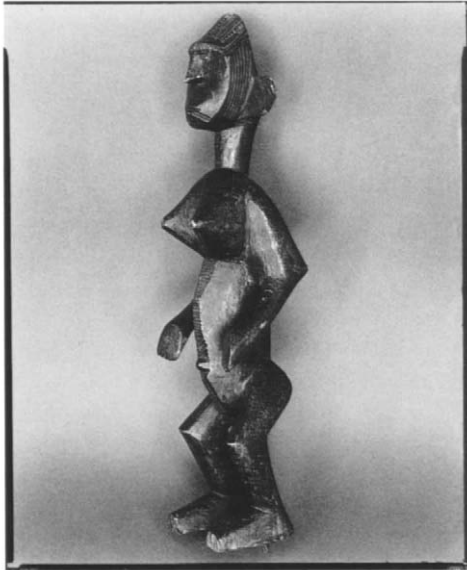


25. Walker Evans, Connecticut Frame House, 1933. Gelatin silver print, 4⅞ x 5⅞ in. (11.1 x 13.8 cm). J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (84.XM.956.487)

whole seems greatly enlarged yet compressed in the front view, where again the perimeter of the sculpture just touches the edges of the frame.

Another set of photographs showing a Luba *kabwelulu* also presented that work in a unique, nontraditional way. Only a full back view (plate 47, WE 383, MoMA 489) and a three-quarter detail of the front top half (plate 46, WE 382, MoMA 489) are in the portfolio. In the detail Evans turned the object slightly away from the camera. He horizontally framed only its upper half, which comprises a carved female figure. The breasts and elbows of the figure rest on a piece of animal skin along with shells that separate it from its gourd base. Evans turned the piece to accentuate the angles of the figure and show its coiffure. The point where it connects with the gourd forms a fluid linear composition. A full-front view of the sculpture was not included in the portfolio, although one by a different photographer was shown in Sweeney's catalogue.<sup>140</sup>

The cropping of prints and negatives, both literally cutting them and printing variant images, is common in Evans's work. His notebook for the African portfolio documents his concern about negatives, as he indicated



26. *Untrimmed version (contact print) of WE 69, Figure. Elisabeth Sekaer Rothschild and Christina Sekaer*

which ones he had checked.<sup>141</sup> Most of the photographs in the portfolio were contact printed, then cut to desired size. This is evidenced by the existence of full-frame, untrimmed prints with crop marks, which were not part of any of the original seventeen portfolios.<sup>142</sup> In addition to the untrimmed print showing the background setup previously discussed (see figure 23), an example of Evans's cutting prints is also seen in an untrimmed contact print—not part of any completed portfolio—from the Sekaer collection (figure 26). It shows the negative edges around the border of the print. In the completed photographs these negative edges were always trimmed and, depending on the proportions of the object, the size of the print was radically reduced (figure 27). The slender dimensions of many of the portfolio prints reveal not only the editing process but Evans's deliberate decision to keep only a narrow perimeter of space around the sculpture.<sup>143</sup> The trimming of prints is also evidenced in the slight variations of sizes between the seventeen completed sets. The original negatives in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art are full 8 x 10-inch size, even when the finished print is dramatically reduced in proportion.<sup>144</sup>

The paper Evans selected for the prints was Azo and possibly Cyko contact paper. Azo was a popular paper manufactured by Kodak that



27. *Final version of WE 69 (trimmed), Figure, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, Visual Resources Collection*

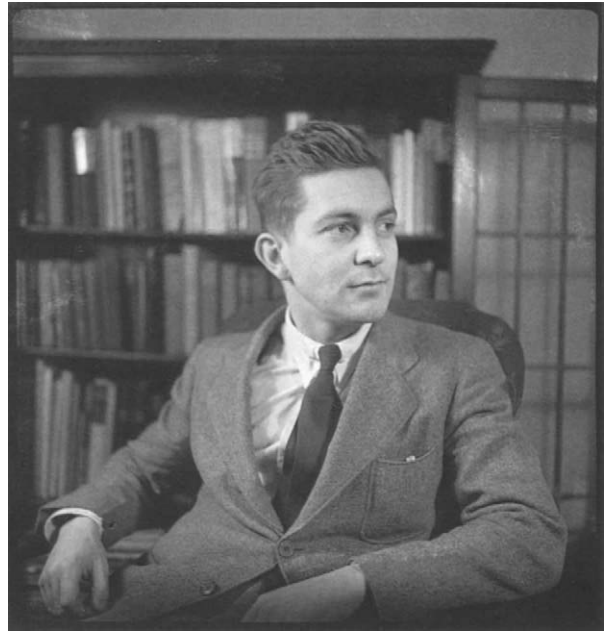
had a lustrous matte surface.<sup>145</sup> Evans's choice of a paper with an excellent range of tones facilitated the representation of the various textures of the sculptures, especially in conjunction with Evans's soft lighting technique, which accentuated forms but did not create defined shadows. The resulting photographs convey the vibrancy and multiplicity of media used by African artists.

While the actual photography took about six weeks, the printing, mounting, and collating of the prints took almost a year. There were several reasons for this, but the primary ones are that the number of photographs to be printed increased throughout the project and that Evans had also begun working for the Resettlement Administration. The initial grant proposal called for ten sets, but the contract with Evans calls for fourteen prints each of 450 negatives.<sup>146</sup> Ultimately, the final report by Mabry to the General Education Board accounted for thirteen sets, but the report was annotated by an unknown hand making the total seventeen.<sup>147</sup> Also, documents about the project in the Walker Evans Archive indicate that enough prints were made for seventeen complete sets.<sup>148</sup> If one counts the prints that actually made it into the seventeen finished portfolios, the total is 8,109.

In June 1935 Evans had already started



28. Undetermined photographer, [Portrait of Peter Sekaer], ca. 1930s. Courtesy © Elisabeth Sekaer Rothschild and Christina Sekaer, New York



29. Peter Sekaer (American, 1901–1950), [Portrait of John Cheever], ca. 1930(?). Courtesy © Elisabeth Sekaer Rothschild and Christina Sekaer, New York

visiting Washington in conjunction with his work for the Resettlement Administration, so the museum project fell behind schedule.<sup>149</sup> Evans did not finish developing the negatives for the museum until August 13, 1935. He made the first substantial group of prints on August 15 and delivered them to Mabry the following day. Because of the new opportunity with the government project and because Evans realized that the amount of work that he had agreed to complete (originally by September 1935) for the museum was enormous, he hired several people to assist him with the printing of the African art photographs. Several names are listed in documents, correspondence, and diaries. Two people, J. Russack and E. Deis, are listed briefly as having done some retouching of prints.<sup>150</sup> But prominent among Evans's assistants were Peter Sekaer (figure 28) and John Cheever (1912–1982; figure 29). Sekaer was a fellow photographer who had studied with Berenice Abbott at the New School for Social Research.<sup>151</sup> Sekaer was hired on August 19, 1935, only a few days after Evans completed the initial work. Sekaer managed the entire project and worked with and without Evans, making thousands of prints for the African

art portfolios. During the later stages of the project, Sekaer kept it going forward while Evans made intermittent visits to New York. Cheever and Sekaer worked in the studios at 23 and 22 Bethune Street (figures 30, 31) that Evans shared with Shahn.<sup>152</sup> Sekaer and Cheever completed the majority of the printing for the portfolios at 22 Bethune Street.

As noted, Evans is said to have met Sekaer through Shahn, who, along with artist Lou Block (1895–1969) and writer James Agee (1909–1955), helped Evans set up the darkroom for the African sculpture project.<sup>153</sup> Cheever, who was then at the beginning of his writing career, worked for more than fourteen weeks making prints with Sekaer, who labored for twenty-one weeks.<sup>154</sup> Sekaer's widow, Elisabeth Sekaer Rothschild, and Evans's diary provide information about the working relationship between the photographers and their social life in Greenwich Village. They often dined and traveled together, and in November 1935 the Sekaers visited Evans in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. When Evans was in New Orleans working for the Resettlement Administration, Sekaer accompanied him and created his own remarkable and distinct series of photographs in similar locations.



30. Building at 23 Bethune Street, 1939–41. Tax photograph, Department of Records and Information Services, Collections of the Municipal Archives of the City of New York (635-22)



31. Building at 20–22 Bethune Street, 1939–41. Tax photograph, Department of Records and Information Services, Collections of the Municipal Archives of the City of New York (640-64)

Sekaer's training with Abbott, as well as his talent as a photographer, provided Evans with an ideal friend and manager for the African project.<sup>155</sup>

In August 1935, when Evans returned to New York to work on the museum project, by most accounts his personal life was preoccupied with thoughts of Jane Smith Ninas, whom he met in New Orleans at the end of January 1935.<sup>156</sup> However, his tone in a letter to John Carter, then director of the Division of Information at the Resettlement Administration and the man who hired him, reveals he was anxious about coordinating his new commitment and the significant amount of work that remained on the African art photographs: "I have been so fully occupied in completing the work I am doing here for the Museum of Modern Art, which I think I mentioned to you at our first meeting, that I have not been able to proceed with the series of pictures I have

begun for [Roy Stryker at] the Information Division."<sup>157</sup> Mabry had reminded Evans about the deadline for printing the portfolios. When informed that they would not be completed on time, Mabry, ever resourceful, wrote to the General Education Board asking for an extension on the project, which was granted.<sup>158</sup>

The overlapping of these large projects, as well as Evans's intense relationship with Ninas, undoubtedly caused the production of the numerous prints for the sculpture portfolios to fall behind schedule. Together he and Sekaer managed to deliver additional photos to Mabry in early October—probably for the circulating exhibition, a discussion of which follows. The countless problems of running the studio and producing so many photographs, especially during the later stages of the project, were handled by Sekaer when Evans was away working. Funds were running low for supplies and for payment of the utili-

ties at the 20–22 Bethune Street studio where the printing was being done. Sekaer wrote to Evans about the impending problems, but by January 1936 Sekaer had run out of money to cover bills and once again sought Mabry's assistance.<sup>159</sup> He, too, was treated royally, and on one occasion, at a lunch with Miller, he met everyone from the doorman to Barr.<sup>160</sup> In the meantime the late delivery of the completed portfolios was explained in letters to the prospective recipients by Mabry.<sup>161</sup>

Evans and his able assistants did finally complete the project at the end of April 1936. There were two simple formats for the portfolios, mounted and unmounted. The idea to have one format mounted on a durable paper was included in the initial prospectus for the portfolio. The museum wanted to improve on the paper that had been used for mounting the Theatre Art corpus, "[which] had proved too fragile for practical use in libraries."<sup>162</sup> Notes regarding the types and prices of mounting paper survive in the Walker Evans Archive. The types were given as an Index Bristol Standard 117M, Mansfield Bristol 200 M, and Stanton Index 117M.<sup>163</sup> An undated invoice from the Schlosser Paper Corporation, New York, indicates the purchase of white Stanton paper cut to 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches.<sup>164</sup> Evans did play a part in the decision on how to mount the photographs. Some of the actual mounting of the prints was done by Sekaer, but most of it was done at a commercial business and supervised by a man named Valone, whom Evans visited on October 4, 1935.<sup>165</sup> The skill Valone displayed was also observed by Sekaer in a letter to Evans.<sup>166</sup> The quality of the mounting was indeed good, as the portfolios of that format have generally survived in excellent condition.

The completed sets of photographs, both mounted and unmounted, were distributed in folios, with the title imprinted on the covers (see figure 2). The mounted sets were cased in four folios; the unmounted photos may have been cased the same way.<sup>167</sup> Although probable, it cannot be determined if all of the original folio covers were identical.

Despite the long delays in the production and delivery of the portfolios, Mabry in particular was thrilled with the final product. He wrote that they were "better than any of their kind I have seen before."<sup>168</sup> Mabry's feelings about the quality of Evans's work, which

he had said would be unsurpassed in contemporary photography, had come to fruition.<sup>169</sup> Evans also expressed his satisfaction, saying simply that the photographs "seem good."<sup>170</sup>

Seven sets were given free of charge to the institutions that the General Education Board, Barr, and Mabry had selected. They were all to receive mounted sets including Sweeney's exhibition catalogue and Miller's "Index." The folios were received at the various institutions and letters of thanks followed.<sup>171</sup> The portfolio and its contents were especially welcomed by the recipient universities. Florence M. Read, then acting president of Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University), wrote, "We are delighted to have this collection. Our students are greatly interested in African art and we are finding a growing interest on the part of people in the community. . . . The photographs in this collection made a very valuable addition to our resources."<sup>172</sup> In 1936 Arthur A. Schomburg, the noted curator at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library, after whom the library is now named, also expressed his pleasure with the portfolio: "This collection will be highly praised and will form an indispensable unit to the study of primitive African art. It will be used, from time to time, in our exhibition cases for the students of New York City schools and adults of the neighborhood to enjoy the handiwork of African people."<sup>173</sup>

In total seventeen complete portfolios were produced. Some were distributed free, and the remainder was offered by subscription for a nominal fee to other museums or libraries that had relevant collections of art (appendix 2). It is interesting to note that for the most part, the portfolios, like the traveling show of sculpture, were offered to art museums. This would have been a direct result of Barr's and Sweeney's desire to elevate the status and promote the teaching of African art. Only one museum chosen by Barr declined the offer and redirected the proposal to a sister institution.<sup>174</sup> Those who purchased the portfolio for a nominal fee were New York University; the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard; the University of Chicago; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Trocadero Museum (now the Musée de l'Homme), Paris. Dartmouth College also wrote requesting a set and was granted one at the last minute. Frederick R. Pleasants,



who assisted Miller with the preparation of the accompanying "Index," purchased a set for his private use. Sweeney was given a portfolio by the Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, in thanks for his work as director of the exhibition.<sup>175</sup> One set remained in the Museum of Modern Art library.

Robert Goldwater purchased a set of unmounted photographs for his own use. At the time he was developing courses in African art at New York University.<sup>176</sup> For Goldwater especially the photographs played a major role in methods of teaching and exhibiting African art for years to come. During his tenure at New York University a set remained in what is now the Visual Resources Collection at the Institute of Fine Arts. Goldwater had made 35mm slides of the photographs that he used in his lectures, and a selection of these now reside in the Museum of Primitive Art Archive at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Goldwater's influential career included being the first director of the Museum of Primitive Art, from 1957 until his untimely death in 1973. During that period he used Evans's photographs continually, most notably reproducing several in his important exhibition catalogues about Senufo and Bamana sculpture. Goldwater gave his personal copy of Evans's portfolio to the Museum of Primitive Art (whose art and non-art collections were transferred to the Metropolitan Museum), and annotations by him and subsequent curators of African art chronicle the changes in scholarship and attributions for the sculptures. Evans's photographs, in conjunction with the sculptures themselves, helped form the aesthetic criteria and support the method, emphasizing style, by which African art was then studied for several decades.

The role of Evans's photographs is also clear in the wide distribution of two publica-

tions: one is *African Folktales*, by Paul Radin and Sweeney, published in 1952 with a revised edition in 1964. The other is Sweeney's *African Sculpture*, which was prepared with Goldwater's assistance and was published in a paperback edition in 1970. These volumes reproduced Evans's photographs along with those of photographer Eliot Elisofon. The books provided an enduring public audience for Evans's work within the changing context of African art studies in public and academic environments.

Both the mounted and unmounted versions of the Evans portfolio, selected from three collections, are presented in the Metropolitan's current exhibition. One unmounted set is from The Photograph Study Collection, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, and was Goldwater's personal copy.<sup>177</sup> The second unmounted copy exhibited is on loan from New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, Visual Resources Collection. The mounted set is from the collection of Laura and James J. Ross. A selection of photographs not part of the final editions is also on loan from Elisabeth Sekaer Rothschild and Christina Sekaer. Prints from the Walker Evans Archive, Department of Photographs, are on view in the exhibition "Walker Evans."

The sculptures that Evans photographed in 1935 came from diverse public and private sources. Over time, objects in private hands eventually found their way into museum collections. This is the case with several of the sculptures seen in 1935 and photographed by Evans that are now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art and on view in the Benenson Gallery, the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing. An additional group of sculptures is presented in the exhibition in conjunction with Evans's photographs.

## THE TRAVELING EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

The portfolio of photographs taken by Evans was never exhibited in its entirety at the Museum of Modern Art or elsewhere. However, a selection of seventy-five prints was made specifically to be circulated to sixteen venues in the United States (appendix 3). This set of enlargements, or "poster exhibition" (as it is often referred to in documents to distinguish it from the portfolio and sculpture shows), was part of the museum's original grant request to the General Education Board. Like the portfolio, it was intended to be a strong educational component of the project and was in keeping with the existing practice of the museum to circulate exhibitions. By 1935 several selections of two-dimensional art had been arranged for travel by the museum.<sup>178</sup> It is interesting to note that "Photographs of Nineteenth Century American Houses by Walker Evans" was one of the museum's shows already on tour at the time. Thirty-nine photographs of houses that Evans had displayed at the Museum of Modern Art in 1933 were on tour between 1935 and 1936.<sup>179</sup> These architectural photos were sent to fourteen venues.<sup>180</sup>

In his initial letter to Stevens about the project, Barr indicated that he sought to produce a traveling exhibition similar to the "Theatre Arts" corpus, which also went on tour.<sup>181</sup> The idea for a touring version of the Evans photographic portfolio was discussed in preliminary conversations with John Marshall of the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>182</sup> The proposal submitted by Barr and Mabry expressly noted the purpose of the supplementary exhibition of photographs "for circulation among Negro colleges."<sup>183</sup> Not only did Barr and Mabry want to promote appreciation of African art, they wanted to make it more available to African-American students.

The museum was willing to subsidize the show for a second year if the General Education Board would allow it to circulate free of charge during the first year.<sup>184</sup> The

proposal suggested that it be seen at fifteen colleges with African-American students and that it consist of twenty-five 16 x 20-inch enlargements mounted on boards approximately 24 inches square and fifty 8 x 10-inch photographs mounted on 12 x 18-inch boards. Two copies of Sweeney's catalogue would remain at each of the fifteen colleges.<sup>185</sup> Funds for this project were granted at the same time as those for the portfolio.<sup>186</sup>

The plans and costs for the preparation of the enlargements were included in the museum's agreement with Evans. The details of the traveling show were arranged by Elodie Courter, secretary of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions.<sup>187</sup> The actual selection of photographs was made by Barr. It was Barr's intention to include "the best possible examples of each phase of the original exhibition."<sup>188</sup> The quality of Evans's work was expressed in the project report and other documents that circulated with the exhibition, which stated that "the Museum was most fortunate to have secured Mr. Evans, one of the foremost American photographers" for the project.<sup>189</sup> The press release that was included in the installation instructions went even further, announcing the work Evans had done prior to the African art photographs: "Under a grant from the General Education Board, the Museum engaged Walker Evans to photograph the objects. A successful photographer of sculpture, Mr. Evans is perhaps more widely known for his documentary photographs of the recent Cuban revolt and for his photographic record of 19th Century American houses of which the Museum has a collection."<sup>190</sup>

In addition to Sekaer, Evans may have had the assistance of another friend and photographer, Berenice Abbott (1898–1991), to facilitate the production of the enlargements for the exhibition. Abbott and Evans had met around 1930, and she is said to have expanded his awareness of the history of photography.<sup>191</sup> Abbott, who was very knowledgeable

about the technical aspects of photography, occasionally allowed others to use her dark-room and equipment, and she was present in New York during this period.<sup>192</sup> Importantly, she is known to have owned the special carriers and lenses needed to enlarge 8 x 10-inch negatives, the film format for the African art project.<sup>193</sup> Among the seventy-five prints needed for Evans's traveling show, twenty-five of the 8 x 10-inch negatives were to be enlarged to 16 x 20 inches. Evans recorded some tantalizing information in his diary concerning the production of the enlargements. He had returned to New York on September 4, 1935, and the next day resumed work with Sekaer on the "museum prints." Evans wrote in his diary on September 17, 1935, that he was "making enlargements all day and evening at Bernice's [*sic*] [and that] Peter worked alone at Bethune Street and came up in the evening to help me. The end of the first double printing is in sight."<sup>194</sup> Although Abbott's first name is not spelled accurately in the diary notation, Evans and Sekaer both knew her by this time. The double printing Evans refers to may be the exhibition prints and a first portfolio set. It is likely that Evans is referring to Abbott's 56 West Fifty-Third Street darkroom when he uses the phrase "up at Bernice's." That work on the museum project was undertaken at Abbott's studio seems likely, as it has been published that Evans worked there during this time making enlargements for the government project.<sup>195</sup> This conclusion may be supported by an entry Evans made on September 17: "Stryker telephoned from Washington called for prints." However, the enlargements for the Evans circulating show had to be received by the museum well before October 11, 1935, when the first venue was scheduled to open. In fact, they were completed and mounted by September 30, 1935, as evidenced by a letter from Mabry to William Brierley of the General Education Board, telling him the prints for the traveling exhibition were ready and would be sent to Howard University.<sup>196</sup> Evans's entry for September 18, 1935, also supports the idea that he made the museum enlargements at Abbott's studio, as on that day he recorded "finished enlargements at Bernice's [*sic*]. Peter worked alone at Bethune Street. A late drink with Dorothy Miller. Enlargements excellent." Evans worked consistently on the

museum prints until Friday, September 20, when he moved to 22 Bethune Street. He delivered the first full set of prints to Miller on October 5 and left the next day for Delaware with Sekaer.<sup>197</sup>

The seventy-five photographs were presented mounted on white board but unframed. They were installed at the various colleges with "driving hooks."<sup>198</sup> Each photograph was accompanied by a simple label.<sup>199</sup> Three of the twenty-five enlargements made from the original negatives survive today at the Museum of Modern Art, still on their original mounts (plates 53–55). The mount sizes are all uniform, but interestingly the prints are not. One (plate 53) has the same cropping as in the portfolio. The photograph of the commemorative figure (plate 54) is narrower than the portfolio print. The photograph of the *kifwebe* mask (plate 55) is larger and more square in proportion, with additional background area on the right and left edges. This supports the idea that the prints for the portfolios were cropped, not the negatives, as was later common practice for Evans.<sup>200</sup>

The Walker Evans Archive contains a few items that shed light on the preparation and choice of the photographs and enlargements. An interesting note written on the reverse of a Museum of Modern Art invoice blank by an unidentified hand gives instructions to Evans about enlarging specific photographs: "437 drum player [WE 372, MoMA cat. no. 437]. Walker, if this is not good enough to enlarge, substitute #66 from the group of 50 and put this one (#437) into group of 50."<sup>201</sup> The sculpture that was the subject of the print in question is a figure now in the collection of the Museum Rietberg, Zurich. According to the documents in the Department of Circulating Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, which lists the sizes and numbers of photographs included, this print was not among the enlargements.<sup>202</sup> The note does infer communication between the museum and Evans about the choice of which photographs from the portfolio would be enlarged.

The schedule called for the photographs to be seen at each venue for approximately two weeks. This timetable has been reconstructed from the records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, newspaper notices, and reviews of the show throughout its

tour.<sup>203</sup> The circulation of the photographs to colleges beginning in late 1935 and running through 1936 overlapped the period when Evans began working for Stryker (mid-1935 to 1937), traveling to West Virginia and Pennsylvania, then on extended trips to the southeast.<sup>204</sup> Interestingly, the traveling exhibition of photographs of African art was seen in colleges in the same region of the country where Evans traveled with writer James Agee for their legendary work, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Suggestions for the arrangement and installation of the traveling exhibition of photographs were provided by the Museum of Modern Art. The directions recommended that the photographs be hung in geographical arrangements, following the order of the sculptures in Sweeney's catalogue.<sup>205</sup> One assumes that the photographs were arranged

according to the museum's instructions, but no installation shots of the exhibit have been located. The choice of photographs and their suggested arrangement were intrinsically connected to Barr's selection of a representative group of objects from the original exhibition. The installation instructions for the photograph show, as well as the arrangement of sculptures in Sweeney's exhibition catalogue, reflected the way that African art was approached and studied by Euro-American scholars at the time. Art forms and styles were generally studied by ethnicity, leaving little if any room for investigation into the individuality of the artist.

The tour of Evans's photographs and the distribution of Sweeney's catalogue gave exposure to both the creators of the African artworks and the photographer who interpreted them through another medium.

## PERFECT DOCUMENTS

Lincoln Kirstein played a significant role in bringing Evans's work to the attention of the public. The two men met in 1929, and by the following year Evans's photographs appeared in *Hound and Horn*, a literary magazine founded by Kirstein. It was Kirstein who suggested that Evans embark on the project to photograph nineteenth-century houses and who gave a selection of those photos to the Museum of Modern Art. That project became the first one-man exhibition of photographs at the museum and, as noted, received wide exposure. Kirstein's subsequent influence at the Modern resulted in additional important projects there for Evans, including the African art commission and Evans's best-known exhibition and publication, *Walker Evans: American Photographs*.<sup>206</sup> Kirstein's comments regarding Evans's early work inspired the title of this essay. Kirstein wrote, "Walker Evans' photographs are such perfect documents that their excellence is not assertive."<sup>207</sup> This laudatory comment was in reference to Evans's images of nineteenth-century architecture, but it succinctly characterizes Evans's approach to making photographs, especially of African art. It is his nonassertive style and absence of pictorial artifice that provide an arena where realism is enunciated. This is a prominent characteristic of Evans's work, one he was well aware of. He made a careful distinction of his work as a "documentary style."<sup>208</sup>

Kirstein's observations announce the descriptive power of the camera in Evans's hands. The artist's penchant for projects that compiled or described material objects or specific situations allowed him to manipulate the primary attribute of the medium of photography, its direct and inseparable connection with the subject. So seamlessly did Evans link the subjects to the representation of them, the status of the photographs as two-dimensional works was minimized, and they were viewed more as surrogates for the

actual sculpture. Evans was a modernist in that sense, as his portrayal of African sculpture is very similar to the way that Barr, Sweeney, and many Euro-Americans initially exhibited them. The objects were placed without reference to any unit of measure showing size or scale, separated and unconnected from their original context within a seamless, neutral background, with an emphasis on formal and plastic characteristics. Evans's camera infuses the sculptures with permanence, presence, and authenticity. It is in these qualities that the power of Evans's photographs of African sculpture lies. He accentuated every aspect of his subject, as if looking through a high-powered magnifying glass. The assertiveness and individuality of these extraordinary objects, the adaptability of the photographic medium to represent them to a museum audience, and their replication onto film, in combination with Evans's approach, defines their excellence as photographs.

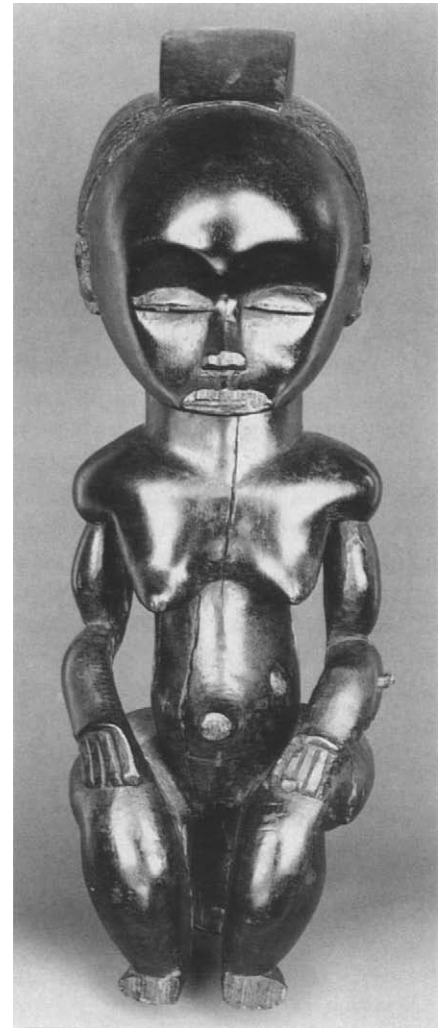
Evans had a remarkable talent for showing people, places, and things in ways that had never been seen before. He exploited every detail of his subject and the margins of emptiness around it, yet suppressed the pictorial and artistic qualities of the photographic medium, rendering them invisible and cloaking the subject in an atmosphere of realism. The images are stylistically unique, unmistakably his creation, visually eccentric and explicitly identifiable.

This distinctive and revelatory use of photography that categorically belongs to Evans is even more apparent when photographs of similar subjects by other artists are directly compared. As noted, the American painter and photographer Charles Sheeler, working seventeen years earlier on a similar subject, had a stylistically different approach to recording African sculpture on film. With a painter's eye and a camera in hand, Sheeler positioned the works of art not as primary or isolated but as elements in the overall pictori-



32. Charles Sheeler (American, 1883–1965), in *African Negro Sculpture*, 1918. Gelatin silver print, 9 x 6½ in. (22.9 x 15.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Robert Goldwater Library (1/03/S54)

al arrangement, with deliberately composed shadows, highlights, bases for sculptures, and table edges all playing an important part in the final image (figure 32). Evans had quite the opposite approach, editing out any elements that might distract the viewer from the subject or be irrelevant to its forms, both literally in the print and initially through the lens, and by fitting the objects snugly into the frame (figure 33). If unwanted elements found their way into the negative or print, he simply cut them away. Evans's reputation as a ruthless editor of his own work is strikingly



33. Walker Evans, *Figure [Reliquary sculpture: figure]*, 1935. WE 305 (MoMA cat. no. 356). Gelatin silver print, 8⅞ x 3¾ in. (22.5 x 9.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962 (1978.412.2138)

demonstrated in the African art series, as is his highly personal and stylized approach.

The revolutionary way that Evans chose to represent works of art from Africa with their own visual power and history of representation is indeed a preview of the legendary cropping and framing associated with his classic work before, during, and after the commission. What has been called Evans's "radical aesthetic of spatial compression with a disturbing use of close-ups" reads like his signature in most of the photographs in the portfolio.<sup>209</sup> The images clearly demonstrate

that the camera is always subjective, even when objectivity is thought to be assured by the vision of the photographer and the purpose and subject of the photographs.

In fact, the powerful presence of the subjects of Evans's photographs has often clouded formal analysis of them. While the sculptures made it to the canon of Euro-American taste, Evans's photographs of them often did not. They were often seen as illustrative in premise and not considered part of his major work, hence, until recently, the relative anonymity of the portfolio in comprehensive studies and chronologies of his work. The photographs have existed in their own sphere of appreciation, studied and prized for their beauty by students, scholars, and collectors of African art. It is now clear that the African portfolio was not created in an aesthetic vacuum and that it is an integral part of a complex and formative period in the genesis of Evans's mature style.

As Barr had envisioned, Evans's photographs of African art played an important role in teaching the subject. The selection of photographs that traveled between October 1935 and December 1936 acted as surrogates for the sculptures themselves. They were directed

at college-level audiences and were used for educational purposes. Years later, Evans's photographs were reproduced in books about African art by Sweeney, Radin, Goldwater, and other scholars and continued to serve an educational function in those texts. They are still viewed today at The Metropolitan Museum of Art by students, scholars, the public, and collectors to learn about traditional art forms. Each successive generation of viewers has found meaning in them, in their own ways.

This evaluation of Evans's photographs of African art has shown them to be highly stylized visualizations. They are the product of a prolific and creative artistic vision that is meticulous in its descriptive arrangement of its subjects. All Evans's photographs share an uncanny accuracy and revelation, a characteristic of his documentary style. Like a stage set, everything that is contained within the frame of Evans's viewfinder clarifies and explicates the subject, revealing his perception of it at that time. Indeed, as perfect documents Evans's photographs of African art will endure to further both our enjoyment and our understanding of the extraordinary subjects and the unique vision of the legendary artist who created them.

## NOTES

1. Judith Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection* (Malibu: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1995), 105, 130, 132.
2. John Szarkowski, *Walker Evans* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1971), 14.
3. The concepts of "primitivism" and the influences of African, Oceanic, and Native American arts on European and American modern art have been the subject of numerous exhibitions and books. See the bibliography for works by Cahill, Goldwater, Rubin, Vogel, and others. Several exhibits have presented sources of formal influences between these traditions.
4. For a detailed study of the specific sources and countries in Africa from which art entered Europe, see Jean-Louis Paudrat, "From Africa," in *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art*, ed. William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 1:125–75.
5. Stewart Culin, *Primitive Negro Art: Chiefly from the Belgian Congo* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1923), n.p.
6. *Ibid.*
7. For a discussion of an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art that also tried to incorporate Native American arts into everyday life, see the discussion of "Indian Arts of the United States" in Virginia-Lee Webb, "Modern Times, 1935–1946: Early Tribal Art Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York," *Tribal Arts* 2, no. 1 (spring 1995): 30–42. See also Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998): 85–98.
8. Ira Jacknis, "The Road to Beauty: Stewart Culin's American Indian Exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum," in *Objects of Myth and Memory*, ed. Diana Fane et al. (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, in association with University of Washington Press, 1991), 43.
9. See for example *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections* (New York: The Center for African Art, 1988), and Mary Nooter Roberts and Susan Vogel, *Exhibitionism: Museums and African Art* (New York: Museum for African Art, 1994).
10. For a discussion of three of these exhibits, see Webb, "Modern Times, 1935–46," 30–42, and for Barr's achievements, see Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*.
11. Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr Jr.: Missionary for the Modern* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989), 91–92.
12. *Ibid.*, 104.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Holger Cahill, *American Sources of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1933), 5.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, 46 (cat. nos. 221–24).
18. The other artists in the show were Ben Benn, Jean Charlot, John Flannagan, Raoul Hague, Carlos Merida, Ann A. Morris, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Marion Walton, and Harold Weston. Cahill, *American Sources*, 7, 8, 47–50.
19. *Ibid.*, 5.
20. James Johnson Sweeney to Patrick Henry Bruce, 9 Jan. 1934, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Department of Registration, "African Negro Art," exhibition number 39, exhibition file (hereafter "African Negro Art" 39).
21. Sweeney to Léonce Guerré, 6 Dec. 1934, "African Negro Art" 39. Sweeney sailed from England to France on the SS *Europa* on 16 Dec. 1934. Sweeney to S. Chauvet, 11 Dec. 1934, "African Negro Art" 39.
22. Sweeney to Stora Gallery, 10 Jan. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
23. The following sculptures were included in both the "African Negro Art" exhibit and the Walker Evans photographic portfolio, and are referred to here by numbers given them in Dorothy Miller's "Index" (WE prefix) and in Sweeney's catalogue (MoMA prefix): WE 1, 2, 3, MoMA cat. 1 (a Dogon figure from Carré); WE 21, MoMA cat. 17 (a Dogon figure from Ratton); and WE 328, MoMA cat. 379 (a Kota reliquary sculpture from Helena Rubinstein). For more information about these numbering systems, see the introduction to "Plates" in this volume. For reproductions of these, see Sweeney, *Plastic Redirections in 20th Century Painting* (Chicago: The Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, 1934), plates xi, ix, and v, respec-



- tively. The sculpture from Tervuren not included in the exhibit is pictured in plate vii.
24. Raoul Lehuard notes that Ratton was asked by Paul Rivet, director of the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadero, Paris, to work with Sweeney on the exhibit. Lehuard, "Charles Ratton et l'aventure de l'art negre," *Arts d'Afrique noire* 60 (winter 1986): 18.
  25. Charles Ratton's life and career are discussed in Lehuard, "Charles Ratton."
  26. Paul Guillaume died before Sweeney's exhibit opened. Domenica Guillaume lent thirty-four objects to the show at the Museum of Modern Art. See Paudrat, "From Africa," 1:162. For a discussion of Guillaume's career, see Musée de l'Orangerie, *Les arts à Paris chez Paul Guillaume 1918-1935* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1993). For a discussion about early collections of African art, see Paudrat, "From Africa."
  27. Barr to Rubinstein, 17 Mar. 1934, "African Negro Art" 39.
  28. Sweeney to Arthur B. Spingarn, 11 Oct. 1934, "African Negro Art" 39.
  29. Barr to Franz Boas, 14 Nov. 1934, "African Negro Art" 39.
  30. Barr to Georges Braque, 12 Jan. 1935; Barr to André Derain, 6 Apr. 1935; Barr to H. S. Ede, Tate Gallery, 19 Jan. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39. Barr wrote to Ede regarding loans from Epstein, who did not respond to Barr, Warburg, Goodyear, or Sweeney.
  31. *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 5 (Feb. 1935), n.p.
  32. Sweeney to Léonce Guerré, 6 Dec. 1934; Sweeney to Eduard von der Heydt, 7 Jan. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39. Sweeney could not visit von der Heydt but saw illustrations of his collection in a book by von Sydow. Von der Heydt's collection is published in von Sydow, *Kunst der Naturvölker: Afrika, Ozeanien, Indonesien* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1932). Barr wrote, "My eye isn't very good but I was really surprised at the quality of many of the things." Barr to Sweeney, 31 Jan. 1934, "African Negro Art" 39. A letter contains a reference to a "small ivory piece" reproduced in Nancy Cunard's *Negro*. Sweeney to Sydney Burney, 4 Jan. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  33. Sweeney to Hessel, 9 Jan. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  34. [Report], "Photographs of African Negro Art Exhibition by Executive Director [Thomas Mabry]," 30 Apr. 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
  35. Sweeney, *African Negro Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1935), 11.
  36. Ibid.
  37. Ibid., 12.
  38. *A Selection of Works by Twentieth Century Artists: Catalogue of the Summer Exhibition, 20 June to 20 Aug. 1934* (Chicago: The Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago, 1934).
  39. Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 62, 70. The terms "natural" and "neutral" are used here to describe Barr's color style.
  40. The installation photographs at the Museum of Modern Art appear to show wood bases and pedestals for most of the sculptures.
  41. Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, 11.
  42. Ibid.
  43. Ibid.
  44. A similar situation occurred when Barr was organizing his exhibit "Cubism and Abstract Art." Mabry, "The United States Government and Abstract Art," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 3, no. 5 (Apr. 1936): 2.
  45. Newspaper articles note the size of the exhibit and some sequences of the galleries. See Margaret Leary, "Observations," *Sun* (Pelham, New York), 19 Apr. 1935, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Public Information Scrapbooks (The Museum of Modern Art, New York [hereafter called "Public Information Scrapbooks"]) microfilm MF5, 398: frame 437.
  46. Ibid. Numerous articles that note the white walls are contained in the scrapbooks.
  47. "The visitor's eyes first fall on the God of War. . . ." Ibid. An unsigned article, "African Art Show Viewed by Pupils," in the *New York Times* (14 Apr. 1935) also verifies the first gallery seen by the public and attests to the white pedestals. Public Information Scrapbooks.
  48. Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr Jr.*, 149.
  49. Staniszewski, *The Power of Display*, 70. It is obvious that Barr and Sweeney had similar sensibilities when it came to installation techniques.
  50. For a complete copy of instructions, see "Instructions" from the Museum of Modern Art, p. 2, "African Negro Art," 26 July-12 Sept. 1935, exhibition files, Archives, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
  51. Barr to Dr. Wieschhoff, 9 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39. Barr used the popularity of the exhibit and statistics to persuade collectors to lend to the traveling version of the show he was assembling.
  52. *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6-7 (Mar.-Apr. 1935), n.p.
  53. Ibid.
  54. *Gazette* (Berkeley, Calif.), 23 May 1935. Public Information Scrapbooks, microfilm MF5, 398, frames 452, 458. *Transcript* (Boston,

- Mass.), 15 May 1935, Public Information Scrapbooks, microfilm MF5, 398, frame 458.
55. "African Negro Art Has Large Following East," *Star* (Muncie, Ind.), 19 May 1935. Public Information Scrapbooks, microfilm MF5, 398, frame 457.
  56. This dinner was reported in numerous society columns, such as Helen Lindsay, "Novel Dinner Given by Mme. Rubinstein," or Helen Worden, "African Art Liked," *Times* (Indianapolis, Ind.), 1 May 1935, Public Information Scrapbooks, microfilm MF5, 398, frame 457.
  57. Jerome Mellquist, "Glimpses of Africa," *Amsterdam News*, 17 Aug. 1935, Public Information Scrapbooks, microfilm MF5, 398, frame 483.
  58. See Public Information Scrapbooks, microfilm MF5, 398, for numerous press clippings.
  59. *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6-7 (Mar.-Apr. 1935), n.p.
  60. Dr. Hans Himmelheber wrote to Barr about presenting a lecture. Himmelheber to Barr, "3.4.35." [3 Apr. 1935]; Barr to Himmelheber, 30 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  61. Barr, providing lecture information to Henry D. Crum, 28 Mar. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39. Another letter from Barr to N. Nathanson regarding lectures by Fantl is dated 28 Mar. 1935.
  62. Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, 25.
  63. *Ibid.*, 11.
  64. Alain Locke, "African Art: Classic Style," *American Magazine of Art* 28, May 1935: 271-72.
  65. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's Archive contains a press release from the Museum of Modern Art, New York (hereafter MoMA), listing the lenders.
  66. *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6-7 (Mar.-Apr. 1935), n.p.
  67. "Instructions," p. 2, "African Negro Art," exhibition files, Archives, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
  68. There seem to be different dates for the duration of the exhibit listed in the newspapers. Public notices date the show as 16 Nov. through 7 Dec., but these dates may have been for the public and the other dates for members of the Arts Club. See Arts Club of Chicago, Exhibit Series, "African Negro Art," 15 Nov.-7 Dec. 1935.
  69. "Negro Art Exhibit," *Chicago Herald and Examiner*, 15 Nov. 1935, Arts Club Archives, Newberry Library, Chicago.
  70. "Cousin Eve," "One Sees the Genius of Modernism in African Art," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 24 Nov. 1935.
  71. "Fascinating Exhibit," *Chicago American*, 20 Nov. 1935.
  72. Grace Morley to Catherine Vivano, 7 Sept. 1935, "African Negro Art," exhibition files, Archives, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
  73. *Ibid.*
  74. *Ibid.*
  75. Junis Cravens, "Exhibition at S.F. Museum Proves Primitive Sculptures Deserve Praise Given Them," *San Francisco News*, 3 Aug. 1935, Public Information Scrapbooks, microfilm MF5, 398, frame 482.
  76. "Circulating Exhibitions 1935-36," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6-7 (Mar.-Apr. 1935).
  77. "Photographic Corpus," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6-7 (Mar.-Apr. 1935), n.p.
  78. Many of the documents and correspondence relating to the Evans portfolio seen in 1989 were published in Webb, "Art as Information: The African Portfolios of Charles Sheeler and Walker Evans," in *African Arts* 24, no. 1 (1991). New documents or ones that were recently located at MoMA are cited in full. For Barr's letter to Stevens of 18 Feb. 1935, see Webb, "Art as Information," 103 n. 7.
  79. D. H. Stevens to Barr, 20 Feb. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  80. Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr Jr.*, 149.
  81. Judith Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 129-30.
  82. Belinda Rathbone, *Walker Evans: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1995), 65-67.
  83. One of Evans's biographers credits Mabry with the idea for the photographic portfolio. She states that because of Mabry's work at Fisk he "had become keenly aware of the American Negro's lack of a tangible cultural history, and he felt strongly that African sculpture should not be limited to a privileged urban audience." Rathbone, *Walker Evans: A Biography*, 99-100.
  84. Executive Director [Mabry] to John Marshall Esq., 9 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  85. [Proposal], 9 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  86. *Ibid.*
  87. *Ibid.*
  88. *Ibid.*
  89. *Ibid.*
  90. Walker Evans diary, 1935, Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1994.250.56), hereafter WEA.
  91. [Proposal], Mabry to John Marshall, 9 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  92. *Ibid.*
  93. W. W. Brierley to Mabry, 13 Apr. 1935,

- "African Negro Art" 39; Evans diary, 1935, WEA; James R. Mellow, *Walker Evans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 254.
94. An unsigned copy of a letter to David H. Stevens, 17 Apr. 1935, by Mabry or Barr, "African Negro Art" 39.
  95. Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 104, 109 n. 6; Rathbone, *Walker Evans: A Biography*, 63.
  96. Jerry Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 95, and Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 103, 104, 109 n. 6.
  97. Mellow, *Walker Evans*, 146, 624, and Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 50–51, 103.
  98. Mellow, *Walker Evans*, 132. Plans for a similar project as described by Laura Muir in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 372. It is unclear if it is the same project proposed by Kirstein, because the documents describing it are not dated.
  99. Brierley to Mabry, 13 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  100. For a discussion of the Sheeler portfolio, see Webb, "Art as Information," and Theodore Stebbins and Norman Keyes, *Charles Sheeler: The Photographs* (Boston: Little Brown, 1987).
  101. Rathbone, *Walker Evans: A Biography*, 99–100.
  102. Brierley to Mabry, 13 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  103. Evans diary, 13–17 Apr. 1935, WEA.
  104. Evans diary, 15 Apr. 1935, WEA.
  105. Mabry to Walker Evans, 17 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  106. "Photographic Corpus," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6–7 (Mar.–Apr. 1935), n.p.
  107. 10 Apr. 1935. This unsigned letter may have been written by Barr or Mabry. "African Negro Art" 39.
  108. Mabry to Stevens, 9 June 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
  109. Mabry to F. Bond, 21 Oct. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  110. Mabry to Charles Johnson, Fisk University, 5 May 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
  111. *Art Digest*, 5 May 1935.
  112. *New York Times*, 28 Apr. 1935.
  113. *New York Herald-Tribune*, 28 Apr. 1935.
  114. Marquis, *Alfred H. Barr Jr.*, 139, 314.
  115. *Ibid.*, 141.
  116. Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, 8.
  117. "Photographs of African Negro Art Exhibition," [report], 30 Apr. 1936, by "Executive Director" [Mabry], "African Negro Art" 39.
  118. Miller, interview.
  119. Miller, interview.
  120. Item 16, p. 3, WEA.
  121. Item 16, various pages, WEA.
  122. This test print was not part of the final portfolios. It bears a stamp on the reverse, which, according to Keller, refers to photographs purchased by George Rinhart and Tom Bergen from Evans that were then acquired by Harry Lunn's Gallery in 1975 (*Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, xvii). See also plate 7 in this volume (WE 49, MoMA cat. no. 305).
  123. "Photographs of African Negro Art Exhibition," [report], "African Negro Art" 39.
  124. Miller, interview.
  125. Jerry Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work*, 12, 116.
  126. Item 16, p. 7, WEA.
  127. Howard Greenfield, *Ben Shahn: An Artist's Life* (New York: Random House, 1988), 106–7.
  128. See Evans's notebook and diary for these notations, WEA. Also an unsigned letter by Barr or Mabry dated 10 Apr. 1935 indicated that some objects not on display needed to be returned to Carré. No catalogue numbers of the objects are listed in the letter, so although it is unlikely they were ever part of the exhibition or portfolio, the facts are difficult to determine. "African Negro Art," 39.
  129. Evans diary, 1935, WEA.
  130. *Ibid.*
  131. Miller, interview.
  132. Item 16, p. 33, WEA.
  133. Miller, interview.
  134. This process was described to the author by John Hill. See Webb, "Art as Information," 103, n. 19.
  135. See proposal dated 9 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  136. Prospective buyers were directed to Ratton or Carré for prices when the museum received inquiries. However, not all of Ratton's loans were photographed for the portfolio. See "Instructions: 'African Negro Art' Exhibition," The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, Records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions (hereafter MoMA Archives, NY, C/E), II.1/33 (4).
  137. See Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 37, fig. 126, for a reproduction of this photograph.
  138. This photo is published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 50, no. 183.
  139. Suzanne Preston Blier, *Royal Arts of Africa: The Majesty of Form* (London: Laurence King, 1998), 31.
  140. None of the photographs that illustrate

- Sweeney's catalogue were made by Evans. They came from a variety of sources, usually the lenders to the exhibition. Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, cat. no. 489.
141. Item 16, p. [2], WEA.
  142. See Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 113, fig. 363. This print of WE 101 (MoMA cat. no. 123) in the Getty Collection includes pencil marks on the back to indicate cropping. Many uncropped prints also have been seen by the author.
  143. Keller has published information that strengthens evidence about Evans's continual cropping of photos. Keller states that Beaumont Newhall recalled that in preparation for the 1938 exhibit "American Photographs," Evans "asked for a paper cutter and cropped prints." Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 137 n. 27. Evans is also known to have literally cut his negatives to the desired cropping. See also Gilles Mora and John T. Hill, *Walker Evans: The Hungry Eye* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 160–61.
  144. I am grateful to Jeffrey Ryan, Photographic Archives, Museum of Modern Art, New York, for checking the size of certain negatives.
  145. Item 7, WEA, is a list of supplies with Azo included. In 1989 Grant Romer, conservator at the George Eastman House, Rochester, New York, suggested Cyko paper may also have been used. Becky Simmons, associate librarian at the George Eastman House, provided references to validate these brand names.
  146. Exhibition file, 9 Apr. 1935, and Mabry to Evans, 17 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  147. [Report], 30 Apr. 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
  148. Item 1, Sekaer to Evans, 19 Nov. 1935, WEA.
  149. See Evans's 1935 diary entries for these dates. WEA.
  150. Documents with names and payment records are located in exhibition file, 30 Apr. 1936, "African Negro Art" 39, and Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work*, 117.
  151. Mellow, *Walker Evans*, 269.
  152. Evans's living situations were anything but stable during the African art project. Both he and Shahn traveled extensively and were involved in complex personal relationships that caused their living arrangements to change frequently. Details regarding these personal matters are found in Greenfeld, *Ben Shahn*; Mellow, *Walker Evans*; and Rathbone, *Walker Evans: A Biography*. According to the Manhattan telephone directories for winter 1934 and summer 1935, Shahn listed his residence as 333 West Eleventh Street, and he and Evans had a business listing, sharing the same telephone number, at 23 Bethune Street. This is also the address that Evans used on his contract with the Museum of Modern Art dated 17 Apr. 1935. On 20 Sept. 1935 Evans wrote in his diary that he moved from Jane Street, where he stayed temporarily, to 22 Bethune Street. (Confusion often occurs because 20–22 Bethune Street, a double lot, is now one building. Often Manhattan buildings were assigned addresses with numbers inclusive of two lots of property. Over time, one identifying number was usually adopted. The building that housed Evans's studio still stands and currently uses the number 20.) Subsequently, in the winter 1935–36 and summer 1936 telephone directories, Shahn's and Evans's identical listings change to 22 Bethune Street. Shahn's residential listing at 333 West Eleventh Street disappears.
  153. Rathbone, *Walker Evans: A Biography*, 100–102, and Mellow, *Walker Evans*, 257.
  154. Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work*, 117.
  155. See Kemmerer, *Peter Sekaer: American Pictures* (Andover, Mass.: Addison Gallery of American Art, 1999), 8–10, for a discussion of this period in Sekaer's career, and in general see Annemette Sørensen, *Peter Sekaer* (Copenhagen: Royal Library, 1990). Information was also obtained through the author's discussions with Elisabeth Sekaer Rothschild.
  156. Rathbone, *Walker Evans: A Biography*, 96–100; and Mellow, *Walker Evans*, 267–68.
  157. Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work*, 112.
  158. Mabry to Brierley, 30 Sept. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  159. Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work*, 117, and item 4, Sekaer to Evans, 2 Jan. 1936, WEA.
  160. Sekaer, undated note, item 2, WEA.
  161. Letters by Mabry to recipients that the delivery of photographs will be delayed until 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
  162. Executive Director [Mabry] to John Marshall, Rockefeller Foundation, Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  163. Items 12 and 14, a handwritten list of dimensions and prices, WEA.
  164. Item 15, WEA. Here the invoice reads "Blanton."
  165. Evans diary, 1935, WEA.
  166. Evans diary, 4 Oct. 1935, WEA. Evans notes spending time at the mounting company with Mr. Valone. Item 2, undated, and item 3, Sekaer to Evans, 26 Dec. 1935, WEA.
  167. It is possible that the unmounted sets of the photographs were not all delivered with four covers. The final financial report, submitted on 30 Apr. 1936, lists only forty portfolio covers, "(4 to a set)." That would only be enough for ten sets, which does not account for the

- entire edition. [Financial report], 30 Apr. 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
168. Mabry to Charles Johnson, 5 May 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
  169. Mabry to John Hope, 18 Nov. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  170. Evans diary, 15 Aug. 1935, WEA.
  171. For receipts and correspondence see "African Negro Art" 39.
  172. Florence M. Read to Mabry, 27 June 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
  173. A. A. Schomburg to Mabry, 15 May 1936, "African Negro Art" 39.
  174. The Fogg Art Museum felt the portfolio was more appropriate for the Peabody Museum, Harvard University. See Mabry to Donald Scott, 16 May 1936; Mabry to Paul Sachs, 16 May 1935; and Sachs to Mabry, 17 May 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  175. "Vote of Thanks," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6-7 (Mar.-Apr. 1935), n.p.
  176. Barr reserved a set for Goldwater, making a distinction between this and the set intended for New York University. Barr to Goldwater, 25 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39. See also Mabry to Donald Scott, 16 May 1935, regarding Goldwater's development of courses, "African Negro Art" 39.
  177. Goldwater gave this copy to the Museum of Primitive Art in 1961 and 1962.
  178. See list of circulating exhibits, MoMA Library.
  179. "Circulating Exhibitions 1935-36," item 7, *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6-7 (Mar.-Apr. 1935), n.p.
  180. Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 381, appendix C.
  181. Barr to Stevens, 18 Feb. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  182. This information appears in an unsigned "statement," which may have been part of Mabry's 9 Apr. 1935 grant, also dated 9 Apr. 1935. "African Negro Art" 39.
  183. Unsigned statement, "African Negro Art" 39.
  184. [Proposal], 9 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art," 39.
  185. [Proposal, part II], 9 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  186. Brierley to Mabry, 13 Apr. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39.
  187. [Financial report], p. 3, 30 Apr. 1936, "African Negro Art" 39; MoMA Archives, NY, C/E, II.1/91 (7).
  188. Ibid.
  189. Ibid.
  190. MoMA Archives, NY, C/E, II.1/91 (7).
  191. Mellow, *Walker Evans*, 624
  192. Mellow, *Walker Evans*, 112.
  193. Information about Abbott's darkroom was provided by Julia Van Haaften in a conversation with the author on 2 Aug. 1999.
  194. Evans diary, 1935, WEA.
  195. Mellow, *Walker Evans*, 270
  196. Mabry to Brierley, 30 Sept. 1935, "African Negro Art" 39. The reference to Howard may be an error on Mabry's part or an earlier change in schedule.
  197. See Evans diary, 1935, for these dates. WEA.
  198. MoMA Archives, NY, C/E, II.1/91 (7).
  199. [Financial report] 30 Apr. 1936, p. 3, "African Negro Art" 39.
  200. See Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work*, 14-15, about cropping. The indication of pencil crop marks on some of the Getty Museum's prints also supports this. See Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, 113, fig. 363. See also Mora and Hill, *Walker Evans: The Hungry Eye*, 160, for a discussion of how Evans installed his own work in "American Photographs," 1938. The flat mounting of the African art photographs for the traveling show is consistent with some of the installation choices he made in 1938.
  201. Item 14, WEA.
  202. MoMA Archives, NY, C/E, II.1/91 (7).
  203. Ibid. For numerous newspaper accounts of the show's appearance throughout the United States see Public Information Scrapbooks, microfilm MF5, 398.
  204. Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, xxi, 132.
  205. MoMA Archives, NY, C/E, II.1/91 (7), "Hanging Directions."
  206. Detailed discussions about Kirstein's prominent role in America's cultural life and in activities at the Museum of Modern Art and about his friendship with Evans can be found in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*; Mellow, *Walker Evans*; and Mora and Hill, *Walker Evans: The Hungry Eye*.
  207. Kirstein, "Walker Evans's Photographs of Victorian Architecture," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 4 (Dec. 1933), n.p.
  208. Thompson, *Walker Evans at Work*, 12.
  209. Mora and Hill, *Walker Evans: The Hungry Eye*, 132.



# PLATES





# INTRODUCTION

The photographs of African art by Walker Evans had several sets of numbers assigned to them in 1935. In the "Index" prepared by Dorothy Miller they are numbered serially; those numbers are referred to here with WE as the prefix. Each photograph was then cross-referenced with the number of the sculpture in James Johnson Sweeney's exhibition and its catalogue, cited here as MoMA numbers. Descriptive titles were given to the photographs based on Sweeney's catalogue entries. In many cases the terms are now known to be incorrect. The 1935 descriptions are given in italics, with revised descriptions following in brackets. Photographs from three different portfolios were selected for this exhibition, to be presented in two rotations. In the first rotation unmounted sets from the Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Visual Resources Collections, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University are shown. In the second rotation mounted photographs are added from the collection of Laura and James J. Ross. Also exhibited throughout the duration of the show are unmounted individual photographs owned by Peter Sekaer, from the collection of Elisabeth Sekaer Rothschild and Christina Sekaer. The three enlargements from Evans's traveling

exhibition are from the Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The collections and accession numbers of the photographs illustrated here are provided. Citations are given for books in which Evans's photographs have been published. When published, the collection histories of the sculptures from 1935 to the present are provided. The object provenances marked with an asterisk indicate that the sculpture also is in the exhibition. The information is organized in the following order.

*Title of photograph 1935* [Revised title]  
Revised provenance of the sculpture: region, country, people

WE number (MoMA catalogue number)

Photograph medium

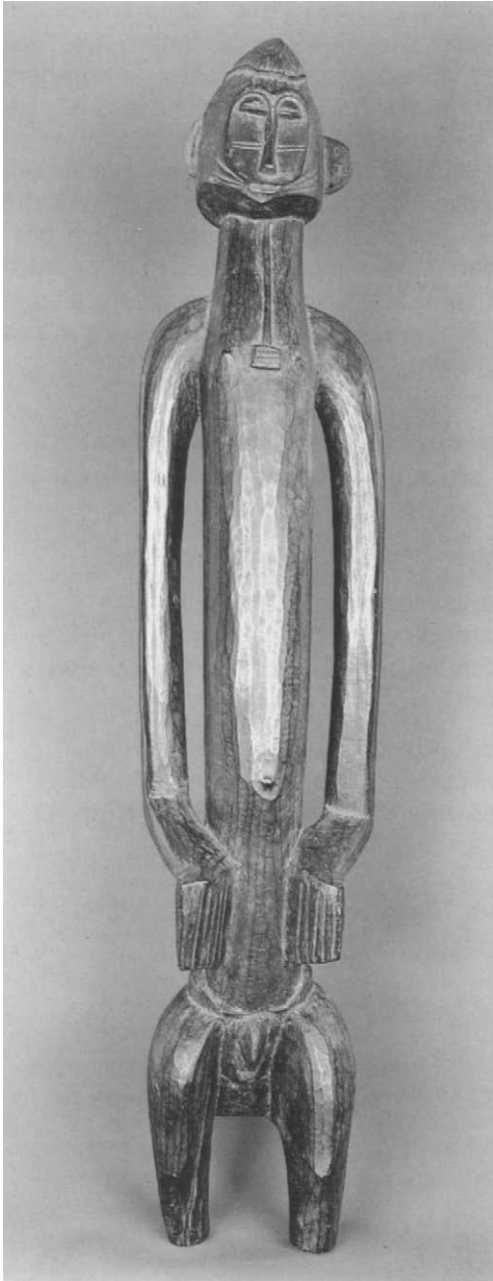
Photograph dimensions

Publication information for the Walker Evans photograph

\*Description of sculpture, credit line of lender or current location, if known, and published ex collection information from 1935 to present

\*Indicates that the sculpture is exhibited

# PLATES



1

1. *Ancestral figure* [Figure]  
Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Senufo peoples

WE 4 (MoMA cat. no. 2)

Gelatin silver print

9½ x 4¾ in. (23.2 x 12.1 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962

(1978.412.1852)

Published in Goldwater, *Senufo Sculpture from  
West Africa*, fig. 123; Radin and Sweeney, *African  
Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 48; Sweeney, *African  
Sculpture*, fig. 48

Figure: present location undetermined. Ex coll.:  
André Derain, Paris (1935)

2. *Ancestral figure* [Figure, front view]  
Africa, Mali, Dogon peoples

WE 14 (MoMA cat. no. 13)

Gelatin silver print

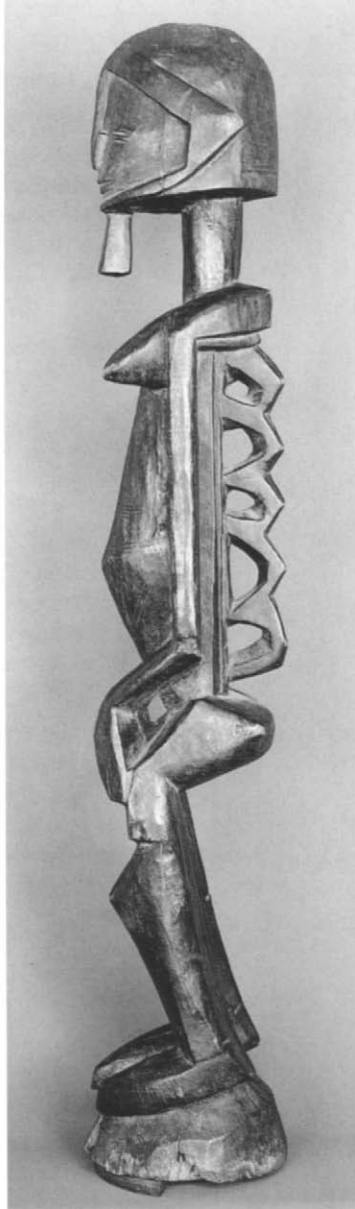
9¾ x 2¾ in. (23.8 x 7 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Figure: present location undetermined.  
Ex coll.: Paul Guillaume, Paris (1927); Charles  
Ratton, Paris (dates undetermined, ca. 1928–35);  
Laura Harden, New York (1935); James Johnson  
Sweeney, New York (1986); Morris Pinto, New  
York (dates undetermined); Werner  
Muensterberger, Pennsylvania (dates undeter-  
mined)



2



3



4

3. *Ancestral figure, profile view* [Figure, side view]  
Africa, Mali, Dogon peoples

WE 15 (MoMA cat. no. 13)

Gelatin silver print

9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (23.8 x 7 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published in *African Sculpture Lent by New York  
Collectors*, fig. 12; Radin and Sweeney, *African  
Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 43; Sweeney, *African  
Sculpture*, fig. 43

4. *Ancestral figure, back view* [Figure, back  
view]

Africa, Mali, Dogon peoples

WE 16 (MoMA cat. no. 13)

Gelatin silver print

9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (24.1 x 7 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection



5

5. *Figure* [Female figure]  
Africa, Mali, Bamana peoples

WE 17 (MoMA cat. no. 14)

Gelatin silver print

9¼ x 3¼ in. (23.5 x 8.3 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1862)

\*Figure: Frieda and Milton Rosenthal. Ex coll.:  
Helena Rubinstein, New York (1935)

6. *Latch with key* [Door lock]  
Africa, Mali, Dogon peoples

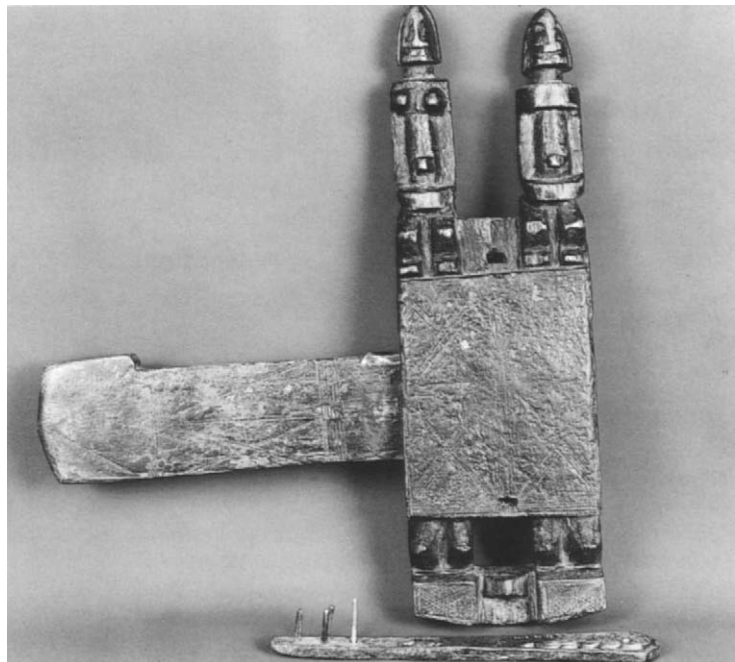
WE 40 (MoMA cat. no. 36)

Gelatin silver print

7½ x 8 in. (18.1 x 20.3 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1883)

Door lock: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979  
(1979.206.32). Ex coll.: Musée d'Ethnographie,  
Palais du Trocadero [now Musée de l'Homme],  
Paris (1935; acc. no. 31.74.2102); René  
Rasmussen, Paris (dates undetermined); J. J.  
Klejman, New York (1955); Nelson A. Rockefeller,  
New York (1955); Museum of Primitive Art, New  
York, 1956 (1956-79, acc. no. 56.355)



6



7

7. *Mask [Banda headdress]*  
Africa, Guinea, Baga/Nalu peoples

WE 49 (MoMA cat. no. 305)

Gelatin silver print

8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (22.2 x 7 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1892)

Mask: Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva, (acc. no.  
BMG 1001-24). Ex coll.: André Lhote, Paris  
(1935)



8

8. *Mask, profile view [Banda headdress, profile]*  
Africa, Guinea, Baga/Nalu peoples

WE 50 (MoMA cat. no. 305)

Gelatin silver print

8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. (22.5 x 6.4 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1893)



9

9. *Mask*  
Africa, Mali, Bamana peoples

WE 82 (MoMA cat. no. 91)

Gelatin silver print  
9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 6 in. (23.8 x 15.2 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection  
Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales  
and Sculpture*, fig. 8; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*,  
fig. 8

Mask: present location undetermined. Ex coll.:  
Louis Carré, Paris (1935)



10

10. *Mask*  
Africa, Guinea, Toma peoples

WE 91 (MoMA cat. no. 81)

Gelatin silver print  
9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in. (24.4 x 12.1 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection  
Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales  
and Sculpture*, fig. 3; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*,  
fig. 3

\*Mask: Lipchitz Collection: promised gift to the  
Israel Museum; Collection Jacques Lipchitz, Paris  
(1935)



11

11. *Mask*

Africa, Liberia, Dan peoples

WE 96 (MoMA cat. no. 79)

Gelatin silver print

9¾ x 6½ in. (24.8 x 16.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1935)

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 6; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 6

Mask: present location undetermined. Ex coll.:  
Paul Chadourne, Paris (1935)



12

12. *Mask*

Africa, Liberia, Dan peoples

WE 107 (MoMA cat. no. 112)

Gelatin silver print

9¼ x 5¾ in. (23.5 x 14.6 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1946)

\*Mask: private collection. Ex coll.: Charles Ratton,  
Paris (1935)





13

13. *Mask*

Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Guro peoples

WE 119 (MoMA cat. no. 100)

Gelatin silver print

9 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 6 in. (23.8 x 15.2 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1958)

Mask: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979 (acc. no.  
1979.206.293). Ex coll.: Paul Guillaume, Paris  
(1935-65); Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York  
(1965); Museum of Primitive Art, New York  
(1965-79; acc. no. 65.127)



122

14

14. *Double mask* [Mask: Twins]  
Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Baule peoples

WE 122 (MoMA cat. no. 95)

Gelatin silver print

9¼ x 6¼ in. (23.5 x 15.9 cm), excluding mount  
Collection Laura and James J. Ross

Mask: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979  
(1979.206.294). Ex coll.: Paul Guillaume, Paris  
(1935–65); Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York  
(1965); Museum of Primitive Art, New York  
(1965–79; acc. no. 65.128)

64



15

15. *Two bobbins* [Heddle pulleys]  
Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Guro peoples

WE 129 (left: MoMA cat. no. 126; right: MoMA  
cat. no. 63)

Gelatin silver print

7½ x 7⅞ in. (19.1 x 20 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty  
Museum Collection*, p. 114, fig. 366

\*Heddle pulley (left): Frieda and Milton Rosenthal.  
Ex coll.: Galerie Percier, Paris (1935).

\*Heddle pulley (right): Brian and Diane Leyden.  
Ex coll.: Helena Rubinstein, New York (1935)



16

16. *Two bobbins* [Heddle pulleys]  
Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Guro peoples

WE 134 (left: MoMA cat. no. 139; right: MoMA  
cat. no. 138)

Gelatin silver print  
7¼ x 7½ in. (18.4 x 19.1 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, Visual  
Resources Collection

Heddle pulley (left): present location undeter-  
mined. Ex coll.: Félix Fénéon, Paris (1935). Heddle  
pulley (right): The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial  
Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979  
(1979.206.292). Ex coll.: Paul Guillaume, Paris  
(1935–65); Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York  
(1965); Museum of Primitive Art, New York,  
(1965–79; acc. no. 65.126)

66



17

17. *Bobbin* [Heddle pulley]  
Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Senufo peoples

WE 135 (MoMA cat. no. 140)

Gelatin silver print  
7 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 6 in. (20 x 15.2 cm)  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1973)

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 56; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 56

\*Heddle pulley: Faith-dorian Wright.  
Ex coll.: Louis Carré, Paris (1935); Harold Rome  
(dates undetermined)



18

18. *Five ornaments* [Treasure of King Prempeh I; five gold ornaments (center: Soul-Washer's disk [*akrafokonmu*])  
Africa, Ghana, Kumasi, Asante Kingdom, Akan peoples

WE 142 (MoMA cat. no. 162)

Gelatin silver print  
6 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (17.5 x 21.6 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

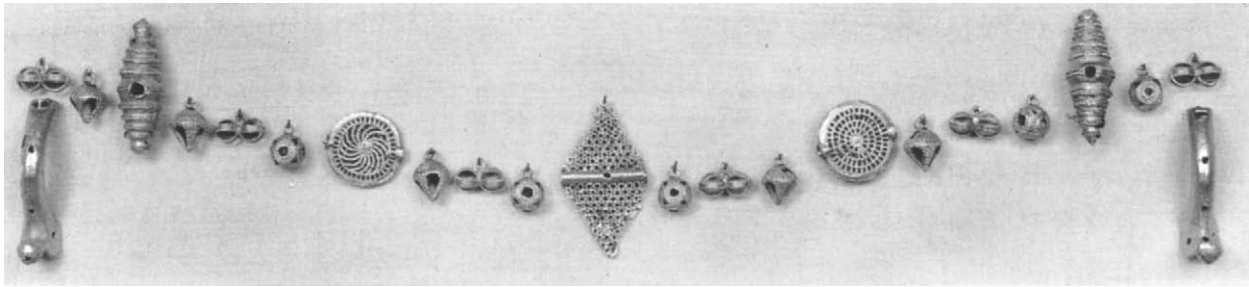
\*Ornaments: The Cleveland Museum of Art,  
Cleveland, Dudley P. Allen Fund, (acc. no.  
1935.308-.312). Ex coll.: Charles Ratton, Paris  
(1935)

19. *Necklace: in part* [Treasure of King Prempeh I:  
gold bead elements from necklace]  
Africa, Ghana, Kumasi, Asante Kingdom, Akan  
peoples

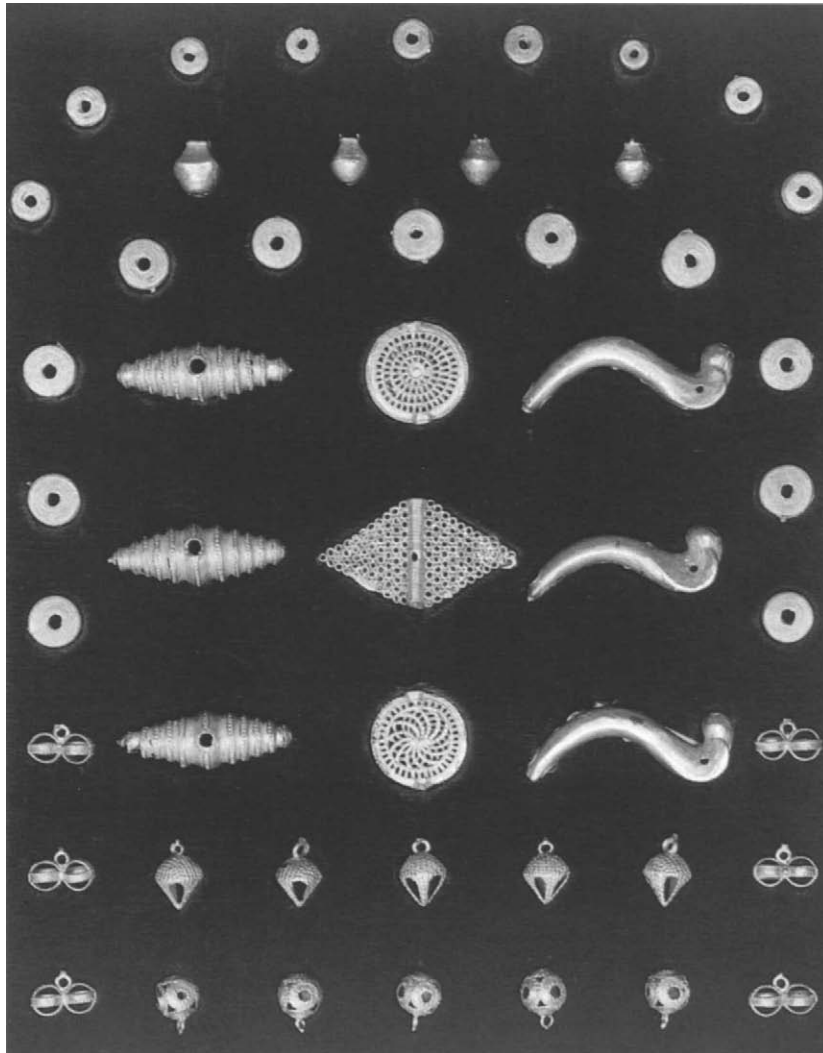
WE 143 (MoMA cat. no. 163)

Gelatin silver print  
2 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (5.4 x 22.5 cm)  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1980)

Gold bead elements: present location undeter-  
mined. Ex coll.: Louis Carré, Paris (1935)



19



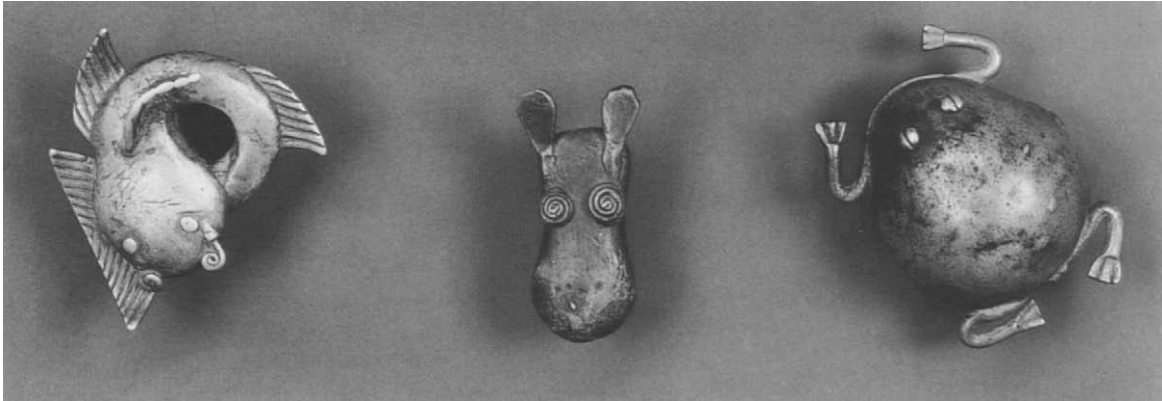
20

20. *Necklace: complete* [Treasure of King Prempeh I: gold bead elements from necklace]  
Africa, Ghana, Kumasi, Asante Kingdom, Akan peoples

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.1981)

WE 144 (MoMA cat. no. 163)

Gelatin silver print  
7 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 6 in. (19.4 x 15.2 cm)



21

21. *Three weights for measuring gold dust* [Gold weights]  
Africa, Ghana, Asante Kingdom, Akan peoples

WE 164 (left to right: MoMA cat. nos. 228, 225, 226)

Gelatin silver print

3 x 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (7.6 x 21.3 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 108; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 108

Weight (left): present location undetermined.  
Ex coll.: Laura Harden, New York (1935). Weight (center): present location undetermined. Ex coll.: Bela Hein, Paris (1935). Weight (right): present location undetermined. Ex coll.: Bela Hein, Paris (1935)

22. *Figure, so-called god of war, "Egbo"* [Warrior figure]

Africa, Republic of Benin, Kingdom of Dahomey, Fon peoples

WE 167 (MoMA cat. no. 237)

Gelatin silver print

9 x 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (22.9 x 10.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2004)

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 115; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 115

Warrior figure by Akati Akpele Kendo, commissioned ca. 1858 by King Glele (r. 1858–89):  
Musée de l'Homme, Paris (acc. no. 94.32.1).  
Ex coll.: Musée d'Ethnographie, Palais du Trocadero [now Musée de l'Homme], Paris (1935)



22





23

23. *Figure, so-called god of war, "Egbo," detail: head [Warrior figure]*  
Africa, Republic of Benin, Kingdom of Dahomey, Fon peoples

WE 168 (MoMA cat. no. 237)

Gelatin silver print  
9¼ x 7¼ in. (23.5 x 18.4 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2005)

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 114; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 114



24

24. *Figure, so-called god of war* [Divination portrait of King Glele: War God Gu (*Bocio*)]  
Africa, Republic of Benin, Kingdom of Dahomey, Fon peoples

WE 169 (MoMA cat. no. 238)

Gelatin silver print

8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 5 in. (21.3 x 12.7 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, p. 115, fig. 370; Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 112; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 112

Divination portrait of King Glele: War God Gu (*Bocio*), by Ganhu Huntondji, commissioned by King Glele (r. 1858–89): Musée Dapper, Paris. Ex coll.: Charles Ratton, Paris (1935); G. Ladrière, Paris (dates undetermined)

72



25

25. *Figure, so-called god of war, detail: back of head and shoulders* [Divination portrait of King Glele: War God Gu (*Bocio*)]  
Africa, Republic of Benin, Kingdom of Dahomey, Fon peoples

WE 170 (MoMA cat. no. 238)

Gelatin silver print

9¼ x 7½ in. (23.5 x 19.1 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, p. 115, fig. 371; Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 113; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 113

26

26. *Figure, so-called god of war, detail: feet*  
[Divination portrait of King Glele: War God Gu (*Bocio*)]  
Africa, Republic of Benin, Kingdom of Dahomey, Fon peoples

WE 171 (MoMA cat. no. 238)

Gelatin silver print

9¼ x 7 in. (23.5 x 17.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2008)





27

27. *Necklet* [Altar ring]

Africa, Nigeria, Kingdom of Benin, Edo peoples

WE 228 (MoMA cat. no. 291)

Gelatin silver print

4¼ x 8½ in. (10.8 x 21.6 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962 (1978.412.2063)

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, p. 118, fig. 382; Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 120; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 120

Altar ring: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1980 (1980.279). Ex coll.: Charles Ratton, Paris (1935)

28. *Head* [Carving of a head from a drum, front view]

Africa, Cameroon, Bansa, Bamileke Kingdom, Bamileke peoples

WE 269 (MoMA cat. no. 317)

Gelatin silver print

8¼ x 7 in. (21 x 17.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962 (1978.412.2104)

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty Museum Collection*, p. 122, fig. 400

\*Carving of a head from a drum: Drs. Daniel and Marian Malcolm. Ex coll.: Collected by Father Frank Christol (dates undetermined, ca. 1925–26); Pierre Loeb, Paris (dates undetermined, ca. 1926–35); Helena Rubinstein, New York (1935–66)

29. *Head* [Carving of a head from a drum, side view]

Africa, Cameroon, Bansa, Bamileke Kingdom, Bamileke peoples

WE 270 (MoMA cat. no. 318)

Gelatin silver print

7¾ x 9½ in. (18.7 x 23.2 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962 (1978.412.2105)

Published in Webb, "Art as Information," 1991, p. 63, fig. 19

Carving of a head from a drum: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979 (1979.206.297). Ex coll.: Collected by Father Frank Christol (dates undetermined, ca. 1925–26); Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome Collection, London (dates undetermined, ca. 1926–35); Helena Rubinstein, New York (1935–66); Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York (1966); Museum of Primitive Art, New York (1966–79; acc. no. 66.31)



28



29



30

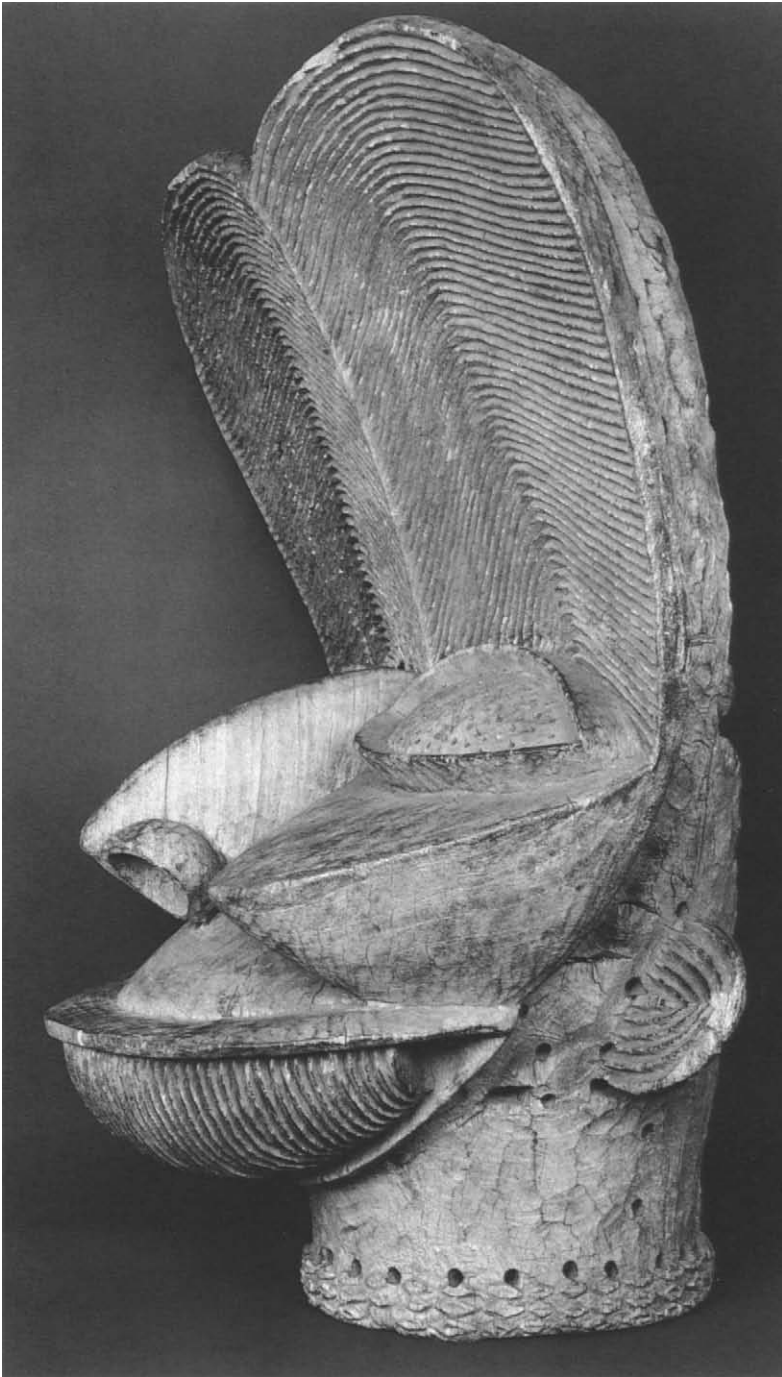
30. *Mask*  
Africa, Cameroon, Bandjoun, Bamendjo  
Kingdom

WE 271 (MoMA cat. no. 326)

Gelatin silver print  
8 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 7 in. (22.5 x 17.8 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published in Mora and Hill, *Walker Evans: The Hungry Eye*, p. 98; Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 15; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 15

Mask: Museum Rietberg, Zurich (acc. no. RAF 721; from 1945). Ex coll.: collected by Father Frank Christol (1925); Baron Eduard von der Heydt, Zandvoort (1935–45)



31

31. *Mask, profile view*  
Africa, Cameroon, Bandjoun, Bamendjo  
Kingdom

WE 272 (MoMA cat. no. 326)

Gelatin silver print  
8 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 6 in. (22.5 x 15.2 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales  
and Sculpture*, fig. 16; Sweeney, *African  
Sculpture*, fig. 16



32

32. *Mask*

Africa, Cameroon, Bangwa peoples

WE 273 (MoMA cat. no. 327)

Gelatin silver print

6½ x 7 in. (16.2 x 17.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2108)

Mask: present location undetermined. Ex coll.:  
Carl Einstein, Berlin (1921); Tristan Tzara, Paris  
(1935–88)

33. *Mask*

Africa, Nigeria, Igbira peoples

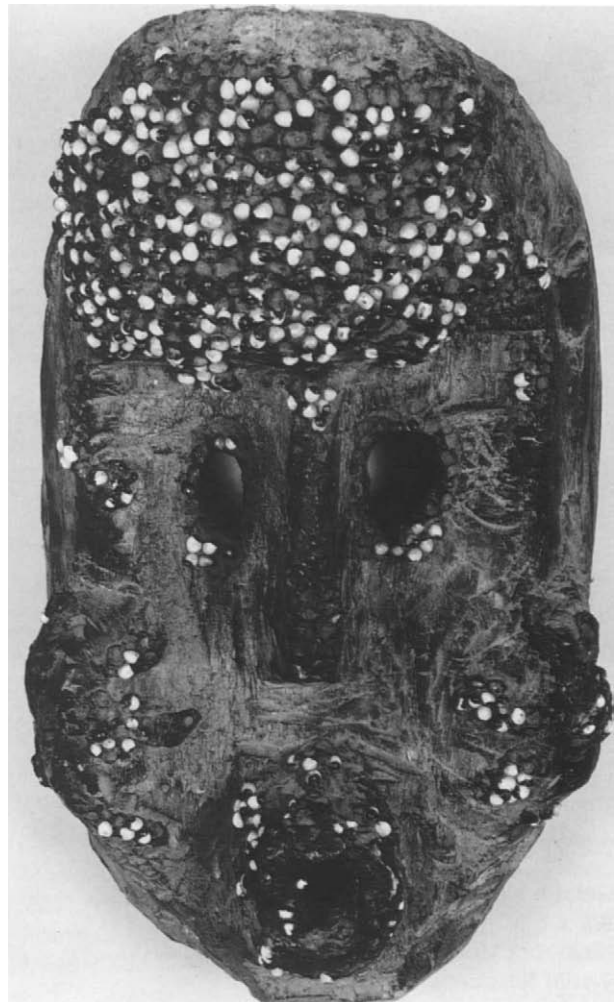
WE 286 (MoMA cat. no. 333)

Gelatin silver print

9½ x 5¼ in. (24.1 x 14.9 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2121)

\*Mask: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New  
York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial  
Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979  
(1979.206.23). Ex coll.: Pierre Loeb, Paris (1935);  
Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York (1955); Museum  
of Primitive Art, New York, (1956–79; acc. no.  
56.341)



33





34

34. *Ancestral figure, head* [Reliquary sculpture: head (*Nlo Bieri*)]  
Africa, Gabon, Fang peoples

WE 315 (MoMA cat. no. 366)

Gelatin silver print

9¼ x 6 in. (23.5 x 15.2 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962 (1978.412.2145)

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 71; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 71; Webb "Art as Information," p. 60, fig. 9, top

Reliquary sculpture: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979 (1979.206.229). Ex coll.: Vicente Huidobro, Paris (dates undetermined); Paul Guillaume, Paris (dates undetermined, ca. 1925–35); Jacob Epstein, London (1935–62); Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York (1962); Museum



35

of Primitive Art, New York (1962–79; acc. no. 61.283)

35. *Ancestral figure, head, profile view* [Reliquary sculpture: head (*Nlo Bieri*)]  
Africa, Gabon, Fang peoples

WE 316 (MoMA cat. no. 366)

Gelatin silver print

9¼ x 5⅜ in. (23.5 x 13.7 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962 (1978.412.2146)

Published: Webb, "Art as Information," p. 60, fig. 9, bottom



36

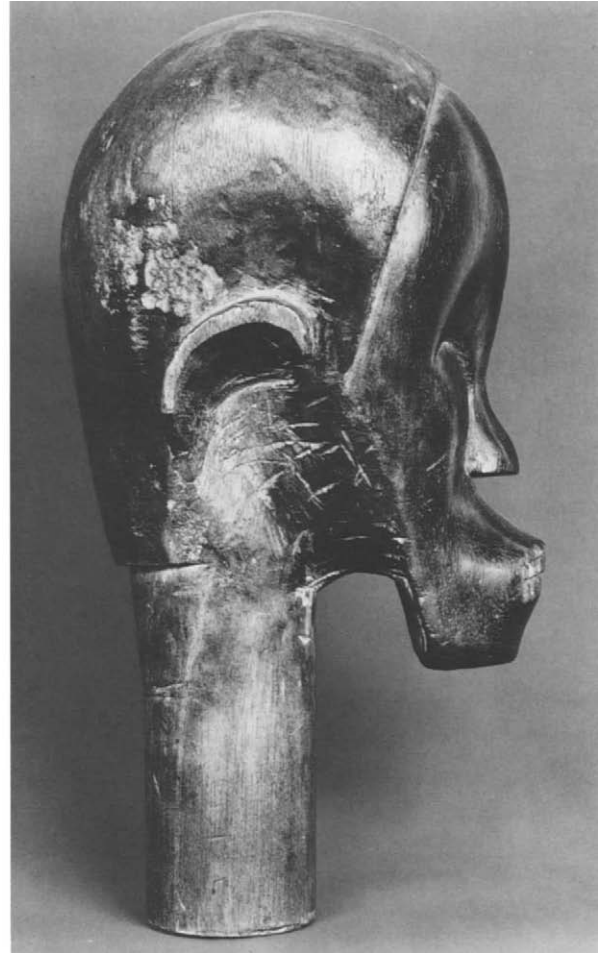
36. *Ancestral figure, head* [Reliquary sculpture: head (*Nlo Bieri*)]  
Africa, Gabon, Fang peoples

WE 317 (MoMA cat. no. 368)

Gelatin silver print  
9 x 5½ in. (22.8 x 13 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2147)

Reliquary sculpture: Philadelphia Museum of Art,  
Philadelphia, The Louise and Walter Arensberg  
Collection (acc. no. 1950-134-202); Ex coll.: Frank  
Burdy Haviland (dates undetermined); Louise and  
Walter Arensberg, Los Angeles (1935-50)



37

37. *Ancestral figure, head, profile view* [Reliquary sculpture: head (*Nlo Bieri*)]  
Africa, Gabon, Fang peoples

WE 318 (MoMA cat. no. 368)

Gelatin silver print  
9¼ x 5¾ in. (23.5 x 14.6 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection



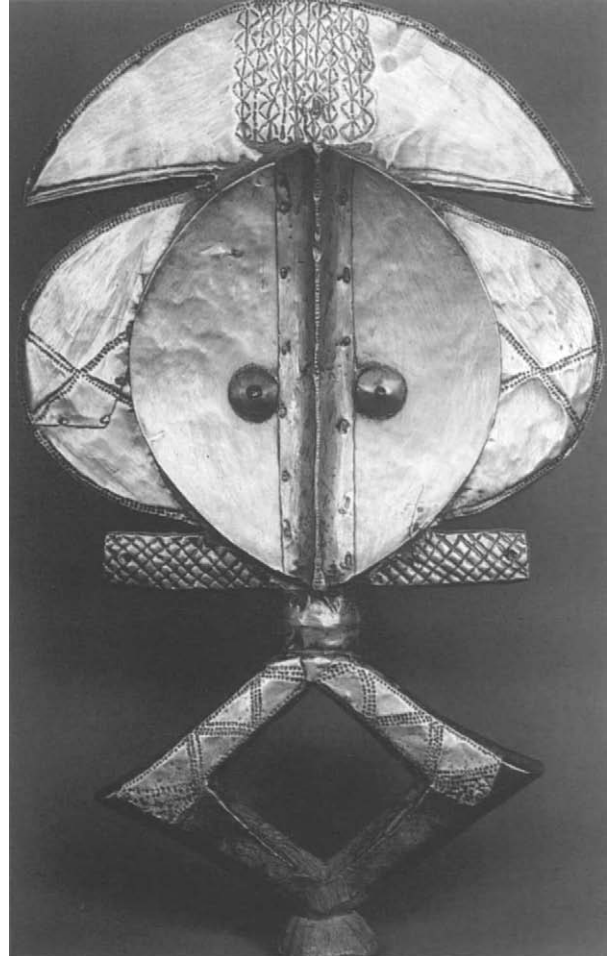
38

38. *Ancestral figure, head* [Reliquary sculpture: head (*Nlo Bieri*)]  
Africa, Gabon, Fang peoples

WE 321 (MoMA cat. no. 370)

Gelatin silver print  
9½ x 6¼ in. (24.1 x 15.9 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

\*Reliquary sculpture: private collection. Ex coll.:  
E. Ascher (before 1935); Helena Rubinstein, New  
York (1935–66)



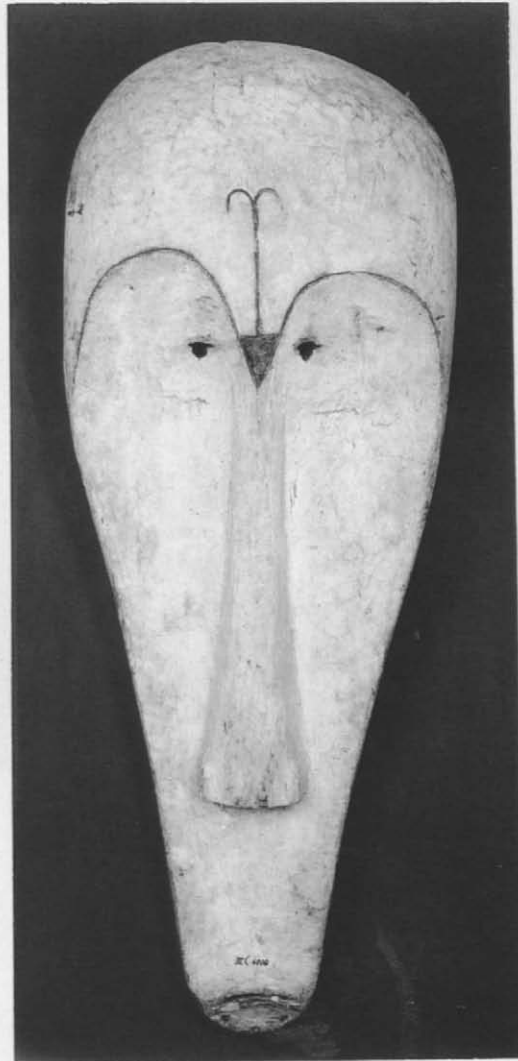
39

39. *Ancestral figure* [Reliquary sculpture: figure]  
Africa, Gabon, Kota peoples

WE 328 (MoMA cat. no. 379)

Gelatin silver print  
9 x 5⅞ in. (22.9 x 14.9 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection  
Published in Haworth-Booth, *Photography: An  
Independent Art*, p. 120, fig. 9; Radin and  
Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*,  
fig. 144; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 144

Reliquary sculpture: present location undeter-  
mined. Ex coll.: Helena Rubinstein, New York  
(1935–66); Mr. and Mrs. David L. Kreeger,  
Washington, D.C. (1970)



351

40

40. *Mask*

Africa, Gabon or Cameroon, Fang peoples

WE 351 (MoMA cat. no. 410)

Gelatin silver print

9 x 4½ in. (22.9 x 10.5 cm), excluding mount

Collection Laura and James J. Ross

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 19; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 19.

Mask: Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, (acc. no. III C 6000; 1935)

82



41

41. *Mask, profile view*

Africa, Gabon or Cameroon, Fang peoples

Collection Laura and James J. Ross

WE 352 (MoMA cat. no. 410)

Gelatin silver print

9½ x 3 in. (22.9 x 7.6 cm), excluding mount



42

42. *Mask*  
Africa, Gabon, Punu peoples  
WE 355 (MoMA cat. no. 118)

Gelatin silver print  
9½ x 6¼ in. (23.5 x 15.9 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

\*Mask: Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (38.3;  
from 1938). Ex coll.: Bernard Hendecourt, Paris  
(1917–27); Raphael Stora, Paris (1935)



43

43. *Mask*  
Africa, Gabon or Republic of the Congo, Kwele  
peoples

WE 358 (MoMA cat. no. 414)

Gelatin silver print  
7 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (18.1 x 18.7 cm)  
New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty  
Museum Collection*, p. 125, fig. 409; Radin and  
Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 21;  
Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 21

Mask: Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva, (BMG  
1019-80; from 1988). Ex coll.: Tristan Tzara, Paris  
(1935-88)



44

44. *Commemorative figure* [Figure]  
Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Dengese peoples

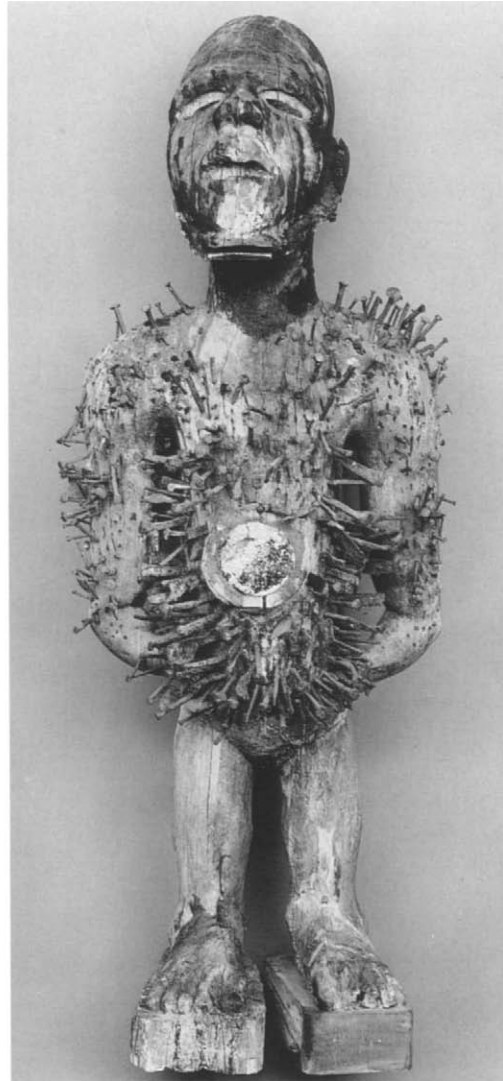
WE 367 (MoMA cat. no. 445)

Gelatin silver print

9 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 4 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (23.8 x 10.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2190)

Figure: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1969  
(1978.412.520). Ex coll.: Charles Ratton, Paris  
(1935); Helena Rubinstein, New York (1965);  
Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York (1966); Museum  
of Primitive Art, New York (1966–78; acc. no.  
66.32)



45

45. *Figure stuck with nails* [*Nkisi N'kondi* front  
view]  
Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Yombe peoples

WE 376 (MoMA cat. no. 436)

Gelatin silver print

9 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 4 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (23.2 x 10.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2199)

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty  
Museum Collection*, p. 124, fig. 411

\**Nkisi N'kondi*: University of Pennsylvania Museum  
of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia  
(30-46-2; from 1935). Ex coll.: Sumner Healy  
(1930–35)





46

46. *Figure surmounting a calabash* [Detail, gourd figure: *Kabwelulu*]  
Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Luba peoples

WE 382 (MoMA cat. no. 489)

Gelatin silver print

7 x 9 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (17.8 x 23.8 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2205)

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty  
Museum Collection*, p. 125, fig. 413; Radin and  
Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 96;  
Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 96; Webb, "Art as  
Information," p. 61, fig. 11

Gourd figure (*Kabwelulu*): present location un-  
determined. Ex coll.: Tristan Tzara, Paris (1935)

47. *Figure, surmounting a calabash, back view*  
[Gourd figure: *Kabwelulu*]  
Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Luba peoples

WE 383 (MoMA cat. no. 489)

Gelatin silver print

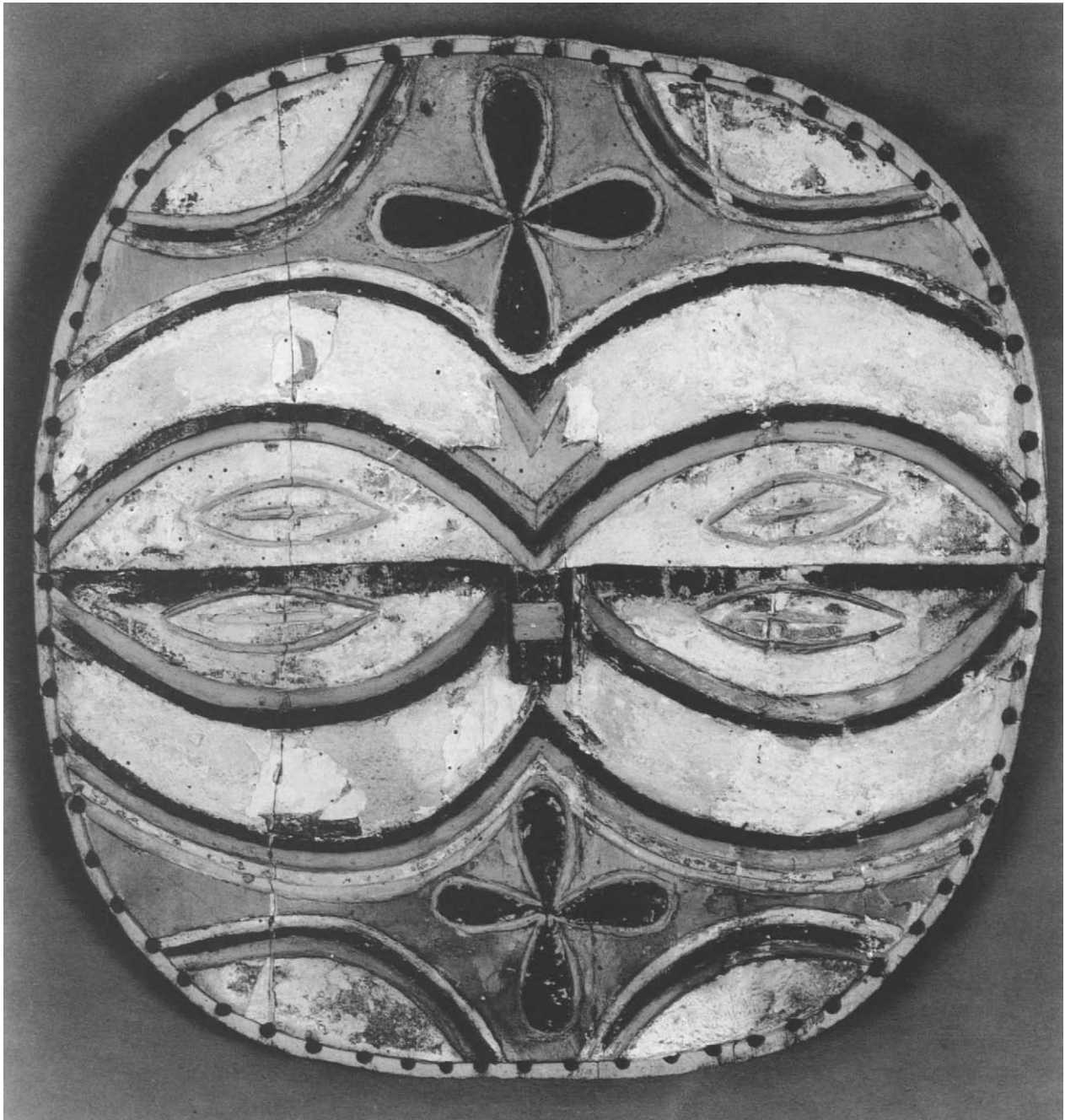
8 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. (21.9 x 18.4 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2206)

Published in Fleurov, *Walker Evans: Simple  
Secrets*, fig. 40 [checklist]; Keller, *Walker Evans:  
The Getty Museum Collection*, p. 126, fig. 414;  
Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and  
Sculpture*, fig. 97; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*,  
fig. 97

47





48

48. *Mask*  
Africa, Republic of the Congo, Teke peoples

WE 410 (MoMA cat. no. 458)

Gelatin silver print

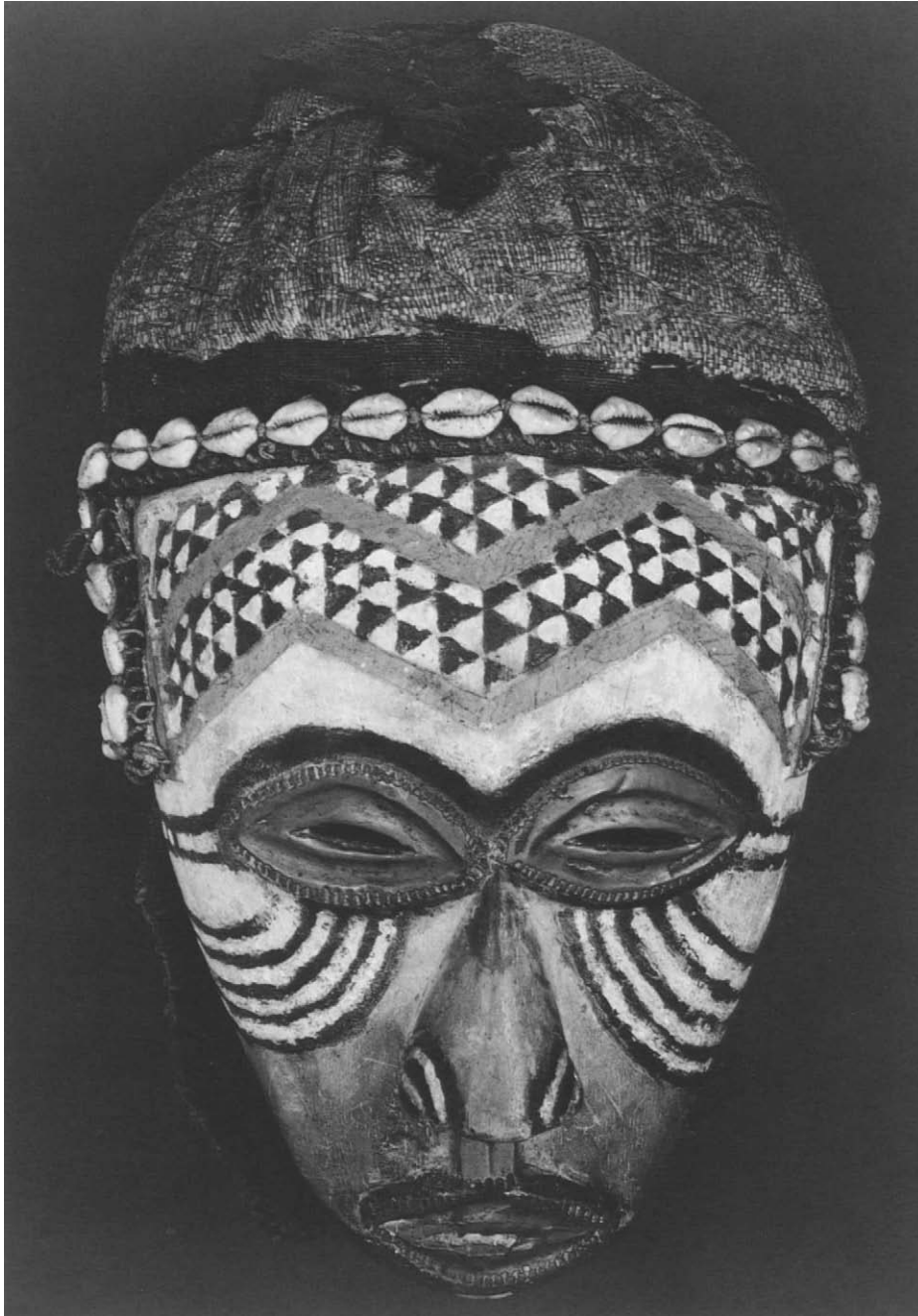
7½ x 7½ in. (19.4 x 18.1 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2231)

Published in Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty  
Museum Collection*, p. 126, fig. 417; Radin and  
Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 29;  
Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 29

Mask: Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva (acc. no.  
BMG 1021-20). Ex coll.: André Derain, Paris  
(1935); Charles Ratton, Paris (dates undeter-  
mined, before 1939); Joseph Mueller, Geneva  
(1939)

88



49

49. *Mask [Ngady aMwaash mask]*  
Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Kuba peoples

WE 427 (MoMA cat. no. 460)

Gelatin silver print  
9 x 6¼ in. (22.9 x 15.9 cm)  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2248)

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales and Sculpture*, fig. 23; Sweeney, *African Sculpture*, fig. 23

Mask: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York (from 1935). Ex coll.: Raoul Blondiau, Brussels (dates undetermined, before 1927); Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection, New York (1927)



50

50. *Mask*  
Africa, Burkina Faso, Bwa peoples

WE 430 (MoMA cat. no. 466)

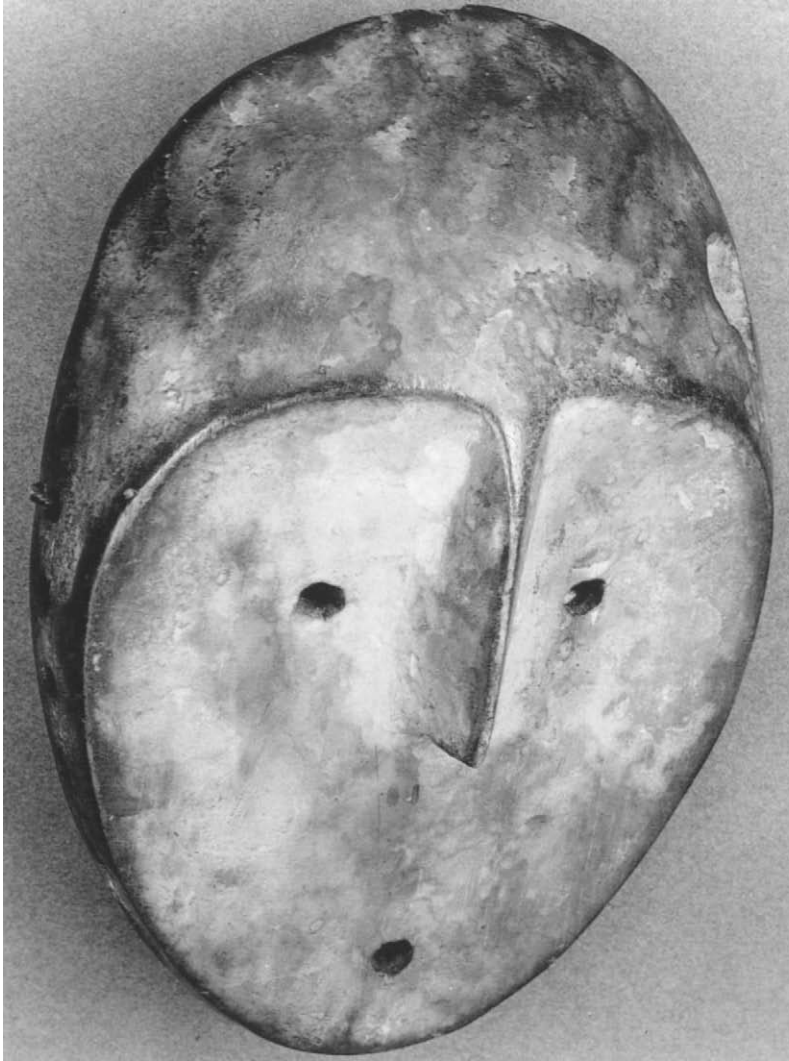
Gelatin silver print

9½ x 5½ in. (23.2 x 14.9 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2251)

\*Mask: Faith-dorian Wright (from 1988). Ex coll.:  
Tristan Tzara, Paris (1935–88)

90



51

51. *Mask*  
Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Lega peoples

WE 431 (MoMA cat. no. 462)

Gelatin silver print

9 x 6 $\frac{7}{8}$  in. (22.9 x 17.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection,  
Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962  
(1978.412.2252)

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales  
and Sculpture*, fig. 33; Sweeney, *African  
Sculpture*, fig. 33; Webb, "Art as Information,"  
p. 62, fig. 14

Mask: present location undetermined. Ex coll.:  
Charles Ratton, Paris (1935)



52

52. *Cylindrical box with cover*  
Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Mangbetu peoples

WE 446 (MoMA cat. no. 502)

Gelatin silver print

9 $\frac{1}{8}$  x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$  in. (23.2 x 8.6 cm)

New York University, Institute of Fine Arts,  
Visual Resources Collection

Published: Keller, *Walker Evans: The Getty  
Museum Collection*, p. 127, fig. 419

Box: present location undetermined. Ex coll.: Félix  
Fénéon, Paris (1935)

## ENLARGEMENTS



53. *Idol [D'mba headdress]*  
Africa, Guinea, Baga peoples

WE 43 (MoMA cat. no. 40)

Gelatin silver print

21 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. (55.6 x 26.7 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase  
(382.41)

Published in Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales  
and Sculpture*, fig. 51; Sweeney, *African  
Sculpture*, fig. 51

Headdress: Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et  
d'Océanie, Paris (acc. no. MNAN 67-3-1). Ex coll.:  
Georges Salles, Paris (1935)



54. *Commemorative figure* [Commemorative figure of a king]  
Africa, Cameroon, Bamileke Kingdom,  
Bamileke peoples

WE 253 (MoMA cat. no. 313)

Gelatin silver print

18¼ x 7¾ in. (46.4 x 19.7 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase  
(384.41)

Figure: Museum für Völkerkunde, Leipzig (acc. no.  
MAF 11625; from ca. 1935)



55

55. *Mask [Kifwebe mask]*  
Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo,  
Songye peoples

WE 417 (MoMA cat. no. 452)

Gelatin silver print  
18½ x 14 in. (47 x 35.6 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase  
(383.41)

Published: Radin and Sweeney, *African Folktales  
and Sculpture*, fig. 25; Sweeney, *African  
Sculpture*, fig. 25

Mask: present location undetermined. Ex coll.:  
Sydney Burney, London (1935); Roland Penrose,  
London (1958)

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## DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THE EXHIBITION

56. Walker Evans, [Notebook for *African Negro Art* project], 1935 (see figures 21, 22, back cover)

7½ x 4¾ in. (19.1 x 12.1 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Walker Evans Archive, 1994 (1994.250.56 [folder 16])

57. [Exhibition catalogue and original dust jacket], *African Negro Art*, by James Johnson Sweeney, 1935 (see below)

10¼ x 7¾ in. (26 x 19.7 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Department of Publications

58. [Portfolio cover], *African Negro Art*, 1935 (see figure 2)

12⅝ x 10¾ in. (32.1 x 27.3 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, Anonymous Gift, 1991 (NA.1991.1)

59. Dorothy Miller, "Index," 1935

Typescript on 8½ x 11-inch paper

45 pages

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of Robert Goldwater, 1961 and 1962



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- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York  
Walker Evans Archive, 1994 (1994.250.56)

# APPENDIX 1

## List of venues and dates for the exhibition of sculpture "African Negro Art."

The Museum of Modern Art, New York	18 Mar.–19 May 1935
Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire	10 June–8 July 1935
San Francisco Museum of Art, California (now San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)	23 July–2 Sept. 1935 *(29 July–2 Sept. 1935)
Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio	28 Sept.–27 Oct. 1935 † (26 July–12 Sept. 1935)
‡Arts Club of Chicago, Illinois	15 Nov.–9 Dec. 1935 (original dates 11 Nov.–9 Dec. 1935)
Milwaukee Art Institute, Wisconsin (now Milwaukee Art Museum)	7–26 Jan. 1936 (original dates 30 Dec. 1935–27 Jan. 1936)
§Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland	10 Feb.–9 Mar. 1936
Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut	25 Mar.–14 Apr. 1936 (original dates 23 Mar.–20 Apr. 1936)

\*Dates from the *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 2, no. 6–7 (Mar.–Apr. 1935).

†Dates from *Quarterly Bulletin, San Francisco Museum of Art* 3, no. 1 (1943–44).

‡A checklist prepared by the Arts Club lists the dates 15 Nov.–7 Dec. 1935

§The initial schedule changed slightly, as the St. Louis Art Museum was replaced by a venue at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

The original schedule is found in The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, Records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, II.1/33 (4)

## APPENDIX 2

This chart provides information concerning the distribution of the Walker Evans portfolios in 1936 and their format.

<i>Location 1936</i>	<i>Free/Purchase</i>	<i>Mounted/Unmounted</i>
Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University)	Free	Mounted
Fisk University	Free	Mounted
Hampton Institute (now Hampton University)	Free	Mounted
Tuskegee Normal Industrial Institute (now Tuskegee Agricultural and Mechanical University)	Free	Mounted
Howard University	Free	Mounted
Dillard University	Free	Mounted
New York Public Library 135th Street Branch (now Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture)	Free	Mounted
New York University	Purchase	Unmounted
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University	Purchase	Unmounted
Victoria and Albert Museum, London	Purchase	Unmounted
Musée Trocadero, Paris (now Musée de l'Homme)	Purchase	Mounted
University of Chicago Library, Special Collections	Purchase	Mounted
Dartmouth College	Purchase	Mounted
Museum of Modern Art, New York	Free	Mounted
Robert Goldwater (formerly Museum of Primitive Art, now The Metropolitan Museum of Art)	Purchase	Unmounted
Frederick Rhodes Pleasants	Purchase	Unmounted
James Johnson Sweeney	Free	Mounted



## APPENDIX 3

Dates and venues for circulating exhibition, "Photographs of African Negro Art by Walker Evans," 1935-36, organized by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. 75 photographs.

Location	Original schedule	Revised dates
Hampton Institute, Virginia	11-25 Oct. 1935	
Virginia State College, Petersburg Dept. of Fine Arts	30 Oct.-13 Nov. 1935	*1-13 Nov. 1935
Bennett College for Women, Greensboro, North Carolina Pfeiffer Hall	18 Nov.-2 Dec. 1935	*23-26 Nov. 1935
Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina	*6-20 Dec. 1935	
Atlanta University, Georgia Library exhibition room	6-20 Jan. 1936	*17-28 Jan. 1936
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College, Tallahassee	24 Jan.-7 Feb. 1936	*4-7 Feb. 1936
Dillard University, New Orleans	*12-26 Feb. 1936	
Prairie View State College, Texas	2-16 Mar. 1936	
Wiley College, Marshall, Texas, Carnige Library	20 Mar.-3 Apr. 1936	*23-26 Mar. 1936
Tuskegee Institute, Alabama	8-22 Apr. 1936	
Talladega College, Alabama	27 Apr.-11 May 1936	

## APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

Location	Original schedule	Revised dates
Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee browsing room of library	*15–29 May 1936	
Howard University, Washington, D.C.	1–15 Oct. [1936] or 3–17 June 1936	†3–17 June 1936
Morgan College, Baltimore, Maryland	22 Oct.–5 Nov. [1936]	*5–12 Nov. 1936
Lincoln University, Chester County, Pennsylvania	12–27 Nov. [1936]	
New York Public Library, Harlem branch	4–18 Dec. [1936]	

\*Indicates dates published in local newspaper or annual report or provided in 1999 by institution

†Alternate dates given on undated list in The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, Records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, II.1/91 (7)

The original schedule is found in The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, Records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, II.1/91 (7)

## APPENDIX 4

This list provides the contents and suggested arrangement of the traveling exhibition of Evans's photographs during 1935–1936. The information is found in The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, Records of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, II.1/91 (7). The numbers assigned to objects in Sweeney's exhibition and catalogue were used in the original hanging instructions for Evans's show of photographs. This appendix includes the original catalogue numbers, the colonial regions and country names used in 1935, numbers assigned to the photographs, and the size of the print in the exhibition.

MoMA catalogue #	WE photograph #	size of print	en = photographs enlarged to approximately 16 x 20 inches, either orientation, and mounted on white mat board, originally 24 x 24 inches; other photographs were 8 x 10 inches, mounted on 12 x 18-inch mat boards
French Sudan			
1	1	en	
2	4	en	
4	6	en	
10	12		
11	13		
13	14	en	
14	17		
34	36	en	
French Guinea			
40	43	en	
Ivory Coast			
66	66	en	
91	82	en	
99	98		
135,141	133		
142	136		
207, 208, 209	163		
228, 225, 226	164		
227, 229, 182	156		

## APPENDIX 4 (CONTINUED)

MoMA catalogue #	WE photograph #	size of print
Dahomey		
237	167	en
238	169	en
239	172	
243	176	
British Nigeria		
248	186	
249	192	
255	201	en
280	211	
285	223	
289	227	
292	231	
293	233	
Cameroon		
319	255	en
321	258	en
322	267	en
323	260	en
326	271	en
332	282	
336	288	en
341	295	
Gabun		
350 front	300	
350 side [back]	301	
354	303	en
356	305	en
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370 (side view)	322	
377	326	
379	328	en
French Congo		
394 (two views)	341	
403	344	
410	351	en
414	358	

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417	423	
437	371	
446	397	
449	414	
452	417	en
454	419	
455	432	
458	410	
462	431	
468 (three-quarter view)	384	
468 (back view)	385	
470	387 or 388	
476	391	en
476	392	
489	382	
489	383	
498, 494	439	
500	440	
516	399	
521	408	
* 540, 539, 535, 561, [544]	450	
578	460	en
Angola		
585	466	
British East Africa		
592	471	en
594	474	

\*Catalogue number 544 was not in the original list but is pictured in the portfolio photograph

## PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

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✓ ⑧ my 14, plaque for Palou M282, 5 min  
~~5 min~~

✓ <sup>up p 34</sup> 328 Wed. eve. at museum Apr. 24  
 4 min. 1000w pent

11 5 " " sported? people

✓ 24  
~~22~~ 5 min. (headress)

✓ 462 1/2 hr cam. 2 max mus 3 B

✓ 29 3 min. 1000w close (3ft)

Thurs eve. Apr. 25

✓ 30 <sup>up p 84</sup> 1 1/2 min. 2-1000w OVER  
 animal mask TRY 3/4 min

✓ 594 2 min. 2-1000w OVER

✓ 596 4 min. new 1000w only. <sup>OVER</sup> at 4ft.