

These masks were created around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The mask is used during the Mblo dance. It is used to represent an important ancestor.

Mblo is one of the oldest ritual dances of the Baule people. The dance is used to make their ancestors' spirits less hostile but also to honor them.

## Portrait Mask (Mblo)

The masks were carved from wood and then painted.

The masks were usually commissioned by men to honor a female relative.

The masks share similar characteristics, such as long faces, geometrical shapes, closed eyes, and large foreheads.

The squinted eyes are a symbol of the existence of this person's spirit in the world.



Only the very best male dancers were allowed to participate in the ritual.

Unique details, such as scarifications, are also included in the carvings.

Every mask is unique and represents one specific person.

The masks are idealized to fit the beauty standards of their culture.