



# Standing figure

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## On display

**Title/Description:** Standing figure

**Born:** 1850 c. - 1950 c.

**Object Type:** Figure

**Materials:** Pigment, Shell, Wood

**Measurements:** h. 292 x w. 124 x d. 130 mm

**Accession Number:** 557

**Historic Period:** 19th century, 20th century

**Production Place:** Nidu, Oceania, Pacific, Santa Cruz

**Credit Line:** Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1978

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Davenport (1985) observes that carved figures from Santa Cruz 'are representations of men's tutelary deities and are called *munge dukna* ("image deity"). He also states that they were 'permanently installed on household altars and were the focal objects for domestic rituals' - which were generally offerings of food.

When in use, images of this type were painted and ornamented with fibre clothing and shell pendants, but on this example only the shell eyes and traces of the original painting remain, mostly black linear designs on the forehead, abdomen and legs; those on the sides of the knees resemble frigate birds with outstretched wings. There are also traces of yellow turmeric colouring. The projection at the back of the head represents the *abe* or *ombe* head-dress, formerly worn on ceremonial occasions by men, who were said to be 'impersonating the deities' (ibid.).

Carved figures are thought to have been made only on Nidu Island (also known as Ndende or Santa Cruz Island), the largest island in the group. This example closely resembles two figures in Berlin and Cologne which were collected by Wilhelm Joest in 1897 (see Koch, 1971: 177, and Graebner, 1909: 152).

Steven Hooper, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 74.

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