



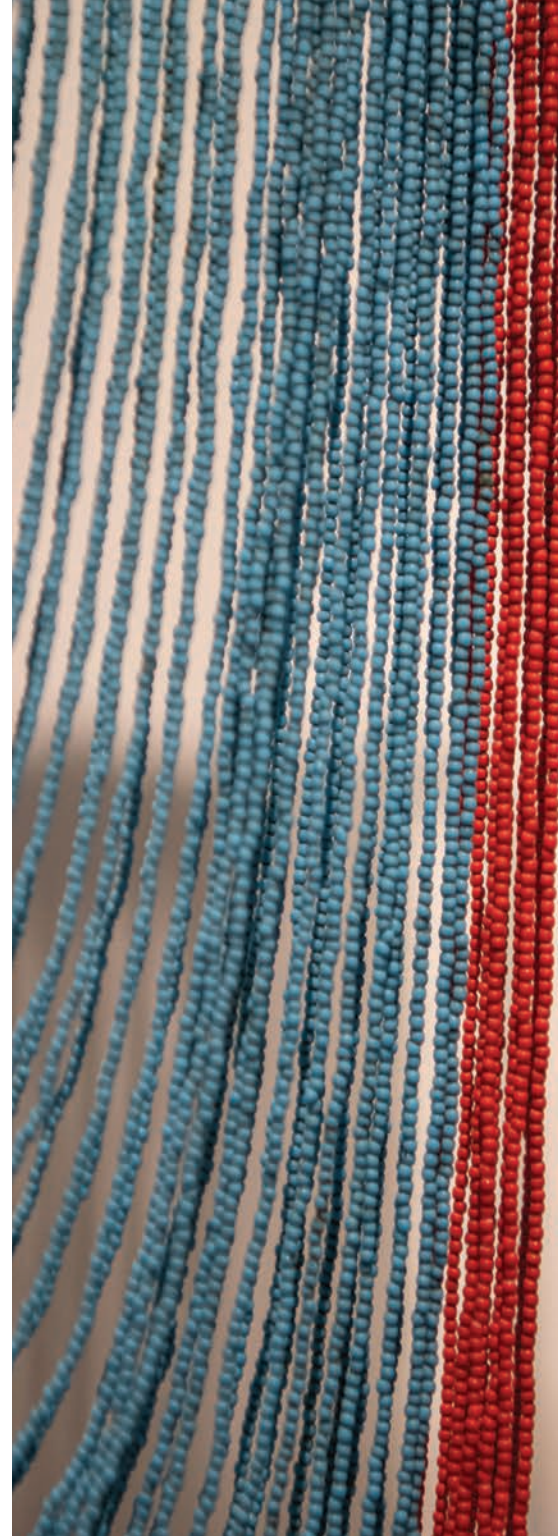
Moving Objects
african and oceanic art



Moving Objects: African and Oceanic Art
from the Collection of the Fitchburg Art Museum

2018 - 2023







West Africa

Installation image by Megan Ptak



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by Jean M. Borgatti, PhD

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Acknowledgments

Moving Objects is the second long-term exhibition crafted from FAM's permanent collection of African and Oceanic art, and the first to enjoy an online catalogue. In following the journeys that these objects have made from their respective points of origin to the Fitchburg Art Museum, we honor the many donors who have helped build the collection, from Miss Cora Hatch of Fitchburg who gave the museum its first object from Oceania in 1931 to such major twenty-first century donors as Dwight and Anna Heath, The Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation, William Teel, Bobbi and Tim Hamill, and Simon and Nancy Gregory. Simon deserves special thanks for donating his time and energy to build many of the stands for the works on display. Indeed, I would like to thank all those individuals who have helped us build the collection, especially our director Nick Capasso and the members of the Collection Committee who supported purchases of the work of contemporary artists in Nigeria and Ghana.

Baga artist, Guinea
Masquerade Sculpture (D'mba)
by 1965
wood and brass tacks
52" x 11" x 23"
2018.21
Photography by Charles Sternaimolo

All exhibitions are the result of teamwork, and I would also like to thank Nick Capasso, my fellow curator Lisa Crossman, and exhibition designer Matthew Oates, Collection Manager Charlie Cruz, and Terrana Curatorial Fellow Candice Bancheri for helping me realize my vision for this exhibition. This catalogue is also the product of a team of students at Fitchburg State University, who designed it with the guidance of Professor Rob Carr and FAM's Assistant Curator Marjorie Rawle. Kudos to Alexis Sweeney, Sadie Bodkin, Bethany Palmer, and Andrew Ashley who had to translate a multi-dimensional exhibition into an engaging and inclusive two-dimensional format, with limited access to the exhibition and a shortened semester due to COVID-19. Let me not just thank them, but also congratulate them on a job well done. I would also like to thank Marjorie and FAM's Curator Lauren Szumita for reading and commenting critically on the essay at the heart of this catalogue and for laboring tirelessly along with Rob Carr to help the students bring the catalogue to life.

Jean M. Borgatti, PhD
Consulting Curator for African, Oceanic,
and Native American Art



Installation image by Charles Sternaimolo



Igbo artist (North Central Region), Nigeria
Maiden Spirit Mask (*agbogho mmuo*)
mid-20th century
wood, pigment
17 1/2" x 6"
2018.27
Photography by Megan Ptak

Director's Foreword

Over the past decade, collecting and exhibiting African and Oceanic art have become increasingly important aspects of the Fitchburg Art Museum's curatorial program. This is due in large part to the work of Dr. Jean Borgatti, our Consulting Curator for African, Oceanic, and Native American Art. Jean has radically expanded our holdings through her career-long relationships with collectors, her willingness to field-collect and commission new works during teaching posts at the University of Benin in Nigeria, and her dedication to the idea that the visual languages of traditional tribal arts remain potent and relevant today for artists across the globe. Jean's deep knowledge and experience of African and Oceanic arts, their cultures, and their creators has been brought to bear on several exhibitions from the FAM Permanent Collection, among them *Moving Objects*. This exhibition reveals the dynamism of tribal arts—how objects moved from their original context to a regional art museum in Massachusetts, how these objects were never meant to be experienced as static objects in a gallery, and how they continue to move us emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. Jean tells this story, in both the exhibition and in this catalogue, with authority, insight, and passion. FAM is deeply grateful to Jean for helping to shape the identity and mission of our Museum for the 21st century.

The beautiful *Moving Objects* exhibition was also made possible by exhibition designer Matt Oates, Collection Manager Aminadab (Charlie) Cruz, Jr., former FAM Curator Lisa Crossman, Facilities Manager Steve Backholm and his assistant Mel Bailey, and FAM Community Advisor Simon Gregory who fabricated many of the object mounts for the show pro-bono. This exhibition catalogue was created through an ongoing collaboration with Professor Rob Carr's Document Design class at Fitchburg State University. Professor Carr's students designed this book, guided by both Jean Borgatti and FAM's Terrana Assistant Curator Marjorie Rawle.

I hasten to also thank the Geneviève McMillan – Reba Stewart Foundation for the grant that funded the *Moving Objects* exhibition, for their ongoing support of African art exhibitions and education programming at FAM, and for their many gifts of African and Oceanic art. Thanks also to all the donors of artwork who made this exhibition possible, foremost among them Bobbi and Tim Hamill, Dwight and Anna Cooper Heath, and William and Bertha Teel.

Nick Capasso
Director

Bamileke artist, Cameroon
Elephant Mask (mbap mteng)
late 20th century
cloth, beads, wicker
46 ½" x 16 ½"
2017.259
Photography by Megan Ptak

Bamileke artist, Cameroon
Elephant Mask (*mbap mteng*)
late 20th century
cloth, beads, wicker
46 ½" x 16 ½"
2017.259
Photography by Megan Ptak



The Museum as Memory Keeper: Objects, Ideas, People

by Jean M. Borgatti, PhD

MOVING

1. In motion; changing locations
2. Producing strong feelings

African and Oceanic objects have traveled from their places of origin to the West, moving through the hands of individual collectors, art dealers, galleries, and even other museums to arrive at the Fitchburg Art Museum (FAM). The Western world's perception of African and Oceanic objects has also shifted, or "moved." The objects were first considered curiosities, then looked at as artifacts, and finally seen as art—appreciated first for their form and then for their meaning. In *Moving Objects*, my first responsibility is to tell the stories of the objects on display, focusing on their meaning in their own cultures. However, the stories of individual works are embedded in a larger narrative. This essay addresses that broader narrative, outlining how some of FAM's most interesting works of African and Oceanic art came into the collection, providing a behind-the-scenes exploration of how museums acquire the art they display, and offering some insight into the motivation of collectors and the context of their donations.



Figure 1
Indigenous artist,
Tonga Kingdom, Polynesia
Tapa Cloth (ngatu)
pre-1931, possibly late 19th century
tree bark (paper mulberry tree),
pigment, arrowroot binder
79 ¼" x 38 ½"
1931.100
Photography by Bethany Palmer

FAM'S Earliest Acquisition

The only African or Oceanic work to come into FAM's collection before 1984 was a **tapa cloth** (fig. 1) from Tonga (1931.100) that features the Tongan coat of arms along with the British lion.¹ It was donated in 1931 by Miss Cora Hatch (1860–1938) of Fitchburg (fig. 2), just two years after the dedication of the museum. Miss Hatch was a cultured and civic-minded woman, reasonably well-off financially, and active in her church and women's clubs.

How Miss Hatch came by the tapa cloth remains a question, as neither she nor her family traveled. However, Christian missionary interests were widespread in New England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cora Hatch headed up the Missionary Committee of the Women's Federation of Christ Church in 1921. It seems likely that Miss Hatch purchased the tapa when it was offered for sale during a mission fundraiser. FAM's tapa cloth consists of only two strips, suggesting that it was separated from a larger cloth of ten or even more strips bearing the same designs. It is possible that the cloth was divided as it moved from sale to sale.

Why did she give it to the Fitchburg Art Society? The society's founder, Eleanor Norcross, wanted the young people of her hometown to know the joy and inspiration of art. Her original collections included not only her own paintings and furniture, but the work of other Western artists and Asian art—though nothing from Africa or Oceania. Since missionary activity was part of the fabric of Fitchburg's life, the tapa cloth from Tonga would not have been out of place. As many of the original objects in the collection were possessions treasured by Eleanor Norcross, it seems only fitting that objects from other parts of the world—treasured possessions in their own cultures—should be shared with Fitchburg's citizens.

Certainly, tapa is prized in many Polynesian societies, serving as currency as well as gifts for important occasions. The motifs stenciled and painted here—the dove of peace, the royal eagle, and the Norfolk Island Pines that line the road leading to the royal palace, and the Tongan crest and British lion—were characteristic of designs used during the late nineteenth century, emerging again during WWII when Tonga sought to show solidarity with the British, as a British protectorate.² Since the textile was given to the museum in 1931, we can assume that it was made prior to that time, possibly towards the end of the nineteenth century when these images were popular. The enduring importance of tapa itself is signaled by its appearance on Tonga's modern currency.



Figure 2
Miss Cora Hatch (back row, 2nd from the right) with fellow members of one of the several women's organizations to which she belonged. Hatch would have been 38 when this photograph was taken on April 19, 1898. Original photograph from the archives of the Fitchburg Historical Society.



The Museum as Memory Keeper

Objects in museum collections are often gifted by members of the local community. An early African work to come into the museum, a **Dan or Mano miniature mask from Liberia or Ivory Coast** [1984.57], was donated by a local teacher Charles Cohn of Worcester. The family of Howard Lonergan of Concord, New Hampshire, donated items of personal adornment from the Pacific [2006.54–55]. Lonergan's story is one shared by many American soldiers who have served overseas and become engaged by new cultures. Lonergan, a World War II veteran, served in the Pacific War. He later returned to areas that had fascinated him during the war, especially uncharted New Guinea, to share something of his experience with his wife. He purchased a number of works on this trip down memory lane, and because these items were important to him, his family wanted to safeguard them, and share them along with the memories they embody.

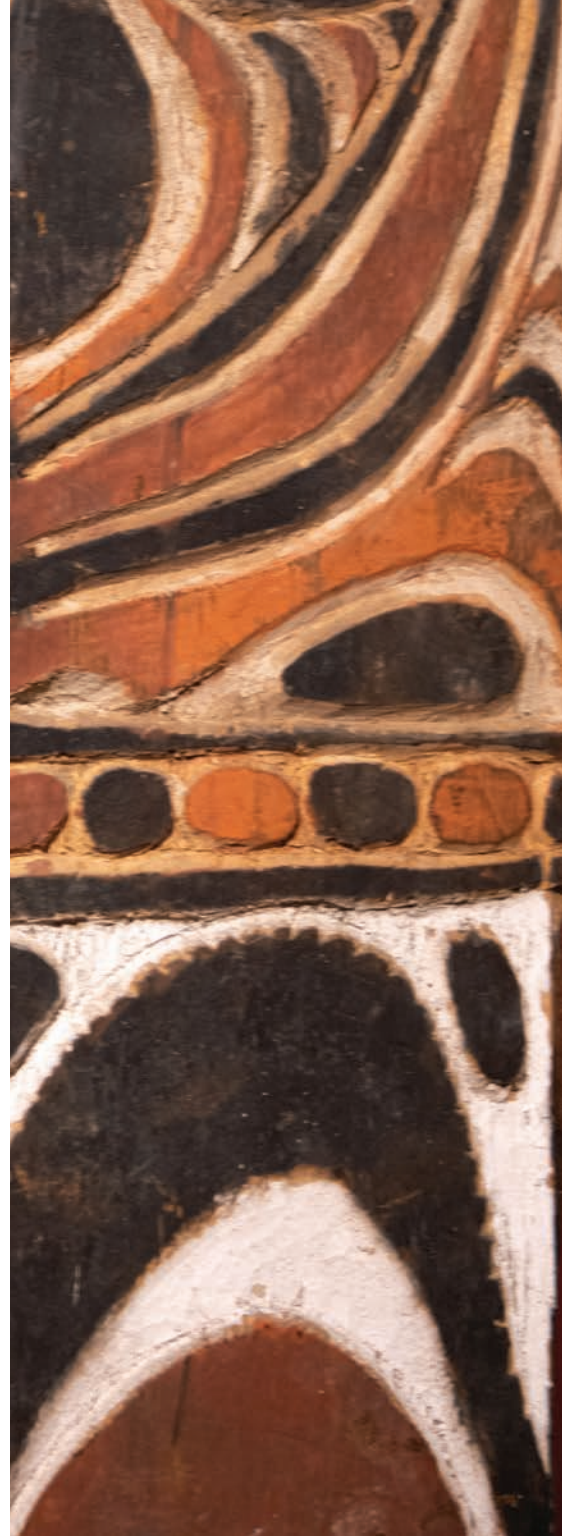
Baining artist, Gazelle Peninsula,
New Britain, Papua New Guinea
Spirit mask (kavat)
mid-20th century [before 1960]
bark cloth (tapa), cane framework, pigment
Height: 52"
2016.203
Photography by Megan Ptak

Massachusetts collectors William Teel [1924–2012] and his wife Bertha [1918–1995] championed the cause of making African and Oceanic Art more available to the public. They were among those who responded early with enthusiasm to art that disregarded realism in favor of exciting new ways of seeing and representing the world. To share the artworks that they loved, they funded the African and Oceanic Art galleries at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, published images of non-Western works in a series of books called *University Prints*, and loaned many works to the Fitchburg Art museum over several decades. The long-term African exhibition in the Museum's Zaydee D. and Mason D. Harris Gallery, on view between 2002 and 2014, consisted of loans and gifts from their collection. Work in *Moving Objects* bequeathed by Mr. Teel include a **Senufo (Ivory Coast) champion cultivator staff** [2009.52] and an **Abelam clan spirit figure** from New Guinea [2009.34].

Several works in the exhibition came not from major collectors of African and Oceanic Art, but from educators or curators who found the art from these areas of the world appealing because of their interest in modern art. In 1994, FAM acquired some **Senufo (Ivory Coast) Heddle Pulley Holders** [1994.56–57] from James Plaut. He was the first director of the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, taking up the position in 1939 when the organization was still a wing of MoMA in New York.³ Another such work is a **Pende mask** [2017.30] that belonged to Martin Friedman, who directed the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis from 1961 to 1990. As a modern art expert, Friedman recognized the role that non-Western art played in the transformation of Western art in the early twentieth century.

Why do collectors donate works to museums? A comment by Patrick Dolan, who gifted Kente cloth that he had collected in Ghana during his Peace Corps experience in the 1960s, provides some insight into the underlying motivations of almost all donors. He said that placing the cloth in the museum gave him a sense of immortality.⁴ Thus, it is the satisfaction of sharing something personally valued and the importance of being remembered, or remembering someone else, that is fundamental to the process of giving to public institutions.

Installation image by Norm Eggert



Movement Among Museums

The **Baining Night Mask** [2016.203] (fig. 3) that delights visitors as they enter the exhibition came to FAM from Mrs. Helen Slosberg, the widow of Samuel Slosberg, a children's shoe manufacturer (StrideRite) in central Massachusetts. This mask took a somewhat complicated path from its original site on New Britain's Gazelle Peninsula (politically part of Papua New Guinea) to Fitchburg, reaching us only in 2016. In New Guinea, young men used the night masks during their initiation into adulthood and left the masks to deteriorate in the forest afterward. However, by the second half of the twentieth century, Baining elders discovered they could remove the masks as ritual required and also get cash for them by selling them to visitors—missionaries, government officials, and tourists. Mrs. Slosberg had acquired two such masks by 1960, but whether she purchased them during her travels in New Guinea or if they came through dealers in Australia, Europe, or America, is unclear.

Helen and Samuel Slosberg gave generously to support the arts in Massachusetts, including a significant collection of Oceanic objects given to the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University and subsequently to the Worcester Art Museum. Western artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took inspiration from the stylized imagery of Oceanic art, making this gift appropriate to support the Rose Art Museum's collection of modern art. By 2004, however, the museum transferred the collection to the Worcester Art Museum.⁵ Several works, including the **Baining Night Mask**, were culled from that collection in 2016, and FAM was delighted to accept this iconic work into its collection.⁶

Figure 3
Baining artist, Gazelle Peninsula, New
Britain, Papua New Guinea
Spirit mask (kavat)
mid-20th century (before 1960)
bark cloth (tapa), cane framework, pigment
Height: 52"
2016.203
Photography by Charles Sternaimolo





Figure 4
Baga artist, Guinea
Masquerade Sculpture (D'mba)
by 1965
wood and brass tacks
52" x 11" x 23"
2018.21
Photography by Charles Sternaimolo



The Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation

Geneviève McMillan (1922–2008), one of FAM's major donors, began her love affair with African and Oceanic art as a student in Paris in the 1940s. She continued collecting after moving to the United States, gathering objects through visits to galleries, attending auctions, welcoming itinerant dealers from Africa into her Cambridge home, and traveling to Africa and the Pacific herself. Her collection—eclectic and idiosyncratic—was dispersed to numerous cultural organizations by the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation after her death.⁷ Mrs. McMillan established this foundation in 2001, honoring her close friend, Reba Stewart (1930–1971), who had shared her love of non-Western art and travels in Africa, but who unfortunately contracted malaria in 1971 and died that same year. To this day, the foundation continues McMillan's support of worthy projects in the arts. It was a major sponsor of FAM's award-winning exhibition *Global Africa* (2014–2018) and of this exhibition, *Moving Objects*.

Figure 5
D'mba masquerade in full dress, 1904,
Guinea, Baga people (Fore or Buluñits subgroup).
Photograph by: M. Chevrier. Published in Andre Arcin,
Histoire de la Guinée Française (Paris, 1911).
James Ross Archive, Yale University

One work from Mrs. McMillan's collection with a particularly interesting history is the **Baga D'mba mask** (fig. 4) (2018.21) that travelled from Guinée to Senegal to Paris to Boston to Worcester, and finally to Fitchburg. Mrs. McMillan purchased this work in Paris from a Mme. Durand of Pau in 1965. Mme. Durand lived in Senegal from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, and she and her husband built a major collection of West African art.⁸

D'mba represents the ideal female—evidenced by vigorous, yet elegant movement in performance, refined coiffure, adornment, and flat, pendulous breasts that indicate many children nursed. The fully costumed masquerade appeared on many occasions that served as milestones of personal and communal growth—marriages, births, ancestral commemorative rituals, during harvest and planting, and at ceremonies of hospitality (fig. 5). Documented as early as 1886, the masquerade performances ended in the 1950s, not only because of Islamic iconoclasm, but also because of French colonial antipathy to local cultural practice and nationalistic pressures. In the 1980s, there was a limited revival of the mask's use in several villages.⁹



Igbo artist, Nigeria
Crest Mask (mmuo)
early to mid-20th century
wood, pigment
16" x 8"
2018.28
Photography by Megan Ptak



Iatmul artist (Tambanum Village), Sepik River area,
Papua New Guinea, Melanesia
Woven Sculpture/Pig
mid-20th century
basketry, pigment, feathers, cowry shells
13 1/2" x 13" x 27"
2010.85
Photography by Megan Ptak

Dealers of African Art

Tim Hamill, studio artist and entrepreneur, acquired his first piece of African art in 1980. In 1990, he transformed his studio, a nineteenth-century wallpaper factory in Roxbury, into a gallery where he bought, sold, and exhibited the African and Oceanic art that had begun to fascinate him. Since then, the gallery has organized more than one hundred exhibitions of traditional African art at museums, universities, school galleries, and public and private institutions in southern New England, including an exhibition of African art held at the Fitchburg Art Museum in 1992. Tim and Bobbi Hamill, along with Bobbi's son Matt Mrachek, have been very generous in helping FAM develop its African collection with the donation of key objects. Gifts in the exhibition from the Hamill Gallery include an **Ethiopian healing scroll** (2016.71), a **Lobi ritual vessel** (2012.8), and a **Dogon toguna post** (2016.54).

Although we do not have a clear path from Africa to Fitchburg for the works sold by itinerant African dealers, thousands of such objects came into the United States in the 1960s, and into Tim Hamill's gallery after 1980. Mrs. McMillan and the Heaths also patronized West African traders. Many of those dealers continue to follow the trade fair and flea market circuit where they sell a wide range of Africana, from beads and textiles to carved wooden and cast metal objects (fig. 6). This network of traders is well-described in the academic literature on immigration and globalization.¹⁰ Some of these individuals whom I have met at the well-known antiques market in Brimfield, Massachusetts, have shared bits of their stories with me.



Figure 6
Display of African sculpture at Brimfield Antiques Market (Brimfield, Massachusetts), September 2015. This is the stall of Abdoul Keita who has been coming to Brimfield for more than 30 years. He and other Itinerant African traders continue to use flea markets and fairs as sites for selling the African sculpture they import.
Photograph by Jean Borgatti



Mende, Vai, or Temne artist,
Sierra Leone and Liberia
Sande Society Helmet Mask (sowei)
early to mid-20th century
Height: 15 1/2"
wood, glass beads
2016.74
Photography by Megan Ptak

African Art as Influence

The late Dwight Heath (1930–2017) bought his first piece of African art, a sword, at the age of 10 for \$1.50 in an antique shop because he liked the way it looked. He described himself and his wife Anna as “hunters and gatherers” rather than “collectors,” being fascinated by the technology of production and the sociology of distribution. The Heaths began buying African objects in quantity from itinerant dealers in the early 1990s. They felt strongly that this work should be shared and have given generously to many institutions, including Brown and Yale Universities, as well as the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Fitchburg Art Museum.

One work gifted by the Heaths is a **Kru mask** (fig. 7) from Liberia or Ivory Coast (2017.301) that I have referred to as “the curator’s dilemma.” It is a brilliant carving, but not clearly identifiable through comparison with historic, documented works.¹¹ The relative restraint of the Fitchburg mask in its forms, attachments of cloth around the periphery, the depth of the mask, the curvature of the inner “face” of the mask, the placement of the eye-holes, and the discoloration possibly caused by breath argue for its “authenticity”—that is, having been made for and used by an African community, even if only briefly. Its idiosyncratic form and its appearance on the market, along with masks related to it in construction and from the same area, argue for workshop production aimed at a non-local market or revival activity.¹² What little we know about these masks suggest they had a protective community function but are more likely to be performed for entertainment today.

However, the story of this mask is not just the story of a moving object coming from Africa via a network of global trade and passing through the Heath’s hands to FAM, but also of the contact between ethnic groups in Africa over several centuries. The style of this mask suggests a sharing of ideas among people along the west coast of Africa from Liberia and Ivory Coast to Cameroon with an important fulcrum in the Niger Delta. Kru sailors worked as migrant laborers on European ships from the mid seventeenth century onwards, and a late nineteenth-century photograph collected in Douala, Cameroon, shows migrant Kru sailors with their signature masquerade.¹³ A comparison of Kru, Ijo (Niger Delta), and Douala masks shows a clear set of stylistic relationships as well as an adaptation to local practice.¹⁴

Gurunsi artist, Gurunsi, Burkina Faso
Rooster Mask (*wan norga*)
20th century
wood
13" x 18 1/2" x 5"
2017.266
Photography by Megan Ptak



Figure 7
Indigenous artist or workshop,
Kru or Grebo people, Liberia or Ivory Coast
Kru Face Mask
20th century
wood
18" x 7 3/4" x 9 1/2"
2017.301
Photography by Megan Ptak



Installation image by Megan Ptak



Honoring Tradition

Increasing familiarity with the forms and meanings of African objects has moved us to appreciate them in their own right. We value these objects today because they help us understand not only other people's lives, but also their creativity and imagination. Thus, the museum has added to the collection through judicious purchases from living artists.

We have also been able to acquire or commission a number of works from artists in Africa that clearly demonstrate the continued skill and creativity of the individuals who work in the realm of the “contemporary traditional”—making work for local use as well as for sale. These include **brass castings** from the Benin Kingdom (2014.24, 2016.50–51, 2018.32–33) and full **masquerade costumes** (2016.43, 2016.45) from the Okpella people who live in the northern part of Nigeria's Edo State. The Benin brass castings are particularly important because they show the level of skill and craftsmanship that members of the Benin casters' guild (Igun Eromwon), operative from the fifteenth century, continue to demonstrate in their work. They contradict any idea that Benin Kingdom art came to a crashing halt in 1897, the date of Britain's Punitive Expedition to Benin that resulted in an interregnum of some seventeen years. Hip masks, fasteners for noblemen's garments or worn as pendants, signal a level of status as well as ritual accomplishment. Chiefs wore pendants on their left sides, while the Oba, or king, wore them on the right.¹⁵ The hip masks in *Moving Objects* were made between the 1950s and 2015.¹⁶ Only the Oba, or king, could commission work from the brass casters' guild until twentieth-century Obas allowed sales to others. Oba Ovonramwen owned all work from the guild until 1897, when he was sent into exile by the British, leaving Benin without a king and the royal guilds without patronage until his heir, Eweka II, came to the throne in 1914. Eweka II and his successor Azenkua II opened the market for non-royal patronage, enabling the guildsmen to survive.¹⁷

Fon artist (Abomey), Benin Republic
Memorial Altar (Asen)
early to mid-20th century
iron, brass, beads
4 ¾" x 10"
2018.20
Photography by Megan Ptak





Imuwahen Edabor, a guildsman, (fig. 8) proudly shows the inspiration for FAM's **hip mask** (2016.50), taken from a well-known 1960's publication. The original illustrated in the book is a work now in The Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK) in Hamburg, Germany. It shows an Oba in a composite configuration that includes the tusks and trunk of an elephant ending in a human hand (a symbol of power and authority), as well as projections that suggest mudfish—symbols of the Oba's divinity. Another FAM **hip mask** (2016.51) replicates the one said to be worn by the Chief of the Casters' Guild (Ineh n'Igun Eromwon) on ceremonial occasions.¹⁹ Leaf-like eyebrows and snakes eating toads emerging from the nostrils suggest a link with the deity Osun who is associated with herbal medicine and protection. According to the historian William Fagg, only three masks of this type were known to exist: two in the British Museum and one in the possession of the head of the brass casters' guild in Benin City.²⁰ FAM purchased this replica in 2015 from the current guild head or Ineh, Chief Kingsley Inneh, who maintained that it had been made by his grandfather, Chief Omoregbe, who was the head of the guild in the mid twentieth century. FAM also acquired two animal pendant ornaments from him: **heads of a leopard** (2018.33) and **a ram** (2018.32), which had belonged to his late father, Chief David Omorogie. A leopard pendant was reserved for use by war chiefs and the ram is a dynastic symbol in Benin that was revived in the eighteenth century. The leopard pendants are no longer made for local use since the Benin Kingdom no longer fields its own army.

James Friday, aka "Happiness" (Nigerian, Okpella, b. circa 1980)
"Dead Father" Masquerade Costume (Omeshe), 2014
handwoven cloth (women's weave) from Okene,
wood, yarn, cowry shells
134" x 56"
2016.45
Photography by Bethany Palmer

Other works commissioned from "contemporary traditional" artists include **the Messenger for the Dead Fathers (Anogiri) masquerade costume** made by Felix Edeh in 2014 (2016.43). Felix was the *Itilimi*, or Father of the Masquerades, in the Okpella community of Iddo. Shedetu Bekon and Stephen Isah, cousins from a family known for its carvers, created the complementary carved **wooden mask** (2016.44) in 1973. Many Messenger masquerades have both cloth and wooden heads. The wooden head provides the masquerade with greater dignity in public appearances and when making proclamations on behalf of the ancestors. The cloth mask allows for greater freedom during festival activities.



Figure 8

Imuwahen Edabor, member of the brass caster's guild (Igun Eromwon) stands outside his shop at 22 Igun Street, Benin City, in 2015 showing the pendant or hip mask that was the model for the one purchased for FAM.



Messengers for the Dead Fathers (*Inogiri*) open Okpella's ancestral festival season every year. They also serve as contacts with ancestral spirits for community members. During the festival finale, they lead teams of youths who engage in mock hostilities, testing one another with whips. Their activity is crucial to generating excitement for the festival climax when the ancestors actually return to the community in masquerade form as validation that the congregation's offerings have been accepted and ancestral blessings have been conferred for the coming year.



Figure 9
Baba Issaka in his studio, 2017,
Ghana, Swedru Region.
Photograph: Jean Borgatti.

The **Dead Father (Omeshe)** (2016.45) is the basic form representing a deceased head of a family throughout Okpella communities that celebrate an annual ancestral festival. James Friday, its fabricator, is the grandson of the current *Itilimi* in Okpella's Ogute community. He not only makes costumes, but also owns and performs both Messenger and Dead Father masquerades during Ogute's annual festival.

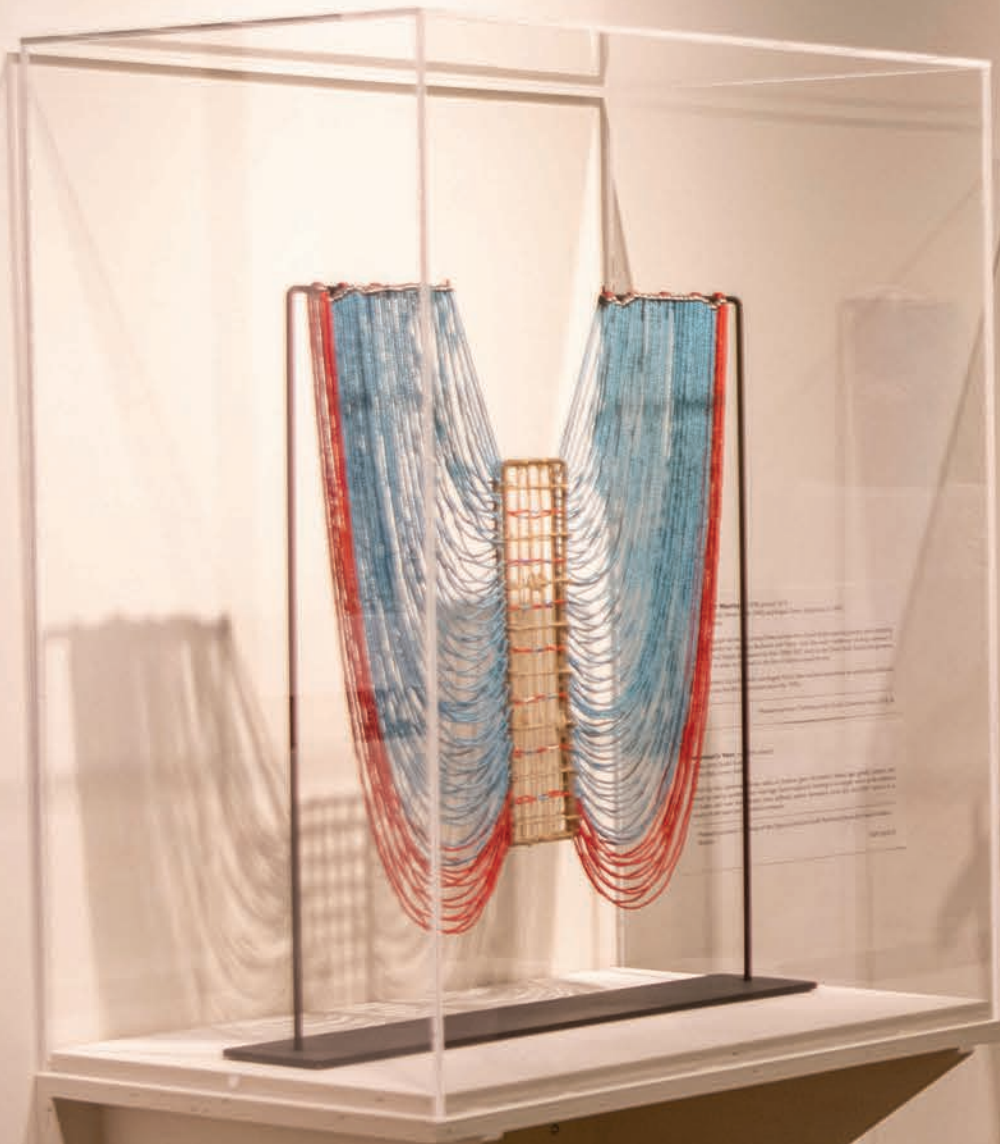
A last work acquired through commission is an **Asafo flag** from the Fante (Swedru) region in coastal Ghana (2018.34) made by Baba Issaka (fig. 9). He not only makes things for local patrons—like the other artists whose work has been featured here—but has worked for many museums, including London's Horniman Museum. As a resident artist in 2007, he led a community flag-making program as part of Britain's commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade.

Baba Issaka (Ghanaian, Fante/Swedru area,
b. circa 1968)
Asafo Flag (*frankaa*)
2017
commercial cotton cloth
43" x 74"
2018.34

Photography by Bethany Palmer

Asafo flags are the insignia created for the numerous military companies of the Fante states in Southern Ghana. Historically, Asafo companies were in charge of the safety and protection of the local community as well. They build and maintain clubhouses that are monumental sculptures in their own right and still serve as neighborhood watch societies. The companies continue to compete with one another, though today they "fight with art."²¹ Dancing the flags in an annual festival has replaced warfare between the companies. The flag imagery conveys multiple messages, recording historical events and illustrating proverbial wisdom. FAM's flag displays a whale, an eighteenth-century ship, and the Union Jack (or British national flag). These images refer to the idea that technology can overcome natural strength (only the ship can overcome the whale).²²





Installation image by Megan Ptak

Contemporary Artists and African Culture

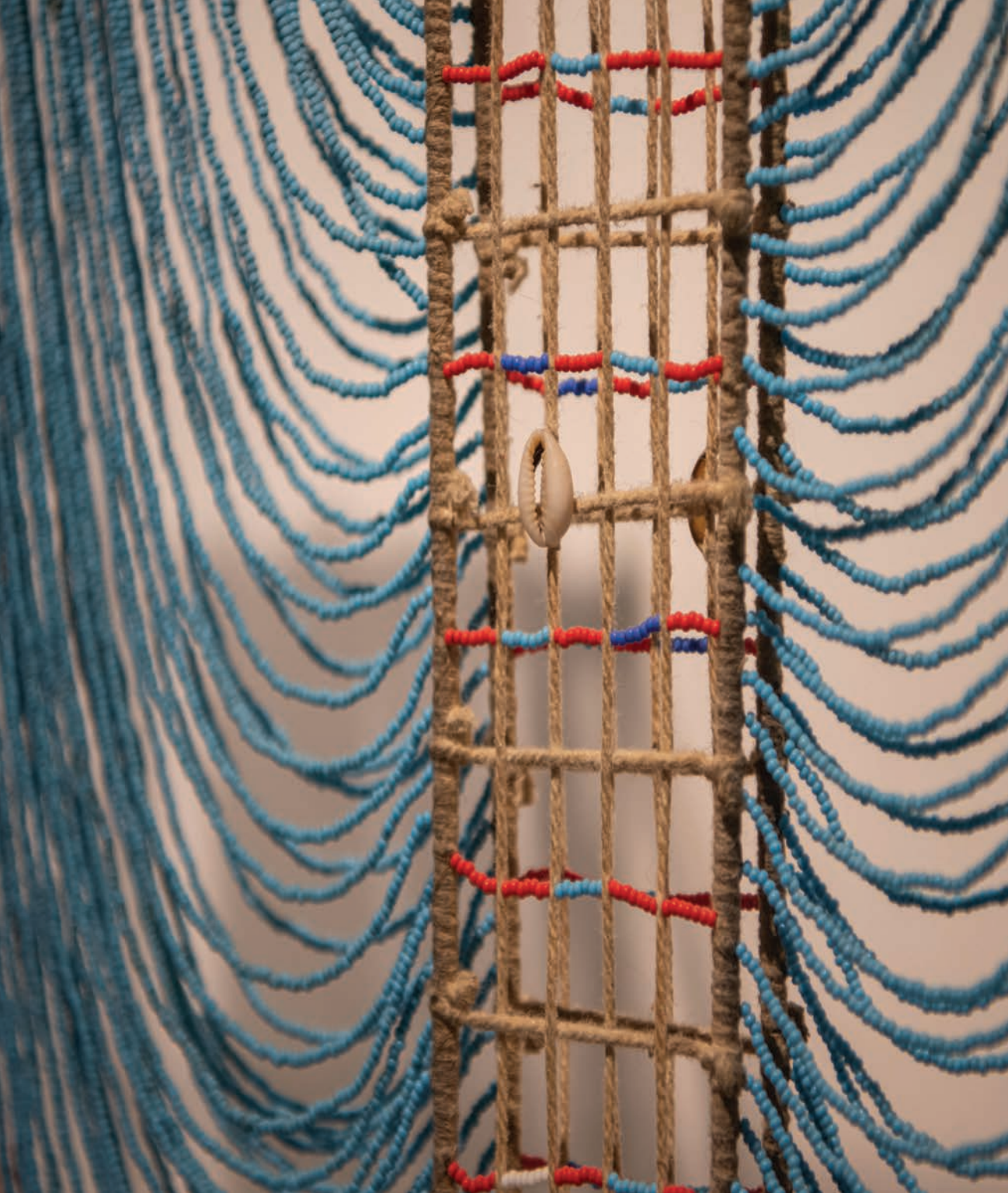
Photographs that are regarded as contemporary works of art in themselves can also provide insight into specific African cultures and dress. Héctor Mediavilla's **Lamame (the "Old Parisian") in Simon Kimbangu Avenue, Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo** (2018.14) and Daniele Tamagni's **Playboys of Bacongo** (2020.40) document the Society of Artists and Elegant Persons. The Sapeurs (the term derives from the acronym S.A.P.E. of their French name, Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes) pride themselves on adding glamour to their impoverished environments and giving hope to their neighbors through their refined manners and impeccable dress.²³

Ready for Marriage (2018.38) by Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher shows two young Dinka women from South Sudan wearing beaded vests similar to the **Dinka vest** (2018.19) in *Moving Objects*. Beckwith and Fisher note that such traditional clothing, though common in the 1970s when the photograph was taken, had largely disappeared by the early twenty-first century. Such garments were sold to buy food in the face of famine caused by war.

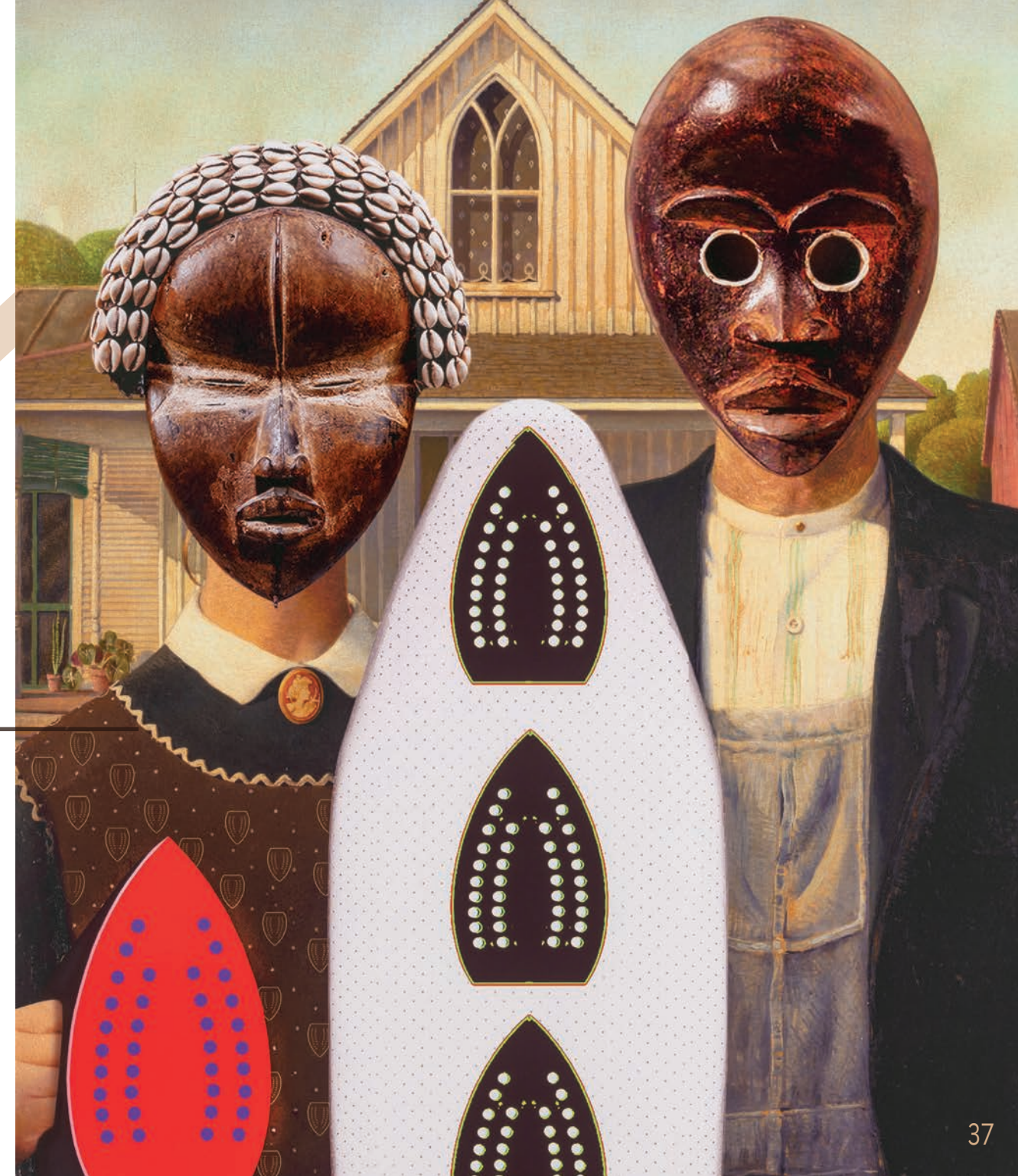
Willie Cole's **American Domestic** (2018.18) is a witty and poignant play on Grant Wood's iconic painting **American Gothic**.²⁴ Cole transforms the painting by replacing the figures' heads with male and female masks from the Dan people of Ivory Coast. Both the print's title and the accessories featured—an iron and ironing board (signature images in Cole's art)—refer to the occupations historically available to many African Americans. The work also recalls Gordon Parks' 1942 photograph of Ella Watson titled **American Gothic**, with the tools of her janitorial trade framed by the American flag.²⁵



Héctor Mediavilla (Spanish, b. 1970)
**Lamame (the "Old Parisian")
in Simon Kimbangu Avenue,
Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo**
2008
giclée print on Hannemhüle paper
28 3/4" x 42 1/2"
2018.14



Dinka artist, South Sudan
Woman's Vest
mid-20th century
beads, fiber, cowry shells
19" x 18"
2018.19
Photography by Bethany Palmer



Willie Cole (US American, b. 1955)
American Domestic
2016
digital pigment and serigraph
36" x 30"
2018.18





This essay began with a reference to the double meaning of the word “moving.” FAM’s collection, like that of other museums, is made up entirely of moving objects, following the first definition. All objects move from the mind and hands of the artist to become a physical reality, and as the moving of the many objects in the exhibition demonstrates, they often travel considerable distances until they reach a final resting place. In the case of many works of art from Africa and Oceania, they may have deteriorated through use and storage conditions, or have been taken out of use and left to return to the earth for ritual reasons, being replaced by new versions or new things. This enables change even in art traditions that welcome change slowly, since the objects have essential meanings attached to their forms intended for their original audiences. Those same objects, many now preserved in museum contexts, continue to move new audiences in different ways—stirring emotions, evoking memories, or simply providing pleasure through their forms. We hope that the works in the exhibition will “move” you and that this essay will provide a clearer understanding of how these works have moved to Fitchburg.

Indigenous artist, Amhara or Tigray
regions, Ethiopia
Healing’ Scroll, *ma’ero qumät*
(“full size”) or *yä branna ketab*
(“written on skin”)
late 19th or early 20th century
vellum, pigment
68” x 6”
2016. 71
Photography by Bethany Palmer

Endnotes

¹ The British Royal Coat of Arms features a lion, hence the lion's association with Britain in Tonga, which came under Britain's protection formally in 1900 though the British had been a presence there throughout the nineteenth century.

² Roger Neich and Mick Pendergast, *Pacific Tapa* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 57 (caption for plate).

³ Obituary for James Plaut, *Hartford Courant*, Jan. 16, 1996.

⁴ Patrick Dolan, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, personal communication, 2020.

⁵ Citing a desire to focus more specifically on twentieth-century art, the Rose Art Museum transferred the collection that by this time numbered 350 works to Worcester. (See Bonnie Saulnier's catalogue of the Helen S. Slosberg Collection of Oceanic Art in Memory of her Brother Israel Sagoff published by the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis in 1977.) This was in line with the terms of the gift to the Rose Art Museum, since Mrs. Slosberg had been associated with the Worcester Art Museum since the early 1960s and served as a corporator between 1967–1973 when she also endowed a collections fund there (James Welu, personal communication, January 2021).

⁶ Baining masks were displayed as early as 1946 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, making them highly desirable collectibles for both museums and individuals. See Ralph Linton and Paul Wingert in collaboration with Rene d'Harnoncourt, *Art of the South Seas* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), 155.

⁷ The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, a major recipient of works from her collection, produced an excellent exhibition and catalogue that discusses Mrs. McMillan's interests in non-Western art and individual works that are comparable to those that came to Fitchburg. See Christraud Geary and Stephanie Xatart, *Material Journeys: Collecting African and Oceanic Art, 1945–2000* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2007).

⁸ Work from the Durand collection was exhibited in Pau in 1961, though the D'mba was not featured. See Jacqueline DeLange, *Sculpture de L'Afrique Noire de Pau* (Pau: Musee de Beaux Arts, 1961), Introduction and Catalogue. Nor was it mentioned in the later auction catalogue of the collection that did incorporate old photographs of the house interiors in Africa and Pau. See *Art Africain: Collection Durand–Barrère*, December 5, 2008 (Paris: PIASA Auctions), essays by Pierre Ambrouche and Michele Durand–Barrere. The introduction to the Pau exhibition is reprinted in the auction catalogue. It's certainly possible that FAM's D'mba came out of Baga country in the 1950s to be sold in Dakar, easily accessible from the community in which the Durands lived, to be transported back to France by 1961. We don't know whether they purchased it from an African or a French trader, or if it was one of those commissioned for export from local artists still conversant with the style because it had become an iconic form. Baga scholar Fred Lamp, though working only with photographs, suggests that FAM's D'mba may have been carved by an artist from Kifindia, a small village along the northern coast of Guinea, who was responsible for a group commissioned by art dealer Boris Kegel–Konietzko of Hamburg around that time (personal communication, Aug. 27–28, 2018).

⁹ Frederick Extra, *Art of the Baga: A Drama of Cultural Reinvention* (New York: Prestel, 1996), 19, 226.

¹⁰ See Nicholas Lemann, "Fake Masks," *Atlantic* 260, no.5 (Nov. 1987); Christopher Steiner, Ilisa Barbash, and Lucien Taylor, *In and Out of Africa* (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Media, 1993); and John R. Rohner, *Art Treasures from African Runners* (Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2000) for varied viewpoints on the caliber of the works sold by itinerant African dealers over time. When buying at a street fair or flea market, it is definitely a case of "Let the buyer beware."

¹¹ The only comparable documented mask is in the collection of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, a Grebo mask collected between 1838–1841. <https://www.pem.org/explore-art/african-art/mask-mid-19th-century/mask-mid-19th-century-large> – accessed Jan.5, 2021.

¹² Masks similar in terms of basic structure, though without hands, include a Sassandra face mask from the Ivory Coast shown at the Trocadero Museum in Paris in 1900 published in William Rubin ed., *Primitivism in 20th Century Art, Vol.1* (New York: MOMA: 1984), 260; and a face mask with multiple projections from the village of Ubi in Ivory Coast published in Tom Phillips ed., *Africa: The Art of a Continent* (New York: Prestel, 1995), pl.5.129.

¹³ Jurgen Scheider, Ute Roschenthaler, Bernard Gardi, *Fotofieber: Bilder aus West- und Zentralafrika Die Reisen von Carl Passavant 1883–1885* (Basel: Museum der Kulturen, 2005), 14–15 Abb.2.

¹⁴ See Martha Anderson, “From River Horses to Dancing Sharks: Canoes and Fish in Ijo Art and Ritual” in *Ways of the Rivers*, Martha Anderson and Phil Peek, eds. (Los Angeles: Regents of the University of California, 2002), 133–161 for illustrations of Ijo masks. See for illustration of Douala horizontal headdress, fig.18 (p.54) in Rosalinde Wilcox, “Commercial Transactions and Cultural Interactions from the Delta to Douala and Beyond,” *African Arts* 35, no.1 (Spring 2002): 42–55, 92–95.

¹⁵ For context photograph, see Joseph Nevadomsky, “2 Town Chiefs during Igue Festival 1992,” photograph published in Victor Osaro Edo, “Hierarchy and Organization of the Benin Kingdom and Palace,” in *Benin Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria*, ed. Barbara Plankensteiner (Vienna: Snoeck, 2007), 90.

¹⁶ These twentieth- and twenty-first-century works were exported from Nigeria with permission of the National Commission of Museums and Monuments.

¹⁷ The guilds were restored, works were commissioned to rebuild the shrines first pillaged by the British troops and then destroyed when the palace burned, and an official school of arts and crafts was established. See Charles Gore, “Casting Identities in Contemporary Benin City,” *African Arts* 30, no. 3, *Special Issue: The Benin Centenary, Part 1* (Summer, 1997): 54–61, 93; Joseph Nevadomsky, “Contemporary Art and Artists in Benin City,” *African Arts* 30, no. 4, *Special Issue: The Benin Centenary, Part 2* (Autumn 1997): 54–63, 94–95; and John Ogene, “The Politics of Patronage and the Igun Artworker in Benin City,” *African Arts* 45, no.1 (Spring 2012): 42–49.

¹⁸ The inspiration is reproduced in William Fagg and Herbert List, *Nigerian Images* (New York: Praeger, 1963), fig.18b.

¹⁹ Kingsley Inneh, the current Ineh n’Igun Eromwon, personal communication, 2015.

²⁰ William Fagg and Herbert List, *Nigerian Images* (New York: Praeger, 1963), fig. 19.

²¹ Doran Ross, *Fighting with Art: Appliqued Flags of the Fante Asafo* (Los Angeles: UCLA Museum of Cultural History, 1979).

²² Silvia Forni and Doran Ross, *Art, Honor, and Ridicule: Asafo Flags from Southern Ghana* (Toronto: Royal Ontario Museum, 2016), 84.

²³ The society originated during the Colonial period and was revived in the 1970s in opposition to the violence and repression of Mobutu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its popularity today in the neighboring Congo Republic is described by one politician as an indication of the country’s coming to life again after its own civil war in the 1990s and subsequent tumultuous history.

²⁴ Grant Wood (US American, 1891–1942), *American Gothic*, 1930, oil on board, 30 ¾” x 25 ¾”. Art Institute of Chicago, Friends of American Art Collection: 1930.934.

²⁵ Gordon Parks (US American, 1912–2006), *American Gothic*, 1942, gelatin silver print, 11 13/16” x 8 7/16”, (image), 14” x 10 15/16” (sheet). Image managed by the Gordon Parks Foundation.



Exhibition Checklist

Oceania



Papuan Gulf artist, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia
Spirit Board (Gope)
mid-20th century
wood, pigment
49 ½" x 9 ½" x 1"

Purchased from Island Carving, Lae, Papua New Guinea, 1974
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.82



Abelam artist, Prince Alexander Mountains, Sepik River area, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia
Adze
20th century
wood, stone, rattan
18" x 13" x 2"

An adze was purchased from the Hurst Gallery (Cambridge, MA) in 1986
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.88



Massim artist, Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia
Betel Nut Mortar/Lime Spatula
mid-20th century
wood, lime
Height: 9"

A Trobriand lime spatula was purchased from the Hurst Gallery (Cambridge, MA), 1980s
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.98



Indigenous artist, Western Highlands and Sepik River regions, Papua New Guinea and West Papua, Indonesia (formerly Irian Jaya), Melanesia
Penis Sheath (koteka)
mid-20th century
gourd (lagenaria siceraria), braided rattan binding
6" x 10"

Purchased from Australian Traders/Adventurers, Cairns, 1979-80
Gift of Michael Lonergan
2006.54



Fijian artist, Fiji, Polynesia/Melanesia
Throwing club (ula)
20th century
wood
17" x 7 ¼"

Several Fijian clubs were purchased from the Hurst Gallery (Cambridge, MA) in the 1980s
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.87



Fijian artist, Fiji, Polynesia/Melanesia
Mace-headed root throwing club (waka)
20th century
wood
18" x 4"

Several Fijian clubs were purchased from the Hurst Gallery (Cambridge, MA) in the 1980s
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.89



Indigenous artist, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia
Shell pendant necklace (kina)
mid-20th century
shell, braided fiber
Height: 15" (pendent only: 6" x 7")

Probably purchased in New Guinea in the 1970s
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2013.66



Maori artist, New Zealand, Polynesia
Striking club (wahaika)
probably early 20th century
wood (Maire/Nestegis cunninghami, Manuka/Leptospermum scoparium, or Pohutukawa/Metrosideros excels), abalone shell
14" x 6"

Purchased from Hurst Gallery (Cambridge, MA) in 1985;
Ex collection Mr. & Mrs. Seymour Reichlin
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.65



Indigenous artist, Upper Sepik River area (Idam R. Abau Group), Papua New Guinea, Melanesia

Shield
mid-20th century
wood, pigment, fiber
63" x 27 1/2"

Probably purchased in New Guinea in the 1970s
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.128



Indigenous artist, Upper Sepik River area, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia

Shield
mid-20th century
wood, pigment, fiber
70" x 14 1/2" x 4"

Probably purchased in New Guinea in the 1970s
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.81



Abelam artist (Wosera area), Prince Alexander Mountains, Middle Sepik River region, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia

Yam Mask (silgu)
mid-20th century
basketry (Nengwa vine/Lygodium), pigment
15" x 7" x 6 1/2"

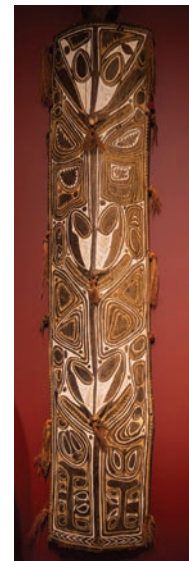
Purchased from Island Carving, Lae, Papua New Guinea, 1974
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.91



Iatmul artist (Tambanum Village), Sepik River area, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia

Woven Sculpture/Pig
mid-20th century
basketry, pigment, feathers, cowry shells
13 1/2" x 13" x 27"

Purchased from Hurst & Hurst, Cambridge MA, 1982
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.85



Indigenous artist, Lower Sepik River Area (Angorram), Papua New Guinea, Melanesia

Shield
mid-20th century
wood, pigment, fiber
77" x 16 1/2"

Probably purchased in New Guinea in the 1970s
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.79



Abelam artist, Prince Alexander Mountains, Middle Sepik River region, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia

Male Clan Spirit Figure (nggwalndu)
mid-20th century
wood, paint
Height: 70"

Purchased from Galerie Le Corneur Roudillon, Paris, April, 1968
Gift of William Teel
2009.34



Indigenous artist, Middle Sepik Region, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia

Gable Mask
mid-20th century
woven fiber, pigment, cassowary feathers
15" x 7" x 6 1/2"

Probably purchased in New Guinea in the 1970s
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.92



Indigenous artist, Arrernte, Luritja, Wakaya, Warlpiri, Walmajarri, or Warumungu people, Central Australia

Shield (kutitji)
mid-20th century
wood (Sturt's bean tree/Erythrina vespertilio), pigment
28" x 8 1/2" x 3 1/3"

Purchased from Hurst & Hurst, Cambridge MA, 1982
Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2013.47



Oro Province artist, Huon Peninsula, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia
Tapa cloth
 mid-20th century
 tree bark (paper Mulberry), vegetable dyes, earth pigments
 22" x 39"

Purchased from Island Carving, Lae, Papua New Guinea
 Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
 2013.70



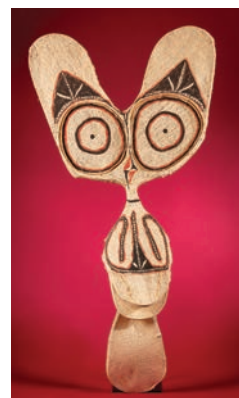
Kapriman artist, Korewori and Blackwater Rivers, Middle Sepik region, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia
Mask (didagur)
 mid-20th century (after 1967)
 basketry, pigment, feathers
 11" x 31" x 5"

Gift of the May Gruber Estate
 2013.13



Indigenous artist, Tonga Kingdom, Polynesia
Tapa Cloth (ngatu)
 pre-1931, possibly late 19th century
 tree bark (paper mulberry tree), pigment, arrowroot binder
 79 1/4" x 38 1/2"

Gift of Miss Cora Hatch
 1931.100



Baining artist, Gazelle Peninsula, New Britain, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia
Spirit mask (kavat)
 mid-20th century (before 1960)
 bark cloth (tapa), cane framework, pigment
 Height: 52"

Gift from The Helen Slosberg Collection of Oceanic Art in Memory of Her Brother Israel Sagoff; transferred from the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, to the Worcester Art Museum, 2003, accessioned 2004; transferred to the Fitchburg Art Museum in 2016
 2016.203

West Africa



Senufo artist, Ivory Coast
Heddle Pulley Holders (Hornbill Motif)
 20th century
 wood
 8" x 3"

Gift of James Plaut, founding director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston
 1994.57



Senufo artist, Ivory Coast
Heddle Pulley Holders (Hornbill Motif)
 20th century
 wood
 7 1/4" x 4 1/8" x 3 1/4"

Gift of Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David
 2017.313



Senufo artist, Ivory Coast
Heddle Pulley Holders (Hornbill Motif)
 20th century
 wood
 7 1/4" x 3 1/2"

Gift of James Plaut, founding director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston
 1994.56



Senufo artist, Ivory Coast
Champion Cultivator Bird Staff (sejen)
 mid-20th century
 10" x 23 1/2"
 wood, pigment

Gift to the Teels from Edward Brown of Atlanta, civil and human rights activist and co-owner of the Harris-Brown Gallery in Boston, 1991
 Gift of William Teel
 2009.54



Bamileke artist, Cameroon
Elephant Mask (*mbap mteng*)
late 20th century
cloth, beads, wicker
46 ½" x 16 ½"

Purchased from an itinerant African dealer prior to 2012. Gift of Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David
2017.259



Igbo artist (Afikpo sub-group), Nigeria
Mask called Yam Knife (*mma ji*)
mid to late 20th century
wood, pigment
37 ½" x 6 ½"

Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2010.57



Fon artist (Abomey), Benin Republic
Memorial Altar (*Asen*)
early to mid-20th century
iron, brass, beads
4 ¾" x 10"

From the inventory of the Hamill Gallery Boston
Gift of Tim and Bobbi Hamill
2018.20



Baga artist, Guinea
Masquerade Sculpture (*D'mba*)
by 1965
wood and brass tacks
52" x 11" x 23"

Transferred from the Worcester Art Museum; Ex collection of Zulma and Robert Durand, Paris; Gift of the Geneviève McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation
2018.21



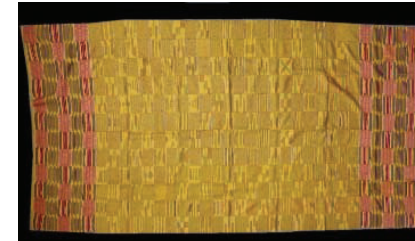
Indigenous artist, Malaita Island, Solomon Islands, Micronesia
Comb (*fa'a*)
mid-20th century
palm wood, lime, coconut fiber
Height: 10 ¼"

Purchased from Australian Traders/Adventurers, Cairns, 1979-80
Gift of Michael Lonergan
2006.54



Lobi artist, Burkina Faso
Altar Vessel
mid-20th century
terra cotta
Height: 21"

From the inventory of the Hamill Gallery, Boston
Gift of Bobbi and Tim Hamill in honor of FAM Director Peter Timms
2012.8



Asante (Ashanti) weaver, Ghana
Woman's Kente Cloth Garment (*wrapper*)
c. 1940
silk, 12 hand-woven strips sewn together
42" x 80"

Museum Purchase from Duncan Clarke (Adire African Textiles, London), who purchased it in Ghana in 2016
Sinon Collection Fund
2016.94



Mende, Vai, or Temne artist, Sierra Leone and Liberia
Sande Society Helmet Mask (*sowej*)
early to mid-20th century
wood, glass beads
Height: 15 ½"

A Sande Society Helmet Mask taken from Hamill Gallery Inventory
Gift of Bobbi and Tim Hamill
2016.74



Gurunsi artist, Gurunsi (Nuna, Winiama, Lela and other Gur-speaking peoples), Burkina Faso
Rooster Mask (*wan norga*)
 20th century
 wood
 13" x 18 ½" x 5"

Purchased from an itinerant African dealer prior to 2012
 Gift of Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David
 2017.266



Stephen Isah (Nigerian, Okpella, b. circa 1950)
Drum (*obiza*)
 2015
 terra cotta, leather (goatskin), fiber
 13" x 9 ¼"

Commissioned from the artist by Jean Borgatti
 Museum Purchase
 2016.76



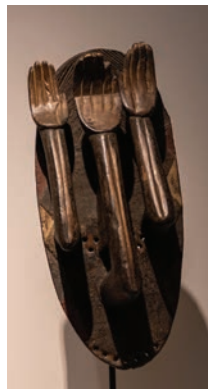
Igun Street artists, Benin City, Nigeria
Leopard's head hip or pendant ornament/container
 early to mid-20th century
 cast copper alloy
 5 ½" x 3" x 2 ¼"

Purchased from the current Ineh n'Igun Eromwon Chief Kingsley Inneh in Benin City in 2017 by Jean Borgatti
 2018.33



Osagie Igbinosun (Nigerian, Benin City, Igun Street, b. circa 1980)
Hip Mask
 2013
 cast copper alloy
 6 ½" x 5" x 1 ½"

Purchased from the artist, Benin City by Jean Borgatti
 2014.24



Indigenous artist or workshop, Kru or Grebo people, Liberia or Ivory Coast
Face Mask
 20th century
 wood
 18" x 7 ¾" x 9 ½"

Purchased from an itinerant African dealer prior to 2010
 Gift of Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David
 2017.301



Ineh n'Igun Eromwon, Chief Omoregbe (Nigerian, Benin City, Igun Street, 1900- c. 1980?)
Hip Mask
 mid-20th century
 cast copper alloy
 6 ¼" x 3" x 2"

Purchased in 2016 from the current Ineh n'Igun Eromwon Chief Kingsley Inneh in Benin City by Jean Borgatti
 2016.51



Igun Street artists, Benin City, Nigeria
Ram's head hip or pendant ornament/container
 early to mid-20th century
 cast copper alloy
 8 ¼" x 3" x 2 ¼"

Purchased from the current Ineh n'Igun Eromwon Chief Kingsley Inneh in Benin City in 2017 by Jean Borgatti
 2018.32



Imuwahen Edabor (Nigerian, Benin City, Igun Street, b. circa 1950)
Hip Mask
 2015
 cast copper alloy
 7" x 4 ½" x 1 ½"

Museum Purchase from the artist in Benin City in 2015 by Jean Borgatti
 2016.50



Yoruba artist
(Oyo subgroup), Nigeria
Herbalist's Staff (*opa Osanyin or opa Eyinle*)
mid-20th century
iron
28" x 6 ¾"

Gift in loving memory of
Grampa Bob from Maxim
and Jeremy Rossi
2011.3



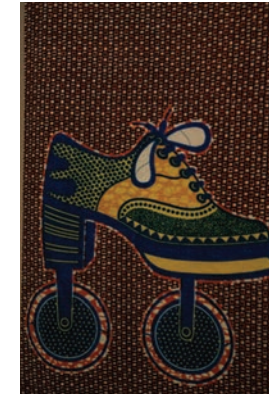
Yoruba artist
(Oyo subgroup), Nigeria
Herbalist's Staff (*opa Osanyin or opa Eyinle*)
mid-20th century
iron
27" x 6"

Gift in loving memory of
Grampa Bob from Maxim
and Jeremy Rossi
2011.2



**Fan pattern
Dutch Wax Print**
c. 2013
cotton, aniline dyes, factory
printed
44" x 216"

Museum Purchase (Okpella
Market, Nigeria)
2014.51



**Roller Skate pattern
Dutch Wax Print**
c. 2012
cotton, aniline dyes, factory
printed
45" x 216"

Museum Purchase (from
Boutique D'Afrique,
Worcester MA in 2012)
2012.16



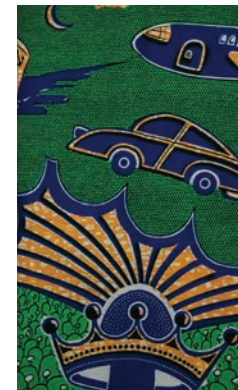
Nafana artist, Ivory Coast
(Bondoukou area)
Mask (*Bedu*)
20th century
wood, pigment
88" x 44" x 5 ½"

Gift of Bobbi and Tim Hamill
2019.129



Asante (Ashanti) weaver,
Ghana
**Woman's Kente Cloth
Garment (*wrapper*)**
c. 1950
silk, 14 hand-woven strips
sewn together
49" x 83"

Museum purchase from
Duncan Clarke (Adire African
Textiles, London)
African Acquisitions Fund
2019.14



**Tree of Obama or Obama's
Key to Success pattern
Dutch Wax Print**
c. 2008
cotton, aniline dyes, factory
printed by Vlisco, Holland,
made for the African Market
47" x 216"

Museum Purchase (online
from Vlisco)
2018.37



Felix Edeh (Nigerian, Okpella,
b. circa 1965)
**Messenger Mask and
Costume (*Anogiri*)**
2014
cloth, fiber, metal
Height: 70"

Commissioned from the artist
in Nigeria by Jean Borgatti
Museum Purchase
2016.43



Shedetu Bekon (Nigerian, Okpella, b. circa 1955) and Stephen Isah (Nigerian, Okpella, b. circa 1950)
Messenger Mask (Anogiri)
1973
wood, mirrors, cowry shells, abrus seeds, handwoven cloth
13" x 7 1/2" x 9"

Commissioned from the artists in Nigeria by Jean Borgatti in 1973
Museum purchase
2016.44



Igbo artist (North Central Region), Nigeria
Maiden Spirit Mask (agbogho mmuo)
mid-20th century
wood, pigment
17 1/2" x 6"

Gift of Simon and Nancy Gregory
2018.27



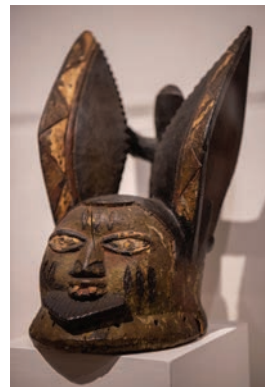
Dan artist, Liberia or Ivory Coast
Face Mask for Singer (deangle)
mid-20th century
wood, fabric, cowry shells, brass bells
11" x 8"

Purchased by donors on eBay
Gift of Simon and Nancy Gregory
2018.29



James Friday, aka "Happiness" (Nigerian, Okpella, b. circa 1980)
"Dead Father" Masquerade Costume (Omeshe)
2014
handwoven cloth (women's weave) from Okene, wood, yarn, cowry shells
134" x 56"

Commissioned from the artist in Nigeria by Jean Borgatti in 2014
Museum Purchase
2016.45



Yoruba artist (Egba region, Abeokuta), Nigeria
Crest Mask (egungun erin)
mid to late 20th century
wood, pigment
13 5/9" x 8 1/4" x 10 3/4"

Purchased at auction (Skinner's) with an online bid made from Nigeria, Ex collection of Gordon Lankton, African Gallery, Clinton MA
2018.26



Igbo artist, Nigeria
Crest Mask (mmuo)
early to mid-20th century
wood, pigment
16" x 8"
(full height with fringe: 45")

Gift of Simon and Nancy Gregory
2018.28



Dan or Mano artist
Liberia or Ivory Coast
Miniature mask (ma)
mid-20th century (before 1984)
wood, sacrificial patina
4 3/4" x 2 1/2"

Gift of Charles Cohn
1984.57



Willie Cole (US American, b. 1955)
American Domestic
2016
digital pigment and serigraph
36" x 30"

Museum Purchase from the artist courtesy of the Sinon Collection Fund in honor of Jean Borgatti, FAM Consulting Curator for African, Oceanic, and Native American Art
2018.18

Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa



Igbo artist, Nigeria
Mask
mid to late 20th century
wood, oil-based paint
8" x 7" x 7 1/2"

Gift of the Geneviève
McMillan-Reba Stewart
Foundation
2013.41



Yoruba artist, Nigeria or
Benin Republic
**Diviner's Staff (opa Orere
or osun Babalawo)**
mid-20th century
iron, fiber
Height: 36"

Purchased from an itinerant
African dealer prior to 2011
Gift from Dwight B. and
Anna C. Heath in memory of
their son David
2017.185



Indigenous artist, Amhara or
Tigray regions, Ethiopia
**Healing Scroll, ma'ero
qumät ("full size") or yä
branna ketab ("written on
skin")**
late 19th or early 20th
century
vellum, pigment
68" x 6"

From the inventory of the
Hamill Gallery, Boston
Gift of Bobbi and Tim Hamill
2016.71



Lega artist, Democratic
Republic of the Congo,
formerly Zaire
Men's Title Hat
mid-20th century
wicker, pangolin scales,
elephant hair
7 3/4" x 6 1/2"

Purchased from an itinerant
African trader prior to 2011
Gift from Dwight B. and
Anna C. Heath in memory of
their son David
2017.202



Baba Issaka (Ghanaian,
Fante/Swedru area, b. circa
1968)
Asafo Flag (frankaa)
2017
commercial cotton cloth
43" x 74"

Commissioned and
purchased from the artist in
2017 by Jean Borgatti
2018.34



Indigenous artist, Dogon People, Mali
Toguna Post
mid-20th century
Kile wood (Prosopis africana)
Height: 51"

From the inventory of the Hamill
Gallery, Boston
Gift of Bobbi and Tim Hamill in honor
of FAM Director Nicholas Capasso
2016.54



Lega artist, Democratic
Republic of the Congo,
formerly Zaire
**Men's Title Hat (Mukuba
wa Bifungo or Nkumbu za
Nsembe)**
mid-20th century
wicker, cowries, elephant hair
6 1/2" x 7"

Purchased from an itinerant
African trader prior to 2011
Gift from Dwight B. and Anna
C. Heath in memory of their
son David
2017.201



Unidentified artist, Sudan or
South Sudan
Sandals
20th century (possibly
before 1950)
wood
9 3/4" x 3 3/4" each

Purchased from an itinerant
African dealer prior to 2011
Gift from Dwight B. and
Anna C. Heath in memory of
their son David
2017.186



Ethiopian artist (Amhara or Tigray regions), Ethiopia
Hand Cross
mid to late 20th century
metal, pigment
13 7/8" x 5 3/8"

Gift from Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David
2017.167



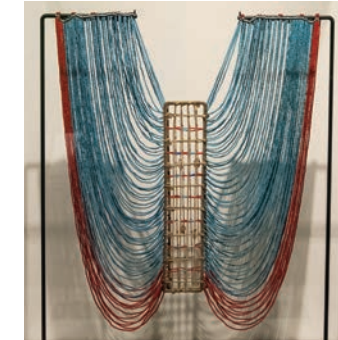
Ethiopian artist (Amhara or Tigray regions), Ethiopia
Processional Cross
mid to late 20th century
metal
9" x 4 1/2"

Gift from Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David
2017.284



Ethiopian or Eritrean Artist, Ethiopia (Gomu-Gofa region) or Eritrea
Chordophone – bowl lyre (krar)
20th century
leather, wood
28 1/2" x 15"

From the inventory of the Hamill Gallery, Boston
Gift of Tim & Bobbi Hamill
2016.63



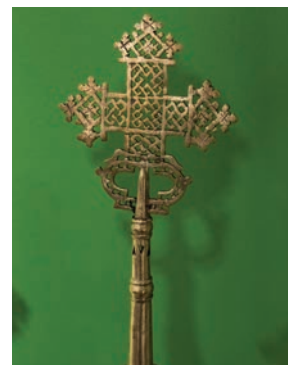
Dinka artist, South Sudan
Woman's Vest
mid-20th century
beads, fiber, cowry shells
19" x 18"

Purchased from the Hamill Gallery, Boston
Sinon Collection Fund
2018.19



Ethiopian artist (Amhara or Tigray regions), Ethiopia
Processional Cross
mid to late 20th century
metal
10 3/4" x 4 1/2"

Gift from Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David
2017.285



Ethiopian artist (Amhara or Tigray regions), Ethiopia
Processional Cross
mid to late 20th century
metal
9" x 5"

Gift from Dwight B. and Anna C. Heath in memory of their son David
2017.299



Ndebele artist, South Africa
Bridal Apron (ijogolo)
20th century
leather, beads
22 1/2" x 20 1/2"

From the inventory of the Hamill Gallery, Boston
Gift of Bobbi and Tim Hamill
2016.70



Carol Beckwith (US American, b. 1945) and Angela Fisher (Australian, b. 1947)
Ready for Marriage
1978
archival C-print
20" x 16"

Sinon Collection Fund
2018.38



Unidentified Artist, Kenya
**Factory printed cloth
(kanga)**
21st century
cotton
39" x 63"

Museum Purchase (online)
2019.154



Indigenous artist, Central
Pende People, Democratic
Republic of the Congo
Mask (Mbuya)
early to mid-20th century
wood, pigment (barkpaste,
lime, charcoal), raffia
Height: 17" with fringe

Purchased in 1977 from
the Locksley-Shea Gallery,
Minneapolis, MN by Martin
Friedman, Director of Walker
Art Center, 1961-1990
Gift of the family of Mildred
and Martin Friedman
2017.30



Héctor Mediavilla (Spanish, b. 1970)
**Lamame (the "Old Parisian")
in Simon Kimbangu Avenue,
Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo**
2008
giclée print on Hannemhüle paper
28 ¾" x 42 ½"

Museum purchase from the artist
Sinon Collection Fund
2018.14



Unidentified Artist, Kenya
**Factory printed cloth
(kanga)**
21st century
Cotton
39 ¾" x 61 13/16"

Purchased in Kenya by
the donors (c. 2008)
Gift of John and
Jane McWilliam
2018.37



Kuba artist, Democratic
Republic of the Congo,
formerly Zaire
**Woman's Title Hat
(mpaan)**
20th century
wicker, raffia cloth, glass and
plastic beads, cowries
8" x 11"

Purchased by the donors
on eBay, c. 1998
Gift of Simon and
Nancy Gregory
2018.30



Daniele Tamagni (Italian, 1975-2017)
The Playboys of Bacongo
2008
C-print, edition of 10
12" x 18"

Purchased from Danziger Gallery
Gift of Dr. Anthony Terrana
2020.40

This catalogue accompanies the exhibition **Moving Objects: African and Oceanic Art from the Collection of the Fitchburg Art Museum**, presented at the Fitchburg Art Museum, 2018 – 2023. This exhibition was organized by Consulting Curator for African, Oceanic and Native American Art Jean Borgatti with Former FAM Curator Lisa Crossman, Terrana Curatorial Fellow Candice Bancheri, and Exhibition Designer Matthew Oates.

Texts by Nick Capasso and Jean Borgatti.

Catalogue edited by Marjorie Rawle.

Photography
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Catalogue design by the students of Robert Carr's Spring 2021
Document Design course at Fitchburg State University:

Andrew Ashley
Sadie Bodkin
Bethany Palmer
Alexis Sweeney

Detail Spread Credits:
4–5: Bethany Palmer & Megan Ptak
10–11: Megan Ptak
27: Megan Ptak
42–43: Bethany Palmer & Megan Ptak
48–49: Bethany Palmer
58–59: Bethany Palmer
66–67: Bethany Palmer & Megan Ptak

Published by the Fitchburg Art Museum
185 Elm Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420
www.fitchburgartmuseum.org
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