

Social Classification of African Masks

(Tribal dolls - ancestor statues - amulets statues)

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Classification of African masks from a social point of view and divided into:

tribal dolls

"It is carried by a small married woman who is looking forward to an easy pregnancy and the birth of males or females according to the shape of her doll and also helps her during childbirth. The dolls are characterized by simplification of the components of the hands and arms in the wooden carving, and the legs are almost eliminated, as they are characterized by cylindrical body and attention to the head, they are circular or rectangular with the elongation of the neck, we find that they are distinguished by the simplicity of the details and the lengthening of its members such as the eyes, the nose and the mouth to suit the purpose for which it was made, and it is made up of geometric elements such as the circle, the cylinder and the cone in an organic way. We find the organic style in these statues depends on the treatment of the human form from sharp angles, and often determines the general features of the carved wooden form associated with certain deities from a point of view. Consider the African example, a method that results in projecting details, while we find in it a certain type of memorial characteristics, that there is a dual relationship between the intellectual contents of the wood carving, and its expressive form, which requires expertise and aesthetic experience to push it into the circle of conscious aesthetic attention, which the example did not neglect. The African in building his wood carvings did not hesitate in ways to achieve interaction between the two sides of the relationship of mixing. Between more than one element, medium, and style in one sculpture.

Ancestor statues:

"The worship of the great-grandfather or the first mother of the tribe, dominates the religious rituals of the African example, in which he feels calm and secure living, and the continuity and calmness is ensured through religious ceremonies through which he shows his respect for the gods and the sacred personalities and thus prepares himself for a psychological and mental balance between life and death".

Among the most important African wood carvings are the ancestor statues, and they depict the first ancestors of each tribe. We find the parts of the body and the characteristics of the head in each statue united in a way that gives each part its total size. Nature in African art does not mean realism or sincerity in mimicking nature. In most woodcarvings there is a tension between adherence to the natural form and its absence, and this tension is found in all African art.

"The shape in the African wood carving is determined by the reduction, shortening, enlargement or lengthening of the main organs in addition to the precise characteristics of the body, so that a variety of structures result from this that distances the form from simulating the natural appearance. Rather, it is considered a sculptural work that merely expresses reality".

"The statues of the supreme ancestor are trying to embody a convincing resemblance that performs the task of the repository of the soul, and therefore the parts of the body are coordinated in a stable position and calm sobriety without any violent movement or strange exaggeration, and the eyes of the gaze are deep." Thus, the statue of the ancestor expresses the feeling of the spirit settled in the body and evokes a feeling of sanctity and reverence towards the higher ancestor. On the other hand, we find that the wooden carvings are more mobile in the latent spirit than them, and in keeping with the effectiveness of its magical mission, and it may sometimes be frightening and aggressive, and it may strongly embody that power. The explosives, as in some tribes, who add nails to their idols to stir up the spirit.

In the form of one of the statues, the ancestor or the great-grandfather, which is a more natural standing statue, to the extent that the African example felt the need to shorten his arms and enlarge the hands in order to balance the upper part of the statue with the solid mass of thighs and legs and the seat at the bottom of the statue, which shows the features of statues. The Bambara, the head is in the form of a triangle perpendicular to the neck, and the neck and torso are cylinders, with a large cylindrical torso and confrontation in posture and movement, in addition to the plastic treatment of the pectoral muscles, which suggests readiness and launching through the treatment of the conical breasts prominent forward and the arms hanging downward attached to the body and ending in the middle of the abdomen. Roughly, then the African artist added to the statue a layer of grease and soot and some knots and ropes in the neck and legs of the statue to give the statue wonderful expressive and plastic values.

The formal characteristics enjoy interlacing the legs as a square base and emphasizing the elongation of the hands, and the inscriptions emphasize the length of the cylindrical trunk as well as the expressions of the faces of rigor and seriousness. And in the above, it is clear that there are aesthetic features in these wood carvings through formations, voids, and internal and external lines surrounding the shapes from the outside. All these aesthetics brought about expressive characteristics that are usually more than the structural qualities and engineering combinations.

amulets statues:

"The wooden amulets of the African example have a social, political, functional and psychological significance, as they remove his fears of the unknown and reduce his tension... In these statues, the African artist added other secondary materials such as beads and some precious stones, as well as animal teeth, and sometimes human teeth in addition to Shells, leather and horns, and he does not borrow these things from nature in an attempt to imitate nature, but to confirm symbolic, religious or magical connotations until these wood carvings reached us with their aesthetic and plastic values. In the end, it is a work of art in which materials of contrasting clothes and colors are combined in an innate way that has a special taste