



Kuba Cup



7 500 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Solid wood

Height : 12,5 cm

Description

Kuba bowl on an openwork pedestal, Democratic Republic of the Congo, hardwood with a deep, lustrous brown patina. The flared bowl, delicately hollowed out, rests on a truncated conical body entirely carved with geometric motifs in slight relief. The piece as a whole demonstrates remarkable technical virtuosity: the decorative motifs alternate between herringbone patterns, excised triangles, interlacing, and grid-like surfaces, evoking with great finesse the textural and woven effects of traditional basketry. The upper section is highlighted by a frieze of oblique interlacing running beneath the rim, while a central band marks the transition to the body. The body is adorned with large triangular panels and openwork motifs that accentuate the play of shadows and the depth of the decoration. The

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pedestal, consisting of several carefully hollowed-out arched supports, connects the bowl to a solid cylindrical base. This open structure lends the object a great sense of visual lightness while highlighting the quality of the carving. The surface bears an old, reddish-brown patina of wear, glossy in places, revealing the piece's repeated handling and age. The slight wear on the edges further accentuates the relief of the motifs. These prestigious Kuba bowls were associated with the court elite and were used, in particular, during ceremonies involving the consumption of palm wine or for other ceremonial purposes. They represent one of the most refined expressions of woodcarving from the former Zaire. It should be noted that a cup of comparable shape, patina, and dimensions, formerly donated by the Lieris couple, is held in the collections of the Musée du Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac under inventory number 71.1990.171.38. This example belongs to a rare group characterized by the richness of its openwork, geometric, and non-anthropomorphic carved decoration. The world record for the sale of a Kuba cup is held by an anthropomorphic example that also belonged to Marcel Nies, sold during the auction of part of his collection at Christie's on March 26, 2026. Date Late 19th century. Provenance Lempertz Tribal Art auction, April 3, 1993. Marcel Nies Collection. Ferry Herrebrugh. Private German collection. Exhibitions Netherlands, Berg en Dal, Afrika Museum, 1999. Bibliography DE SMET, Peter A. G. M. Herbs, Health, Healers: Africa as an Ethnopharmacological Source. Berg en Dal: Afrika Museum, 1999, p. 105. Condition Minor flaws due to age and use; superb, deep patina from use and collection. Dimensions Height: 12.5 cm.