



MAHONGWE-STYLE RELIQUARY GUARDIAN

\$1,280

Mid-20th Century • Gabon • Copper, Steel • Collection #CAA1278

W: 9.0" D: 3.5" H: 25.0"

This compelling abstract form is attributed to the MaHongwe people in north Gabon, a subpopulation of the Kota in the same region. Sculpted of a wooden form wrapped in metal wire, this work recreates the reliquary figures of "bwete" ancestor practices. Such figures would have been placed above a basket containing ancestral relics, and represented the founder of the familial lineage. The highly abstracted ancestor figures are nonetheless sculpted with fantastic detail. Continued...



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Radiating from a central pair of eyes and nose, an intricate pattern of hammered wire and nails decorates this figure's head, flowing into stylized plaits on the back. Although its unlikely this Mahongwe reliquary was ritually used, it's a fantastic example of conceptual tribal art and looks especially striking set on a custom stand as a storied sculptural object.



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