



## MUMUYE

SCULPTURE FROM NIGERIA  
The Human Figure Reinvented

# Mumuye: Sculpture from Nigeria

## The Human Figure Reinvented

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Through forty-one masterworks, *Mumuye* reveals some of the most accomplished statues made by this Nigerian tribal group. It was not until the late 1960s that statues from the Mumuye culture of northeastern Nigeria appeared on the European art scene. Their impact was immediate and profound: African art aficionados marvelled at Mumuye artists' abstract interpretation of the human body, which recalled the approach to anatomy by artists of the Cubist and Expressionist movements. Indeed, anthropomorphic Mumuye figure sculptures demonstrate an astonishing range of variations, testifying to their makers' unbridled creativity and limitless inventiveness. Here, a meticulous analysis of the extraordinary forms of Mumuye figures – paying attention to their striking inherent sense of motion – leads to a new style of classification that recognises different workshops and even the hands of individual masters. A summary of the scant field-based studies discusses the figures' primary role as emblems of status and rank, their connections to ancestral veneration, and healing and divination practices. Through a selection of masks and other objects, this book reveals the beauty of Mumuye figurative sculpture.

**Frank Herreman** was Director of the Ethnographic Museum in Antwerp, Belgium, from 1989 to 1995, and Director of Exhibitions and Publications at the Museum for African Art in New York from 1995 to 2004. **Constantine Petridis**, director of 5 Continents Editions' *Visions of Africa* series, has been Curator of African Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art since 2003.