



Mbolo Ancestor Portrait Welding Mask

Date

2021

Primary Maker

Yashua Klos

Medium

Stained and charred maple

Description

"The Western art history canon credits Pablo Picasso with pioneering abstraction through his Cubism based on African tribal mask forms. Here, I use cubits of wood to build the mask, a gesture toward inverting the canon, and reclaiming abstraction at its African origins. These masks are hybrids of welding masks and different African tribal masks. Although these two forms have very separate purposes, I find that masking almost always engenders ideas around identity. The welding mask hides identity through its function: protecting the worker. The African tribal mask functions to summon and activate an identity for the wearer to embody. A traditional tribal mask is activated during ceremonial theater once it is "danced." Since I do not dance these masks, I activate them through my own torching ceremony. This torching is an act that fuses my own creative labor with my family's contemporary labor, and to African ancestral histories." —Yashua Klos

Dimensions

Overall: 18 3/4 x 11 3/8 x 13 3/8 in. (47.6 x 28.9 x 34 cm)