



BENIN-STYLE BRONZE FIGURAL PIPE MOUTHPIECE

\$980

Late 19th Century • Nigeria • Bronze • Collection #CAA1463

W: 4.5" D: 4.25" H: 18.0"

World-renowned for high-quality lost wax casting, the city of Benin in West Africa has been a leading producer of fine cast brass and bronze sculptures since as early as the 16th century. Most Benin bronze objects were commissioned specifically for the ancestral altars of past obas (rulers) and iyobas (queen mothers), as well as for rituals to honor ancestors and to validate the succession of new obas.

This unusual bronze sculpture exemplifies Benin-style metalwork and was likely cast in the late 19th century. Continued...



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The sculpture depicts the figure of a naked woman reclined in a seated position and smoking a pipe. A common subject in African folk art, female figures are typically understood as symbols of fertility, creativity, and wisdom. The figure is integrated into a hollow, narrow tube, suggesting this is actually the a mouthpiece to a large, ceremonial pipe. Despite the annexation of the Benin kingdom in 1897, the present day Yoruba people of Nigeria continue the traditional practices of Benin metalwork in fantastic sculptural objects such as this.

