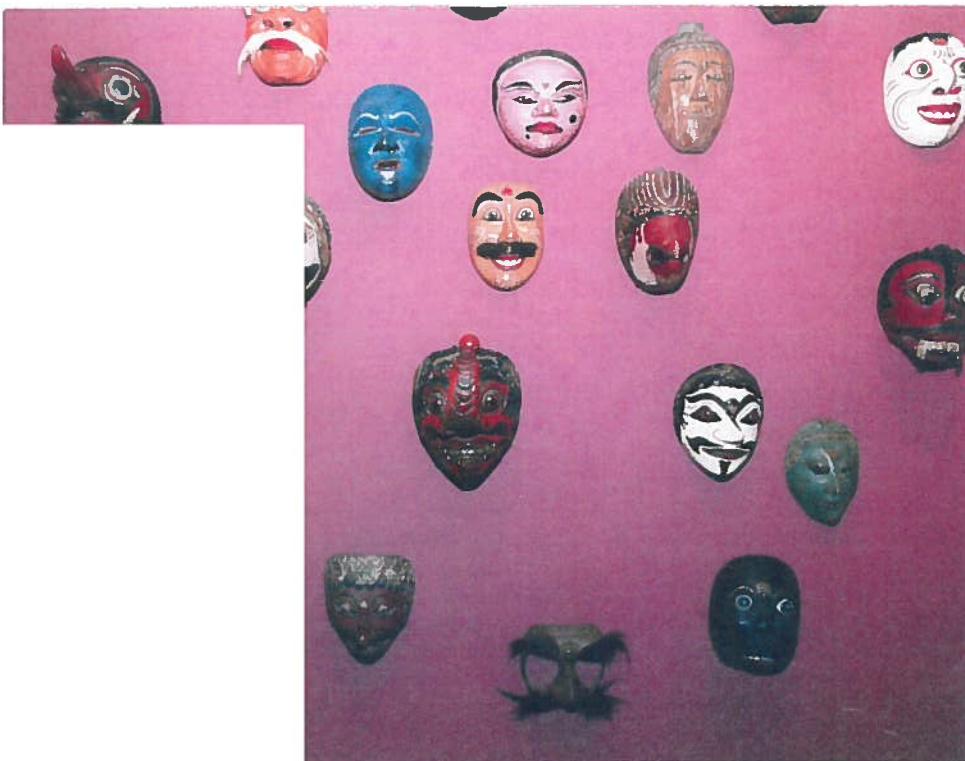


Masks

Java, Bali, Madura, 18th-20th century
Polychromed wood, hair, teeth
Gift of The Christensen Fund, 2001

The majority of the masks shown here are from the island of Java, but examples from Bali and Madura are present. They are worn by dancers in performances which are also presented as puppet shows. The masked dancers do not speak. Instead, the subject matter is expressed by dialogue spoken by a narrator who also provides the dialogue in puppet shows. The subject matter is largely influenced by Hinduism, but local subjects and Islam flavor performances as well. Noble figures and the forces of good and evil, as depicted in the masks, battle as they appear in mythological, religious, and historic contexts. Masked performances remain a popular form of entertainment today.



Masks

Dramatic performances with masked dancers (*wayang topeng*) are said by some Javanese to have originated on Java's north coast in the sixteenth century. Performances are largely based on the Indonesian cycle dealing with the hero, Panji, and the ancient Indian epics, the *Mahabarata* and *Ramayana*, occasionally enriched by local mythology. Court performances, however, adhered to a strict tradition. Origins of the masks are difficult to ascertain; many are influenced by Indian prototypes. On display is a selection of masks representing a variety of human characters, court figures, animals, and assorted demons.

