



RECLINING AFRICAN WOMAN FRANZ HAGENAUER CA. 1953

Reclining African woman, design by Franz Hagenauer, execution by Werkstätte Hagenauer
Wien, ca. 1953, fine wood, carved, marked

Although the era of great explorations had ended after World War I, expedition reports, as well as travel and adventure films, remained immensely popular across Europe. This heightened fascination with the “exotic” is also reflected in the African wooden figures produced by the Hagenauer workshop, which emerged in the 1930s.

Many of Hagenauer’s designs reveal a keen interest in foreign cultures, as well as in their portrayal within popular entertainme

The depiction of an African woman as a nude figure exemplifies a stylized interpretation of Africa—shaped by colonialist perceptions of indigenous peoples that were deeply embedded in Austrian society until the 1950s. Rather than drawing directly from African artistic traditions, this design translates the subject into the formal language of Art Deco, characterized by Hagenauer’s signature elegance and flowing lines.

The hand-carved and polished wood was stained dark to emulate a deeper skin tone. The warmth of the material, combined with the graceful pose, makes this sculpture a particularly striking example of Hagenauer’s African wooden figures.

