

Nom : Urhobo Mask

Description : Mask, Urhobo peoples, Nigeria, Early to mid-20th century, Wood, pigment, encrustation

Masks of this type are used in masquerades performed at festivals to honor Urhobo water spirits-which can be harmful or beneficial-that journey upriver from the Niger River delta. This mask represents a beneficial spirit associated with the ideal beauty of a young woman or bride. The mask's superstructure mimics the elaborately beaded, crowned and crested coiffure worn by Urhobo brides. The short vertical wood projections across the upper forehead represent the silver hairpins set into the lower parts of a young bride's crown. The gracefully curved horns projecting from the top of the head are described simply as horns or as embellishments of the coiffure.

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Source : Musée national d'art africain