

## **Trio of Masks**

Wauja: Brazil, Americas

2000

Straw, yarn

These colourful straw dancing masks were worn by Wauja women as part of shamanic ritual healing. The masks blocked the women's vision from seeing the kawika (sacred flutes) used in the ceremony, which signified humility and respect for the instruments. The masks were made by women and always used in a trio.

[On loan from and collected by Aristoteles Barcelos Neto, 2000]

---

## **Ere Ibeji (Figure)**

Yoruba: Nigeria, Africa

Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Wood, glass, shell, iron

Such carved figures embody the spirit of a deceased child and are a source of consolation to grieving mothers, who wear these on their back in cloth wrapping, like a baby. Stylistically the figure shows ideals of Yoruba beauty: an individual at the prime of life, with ornaments and scarification - which was an important practice for Yoruba women.

SRU1991R3 [Collected by Michael Ranson, 1950]

---

## **Woman's apron**

San: Botswana, Africa

20<sup>th</sup> Century

Leather, bone, copper, glass, plastic

This unusual apron would have been worn during special ceremonies involving dance. Through the act of dancing, the beads on the front flap would knock against one another, creating a percussive sound.

SRU2013MMR17 [Collected by Margo & Martin Russell, 1973]

---

## **Wooden Female Head**

Kenya, Africa

20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century

Wood, vegetable fibre

This is a finely carved head of a woman created for the tourism market, made from dense, hard wood. The figure is represented with elongated earlobes. Stretched earlobes are the first stage of initiation towards adulthood in traditional Maasai communities. The depiction here highlights the importance of such adornments in initiation ceremonies.

SCVA012

---

## **Tīpare (Headband)**

Maori: New Zealand, Oceania

20<sup>th</sup> Century

Cotton, elastic, wool

The word tīpare means 'headband' in Te Reo Māori, but it also means "to adorn". This tīpare is made from a weaving technique known as taniko, made by female weavers by hand without using a loom. Tīpare are worn around the head by female dancers during ceremonies and kapahaka, song and dance performances.

SRU1991F5

---

## **Bilum bag**

Papua New Guinea, Oceania

20<sup>th</sup> Century

Acrylic yarn

Bilum bags are a symbol of womanhood because of their allusion to wombs. These bags are woven by women and traditionally made of vegetal fibre. They can be woven into various shapes and sizes. Bilum bags are worn by women, suspended from their foreheads, and used to carry numerous possessions - including food, and even babies.

SRU2013GT1 [Collected in Lae by Géraldine Terry, 1987]

---

### **Akua'ma (Fertility Dolls)**

Asante: Ghana, Africa

20<sup>th</sup> Century

Wood, beads

These wooden sculptures are replicas of ritual fertility dolls called akua'ma, made for the tourist market. Traditionally, a woman expecting a child would adorn this figure with glass beads, wrap it, and carry it on her back as if it was a baby.

SRU1998D1; SCVA001

---

### **Doll dressed in siapo (barkcloth)**

Samoa, Oceania

1954-1968

Pandanus fibre, pigment, tapa

The siapo adorning this doll is unusually fashioned in the style of a female Victorian missionary. Siapo is mostly made and worn by women, and with its unique motifs and designs, shows their creativity. The cloth is worn and used in various ceremonies, particularly in marriage ceremonies where it is exchanged between families.

SRU2004MK49

---

### **Grass Skirt**

Papua New Guinea, Oceania

1954-1968

Natural fibre, dye

These skirts are usually made from palm and pandanus leaves and are worn as an everyday garment. Every key moment in a woman's life is marked with the receipt of a new skirt. The style, length, and colour will vary to signify the maker's community and indicate the occasion for which it was made.

SRU2004MK54

---

## **Drawings of skin tattoos**

San: Botswana, Africa

20<sup>th</sup> Century

Paper, ink

Little is known about these specific examples, but amongst some San groups, tattooing plays a key role in marriage rituals. The couple is tattooed together and blood from the incisions of each spouse is rubbed into the other's along with ash from burnt medicinal roots. In doing so they are united as one.

SRU2013MMR04 [Drawn by Martin Russell, 1973]