



Art of the Dogon

A private collection of Dogon material culture

Jan Baptist Bedaux

Bedaux Art Editions
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For my daughter Lianne Louise Bedaux

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foreword

In the summer of 1975 I had my first encounter with the cultures of the Dogon and Tellem. This was at Utrecht University's Institute for Human Biology, whose exhibition represented over ten years' research by the institute's staff in the Republic of Mali, who had worked where the bend in the Niger touches the southern fringes of the Sahara, where the mighty Bandiagara Escarpment arises. In total, they had undertaken five expeditions to the area, wishing to establish the identity of the people who had lived there before its current inhabitants, the Dogon, and to research the relationships between the two populations. Over the years, they investigated 29 caves around Sanga, and five more to the northeast, round Nokara and Hombori.

One finding of the research was that the modern-day Dogon could not have descended from the people who had once used these caves for burial purposes – a people to whom the Dogon, when arriving at the escarpment in the fifteenth century, referred as 'Tellem'; literally, 'we found them' (Tellem 1975). While it is possible that some Tellem were absorbed into the Dogon population, the number would have been so small that the genetic characteristics of the Dogon remained unchanged. It is also the case that by the time the Dogon arrived in the area, the Tellem population, which had lived there since the eleventh century, had been almost entirely eradicated by droughts and epidemics (R. Bedaux & Van der Waals 2004). This makes it all the more remarkable that the material culture of the late Tellem was so deeply interwoven with that of the early Dogon that it is now difficult – and sometimes impossible – to distinguish between items from the two cultures.

The exhibition in Utrecht in 1975 showed a wealth of items that had been placed in the caves as grave gifts for the Tellem dead – artefacts that were a constant inspiration to me when I founded my collection. In the same year, I acquired my first Tellem neckrests, which were included two years later in the Tellem exhibition in the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal. These were soon followed by the first statues, which I bought in Paris from Michel Huguenin (no. 38), Félicia Dialossin (Argiles, nos. 1, 22) and Robert Duperrier (nos. 6, 41). Even back then, they were expensive for a junior art

historian. Ethnographic artefacts – in which I was just as interested – were much easier to purchase on a small budget.

My 35 years of collecting since then have created a collection that gives a broad view of the material culture of the Dogon and Tellem. In my view, the value of the collection lies not just in its breadth, but also in the sheer variety of items. For when compiling it, I was always guided by my ongoing fascination with the wide diversities within the Tellem and Dogon cultures.

I would like to refer briefly to one of these items (no. 249): a so-called 'Dogon harp', an instrument from the Tellem period. Its financial value may be relatively insignificant. But if we consider that this instrument dates from the early eleventh century and has survived nearly intact – including the neck, bridge and part of the skin over the sound box – it is suddenly apparent that we are dealing with the earliest and most complete string instrument known to have originated in sub-Saharan Africa. It is thus of inestimable value to the history of the continent's music. The instrument was made with great precision and craftsmanship, suggesting that it had many predecessors in a long tradition of such instruments. In a similar way, the collection contains several items that can enrich our knowledge of the Tellem/Dogon culture.

Over recent decades, a series of publications by several authors has helped to map and interpret the material culture of the Dogon, providing ever-greater evidence of the value and importance of this ancient African culture; these publications include Ezra 1988; Leloup 1994; R. Bedaux & Van der Waals 2004; Blom 2010 and Paris 2011. When, in 2009, the Netherlands ratified the 1970 UNESCO treaty, it prompted me to classify the collection, which consisted by then of over 600 items, and to add this catalogue to the series. I hope that this book will find its way to the many lovers of Dogon art.

Dr. Jan Baptist Bedaux

Utrecht, autumn 2011



sculpture



wood



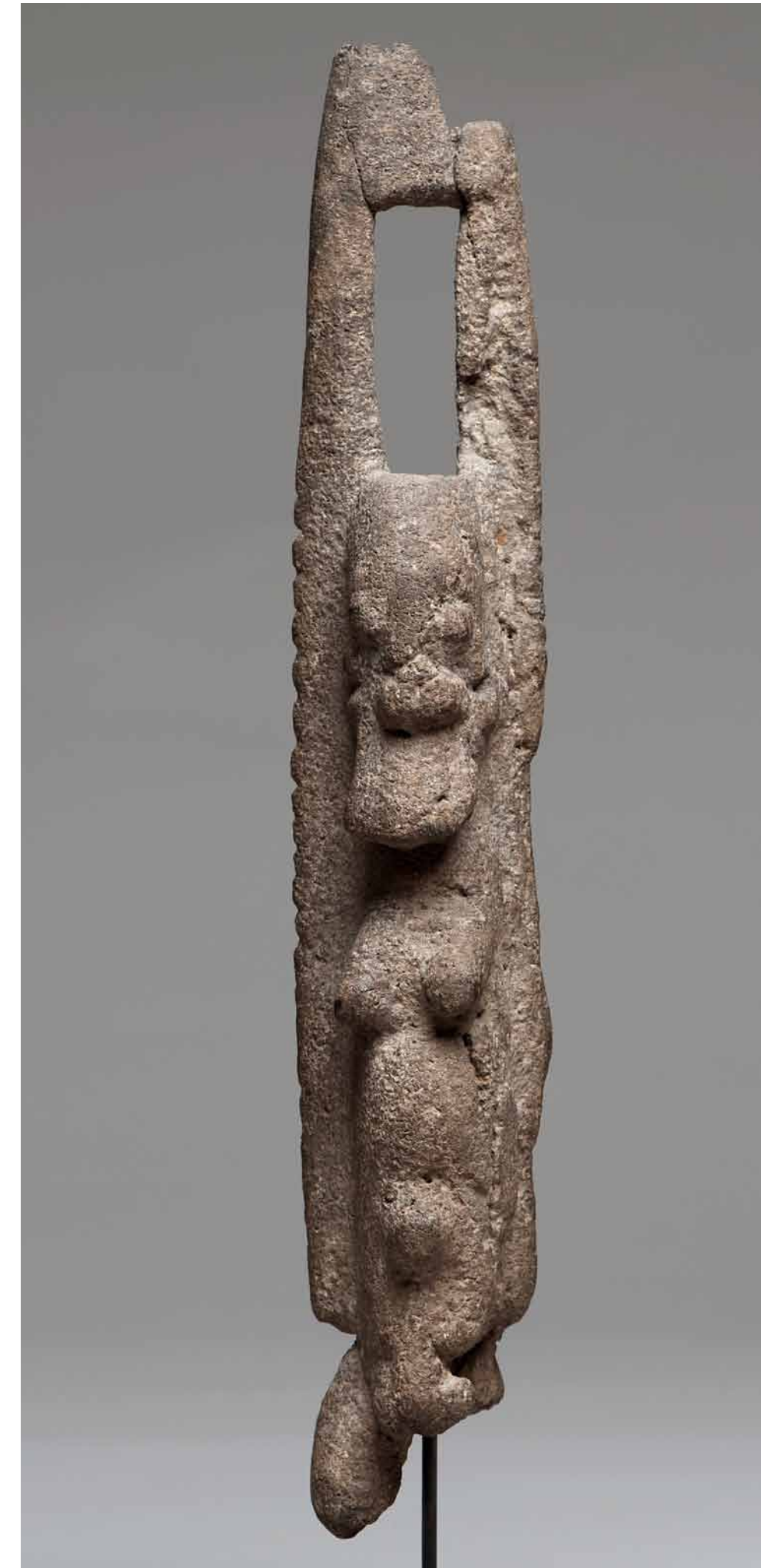
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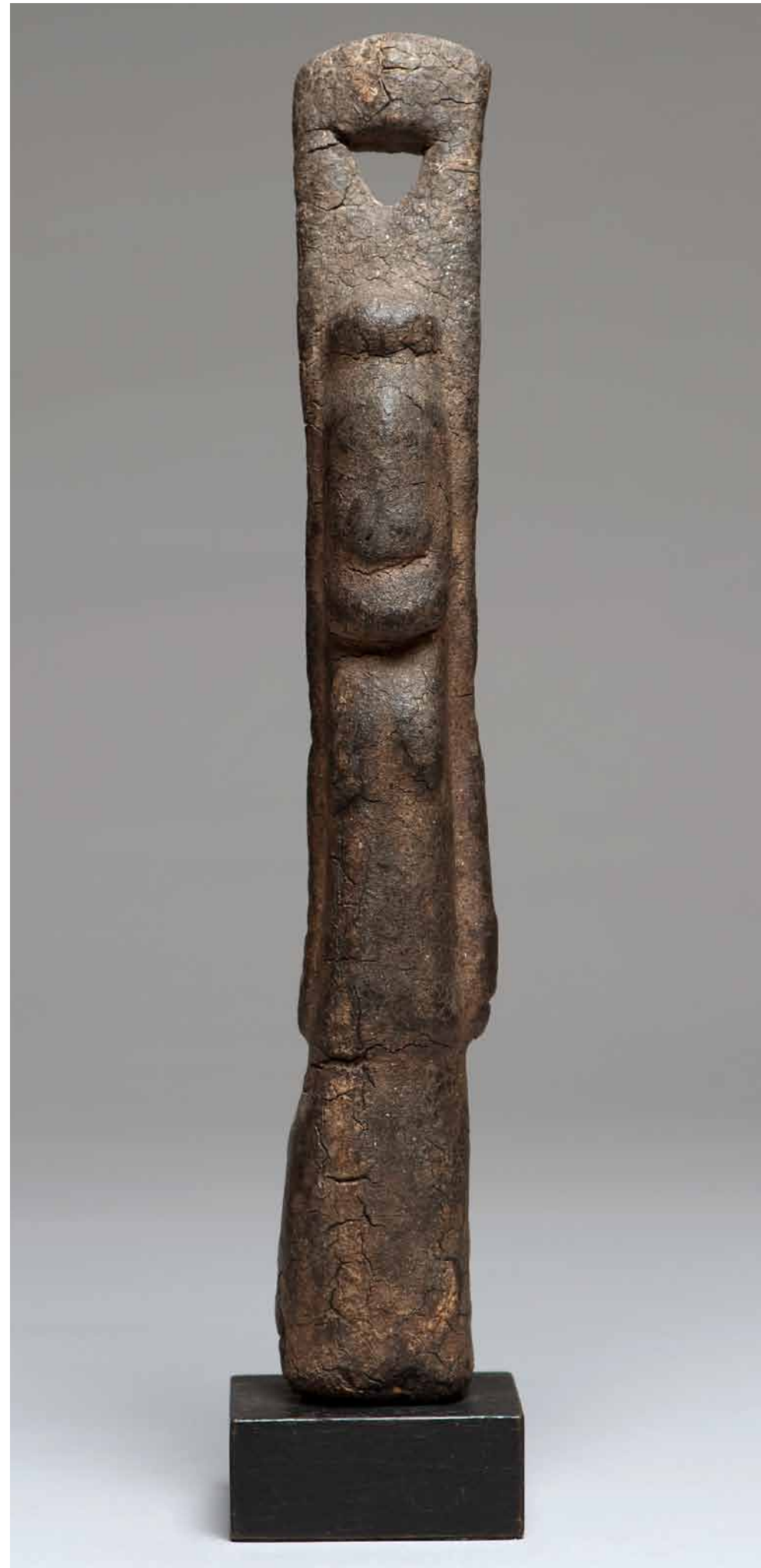
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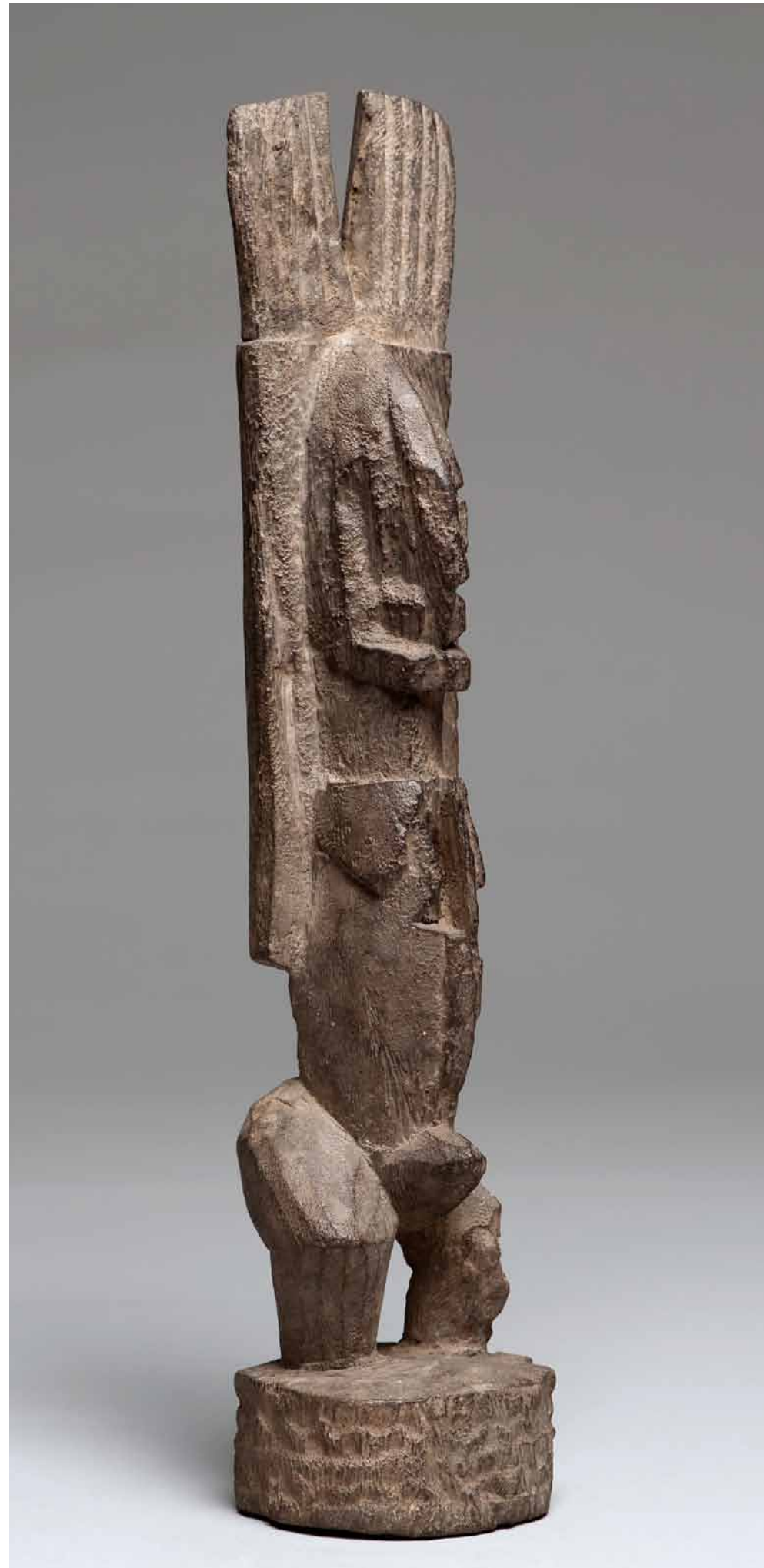
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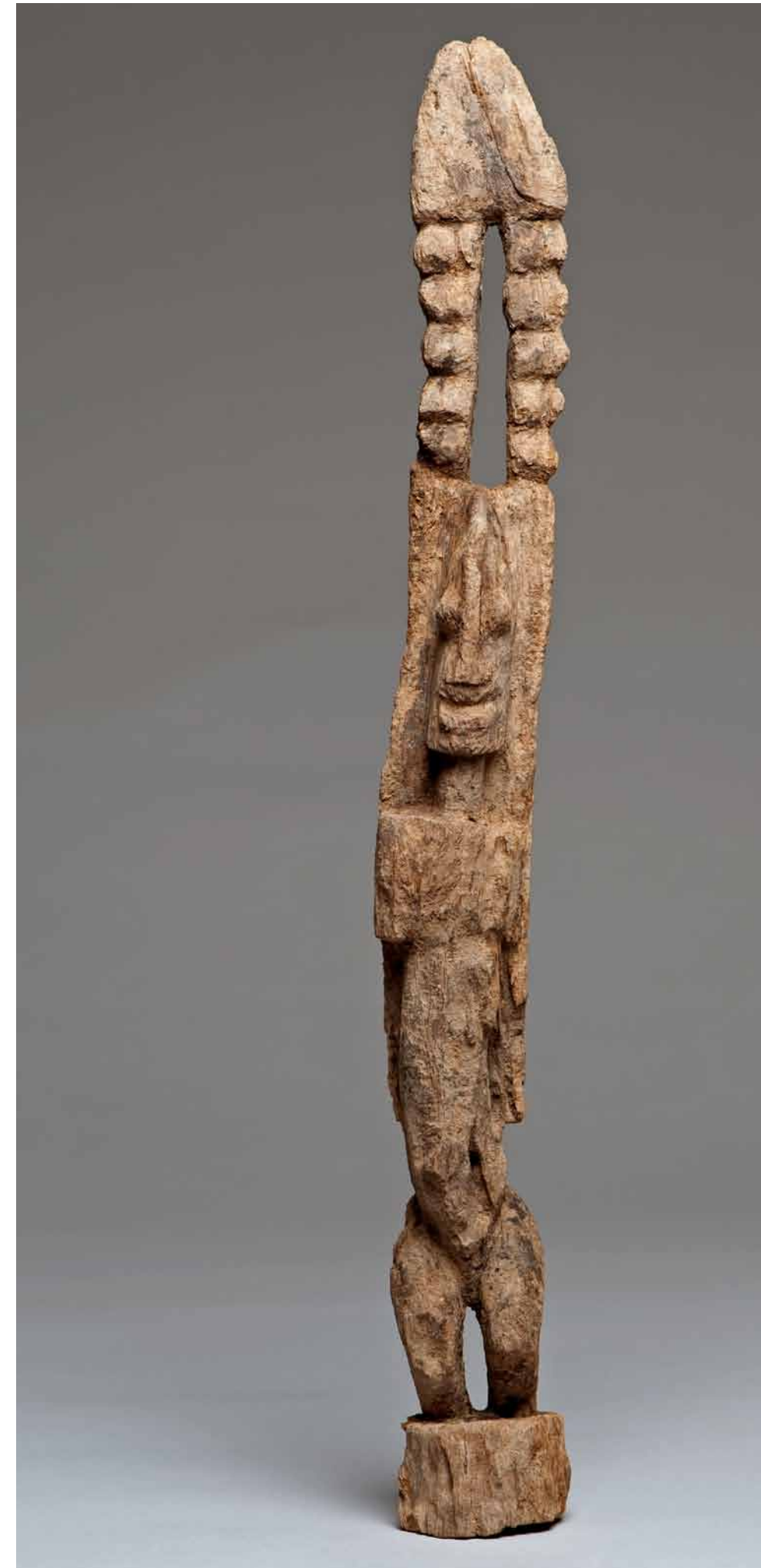
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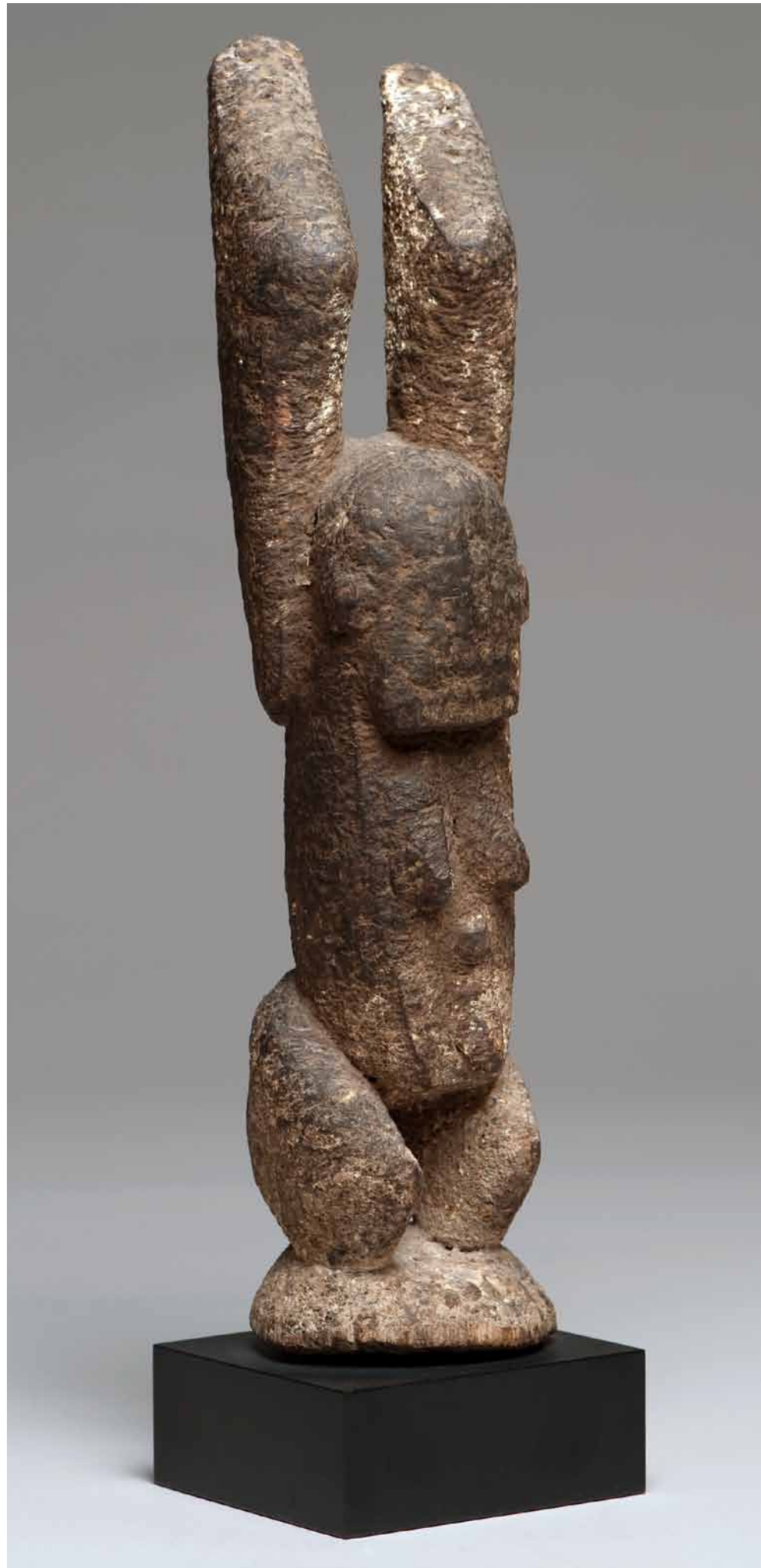
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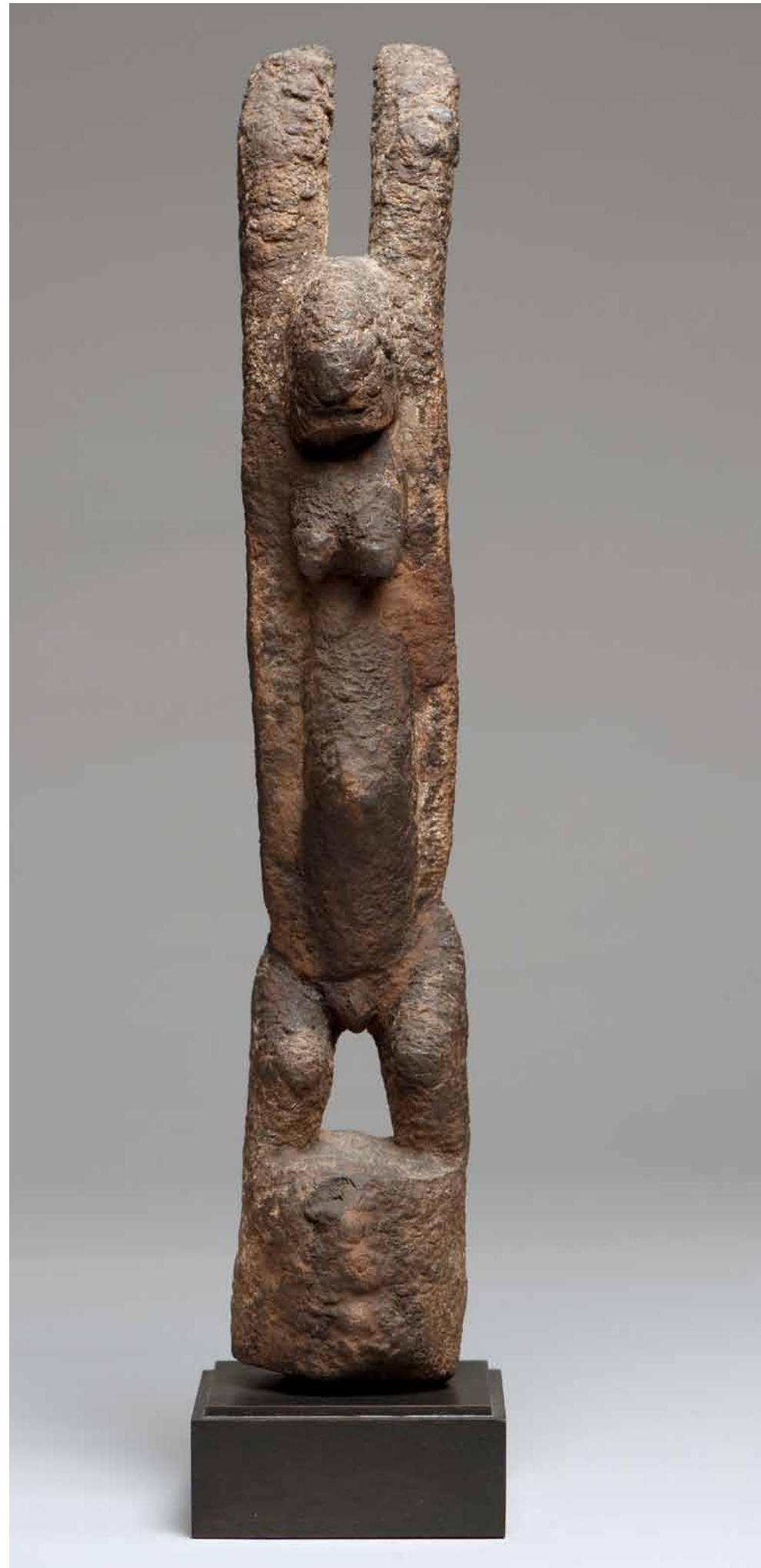
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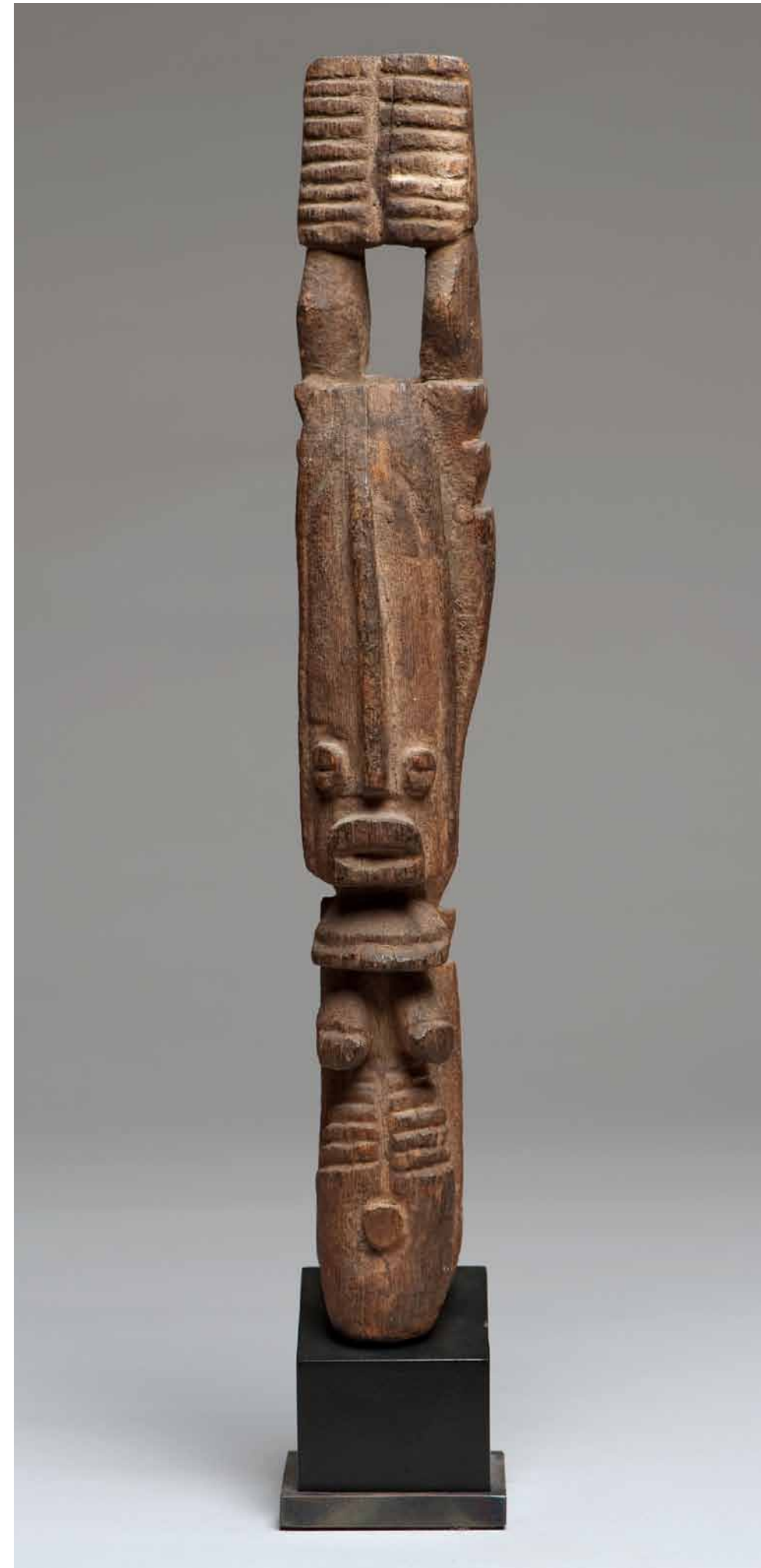
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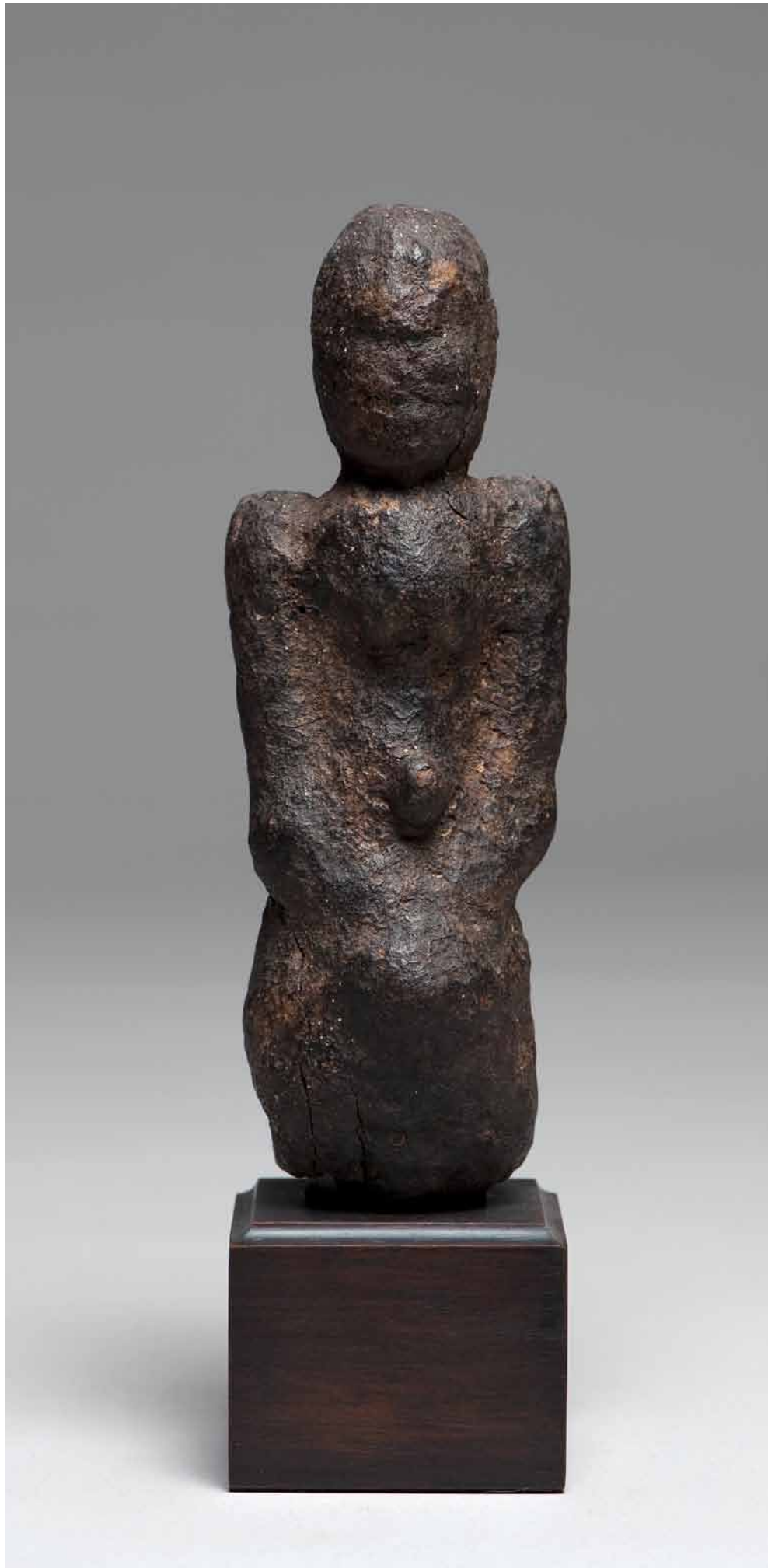
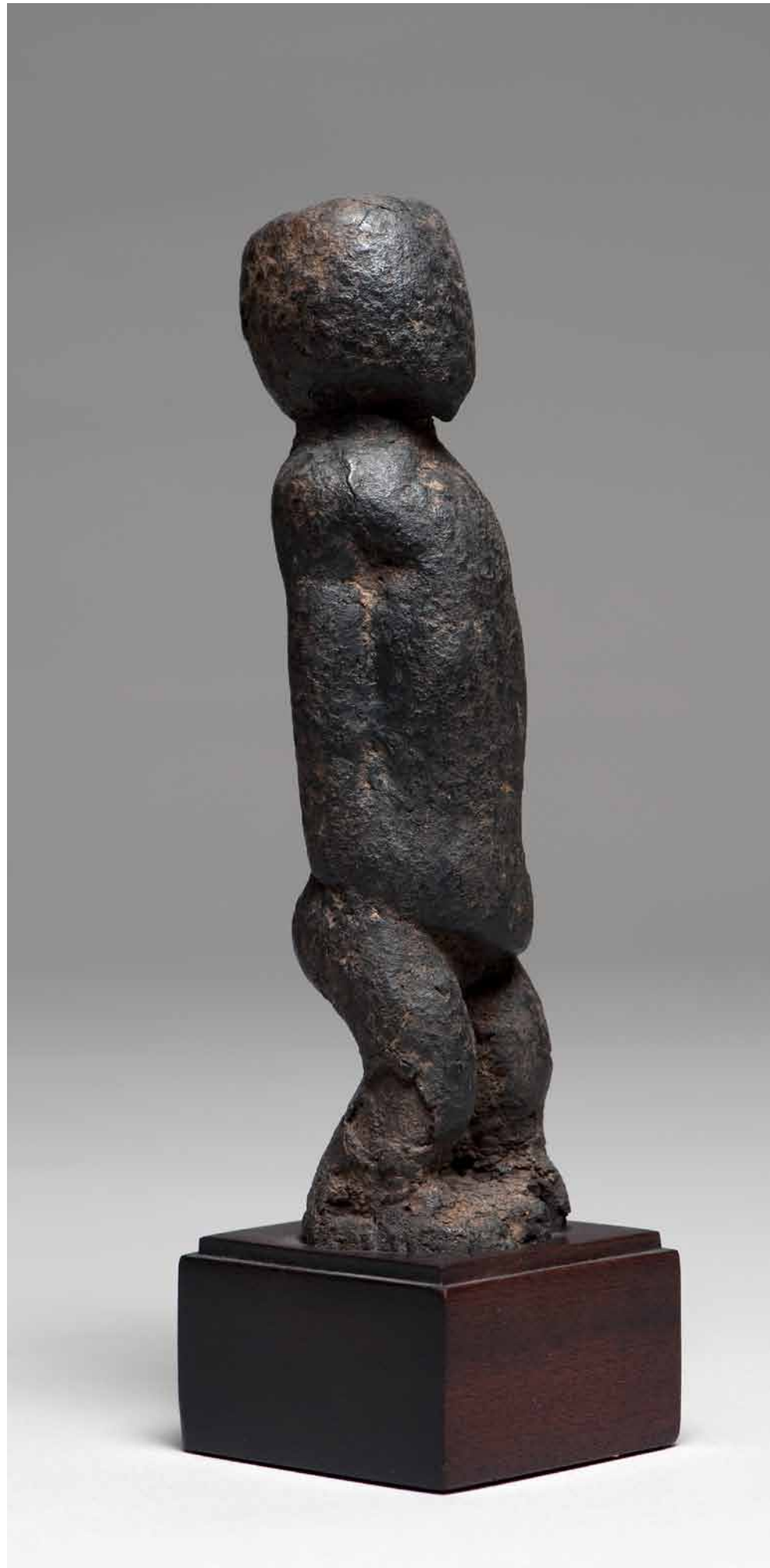
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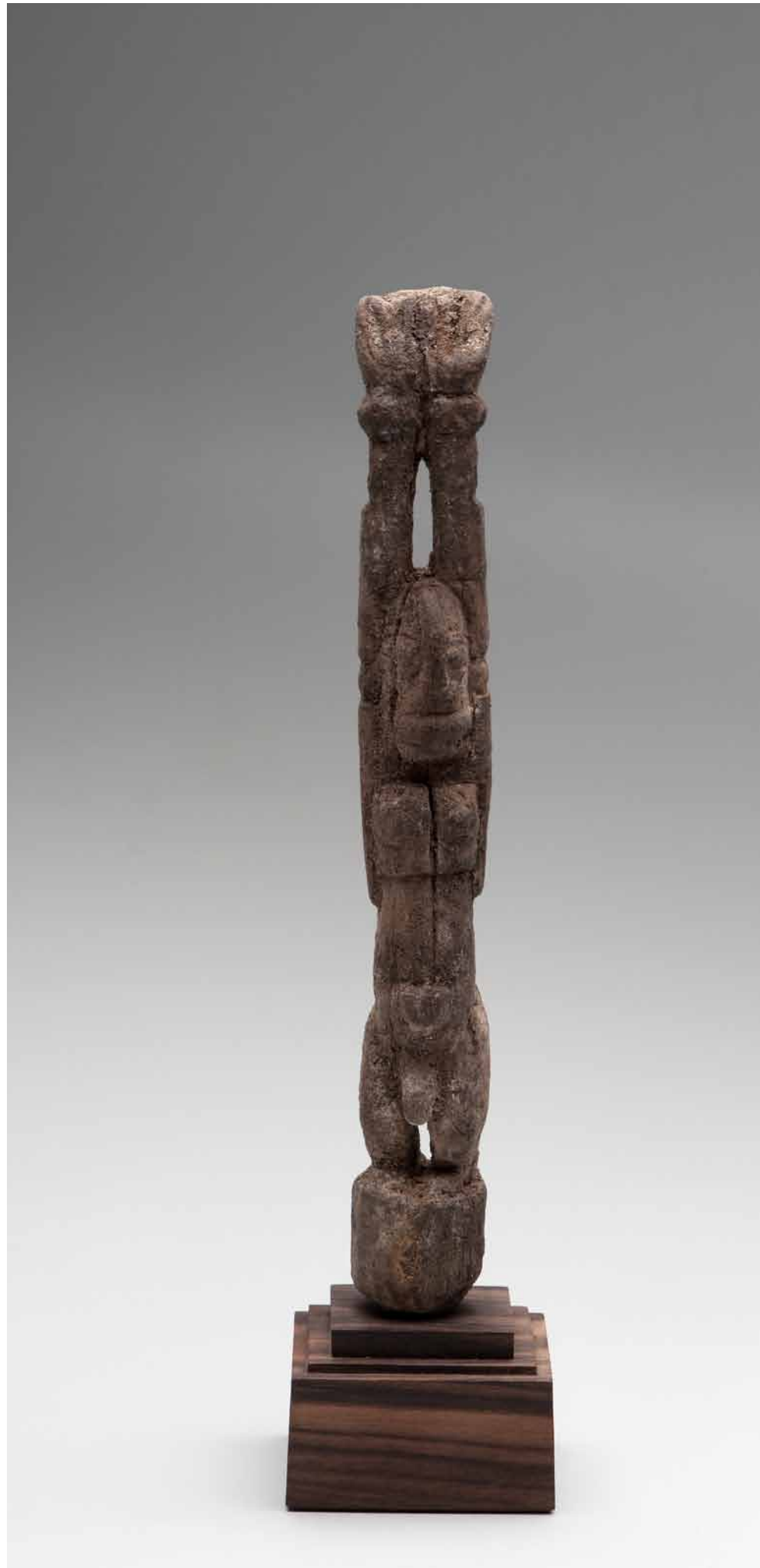


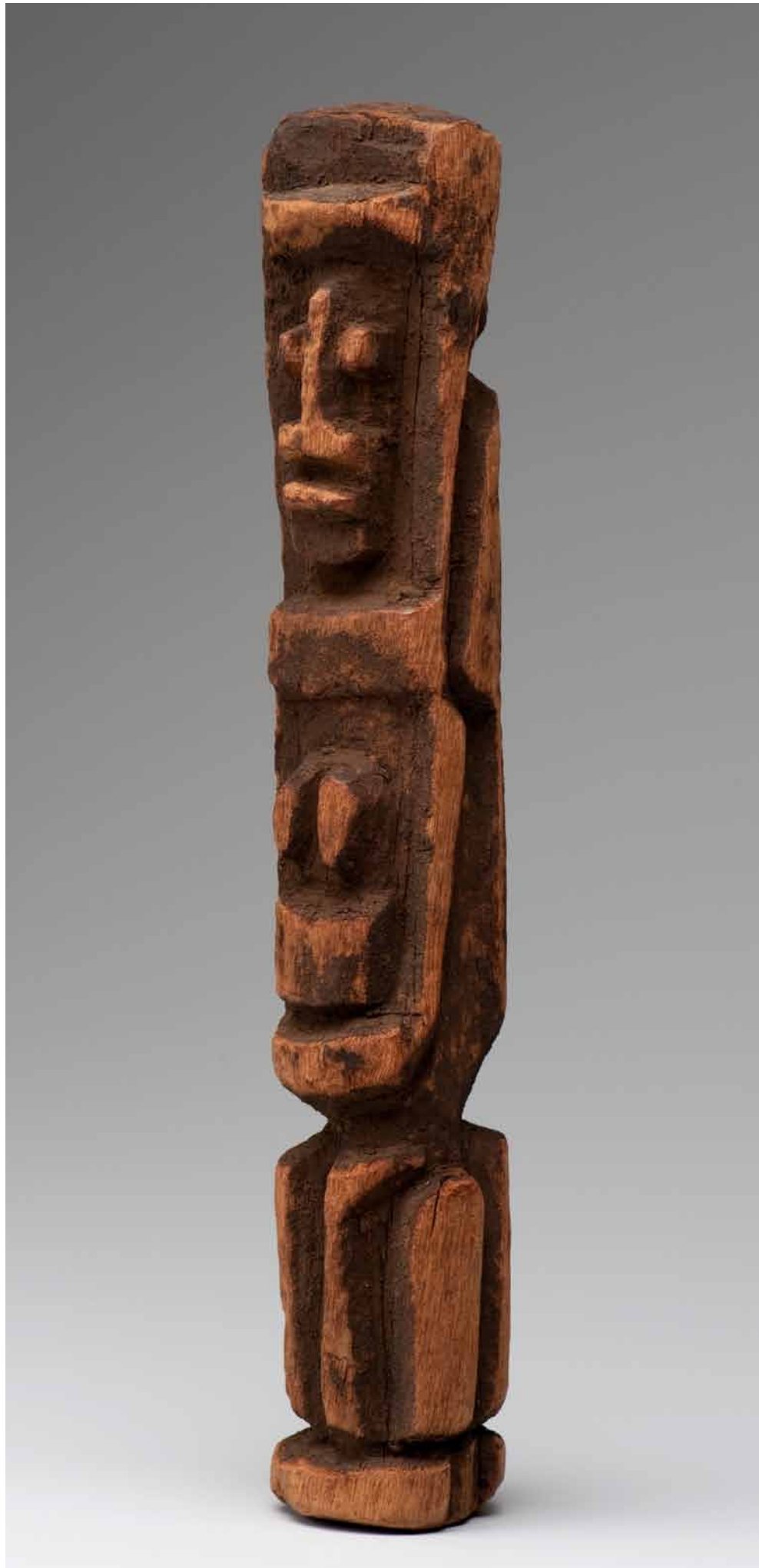
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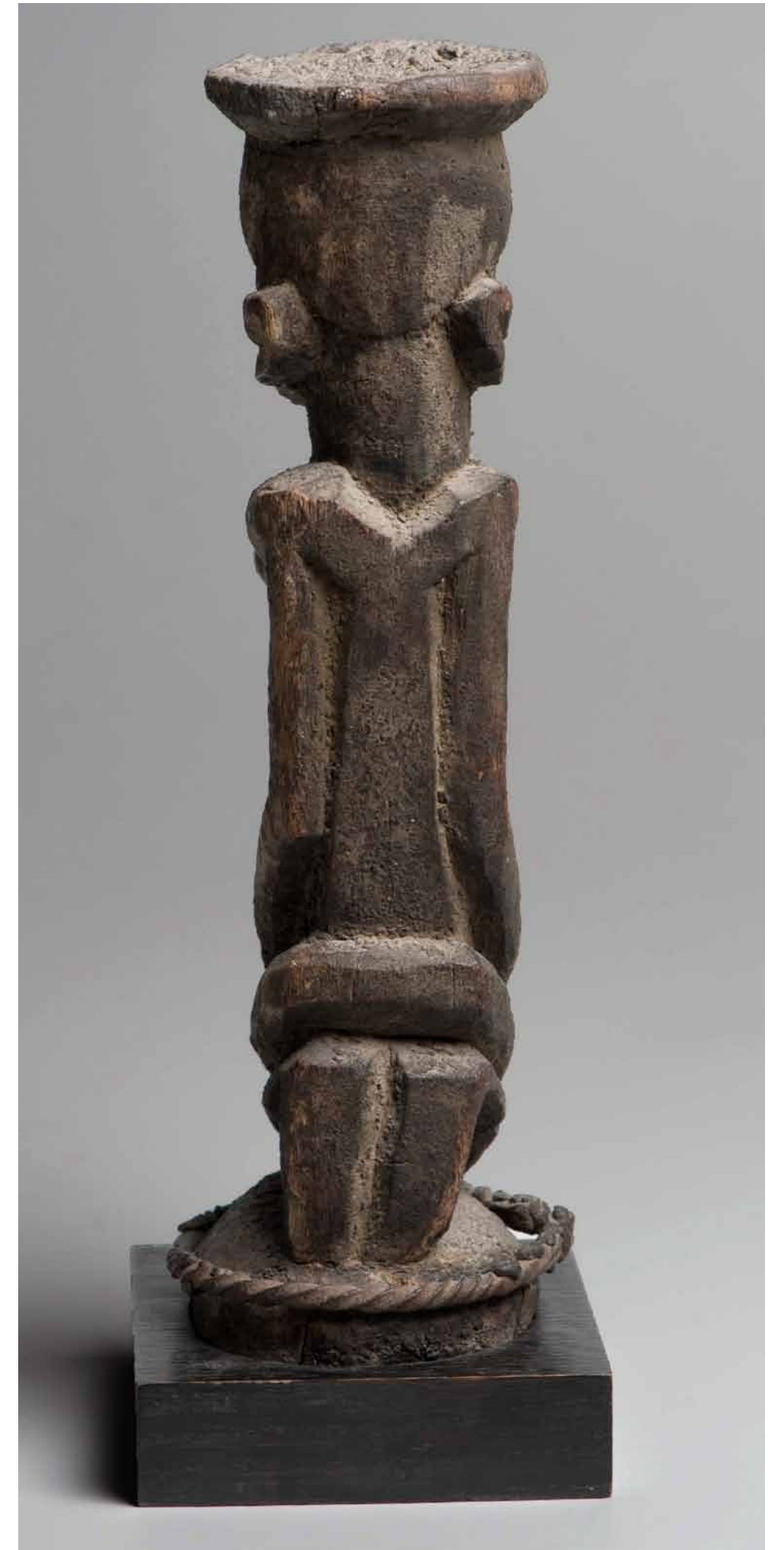
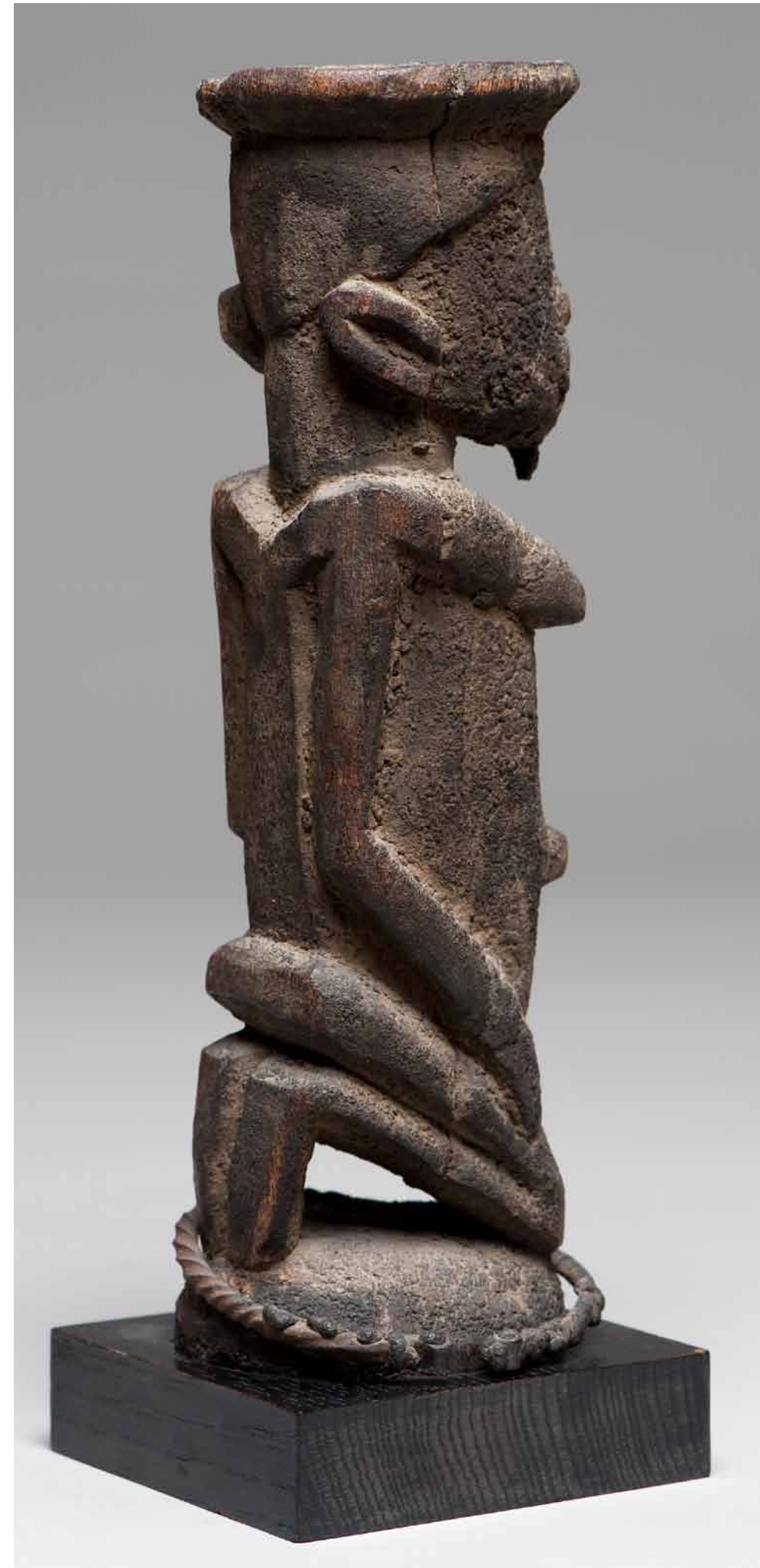
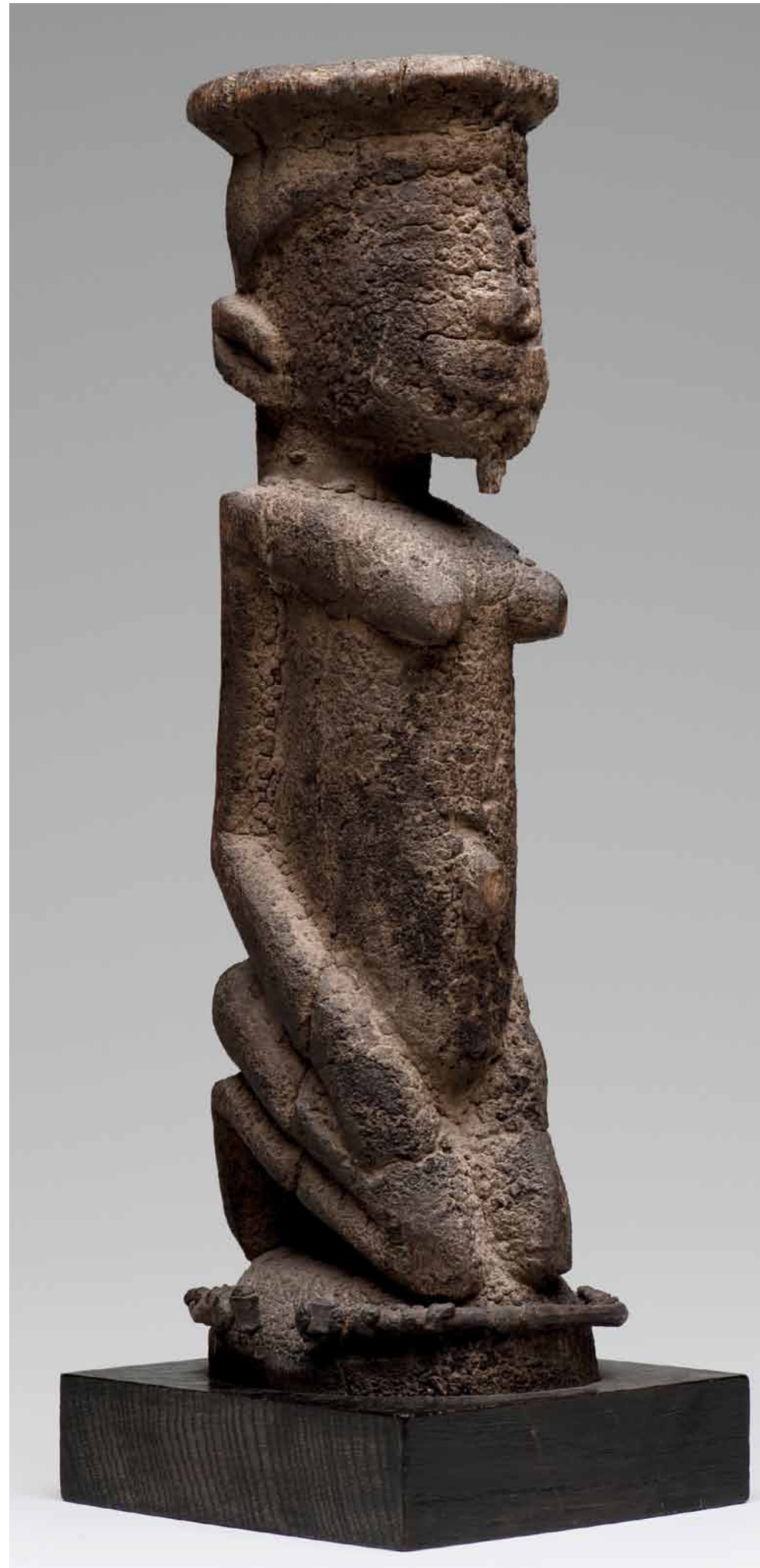


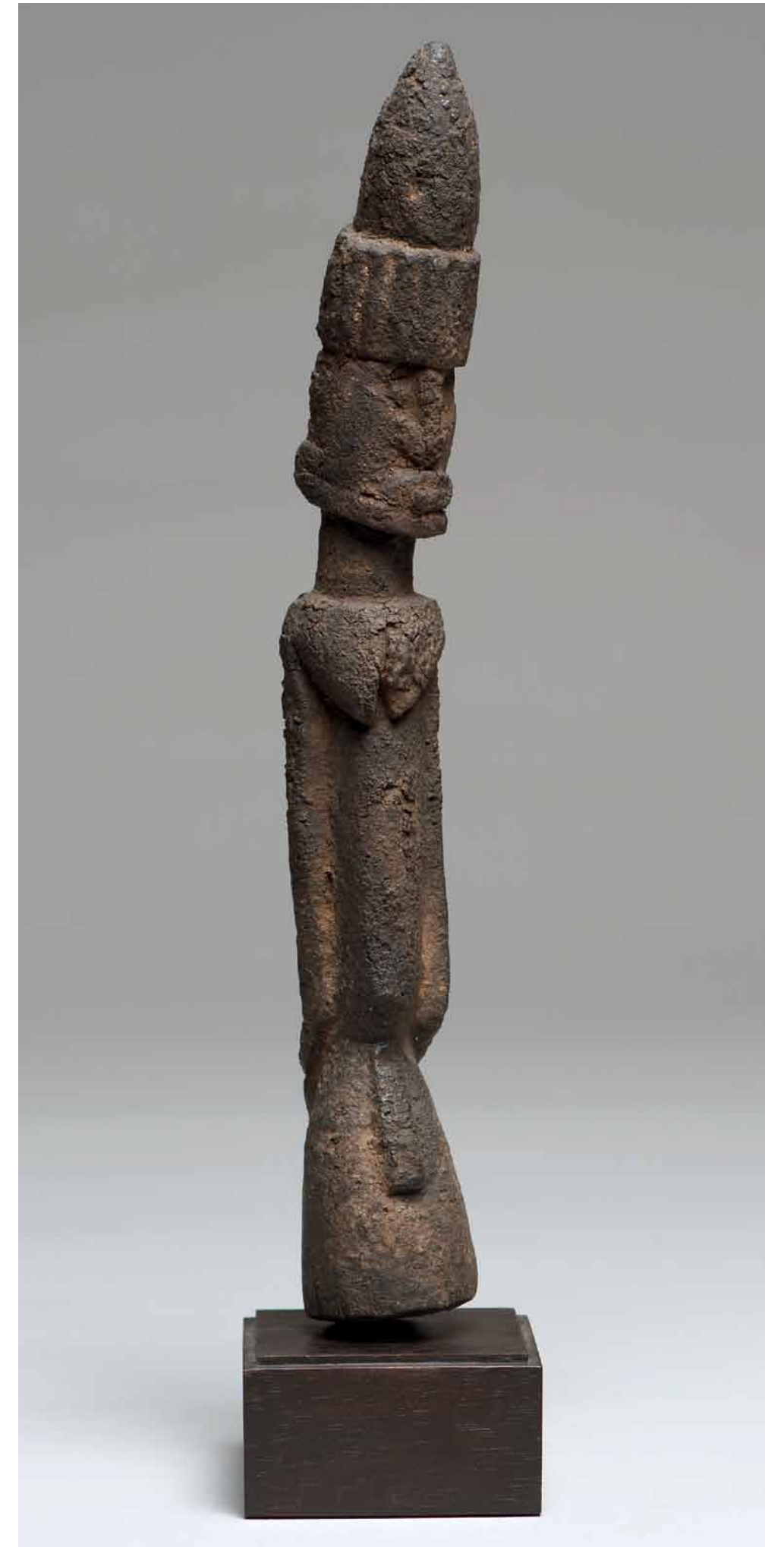
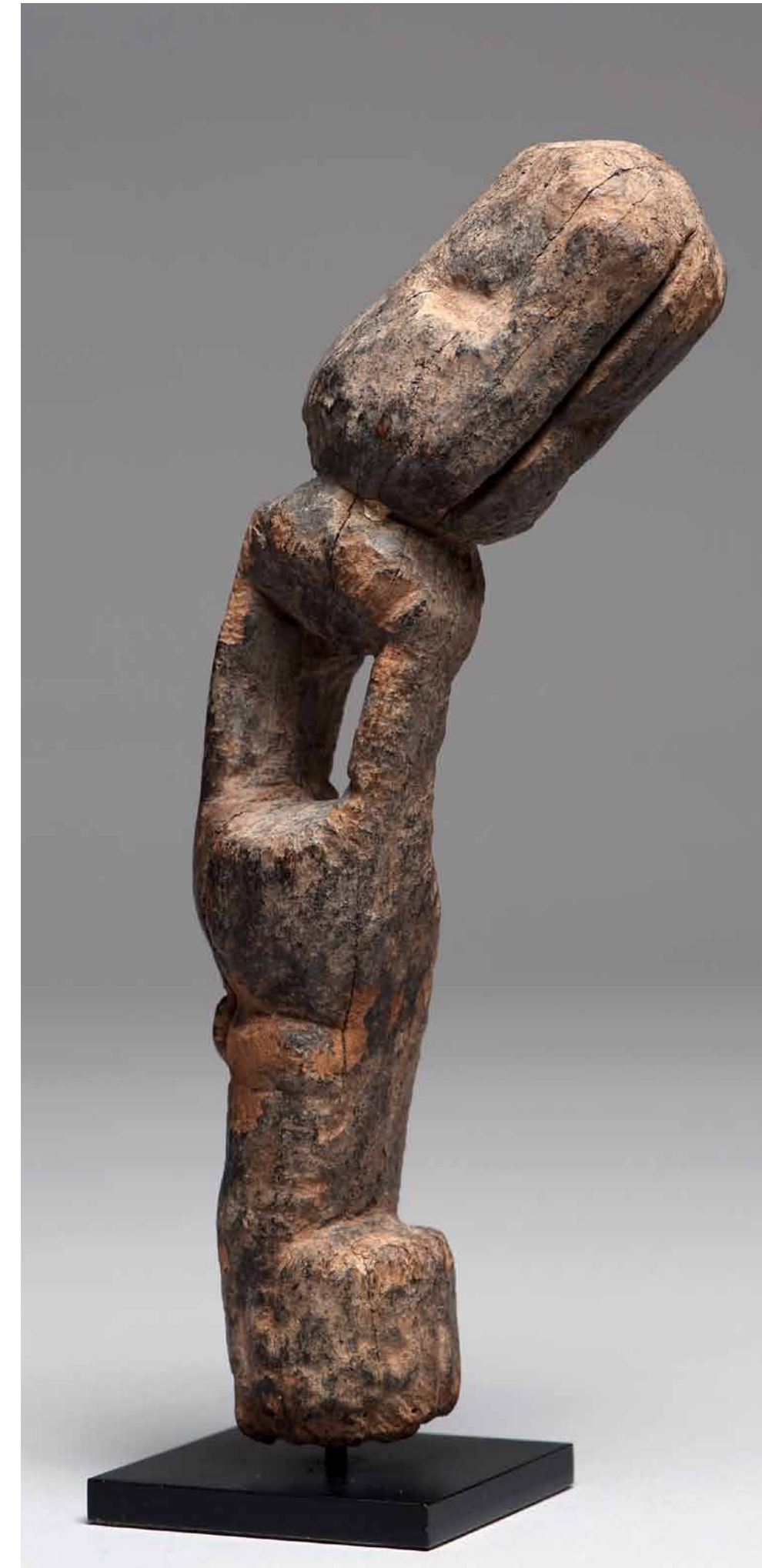
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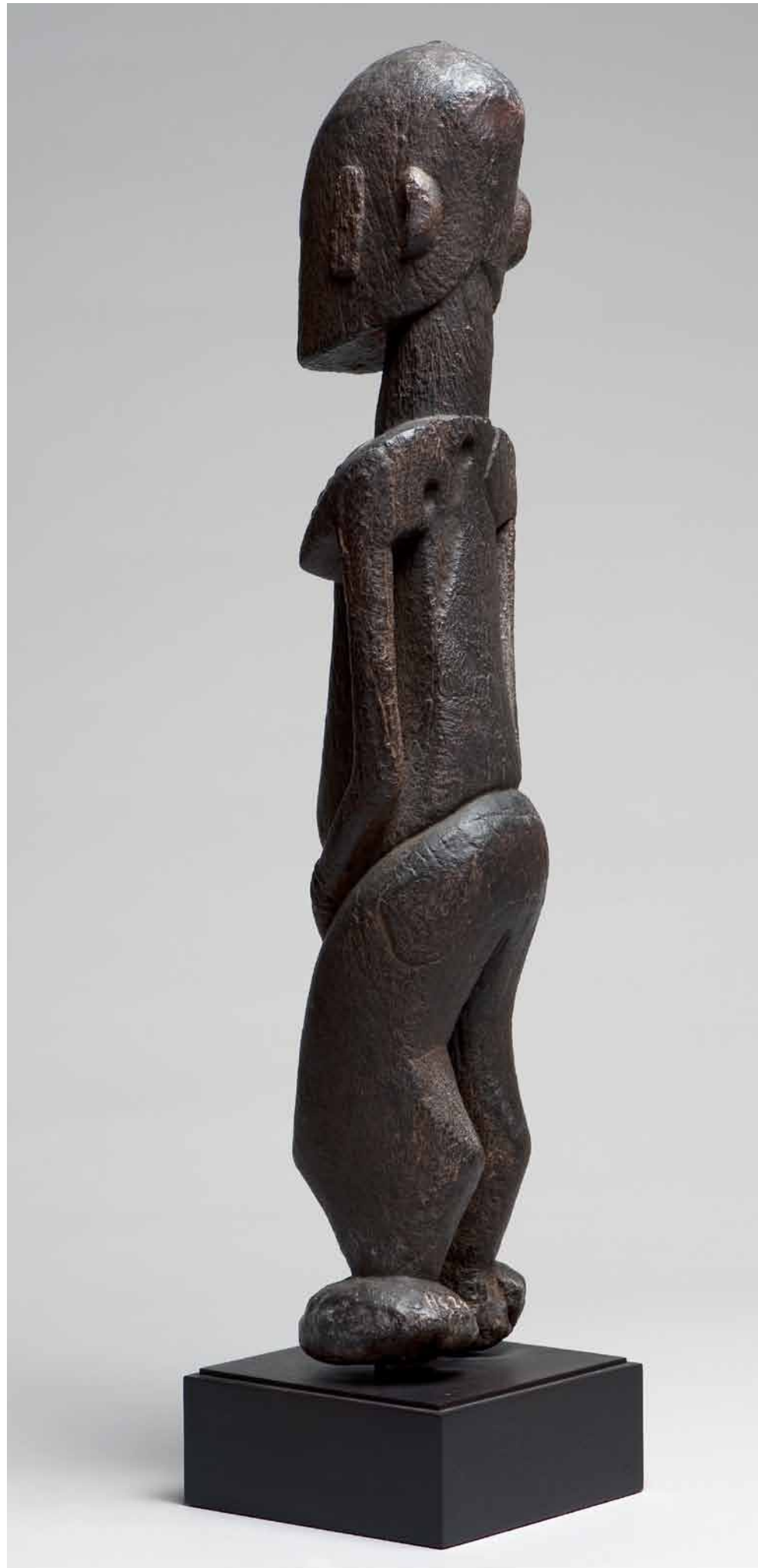




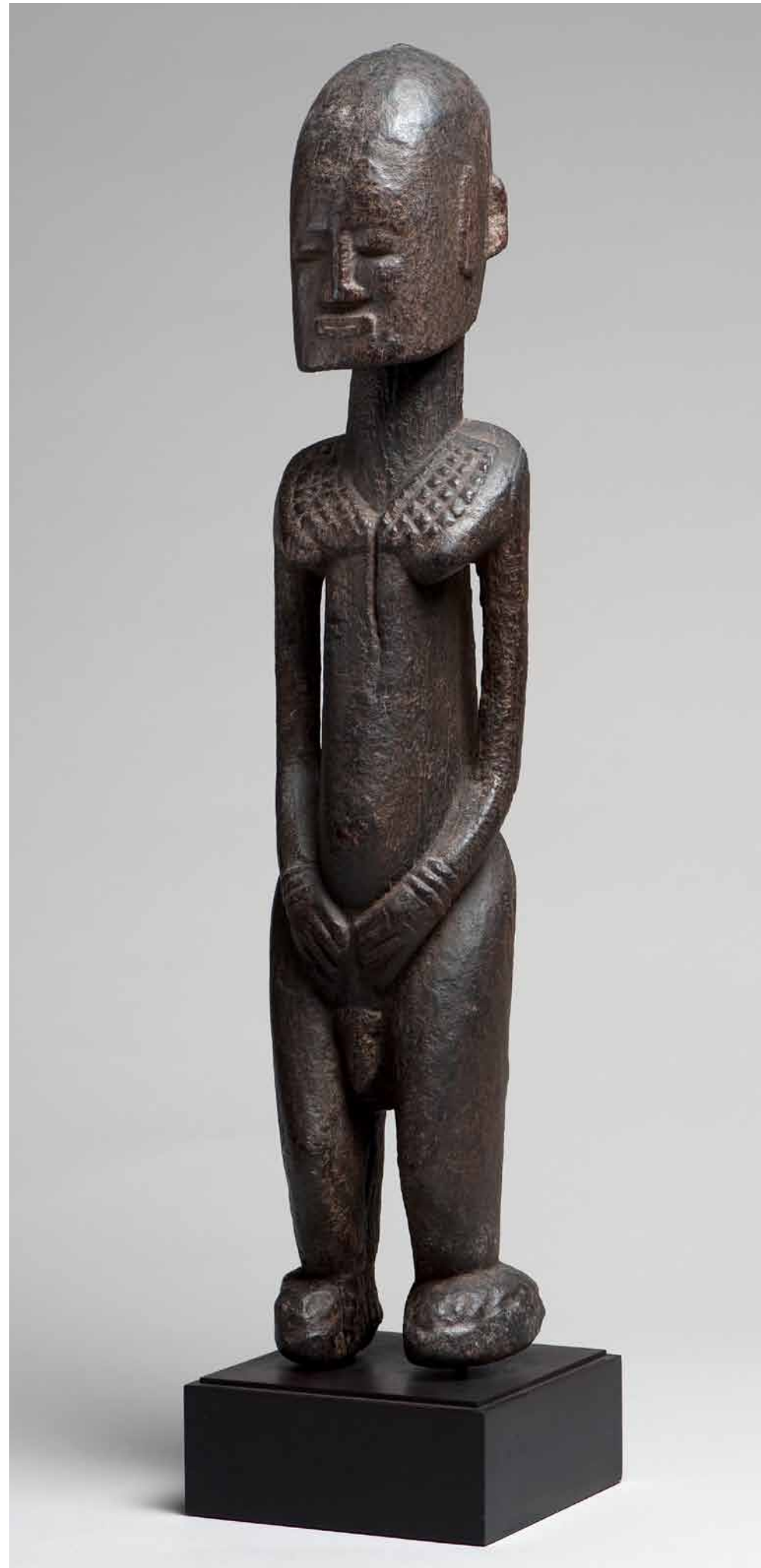




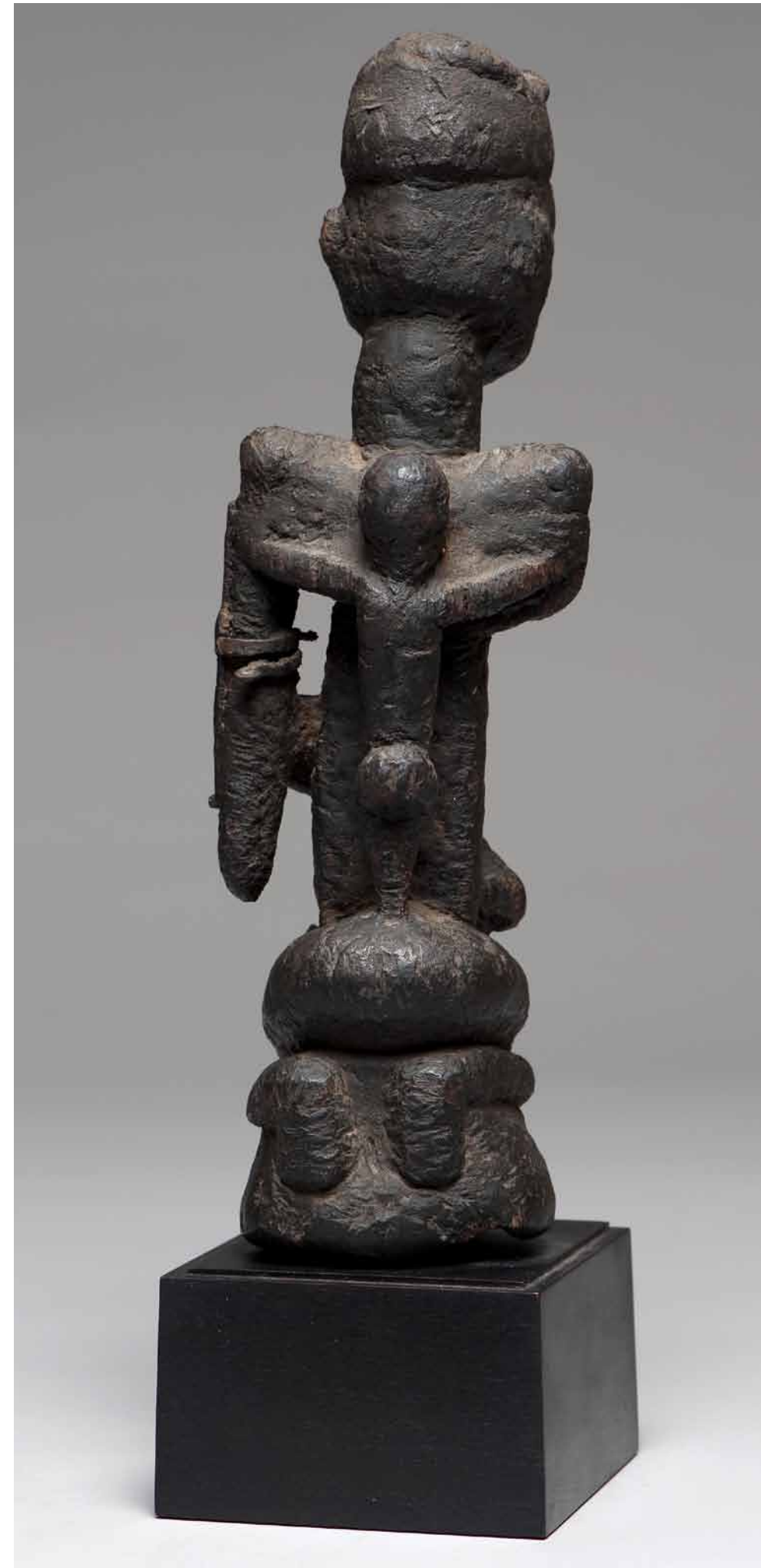




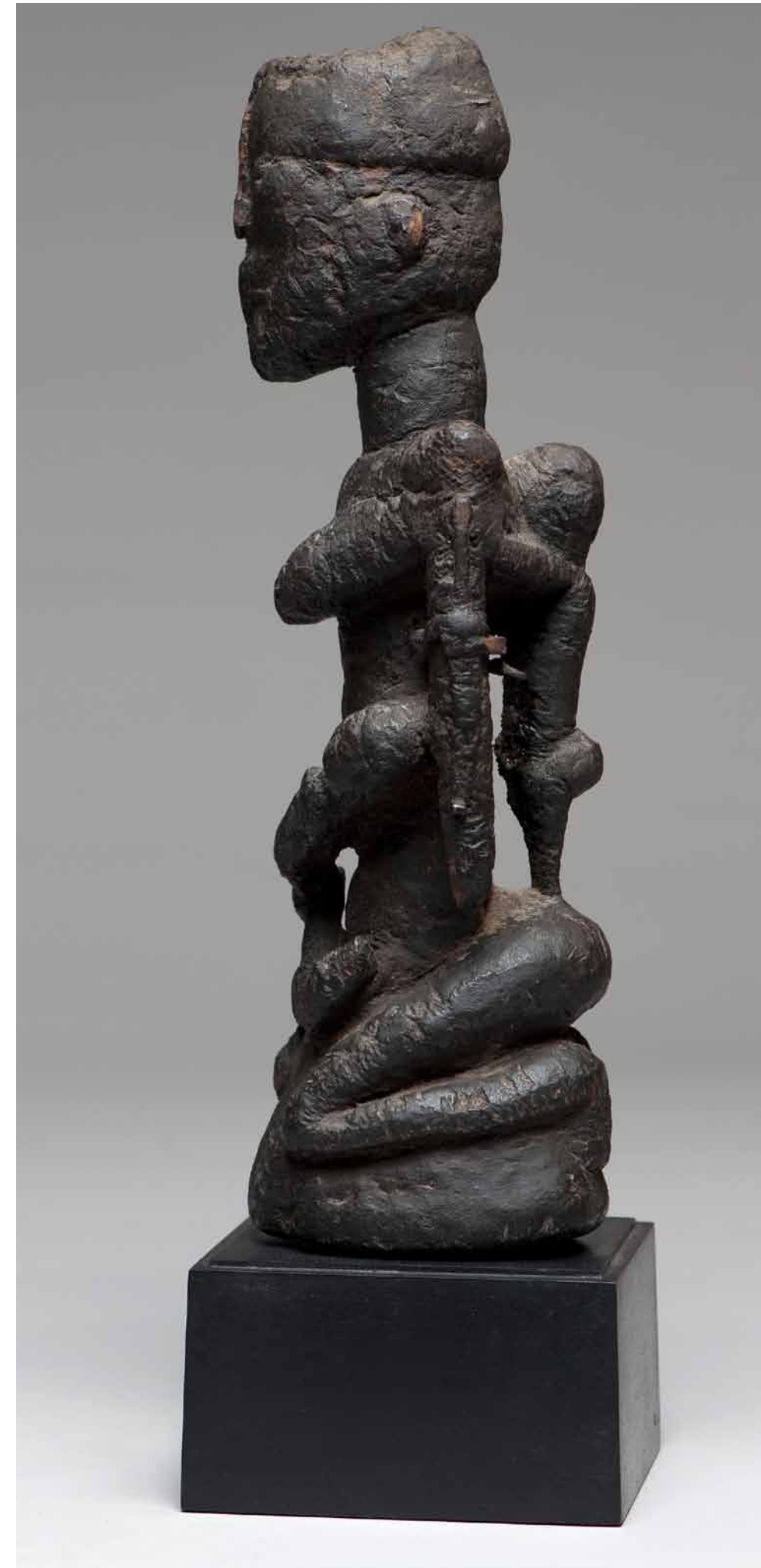
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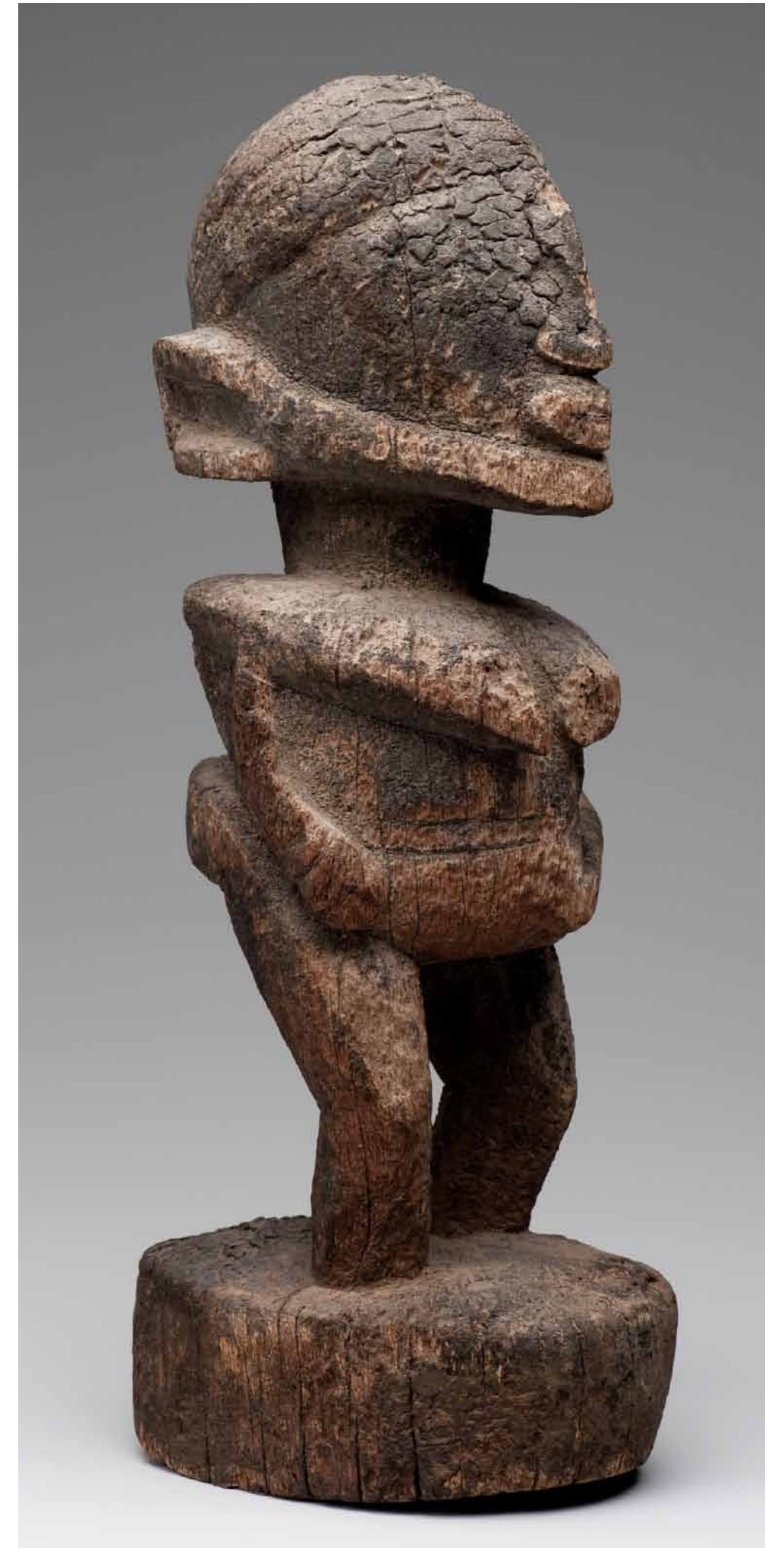
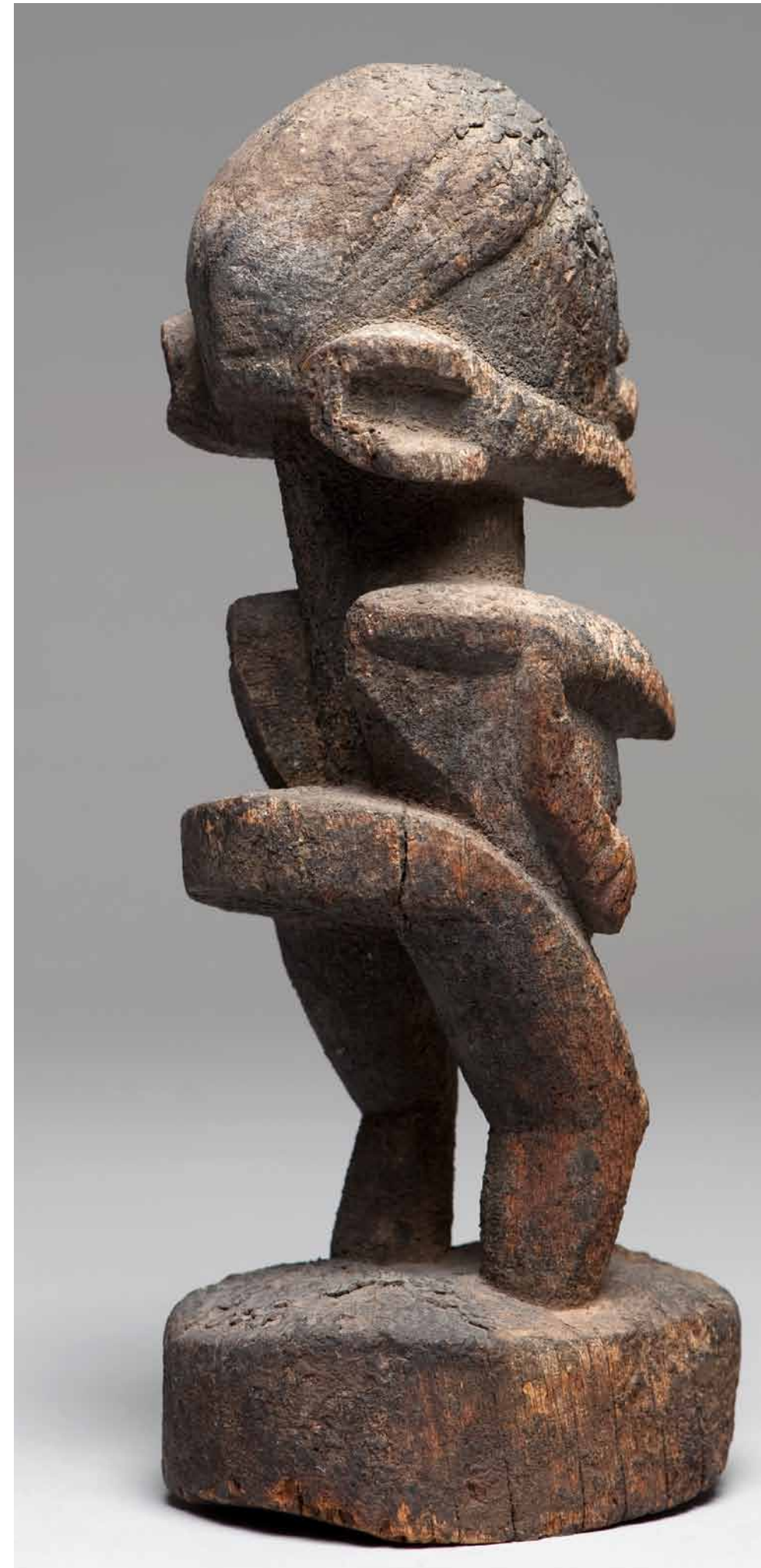
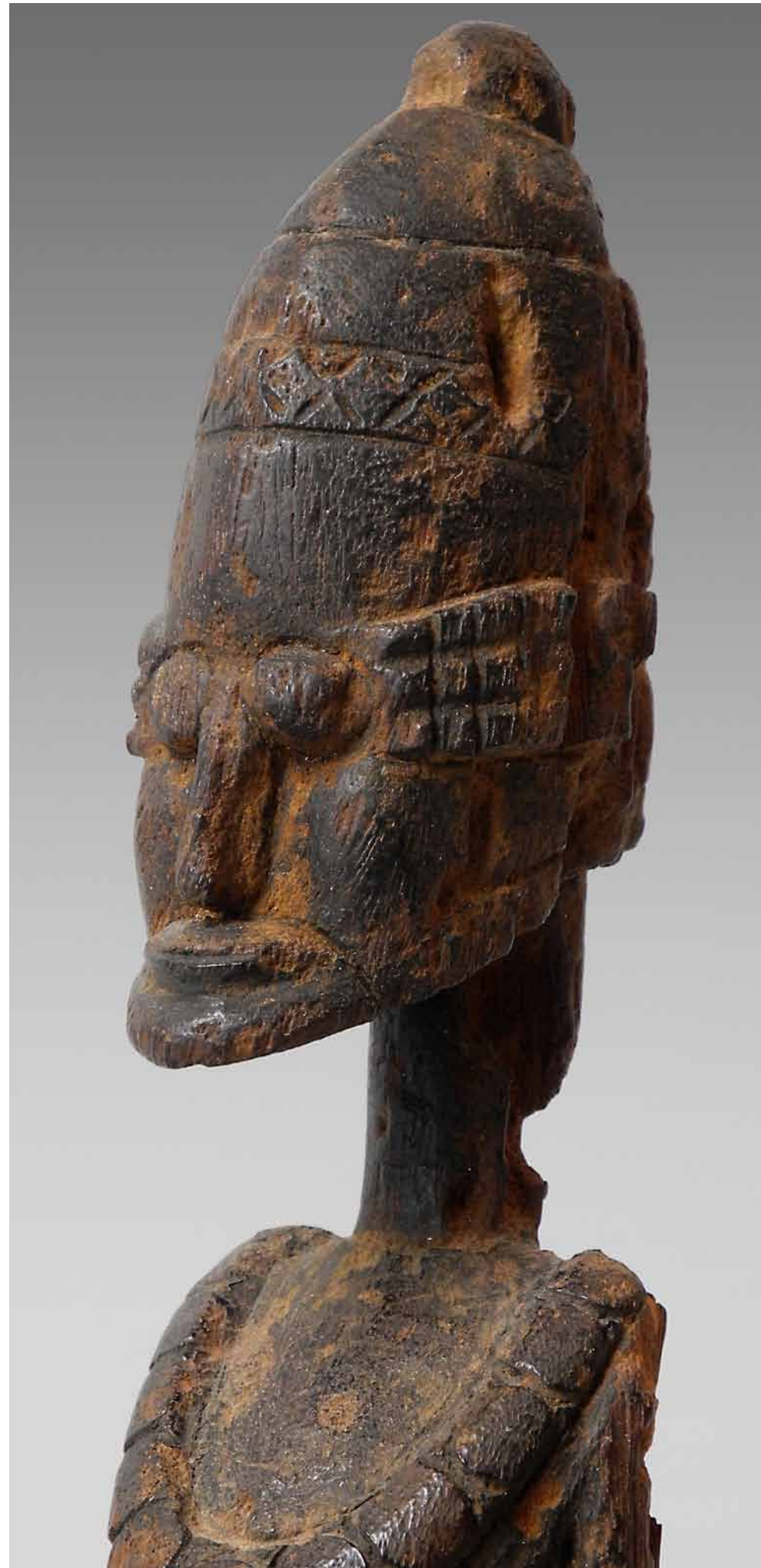
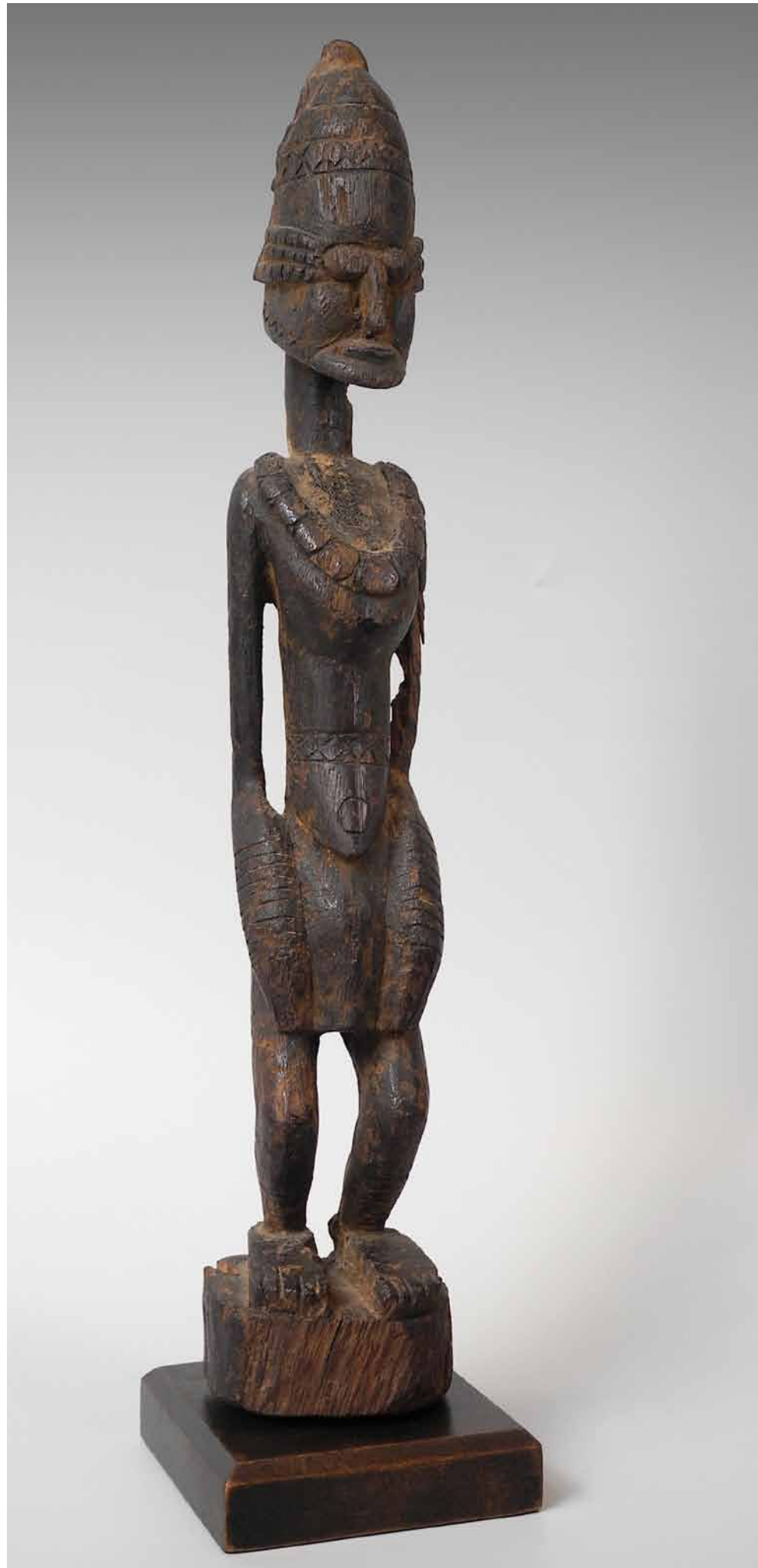
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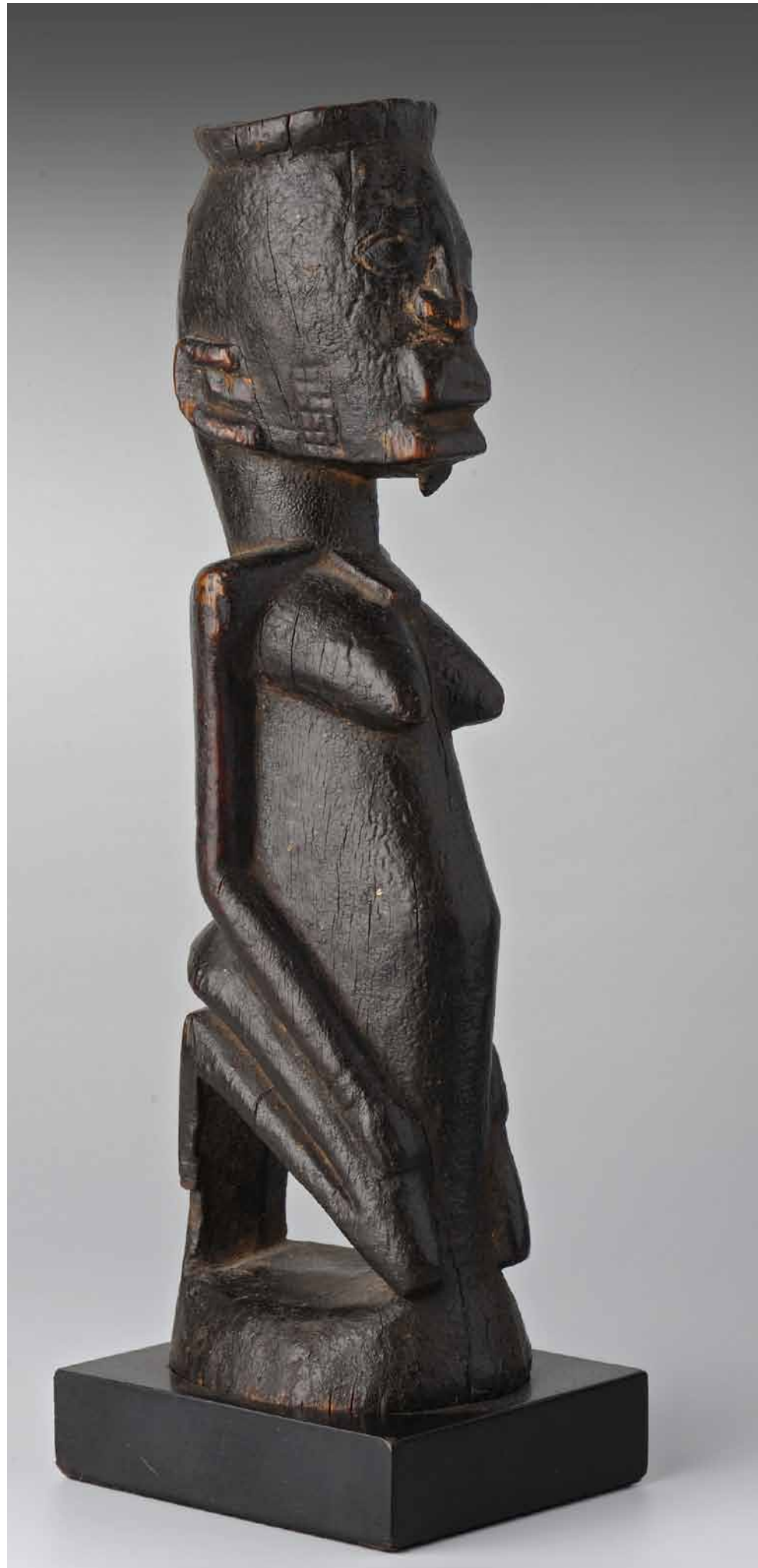


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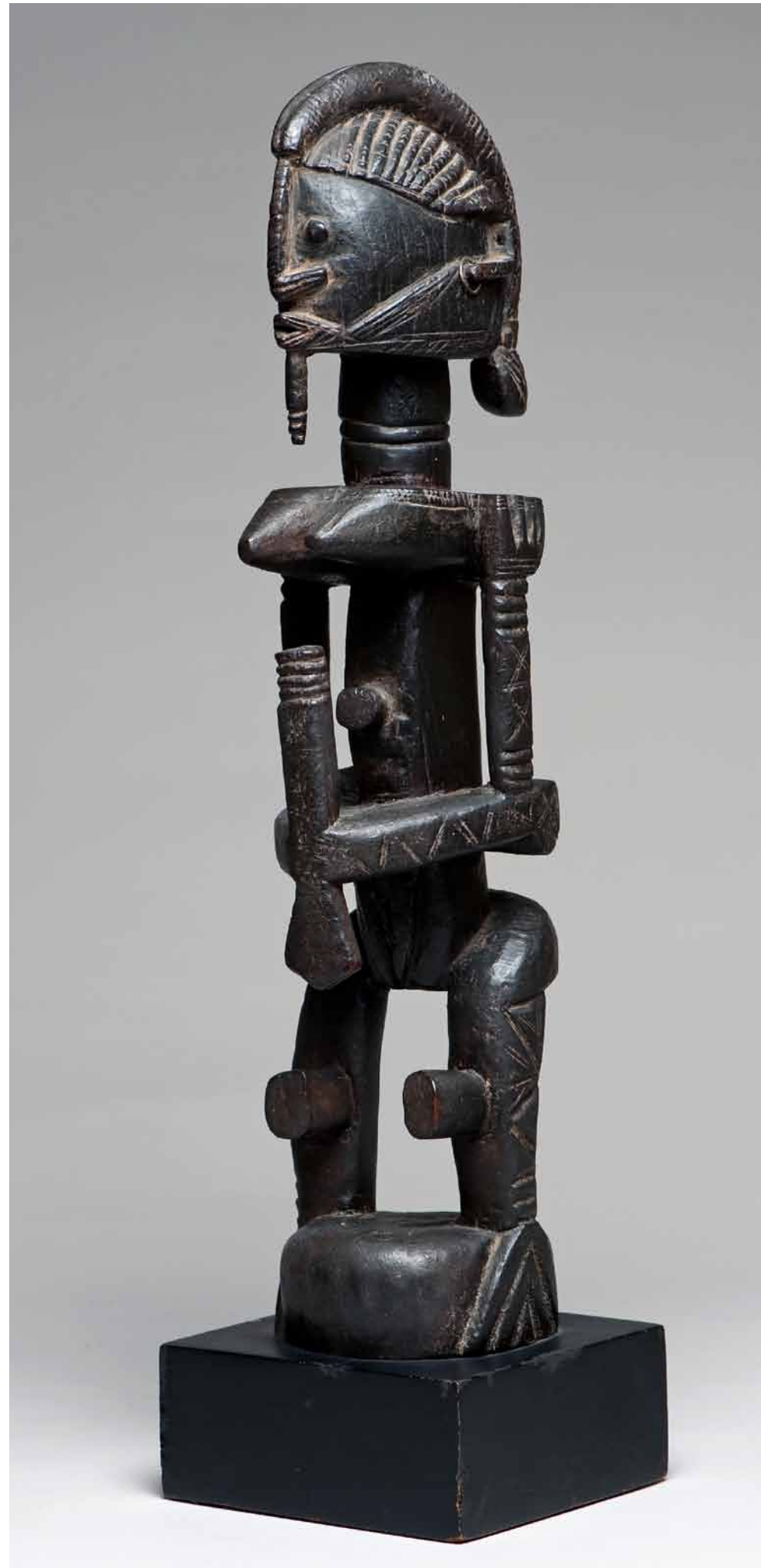
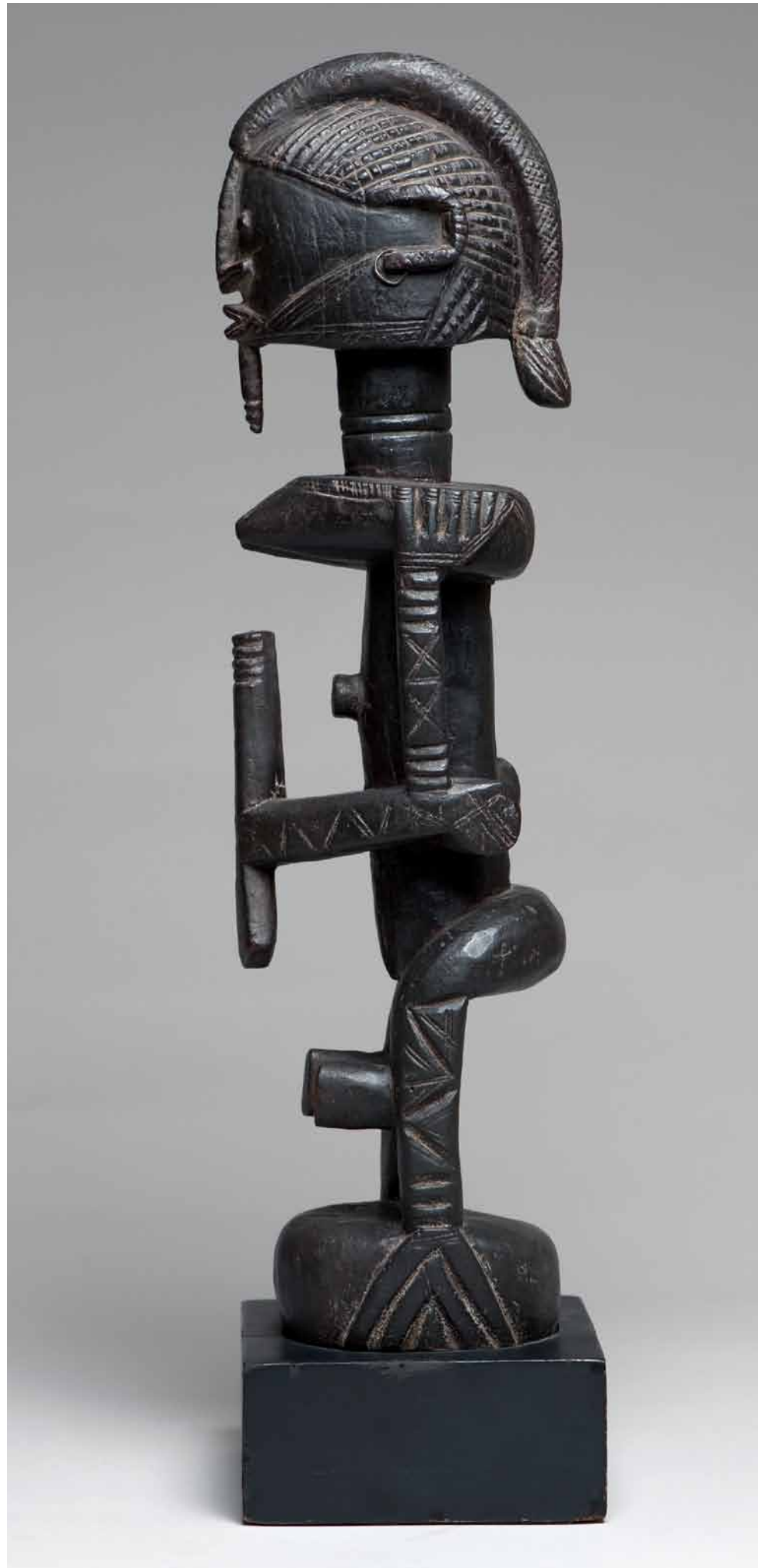


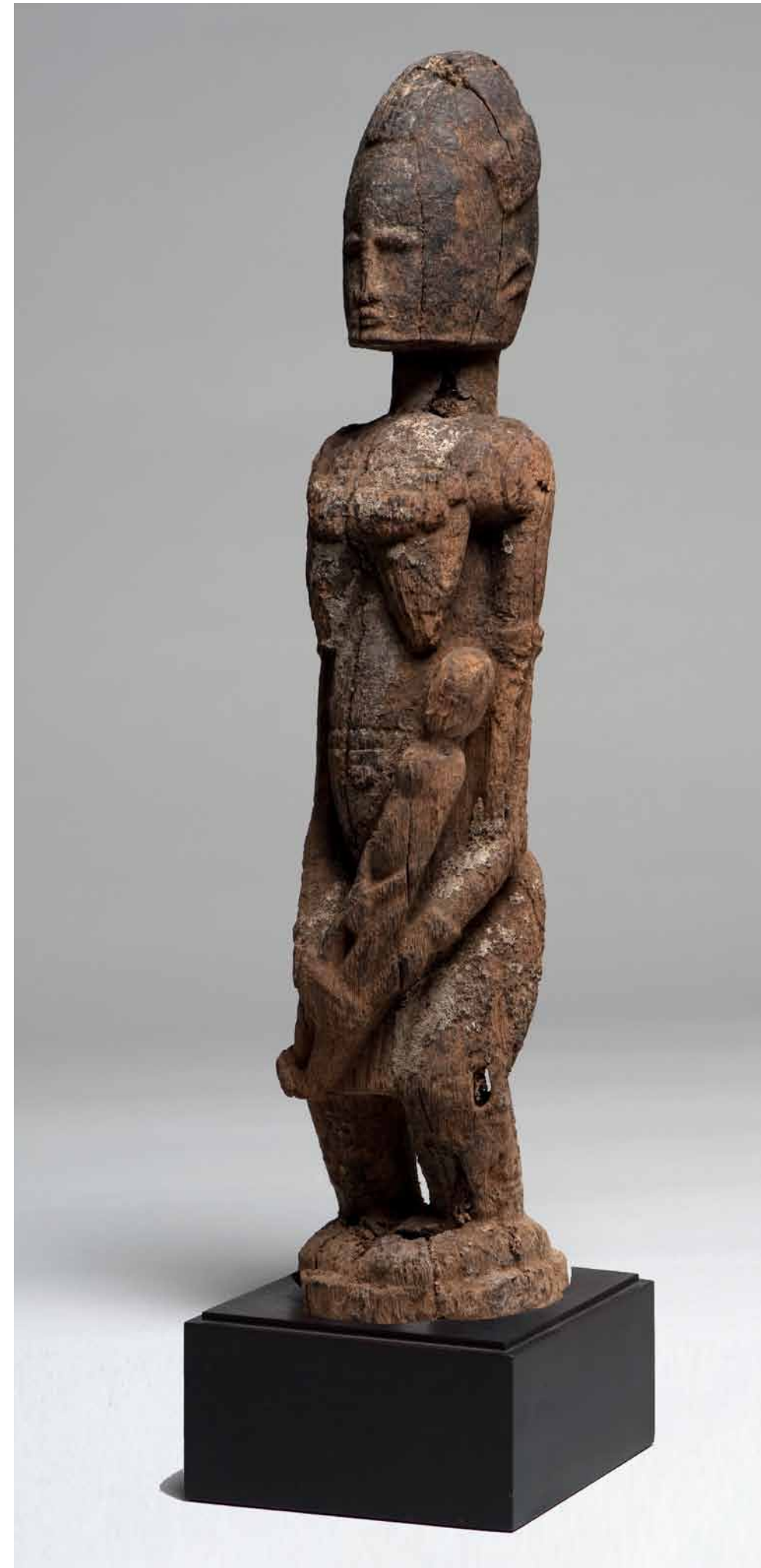
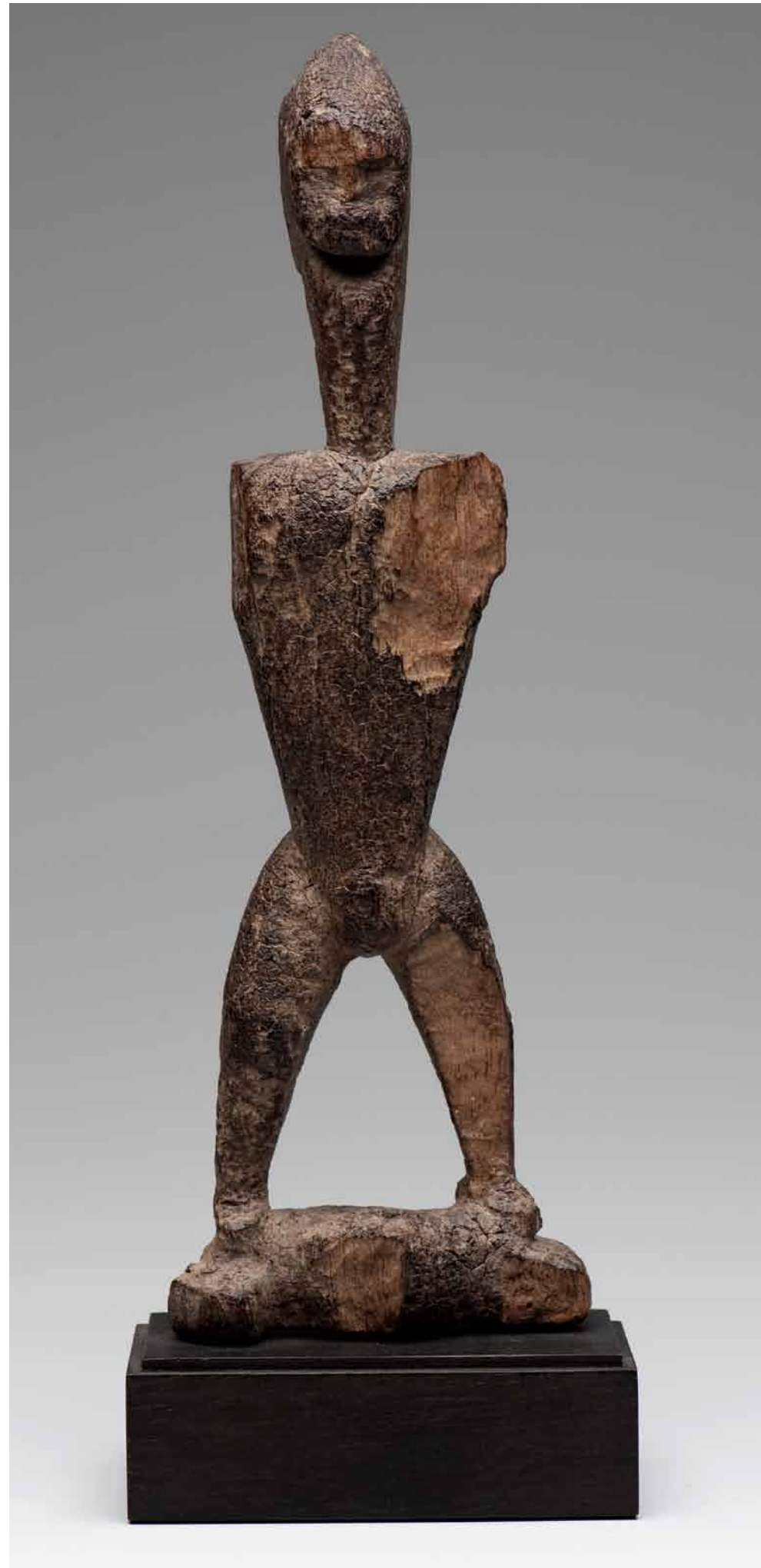
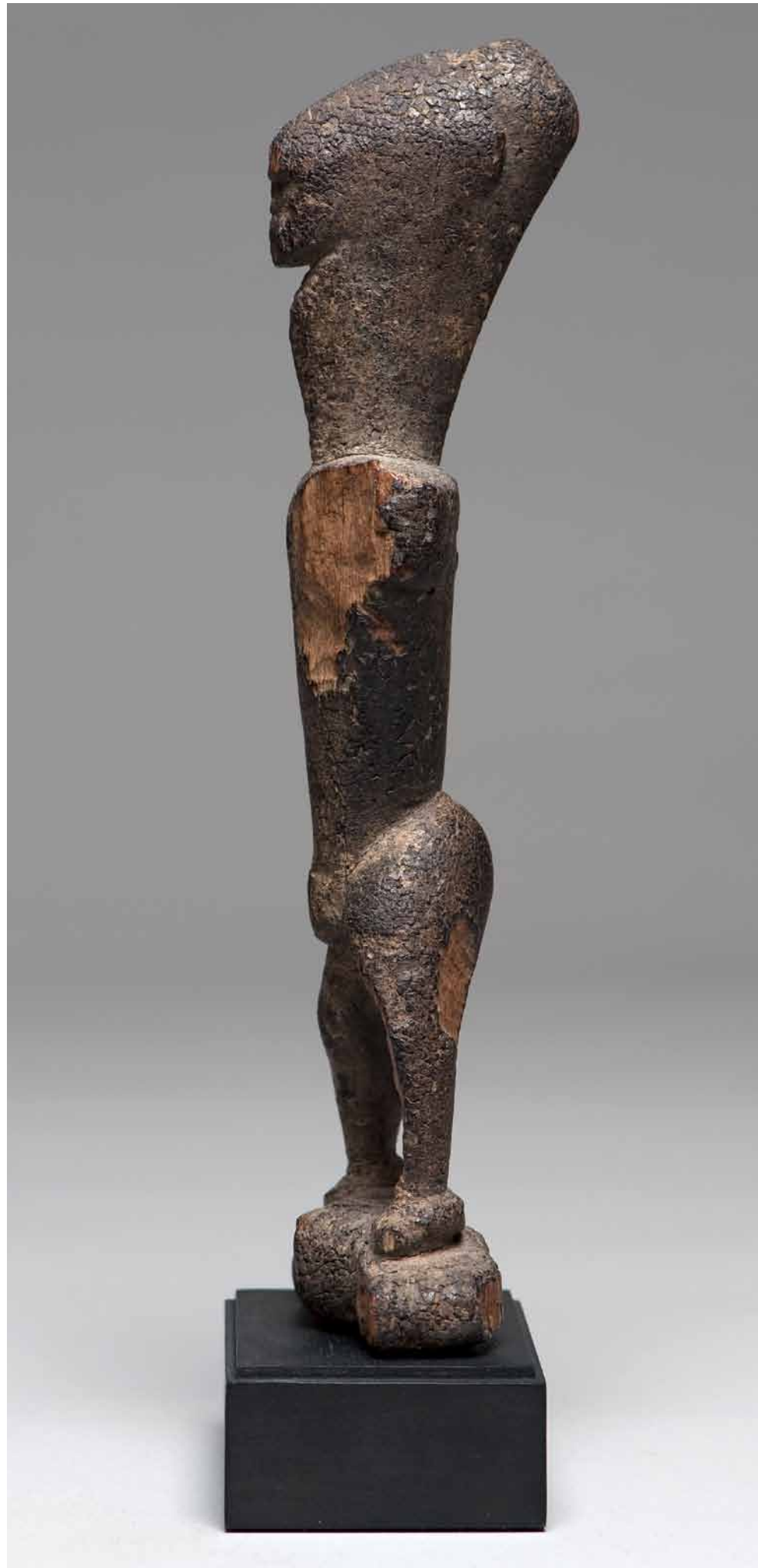
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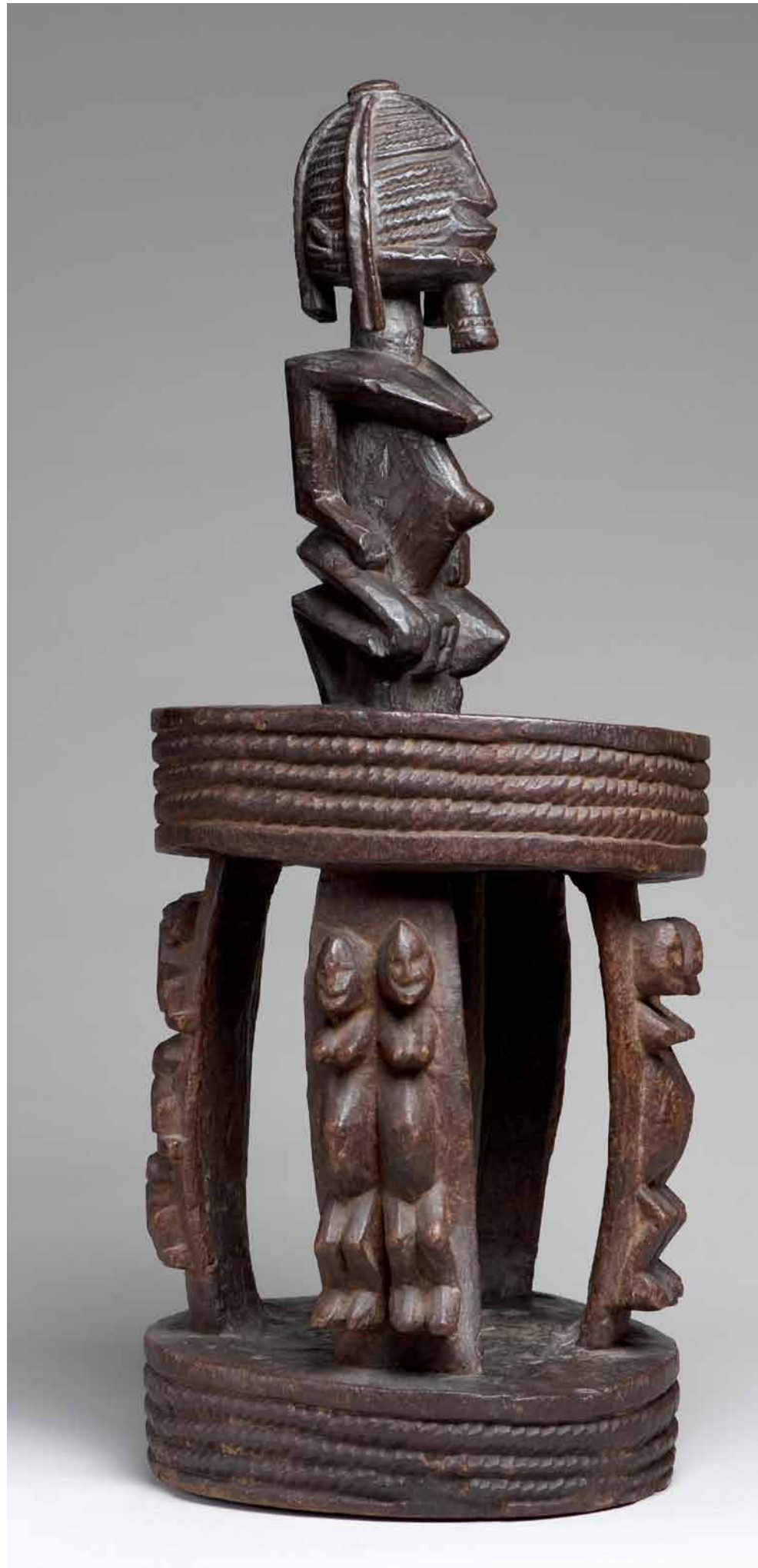












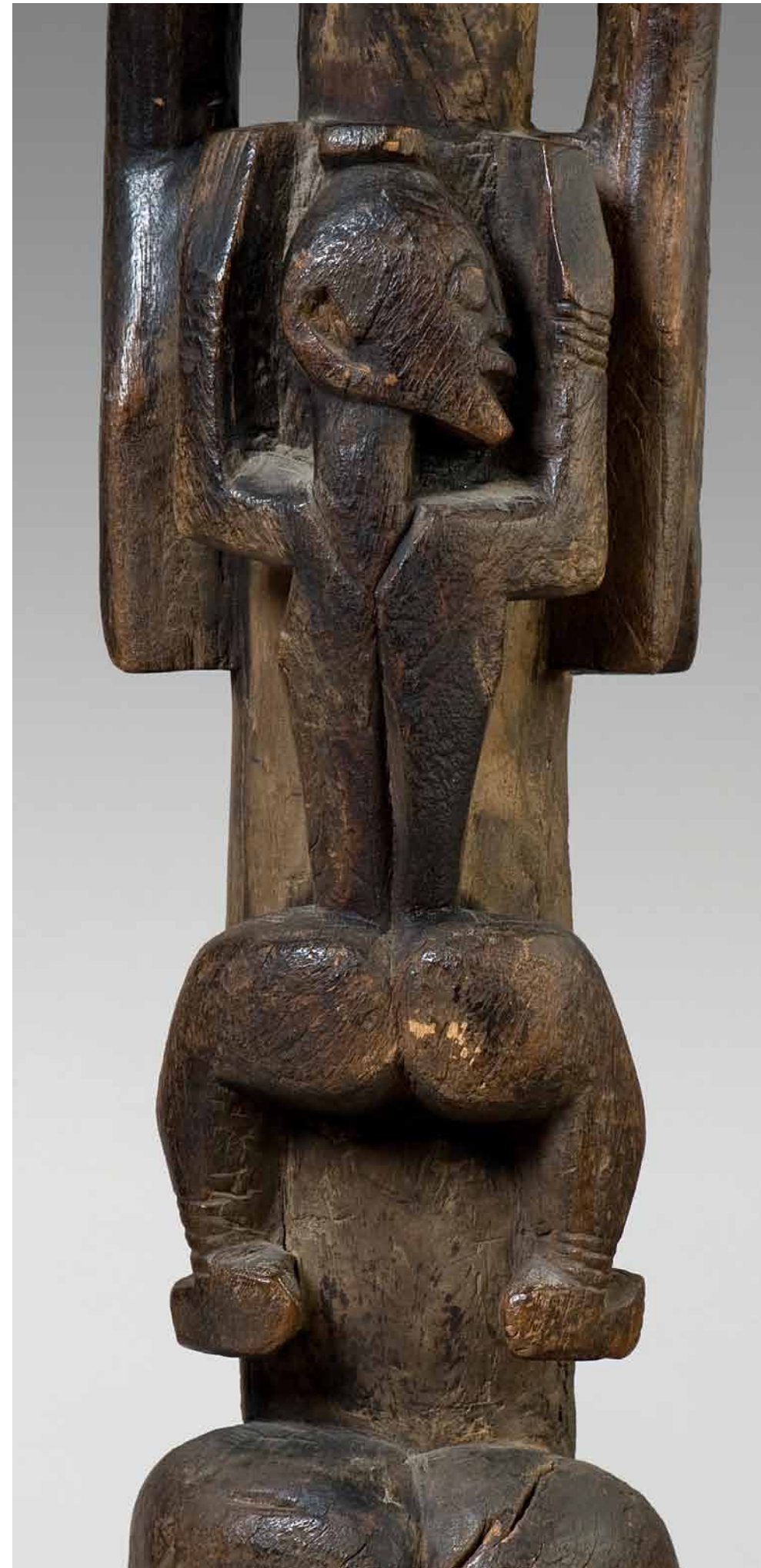
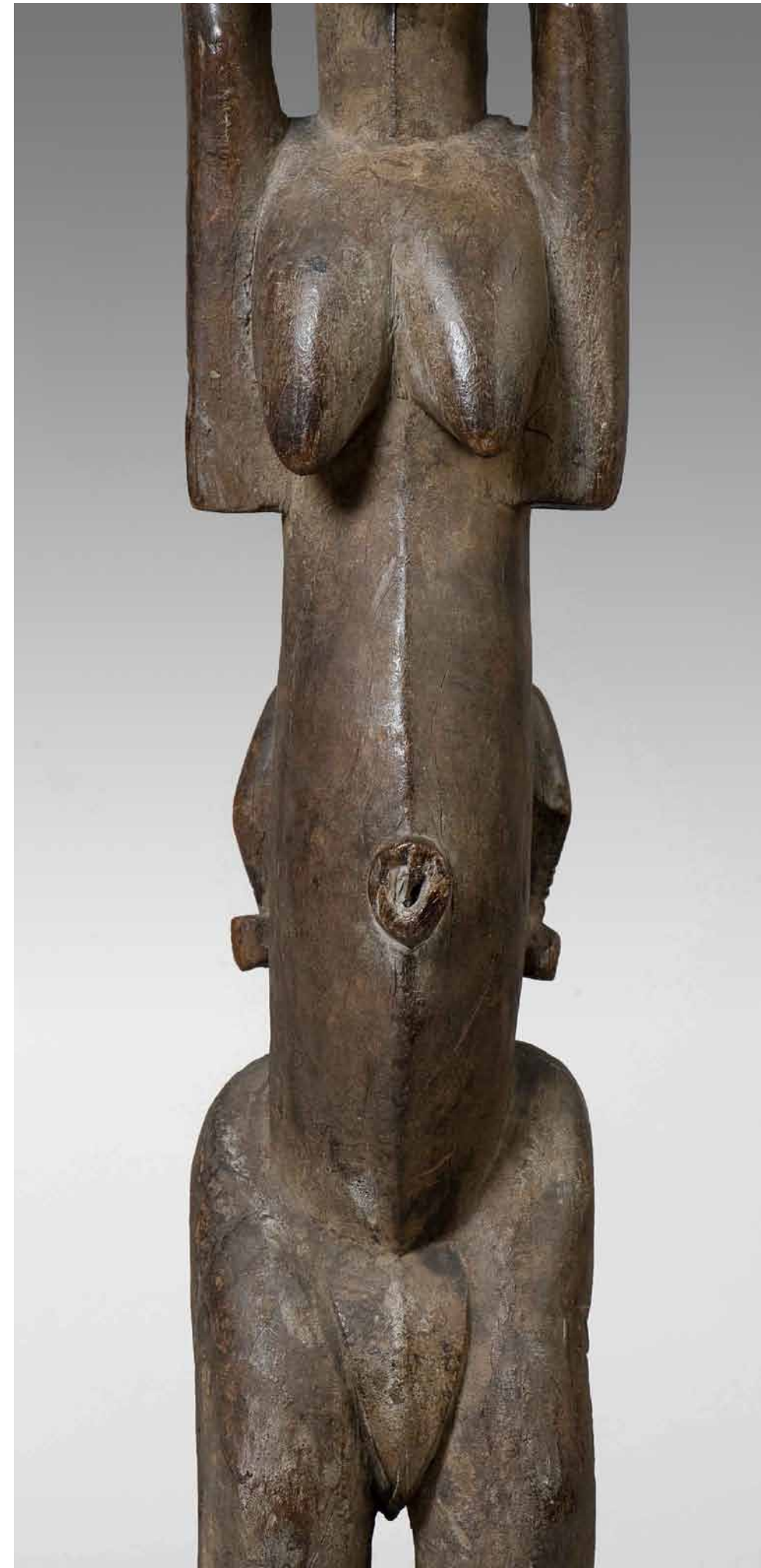
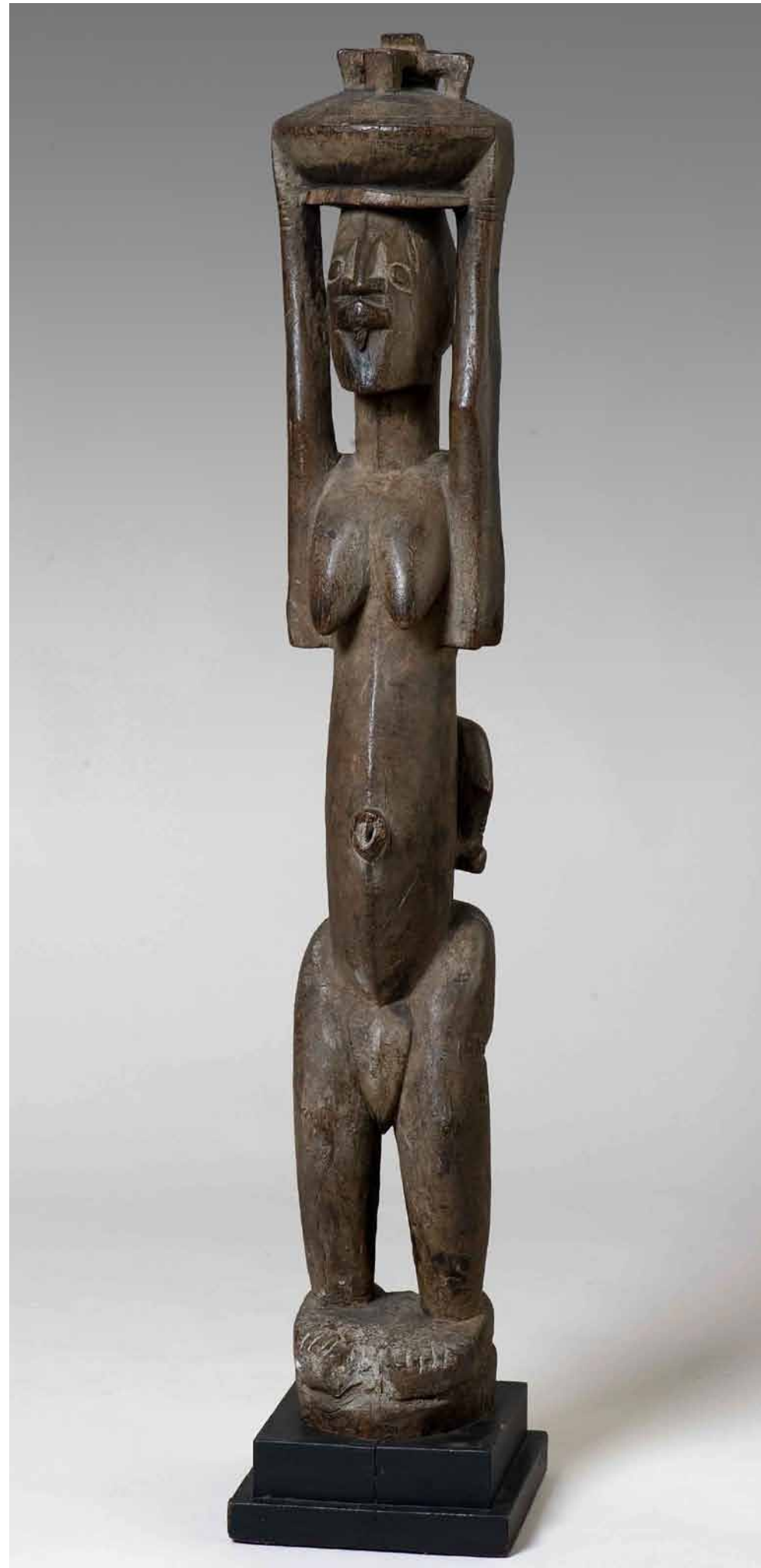
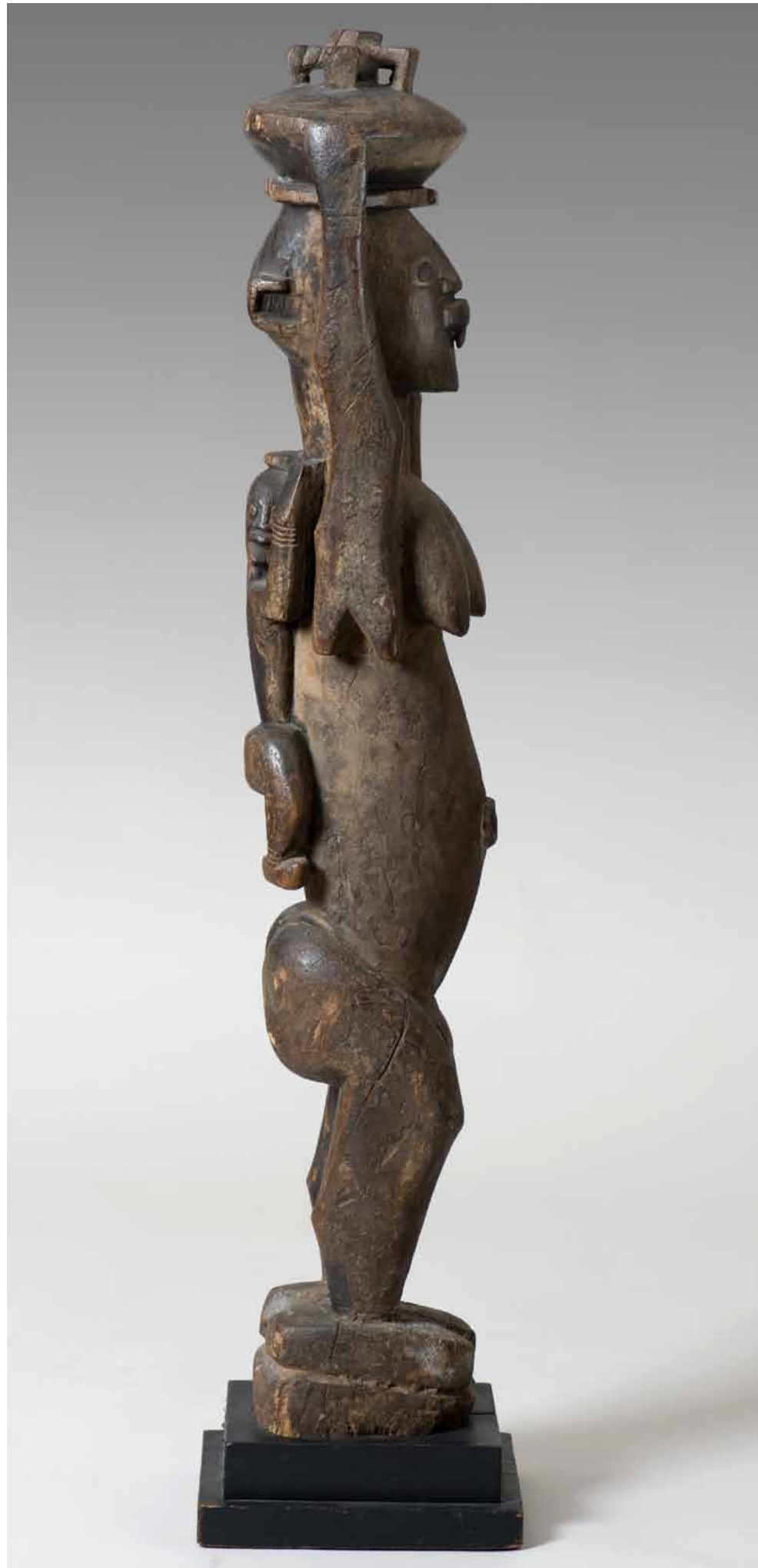
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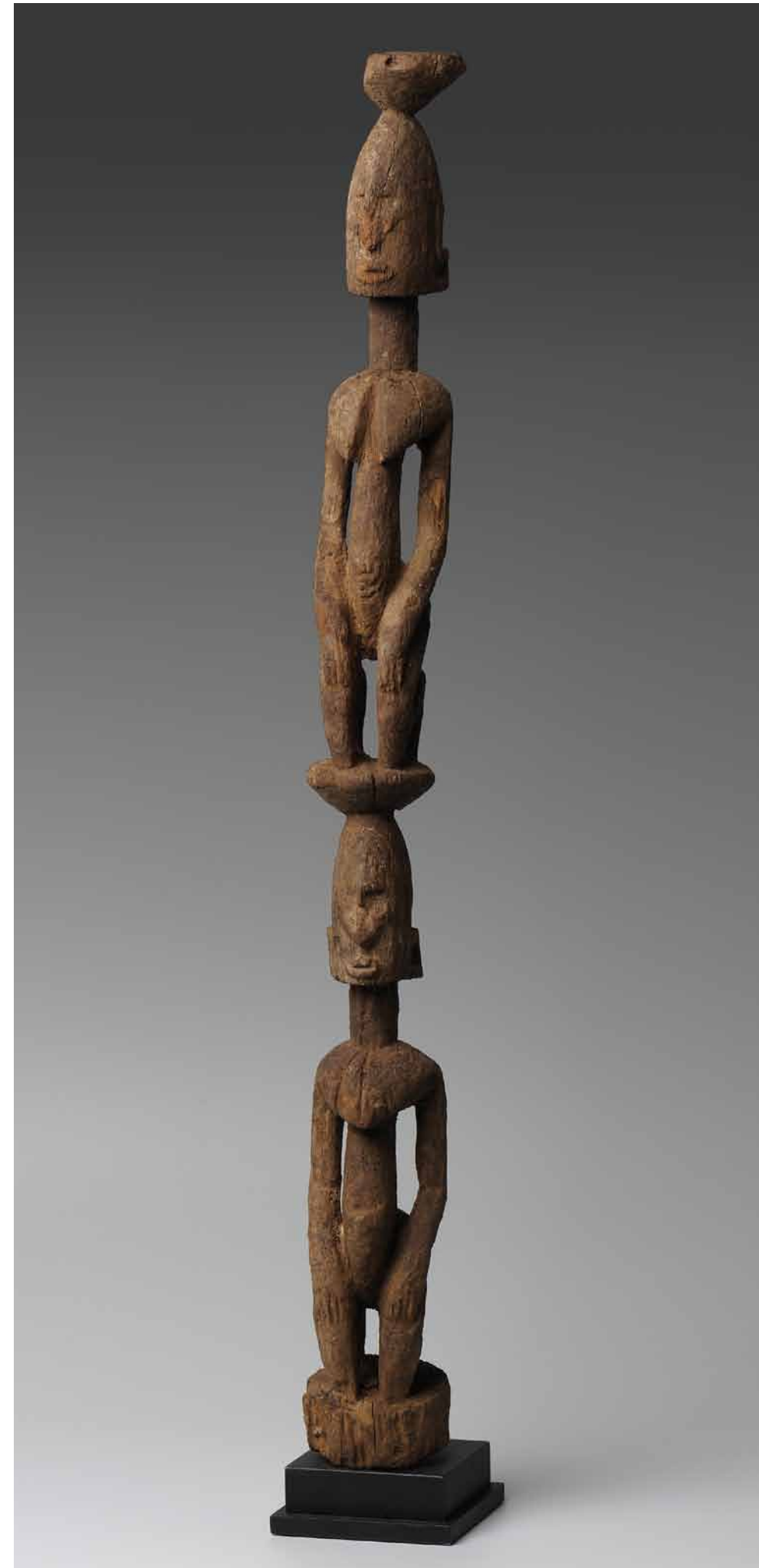




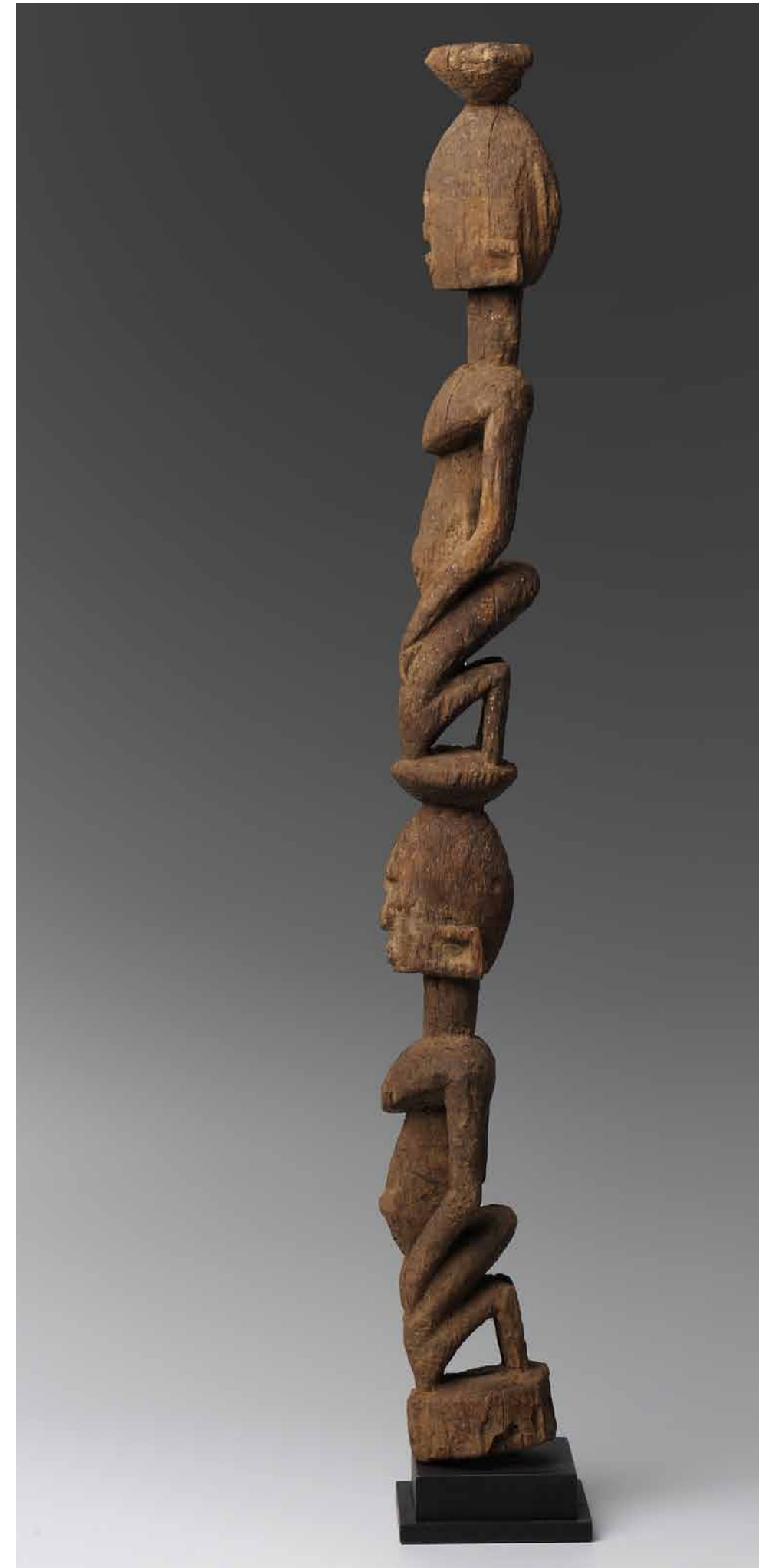
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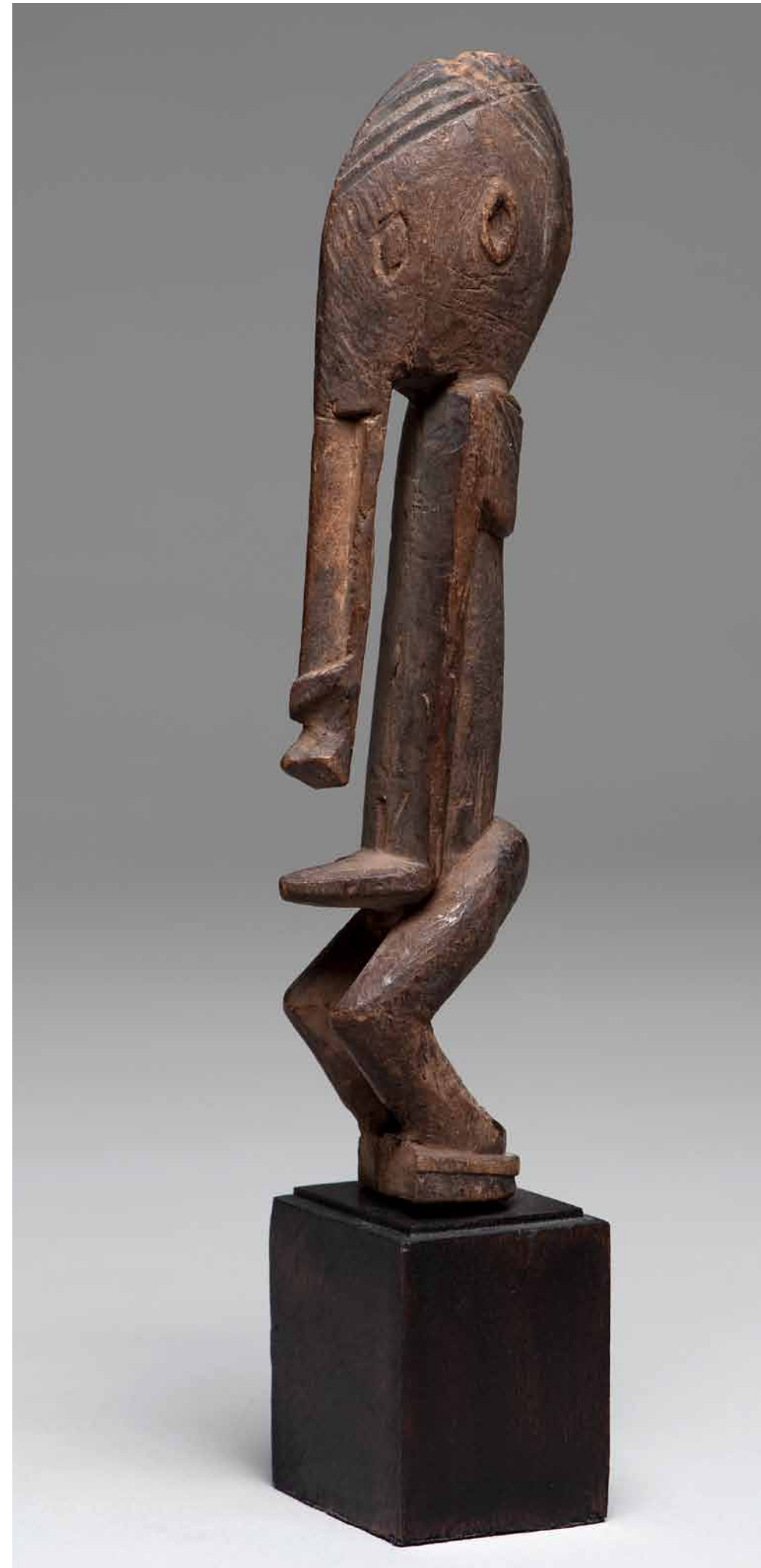
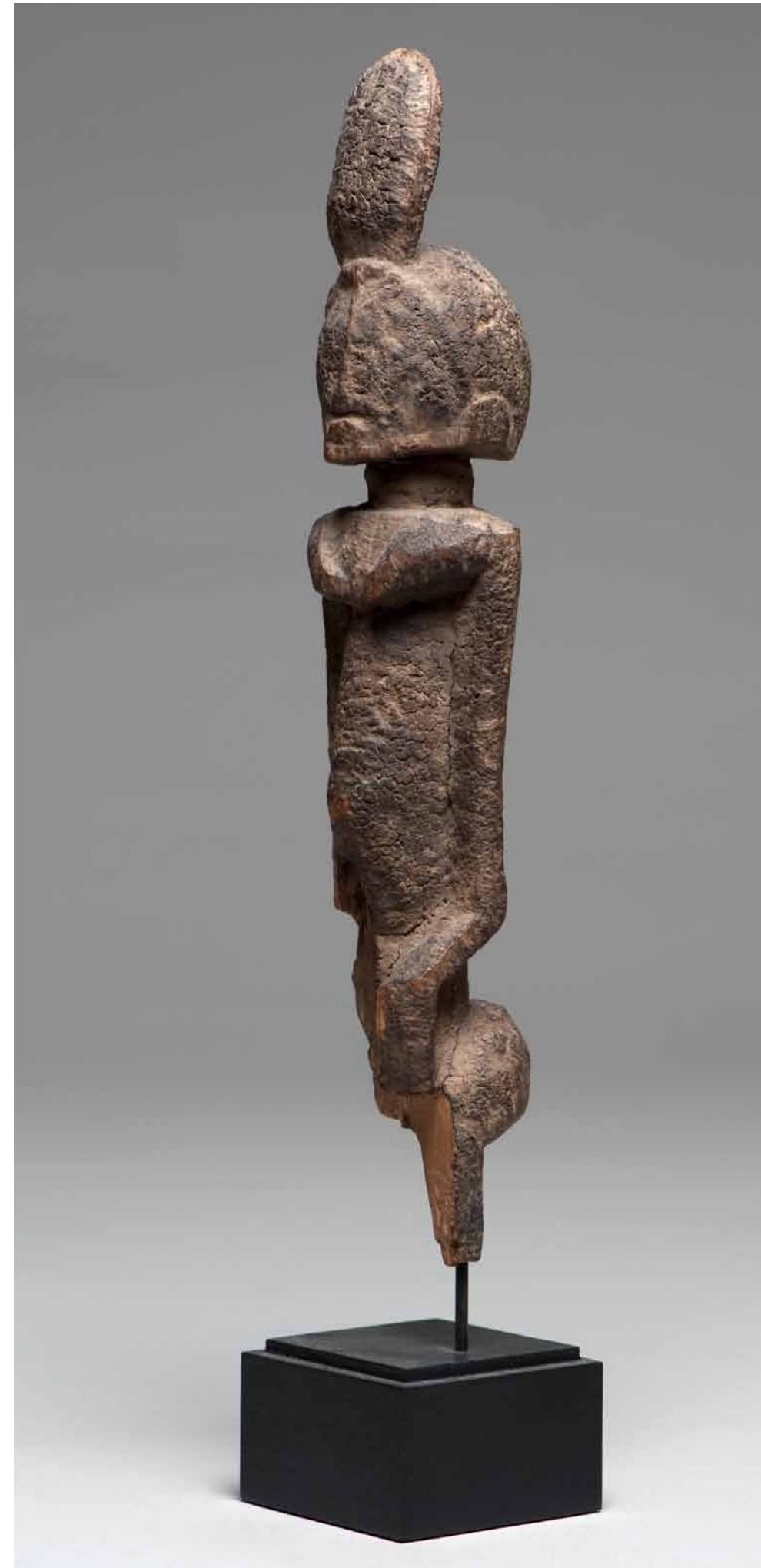
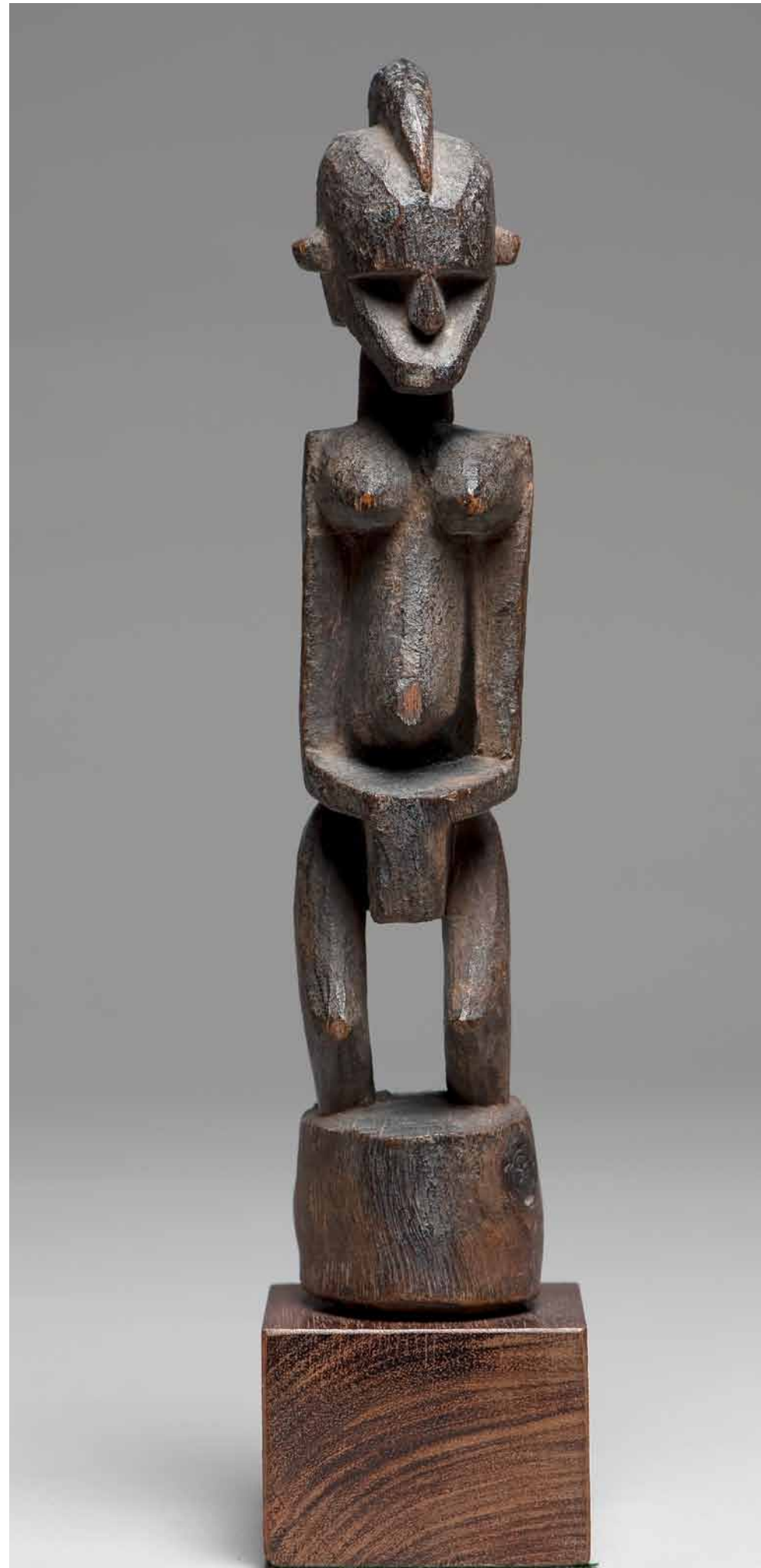
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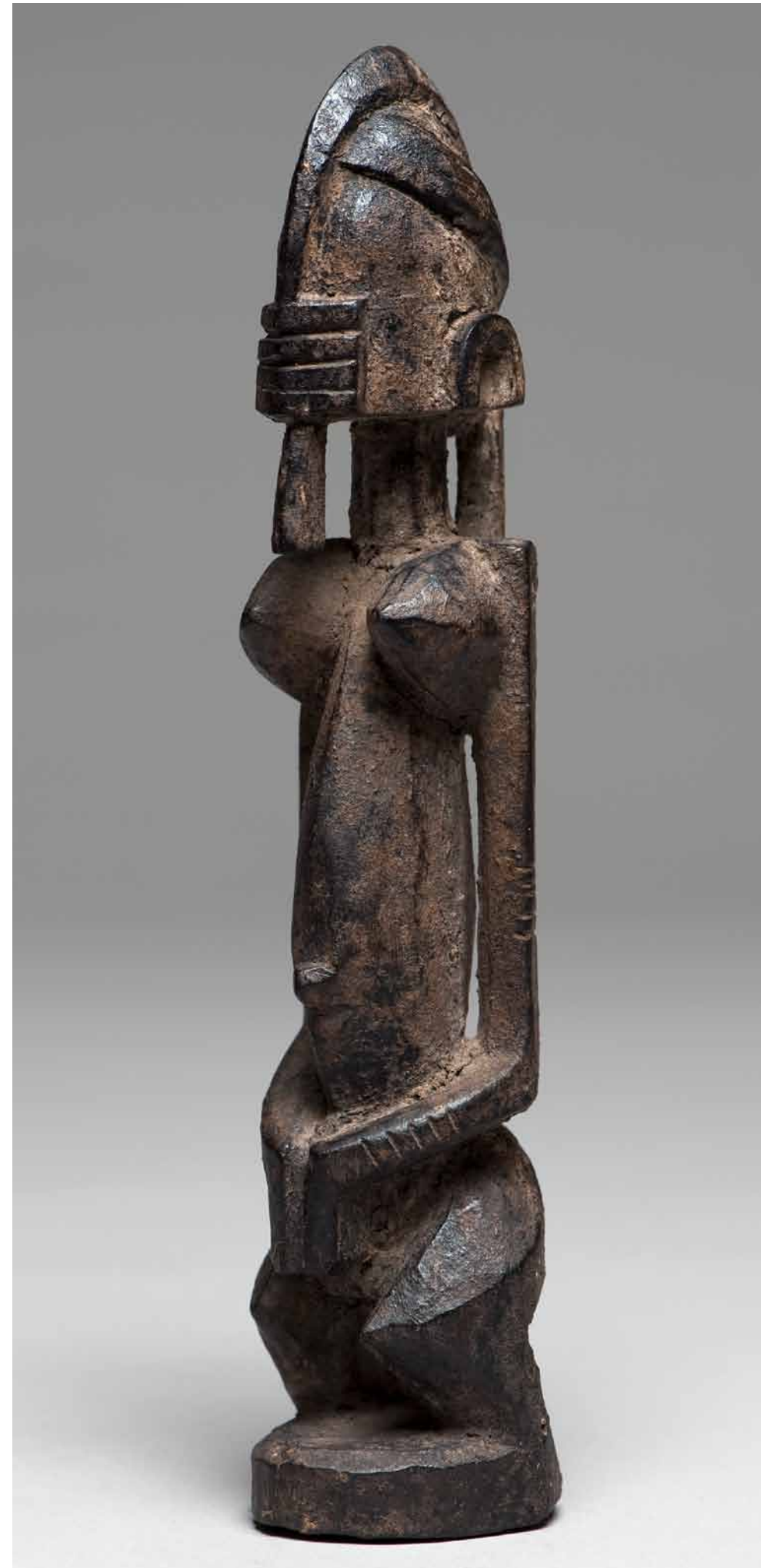
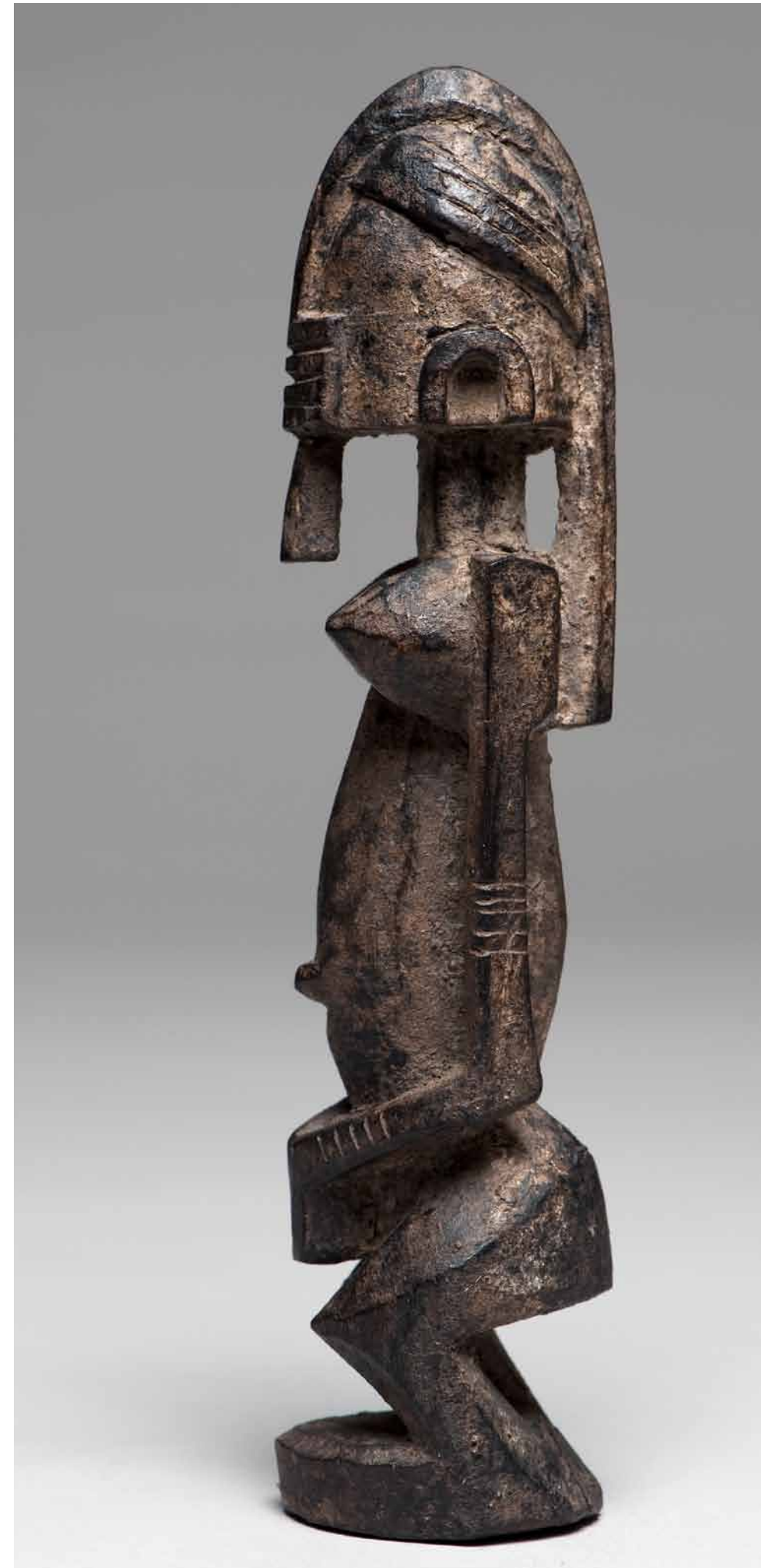
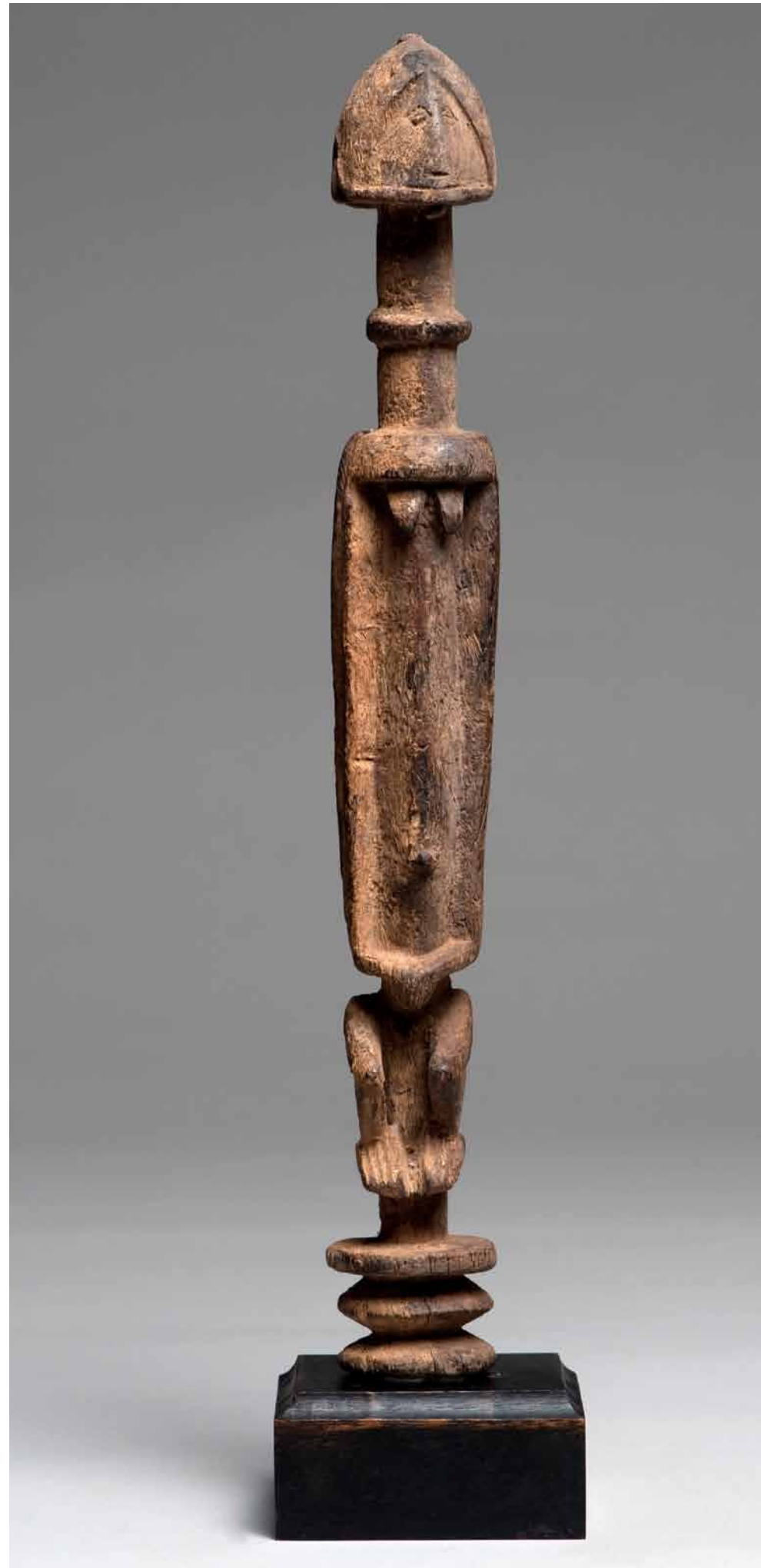


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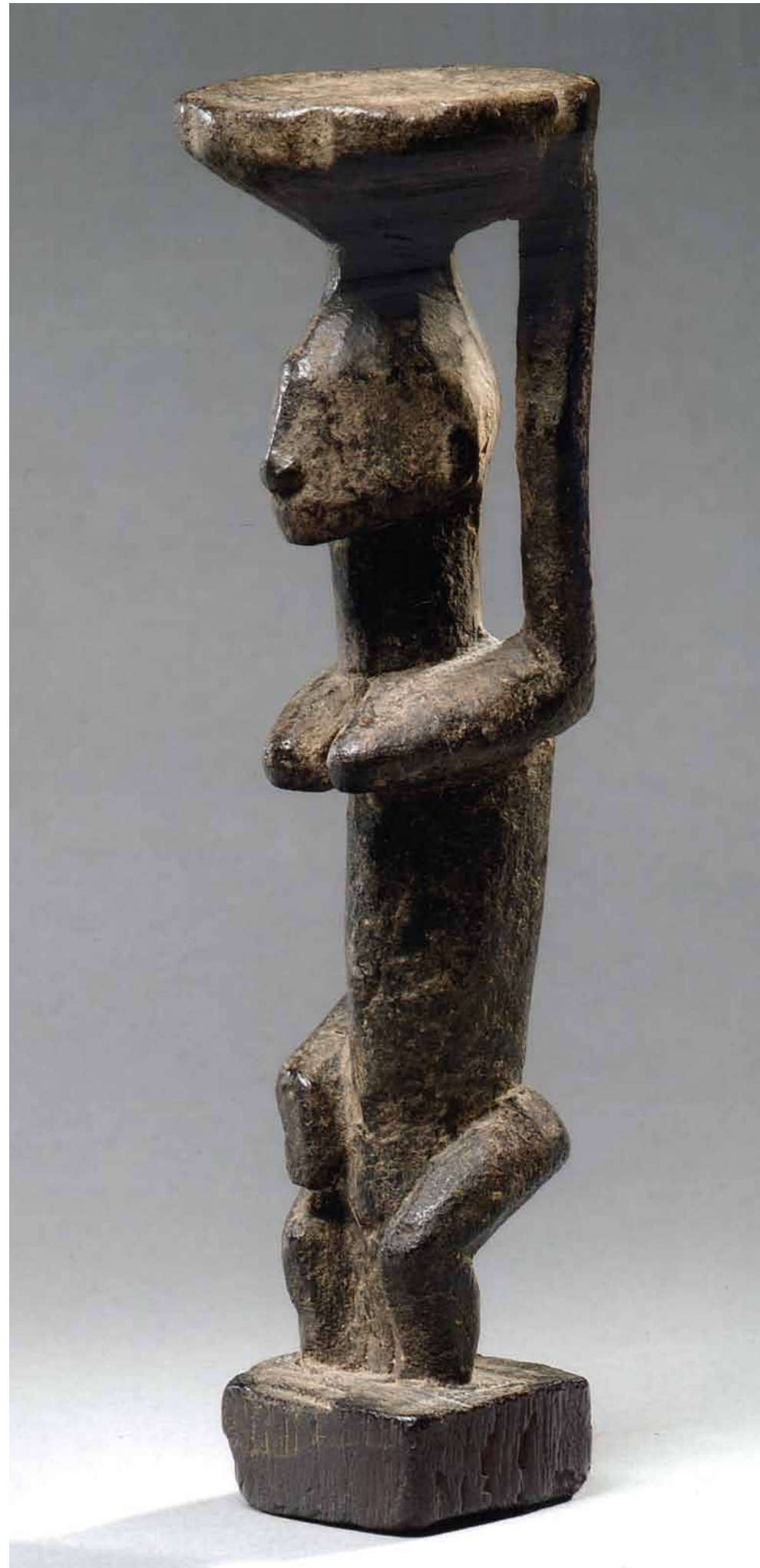




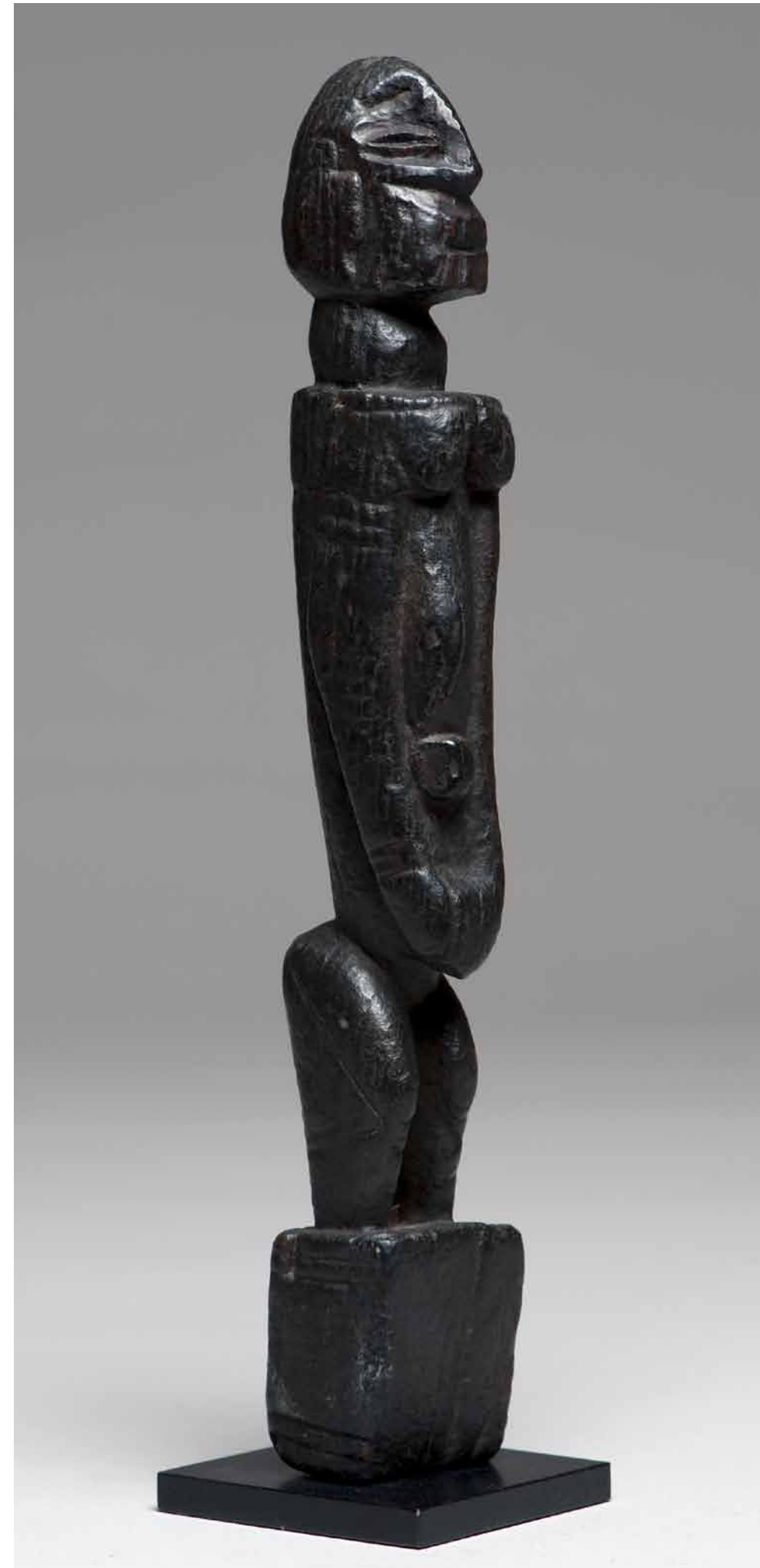




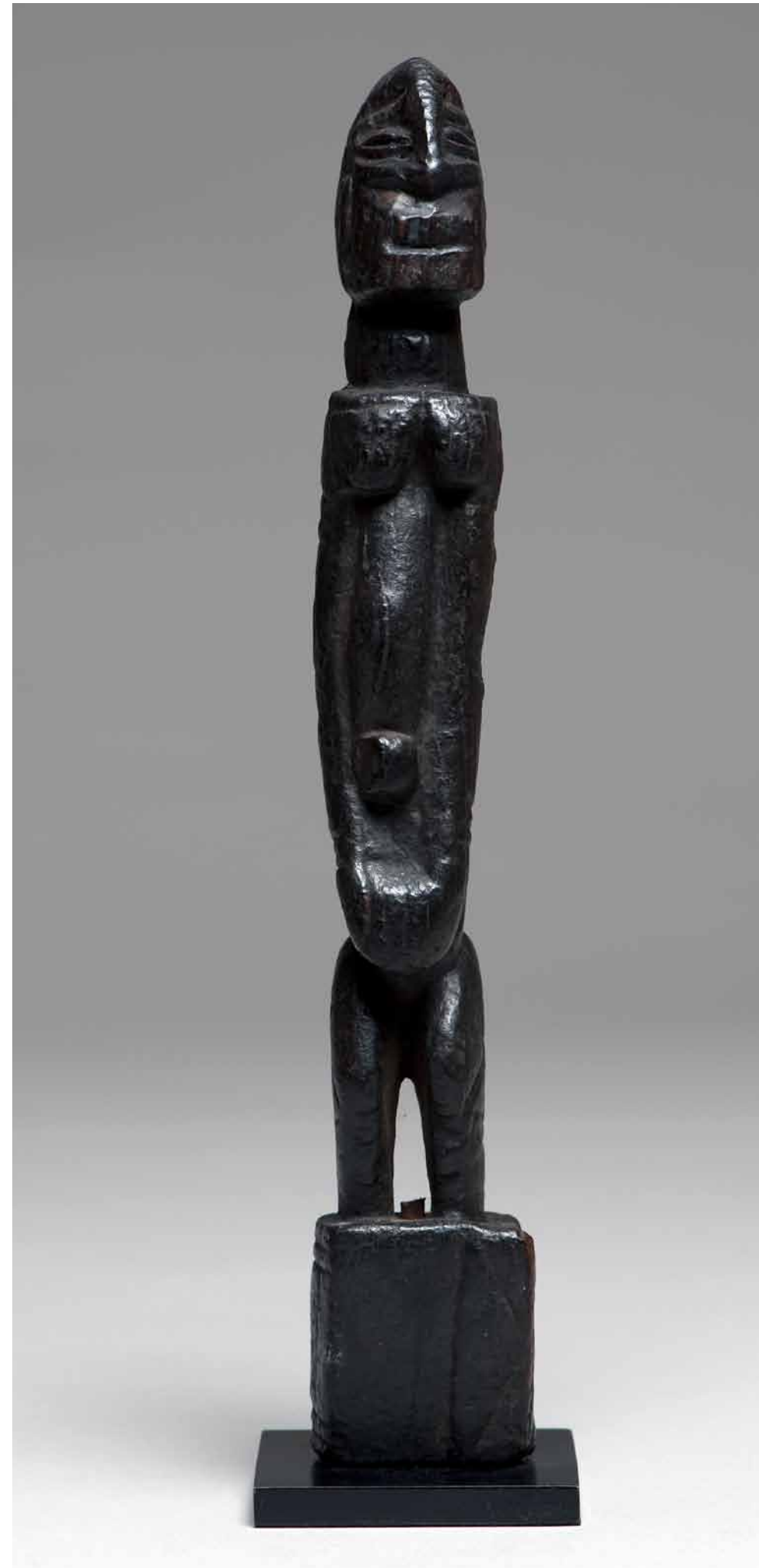
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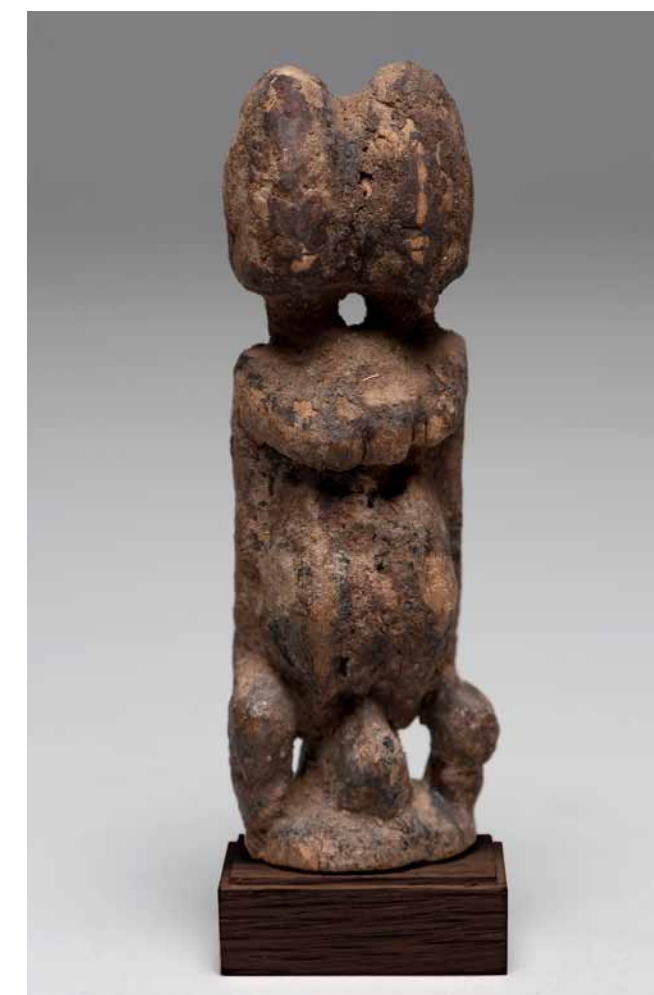
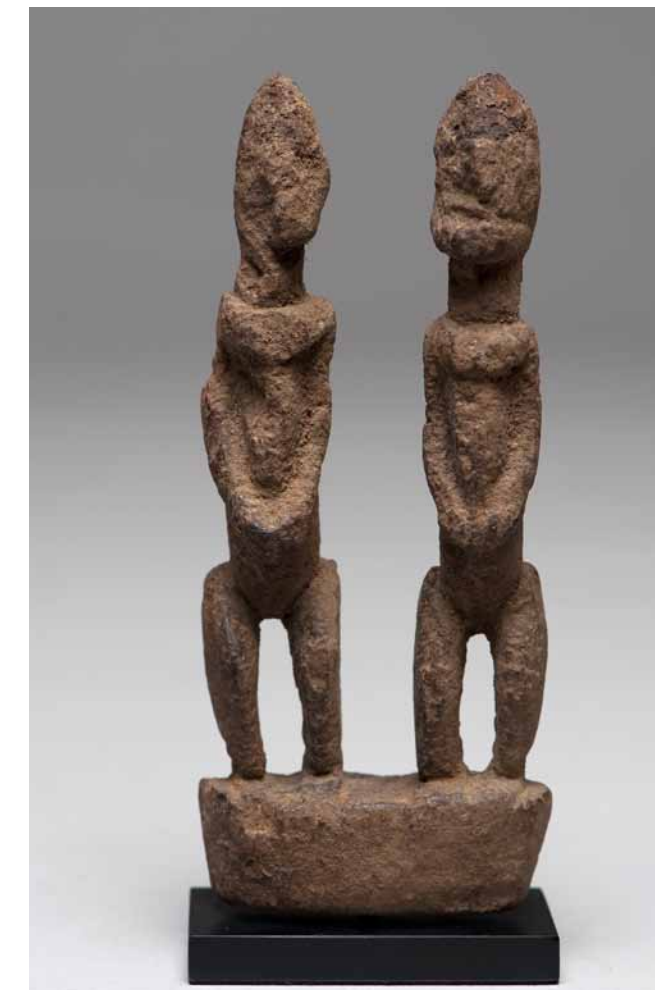
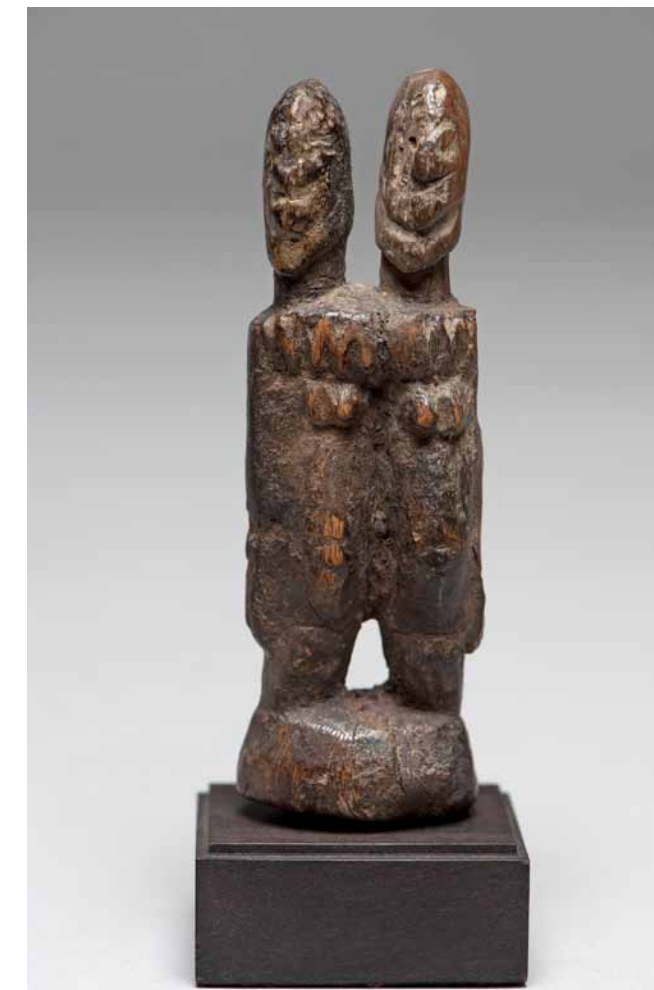
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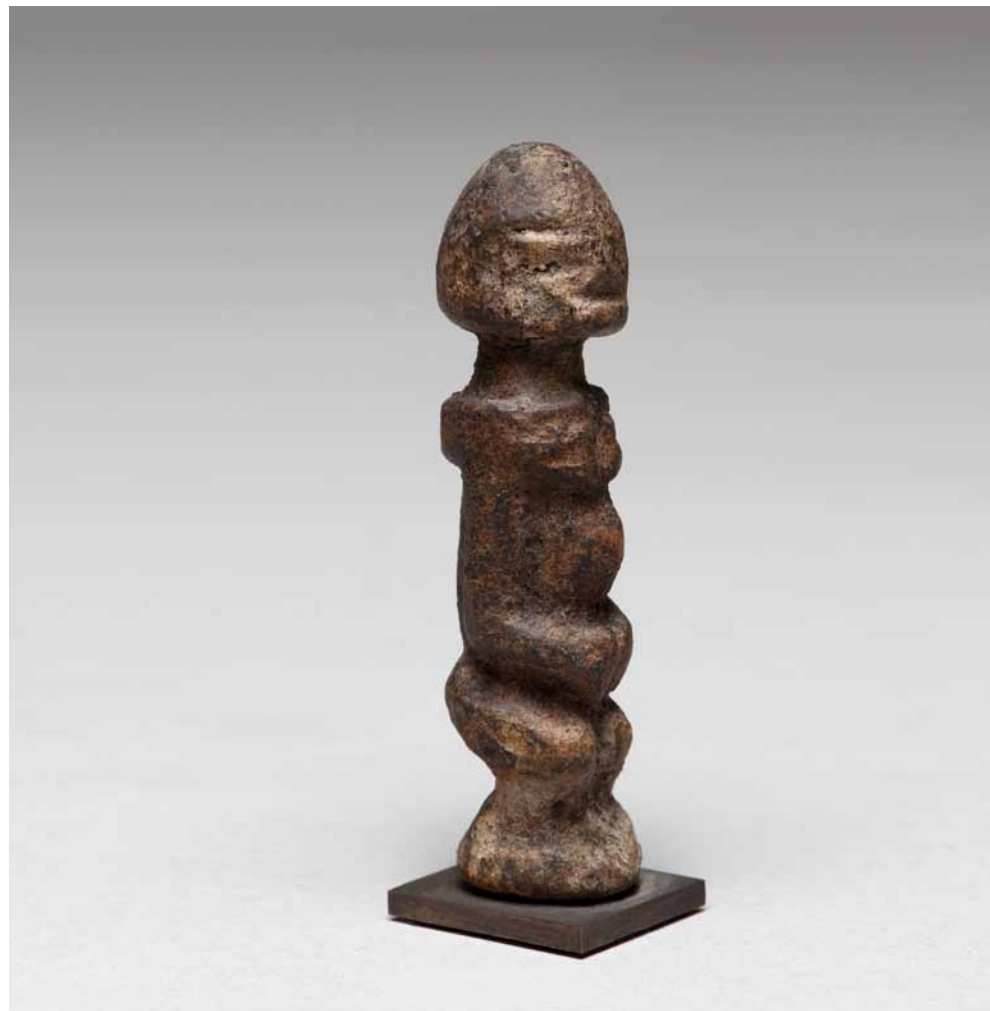


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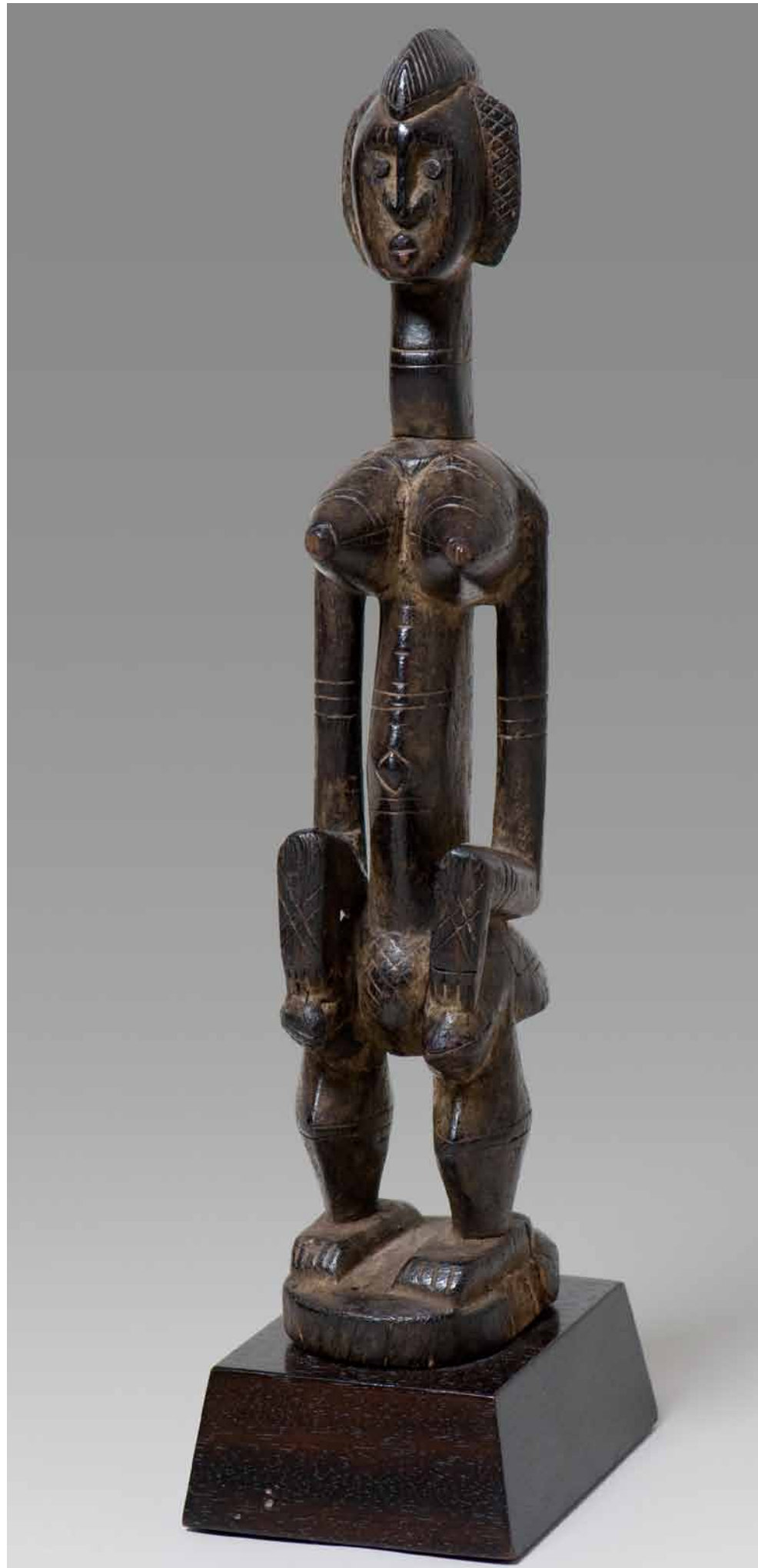


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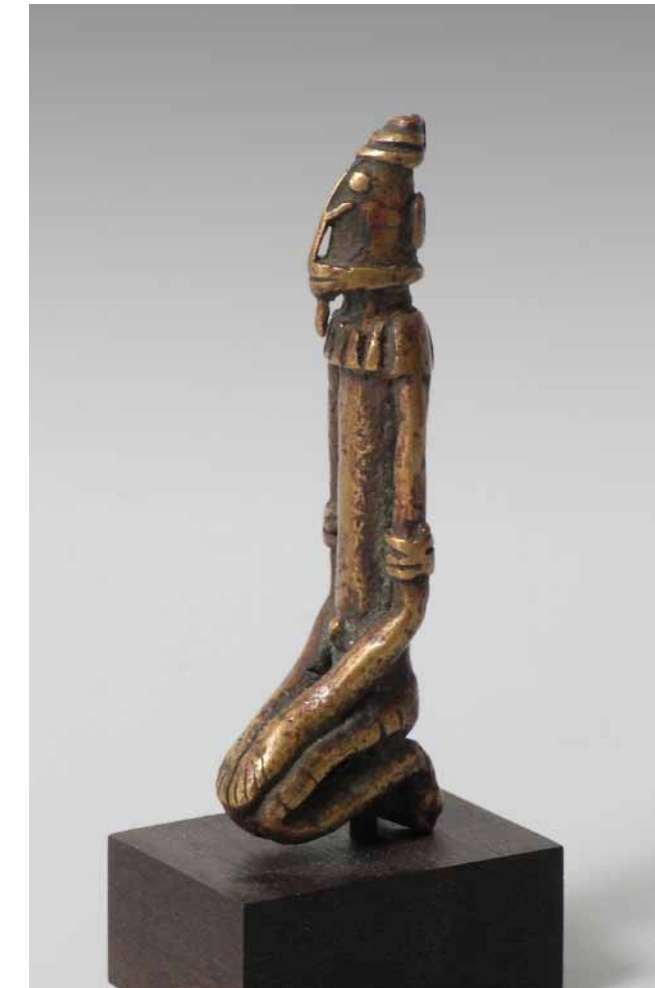
bronze
and other
copper alloys



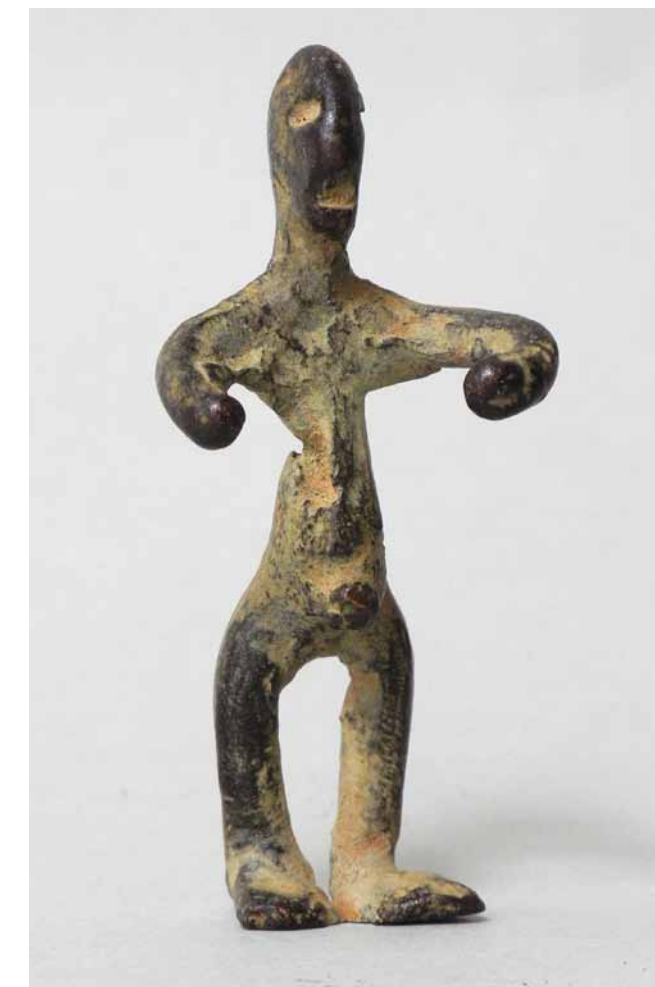
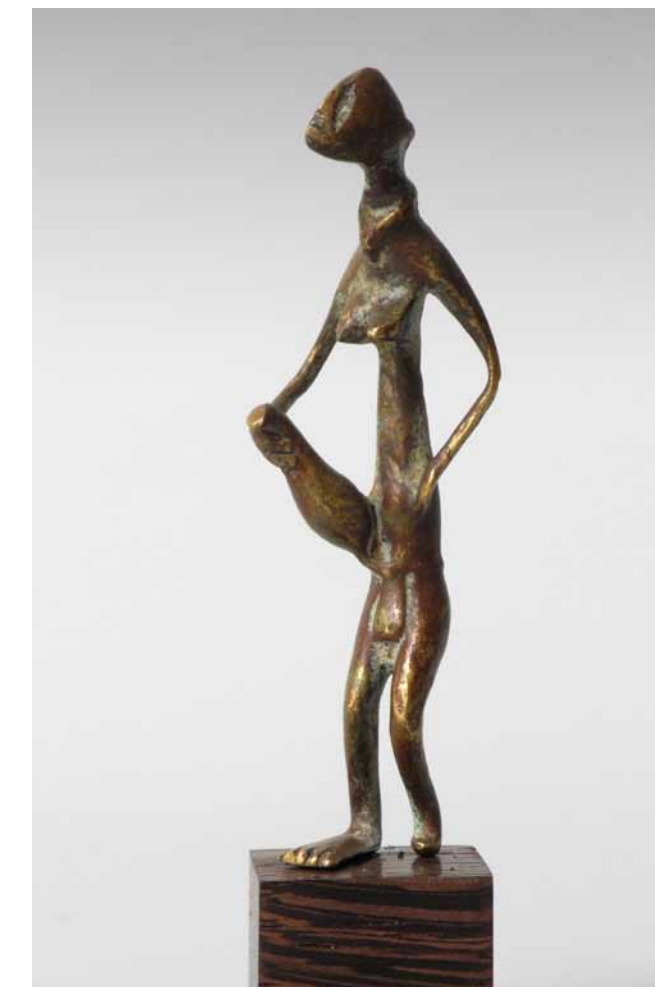
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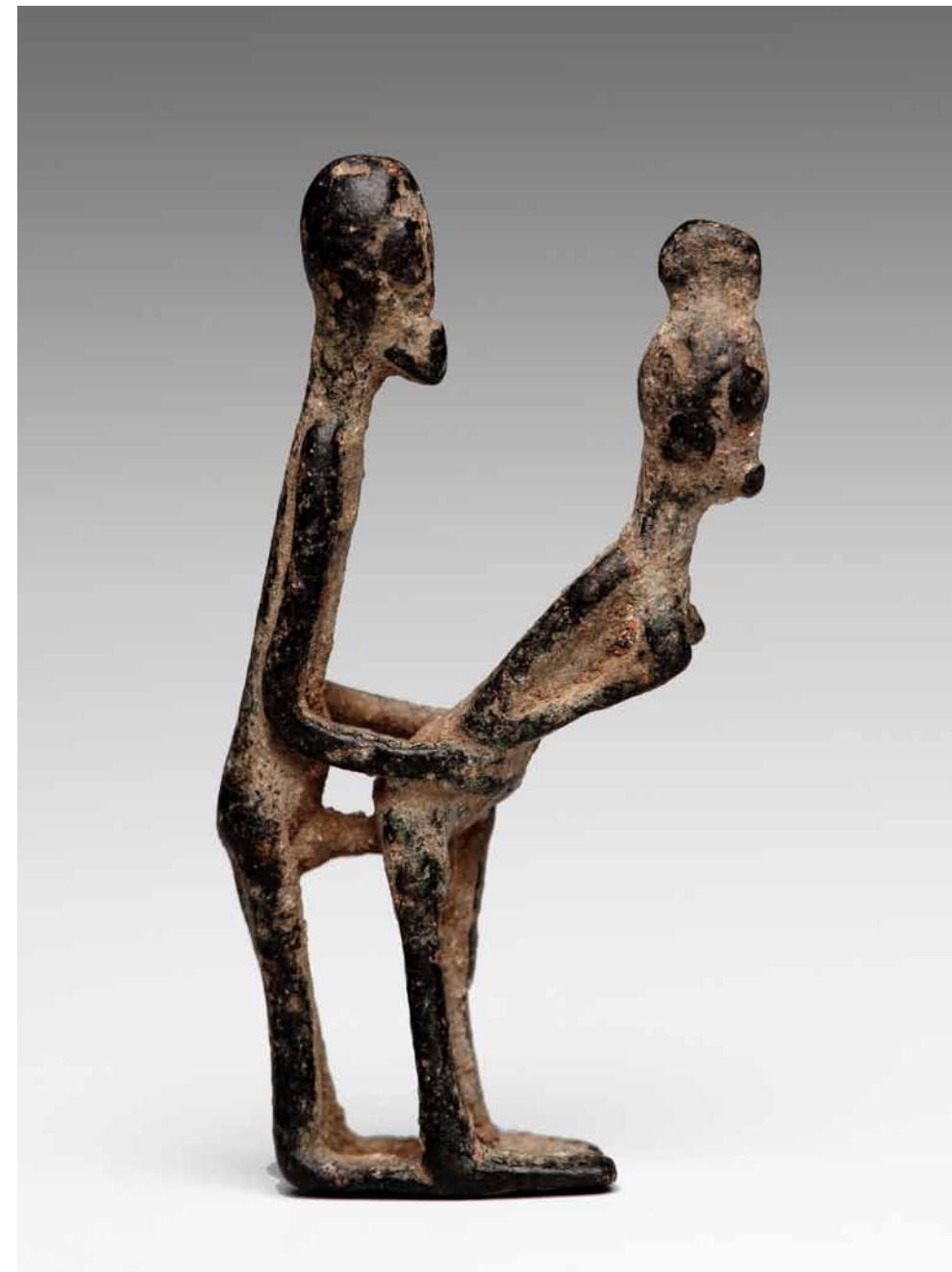
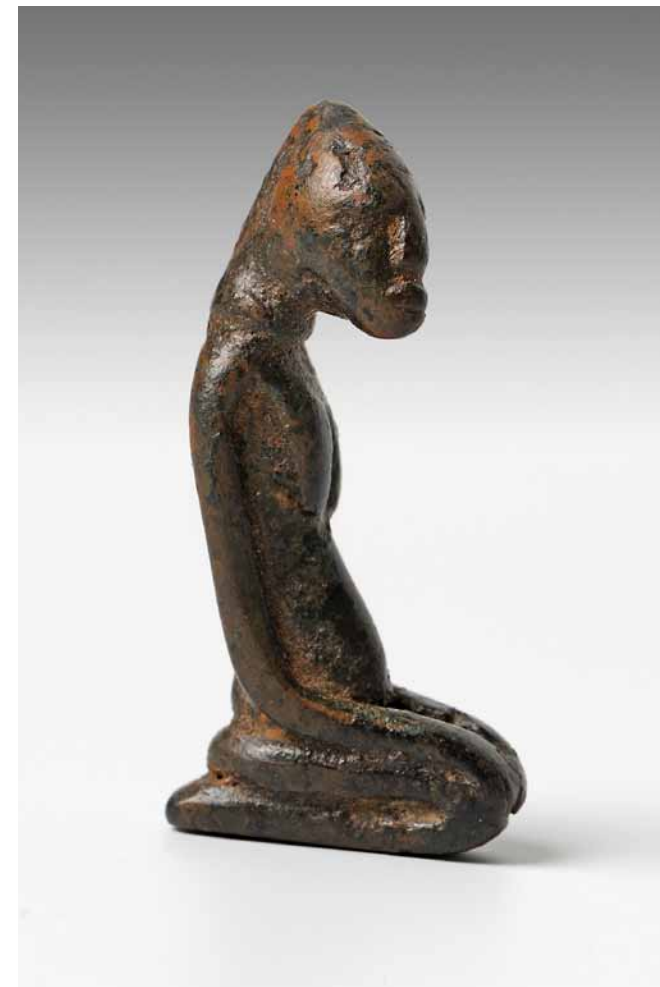


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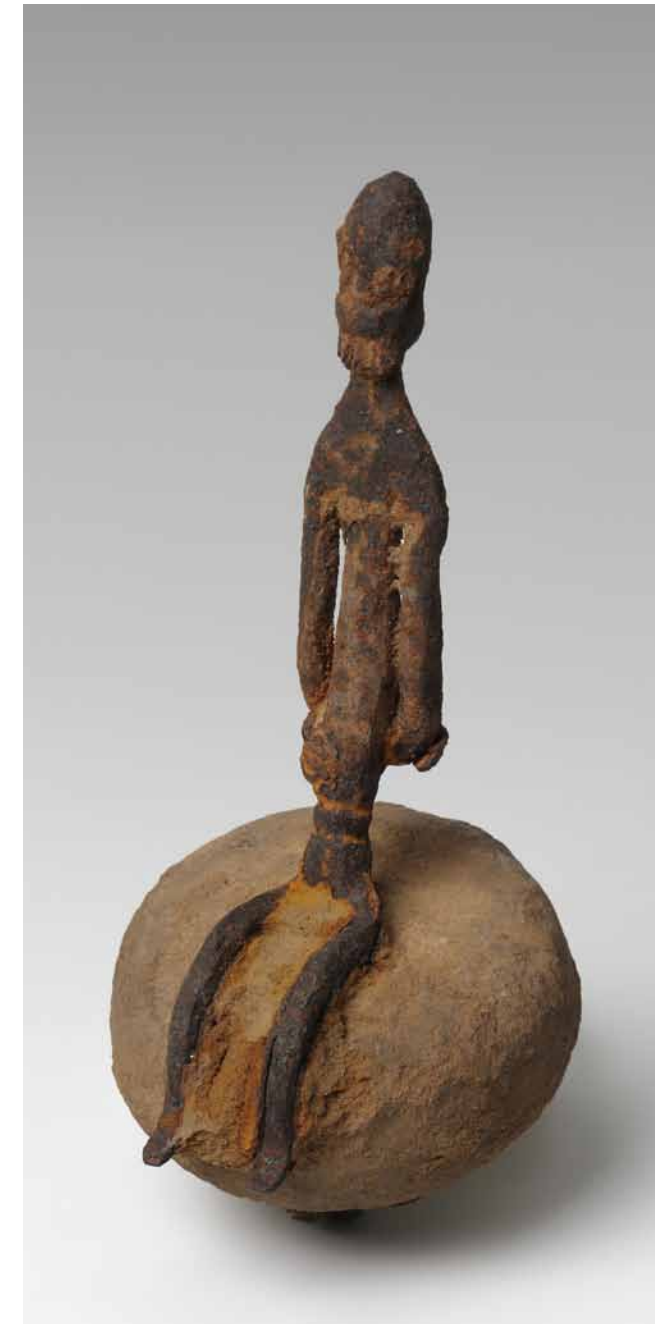
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iron





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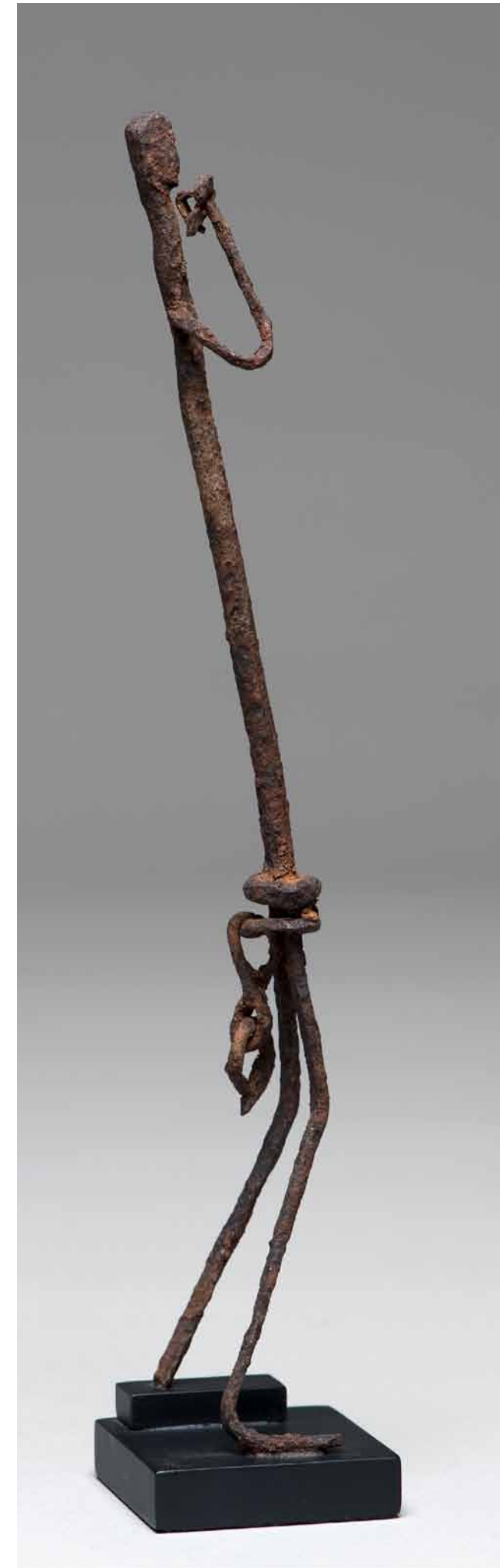
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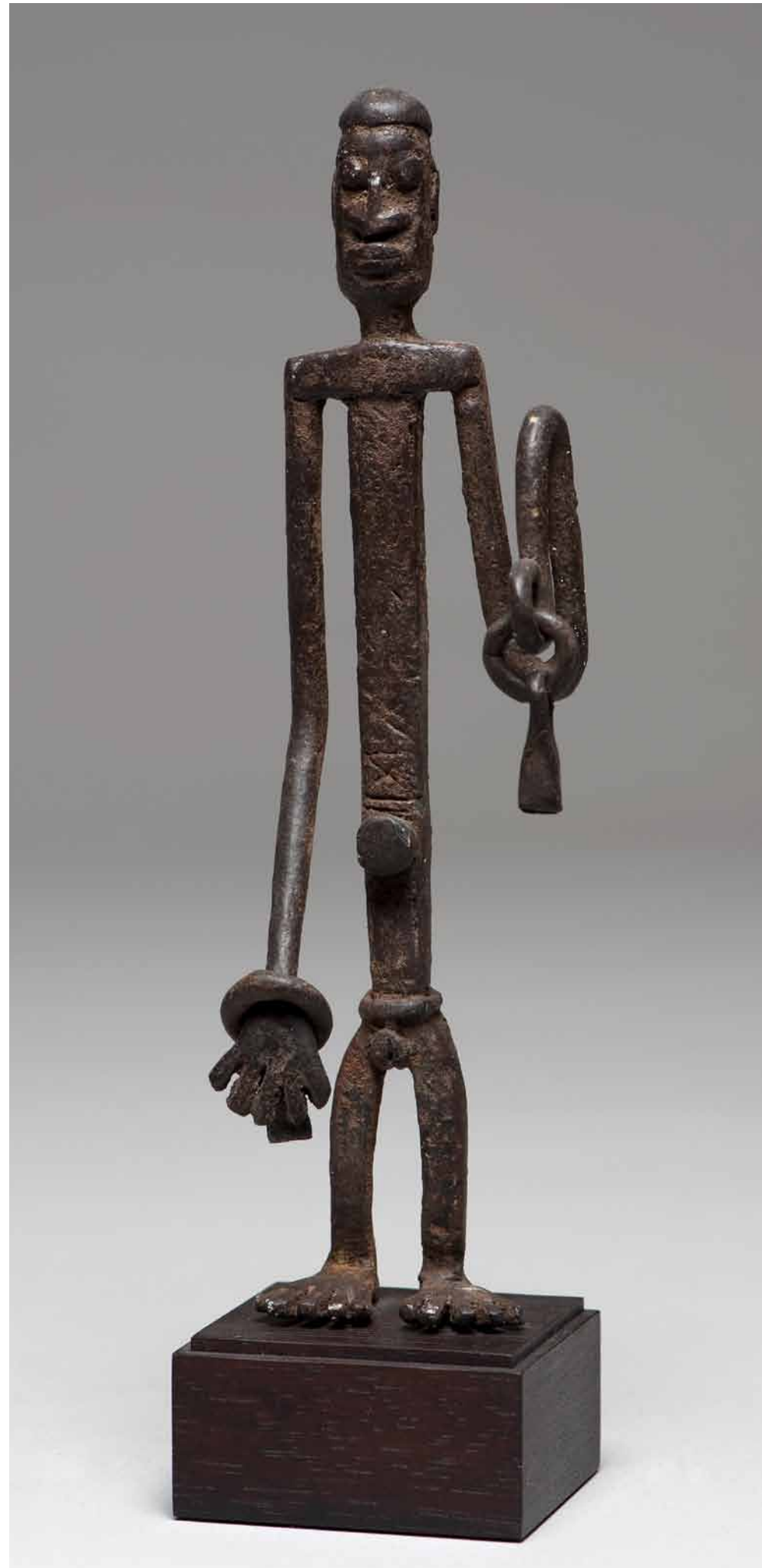
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stone
and
terracotta



130.1
131

132
133

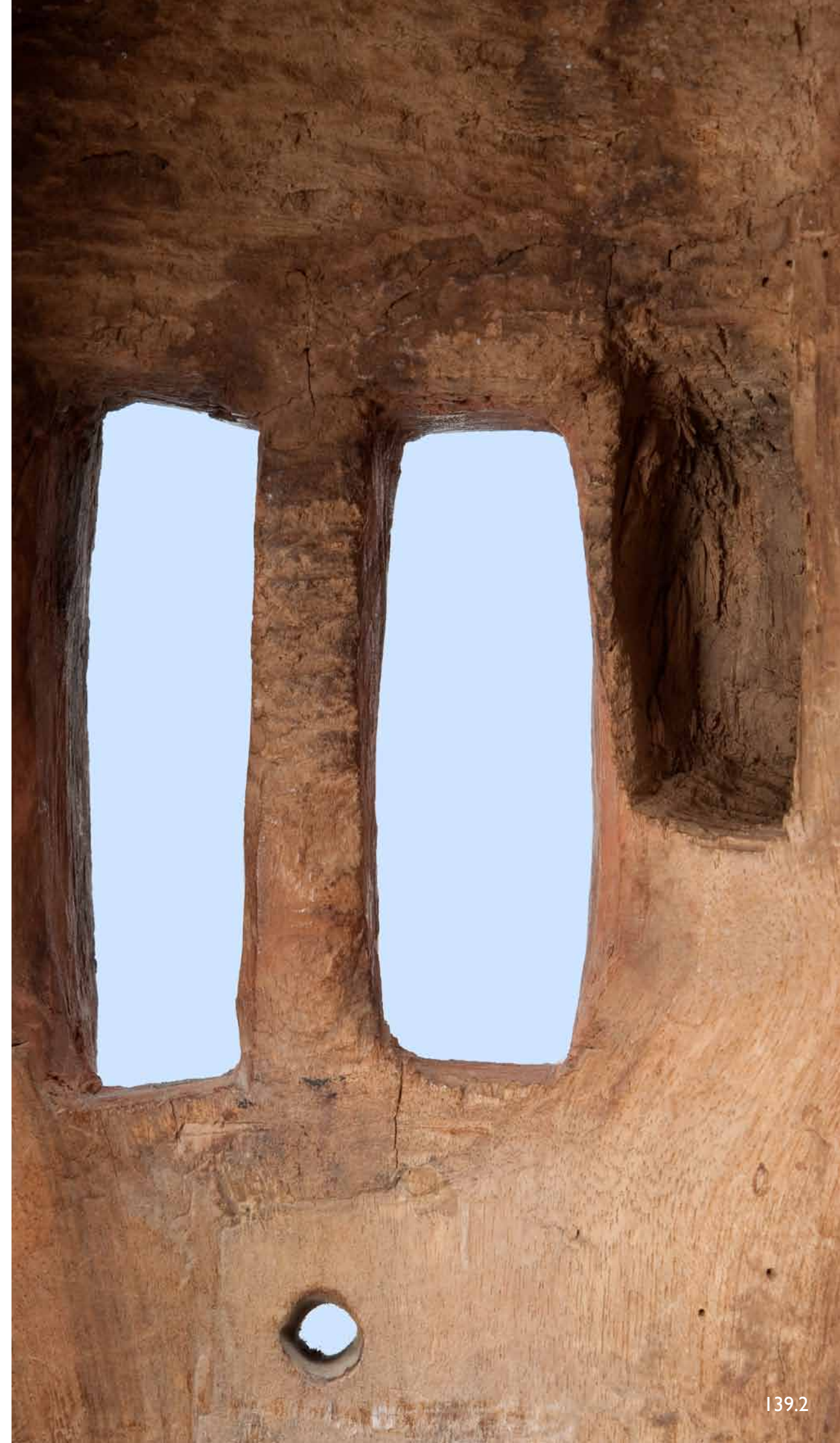
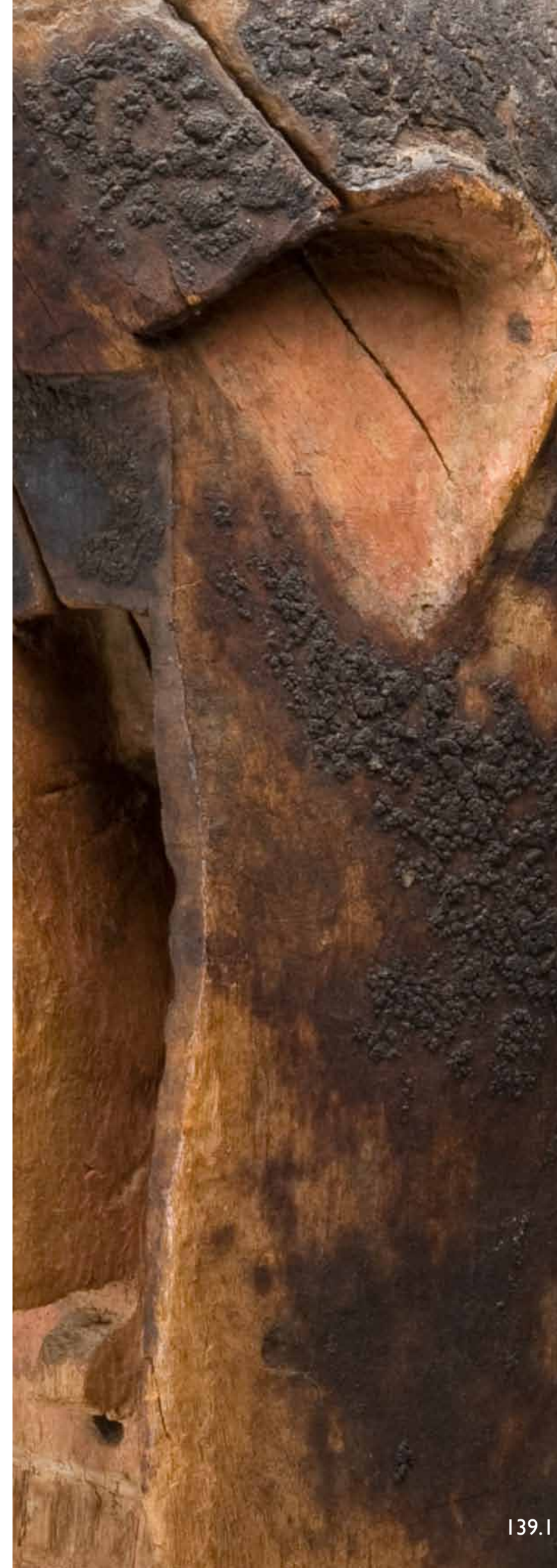
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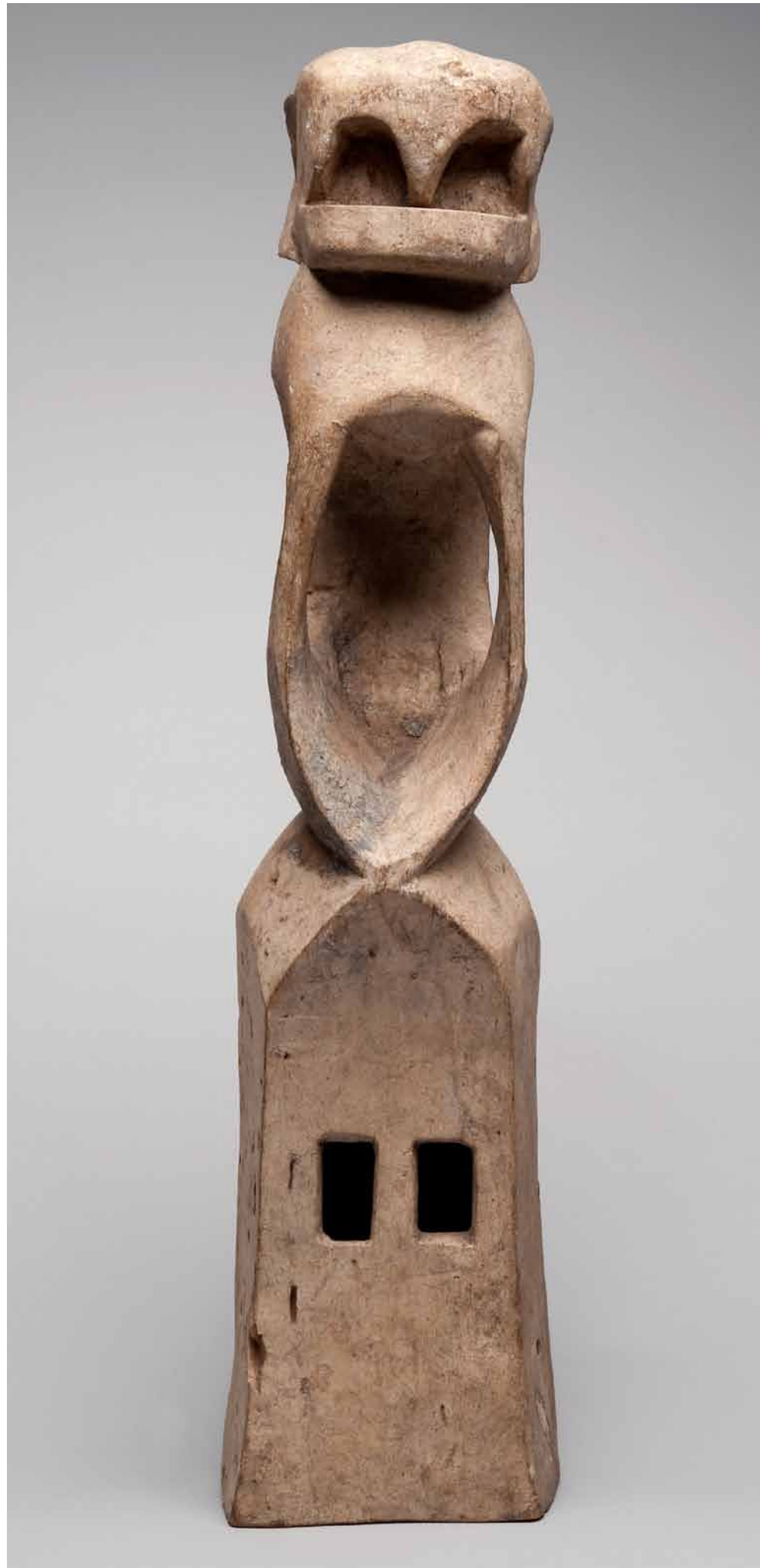


masks





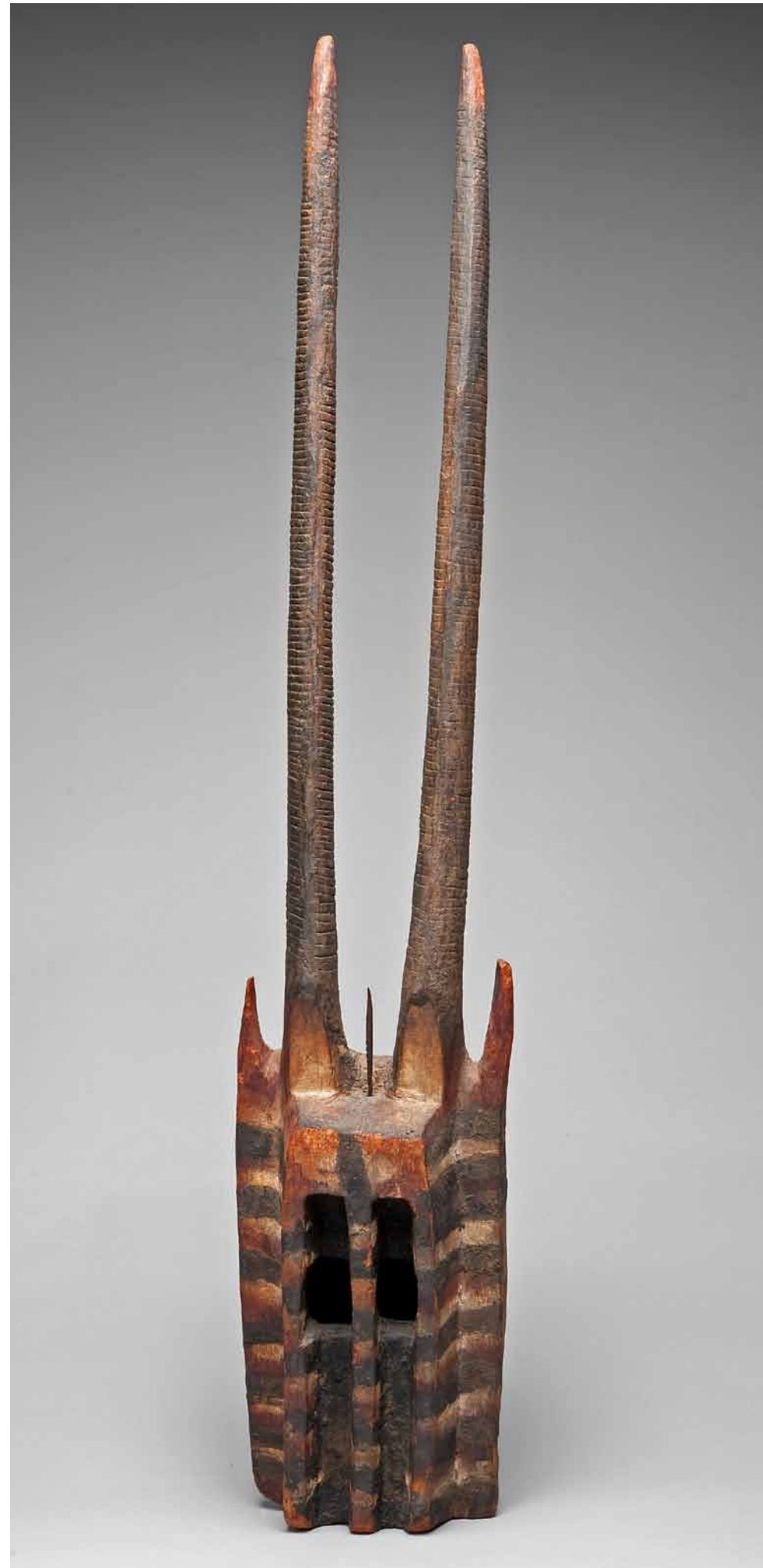




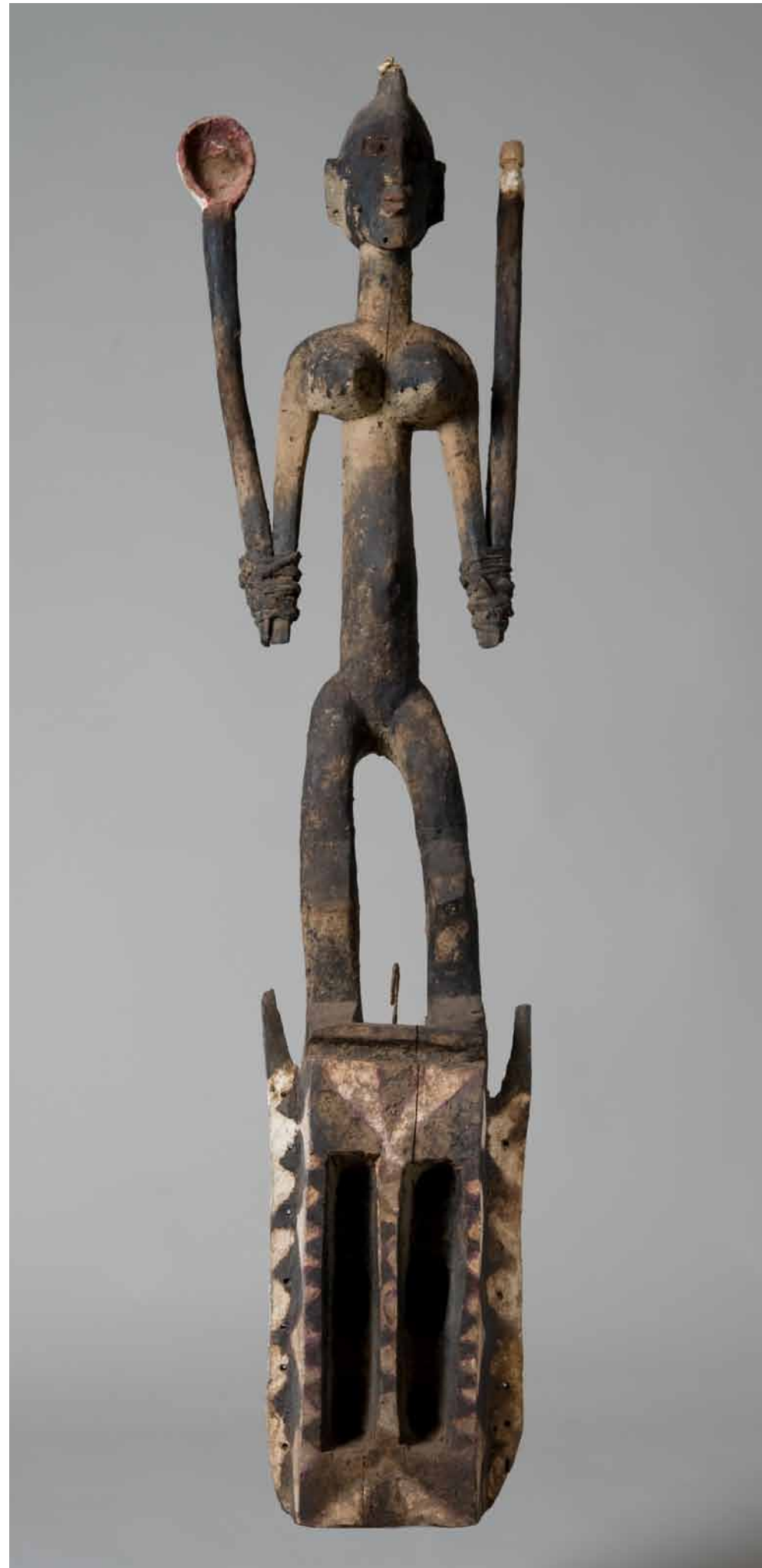
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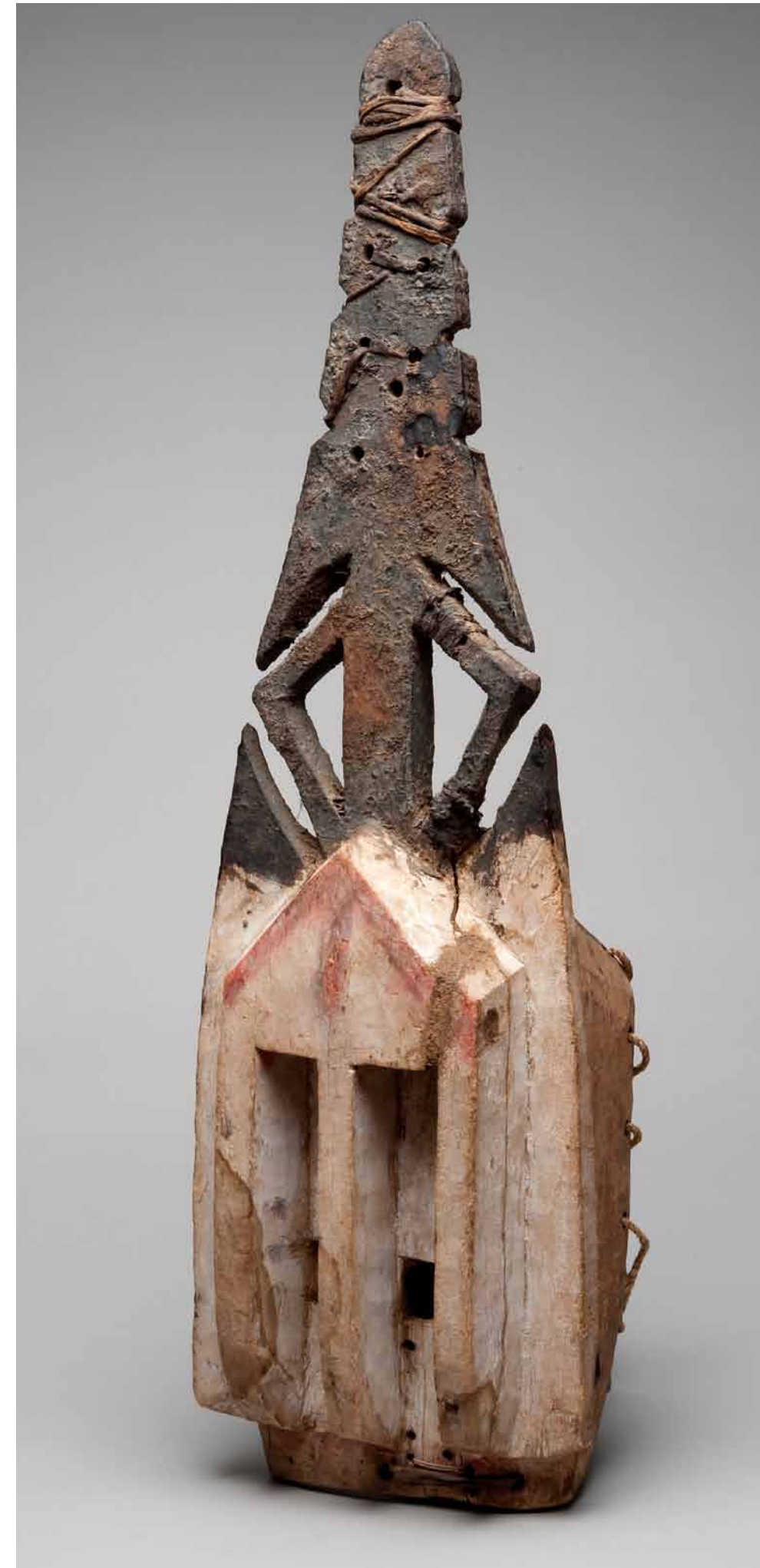


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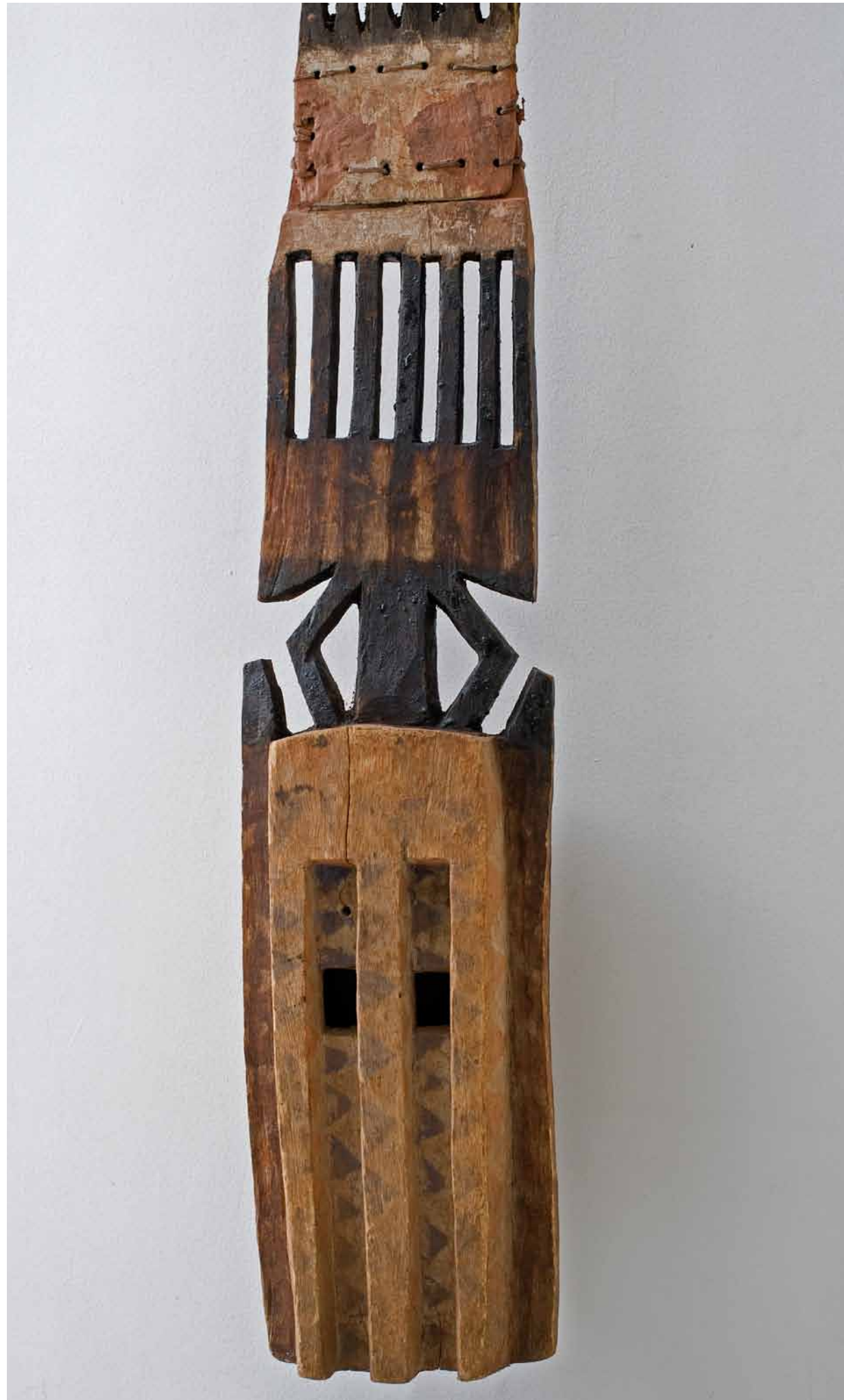
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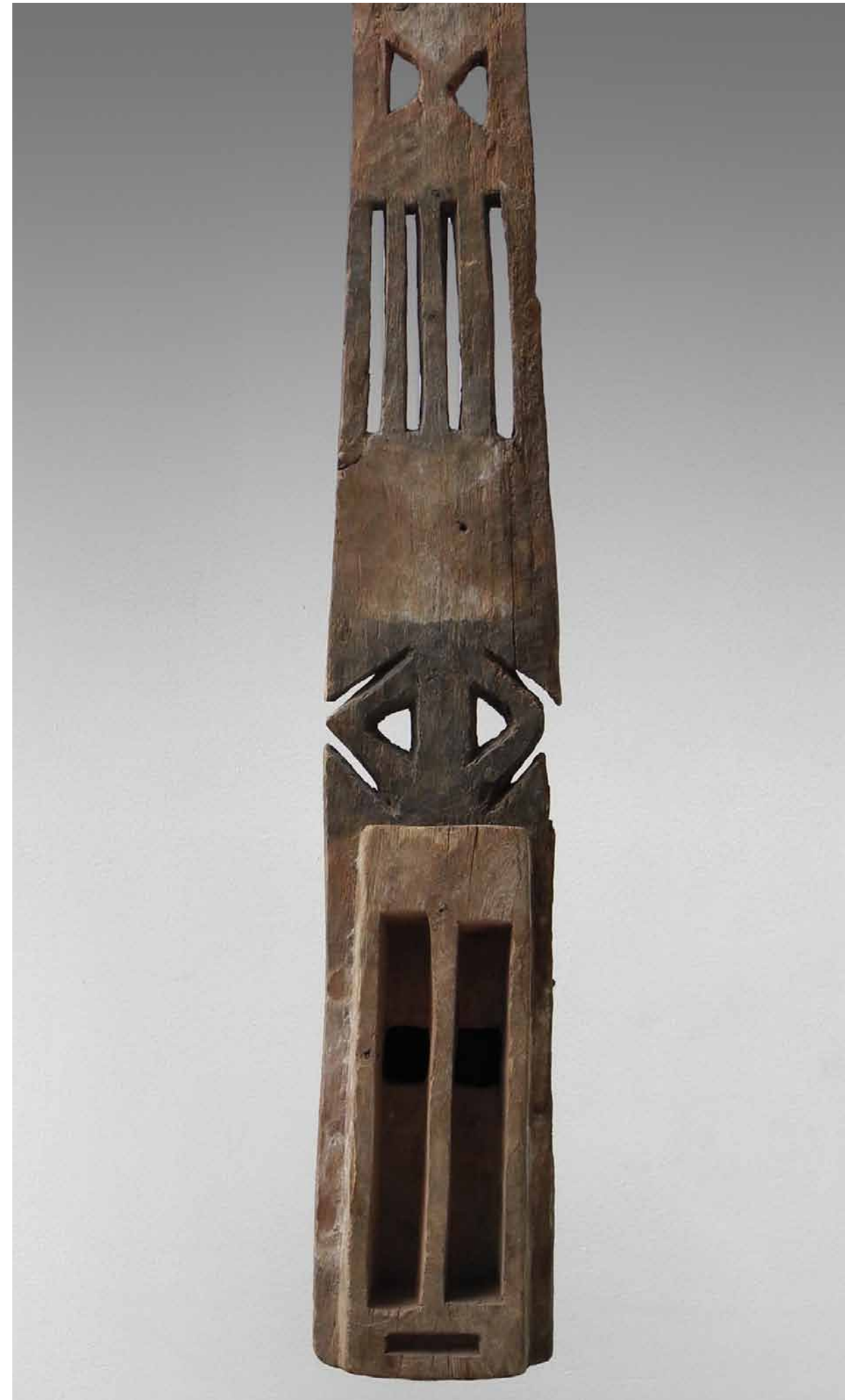




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147.1



148



148.1



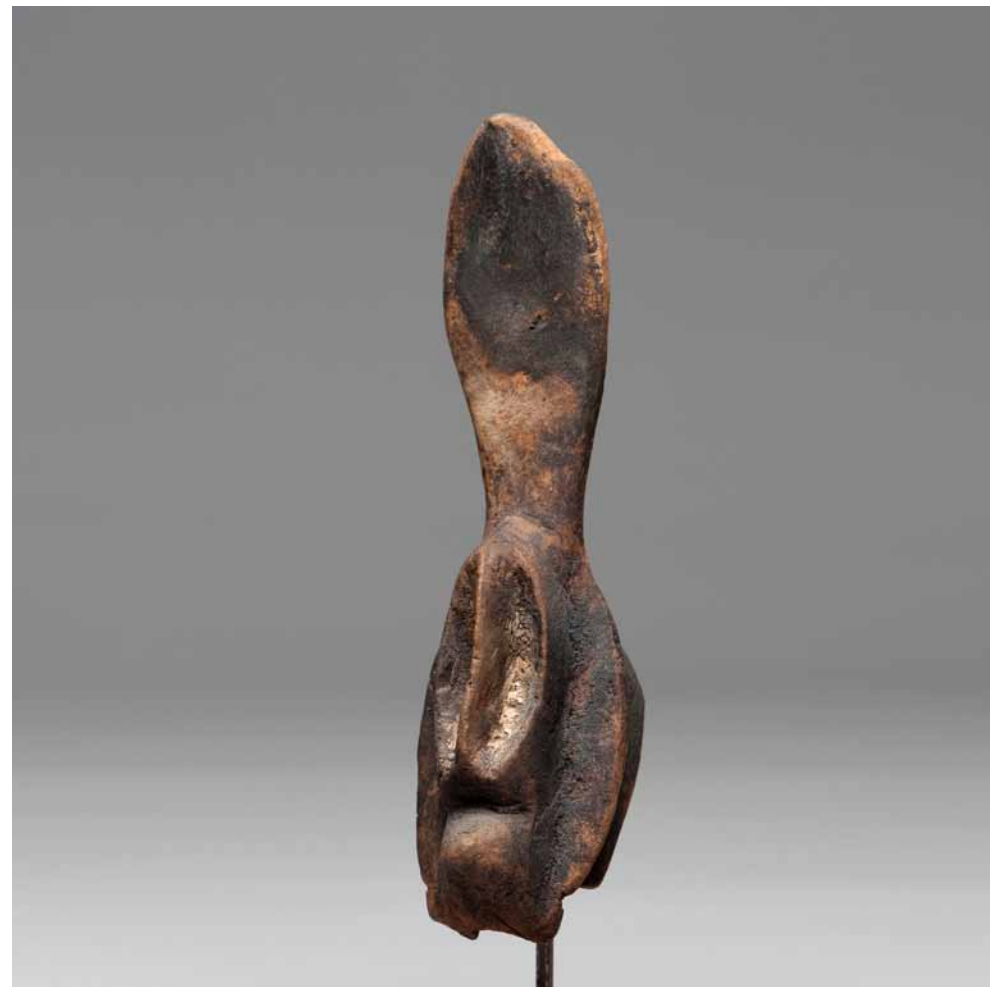








158
159



160
161



162



miscellaneous
ritual
objects



hatchet
and adze



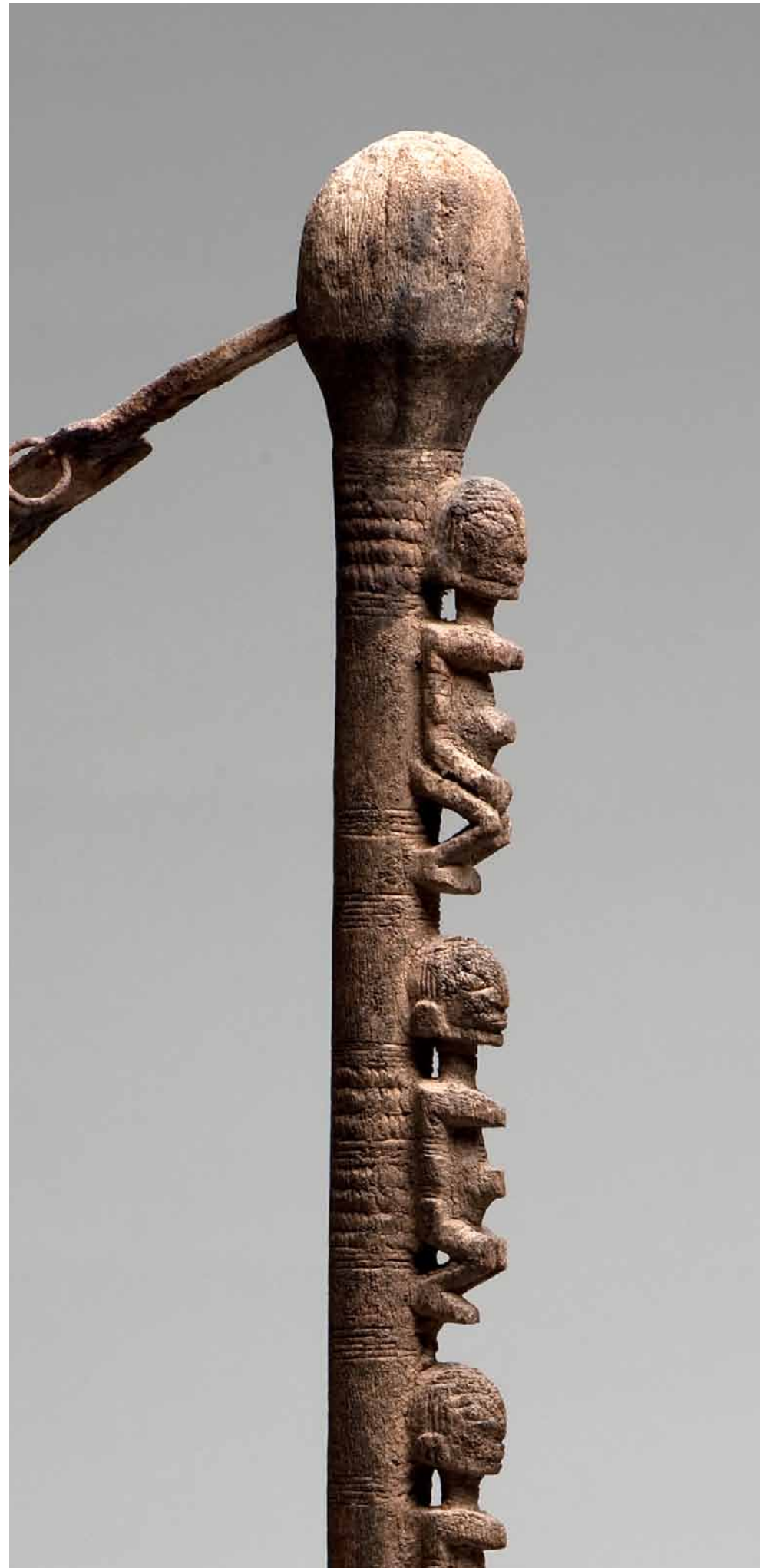
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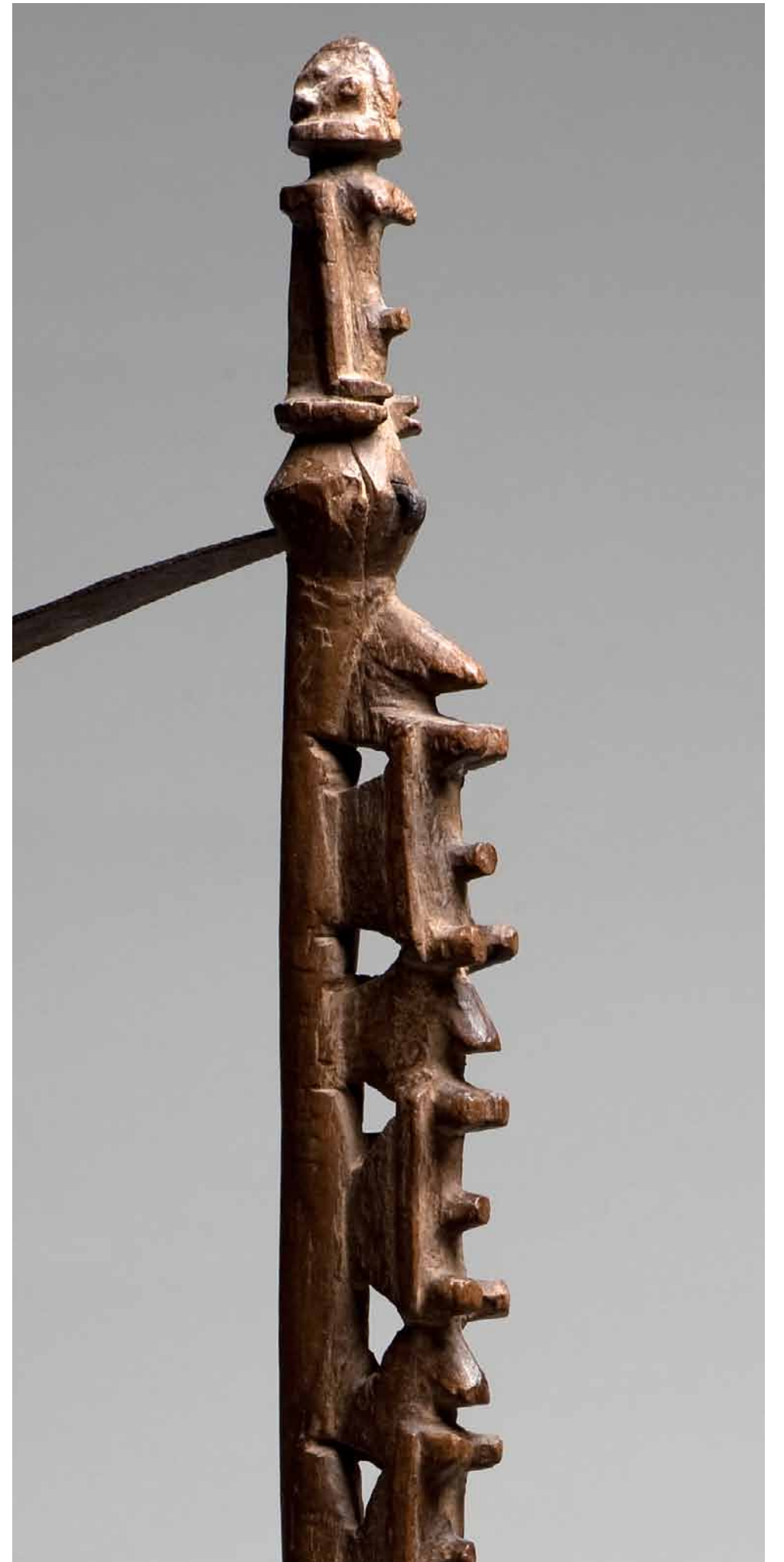
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165.1



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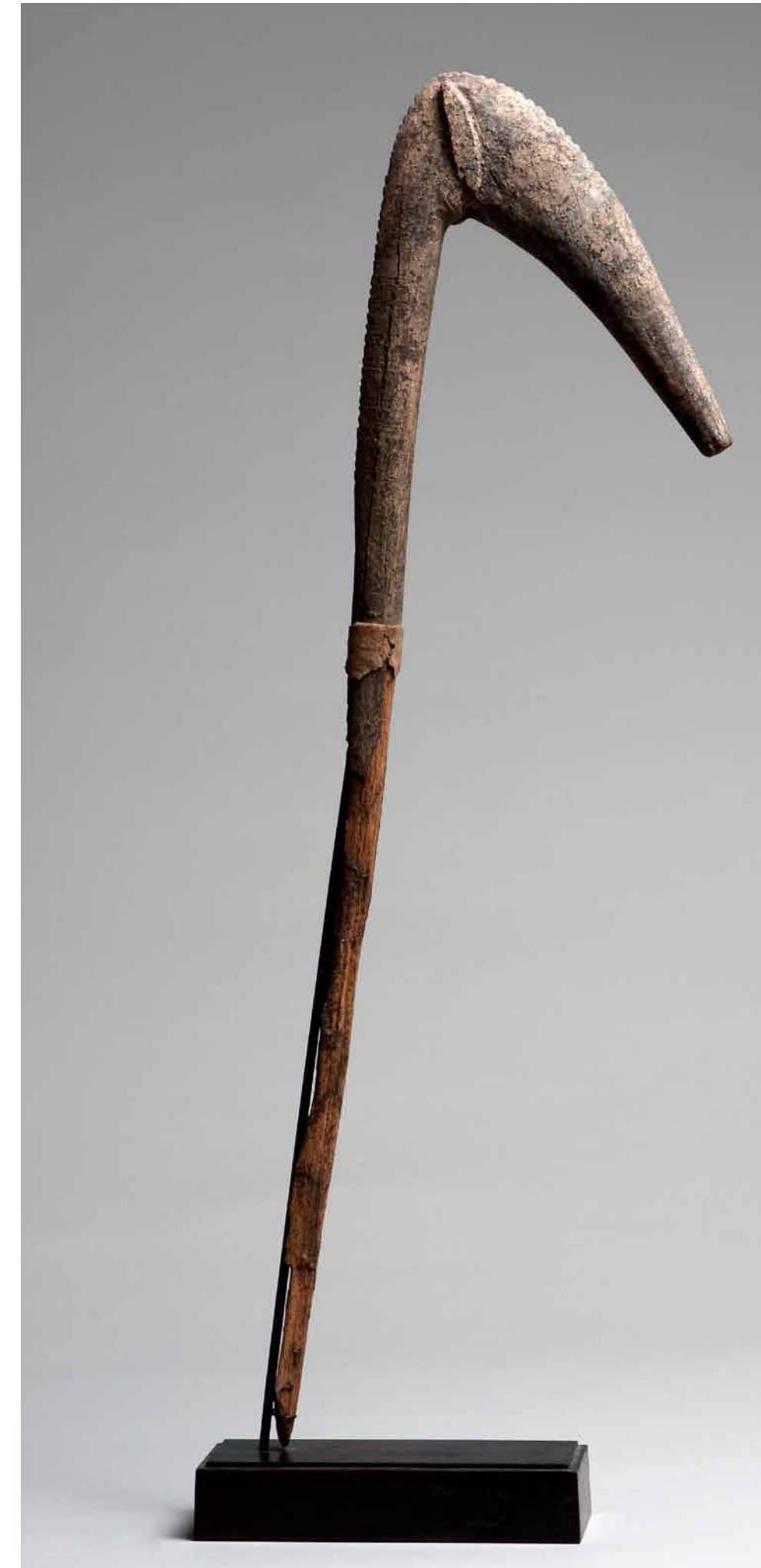


166.1





yo domolo
crook





173



174



170.1



175



objects from
the wagem





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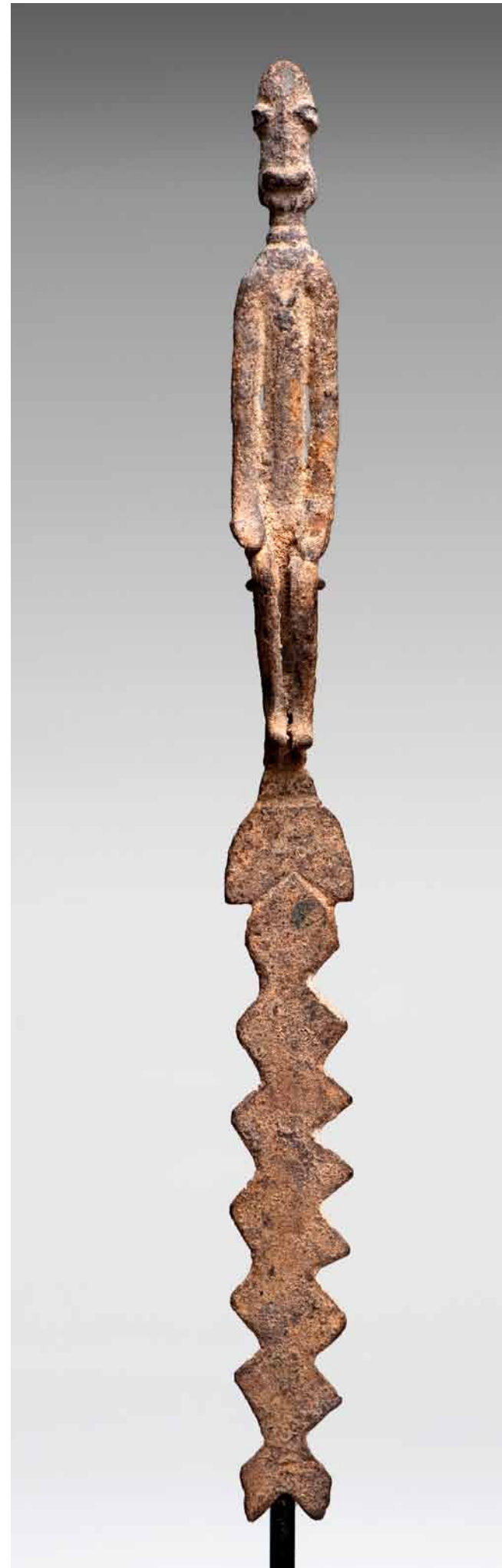
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binu irons





192



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195.1



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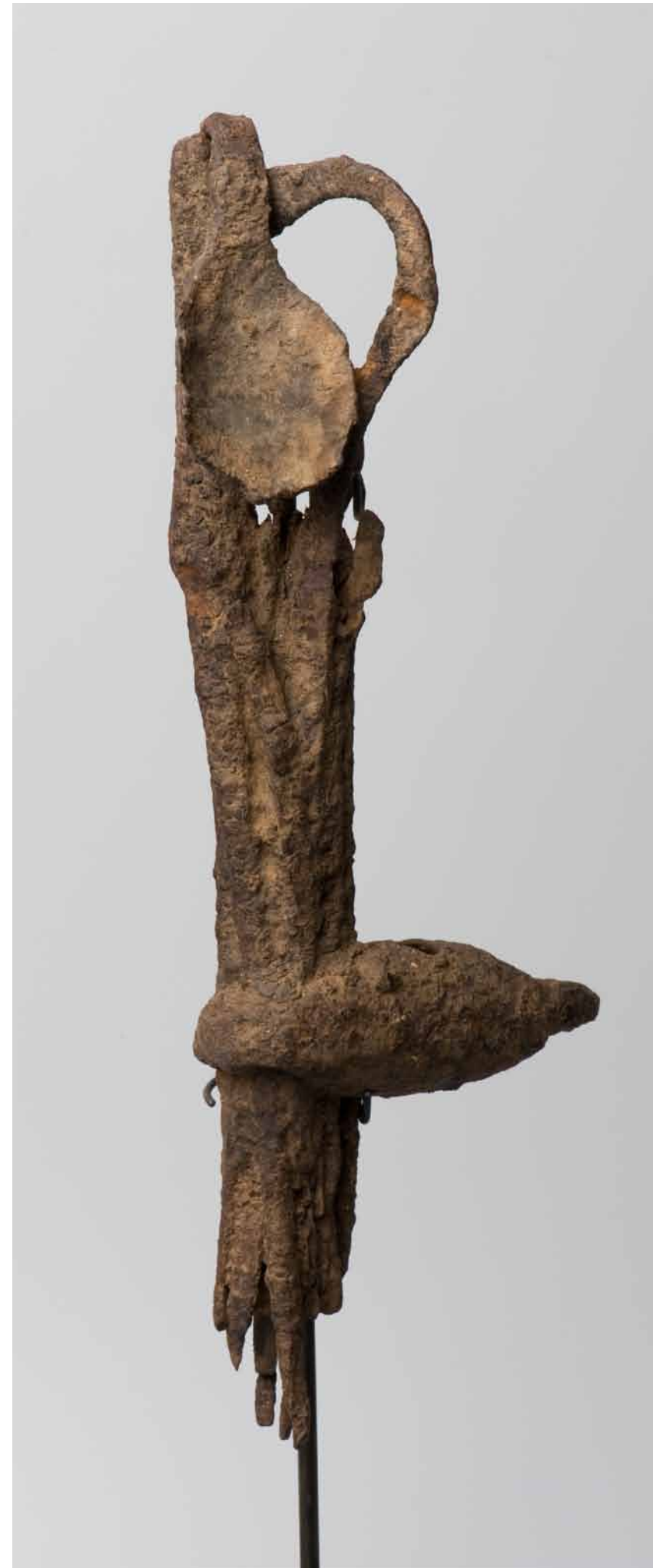
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209



210



211



212



212.1



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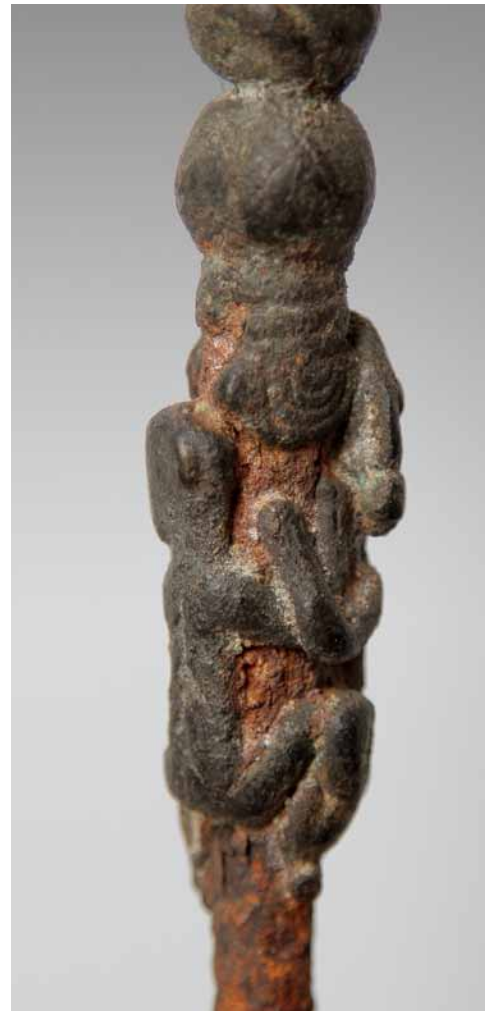
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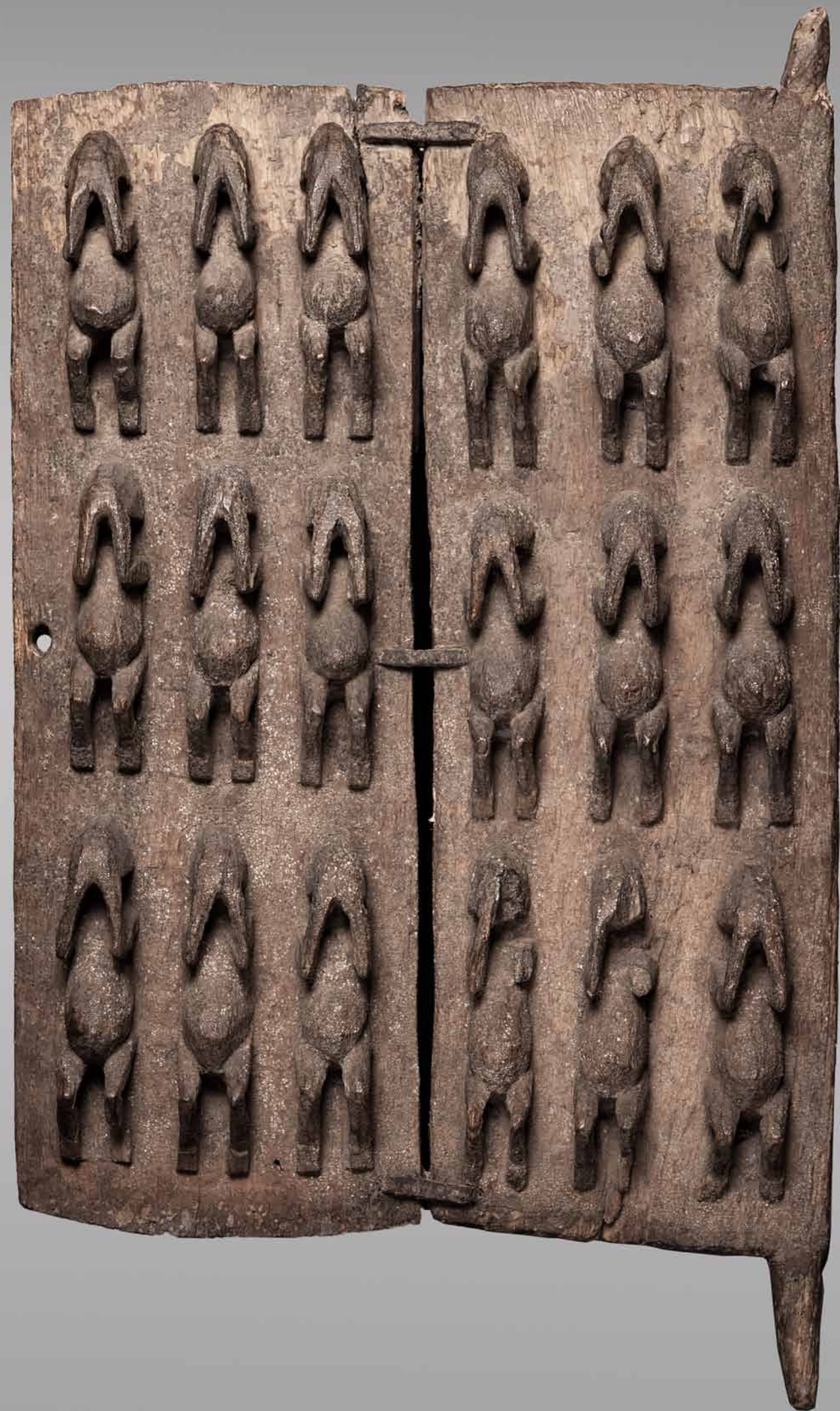
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architectural
elements







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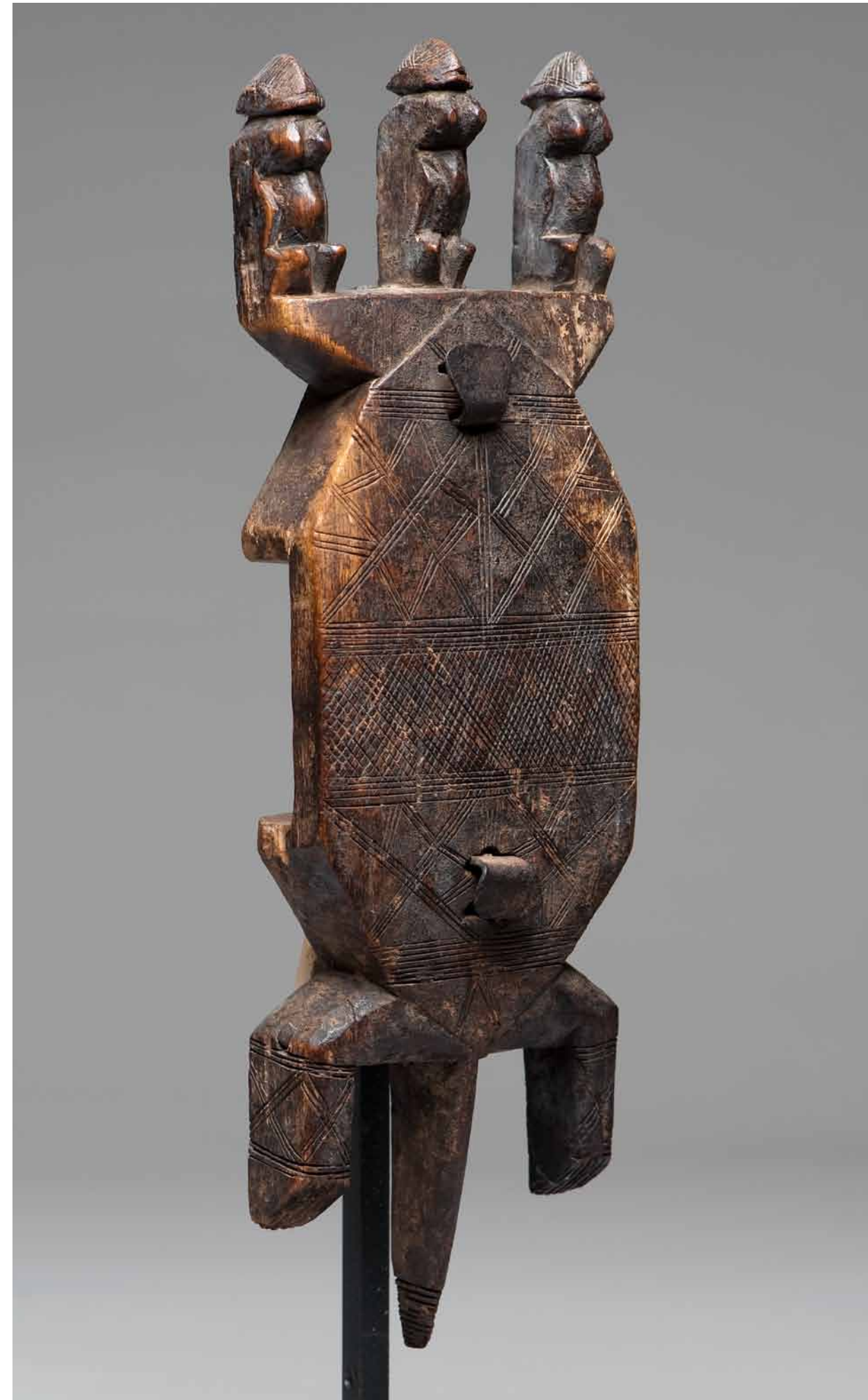




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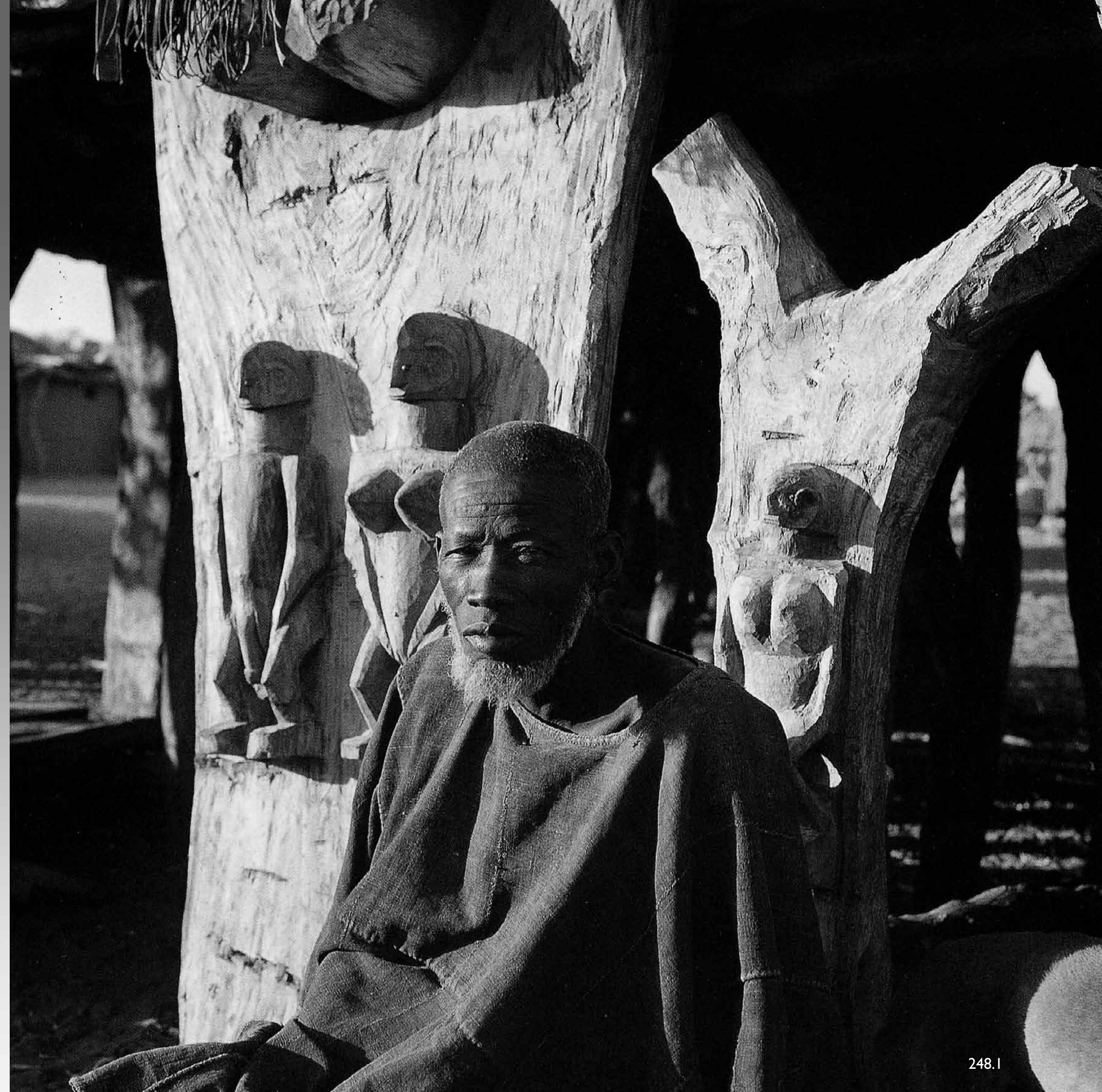
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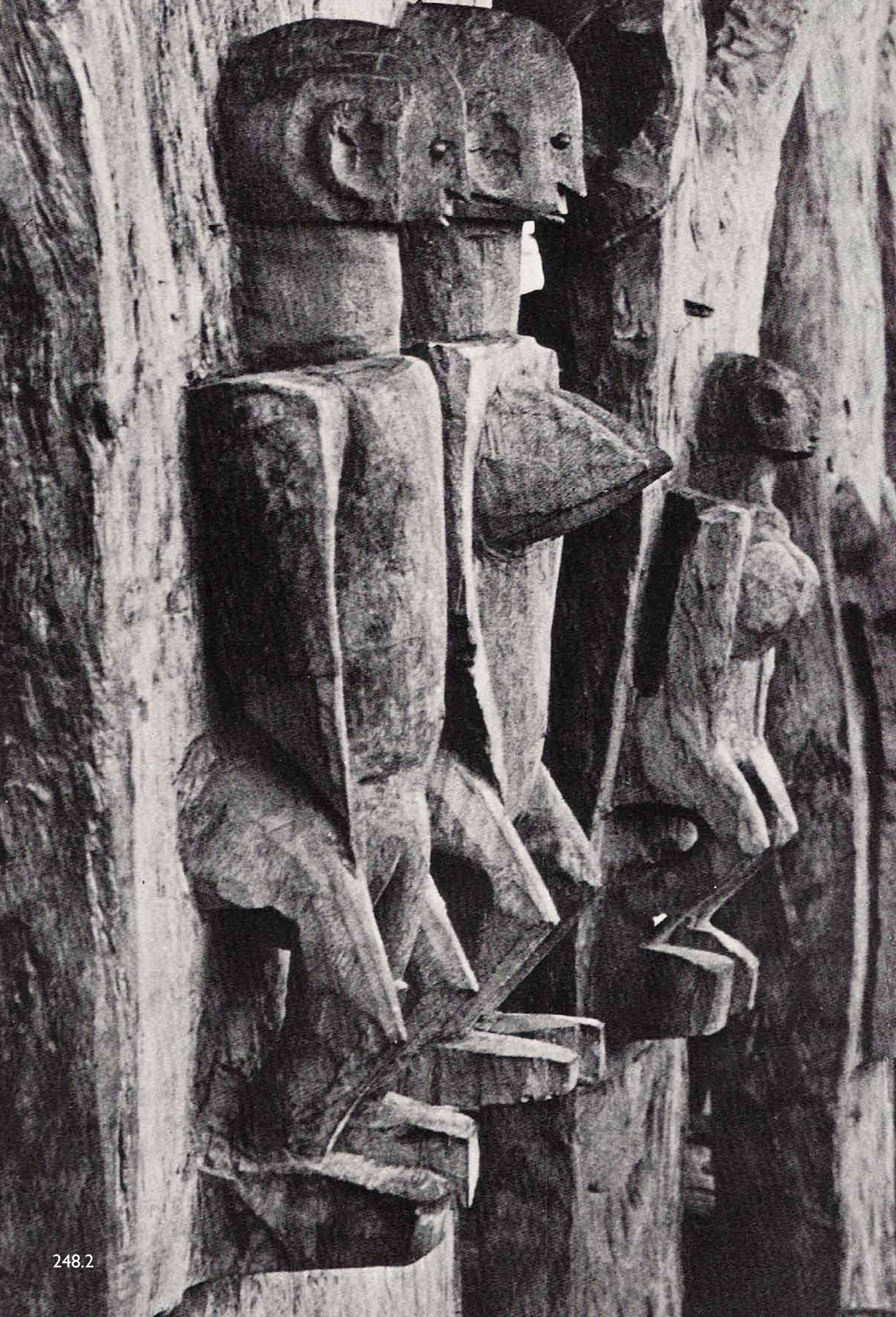


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248.3



musical instruments





249.1



249.2
249.3



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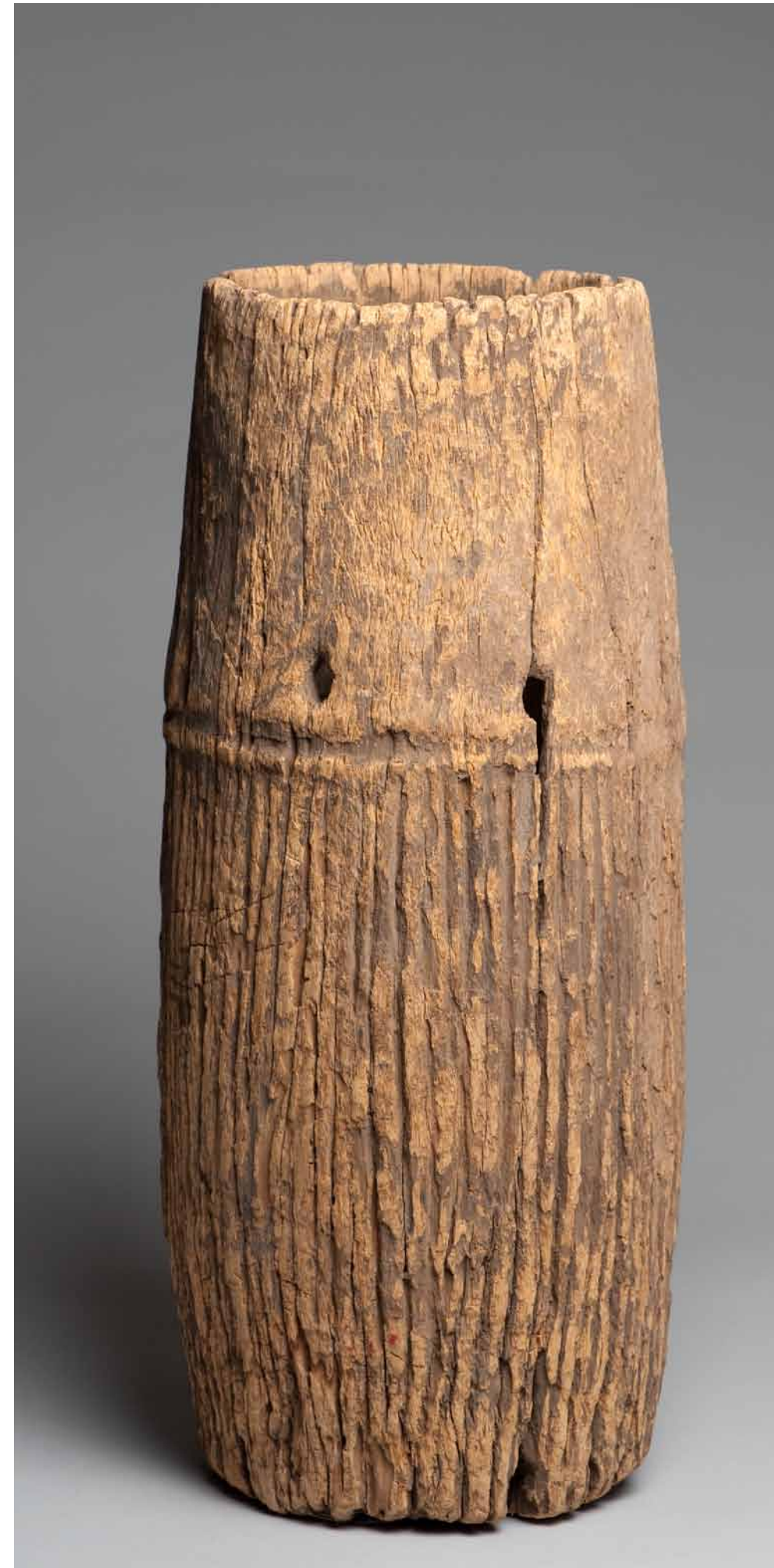


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adornments



bracelets





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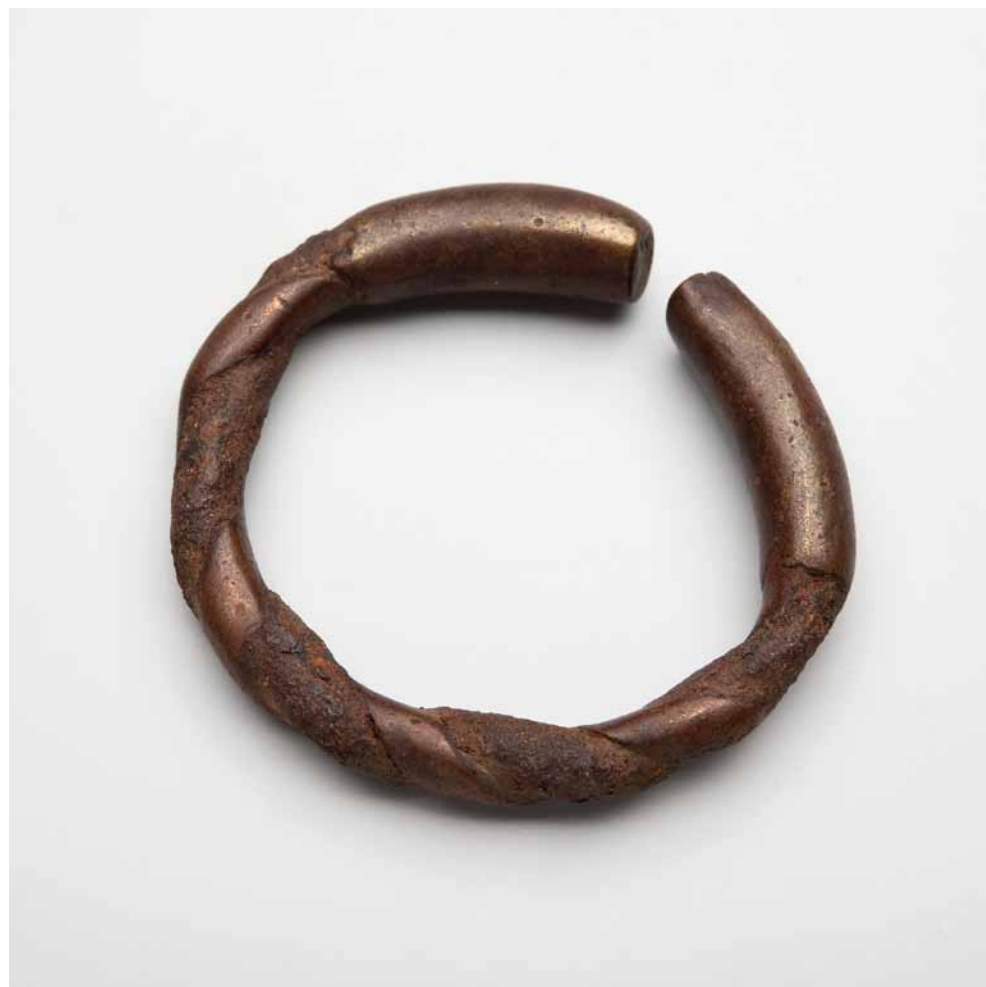
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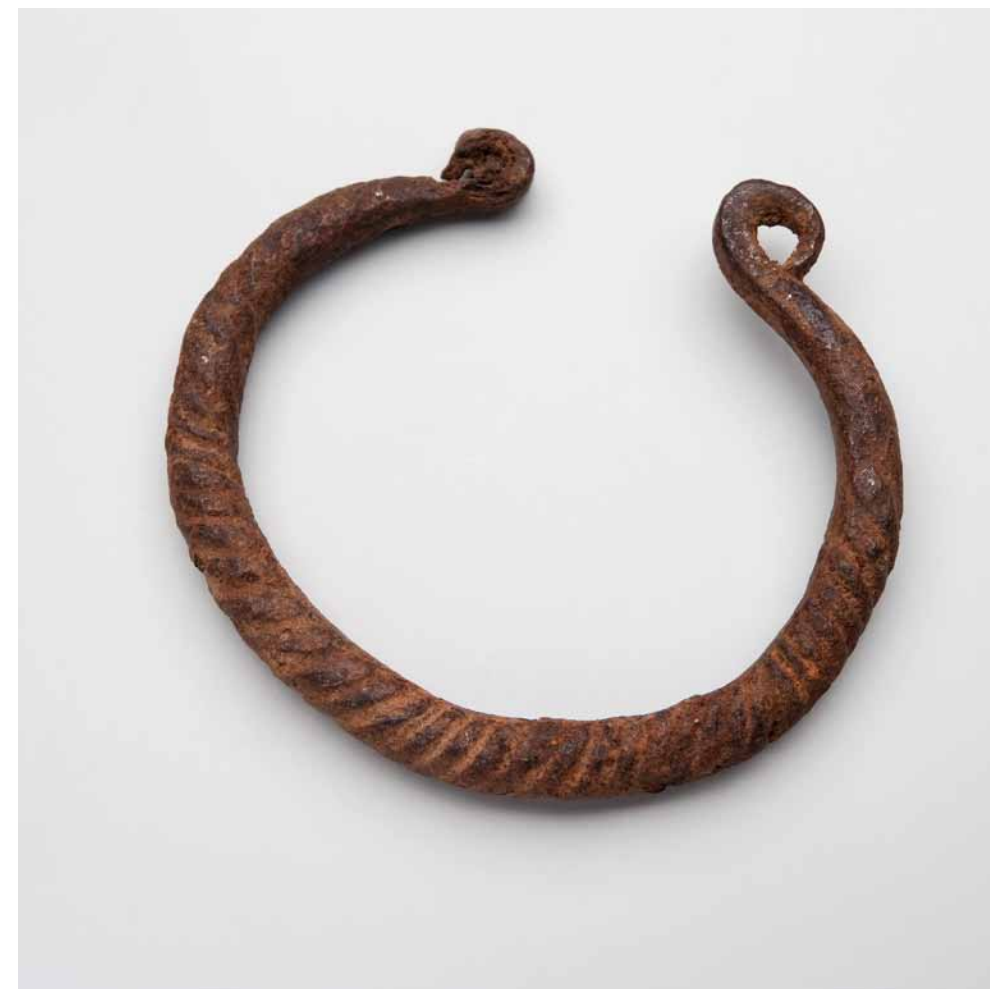
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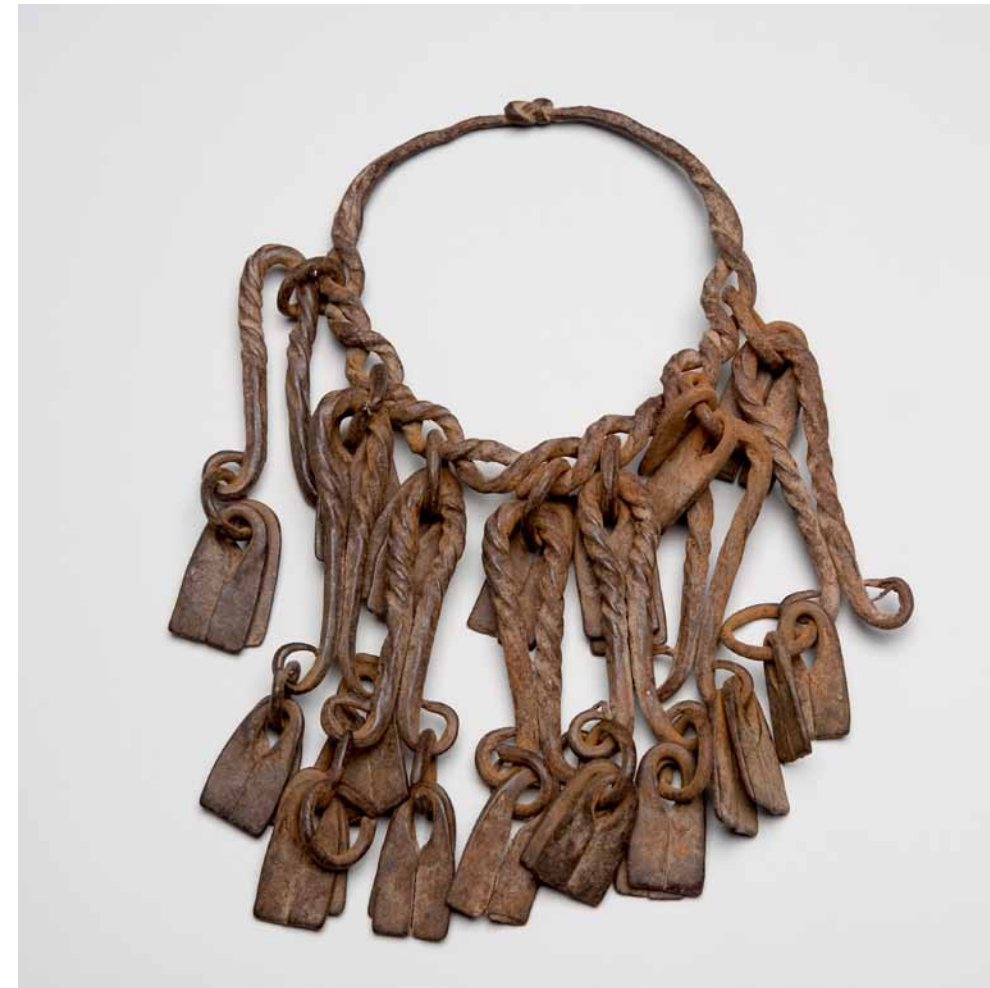




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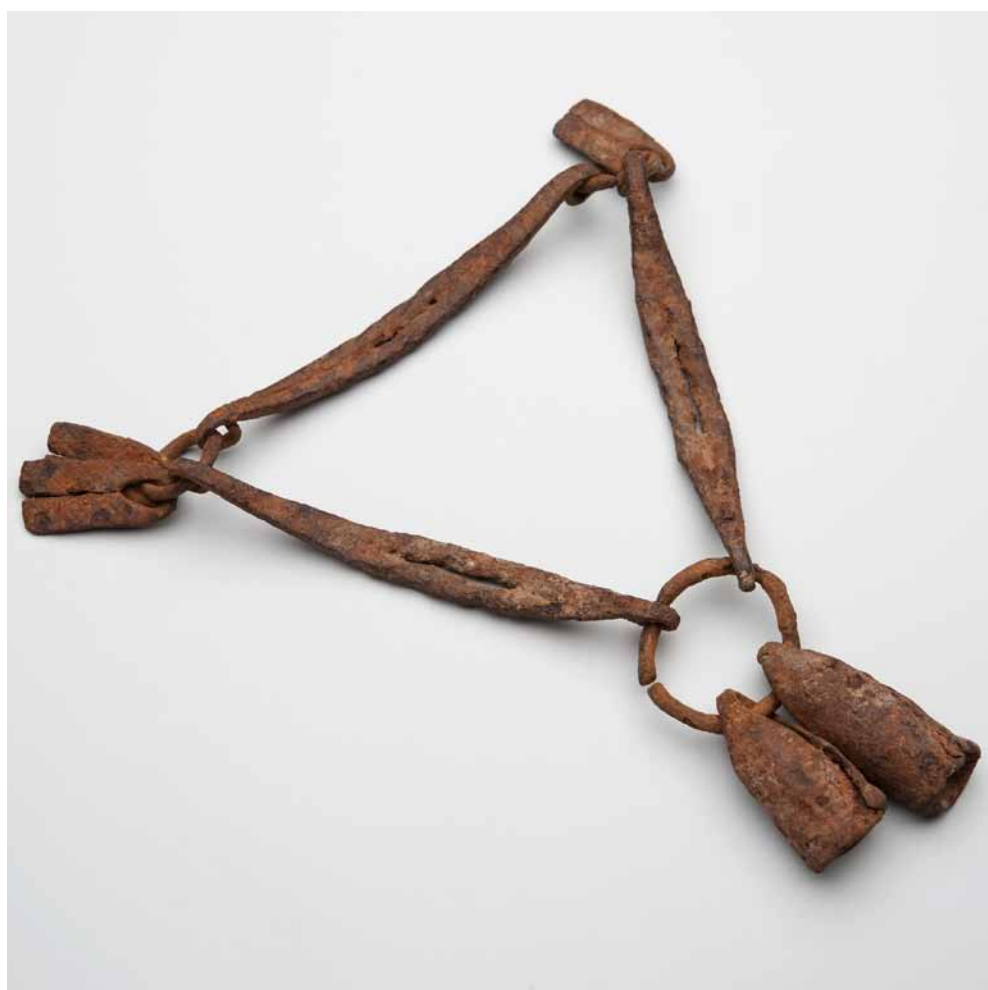
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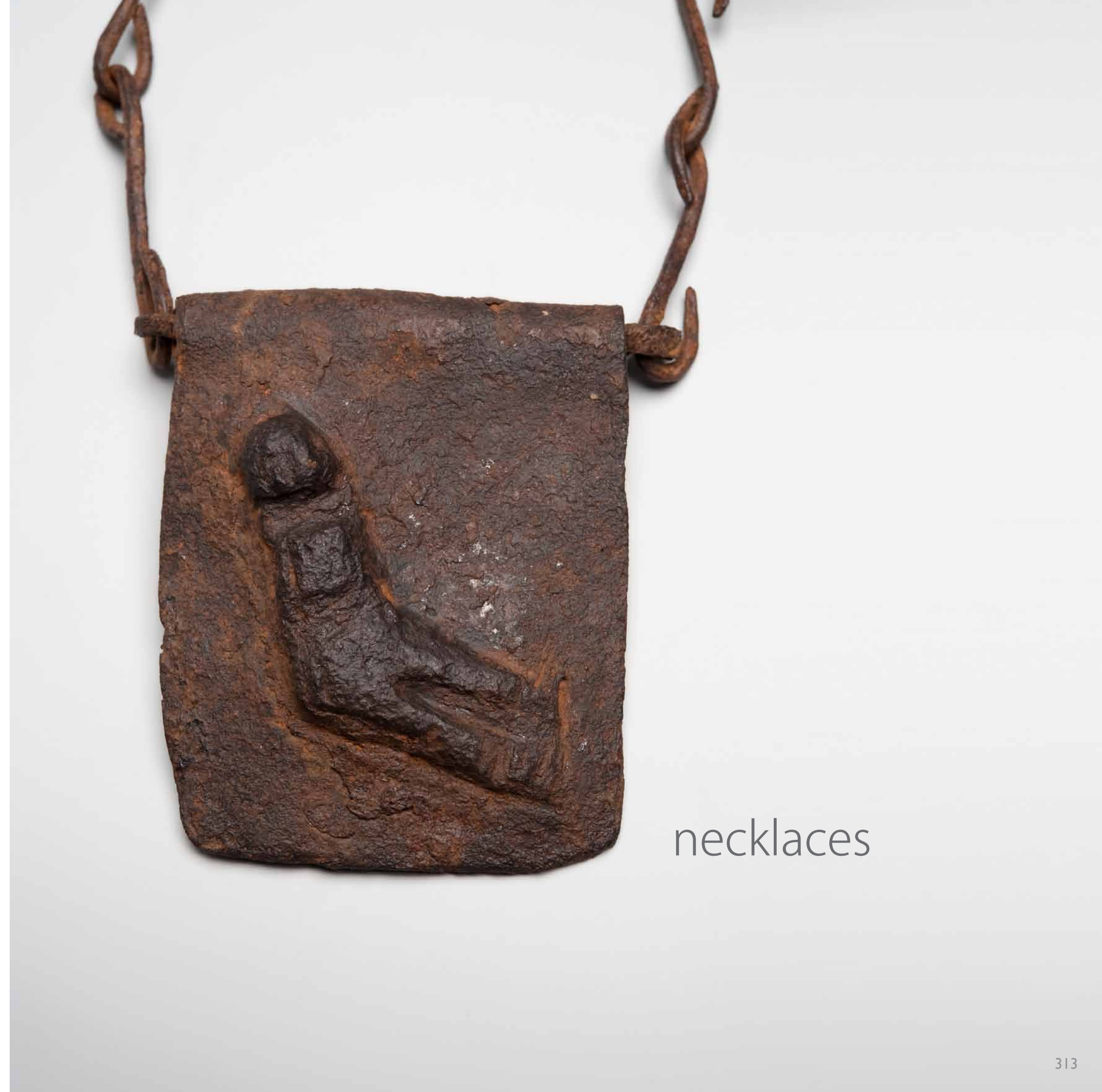




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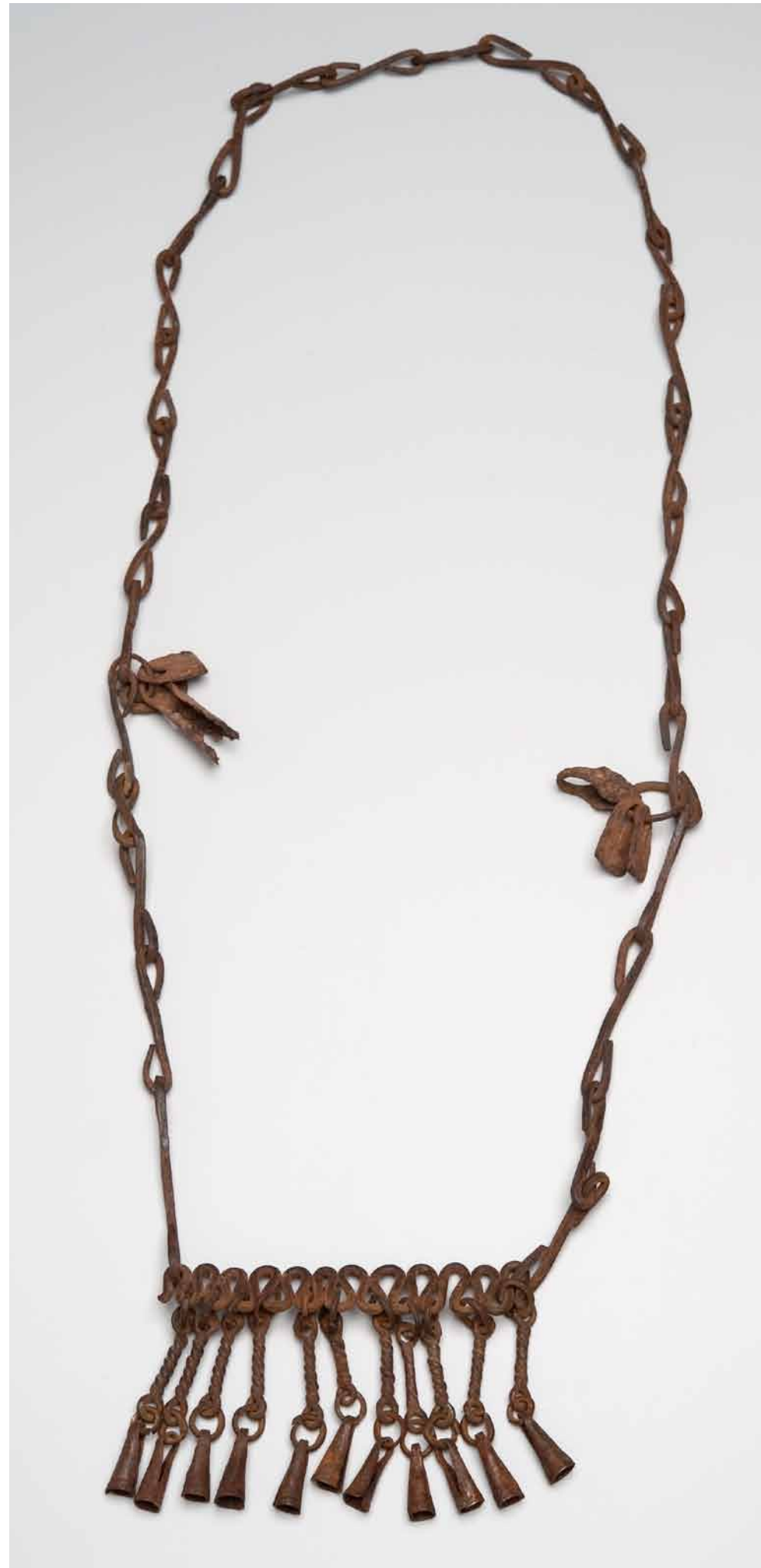


necklaces

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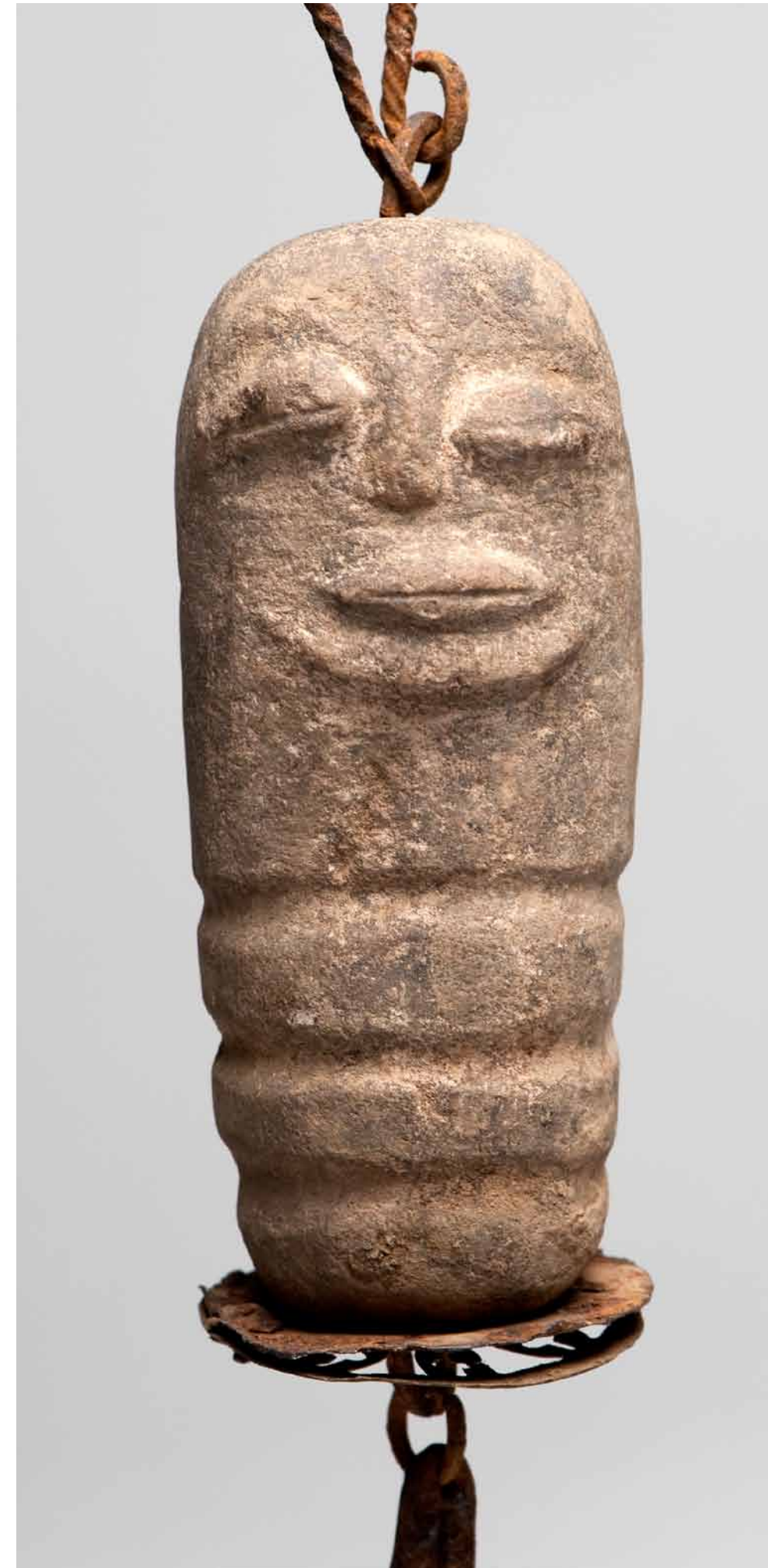
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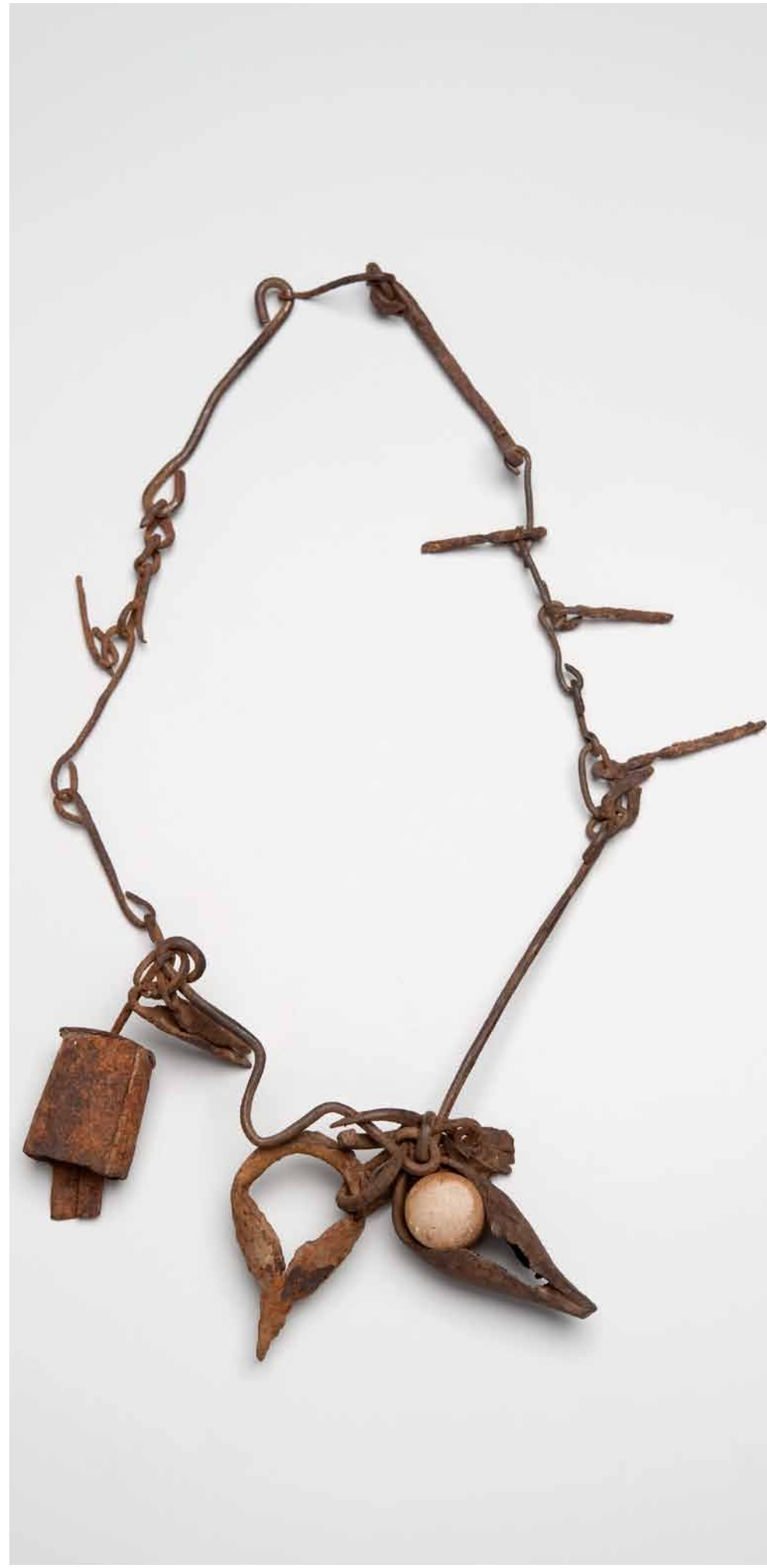
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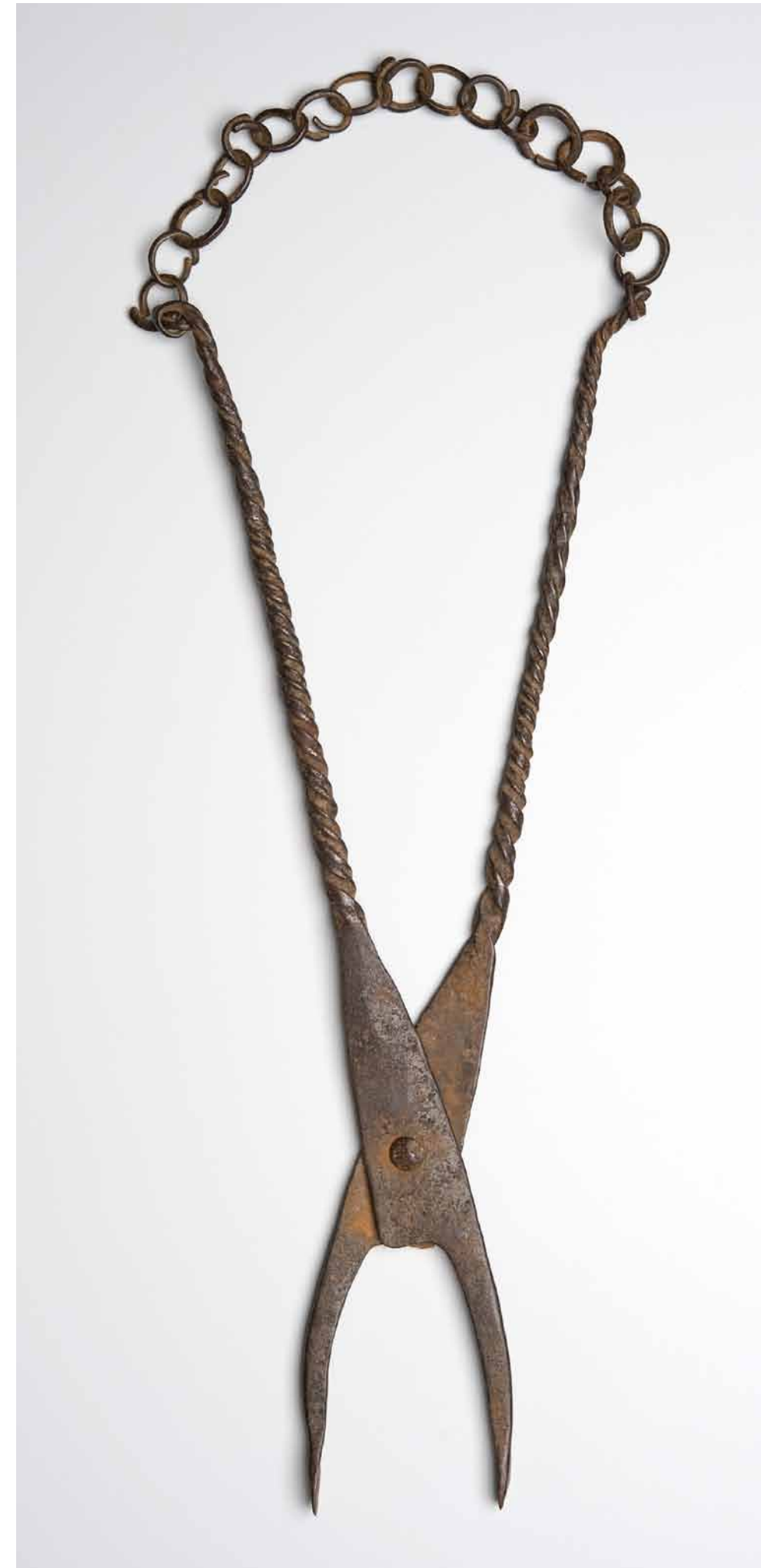
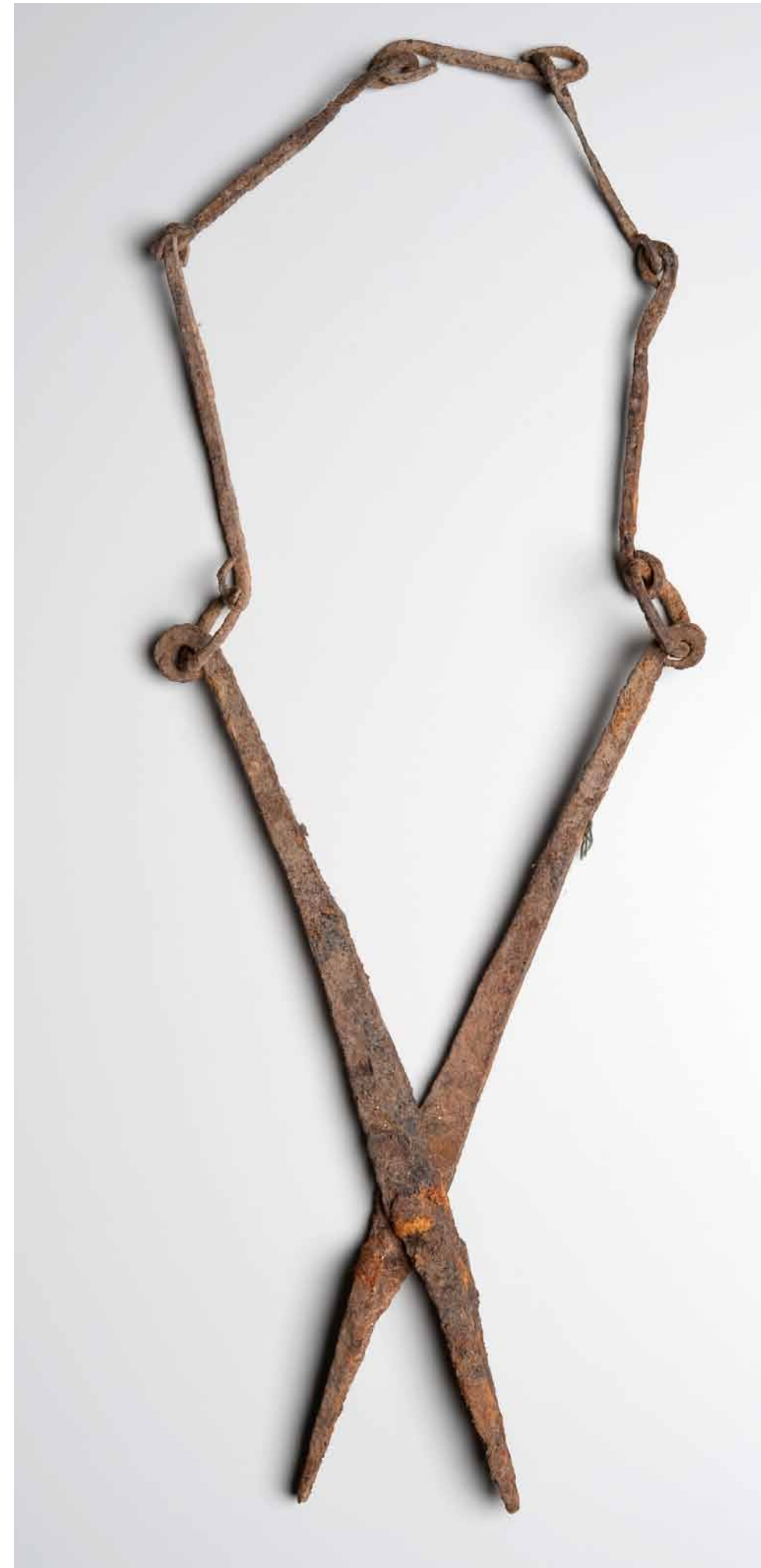
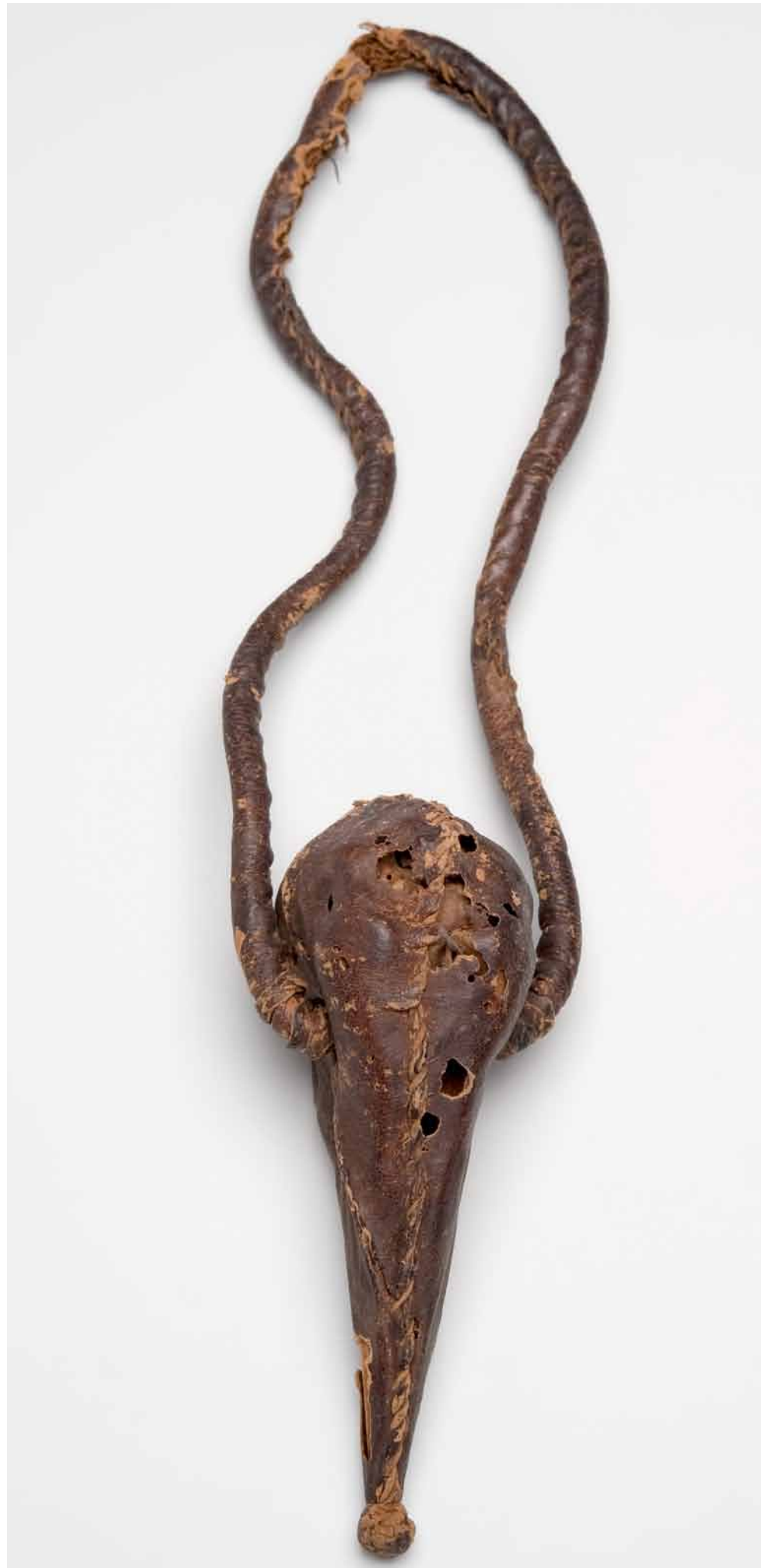
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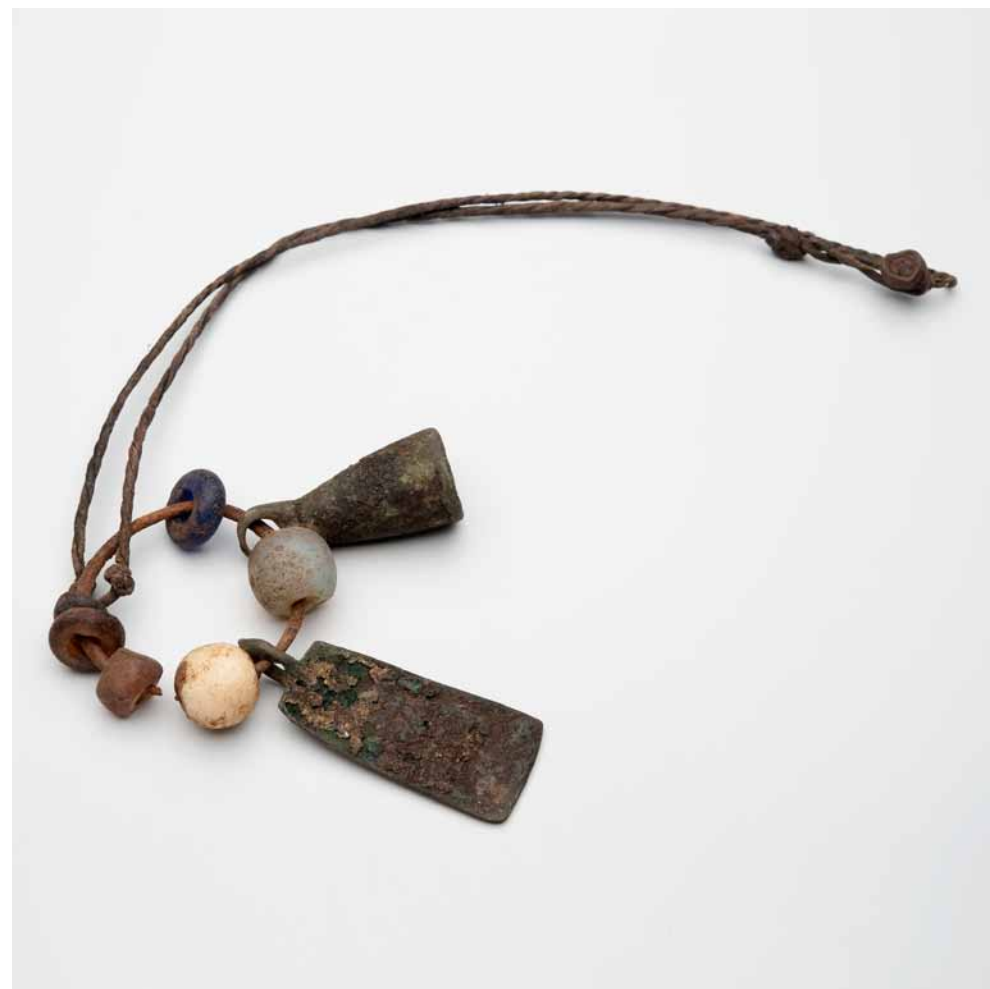
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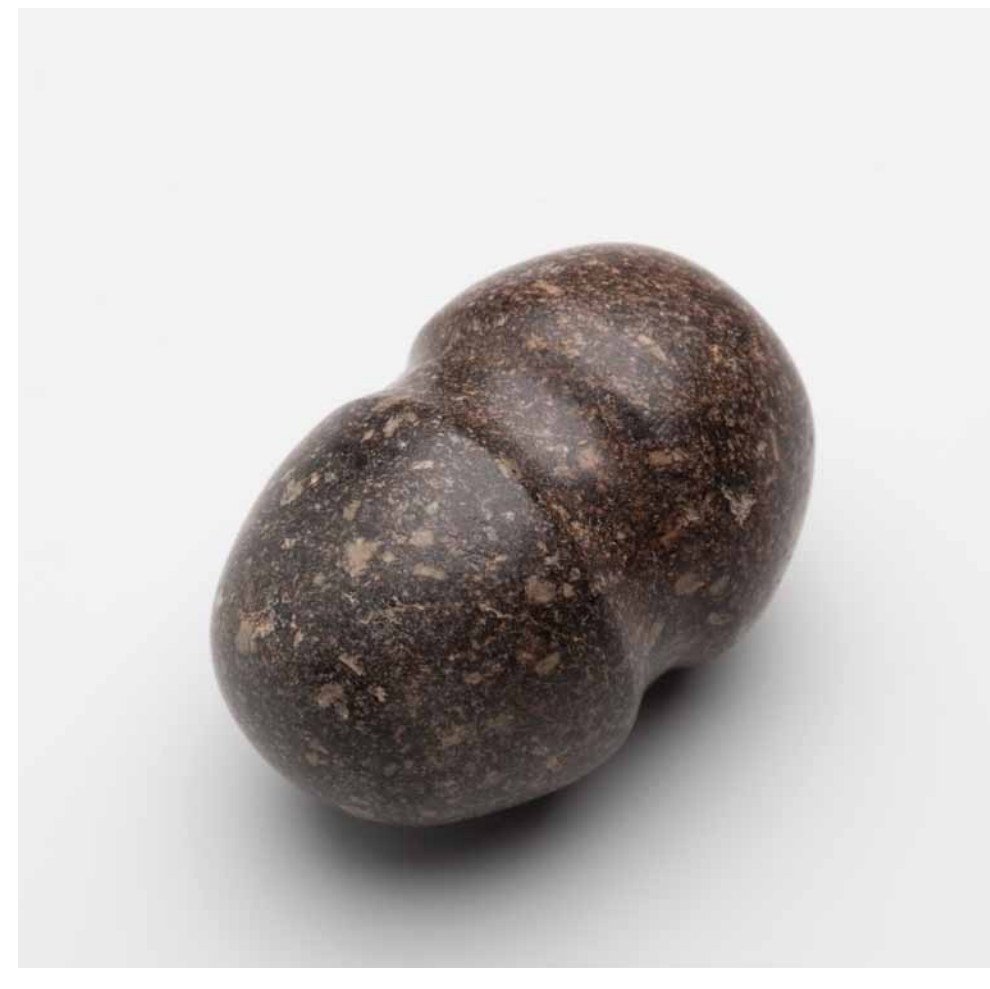




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pendants



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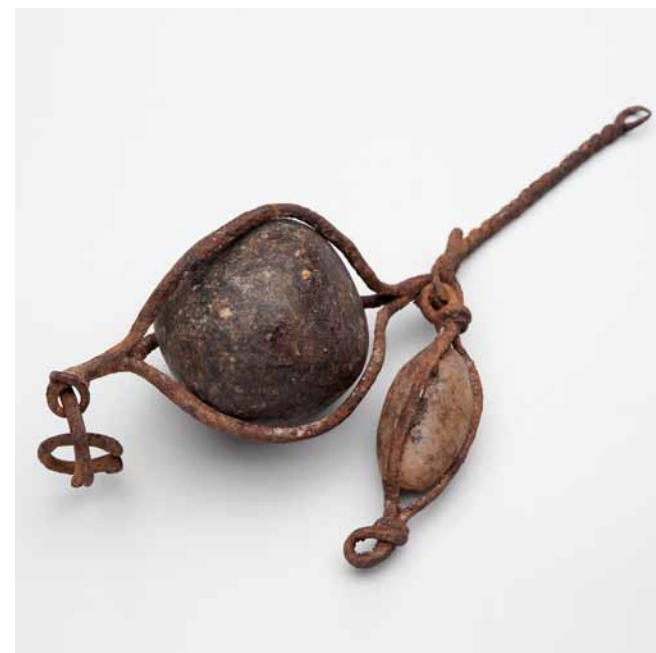
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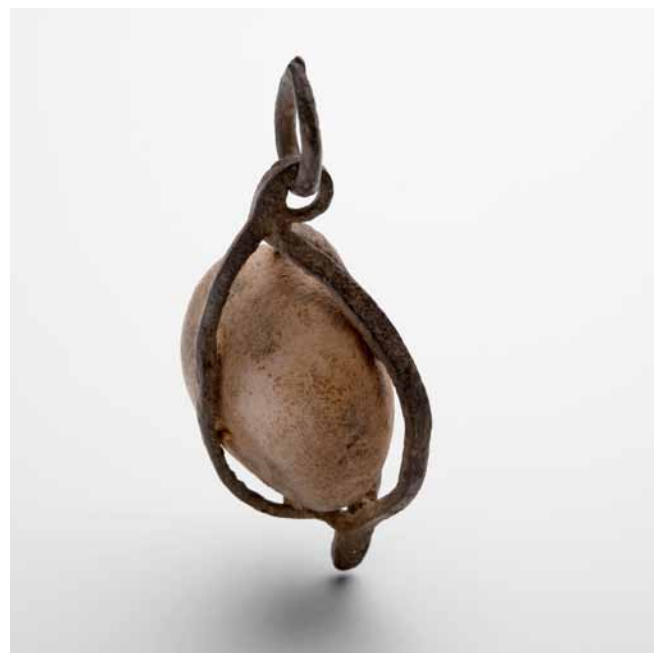
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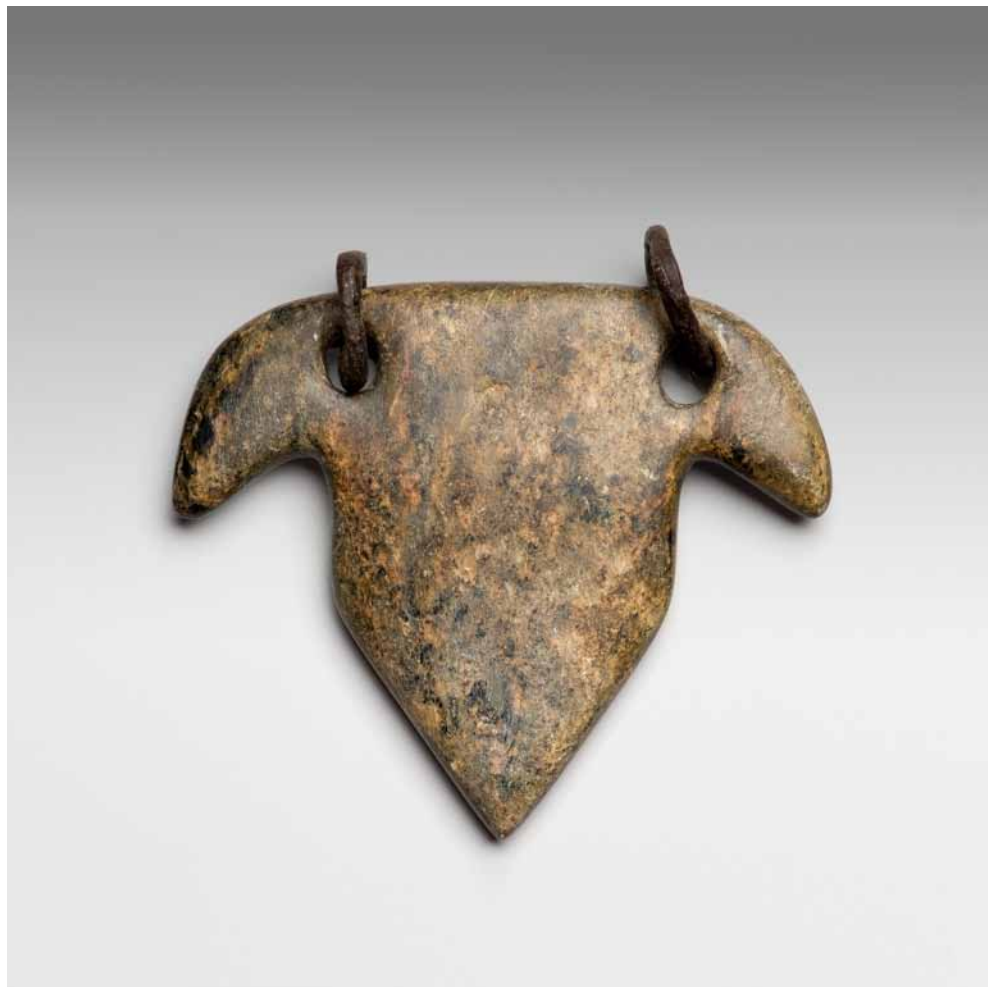
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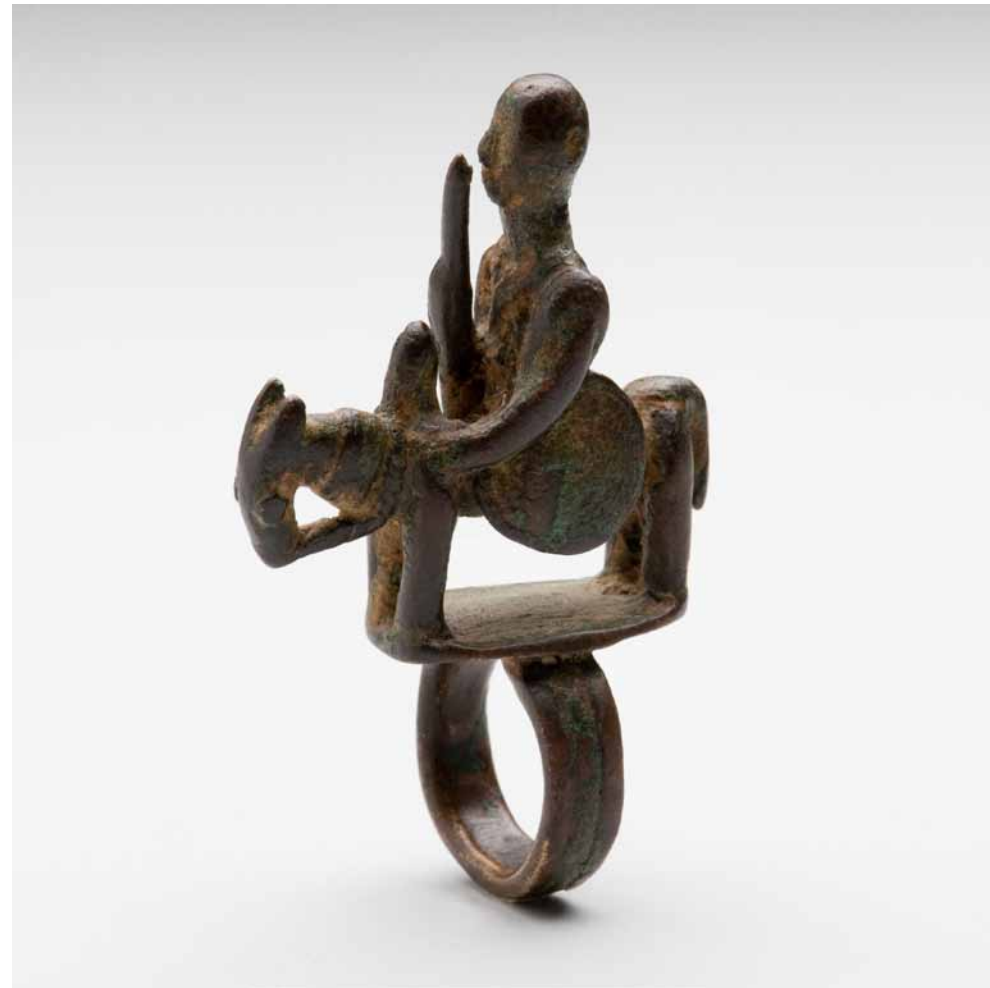


Rings

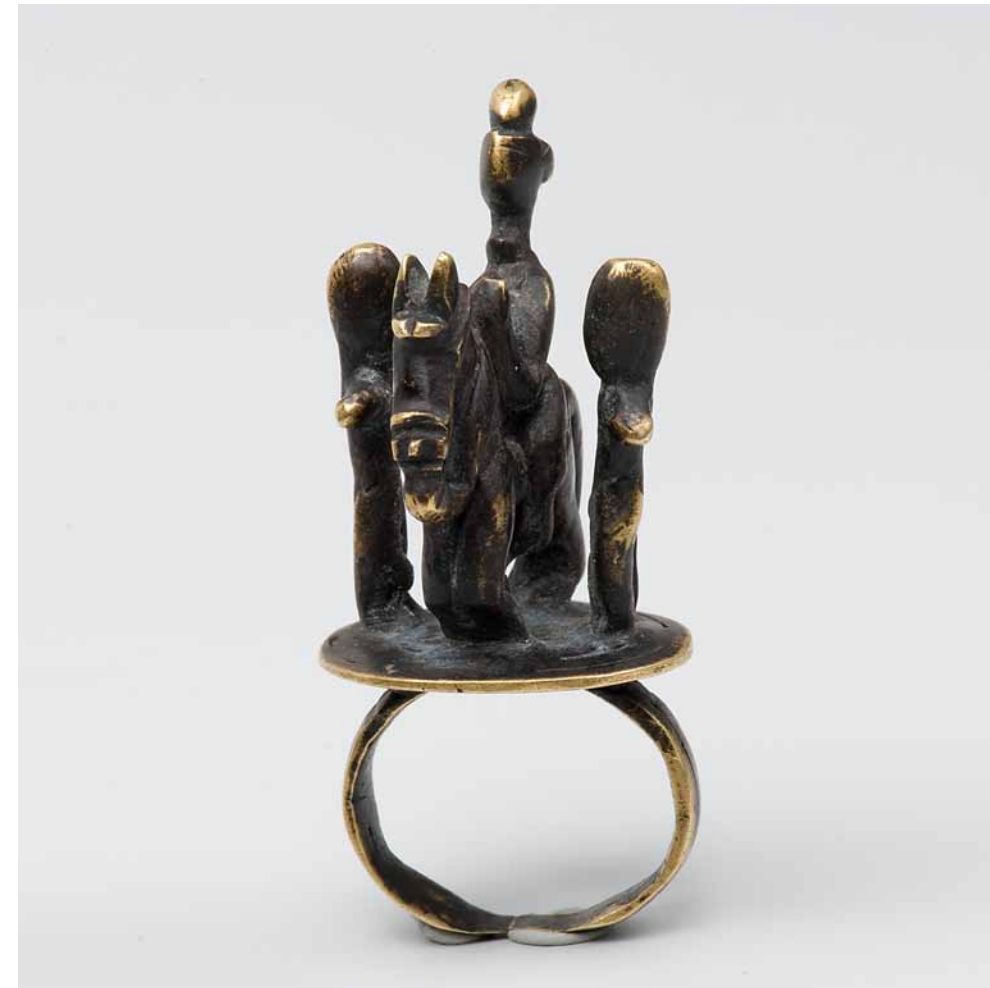




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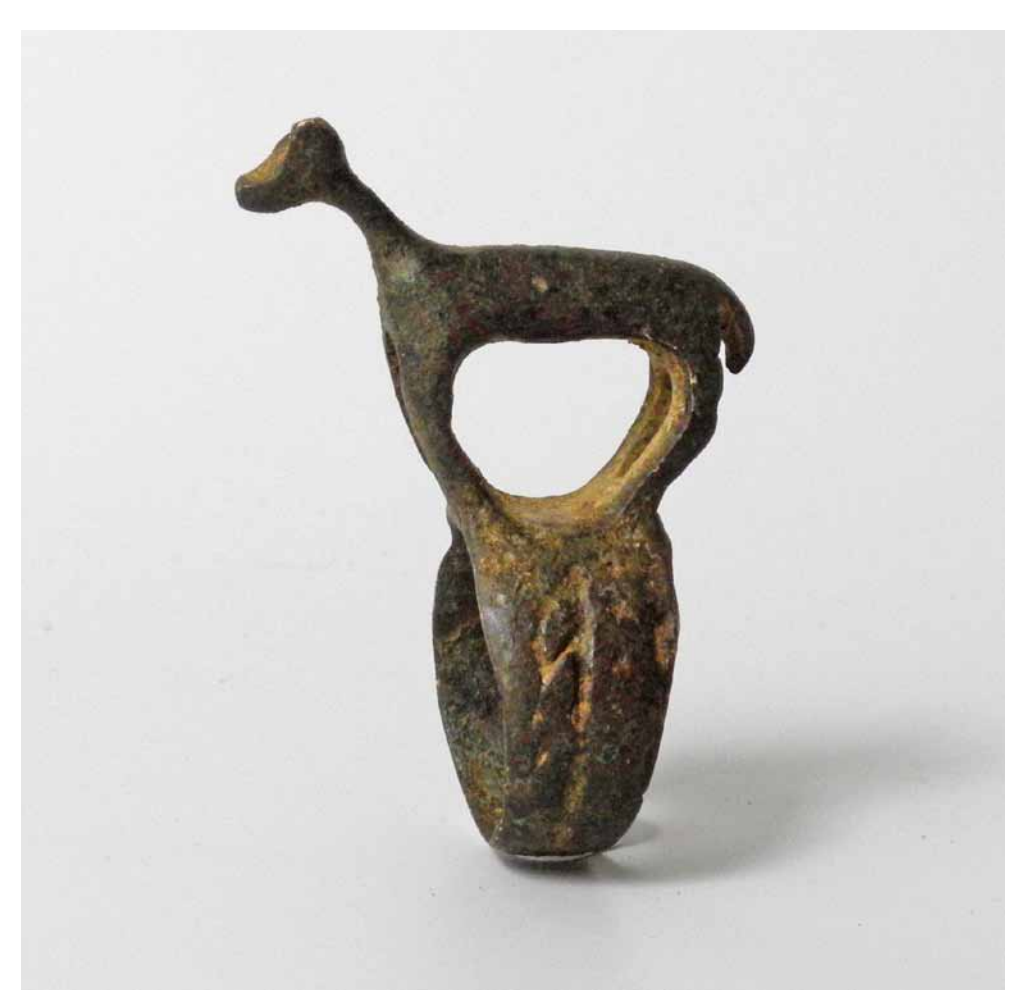
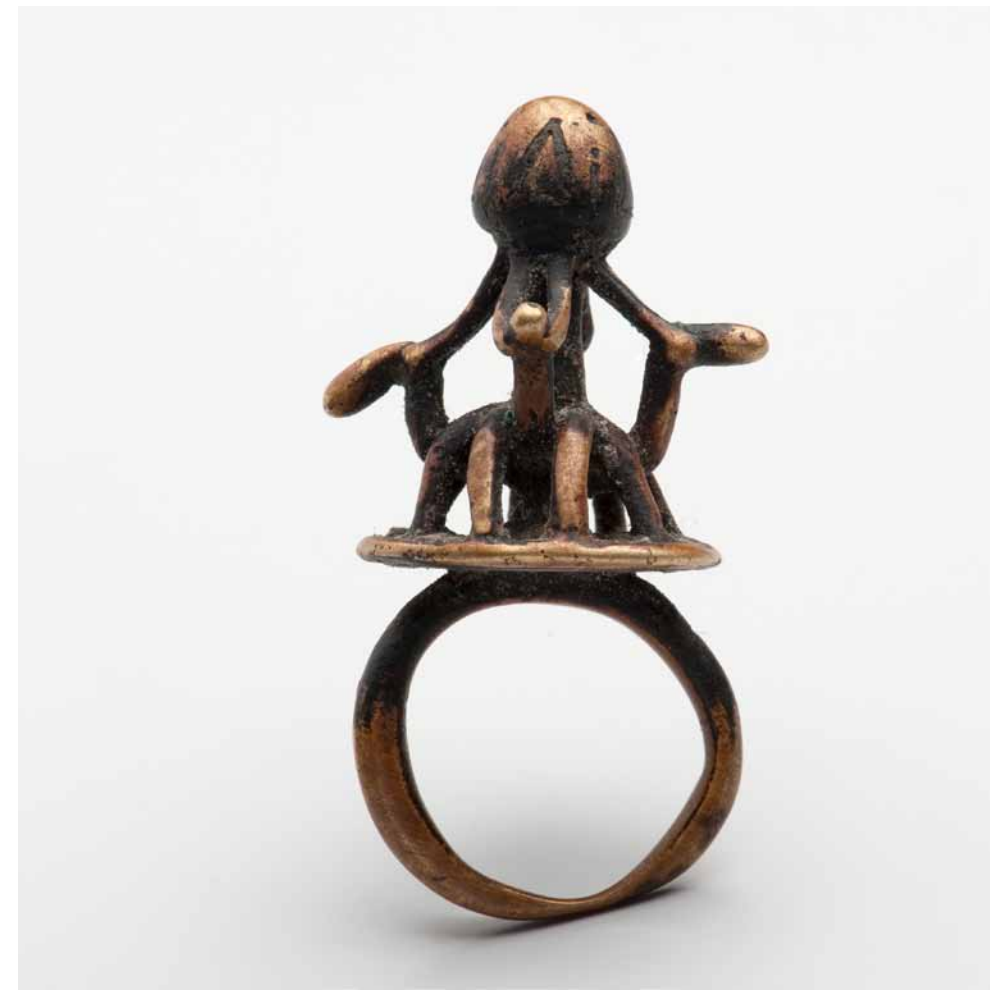
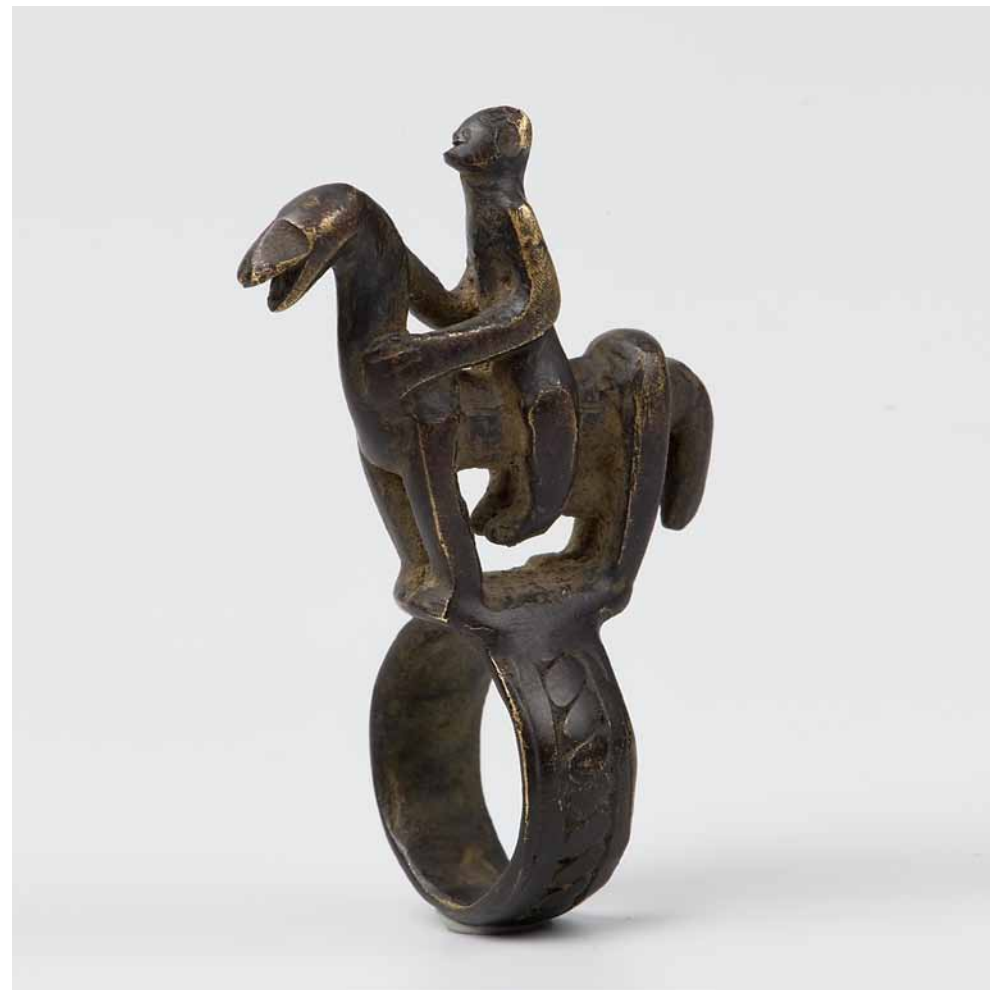
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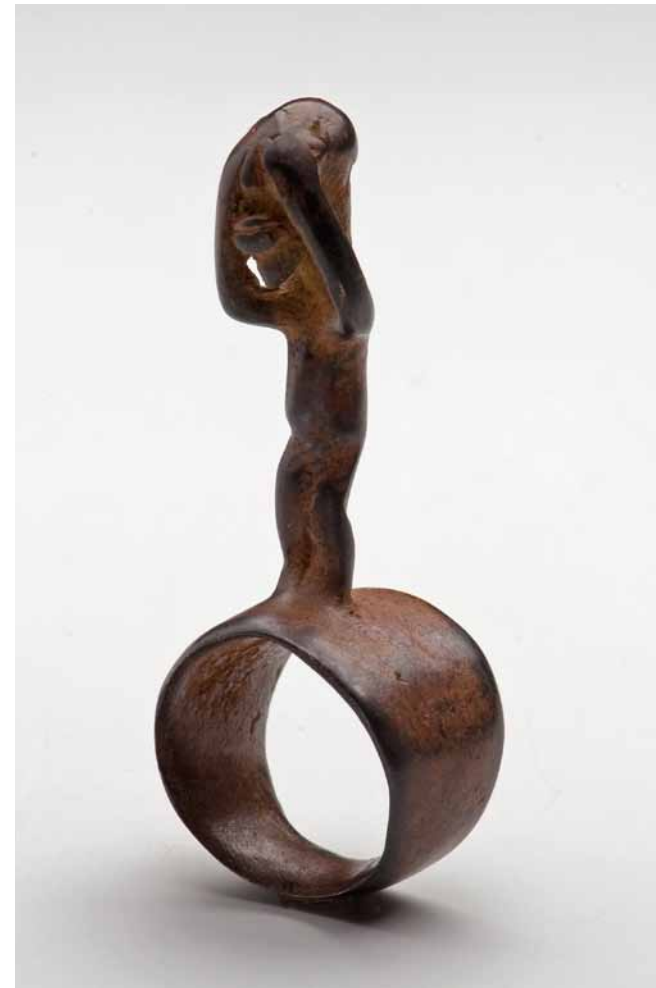
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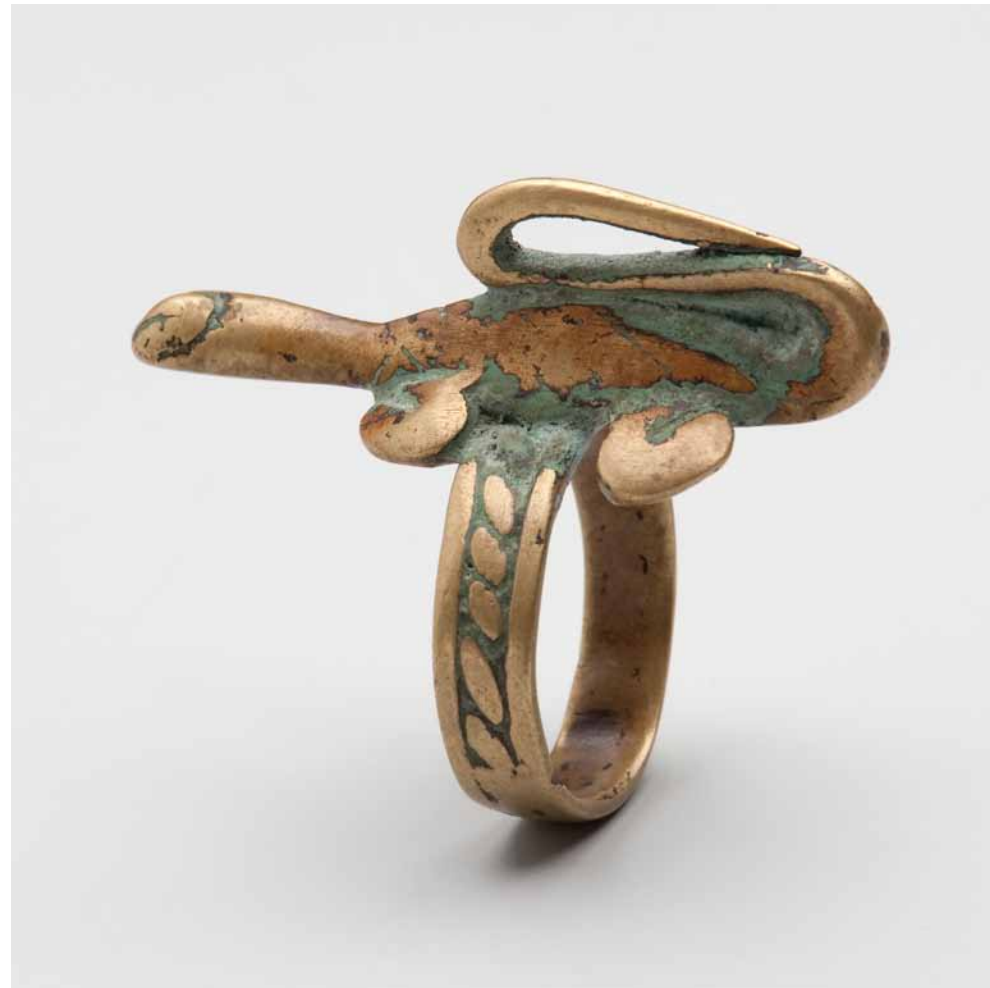


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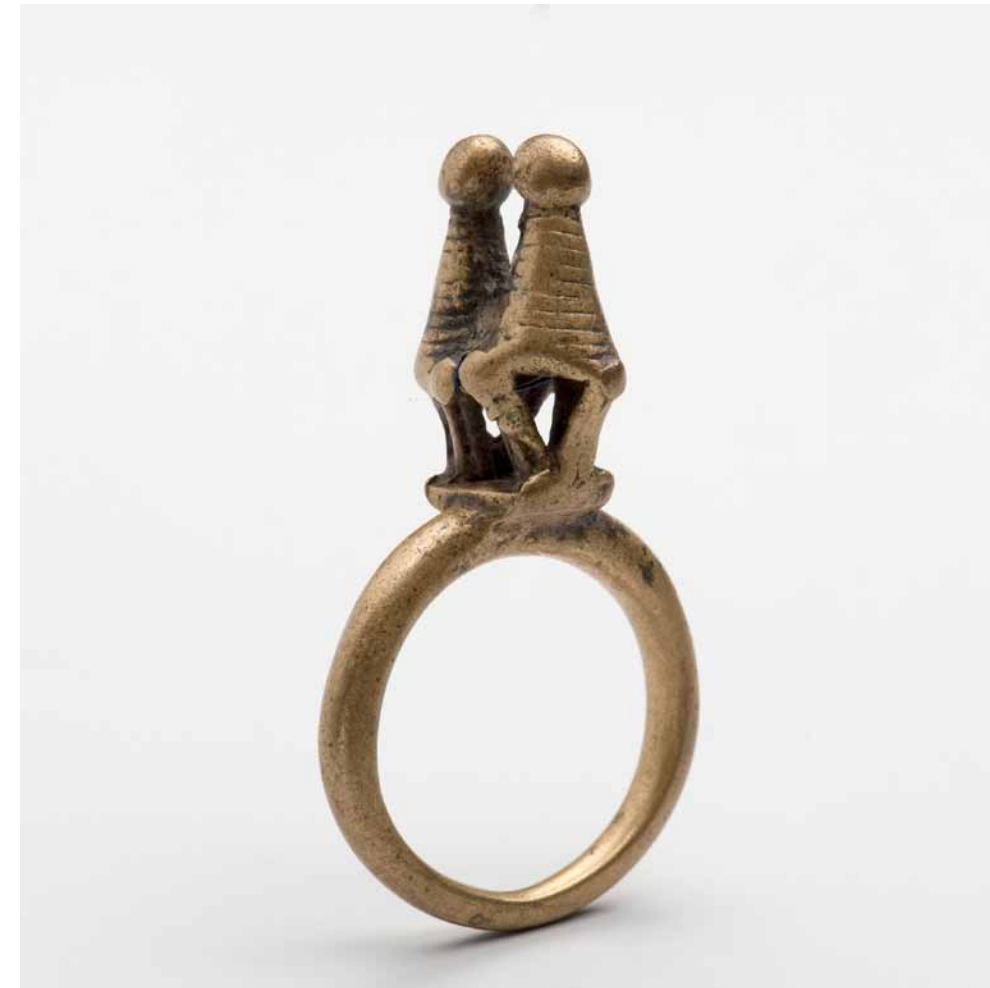
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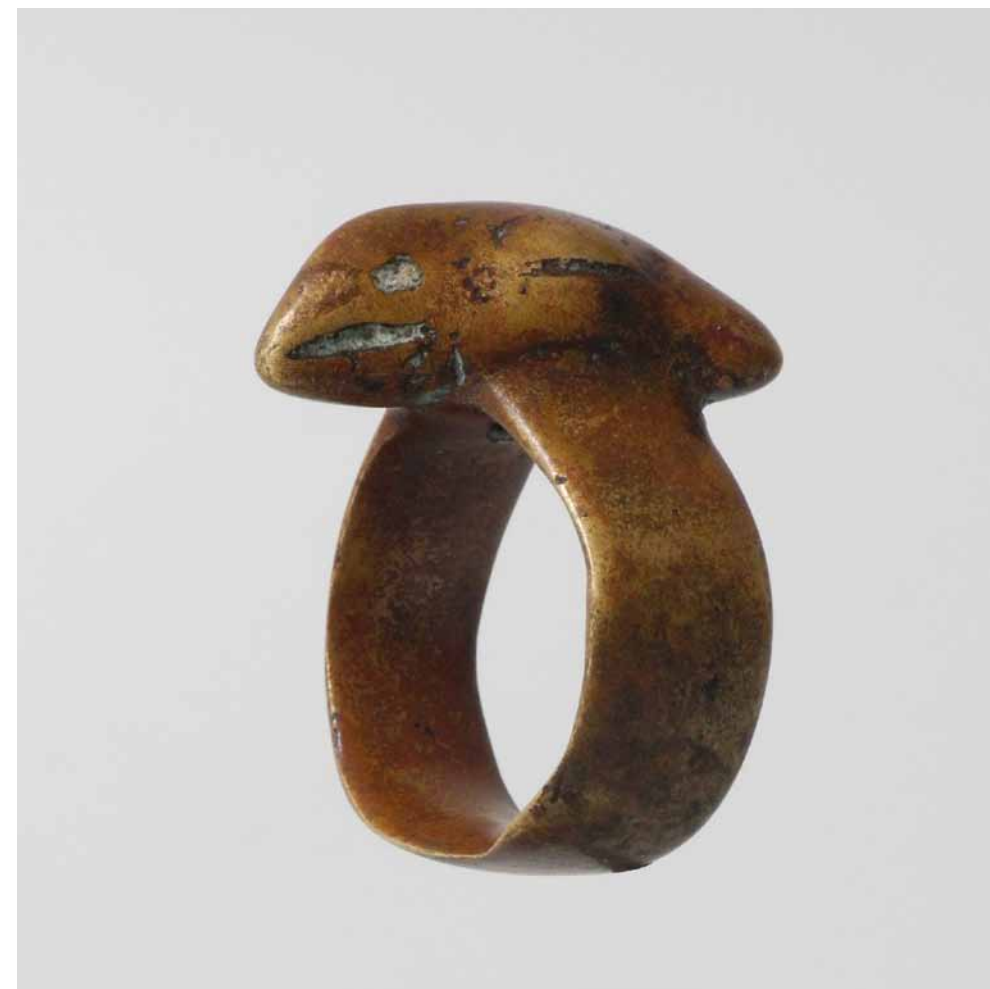
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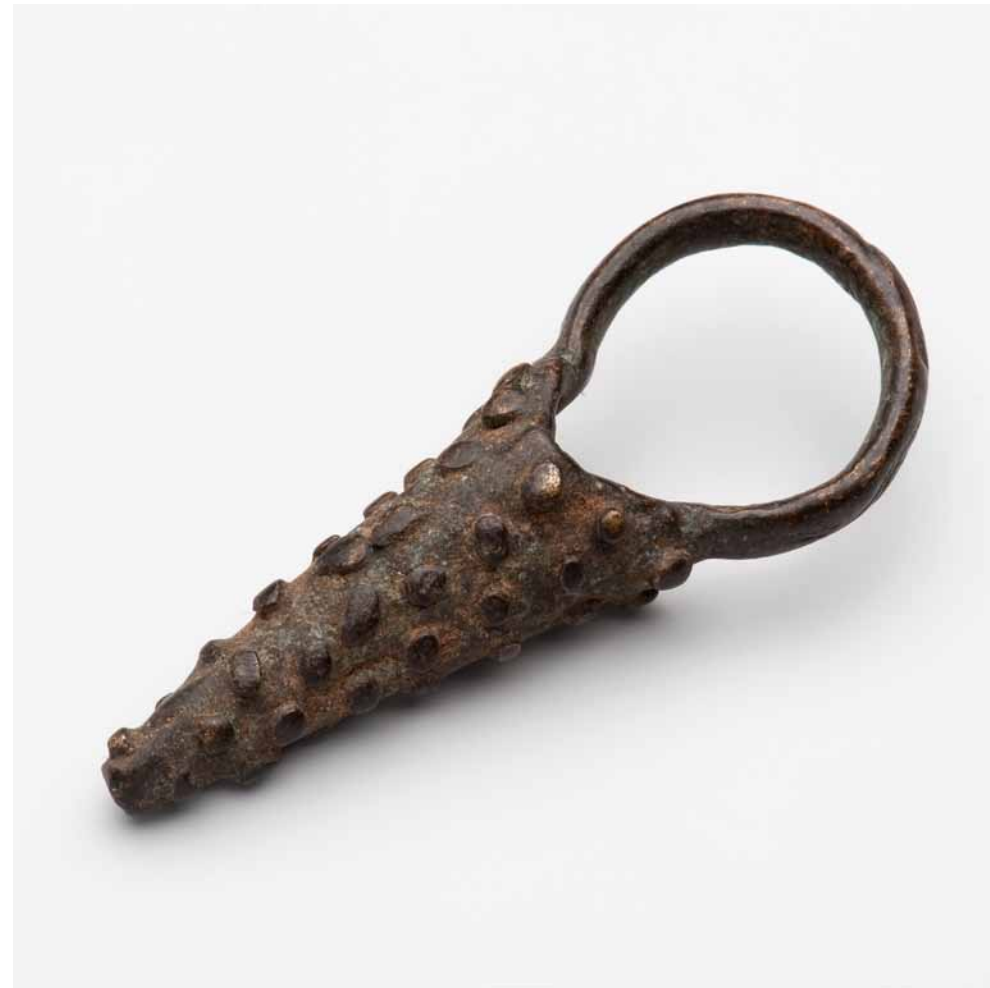




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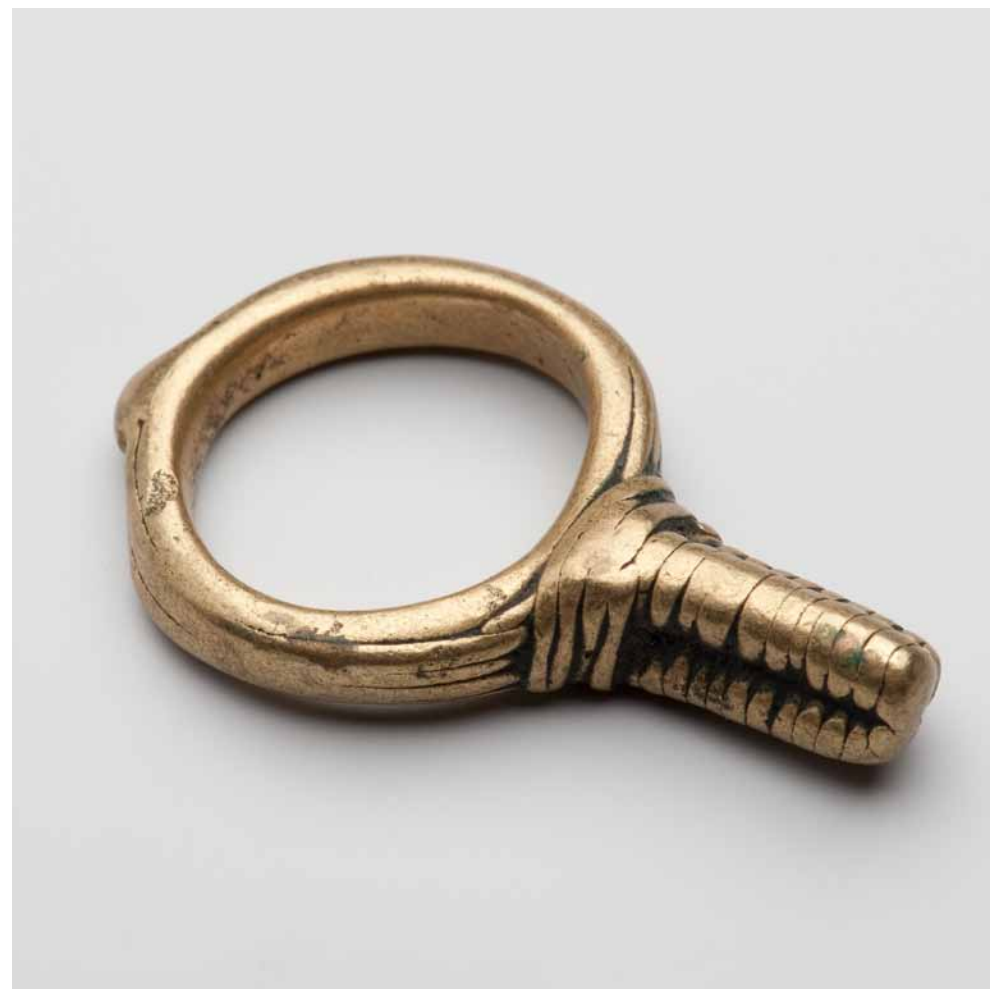
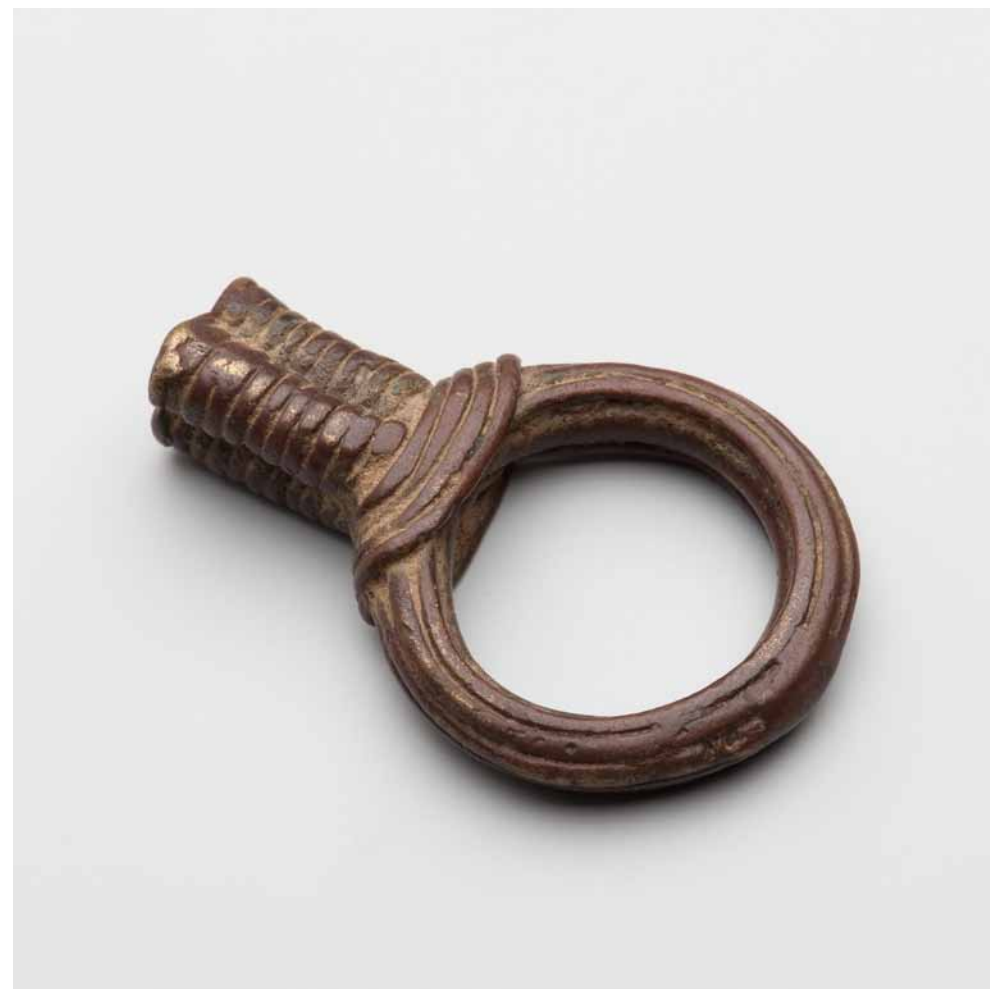
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neckrests



wood





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iron





votive neckrests



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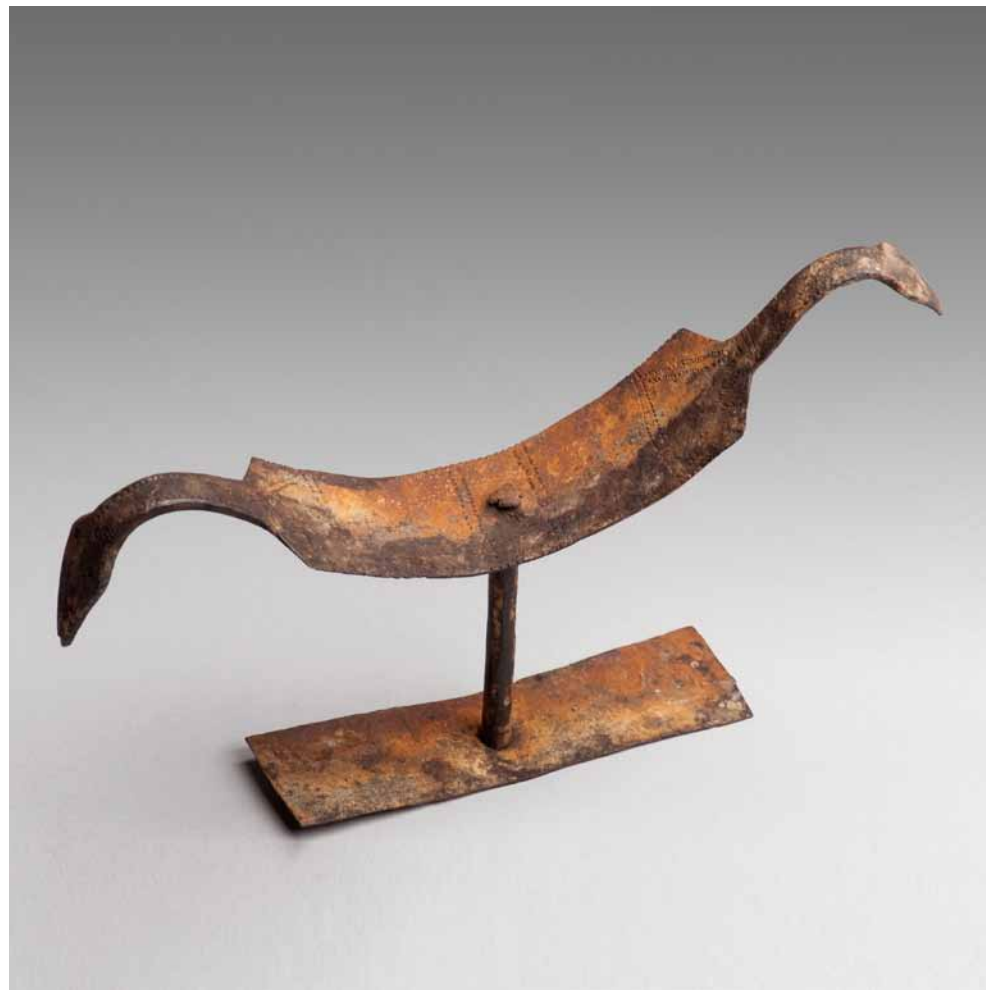
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objects for
daily use



weapons and
hunting attributes





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512.2



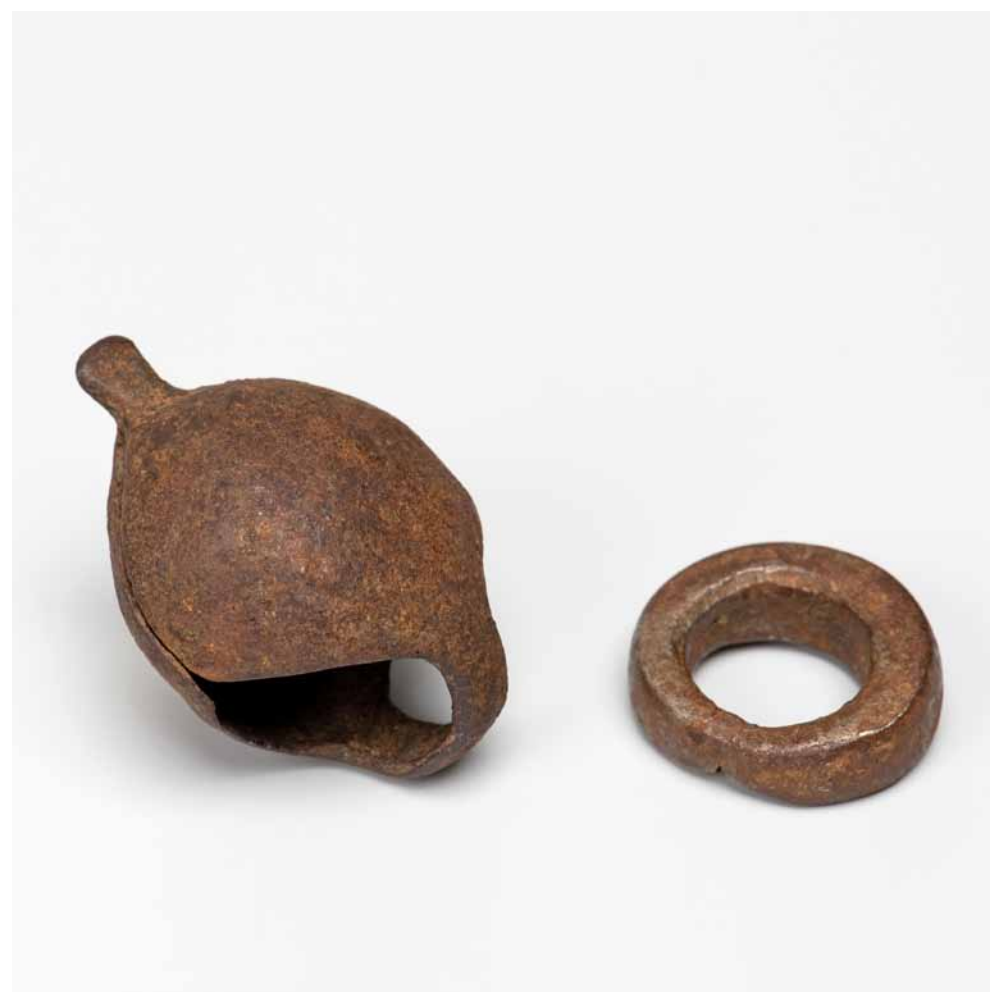
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stools



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pulleys



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knives



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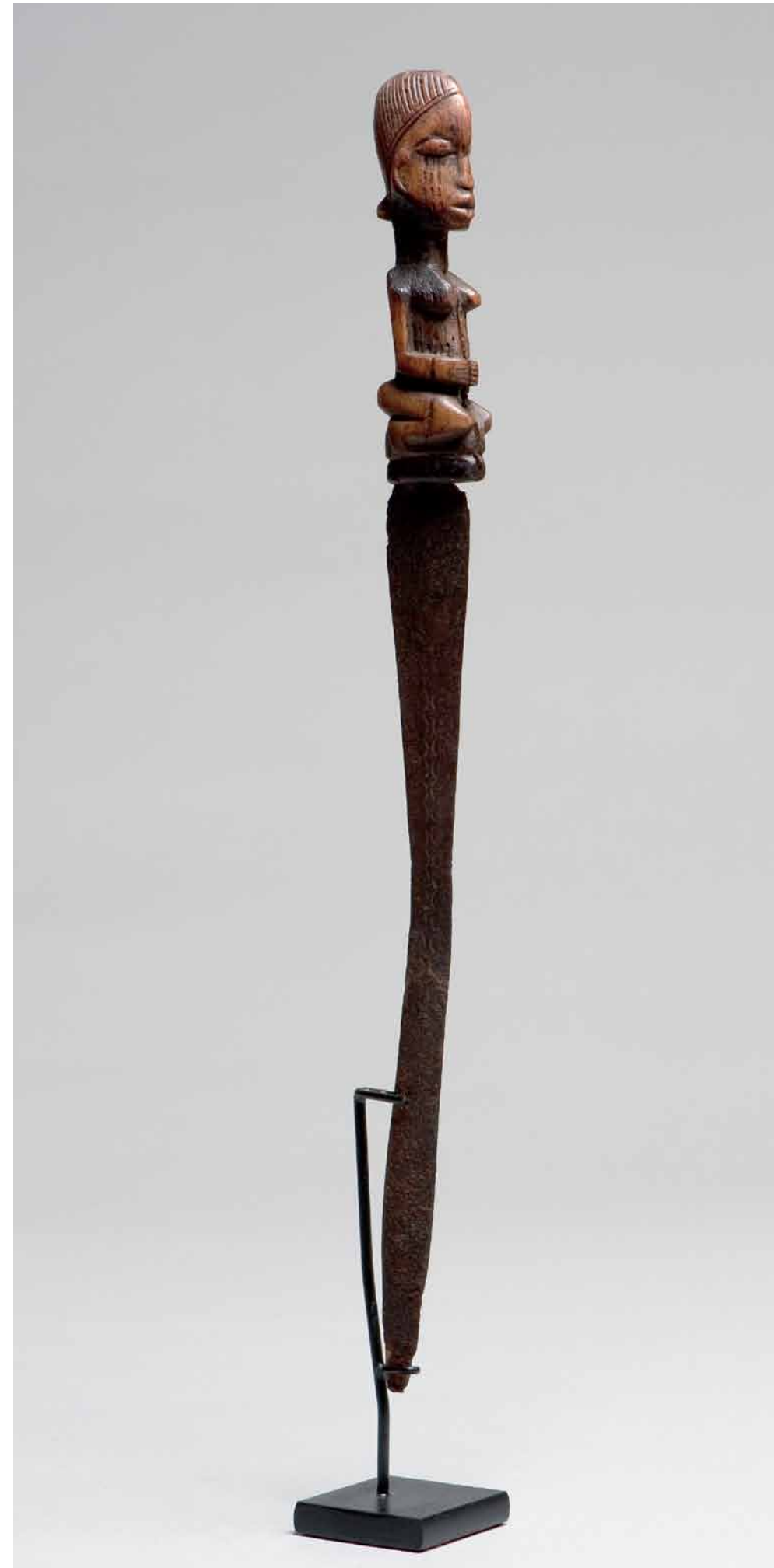
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spoons



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hairpins



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pipes
lamps
and
other
objects



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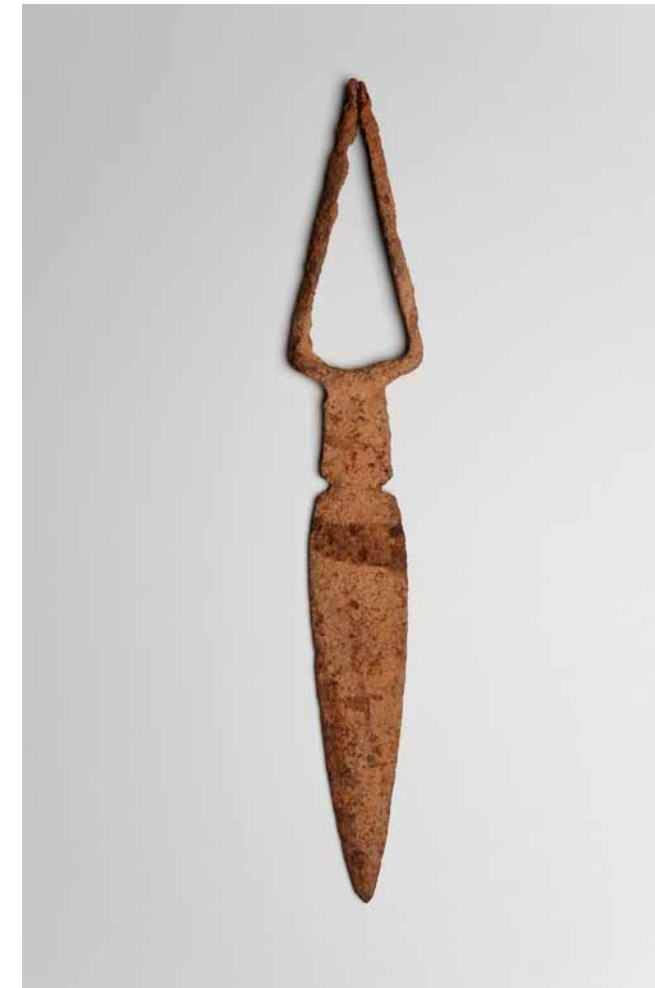
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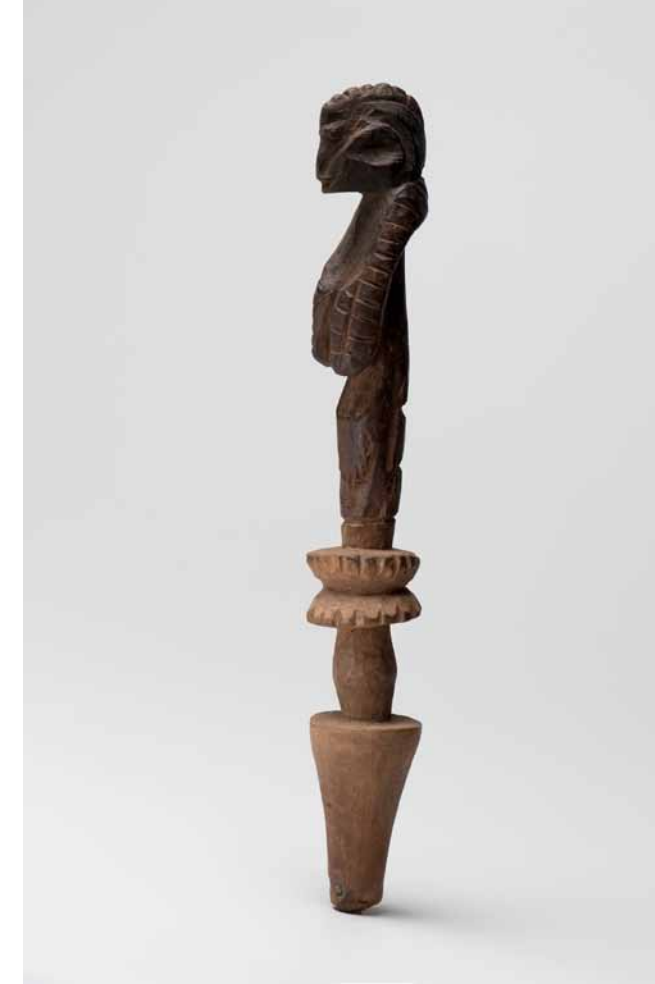
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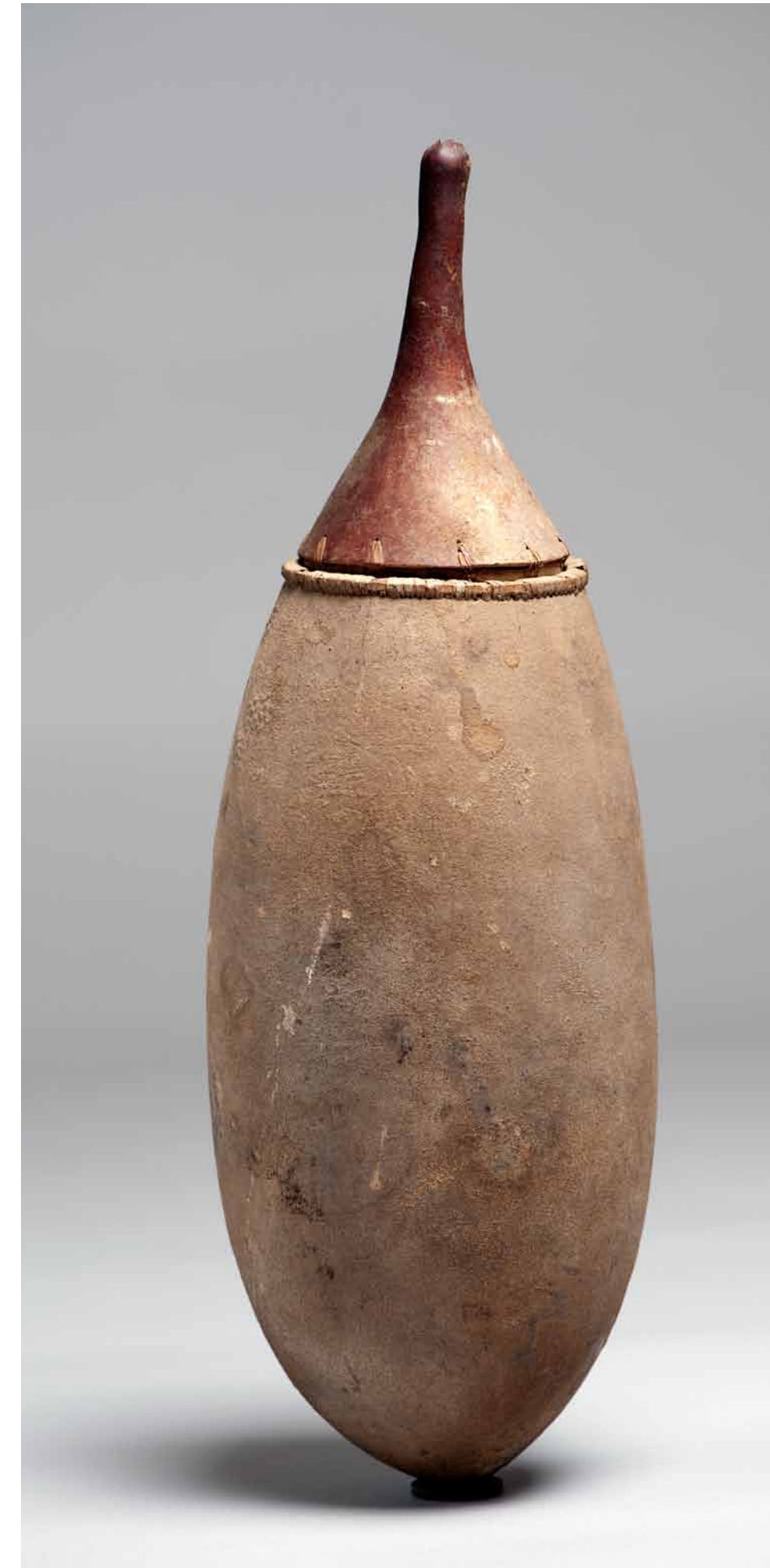
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receptacles



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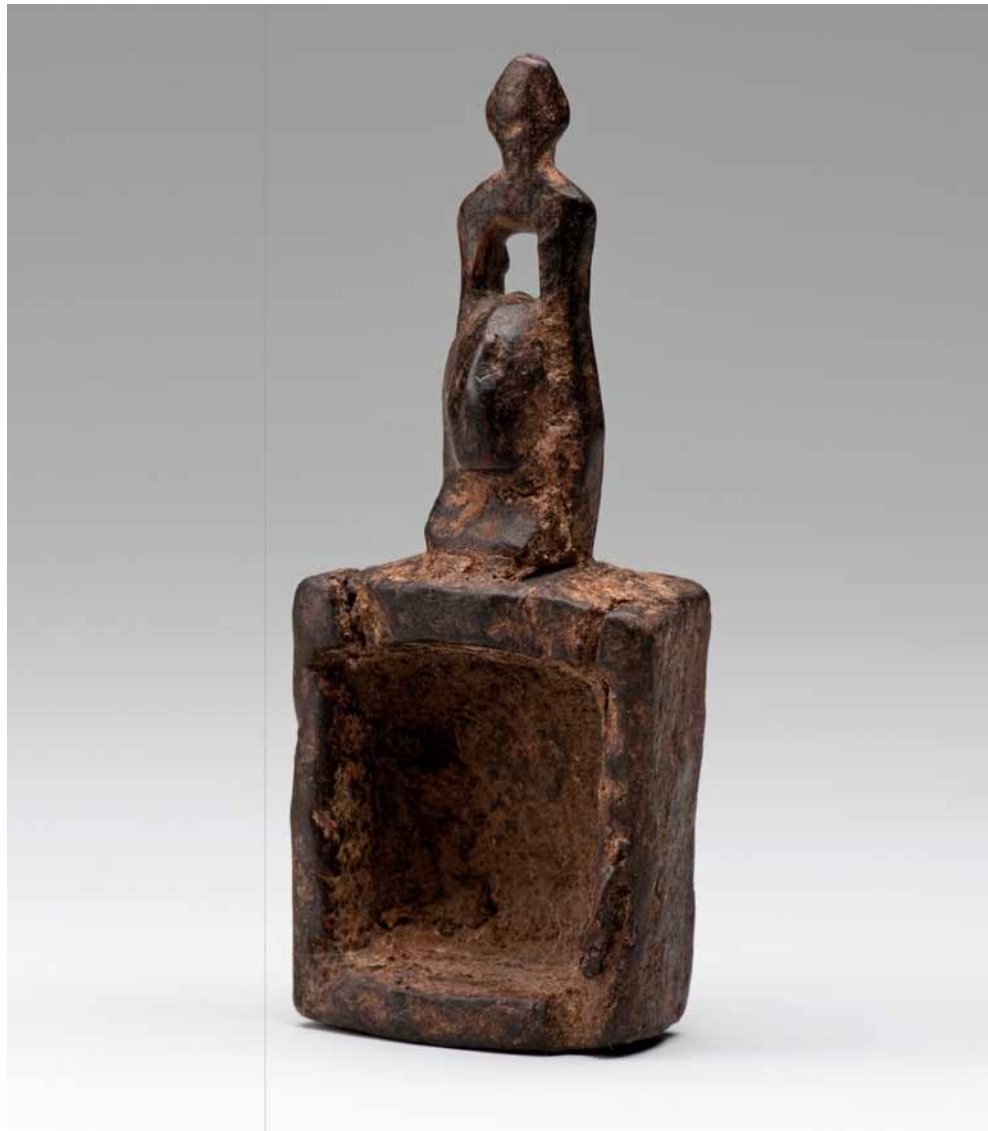
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textile
and
clothing







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