

Portrait Figure of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny

Date

not dated

Primary Maker

Baulé people

Medium

wood and enamel paint

Description

The late president of the Ivory Coast, Houphouët Boigny, was born near the village of Kami in the Baule area. When he died in 1993, the Baule, more than most Ivoirians, felt a keen sense of loss. This portrait figure of Boigny was undoubtedly carved while he was still alive and was based on the poster included with it in the collection. The Baule have a tradition of carving images of people they wish to honor, although those images are more likely to be masks than figures. Baule figures are personal spirits whose presence provides blessings and guidance to their human caretaker. Against the background of these traditions, a portrait honoring the president as a special protector of the Baule is not surprising, and, in fact, seems quite appropriate. The figure is idealized and exquisitely detailed in keeping with the Baule carving tradition.

Dimensions

Overall: 18 1/8 x 4 7/8 x 3 3/8 in. (46 x 12.4 x 8.6 cm)

