WARRIOR WITH SPEAR WERKSTÄTTE HAGENAUER WIEN CA. 1935

Warrior with spear, Werkstätte Hagenauer Wien,
ca. 1935, fine wood, brass, marked

Although the era of great exploratory voyages had ended after World War I, expedition reports, travelogues, and adventure films remained highly popular in Europe. This growing 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 demonstrate a keen interest in foreign cultures, as well as their portrayal in popular entertainment. The figure of an African warrior holding a spear exemplifies a stylized interpretation of Africa—one shaped by colonialist perceptions of indigenous peoples that remained deeply rooted in Austrian society until the 1950s. Rather than striving for an authentic reception of African art, the motif was adapted into the Art Deco aesthetic, characterized by Hagenauer’s signature elegance of flowing lines.

The carved and polished wood was stained dark to imitate a deeper skin tone. The warmth of the wood, combined with the brass necklace and spear, creates a striking contrast of materials. Thanks to its exquisite craftsmanship, this figure is among the finest examples of Hagenauer’s African wooden sculptures.

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