

2018

## Alfred J. Tulk Exhibition Wall Labels

Fairfield University Art Museum

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1. **Dan/Gio or Mano artist**  
*Bead Necklace with Brass Ornaments*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1933  
Brass, glass, fiber, copper, iron  
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
34-34-50/285

Necklaces were highly prized as status symbols and functioned as a measure of wealth. As a man's fortune increased he could demonstrate his new prestige by adding beads or pendants to his wife's necklace.

2. **Dan/Gio or Mano artist**  
*Hairpins*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1933  
Aluminum Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
34-34-50/278a and 34-34-50/278b

Aluminum was readily available in Liberia beginning in 1926 with the establishment of the Firestone Plantation. Rubber tapped from trees was collected in large aluminum buckets, some of which undoubtedly found their way into the furnaces of village blacksmiths.

3. **Dan/Gio or Mano artist**  
*Bead Necklace with Aluminum "Claws"*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1933  
Glass, cotton, aluminum  
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University  
34-34-50/289

4. **Dan/Gio or Mano artist**  
*Anklet with Bells*  
Liberia, late 19th-early 20th century, before 1933  
Brass  
Private collection

Heavy brass anklets were worn by women as status symbols. This one, featuring three bells, also announced the wearer's approach by sound. As women began to participate in the growing manual labor workforce during the 1930s, they abandoned their heavy immobilizing jewelry. Many of these items were melted down so the metal could be used for other purposes.

5. **Bwaiwehn of Belewali (Dan/Gio)**  
*Female Figure*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1932  
Brass  
Karob Collection, Boston

Alfred Tulk purchased this figure in 1932 from George Dunbar, the District Commissioner of Sanniquellie in northeastern Liberia. Although little is known about the origins of brass casting among the Dan/Gio, production of brass objects accelerated rapidly beginning in the late 1890s with the availability of brass basins and spent cartridge shells from French colonial soldiers in neighboring Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

6. **Bwaiwehn of Belewali (Dan/Gio)**  
*Male Figure (Hunter or Soldier)*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1933  
Brass  
Private collection

Figurative brass casting among the Dan/Gio is accomplished using the lost-wax method. It is considered a purely decorative art form acquired for display by indigenous men of wealth and high status. Unlike wooden figures, which are generally clothed in cotton garments, brass figures stand out for their total nudity – a feature that inexplicably violates normal rules of modesty among the Dan/Gio.

7. **Dan/Gio or Mano artist**  
*Bead Necklace with Brass Pendant*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1933  
Brass, copper, glass beads, fiber  
Karob Collection, Boston

8. **Dan/Gio or Mano artist**  
*Bead Necklace with Brass Pendant*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1933  
Glass, brass, copper, fiber  
Private collection

Women among the Dan/Gio and Mano wore heavy brass pendant necklaces as prestige jewelry. Here, blue glass trade beads are interspersed with locally cast brass beads. The pendant is a stylized modification of the leopard tooth motif. Leopard teeth were among the most important symbols of wealth and authority, and both brass and glass imitations were often used in necklaces.

9. **Dan/Gio artist**  
*Chair*  
Liberia, late 19th-early 20th century, before 1933  
Wood, brass  
Karob Collection, Boston

This distinctly low seat, a type found throughout Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, is both an ordinary household chair owned by distinguished elders and part of a traditional ritual. Young girls undergoing rites of passage borrow these small chairs from their grandfathers for a special dance performed in a stooped position at initiation camps. In this ritual, the chair is used to create rhythms against the ground.

10. **Dan/Gio or Mano artist**  
*Utilitarian Spoon with Decorated Handle*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1933  
Wood  
Private collection

While most people traditionally ate with their hands, older heads of households often used spoons, which were seen as prestige items.

11. **Dan/Gio or Mano artist**  
*Storage Container*  
Liberia, early 20th century, before 1933  
Calabash, rattan, wood  
Private collection