



## Anthropomorphic Statuette Known As Nzambi - Holo Culture, Democratic Republic Of The Congo



3 280 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

### Description

ANTHROPOMORPHIC STATUETTE known as Nzambi  
Holo culture, Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Angola  
Circa 1900  
Wood  
H: 29.5; W: 18.5 cm (locally restored, with slight flaking of the wood on the reverse)  
This hermaphroditic statuette, carved from a single block of wood, stands within an architectural frame, its hands resting on the uprights of the angular structure whilst its feet, merged at the base, support short, slightly bent legs that are distinct from one another. Its face tapers towards the chin, marked by two coffee-bean-shaped eyes and two small C-shaped ears. Broadly incised fingers emerge from its broad shoulders; its torso, with a protruding navel, is adorned with X-shaped and chequerboard-patterned body scarifications. According to Albert Maesen, a

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doctor of art history and archaeology and former curator of the Belgian Congo Museum, these statuettes are thought to allude to Christian crucifixes. Indeed, from the 15th century onwards, it was through contact with Europeans that Christian iconography was introduced into Central Africa, notably via crucifixes and depictions of saints and the Virgin Mary. These framed statuettes appear to have first emerged in the 17th century during the second phase of the kingdom's Christianisation by the Capuchin missionaries, who arrived in the region in 1645. Just like the depiction of Christ on the cross, these sacred panels are imbued with a protective function, comparable to that of an amulet. As such, they were kept in houses known as *nzo santu*, as part of the worship of Nzambi. In the Kongo religious tradition, Nzambi is the supreme god, creator of the universe, and is regarded as the source of all life and all spiritual power. Three labels are visible on the reverse:-  
A handwritten label by Klejman indicating the location, group and date -  
A Perls Galleries inventory label bearing the number '11343'.  
A Wellesley College Museum label noting its exhibition in November 1972. Provenance:-  
Formerly in the collection of John J. Klejman, New York, Perls Galleries (inv. no. 11343)-  
Formerly in a private American collection. Bibliographical reference: Francois Neyt, *L'Art Holo du Haut-Kwango*, Munich, Fred Jahn, 1982. Text and photographs © FCP  
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