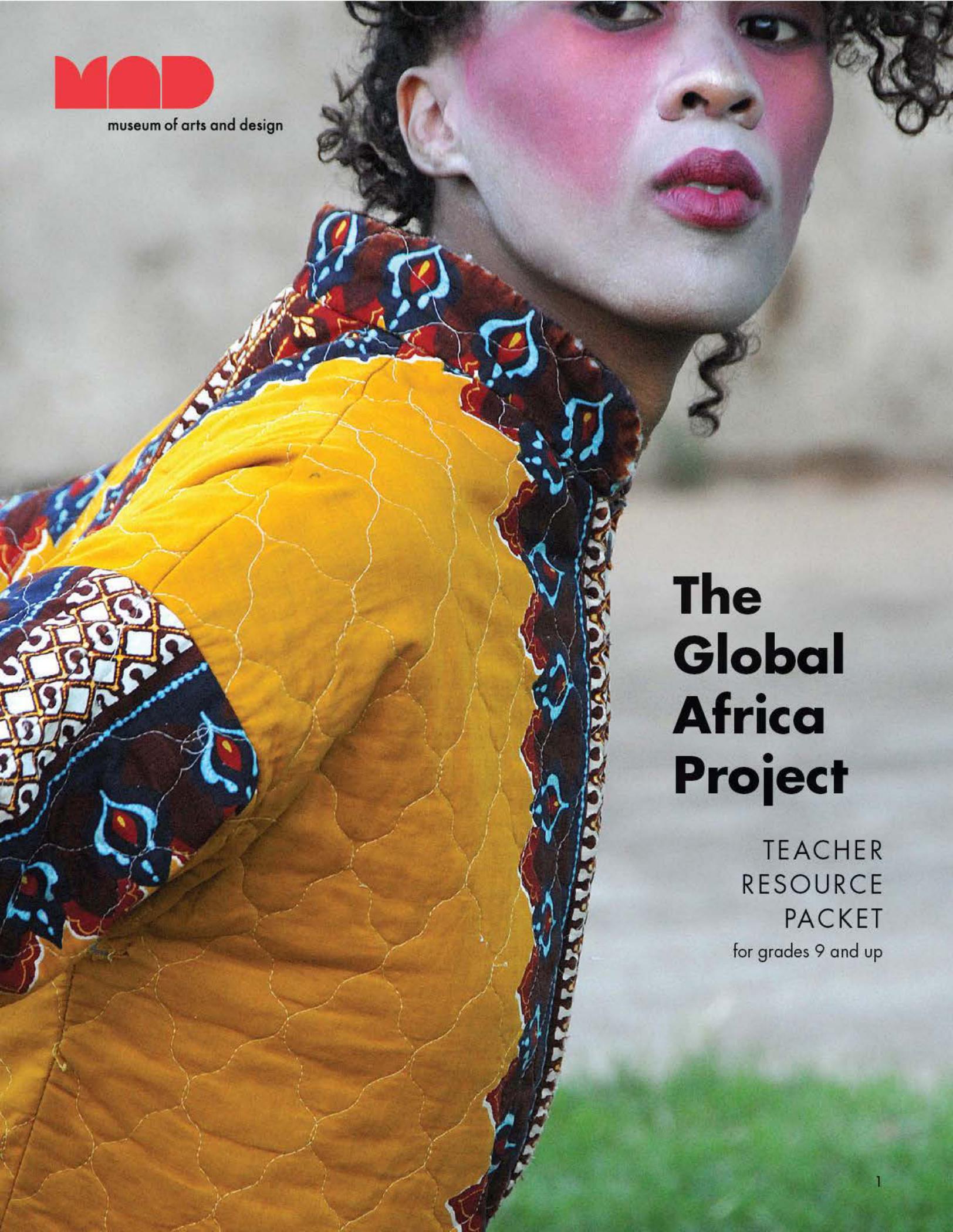




museum of arts and design



The Global Africa Project

TEACHER
RESOURCE
PACKET
for grades 9 and up



Dear Educator,

We are delighted that you have scheduled a visit to The Global Africa Project. When you and your students visit the Museum of Arts and Design, you will be given an informative tour of the exhibition with a museum educator, followed by an inspiring hands-on project, which students can then take home with them. To make your museum experience more enriching and meaningful, we strongly encourage you to use this packet as a resource, and work with your students in the classroom before and after your museum visit.

This packet includes topics for discussion and activities intended to introduce the key themes and concepts of the exhibition. Writing, storytelling and art projects have been suggested so that you can explore ideas from the exhibition in ways that relate directly to your students' lives and experiences.

Please feel free to adapt and build on these materials and to use this packet in any way that you wish.

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to the Museum of Arts and Design.

Sincerely,

Cathleen Lewis
Manager of School, Youth And Family Programs
cathleen.lewis@madmuseum.org

Lessons written by Petra Pankow, Museum Educator in collaboration with, the Museum of Arts and Design Education Department.

Graphic Design by Polly Hyde, Intern for the Museum of Arts and Design Education Department

Image on cover:

Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko
Madame Lolo Let Them Eat Fruit, 2006
Pigment inks on cotton rag paper
16 9/16 x 11 in.

Table of Contents

2	Introduction
6	Branding Content
16	Intersecting Cultures
28	Competing Globally
36	Sourcing Locally
48	Transforming Traditions
58	Building Communities
68	Resources
76	Glossary

vocabulary words are in bold throughout the text.

The Museum of Arts and Design

The Museum of Arts and Design has been functioning as an international resource center for craft, arts and design since 1956. Through its collections, exhibitions, programs and publications, the Museum serves as a forum for critical debate concerning the nature of craftsmanship and the engagement with the process that links materials, techniques, forms, patterns and concepts in all creative work.

How does a museum work?

Administration: The team led by the Director of the Museum determines the programs, plans and philosophy of the Museum. It also raises funds to realize the Museum's goals and works directly with the Board of Governors, which guides the Museum's functions.

Curatorial: This is the team, led by the Chief Curator, that works together to decide which exhibits will be shown, how they will look, what artwork is to be included, and how they are to be interpreted.

Registration: Led by the Registrar, this team arranges the safe handling of art to be placed in an exhibition and maintains the permanent collections acquired by a museum.

Education: This team provides the interactive interpretation of the objects on view through the educational programs designed for children, adults and families who visit the Museum.

Facility Maintenance: This is the team that allows the day-to-day operations of a museum to continue: from the lights being turned on, to the safety of all who enter the building.

Security Guards: This is the team most often seen in a museum, because its main task is to protect the artwork from harm so that in the future people will be able to see the same objects as seen in a museum today. They also are helpful to visitors who have a variety of questions.

Museums are places where we can learn about the past, present, and future of the world around us. The diversity of knowledge is endless when the habit of museum exploration is formed at an early age. We look forward to welcoming your group into our galleries.



Helpful Hints for Your Museum Visit

While visiting the exhibition try to use all your senses. Notice the way the pieces are displayed. Are there any specific groupings of pieces you can distinguish? If you enjoy looking at one piece more than others can you explain why?

Here are some questions and suggestions to think about as you move around the exhibition:

- I. What can be objectively observed?
 - a. What is the physical description? Measurement, weight, materials used, articulation of materials...
 - b. What **iconography**, if any, is used? Designs, words, diagrams...
 - c. What are the object's formal design characteristics? Lines, shapes, forms, color, texture...
- II. What would it be like to interact with this piece of art? How would you handle, lift, display it?
 - a. How would the piece of art feel, move, and sound?
 - b. What does the piece do? Does the piece have a function? How would the figures move if they were alive?
 - c. What is our emotional response to this beaded figure? Fear, joy, indifference, curiosity, revulsion, excitement...
- III. What is in the mind of the artist? What does the artist want the viewers to think? Use creative imagining and free association.
 - a. Review all of the above information and consider what was going on in the world when the work was produced to develop possible interpretations of the piece. (Theories and hypotheses)
 - b. Do the figures tell a story? Does the piece have underlying political or social meaning? (Understanding and visual thinking)
 - c. Develop a program to investigate the questions posed by the material evidence. (Program of research)
- IV. Brainstorm about an event or situation that is happening in your life at the moment, which you could animate into one scene which could be made into your very own figurative sculpture.

"I try, when I go to museums, to do two things. One, to appreciate what I'm looking at, just to see it, but then to isolate a few pieces that I really look at in detail. I study and I draw not with any purpose in mind. I mean, I don't go looking for specific things. I just try to be open-minded and keep my eyes open. It's interesting that every time I go back to the same place, I see something different."

Arline M. Fisch
(1931-) Brooklyn, New York

The Global Africa Project

A Senegalese **product designer**, educated in France and living in Japan, creates traditional **kimonos** out of fabric adorned with **West-African patterns** and produced by a Dutch company; an African-American painter with a penchant for European **portrait** traditions is commissioned by a German sporting goods manufacturer to create designs for the 2010 World Cup hosted by South Africa; a Rotterdam-based artist from Benin envisions elaborately-braided wigs in the shape of the Empire State Building and yellow school buses; a South African descendant of generations of **Ndebele** wall painters brings her skills and traditional painting style to embellish a BMW car: these are just a few examples that illustrate “the strong influential presence of creators of and in Africa”¹ in the global arena of art and design, which is the subject of *The Global Africa Project*.

On view at the Museum of Arts and Design from November 17, 2010 to May 15, 2011, the exhibition is less interested in “defining an overarching African identity or aesthetic” than in revealing the “stories of individuals working in the psychic and physical space that is known as ‘Africa’ in the world today.”²

Many of these stories are about passages, journeys from one place to another—or from one time period or **economic** reality to another. Some questions that arise from these stories are:

- What happens when different localities intersect and identities are shaped by more than just one place?
- How do African or African-descended artists actively shape international perceptions of Africa in a way that transcends common stereotypes?
- What happens when ancient artisanal techniques meet the market forces of contemporary design?
- How do artists use local materials to create works that are sold internationally?
- How can craft and design become **economic** motors for individual creators and the contexts in which they work?
- How does art shape communities?
- How do communities shape art?

To answer these questions, *The Global Africa Project* explores the output of artists based in Africa, Asia, Europe, the US, and the Caribbean who work in genres as varied as ceramics, basketry, **textiles**, jewelry, furniture, **product design**, architecture, fashion, photography, painting, and sculpture. Featuring around 120 works, the exhibition demonstrates that the boundaries between these genres are often permeable. Because many objects are rooted in ritual and performance traditions, this interdisciplinary tendency has been a part of African art for centuries, but has only just recently become a hallmark of Western art.

Artists in the exhibition range from a Rwandan women’s basketry collective to a teenage inventor to international design superstars working for Western corporations. *The Global Africa Project* highlights **economic** and social issues explored by designers at home and abroad and their inventive and provocative ways of engaging the contemporary art market. Studying the work in the exhibition, shared characteristics of creativity quickly emerge, such as a strong focus on surface and pattern and the use of unexpected materials. Six themes facilitate the navigation of the exhibition and serve as the framework for the objects and images featured in this guide:

1. Branding Content
2. Intersecting Cultures
3. Competing Globally
4. Sourcing Locally
5. Transforming Traditions
6. Building Communities

Branding Content

Public perception of Africa often focuses on issues like oil, gold, slavery, war, genocide, AIDS, **apartheid**, etc. The artists in this section contemplate this image but also question its roots and offer alternative readings of “Africa” as a brand. Logos, text, symbols, and the body are important conveyors of meaning in their work.



The Hope Throne, Gonçalo Mabunda

Gonçalo Mabunda
The Hope Throne, 2008
Deactivated welded weapons,
leather
52 3/8 x 50 13/16 x 36 5/8in.
Museum purchase with
funds provided by proceeds
from works donated by the
American Craft Council,
Maurice S. Polkowitz and
Michael Zagaris by exchange,
2009 and Michael Zagaris by
exchange, 2009
Photo courtesy of Arronova,
Johannesburg



“The arms in this piece
were donated by
ordinary people.”
Gonçalo Mabunda

- What type of object is this?
- What is it made of? Please describe what you see in as much detail as possible. What materials do you notice? What shapes do you recognize?
- How are the individual pieces arranged? How did the artist put them together?
- What do you think it would feel like to sit on this chair?
- Describe the color scheme and discuss how it may contribute to the meaning of the piece.
- What do you think is the purpose of this “chair”? What message does the artist convey through this work?
- Can you think of a fitting title?
- Gonçalo Mabunda called his sculpture *The Hope Throne*. Based on the previous discussion, why do you think the artist chose this title for his work?

Gonçalo Mabunda describes his intention as follows:

The work “talks about the taking of power through force, often by military leaders. I constructed it out of discarded, buried, and rusted weapons used during the brutal civil war that gripped my country, Mozambique, from 1975 to 1992. A church-sponsored program devised a project that collected guns and other armaments found by civilians and dismantled them, rendering them powerless. These defunct arms were then offered to artists for use in works that would have a “positive” influence, thus opposing their former function of killing.”³

- Imagine you had lived through the bloody conflict in Mozambique. Describe what you might be feeling when looking at Mabunda’s work.

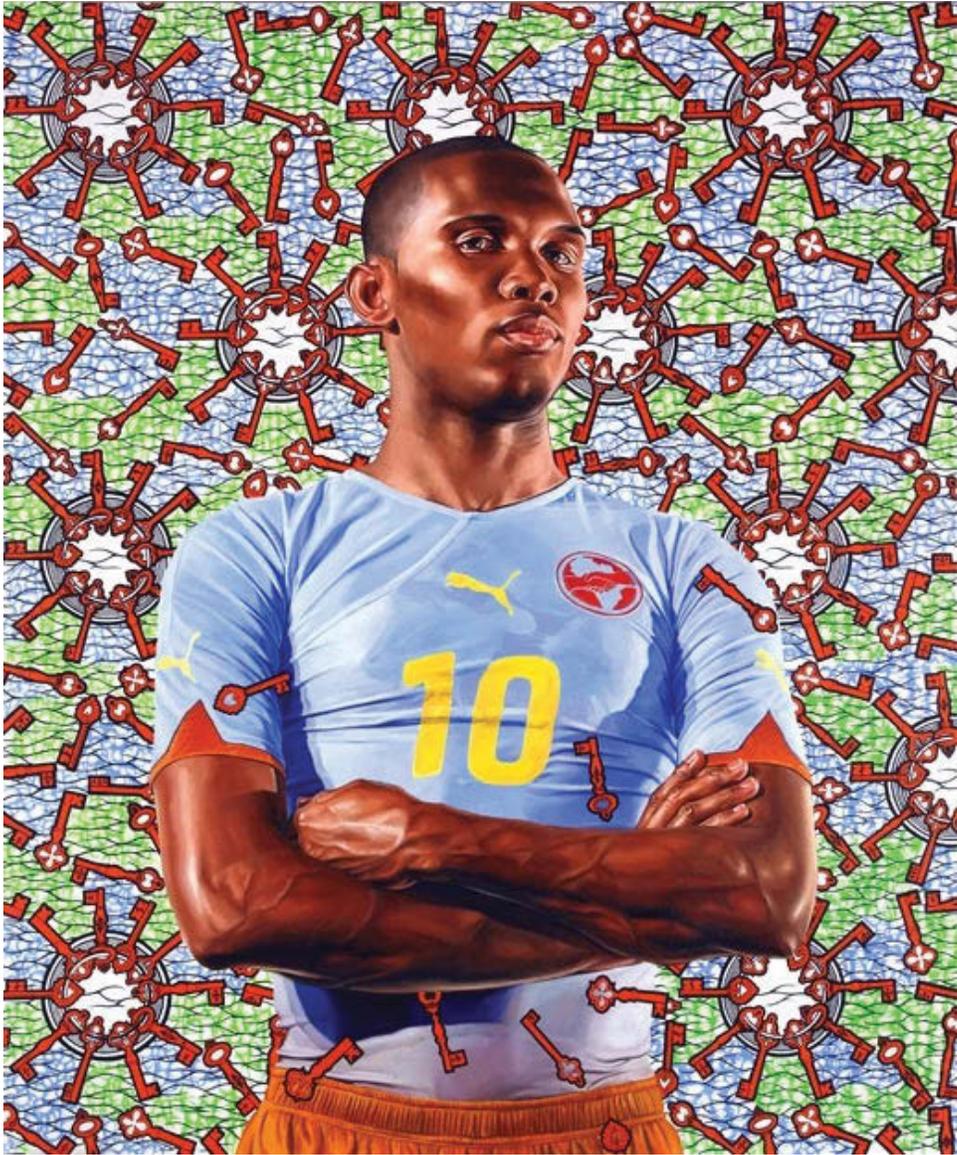
The artist recounts that “the arms in this piece were donated by ordinary people. In the postwar period, many guns were buried for fear that the war might return. Now people are digging them out of the ground and sending [them] to the church. Most of the guns are actually found by accident, however, as people perform their daily chores in fields now used for growing food. It is a stark contrast to the past.”⁴

Activity

Think of how you could **repurpose** materials found in your neighborhood in an artwork that draws attention to a particular social or environmental issue. Describe what your project would look like. What materials would you use and what message would you convey?

Samuel Eto'o, Kehinde Wiley

Kehinde Wiley
Samuel Eto'o, 2010
Oil on canvas
67 3/16 x 57 3/16 x 2 1/16 in.
Photo: Kwaku Alston



- What is the first thing you notice when looking at this image?
- Describe the background and the foreground of the image.
- Try to imitate the pose of the man in the painting. What does it feel like to stand like this? What messages do his body language and facial expression communicate?
- What do you notice about the person's outfit?
- Summarizing your observations, what story does the painting tell about this man?

The painting was created by African-American artist Kehinde Wiley. Commissioned by sports-wear manufacturer PUMA at the occasion of the first African-hosted World Cup in South Africa in 2010, Wiley produced a series of paintings as well as an apparel collection. The subject of this work is Cameroonian soccer star Samuel Eto'o, who is positioned in front of a backdrop inspired by a **West African textile pattern**. Talking about his approach, Wiley said he sees himself "as the contemporary descendant of a long line of **portraitists**—Reynolds, Gainsborough, Titian, Ingres, and others. Like them I look for the signs and visual rhetoric of the heroic, powerful, majestic, and sublime in my subjects."⁵

- Do you think this "visual rhetoric" comes across in this image? If yes, how do you think Wiley achieves this?
- What may have been reasons for the artist to choose this particular pattern as a background? How does it change your impression of the image?
- What effect does the overlapping of almost photographic portrait and patterned background in the lower part of the image have on you?

Part of Kehinde Wiley's interest in Africa is to redefine common assumptions about this continent: "So much of what I wanted to do with this project was get away from the televisual notions of disease, war, famine that we are sort of constantly bombarded with in regards to looking at Africa."⁶

- What about this painting strikes you as particularly "African"?
- Discuss some of the ways in which Wiley is successful in his attempt to re-brand Africa.

Extension

Research some of the famous 16th to 19th-Century painters Wiley mentions (Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, Titian, and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres). What is the connection between their portraits and Kehinde Wiley's work? In what way are Wiley's paintings different?

Free South Africa, Keith Haring

Keith Haring
Free South Africa, 1985
 Offset lithograph on glazed
 poster paper
 48 x 48 in.
 Collection: Keith Haring
 Foundation, New York
 Photo courtesy of Haring
 Foundation Archives

“Art lives through the imaginations of the people who are seeing it. Without that contact, there is no art. I have made myself a role as an image-maker of the twentieth century and I daily try to understand the responsibilities and implications of that position.”⁷

Keith Haring, 1984



- Take a few moments to gather “visual evidence” by looking closely at the image.
- Discuss the poster’s composition. How are the figures placed within the rectangle, what is the relationship between positive (busy) and negative (empty) space in the image?
- Describe the interaction of the two people in Keith Haring’s *Free South Africa*. Why is the black figure so big and the other so small? What is the meaning of the red x on the white figure’s chest?
- How does the artist express movement in the image?
- How does the visual image relate to the written text, which is also the title of the work?

- Does the style of this poster remind you of something you have seen before? Where might you expect to see an image like this (in the museum, in a book or magazine, on T-shirts)? Please explain.

Free South Africa was produced in 1985 as an edition of 20,000 posters that were handed out at an anti-apartheid rally and soon became an iconic image of liberation.

- In your opinion, what is it that makes *Free South Africa* so powerful an image?
- In 1984, artist Keith Haring said: “It has become increasingly clear to me that art is not an elitist activity reserved for the appreciation of a few, but for everyone, and that is the end toward which I will continue to work.”⁸ What do you think he meant by this and how does it connect to *Free South Africa*?

Keith Haring burst onto the New York scene as a graffiti artist in 1980. Interested in making art generally accessible, he did chalk drawings on the black paper covering unused advertising panels in the subway, quickly creating “a cartoonish universe inhabited by crawling children, barking dogs and dancing figures, all set in motion by staccatolike lines.”⁹ As irresistible as easy-to-comprehend, his wildly popular **pictograms** quickly became iconic. Haring soon gained international recognition and his work was sought-after by galleries. However, the artist remained devoted to public works, many of which carried social messages to raise awareness (and funds) for issues like **apartheid**, African famine, the crack epidemic, and AIDS.



Keith Haring
Grace Jones, 1984
Photo: Courtesy of the Robert
Mapplethorpe Foundation

Activity

The simplicity and concentrated messages of Keith Haring’s **pictograms**, signs and **symbols** managed to sum up much about NYC street life in the 1980s. Using white chalk on black construction paper, develop simple **pictograms** or **symbols** to capture something you consider an essential expression of youth culture in the 2010s.

Extension

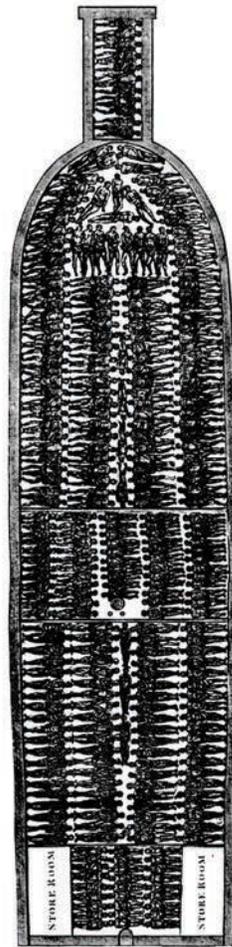
Haring’s interest in African art and performance traditions resulted in a series of body painting project - collaborations with dancer Bill T. Jones and singer Grace Jones. Take a look at the image at left. How is this different from or similar to *Free South Africa*? Comparing the photograph to other works in *The Global Africa Project* (such as Esther Mahlangu’s *Art Car*, page 30, and *The Kalahari* apartment building, page 32) discuss the use of signs, **symbols**, and **pictograms** in the different works.

Absolute Power, Hank Willis Thomas

Hank Willis Thomas
Absolute Power, 2003
Inkjet print on canvas
40 x 30 in.
Photo: Deoborah Willis

"My goal is to subvert the common understanding of black history as somehow extracted from American history and to reinstate it as indivisible from the totality of past social, political, and economic occurrences that make up contemporary culture."¹⁰

Hank Willis Thomas



ABSOLUT POWER.

- Look closely at this image. What do you see? Describe the use of color in this work.
- Where is written language used in this image? What role does it play in the art work?

- What is your initial reaction to the image? How do you think the artist achieves this response?
- Ask students to compare Thomas' image to the diagram (plan) for the Slave Ship Brookes ca. 1850 <https://www.nyhistory.org/web/crossroads/gallery/all/index.html>

Artist Hank Willis Thomas draws on the well-known 18th-Century diagram of the slave ship Brookes. Originally used as an **abolitionist** poster, it has since summarized the horror and inhumanity of the **transatlantic slave trade**. On this and other works in his B@ANDED series, Thomas notes: "By employing the language of popular culture and advertising in my work, I talk explicitly about race, class, and history in a way that is accessible and easy to decode. My intention is to use the familiar, or what the French philosopher Roland Barthes called "what-goes-without saying," to draw connections and provoke conversations about issues and histories that are often forgotten or avoided in our commerce-infused daily lives."¹¹

- The artist assumes that we are familiar with both the abolitionist poster and Absolut Vodka advertisement (which always features the distinctive bottle shape embellished in a way that fits the "Absolut ____" caption and is often created in collaboration with an artist). How does each change once the two are combined?
- What about the Absolut bottle lends itself to the manipulation from bottle to slave ship?

Hank Willis Thomas is particularly interested in the black male body as a **signifier** for inequality and exploitation. Absolute Power refers to a specific historical circumstance to make its point. In what way is this point significant in the context of contemporary life?

Regarding the individual figures pressed into the shape of the ship raises another issue: While considered a powerful image to this day by most, there are also critics of the Brookes diagram who point to the fact that "the crude renderings of the enslaved in the print, side by side, serves to dehumanise individuals at the very moment when the need to proclaim their humanity is paramount. They are reduced to ciphers, images of pain and cruelty, to be easily understood by the viewer"¹², not presented as conscious individuals.

- Which of these two perspectives do you share?

Extension

Thomas is not the only artist to be fascinated by the universal message of the *Brookes* diagram. Research some other ways in which the iconic image has been used and discuss the effectiveness, in your opinion, of each approach.

Activity

To correct the inherent fault in the original *Brookes* image, blow up one of the slave figures in a drawing, adding detail to the face and body. Then write a short stream-of-consciousness monologue from the perspective of this figure in which you may reference the recent past, current painful moment and fearful anticipation of the future.

Intersecting Cultures

The works in this section highlight the hybrid nature of Global African life and art by employing postmodern techniques like pastiche and “riffing.” While featured artists defy cultural stereotypes and classifications, they freely use references not only to their own cultural roots but to various other historical and geographical contexts as well. The resulting tension adds an interesting dimension to the often visually stunning designs.

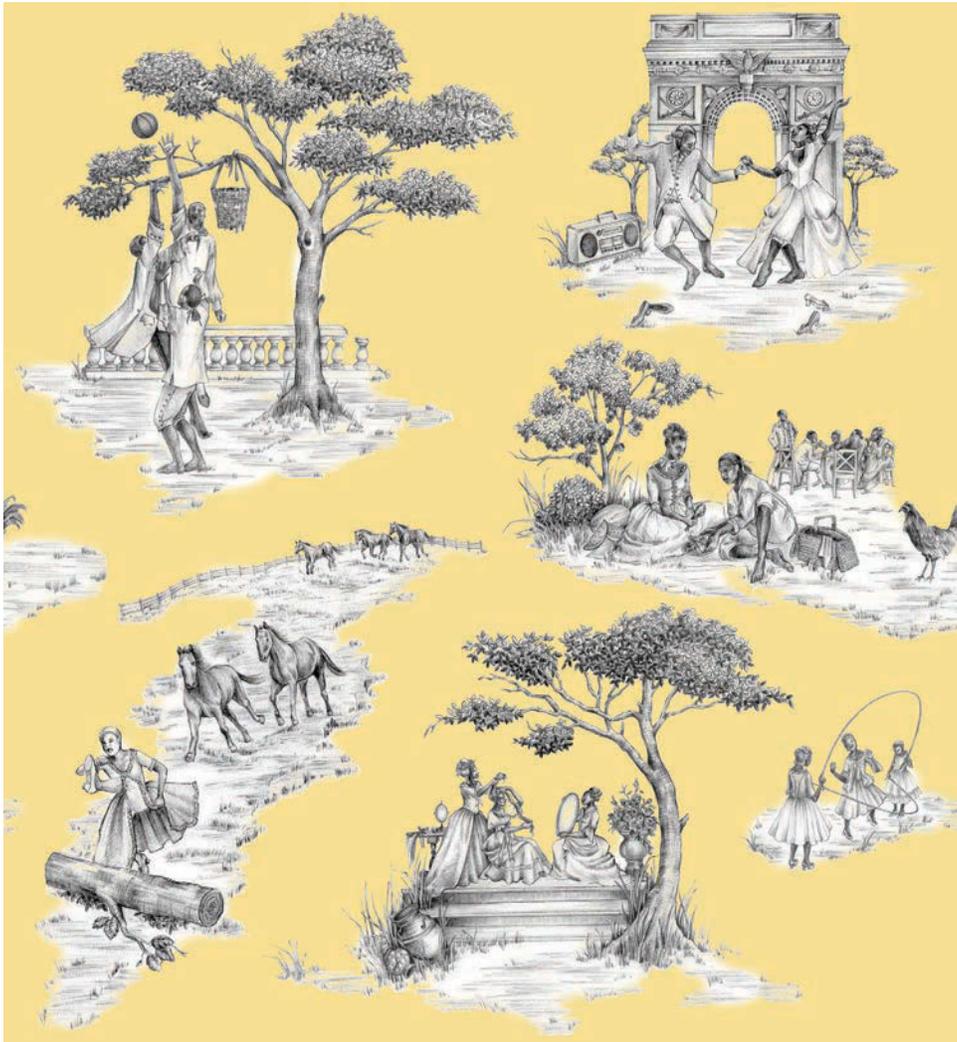
"Global Mixing brings cultures into unpredictable forms of contact and under these circumstances the desire of 'purity' is not only somewhat antimodern and a bit quaint but also practically and logically impossible."¹³

Kobena Mercer

Harlem Toile de Jouy, Sheila Bridges

Harlem Toile de Jouy, 2010
Fabric
Dimensions variable
Photo courtesy of the artist

“I have always been intrigued and inspired by the historical narrative of the decorative arts, especially the traditional French toile de Jouy fabric with pastoral motifs from the 1700s.”
Sheila Bridges



- What is going on in this image?
- Describe the figures in the image in as much detail as possible, paying attention to clothing and body language. What are they doing? How would you describe the relationships between them?
- What is the most unexpected thing you notice?
- What do you notice about the composition in this work? Why do some of the edges seem to be cut-off?
- What might the incomplete image we see be a part of?

Sheila Bridges, a successful interior designer based in Harlem, recalls her motive for creating this work: “I have always been intrigued and inspired by the historical narrative of the decorative arts, especially the traditional French **toile de Jouy** fabric with **pastoral** motifs from the 1700s. I’m entertained by the stories these patterns tell and the questions they sometimes raise. But after searching for many years for the perfect toile for my home, I decided that it quite simply didn’t exist and I created *Harlem Toile de Jouy*.”¹⁴

- In her design, Bridges mixes references to different places and times. What are they?
- Discuss the tension that arises from this juxtaposition of different historical/geographical elements.

Sheila Bridges created wallpaper, fabric, and other decorative objects with this pattern. She says it allowed her to “thread my own satirical story, lampooning some of the stereotypes deeply woven into the African American experience.”¹⁵

- Where in the design are these stereotypes most apparent?
- Can you imagine having a wall in your home adorned with Harlem Toile wallpaper? Why or why not?

Activity

Split in groups of 3-4 students and come up with a series of designs that might adorn a Toile capturing typical instances of your own lives. Create a sample fabric swatch on paper and present it to the rest of the class. Go around the room until all groups have presented.

Wafrica, Serge Mouangue

Serge Mouangue
Wafrica, 2008
Fabric, cotton, silk, wax, print
Photo: Pierre-Oliver

"Textile design fluidly absorbs innovation and transcends cultural boundaries. Conceived as canvases that can be adapted to the human form, textiles express an aesthetic at once personal in nature and cosmopolitan in scope... Given fashion's insatiable appetite for novel ways to enhance appearance, textiles ... have, throughout history, circulated widely and across vast distances through trade networks."¹⁶

Serge Mouangue



- Try to capture in one sentence what you see in this image.
- Describe the different components of the outfit. What colors do you notice? What do the colors remind you of?
- Describe the design/patterns on the different pieces of clothing. Where do you think the designer might have found inspiration for them?
- Have you seen a robe like this before? Where in the world is this type of clothing usually worn?

Born in Cameroon, Designer Serge Mouangue studied in France and has been a global nomad ever since. Currently, he lives in Japan. It is from this country's rich cultural heritage that he borrows the shape of this ensemble: a **kimono**, **obi** (wide sash worn around the waist and on top of the **kimono**) and decorative hair accessory.

- Describe the hairstyle of the person in the image.
- Which different cultures seem to have inspired the artist?

The photo illustrates an example from Mouangue's *Wafrika* line of Japanese **kimonos** in African prints. The prints were produced by Vlisco, a Dutch company that has been supplying fabrics to the African market for 150 years and therefore embodies both global trade and **colonialism**. The mixing of elements from different cultural realms has become a popular practice among artists working today. Serge Mouangue says it allows him to talk about abstract ideas like identity and values and to pose questions like "Where do we feel our origins? Do we actually come from where we were born or where we grew up?"¹⁷

- Thinking about your family background but also your interests in music, fashion, technology, etc., what would you say are some of the elements that shape your "identity"?
- Do any of these things relate directly to another country than the one you live in? Please explain.

Mouangue tries "to look more at the present and future than the past, which we carry inside us. Through the *Wafrika* project I try to deliver a new sense of 'Birth,' to present a vision that transcends both cultures: Japanese and African. This result wasn't possible in our 'pasts.' Today it becomes so, and it belongs to our future."¹⁸

- What do you think he means by "we carry the past inside us"?
- How is this idea expressed in the picture we have been looking at?
- In what way does *Wafrika* "belong to the future"?

Activity

On a letter-size paper or card board, draw an outline of a person (you could use a full body photograph as a template) and cut it out. Then, using (plain, colored, patterned, origami or construction) paper, felt, fabric, aluminum or plastic foil, etc., design an outfit for this figure that speaks to the way you see yourself. Feel free to use elements from different historical periods or parts of the world in your designs. Explain to the rest of your class how the clothes express your identity. What would the title of your work be?

Untitled, Iké Udé

Iké Udé
Untitled, 2010
Pigment on satin paper
40 x 36 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

“To quote from all items of past or present men’s attire is the aim of **sartorial** anarchy. By mixing varied men’s costumes in concert with the now and then, we begin to realize how arbitrary, subjective, fleeting, even absurd—no less wonderful—our “real” cultural construct is.”¹⁹
Iké Udé



- Describe the posture of the person in this photograph.
- Describe what the person is wearing and the objects he is holding.
- Consider the components of the sitter's outfit. What different cultures, historical periods, and gender elements are they borrowed from?
- What effect does the deliberate mixing of these ethnic, historical and gender elements in this portrait have?
- How would you characterize the facial expression?
- By looking directly at the camera, the sitter meets our own eyes as we study the picture. What feeling do you get from this direct gaze? Why do you think the photographer posed his subject in this way?

In fact, the photographer and subject of the image are the same person, artist Iké Udé, whose series of self-portraits called *Sartorial Anarchy* takes a critical look at men's clothing across space and time: "It is challenging, liberating, and imaginatively rewarding to 'mess' with the tyranny men's traditional dress codes . [...]. Today, global options can be ingeniously mixed. This **sartorial bricolage** engenders a novel mode of expression that reflects a true picture of the twenty-first-century man of the world—beyond the fixed **taxonomy** of nationalistic costumes that still prevails."²⁰ By isolating and recombining individual specimen of clothing from different places and times, Udé discloses the power and meaning of clothes in different cultures and historical periods.

- What do you think Udé means by "messing with the tyranny of men's dress codes"?
- In your opinion, what is the connection between elegance and power? Can you think of any contemporary or historical public figure that embodies this connection?
- Where in history or the present have clothes been used as a means of oppression (think of both men's and women's clothing)?
- Can you think of a time period or specific individual illustrating the use of clothing as a means of rebellion or protest? Can you think of an example in contemporary culture?
- The curators of *The Global Africa Project* call Udé's work "grounded in traditions of the **dandy** as both a **symbol** of assimilation and a critique in the African **diasporic** context."²¹ What do you think this means?

Extension

In a statement about his work, Iké Udé quotes the Victorian writer Thomas Carlyle's description of a **dandy** as "a clothes-wearing man, a man whose trade, office, and existence consists in the wearing of clothes. Every faculty of his soul, spirit, purse, and person is heroically consecrated to this one object, the wearing of clothes wisely and well."²² While Iké Udé takes an critical, if playful, approach to **dandyism** in a fine art context, the real-life sapeurs documented in Daniele Tamagni's photographs (page 24) actually live the concept in all its implications. Compare and contrast the two different approaches.

Willy Covari, Brazzaville, Daniele Tamagni



Willy Covari, Brazzaville,
2008
C-print, mounted on acid free
lambda paper
26 x 35 13/16 in.
Courtesy of Michael Hoppen
Copyright Daniele Tamagni

- What is the first thing you notice in this image? Why do you think it caught your eye?
- Give a detailed description of the various items of clothing the central figure is wearing.
- What do his body language, gait, and facial expression communicate?
- Where do you think the photograph was taken? Discuss the juxtaposition between the main character and his surroundings; include the people in the background and the built environment.
- What can you tell about other people in the picture?
- How would you describe the overall style of the main character?
- Imagine a soundtrack to this photograph. What sounds would you be able to hear?
- What kind of music would go best with the image? Please explain.
- Imagine the photo coming to life. What is the next thing that would happen?

The photo was taken by Italian photographer Daniele Tamagni as part of a series “documenting the creativity of a community in the Congo, known as *Les Sapeurs*,” which he describes as follows: “The **Sapeurs**, who are mostly men, form a fashion subculture, known as Le Sape (Society for the Advancement of People of Elegance). Their style and highly tailored fashion is their identity in life. Their look seems derived from the wardrobe of a British **dandy** yet is very much its own evolved creation, based on a strict and detailed code of aesthetics. Socks, ties, pipes and handkerchiefs are chosen with meticulous care—many save up for years to buy the best suit and accessories they can.”²³

- In what way is or isn’t Willy Covari, the man in the photograph, like a British **dandy**? What in his clothes goes beyond a standard Western look?
- How do his surroundings influence our perspective on his wardrobe? What is your reaction to the stylish outfit in the context of the under-developed urban landscape which surrounds him?

Tamagni observes that the *Sapeurs* cultivate “more than just a look,” but that their lifestyle is “imbued with a deeper, more profound moral undertone and identity.”²⁴

- Have you ever experienced that dressing in a particular way has had an effect on the way you behaved? If yes, please explain.

Extension

Visit the following link to hear what Tamagni says about the Sapeurs: http://reel.icontent.tv/dsloan/MAD_Tamagni

Discuss the artist’s intention to show African culture in a positive light through his photographs.

Extension

Compare and contrast Tamagni’s photos with those by Nontsikelelo “Lolo” Veleko (page 26), who documents South African street fashion. Which photos are “snapshots,” which ones are “posed” and how does this change their message? In what way does each of the photographers capture the intersection of elements from different cultures? Please give examples.

Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko
Madame Lolo Let Them Eat Fruit, 2006
 Pigment inks on cotton rag
 paper
 16 9/16 x 11 in.
 Photo: Oupa Nkosi

"I'm totally urban, I love what happens in urban environments, and my work is based in this reality. It's something simple, that people know but don't actually think about until they've seen it in a photograph."

Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko

Madame Lolo Let Them Eat Fruit, Lolo Veleko



Take a close look at this photograph by South African artist Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko.

- How many different patterns can you discern?
- What colors do you notice?
- Describe the relationship between these different colors and patterns.
- Describe the body language and facial expression of the figure in the photograph.
- How do the woman's demeanor and clothing relate to one another?
- Do you think the photo is posed or a snapshot? Why? What implications does one or the other have for the message the photographer wanted to convey with this image?
- What different style or period elements does the woman's outfit combine? Discuss the individual fabrics and what types of clothing or other objects you associate with each?

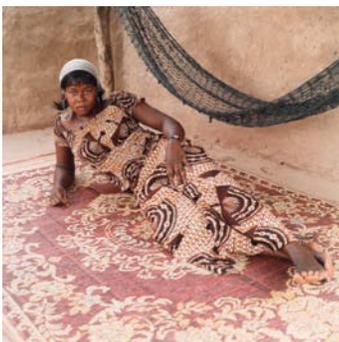
- Artist Nontsikelelo Veleko says that she is interested in the intersection between fashion and identity. Does this intersection become apparent in this particular photograph? How?

“A profusion of patterns [...] can be observed throughout the global African community. [...] The juxtaposition of different patterns effectively replaces cohesion with visual cacophony, and form and color literally vibrate as if in motion. This ‘multiple patterning’ has been related to improvisation, a characteristic shared by African, Caribbean, and African-American visual traditions. The significance and meaning of this visual system lie in the African context where multiple patterning, improvisation, and the resulting visual profusion signify status and ‘the prestige, power and wealth of the wearer.’”²⁵

- Do you get this sense of movement described in the quote above when looking at Veleko’s work? Please explain.
- In what way might the pattern mixing in the photograph illustrate the “prestige, power, and wealth of the wearer”?
- The title of this work is *Madame Lolo let them Eat Fruit*, which is a riff on the famous quote by the French Queen Marie Antoinette (1755-93) who is supposed to have said “Let them eat cake” when she was told that the French population had no bread to eat. Why do you think the artist chose this title?
- Research images of Marie Antoinette, examine the portraits, and discuss the commonalities and differences that Nontsikelelo Veleko’s photograph shares with the historical depictions. The Victorian era followed Marie Antoinette, which area of Victorian Dress does Veleko’s ensemble resemble?

Extension

The mixing of patterns is a key element in many works in the Global Africa Project. Take a look at some of the images below. Pick one and compare and contrast it with Nontsikelelo Veleko’s photograph. In what way are the artists interested in the same issues? What are differences between the way patterns are combined in the different images?



Patricia Blanchet
Untitled from the Burkina Reflected Series, 2005
C-Print
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Patricia Blanchet



Duro Olowu
Gown from the Black Orpheus Collection, 2009
Multiprint silk satin with ruffle trim
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Chris Moore

Competing Globally

This section features artists who have successfully positioned themselves on the global design stage despite such challenges as lack of government support and educational resources. Overcoming stereotypes about African design, these creators follow individual impulses without denying their African heritage

"Creativity is still one of our greatest assets that we can use to gain competitive advantage. Another thing is inspiration from the African continent which is still virgin and unexploited."²⁶

Masana Chikeka

BMW Art Car, Esther Mahlangu



BMW Art Car, 1991
BMW 525i, paint
4 ft. 7 in. x 15 ft. x 5 in. x 5 ft. 8 in.
Photo courtesy of BMW Group

"As a young girl growing up in 1940s South Africa, my mother taught me the Ndebele tradition of wall painting. This art form is exclusive to women and has been a tradition for generations. What most women only did on special occasions to decorate the home, I began doing all the time. In a way, I was obsessed with wall painting. But I wanted to bring my craft and tribal tradition to a contemporary audience."

Esther Mahlangu

- What type of car is this? Can you recognize the make and model?
- How was it manipulated by the artist, Esther Mahlangu?
- What colors do you see? What kind of place or object do the colors remind you of?
- Pay close attention to the role of line and shape in the design. Describe the patterns you see. How do different patterns relate to each other? How do they relate to the shape of the car and its various parts?
- Try to reconstruct the artist's process step by step. What do you think was the car's color at the outset?
- What different types of tools might Mahlangu have used?

Artist Esther Mahlangu was inspired by traditional beadwork and wall painting that women in her native **Ndebele** community have practiced for centuries and continue to pass on to their daughters. She “draws freehand, without first measuring or sketching, using luminous and high-contrast vinyl paints that lend extraordinary vigor to her murals. While at a glance purely abstract, her compositions are built upon a highly inventive system of signs and **symbols**.”²⁷

- What elements of the design on the BMW do you imagine are derived from beading techniques? Please explain.
- What may have been challenges in translating the two-dimensional practice of wall painting to the 3-D surface of the car?
- What symbolic meanings may the shapes and patterns convey? Please give examples.

Early **Ndebele** artists applied colors made from natural pigment with their fingers to decorate both inside and outside of their cylindrical, straw-covered clay huts. Later they devised brushes from branches and feathers. Charcoal was used for the outlines of each pattern.

- In what way do you think these ancient techniques are still apparent in Mahlangu's car design?

The car was created as part of the annual 'Art Cars' program that commissions established artists to decorate a BMW.

- What sort of person can you imagine driving this car?
- “I am working to bridge the gap between the domestic designs of my history and the technology of today,”²⁸ Mahlangu notes. Discuss the issues her BMW raises by applying an ancient female art practice to the modern, male-dominated world of cars.

Extension

Both Esther Mahlangu's *BMW Art Car* and Meschac Gaba's *School Bus* (page 34) turn cars into art objects. Compare and contrast the two works and what you think the artists meant to express through them.

The Kalahari, Jack Travis

Kalahari Condominiums
Frederick Schwartz Architects
Architects and Interior
Designers
GF55 Architects
Executive Architects
Elizabeth Kennedy Associates
Landscape Architects
Jack Travis FAIA Architect
Cultural Design Consultant and
Interior Designer



“Every cultural and political group has always worked to create and maintain an architectural vocabulary and unique identity... Jack Travis, whose practice is based in New York City, has passionately devoted himself to African-inspired built structures. Since the mid-1990s, he has researched, written, and lectured about his search for a ‘Black cultural design aesthetic.’”²⁹

- Take a close look at the photograph. What type of building does it depict?
- Based on your observations, what are some of the ways this building might be used?
- In what sort of landscape do you think it is located? Please explain.
- Who do you think might live in a building like this? What makes you say so?
- In which part of the building would you like to live? Why?
- How would you describe the colors of the structure? What do they remind you of?
- Describe the designs on the building’s façade. What different patterns do you notice? How do different patterns relate to each other? How do the patterns relate the verticality of the building?
- The image depicts a mixed-use condominium building located on 116th Street in Harlem called *The Kalahari*. Why do you think it has been named after the African desert?

Housing 250 condos, retail shops, an afterschool program, day care, outdoor space and community center, the building is “inspired by **nomadic** and tribal cultures of Africa. The Kalahari Desert is home to the Bushmen tribal group, individuals who have adapted and survived under the harsh conditions of **migratory** life for several centuries.”³⁰

- Why do you think the architects of the building think that **migration** and **adaptation** matter in the context of a residential development in the heart of Harlem?
- The West and South African **symbols** and **patterns** are meant to achieve an “afrocentric design.” Jack Travis, who served as “cultural design consultant” to lead architect Frederick Schwartz stresses the importance of an “understanding of anthropological, social and cultural imaging, beliefs, practices and ‘ways of being’ of people of African descent”³¹ in the context of the “black design aesthetic” he is trying to cultivate.
- Do you think that neighborhood residents agree that this type of design does indeed represent their community?
- Can you think of any other type of “social and cultural imaging” that could be used?

Extension

Jack Travis uses **Ndebele** designs to embellish the Kalahari façade. Compare and contrast his project with that of Esther Mahlangu (page 30), a **Ndebele** artist whose BMW art car merges her people’s artistic heritage and modern technology.

Activity

Both West African **Adinkra** symbols and the designs of the **Ndebele** people of South Africa use simple geometric shapes to represent abstract concepts like “wisdom” or “unity” or objects from both African and Western contexts like houses or airplanes, respectively. Working as individuals or collaborating in small groups, invent a symbol for a concept you find important, using a single color and basic geometric shapes. Once you are done, go around in the class and guess the meaning of each other’s designs.

School Bus, Meschac Gaba

Meschac Gaba
School Bus from the Car
Tresses series, 2008
 Braided artificial hair, wire,
 metal coins
 28 1/4 x 23 1/2 x 10 1/4in.
 Photo: Mario Todeschini



“Humor is essential to my work. My ‘tresses’ projects connect contemporary Western traditions with West African hair-braiding styles.”
 Meschac Gaba

Sculptor and **installation artist** Meschac Gaba, who is based in Rotterdam, brings a commitment to craft and tradition to his sculptural interpretations of buildings and cars in the form of wigs known collectively as “Tresses.” He interprets these international iconic structures and brandname conveyances as braided artificial hair. The forms, produced by assistants in the Gaba’s studio in Cotonou, Benin, are both women-focused and male-conceived, traditional and modern.³²

- What familiar shape does artist Meschac Gaba represent in this work?
- How would you label this type of object (costume/sculpture/wig) and why?
- What is it made from?
- How was it made?
- What sort of artisan would be skilled to manufacture a piece like this?
- How long do you think it would take to make it?
- What is your emotional reaction to this work?
- Imagine someone wearing it. Why might that strike us as funny?

“Humor,” Meschac Gaba notes, “is essential to my work. My ‘tresses’ projects connect contemporary Western traditions with West African hair-braiding styles. In the past, I found inspiration in architecture, creating wigs based on iconic urban structures. Today, I am inspired by another Western item—the automobile. Cars are a modern symbol of progress and invention, of mobility, with a strong global presence. But by removing cars from the streets and using them as wig designs, they become immobile, stripped of function. By doing this, I encourage the viewer to see cars, pickups, even tanks in a new sculptural way, to find their structural beauty. Each ‘wig’ is hand-braided, an organic, time-consuming practice. Each is made from artificial hair and combines a global symbol of African culture with Western, in this case American, design.”³³

Born in Benin, Gaba studied art in Amsterdam and has become an important player in the international contemporary art world, having been featured in major exhibitions worldwide.

- Discuss how *School Bus* merges different cultural realms. What physical and social/economic spaces does the work allude to?
- Why are both cars and African hairstyles suited to evoke issues of a world in which “global exchanges have [...] produced new cultural and aesthetic identities that supersede national affiliations”³⁴? How do they function as carriers of cultural meaning?

Gaba is interested in the way that “the styles of black hair cross over Africa, the Caribbean, the United States, and Asia.”³⁵ He thus dubbed his creations *métissage* (“mixed race”) as a “metaphor for global culture.”³⁶

- How is the work displayed?
- Can you think of another way to display it?
- When Gaba created this and other car-themed wigs in 2005, he shot a video that showed them being worn and paraded around the streets of his native Cotonou, Benin, where they were produced. How does this alter the work?
- How would seeing a whole series of similar sculptures next to each other change our perception of the work as a whole?

Displaying the work literally as wearable sculptures enters the human body into the equation. As one critic puts it, “what is placed on the body speaks of the interface of self with history, culture and space⁶”

- Can you think of any item of clothing you own that similarly illustrates an overlap of different places or times in history?

Extension

Meschac Gaba is often referred to as a **conceptual artist**, which means that the ideas behind his work are at least as important as its physical appearance. Discuss this idea with regard to the “Tresses” series.

Conceived during a residency at PS1 Contemporary Art Center in Queens, NY, the “Tresses” series initially featured iconic buildings instead of cars. How does or doesn’t this change the overall meaning of the work? In your opinion, what possible local and global readings does each theme offer?

Sourcing Locally

Artists in the global African world often rely on materials at hand, whether natural, indigenous or leftover cargo from foreign trade. Recycling and repurposing play a particularly important role and make for unusual supplies. While objects in traditional African art were often made from materials perceived to have specific practical or metaphysical effects, contemporary artists' tendency to use local materials also recognizes the impact of their work on the local economy.

"Two things stand out for me: The humour in Afrikan design and the use of local materials. Afrikan designers are creating... with a lot of humour and many of them experiment with different and unusual materials."³⁸

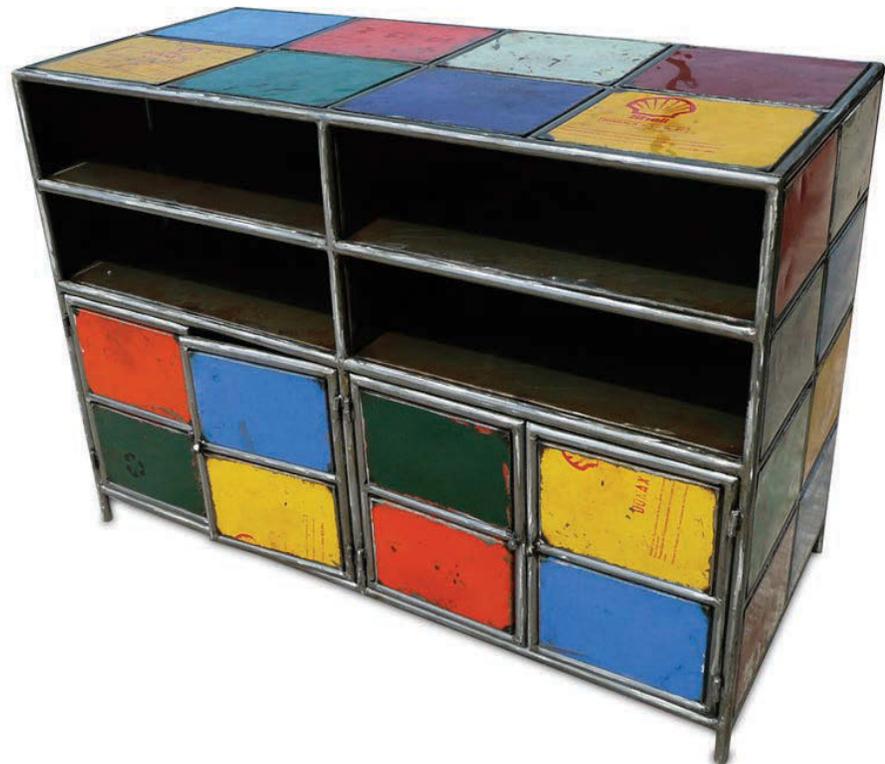
Frieda Lühl

Meuble de Cuisine, Ousmane M'Baye

Ousmane M'Baye
Meuble de cuisine (Kitchen Furniture), 2009
 Galvanized metal, barrel lid
 37 1/2 x 55 1/3 x 24 1/2in
 Photo: Johanna Bramble

"As an artist I think I should work with processes and media that are immediately around me. And in Africa, just like everywhere in the world... we create waste... And as an artist, I think—have always even advised my students to work with materials that you don't have to spend anything to [get], where they have the freedom to play around... and you can't play with something which is expensive."³⁹

El Anatsui



- Take a good look at this object. What is the first thing you notice?
- What colors do you see? How are they arranged?
- What material was the work made from?
- Looking closely at the surface of the material, can you make an informed guess of where the artist might have got it from?
- What sort of place do you think this piece of furniture would fit into?
- Taking into consideration its different parts, think of a number of different ways in which it could be used.
- Imagine owning an object like this. Which room in your house would you put it in. Please explain why.
- What would or wouldn't you like about it?

Dakar, Senegal-based furniture designer Ousmane M'Baye **repurposed** industrial materials to make this piece of kitchen furniture. This is how he

describes his process: "I salvage and sculpt **recycled** oil drums and also use such materials as black galvanized sheet metal to create my furniture. A sense of movement animates my work. The material attracts the hand, the form attracts the eye, and the colors produce smiles. Colors and materials come together in harmony, and this is what makes an object both beautiful and useful."⁴⁰

- Where in the work is this "sense of movement" apparent?
- Do you agree that the outcome is harmonious? What does or does not make it so?
- Jewelry designer Frieda Lühl talks about the significant function of both local materials and humor in the work of many African designers and artist El Anatsui mentions the importance of play in the creative process. What in Ousmane M'baye's kitchen cabinet strikes you as humorous and/or playful?
- The **recycling symbol** on one of the metal panels is a **self-referential**, tongue-in-cheek way to allude to the source materials of the work and the process through which it was made. But, together with the Shell logos that can be found in other areas of the cabinet, it is also a powerful commentary about **globalization** and the environment. In your opinion, what is the message of this commentary?

Like the work of many African designers, M'baye's creations "incorporate and appropriate materials that have come to Africa as the "cargo" of international exchange."⁴¹ M'baye himself resists the idea that African design is looked at in isolation, instead calling for an inter-cultural dialogue around everyday objects. "My work is anchored in Africa, but it is also universal and contemporary," he says.

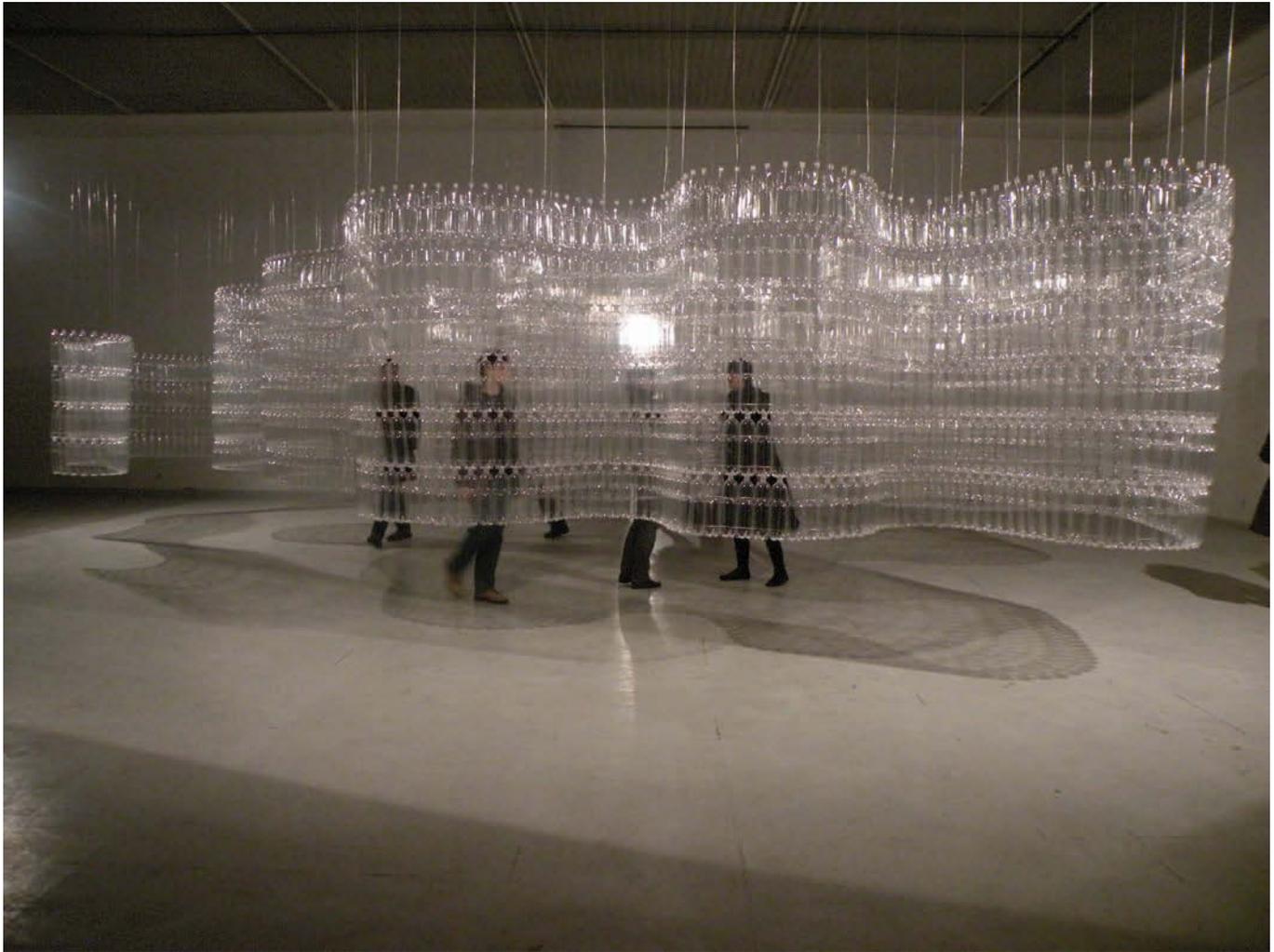
- Please discuss how this particular design object combines both local and global elements.

In her blog about the creation of The Global Africa Project, MAD curator Lowery Sims muses about this existence of African design between local and international contexts which is the key idea behind the exhibition: "It is fascinating that many [African designers] continue to be engaged in their home countries even if they are marketing their work elsewhere. Their home contexts provide inspiration, purpose and not incidentally raw materials and labor for their endeavors. Their interest in sourcing ideas and materials locally inevitably encompasses the impulse toward recycling which has morphed from a strategy of "making do" to one of environmental responsibility and competitive creativity."⁴²

Extension

Comparing M'Baye's work to Bright Ugochukwu Eke's **site-specific installations** (page 40), discuss similarities and differences in the message they convey. How do the different contexts in which they were created (product design vs. fine art) modify the way we evaluate these messages?

Confluence, Bright Ugochukwu Eke



Bright Ugochukwu Eke
Confluence, 2009
Recycled plastic bottles
Dimensions variable
Photo courtesy of the artist
Photo: Bill Rogers

- Please describe the central object in this image.
- What type of artwork is this?
- What is it made from?
- How was it put together?
- According the artist, plastic water bottles serve “as the quintessential icon for the disconnection between people and nature.”⁴⁴ What do you think he means by that?

By using discarded water bottles, Bright Ugochukwu Eke turns waste into something productive, even beautiful and gives meaning to an everyday object we don't usually think twice about. He also expresses an environmental message: "Regrettably, plastic water bottles have become an everyday aspect of our daily life and environment, a symbol of the increasing problem in acquiring drinkable water."⁴⁵

- Where is the sculpture displayed? In what way do you think the place is important?
- Imagine you were in the image. How would you interact with the sculpture/installation? How would you navigate it?
- How do you think the appearance of the work would change in different settings (inside, outside, different lighting, etc.)?

Bright Ugochukwu Eke has created many **site-specific installations**. Some of them have been on view in museums, others in public outdoor environments. Here is what he says about the latter type of venue: "It was refreshing to exhibit in everyday environments—a shopping mall and a neighborhood street—outside the privileged spaces of gallery and museum. This made my art available to everybody, and helped to connect my work and its meanings to everyday life. Because I used materials—the ubiquitous plastic water bottle—found nearby, this becomes part of the "connection." The artworks' environment is part of my message."⁴⁶

- How would you react if you ran into a similar work in a public space in New York City?
- Why do you think the artist still creates works to be shown in museums? What might be some of the advantages? How does the message of the artwork change based on where it is displayed?
- What do you think the sculpture represents?
- The **installation** consists of several "meandering walls to represent the ideological walls people erect to separate themselves from diverse cultures, races, and genders, as well as from the natural world." Can you think of some concrete examples of what types of walls the artist might be referring to?

"My medium/work is from the environment, about the environment; from the public, about the public and everyday life—from the society/culture and about the society/culture."⁴³
Bright Ugochukwu Eke

Untitled (necklace), Beverly Price

Beverly Price
Untitled (necklace), 2009
Foiled and chain-mailed Zulu
love letters
19 1/2 x 11 1/2 x 1 3/4 in.
Photo courtesy of the artist

"My intention with my first necklace was to make a story round the neck—like a silent movie whose movement is governed by the body."⁴⁸

Beverly Price



- What type of object is this?
- Describe its colors and patterns. How did the artist arrange the various patterns?
- How would you describe the overall shape of the necklace?
- What materials was it made out of?
- Try to imagine, step by step, how this artist assembled this necklace.

South African artist Beverley Price made a conscious decision to move away from traditional jewelry materials: “Some years ago I set a goal for my work: I wanted to make a form of jewelry that conveys value without using precious minerals, like diamonds. To this end I began developing the idea of using foil to frame images, such as those from the magazine *Drum* and South African product labels, combining the foiled units to make jewelry.”⁴⁹

- Why do you think Price does not want to work with diamonds?
- What does she mean by conveying “value without precious materials”? How does this idea apply to this particular necklace?
- What meanings can non-traditional materials convey that gold, silver, and precious stones cannot?
- This particular necklace was made from so-called “**Zulu love letters**”, which are tiny rectangles of traditional beadwork the colors and patterns of which encode courtship messages. Why do you think Price chose to turn them into a necklace?

Beverley Price, who makes her jewelry with the help of locals from Alexandra **township**, Johannesburg, is committed to bringing together both Western/European techniques and South African **adornment traditions**. By using the **Zulu love letters**, she honors her country’s rich cultural heritage while bringing the beadwork into the contemporary context of fine art jewelry, which is exported to London, Paris, and other global markets.

- How do you think the piece might be worn and by whom?
- At what occasion might it be worn?
- What would it feel like around the neck? Do you think it is heavy or light, hard or soft? Why?

The interaction of the wearer with the jewelry is of great importance to Price. Her pieces are “intended to act as appendages to the body, moving in synergy with body movements, rather than as separate objects that introduce weight and resistance to movement.” She “therefore developed large hollow articulated jewelry objects that occupy space but not the expected commensurate mass. Interested in the impact of the ‘body’ as a context for display and personal experience”, the artist’s idea is that “the body brings life to the object.”⁵⁰

Beaded Chandelier, MUD Ceramics Studio

MUD Ceramics Studio
Werner du Toit
Philippa du Toit
Beaded Chandelier, 2004
Clay, crystals, steel wire
47 x 35 in.

"The beads of the chandeliers are crafted by rural women, and the wire frames are created by the men. Each bead is hand rolled and strung on the handcrafted wire frame, each individually made"

Werner and Philippa du Toit



- What is this object made of?
- What everyday use does it serve?
- This chandelier was made in South Africa from local materials. What type of materials?
- How was it made? What are some of the steps the artists took to make this?
- Do you think this was done by an individual or a group of people? Please explain.

Here is a statement from Werner and Philippa du Toit, owners of Mud Ceramics Studio:

Our chandeliers “are constructed of clay beads that are created from African soil. We provide employment to many in the Free State’s marginalized communities. We understand the connection between the people of South Africa and their land. The beads of the chandeliers are crafted by rural women, and the wire frames are created by the men. Each bead is hand rolled and strung on the handcrafted wire frame, each individually made. From an early age, many South Africans use wire to craft toys, our way of working is thus based on a tradition that is heavily rooted in the culture.”⁵¹

- Does this particular chandelier remind you of something you have seen before? If yes, how does it differ from the kind you have seen previously?
- Why do you think the artists decided to “riff” on the shape and style of a classic European crystal chandelier?
- The artist uses local labor and materials to construct this object, but in what way is this object foreign from its local environment?
- In what kind of place would you hang this object? What atmosphere would it create?
- Can you think of other objects that could be created in a similar way (i.e. from the same materials using the same process)?
- In the context of *The Global Africa Project*, this work was chosen because it is created from local materials. However, it could just as well serve as an example for the “Intersecting Cultures” and “Building Communities” sections of the exhibition. Can you explain why?

Extension

Compare and contrast
Beaded Chandelier,
2004 with Fred Wilson's
Chandelier Mori, 2003,
pictured on the right

Fred Wilson
Chandelier Mori, 2003
Murano glass, light bulbs
Photo: Ellen Labenski
Courtesy of the Pace Gallery



“The idea for *Iago’s Mirror* and my earlier work, *Speak of Me as I Am: Chandelier Mori*, evolved during the four months I spent in Venice in 2003 creating the artworks for the Venice Biennale where I represented the United States that year. [...] I collaborated with glass studios on the island of Murano to produce works that used an eighteenth-century style of Venetian design so familiar to the world today. Instead of using the traditional white and pastel glass, I used black, a color never before used for these decorative objects. [...] *Speak of Me as I Am* focused on Venice’s relationship to and images of people of African descent from the early years of the Venetian Republic to the present.

I am interested in all the Western cultural meanings of the color black. Be it race or mourning, the complexity of the semantics reach back to Shakespeare’s time and are still relevant today. I also view the sculptures *Speak of Me as I Am: Chandelier Mori* and *Iago’s Mirror* as personifications of the characters in Shakespeare’s play *Othello*. For me, the huge black *Chandelier Mori* evokes the regal strength, sadness, and fury of “the moor of Venice.”[...] Beauty, like blackness is neither friend nor foe, neither benevolent nor evil. It can be construed for various purposes, but in reality, it simply is.”⁵²

Fred Wilson

Transforming Traditions

Many of the works in this exhibition exemplify the merging of traditional craft and contemporary art practice, which is one of the greatest contributions of African design to the world. Fresh perspectives on readily available materials and traditional techniques result in fascinating new interpretations.



Patchwork Quilt (*kawandi*), Ramijabi Madarsahib



Ramijabi Madarsahib
Siddi Women's Quilting
Cooperative
Patchwork quilt (kawandi),
2008
Cotton sari, mixed textiles
54 x 35 1/2 in.
Collection of Henry John Drewal
and Sarah Khurshid Khan

"Siddi quilts are highly individualistic, yet quilters share many clear and precise opinions about quality, beauty, and the need to 'finish properly' the corners with triangular patches called phulas, or flowers."

Henry John Drewal

- Take some time to examine this image. What colors do you notice?
- What shapes do you see?
- What patterns do you recognize?
- What type of object is it?
- What could it be used for?
- What is it made of?
- How do you think the artist/s made this object?
- Take a look at some of the individual fabric pieces and imagine what type of garment they might come from. Who might have been wearing it?

This quilt was made by members of the **Siddi** community in Southern India, descendants of early immigrants from Africa and African slaves brought to India by the Portuguese as early as the 16th Century. While they have assimilated into Indian culture in many ways, Siddis have also retained and transformed African traditions, most notably the patchwork quilts known as *kawandi*. Used as mattresses and blankets, they are made by women for their children and grandchildren from used fabric gathered from friends and family.

- Describe the overall design, the composition of different colors, etc. Do you notice any particular pattern or type of fabric appearing in more than one place?
- Why do you think the artist/s chose this overall design?

The individual patches are sewn on top of a cotton sari, which serves as backing for the quilt. “Starting at one corner of the **sari**, they begin to work their way around, fixing the patches with a running back stitch that eventually covers the entire quilt, both patchwork top and **sari** bottom. The stitches exhibit a distinctive rhythm that is part of the ‘visual signature’ of the artist along with the colors, sizes, shapes, and designs of the cloth patches. Some women incorporate parts of garments such as the neckline of a child’s blouse or the part of a shirt with buttons still attached.” Art historian Henry John Drewal notes that “Siddi quilts are highly individualistic, yet quilters share many clear and precise opinions about quality, beauty, and the need to “finish properly” the corners with triangular patches called *phulas*, or flowers.”⁵³

- Why do you think **Siddi** quilters use materials from worn-out, used clothing for the quilts?
- Is this quilt in any way like something you own? Please explain.

Untitled–Quilt 2, Gee’s Bend Quilters

Gees Bend Quilters
Untitled–Quilt 2, n.d.
 Fabric
 75 x 75 in.



Extension

Both Siddi and Gee’s bend quilts illustrate innovative ways of applying traditional craft skills. Compare and contrast the work of these quilting communities in vastly different areas of the world. Think about how each community’s location might influence their artwork.

“For generations, women of the Bend have passed down an indigenous style of quilting geometric patterns out of old britches, cornmeal sacks, Sears corduroy swatches and hand-me-down leisure suits – whatever happened to be around, which was never much. Quilts made of worn dungarees sometimes became the only mementos of a dead husband who had nothing else to leave behind.”⁵⁴

Michael Kimmelman

- Describe this artwork in as much detail as possible. What colors, patterns, and shapes do you notice?
- How are these different elements combined to form a whole?
- Does the overall design remind you of anything? Please explain.
- What is this object is made of?
- Where do you think the artist/s found the materials?
- How did the artist/s make this work?
- How do you think this process was different from the one used by the Siddi Quilters (page 50)?
- What could this quilt be used for? Did the artist make it for practical use or display? Please explain your answer.
- How do you think this object would feel to the touch? Please explain.

This quilt was made by members of an isolated, historically black community in rural Alabama called Gee’s Bend. “The women of the Gee’s Bend Collective come from four generations of quiltmakers. Our mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers started quilting to help keep their families warm during the cold, wet winters in southern Alabama. For over 150 years, quilting is a tradition that has helped shape the women of our community.”⁵⁵ The abstract designs are often directly related to whatever used materials were available: worn clothing, bedsheets, or cornsacks.

- How might using **recycled** fabrics result in a different design than using fabric bought by the yard?
- Focus on one particular fabric color or pattern at a time. How many pieces of the same fabric did the artist/s use? What can we learn about the artistic process by tracing the placement of these individual pieces?
- *New York Times* art critic Michael Kimmelman uses the language of Jazz to describe some of the Gee’s Bend designs. He talks of “**improvisation**,” “**syncopation**” and “breaking the rhythm.” What do these terms mean in the context of music? How do they apply to this quilt?
- Quilts by artists of Gee’s Bend are often compared to abstract paintings. Why do you think that is? What is it that prompts comparison to painting rather than to other quilts?
- In a statement about the work of the Gee’s Bend Quilting Collective, its members say: “Our designs tell a story. They honor those who have come before us.”⁵⁶ What do you think the story of this particular quilt may be? In what way does it honor the ancestors?

Activity

Pick one of the various patterned fabrics from the quilt above and imagine the object or piece of clothing it came from. Write a short narrative from the perspective of the shirt, apron, dress, or table cloth that describes an event it witnessed, involving its owner and the setting from which it came.

Fame, Bongiswa Ntombela, Ubhle Beads



Bongiswa Ntombela
Ubhle Beads
Fame, 2008
Fabric, glass beads

"Ubhle Beautiful Beads has stunned the art world with its innovative, beaded fine art. What started as a humble project, using traditional skills to create independence and give rural artists hope, has evolved into a dynamic project, creating fine art through individual African artists."⁵⁷

- List all the different shapes you notice in this work.
- Do you notice any patterns?
- What colors do you see?
- What do you notice about the composition of colors and shapes in this work?
- Why do you think the artist chose to juxtapose different colors and shapes in this way?
- What material did the artist use to make this work? How does the material affect the design?
- What does looking at the design make you think of?
- What mood or feeling does it evoke?
- How does the image change if you look at it for a long time? Why do you think that is?
- Imagine the shapes were starting to move. What would the movement look like?
- Imagine the perfect piece of music to go along with this work. What would it sound like? Why do you think it would be fitting?
- The **Zulu** beading traditions in which this work is rooted make intensive use of symbols. What might the symbolic meaning of some of the shapes in this image be?

Ubuhle means “beautiful” in **Zulu** and is the name of a beading collective founded by Ntombephi Ntombela and Bev Gibson in South Africa in 2000. Since then, more than 200 women beaders have been trained. They create beaded pictures as well as jewelry, the sale of which allows them to achieve economic independence. In addition, a percentage of the profit from sales is used for community improvements in housing, education, and medical awareness. The goal is to develop a “design village” providing a safe and sustainable family environment for the beaders.

Extension

The work of Ubuhle artists and zenzulu (page 62), as well as Beverly Price’s necklace on page 42 use Zulu beading traditions as their point of departure. How are these three works similar, how are they different? What do you think traditional Zulu beading means to each of the artists?

Hair Wars: L.A. Braid Queen
The Bird Cage 'Do, 1996
 Mixed media
 Courtesy of David Humphries

The Bird Cage 'Do, Hair Wars



Extension

In Laura Kuster's video on the Heidelberg Project website (<http://www.heidelberg.org/video.html>), a hair show is taking place on an outside runway surrounded by Tyree Guyton's whimsical artwork. Why does the Heidelberg Project seem to be a fitting backdrop for a hairstyling showcase?

- Take a good look at this photograph. What is the first thing you notice?
- What else do you see?
- How would you describe the woman's facial expression?
- What is the "story" the hairstyle in this photo tells?
- In what way does the hairstyle make use of traditional African (-American) hairstyling techniques?
- Where does it go beyond these traditional techniques?
- In what context do you think this picture was taken? Please explain.

The *Bird Cage 'Do* was featured at the 1996 *Hair Wars*, "an annual event that has become one of the largest African-American hair shows in the United States. It is a showcase for artists and salons to create unconventional, elaborate hairstyles using human hair as the primary

medium and designing fashions that suit the hairstyle.”⁵⁸ Started in Detroit in 1991 by night club promoter David Humphries (a.k.a Hump the Grinder), the event began touring nationally in 1994, with stops in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Miami, New York, and elsewhere.

- What do you think motivates stylists to participate in *Hair Wars*?
- Imagine a *Hair Wars* design of your own invention. What does it look like and how would you implement it?
- How is *The Bird Cage ‘Do’* similar to or different from Meschac Gaba’s “Tresses” on page 34?

As a Western traveler observed in 1602, “braided hair, decorated hair, haircuts for men, shaving, hair extensions, women wearing men’s styles, the use of combs and spikes”⁵⁹ all were indications of Africa’s expressive hair culture, which probably dates back much further in history. “Hairstyles could communicate status, occupation, and group affiliation. In affluent towns, hairstyling was as changing and competitive as it was in London or Amsterdam.” When thousands of Africans were shipped to the US as slaves, “this proud hair culture survived, often through reinvention. By the nineteenth century, however, black hair-expressivity began to be suppressed.”⁶⁰

- How do you think this historical backdrop is important in the context of *Hair Wars*?
- In a contemporary context, hairstyles of different cultural origin have started to morph and often defy ethnic categorization. Can you think of examples for this phenomenon from your own realm of experience?

Extension

Hair culture from a historical, social, and global perspective is an important theme throughout the Global Africa Project. Artists Sonya Clark, J.D. ‘Okhai Ojeikere, and Mark Bradford are particularly interested in the subject. Pick one of the images below. How is it different from the *Hair Wars* photograph? What are similarities between the two?



Mark Bradford
Miss China Silk, 2005
C-print, 14x11 in.
Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins &
Co., New York
Photo: Juan Carlos Avendano



Sonya Clark
Roots Necklace, 2002
Linen, silk
Diam. 12 in.
Collection of the artist
Photo: Tom McInville



J.D. ‘Okhai Ojeikere
Ogun Pari, 2000
Gelatin silver print
24 x 20 in. (61 x 50.8 cm)

Building Communities

Many of the designers working in the global African context are committed to using their skills to suit local needs and sustain communities. Design and craft thus often become catalysts for social change.



Change, Algernon Miller & Sanaa Gateja

Algernon Miller
Sanaa Gateja
Kwetu Afrika Women's
Association Angels
Change, 2010
Beads fabricated from recycled
Barack Obama presidential
campaign literature
8 x 10 ft.



detail:



"I consider myself a community artist. I am passionate about both the environment and the empowerment of women and young people. There is a lot of space in Africa for an artist to develop with nature and the community. The world waits to see what comes out of Africa—a great challenge for the artist."⁶¹

Sanaa Gateja

- Take a long look at *Change*: What type of object is it?
- Please describe the pattern.
- What colors do you notice?
- Looking at the close-up image at the bottom, do the colors look different? Why do you think that is?
- What material is the work made from?
- What are its component parts?
- How are these individual units put together to form a whole?
- What, if any, is the function of this artwork?
- If it was made as a wall hanging, for display, where would you hang a work like this?
- What could be the meaning of the frayed lower edge of the wall hanging?
- Given the size of the art work, and the many small beads that make the whole, how many people do you imagine having collaborated on the work? How long do you think it would take to accomplish a piece like this?

Designer Sanaa Gateja has found international acclaim for his neckpieces made from recycled paper beads, which he produces with the help of bead makers he trains, two hundred women currently, “the wives of soldiers, single mothers, school dropouts, the Kwetu Women’s Association Angels (KAWAA). They are learning to work with organic and recycled materials, turning them into beads and using them in innovative and original designs for fashion accessories for the export market.”⁶²

When an American friend sent him a large amount of 2008 Obama campaign materials to be recycled, some of the resulting paper-beaded products were on display at the 2010 Go-Green Expo in New York City, where they caught the attention of American sculptor and installation artist Algernon Miller. He suggested a collaboration on a large-scale work based on his idea and after an extensive process of planning and implementation involving many text messages, emails, and phone calls over two continents, *Change* was born, an 8-by-10-foot wall piece made in Uganda of beads of varied shapes that reveal snippets of content related to the Obama campaign.

- What do you think is the meaning of the work’s title, *Change*?
- “Change” was an important concept in Barack Obama’s presidential campaign, so it directly relates to the materials used to make the work. Can you think of another way the title might be meaningful?
- Sanaa Gajeta said, “There is a lot of space in Africa for an artist to develop with nature and the community.”⁶³ What do you think he means by this and how is this idea expressed in *Change*?

Activity

Change is an example of the many successful collaborations between African artisans and Western designers or businesses. Algernon Miller remembers that one of his motivations for wanting to work with Gajeta and KAWAA was that he “was really interested in the dynamics of collaborating with artists half a world away.”

Conduct a role play in class in which Group 1 represents a group of Africans skilled in a traditional craft technique like beading, weaving, or metal-smithing and Group 2 represents individuals or a business with the ability to market Group 1’s products in the West. Imagine their interaction from first contact (where, when, under which circumstances?) to planning and implementing a collaborative product to be marketed in the West. Think about materials, time line, potential customers, etc.

Imbenge, Vincent Sithole, zenzulu

zenzulu
 Vincent Sithole
Imbenge, 2006
 PVC coated telephone wire
 1 1/2 x 20 1/2 in.
 Courtesy of Amaridian,
 New York



- Take an extensive look at this artwork and describe its formal qualities. What is its shape?
- What colors do you notice?
- What is its texture like (what would it feel like to hold this object)?
- What type of object is it? What could it be used for?
- What is it made out of?
- What technique did the artist use in order to make this object?

For centuries, South African **Zulu** weavers have made lidded ukhamba baskets from palm leaf and grasses. Originally used to store beer, the tight weave and swelling texture of the natural fiber resulted in sturdy vessels embellished in geometric patterns through the use of natural dyes. Founded

by Marisa Fick-Jordaan, South Africa-based design firm zenzulu's "interest in transitional craft forms led to the start of a telephone wire weaving project in an informal settlement outside Durban. Initially, mentoring a growing group of master weavers using a coiled basket technique, [Fick-Jordaan] saw the possibilities of fusing traditional techniques with cutting edge design and modern industrial materials, with the aim to grow local and international markets."⁶⁴ Using recycled telephone wire, the introduction of a wider spectrum of colors by the wire manufacturers has led to increased design possibilities, as illustrated by Vincent Sithole's design from 2006.

- Try to reconstruct the artist's process in your head. Where did he start? How did the design evolve?
- What individual kinds of designs do you notice on the basket?
- In what way are the process (basket weaving) and the pattern (insects arranged in circular fashion) related?
- Look closely at the individual designs. How many different kinds of insects do you notice?
- Thinking of the geometric principles that govern the idea of a circular design, what about this work might be surprising?
- We may have expected for the artist to arrange his bugs and butterflies in a more regular fashion (i.e. alternating designs of two or three different insect). However, a regular pattern is absent in the design. Why do you think the artist decided to arrange the various insects in a more free-form sort of way?
- What type of message arises from this arrangement and the many different species of insects?
- Discuss how old and new, traditional techniques and innovative materials, converge in this object to create a modern design aesthetic intended to appeal to an international market.

The largest South African ethnic group, **Zulus** were treated as third-class citizens and suffered from state-sanctioned discrimination under the **apartheid** regime, which lasted until the 1990s. zenzulu and other fair-trade collaborations have led to sustainable community development that celebrates their rich craft traditions while creating an environment in which skills and artisanal techniques are passed on and exposure to the global marketplace creates a foundation for economic stability.

"The Wired Nature series attempts to create awareness of our rich natural environment and the interplay between interior and exterior. Inspired by natural plant and animal forms, individual components are designed and handmade from wire in a variety of experimental techniques, then assembled to create unique, large-scale three-dimensional sculptural design pieces in limited editions."⁶⁵
zenzulu

Dotty Wotty House, The Heidelberg Project



The Heidelberg Project / Tyree Guyton
The New White House (transformed from the *Dotty Wotty House*), 2009
 Paints and supplies donated by Pittsburgh Paints
 Courtesy of the Heidelberg Project
 Photo: Geronimo Patton

"My art is a medicine for the mind, and it helps to heal the soul in a world that is wounded. I had an epiphany in 1986. I saw what was possible in the midst of chaos in Detroit. What I saw in my mind took control of me, and I found myself going beyond the norm to create a type of beauty that reverberated around the world—the Heidelberg Project."⁶⁶

Tyree Guyton



The Heidelberg Project / Tyree Guyton
Dotty Wotty House, 2006
 Photo: Michele Figurski

- Go around the room, with each student listing one detail they notice in the larger photograph.
- What colors do you see?
- What recurring shapes do you notice?
- Focus on the house in the background. How long ago do you think it was built?
- What might the façade have originally looked like?
- What sort of transformation made it look like it does in the photo?
- Who do you think was responsible for this change?

- What might have motivated them?
- Focus on the tree in the foreground of the small image. What do you notice about it?
- Where do you think the artist/s got all these stuffed animals? What makes you think so?

The photograph shows the *Heidelberg Project*, named for a street in Detroit, which was started in 1986 by Tyree Guyton. “Armed with paintbrush and broom, and with the help of neighborhood children, Guyton, Sam Mackey (his grandfather), and Karen Guyton (his ex-wife) began cleaning up vacant lots on Heidelberg and Elba streets. Guyton transformed the trash they collected into a massive art environment. Vacant lots became ‘lots of art’ and abandoned houses became ‘gigantic art sculptures’.”⁶⁷

- Guyton talks about his art as “medicine for the mind” that heals “the soul in a world that’s wounded.” What impact do you think Guyton’s action had on local residents?
- How would you interpret the presence of Martin Luther King’s photo on the wall at the back of the front porch?
- What mood do you associate with polka dots? What message do you think they are meant to convey?

The *Dotty Wotty House*, which you can see in the photo, is Tyree Guyton’s childhood home. In the fall of 2009, it received a new face when Guyton and some community members repainted its façade.

- How is the new version (pictured below) different from the original? Which of the two façades do you prefer? Why?
- Guyton said about the new coat of paint: “I now call it *The New White House*, in honor of our Polka Dot President, Barack Obama.”⁶⁸ What do you think he means by that?

Throughout the fall of 2009, visitors to the *Heidelberg Project* were invited to add polka dots to *The New White House* and to record their experience in Guyton’s journal.

- Where and how would you leave your mark on the building? Write a brief journal entry about how the color, size, and placement of your polka dot carries meaning. How would you feel about contributing to the overall design of both the house and the *Heidelberg Project* on the whole?

Extension

The Heidelberg Project is recognized today as one of the most influential art environments in the world. Although Guyton received local and international recognition as well as numerous awards for it, the City of Detroit demolished part of the installation twice, in 1991 and 1999. Imagine you are a local resident. Write a petition to the city council in which you argue against plans to tear down the site a third time. Think about ways in which you can stress the positive influence of the artwork on the lives of the residents and how it contributes to a positive image of the city in the eyes of visitors.

Victor Harris

Victor Harris
Victor Harris, Big Chief of the
Fi-Yi-Yi Mardi Gras Indian Tribe,
performing at Congo Square
New Orleans, January 2010
Photo: Leslie King-Hammond



"There is a lot to unite the African American and the Native American both spiritually and politically. In addition to being the first inhabitants of America whose land was taken away by the same powers that brought enslaved Africans to the Americas, the figure and image of the Indian became a substitute for lost African ancestors as well as loci for special spiritual power."⁶⁹

Take a good look at this photograph and describe what you notice.

- What components does the costume consist of?
- What colors do you see?
- What patterns and other decorative designs can you discern?
- Do you notice any references to animals or other creatures?
- Where in nature would you see a color range like this?
- What materials is the costume made of?
- Why do you think the artist chose these materials?
- Movement impacts the costume’s appearance. In what way does this become apparent in the photograph?
- Demonstrate a movement that would bring out the **kinetic** qualities of the costume.
- In your opinion, what kind of music would go with a dance in this sort of costume? What instruments would you use? Why?
- Do you think this costume has a particular function? When do you think it is worn and by whom?

The photograph features Victor Harris, prominent “founder and Big Chief of the Fi Yi Yi, one of New Orleans’ celebrated Mardi Gras Indian tribes.”⁷⁰ The origins of the Mardi Gras Indians date back to the late 19th Century, when African-style music and dance performances were outlawed in New Orleans. In response, local African-Americans invented the Mardi Gras Indian. “If they could not play themselves, they would play an ‘other’ with whom they felt (and still feel) a spiritual and political bond. Parading in their own neighborhoods, these performers were (and are) enacting resistance to white-controlled Mardi Gras celebrations, which in fact were legally segregated until December 21, 1991.”⁷¹

- In what way do the costumes in the photo look “Indian”?
- Victor Harris describes his practice of masking as follows: “I want to identify with the African culture. All of this is about the ancestors. When I mask, a transformation takes place. I become the spirit and I truly believe I’m protected. If there are problems out there, I can solve it. I’m a peacekeeper.”⁷²
- Discuss this idea of a transformation through masking, drawing on your own experience of masquerade and disguise.

Activity

Think of one or several animals associated with qualities you admire. Out of a brown paper bag, markers, and any craft materials at hand (feathers, string, fabric, construction paper, etc.) create a mask with features of this animal. Work carefully on the facial expression to make sure it communicates the forces you would like to summon with this mask.

Resources

Lesson Suggestions

Webography

Glossary

Endnotes



Narrative and Content

Tyree Guyton's Heidelberg Project is recognized today as one of the most influential art environments in the world. Although Guyton received local and international recognition as well as numerous awards for it, the City of Detroit demolished part of the installation twice, in 1991 and 1999. Imagine you are a local resident. Write a petition to the city council in which you argue against plans to tear down the site a third time. Think about ways in which you can stress the positive influence of the artwork on the lives of the residents and how it contributes to a positive image of the city in the eyes of visitors.

Read William Kamkwamba, *The Boy who Harnessed the Wind*, and watch Kamkwamba on TED: <http://williamkamkwamba.typepad.com/>. In what ways does Kamkwamba and Guyton help transform the lives of people in their communities? Look around your urban or suburban environment, what creative ideas can you come up with that might benefit the community that you live in?

Process and Materials

Tyree Guyton in Detroit and Loring Cornish in Baltimore managed to fundamentally change their urban environments by turning discarded things (often referred to as “found objects”) into art.

Go around the room and ask students to pick one of several building types (residential, school, cinema, office building, store, beauty parlor, restaurant, etc). Every student will then embellish and decorate one cardboard box (cereal, pasta, toothpaste, etc.) with construction paper, paint, and “found objects” like plastic cutlery, buttons, pebbles, shells, etc.) and write a short sentence about how the “building” is used in the context of a city. Then arrange all finished boxes on the floor in one corner of your classroom to make up a small town. As an additional option, have students write a travel diary entry from the perspective of someone who visits this town.

Form and Structure

Contemporary African designers excel in creating innovative product design from repurposed or cheap everyday materials. Have students work in groups of 3-4 participants and provide each group with corrugated cardboard, scissors or x-acto knives, stacks of newspaper, and masking tape. Using only these materials, each group will create one freestanding piece of furniture (chair, table, etc) that needs to hold the weight of at least one student. Tape can be used to connect furniture components together, but students cannot tape the structure to the floor. Begin by having each group choose a theme for their chair (ex: “Going Green” lounge chair, love seat, recliner, dining room chair, etc). Encourage students to create a well-planned foundation and inner structure to give their chair strength and support. Showing patterns (ex: architectural, patterns of organic growth, etc.) can help them generate ideas with their building process.

Local and Global

Think of how you could repurpose materials found in your neighborhood in an artwork that draws attention to a particular social or environmental issue. Describe what your project would look like. What materials would you use and what message would you convey?

Webography

Sheila Bridges and Toile de Jouy

<http://www.sheilabridges.com/index.html>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/08/AR2006110800671.html>

<http://www.designspongeonline.com/2010/03/past-present-toile-de-jouy-modern-toile.html>

Bright Ugochukwu Eke

<http://u-bright.blogspot.com>

<http://www.artslant.com/global/artists/show/66944-bright-ugochukwu-eke>

http://odcap.com/artist_in_focus_bright_eke/index.html

Meschac Gaba

<http://www.powerofculture.nl/en>

www.artsouthafrica.com/?article=356

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950DE0D7103DF937A35750CoA9639C8B63>

<http://www.michaelstevenson.com/contemporary/artists/gaba.htm>

Gee's Bend Quilts

<http://www.quiltsofgeesbend.com/>

<http://www.tinwoodmedia.com/PDFDownloads/KimmelmanREVIEW.pdf>

Tyree Guyton and the *Heidelberg Project*

<http://www.heidelberg.org/index.html>

Hair Wars

<http://www.hairwarsustour.com/>

Keith Haring

<http://www.haring.com>

<http://www.haringkids.com>

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/H/haring.html>

Victor Harris and Fi-Yi-Yi

<http://www.neighborhoodstoryproject.org/posters/victorharris.pdf>

William Kamkwamba and The Boy who Harnessed the Wind:

<http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/wed-october-7-2009/william-kamkwamba>

http://www.ted.com/talks/william_kamkwamba_on_building_a_windmill.html

Gonçalo Mabunda

<http://3rings.designerpages.com/2008/12/04/live-at-design-miami-goncalo-mabundas-weapons-chairs/>

Esther Mahlangu

<http://esthermahlangu.co.za>

<http://www.bmwdrives.com/artcars/bmw-artcars-mahlangu.php>

<http://www.eartharchitecture.org/index.php?/archives/989-Mud-Brick-and-the-Automobile.html>

Ousmane M'baye

http://www.coroflot.com/public/individual_details.asp?from_url=true&individual_id=221006&

<http://www.creativeafricanetwork.com/person/6788/en>

Serge Mouange and *Wafrika*

www.wafrika.jp

http://www.egodesign.ca/en/article.php?article_id=341&page=1

Mud Studio

www.mudstudio.net

J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere

http://jdokhaiojeikere.blogspot.com/2008_07_01_archive.html

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/photobooth/2010/09/frames-from-fiction-hairstyles.html>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/20/magazine/structures-the-braided-bunch.html>

Beverley Price and Zulu love letters

<http://www.thompsongallery.co.za/Artists/BeverleyPrice/tabid/14995/Default.aspx>

http://www.charonkransenarts.com/artists/Price/artist_price.html

<http://www.marques.co.za/clients/zulu/bead.htm>

Siddi Quilts

http://www.henrydrewal.com/exhibit_stitching_history.html

Hank Willis Thomas, Absolut and the *Brookes*

<http://hankwillisthomas.com/home.html>

http://www.absolutad.com/absolut_gallery/singles/

<http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/exhibitions/museums/brookes.html>

Daniele Tamagni

<http://www.photodantam.com/contacts/contacts.html>

<http://www.trolleybooks.com/exhibitionSingle.php?exhibId=276>

<http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/06/fop-art-gentleman-of-the-bacongo/>

Jack Travis

www.jacktravis.com

<http://www.kalahari-harlem.com/>

http://www.schwartzarch.com/projects/kalahari_housing.html

Ubuhle Beads

<http://www.ubuhlebeads.co.za/>

<http://www.bibendum-times.co.uk/posts/news/2010/02/01/the-ubuhle-beads-exhibition/>

Iké Udé

<http://www.ikeude.com/>

<http://www.arudemag.com/site/>

Nontsikelelo Veleko

<http://www.afronova.com/Nontsikelelo-Lolo-Veleko.html>

<http://www.artthrob.co.za/07feb/artbio.html>

Kehinde Wiley

<http://www.kehindewiley.com/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dECwcdJMXg>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhgOfyrj1V8&p=6E750E80AA51F49A&playnext=1&index=44>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwNbQR_yIn8

<http://www.interviewmagazine.com/blogs/art/2010-02-22/kehinde-wiley-puma-deitch/>

zenzulu

<http://www.zenzulu.co.za/>

http://www.indigoarts.com/store1_telephone_13.html

Glossary

abolitionism – Movement to end slavery.

abstract – Visual language of form, color and line that exists independently from observable reality.

adaptation - Change in behavior of a person or group in response to new or modified surroundings

Adinkra - Visual symbols, used on fabric, walls, in pottery, woodcarvings that represent abstract concepts like “unity” or “wisdom.” They were originally created by the Akan of Ghana and the Gyaman of Cote d’Ivoire in West Africa.

apartheid - Official policy of racial segregation practiced in the Republic of South Africa between 1948 and 1992, involving political, legal, and economic discrimination against nonwhites.

anthropology - The scientific study of the origin, the behavior, and the physical, social, and cultural development of humans.

bricolage – Something made or put together using whatever materials happen to be available.

colonialism – Process of European settlement and political control over the rest of the world, including Americas, Australia, and parts of Africa and Asia. Period of history from the late 15th to the 20th century when European nation states established colonies on other continents; the justification for colonialism included various factors such as the profits from trade and the expansion of power.

composition - Arrangement of artistic parts so as to form a unified whole.

conceptual art – Art, in which the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work, not the way it looks or what it is made from

economy - Activities related to the production and distribution of goods and services in a particular geographic region.

dandy – A man who gives particular attention to dress and personal appearance

Diaspora - The movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland (e.g. “African Diaspora”)

genocide - Systematic killing of a racial or cultural group

globalization - Refers both to the “shrinking” of the world and the increased consciousness of the world as a whole. The term is used to describe the changes in societies and the world economy that are the result of dramatically increased cross-border trade, investment, and cultural exchange.

kinetic – Characterized by motion

kimono – Japanese traditional garment worn by men, women, and children

improvisation – The practice of doing or creating something, in the moment and in response to the stimulus of one’s immediate environment, without prior preparation and from whatever is at hand.

installation art - Artistic genre of site-specific, three-dimensional works designed to transform the perception of a space.

Mardi Gras Indian –African-American Carnival revelers in New Orleans, Louisiana, who dress up for Mardi Gras in suits influenced by Native American ceremonial apparel.

metaphysical - Relating to forces or beings that exist outside the natural world; supernatural, spiritual. install

migration – Movement of people, often in groups, from one place to another.

Ndebele – South African tribal group known for their iconic wall-painting style

nomadic – Lifestyle of someone who has no fixed home and move according to the seasons from place to place

obi – Sash wrapped around the waist when wearing a sari.

pastoral – Having the charm, simplicity, and serenity usually associated with rural areas and life in the country.

pattern - the repetition of any thing— shapes, lines, or colors—also called a motif, in a design; as such it is one of the principles of design.

pictogram – A symbol which is a picture that represents an object or concept, (e.g. a picture of an envelope used to represent an e-mail message). Pictograms are common in everyday life, e.g. signs in public places or roads.

portrait – Painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression is predominant. The intent is to display the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person.

product design - Concerned with the generation and development of ideas in a way that leads to new products

recycle – to treat or process a waste material in order to make it suitable for reuse.

repurpose- Reusing an object while changing its original function (e.g. turning a tea cup into a flower pot).

riffing – To improvise in the performance or practice of an art, esp. by expanding on or making novel use of traditional themes.

sari - Strip of unstitched cloth, ranging from four to nine yards in length that is draped over the body in various styles. It is popular in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Burma, and Malaysia. The most common style is for the sari to be wrapped around the waist, with one end then draped over the shoulder baring the midriff

Sapeurs – Men who belong to a fashion subculture in the Congo, known as Le Sape (Society for the Advancement of People of Elegance). Their style and highly tailored fashion is their identity in life.

sartorial – Pertaining to clothes

self-referential – Referring to oneself or itself

Siddi – Indian ethnic group of African descent

signifier – Something that can be used to describe or identify something else

site-specific installation - Work of art designed specifically for a particular location and that has an interrelationship with the location. If removed from the location it would lose all or a substantial part of its meaning.

symbol - Something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, Especially a simple visual sign used to represent something invisible or abstract (\$ for money, heart for love, etc.

symmetry - Balance in design or arrangement, with similar or identical elements situated parallel to one another on either side of an axis.

syncopation - The process of displacing 'expected' beats by anticipation or delay of one-half a beat

taxonomy – the practice and science of classification, i.e. finding, defining, naming, and organizing individual units into hierarchical groupings.

textile – Fabric, cloth; flexible material consisting of a network of natural or artificial fibres often referred to as thread or yarn

township – In South Africa, an underdeveloped area consisting largely of shacks, usually situated on the outskirts of a city. During apartheid, blacks, coloreds and sometimes Asians were forcibly moved to townships. Today, residency in townships is mostly voluntary.

transatlantic slave trade - The enslavement and transportation, primarily of African people, to the colonies of the New World that occurred in and around the Atlantic Ocean from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

Venice Biennial – International contemporary art exhibition held every other year in Venice, Italy.

Zulu - Largest South African ethnic group.

Zulu love letters- Beaded rectangles the patterns and colors of which encode messages relating to marriage and courtship.

Endnotes

- 1 Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond, “The Global Africa Project: Contemporary Design, Craft, and Art,” in *The Global Africa Project*, exh. cat. (New York: Prestel, 2010), p. 10.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 *The Global Africa Project*, exh. cat. (New York: Prestel, 2010) p. 229.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 <http://www.myspace.com/kehindewileystudio>
- 6 Kehinde Wiley for Interview magazine: <http://www.interviewmagazine.com/blogs/art/2010-02-22/kehinde-wiley-puma-deitch/>
- 7 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 223.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/02/17/obituaries/keith-haring-artist-dies-at-31-career-began-in-subway-graffiti.html>
- 10 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 242.
- 11 Ibid, p. 241f.
- 12 <http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/exhibitions/museums/brookes.html>.
- 13 Kobena Mercer, “Radio Ethiopia: African Transcultural Influences,” in *Africa*, sale cat., Phillips de Pury & Company, New York, May 2010, p. 57.
- 14 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 214.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Alisa La Gamma (2008), “The Poetics of Cloth” in *Alisa La Gamma and Christina Giuntini, The Essential Art of African Textiles – Design Without End*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2008, pg. 23.
- 17 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 232.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 98.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond, “The Global Africa Project: Contemporary Design, Craft, and Art, in *The Global Africa Project*, p. 22.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 241.

24. Ibid.
- 25 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 93
- 26 “African Thought Leaders,” in *Design in Formation*, no. 13(2009), p. 29.
- 27 <http://www.africancontemporary.com/Esther%20Mahlangu.htm>
- 28 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 230.
- 29 José J. Mapily, “Eclectic Dialogue: The Architectural Search for an Afro-centric Design Aesthetic,” in *The Global Africa Project*, p. 113.
- 30 <http://www.cityrealty.com/nyc/manhattan/kalahari-harlem-40-west-116th-street/36181>
- 31 “Eclectic Dialogue,” p. 113
- 32 “The Global Africa Project: Design, Craft, and Art,” p. 24
- 33 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 219.
- 34 Naomi Beckwith, “Global City, Urban Flux: Three Models of Globalization from and in Africa,” in *The Global Africa Project*, p. 68.
- 35 Gaba, email to Christine Y. Kim, quoted in *Tresses*, exh. cat. (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2005).
- 36 Exhibition announcement, “*Tresses*, 16 August–15 September 2007,” under “Artists / Gaba,” Michael Stevenson Gallery, <http://www.michaelstevenson.com>.
- 37 <http://www.artsouthafrica.com/?article=356>
- 38 “African Thought Leaders,” p. 29.
- 39 Alisa LaGamma, “Interview with El Anatsui,” January 21, 2008, Met Podcast and transcript, Metropolitan Museum of Art, <http://www.metmuseum.org>.
- 40 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 230.
- 41 <http://www.madmuseum.org/INFO/PressRoom/Press%20Releases/global%20africa.aspx>
- 42 <http://www.madblog.org/2010/04/update-on-the-global-africa-project-exhibition/>
- 43 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 218.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid
- 46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 <http://www.thompsongallery.co.za/Artists/BeverleyPrice/tabid/14995/Default.aspx>

49 Ibid.

50 http://www.charonkransenarts.com/artists/Price/artist_price.html

51 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 233.

52 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 81.

53 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 240.

54 Michael Kimmelman, "Jazzy Geometry, Cool Quilters," in *New York Times*, November 29, 2002.

55 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 220.

56 Ibid.

57 <http://www.ubuhlebeads.co.za/>

58 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 223.

59 Ibid., p. 188

60 Ibid.

61 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 220.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 <http://www.zenzulu.co.za/story.html>

65 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 246.

66 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 225.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid, p. 202.

69 Judith Bettelheim, "From Masquerade to Fashion and Back," in *The Global Africa Project*, p. 165.

70 *The Global Africa Project*, p. 224.

71 "From Masquerade to Fashion and Back," p. 165.

72 Ibid.