

The Maconde art

The Makonde traditionally carve household objects, figures and masks.

The ex libris of ritual Makonde art are the unique Mapiko masks (singular: Lipiko), which have been used in coming-of-age rituals.

These masks are painstakingly carved from a single block of light wood (usually 'sumaumeira brava') and may represent spirits ('shetani'), ancestors, or living characters (real or idealized).

The dancer wears them so that he sees through the mask's mouth and the mask faces straight when he bends forward. Examples of such masks are provided in the second row of pictures below.

