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*Emblem of the Leopard Spirit Society (Nkpa), unknown Ejagham artist*

**Arnold Lehman:** This multi-layered construction is an emblem made for the Ngbe, or Leopard Spirit, society, a secret men's association among the Ejagham and Banyang people of Nigeria and Cameroon. It commemorates the initiation ceremony and the sacrifices that were made to form the society.

Just below the center are the remains of a drum, associated with the announcements of the society. Just above that is a wooden-handled dance wand painted with white, black, and red stripes; it's a symbol of power and authority. To the right, a piece of rope probably symbolized the secrecy of the society and was a warning for others to keep out. All over the piece, you'll see animal skulls: a cow, a baboon, antelopes, and goats. These were probably sacrifices eaten at the initiation ceremony of this society.

Unlike other objects in these galleries, this emblem has no practical or religious function. Hung on a wall, it is meant more to remind people of events than to function within them. In the nineteenth century, it was seen as an ethnographic object rather than a work of art. During the twentieth century, however, Western art incorporated the ideas of collage and accumulation, so we might now view this piece as a multimedia artwork.

*For more information about these objects, be sure to visit [www.brooklynmuseum.org](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org)*