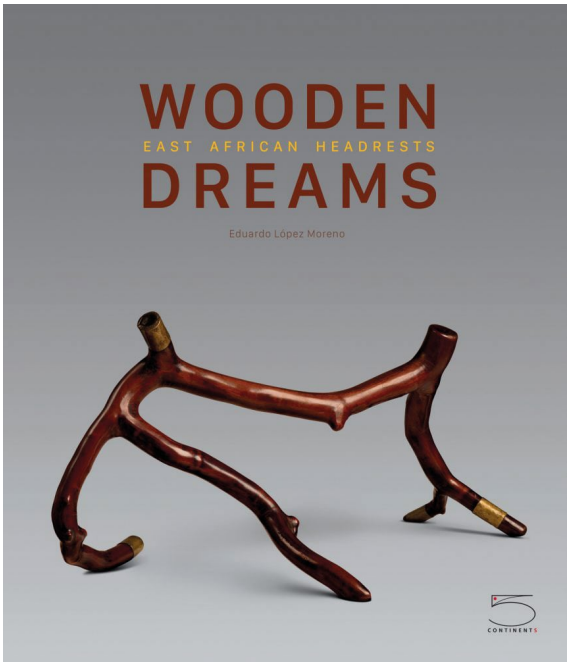
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Wooden Dreams

East African Headrests

Eduardo Lopez Moreno

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- The volume features full-color pictures of very rare and fine headrests that have never before been published
- Short texts introduce selected pieces among the 230 works that have particularly interesting, well-documented backgrounds.

Headrests are simple, utilitarian objects. Widely used across Africa, they are predominantly found in the eastern, central, and southern part of the continent. Also known as neckrests or pillows, headrests are valuable and very personal objects which are indispensable to everyday life. They are made to sleep on, to rest the neck, to sit on, and to protect the elaborate coiffure of their owners. At first sight, they appear to be devoid of any symbolic content. This functional utility has confined them through history to the realm of mere objects. Headrests are not that simple, though. They transcend their material purpose to become something more. In many instances, their design, inherent beauty, technical mastery, and uses give them a multi-purpose value and a multi-layered meaning.

They are objects with ritual and magical intent concealed inside their utilitarian function. Headrests can be flaunted as status symbols that differentiate chiefs from ordinary people, rich from poor, diviners from healers, farmers from shepherds, and sedentary from nomadic. The volume features full-color pictures of very rare and fine headrests that have never before been published. Short texts introduce selected pieces among the 230 works that have particularly interesting, well-documented backgrounds. This book is a journey through ethnicity, anthropology, aesthetics, creativity, tradition, and spirituality. A journey to a part of Africa that materializes through a simple artefact that sometimes dreams to become art: a dream that starts with resting the neck on a piece of wood.

Eduardo Lopez Moreno is a collector and expert on African art. Former Director of Research for the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), he has spoken at prestigious universities in Belgium, the US, and Mexico.

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