



Doll (mwana hiti)

Medium

Wood

Description

Wood doll with abstracted body and head and necklaces. Young Zaramo women undergo an initiation seclusion during which time they receive a mwana hiti, "wooden child." While secluded, she cares for the doll as though it were a real child. When re-entering society, the young woman performs a dance with the doll. The mwana hiti features a distinctive, double-wedge, coiffure. This hairstyle is an ideal old-fashioned type and no longer worn by Zaramo women. In holes through these wedges a young woman might attach her own hair. Mwana hiti represents both sexes; its overall form is phallic, yet its decorations of beads, shells, or bits of fabric are female. Suggested reading: Elisabeth L. Cameron. Isn't s/he a doll?: Play and Ritual in African Sculpture. Exhibition

catalogue. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1996.

Dimensions

Height: 5 inches (12.7 cm)