

LECUENNE  
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4, 95, New Hebrides, South Malekula. *Tomes nevinbir* figures. Musée de l'Homme, Paris.

of earth shaped like the hull of a boat. The serpent thus depicted was accorded every honour and was even stroked at certain moments. It was destroyed at dawn by spear thrusts and blows from clubs before the rites associated with the chief events in the life of the serpent.

Next came a sequence of paintings invoking the chief events in the life of the serpent. After a space on the ground had been carefully cleared and flattened, water was poured on it and the surface was rubbed until quite smooth. When the water had evaporated, the ground had a hard crust to which was applied the first coat of red and yellow ochre. Then, using a finger dipped in red ochre or powdered charcoal mixed with animal fat, depending upon the colour of the background, an elder traced the principal motif; serpentine lines or circles. Next, the younger men covered the ochre ground with a mass of white spots. The pigment was kaolin, mixed with saliva in the mouth, then spat into a container and diluted with water. This colour was applied to the ground with a brush made by chewing the end of a stick to fray it. All these operations were accompanied by songs telling of the journey of the serpent



Color plate 20. LEHMANN WALL, GREAT HALL OF BULLS, LESVREUX CAVES, Dordogne, France. c. 15,000-10,000 B.C. Polychrome rock painting.



The Mosi

Mosi art is also characterized by masks of a perpendicular kind, which are used by the Wango society (fig. 176) in protective rites. The face and horns often represent an antelope spirit; the superposed figure is probably that of an earth goddess.

The Mosi are a very large tribe of the central Upper Volta area who number about a million and a half. They have undergone Islamic influence and their carving tradition has become vitiated. Wango society masks are related in design to those of the Boko, although they derive somewhat more evidently from natural shapes and are less geometrically patterned than the latter. There are also similarities to Dogon and Bambara styles. It is not possible to postulate confidently which of these groups first established its sculptural tradition.

The Dogon

The Dogon are among the oldest practitioners of sculpture in the Sudanese region, and theirs is one of the most style-conscious expressions of West Africa. Lacking the refinement of detail known to much Bambara work, Dogon pieces offer sharp breaks of contour and appealing repetitions of shapes. Most of the finest traditional carvings, especially figures and



175. Mask personifying the village guardian spirit, from Upper Volta. Boko. Wood and fibers, height 68 1/8". Musée de l'Homme, Paris.

176. Wango society mask, from Upper Volta. Mosi. Wood, height 42 1/2". Formerly collection Princess Gounville, Paris.

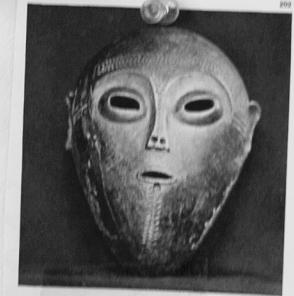
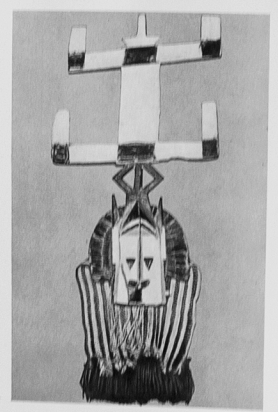
177. "Tellen" figure, from Mali. Dogon. Wood, height 43 1/4". Collection Christophe Tzara, Paris.

179. Cloth-wearing society antelope mask headpiece (sogon-kou), from Mali. Bambara. Wood, height 1.30". Collection Harry Fisher, New York.

180. Antelope dance mask (wala), from Mali. Dogon. Wood, height 21 1/2". Collection Alice C. Davis, Washington, D.C.

masks, were created by persons who may be called professional artists, members of a prestigious caste of smiths. There is also a comparatively crude style which was carried out by untrained carvers. Intrinsically proud of their tribal religion and customs, the Dogon long averred Moslem acculturation by retreating to an all but inaccessible cliff-sided plateau in northern Mali, near the great bend of the Niger River. Their subsistence, like that of the neighboring Bambara, comes largely from agriculture, though the rocky Dogon soil is less productive. Hunting is an important secondary source of food and in some areas it is still carried out with the ancient weapons, the spear and the knife. Animals are prolifically represented in mask forms and on the elaborately carved reliefs of granary or sanctuary doors. The cultivation of crops and attendant fertility beliefs occasion the making of supplicatory figures with arms upraised in one or another attitude of prayer for rain. Some fertility carvings were placed in or near grain fields and were used in rites intended to produce increased crops. The oldest works, such as commemorative figures carved in honor of Sigi, the legendary first ancestor, were placed in caves or other places of sanctuary and were honored by sacrificial gifts. Verticality is apparent or implicit in all Dogon figures, standing or seated (fig. 182). An austere, semiabstract conceptualism is asserted. Reduction (not simplification) of bodily components to their essences is common to the older ancestral figures (fig. 177), which, according to Dogon oral records, may have been created by an ancient people, the "Tellen," who preceded them in their present habitat. More recent figural works have greater elaboration of surface and as the eye. The older figures are the more dramatic in pose; the newer ones are closer in their refinement to Bambara carvings, with which, as we have mentioned, they are not infrequently confused. All Dogon figures receive the *numen* (or *nyama*), the spirit or vital force of ancient or recently dead ancestors; and lured rites are held to preserve that sacred energy and to invoke the beneficence of the departed for the welfare of living descendants.

While Dogon figures are among the strongest of Sudanese works in that form, the masks of these people are even more striking (figs. 178, 181, colorplates 181). Without sacrificing the austerity so impressive in the "Tellen" and other full-length images, Dogon masks are provocative, their abrupt forms enhanced in effect by extensive use of painted geometrical motifs.<sup>28</sup> The illustrated *wala* or antelope masks characterize the main type. Their over-all



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202. Mask, from Northeast Congo, Great Lakes Region, Partibly Makonde. Wood, height, 13". Brooklyn Museum, New York.

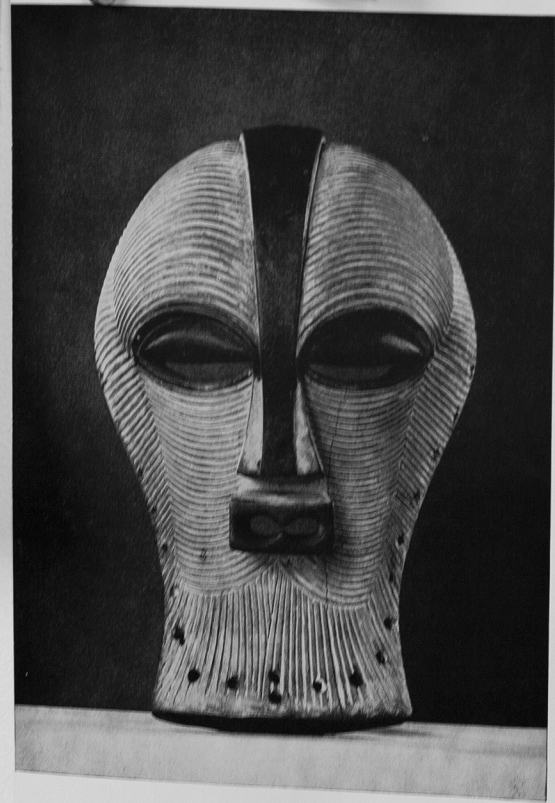


Fig. 47 (left). Mask, Basongé style, Central Congo. H. 13 1/2 in. University Museum, Philadelphia.

Fig. 48 (above). Chief's stool, detail, Baluba style, Eastern Congo. Royal Museum of Belgium Congo, Tervuren.



WHITE FLAG PROJECTS

# *High, Low & In Between*

June 22 – August 24, 2013

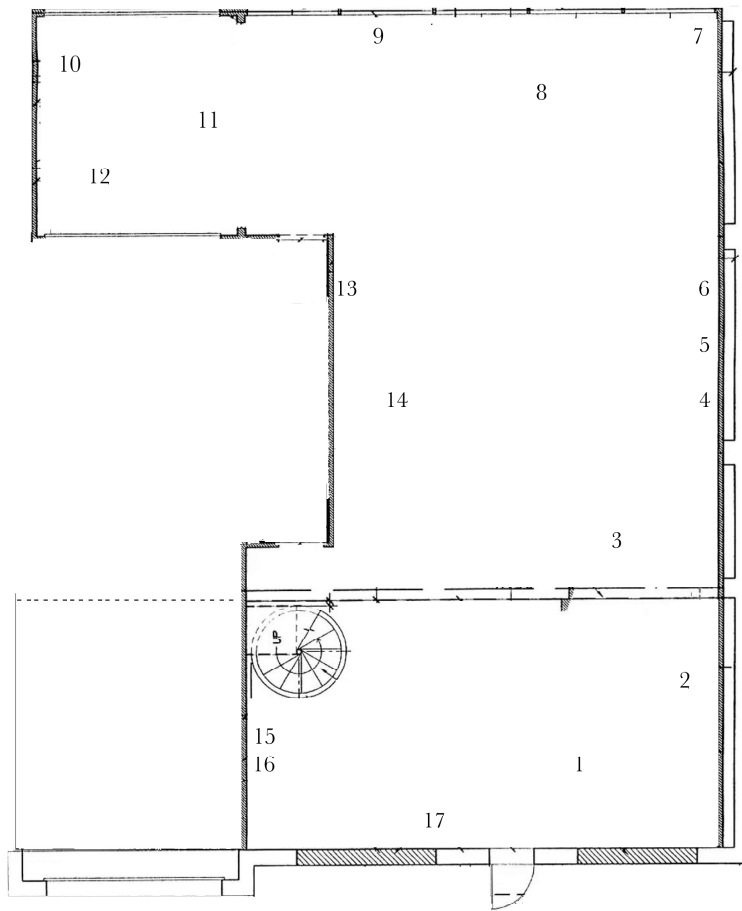
Ryan Johnson  
Johannes VanDerBeek  
Sara VanDerBeek

Organized by Sara VanDerBeek



*High, Low & In Between* is a conversation between three artists who are close. Their proximity to each other in space and in thinking has engendered a dialogue about process and practice, inspiration and realization. As studio neighbors sharing a wall, as friends, and as siblings our doors open to each other. A quick question leads to longer thoughts and talks about where things have come from and where they are going. There are moments of connection, overlaps, and there are also disconnects. A shared interest in ancient forms, figures, and materials ties us together. Patterns emerge. Colors and shapes are layered, echoing earlier histories. A dialogue with the past and the future is attempted and re-considered. Amongst us there is a similar concern for the larger continuum of creation, but our work is varied. Here we have come together. At certain moments working on the same piece at different times reacting to the other's work, and overall contributing singularly individual works that when grouped will sit or stand somewhere high, low, and in between.

- Sara VanDerBeek



- 1- Sara VanDerBeek  
*XXXIX*, 2013  
Wood, paint, 144 x 12 x 12 inches
- 2- Sara VanDerBeek  
*XXXVIII*, 2013  
Wood, paint, 98 x 8 x 6 inches
- 3- Ryan Johnson  
*Facing Chairs*, 2012  
Cedar, maple, plywood, acrylic paint, 58 x 12 7/8 x 93 1/2 inches
- 4- Ryan Johnson & Johannes VanDerBeek  
*Saint Louis Cast III*, 2013  
Linen, pastel, acrylic paint, cedar, foam, 112 x 18 3/4 x 10 1/4 inches
- 5- Ryan Johnson & Johannes VanDerBeek  
*Saint Louis Cast I*, 2013  
Linen, pastel, acrylic paint, cedar, foam, 112 x 18 3/4 x 10 1/4 inches
- 6- Ryan Johnson & Johannes VanDerBeek  
*Saint Louis Cast II*, 2013  
Linen, pastel, acrylic paint, cedar, foam, 112 x 18 3/4 x 10 1/4 inches
- 7- Johannes VanDerBeek  
*Wall (Early Walkers)*, 2012  
Fiberglass, Acqua-Resin, steel and paint, 58 1/2 x 48 x 4 1/2 inches
- 8- Ryan Johnson  
*Composition*, 2013  
Cedar, oak, acrylic paint, rope, glue, brass, nails, 92 1/2 x 93 x 57 inches
- 9- Sara VanDerBeek  
*Roman Woman XI*, 2013  
Digital C-print, 20 x 16 inches
- 10- Johannes VanDerBeek  
*Ancestor (Forefather)*, 2013  
Fiberglass, Acqua-Resin, paint, 37 x 16 1/4 x 17 1/4 inches
- 11- Ryan Johnson & Johannes VanDerBeek  
*Carrying Form*, 2013  
Cedar, acrylic paint, synthetic clay, 10 x 18 3/8 x 143 1/4 inches
- 12- Sara VanDerBeek  
*XXXVI (Kiva)*, 2013  
Fiberglass reinforced plaster, 108 x 9 x 9 inches
- 13- Sara VanDerBeek  
*Baltimore Aphrodite*, 2013  
Digital C-print, 84 x 46 1/2 inches
- 14- Johannes VanDerBeek  
*Figure Study with Pot*, 2013  
Paper pulp, aluminum mesh, steel, 89 x 23 x 16 inches
- 15- Johannes VanDerBeek & Sara VanDerBeek  
*Venice Fence/Woodstock Pool I*, 2013  
Pigment print, 12 x 8 inches
- 16- Johannes VanDerBeek & Sara VanDerBeek  
*Venice Fence/Woodstock Pool II*, 2013  
Pigment print, 12 x 8 inches
- 17- Johannes VanDerBeek  
*Figure Study with Cup*, 2013  
Paper pulp, aluminum mesh, steel, 83 x 19 x 15 1/2 inches











### About the Artists

Ryan Johnson has held one-person exhibitions with Suzanne Geiss Company, New York; Sikkema Jenkins and Co., New York; and Franco Soffiantino Arte Contemporanea, Turin. His work has appeared in group exhibitions with Saatchi Gallery, London; the Aspen Art Museum, Aspen; Guild & Greyshkul, New York; Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg; Team Gallery, New York; and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York. Johnson was also included in *Greater New York 2005*, MoMA/PS 1, New York. His work has been written about in *The New Yorker*, *Bomb*, *The New York Times*, and *Art in America*. Ryan Johnson received his MFA from Columbia University. He lives and works in Brooklyn.

Johannes VanDerBeek has held recent one-person exhibitions with Zach Feuer Gallery, New York and Brand New Gallery, Milan. His work has been included in group exhibitions with Sculpture Center, Long Island City; WallSpace, New York; the Public Art Fund, Brooklyn; Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York. His work was also included in *Portugal Arte 10 Biennial*, Lisbon. Johannes VanDerBeek's work has been discussed in *ArtReview* and *The New York Times*. Together with artist Anya Kielar and his sister Sara VanDerBeek, he founded and operated the gallery Guild & Greyshkul, from 2005 to 2009. VanDerBeek received his BFA from the Cooper Union School of Art and Science. He lives and works in New York.

Sara VanDerBeek has presented one-person exhibitions with The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Fondazione Memmo, Rome; Metro Pictures, New York; and the Approach, London. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Sculpture Center, Long Island City; and Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco. VanDerBeek's work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and the Guggenheim Museum, New York. VanDerBeek, along with artists Anya Kielar and her brother Johannes VanDerBeek founded and operated the gallery Guild & Greyshkul, from 2005 to 2009. VanDerBeek received her BFA from the Cooper Union of Art and Science. She lives and works in New York.



Lenders to the exhibition

Ryan Johnson courtesy the artist and the Suzanne Geiss Company, New York

Johannes VanDerBeek courtesy the artist and Zach Feuer, New York

Sara VanDerBeek courtesy the artist, Metro Pictures, New York and Altman Siegel, San Francisco

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