



**Sidewalk Tribal Gallery**  
*Hobart*

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## How old are these pieces?

While there are some very old pieces among our collection it is almost impossible to find wooden sculpture in Africa that is more than 60 years old and even more difficult to age the items as they are used and discarded or sold when the original owner or village no longer need them or when they are replaced by a piece that is seen as more attractive or potent. Some items considered very powerful are used for many years, repaired when damaged and embellished with differing materials as fashions change, while others are used for a single event or ceremony.

Many pieces in our collection have been used in the village and are purchased in the village or from traveling traders who support their families by traveling from village to village buying discarded sculpture and selling it in the larger cities throughout Africa.

Often villagers fleeing political strife in some African countries will bring their masks and fetishes with them to sell and thus provide money when they are unable to produce food.

Trade in African art began thousands of years ago with the Middle East and more recently in the 14th century with the Portuguese followed by other European countries. So the practice of selling African Sculpture, Jewellery and Textiles is well established and continues in a similar way using these items to trade for hard cash whereas in the past they were used as currency to trade for many different products.

Despite the introduction of newer religions and the growth of large modern cities many cultural groups who use these items still practice their traditional religions in traditional villages where the ravages of termites and a tropical climate, ranging from coastal rainforest to arid sub Saharan conditions, erodes and destroys wooden items quickly. There is often no electricity or modern conveniences and the houses and fetish stores are often adobe dwellings with earthen floors.

The responsibility and policy when buying for Sidewalk Gallery is to collect works, whether old or new, on their artistic merit. The entire collection is unique and many items have been used in the village. New pieces maintain their ethnographical integrity when they are made within their culture where traditions are still intact. In this case the artifacts are still used as part of the every day life but the sale of surplus works along with pieces that are no longer used enables the village council to buy medicines and food as well as encouraging artisans such as the blacksmiths, weavers and carvers, along with their sons who inherit their role, to continue to work within their own community. We pay fair market price in Africa, keep our prices as low as possible to encourage a higher turnover, which enables us to buy more from people who really need foreign currency.

The art produced by African villagers continues to evolve, with stylistic changes to the traditional theme reflecting their evolution in a modern world.

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