

Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

In the Ivory Coast, the Dan tribe carves beautiful polished wooden masks with dreadlocks made from raffia. This mask portrays a man messenger with wide eyes for clear vision.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

Just as there were masks for men messengers, so too there were masks for women messengers. Messengers brought word from the spirit world and the ancestors.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

The mask dealer posed with a stick as a spear to show that this mask was used for hunting. Notice the narrowed eyes for keen vision and the way the raffia covers the wearer's head and shoulders.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

Can you see the eagle on the face of this mask? The eagle's wings form the eyebrows and its tail forms the nose. An eagle signified wisdom from above to the Dan tribe.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

This beautiful and youthful feminine face is a fertility mask. In Africa, large families are a sign of good health and prosperity and children are highly valued by their parents.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

Used for ceremonial purposes, this is a dance mask. It, too, has a beautiful feminine face with full singing lips. Notice the cornrow hairstyle above the forehead.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

The purpose of this mask was to protect a pregnant woman and the child she was carrying and to ensure a safe childbirth and good health for both of them. The mask has been painted white around the eyes.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

The crease down the center of the forehead means that this is a Gris-Gris mask bringing good luck and protection to the ones who use it.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

As you can tell by the crease in the forehead, this is another Gris-Gris mask. This mask has very wide eyes in comparison to the narrowed eyes of the previous mask.



Dan Masks of Côte d'Ivoire

Finally, this last mask is a mask for business. The cowrie shells you see lining its forehead were once used as currency before paper money or coins became the norm.

