

## DAVID NOLAN **NEW YORK**

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## PYGMY BARK PAINTINGS

January 4 – February 9, 2003

This exhibition explores the traditions of the Mbuti through their vital and expressive paintings, which are usually made by women. The Mbuti people, of the Ituri rainforest in Africa, are one of the few remaining hunter-gatherer cultures in the world. Ancient testimony proves that the Mbuti have inhabited the same territory for four thousand years, and were known even in those times for highly developed music and dance. Despite their long history in the region, ethnologists did not encounter these nomadic Pygmies until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and very few of their paintings were taken out of the country before 1976.

Originally created as loincloths for ceremonies and dances, these intricate works are sophisticated abstract compositions. The women who make them believe that their art provides music, movement and splendor to nature itself. To our eyes, these works might also embody the qualities of improvisation and syncopation that are associated with African art and music.

This exhibition is one of a series that have explored the artworks of other cultures. Previous shows have included African throwing knives, Japanese lacquer ware, and Korean ceramics.