



Face Mask

Date

not dated

Primary Maker

Lula people

Medium

wood, stain and pigment

Description

This is a very old and unfortunately badly weathered example of a type of mask recently attributed to the Lula, a splinter group of the Yaka that became affiliated with the Kingdom of the Kongo and that has been strongly influenced by the nearby Teke. Lula art is usually mistaken for Yaka, except for these flat masks, which are the most distinctively Lula production. They are used in connection with the young men's initiation school where they supposedly guard against sorcery that might harm

the boys. Like the better-known bush school guardian masks of the Yaka, the Lula mask has very large cheeks. Its nose, which is long and curves outward at the tip with flaring nostrils, is also very like Yaka initiation masks as are the seemingly closed eyes. The Lula mask has large ears and a threatening mouth. Brightly colored paint is also typical of initiation masks from the Yaka and others in the area. Judging from the placement of the holes a raffia fiber ruff would have concealed much of the lower part of the mask below the cheeks but would have left the "hat-brim" visible at the top.

Dimensions

Overall: 14 1/4 x 10 3/8 x 5 5/8 in. (36.2 x 26.4 x 14.3 cm)