

African Arts of Healing and Divination

Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, Gallery C, February 20- June 24, 2007

Curator: Susan Cooksey

The 72 objects presented in this exhibition were selected from the Harn collection and private collections to illustrate the broad range of object types used in African divination and healing practices, as well as their extraordinary aesthetic qualities and iconographies.

The artworks in the exhibition also reflect both local and global influences and information as they were and are used by diviners, healers and their clients to seek more powerful and effective medicines. To illustrate the scope of ideas and techniques within local contexts, the exhibition includes groups of objects related to single systems of divination and healing. Additionally, a large group of objects represent the great concern for promoting fertility and the health of mothers and children. Other objects were chosen to represent the pervasive theme of spiritual protection, demonstrating both historical and contemporary approaches to confronting and defusing negative forces that affect health and well-being.



Yoruba people, Nigeria

Diviner's Bag (*apo Ifa*)

20th Century

Cloth, glass beads, leather

Museum purchase, funds provided by the
Caroline Julier and James G. Richardson Art
Acquisition Fund

Highlights from the African Collection

Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, September 5, 2006 – ongoing

Curator: Susan Cooksey

The selection of 50 objects in this exhibition reflects the scope of the collection and highlights its growth in recent years. The exhibition includes a range of objects from sub-Saharan Africa, dating from the 15th to the 20th century, and focuses on works by known artists and recent acquisitions. Among these are a drum by Yoruba artist of Nigeria, Olowe of Ise, a group of Ethiopian Christian Orthodox liturgical works, a diverse group of ceramic works, and a selection of Somali metal objects for personal adornment.



Yoruba people, Nigeria, Owo

Ritual Ax

Late 19th early 20th century

Wood, iron, pigment

20 x 2 9/16 x 11 3/16 in. (50.8 x 6.5 x 28.4 cm)

Gift of Rod McGalliard

Continuity and Change: Three Generations of Ethiopian Artists

Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, January 23, 2007 - April 29, 2007

Curators: Rebecca Nagy and Achamyeleh Debela

This exhibition tells the story of modern and contemporary art in Ethiopia from the 1940s to the present and explores the role of government support of artists as part of a purposeful strategy for modernization of Ethiopia. The exhibition also examines the influence of the School of Fine Arts in Addis Ababa, one of Africa's leading art academies. In particular, *Continuity and Change* focuses on those artists who were and are active in Addis Ababa within the context of the political and social upheavals of twentieth-century Ethiopia. Artists active in Addis Ababa are still largely unknown outside Ethiopia and a narrow circle of international curators and collectors. *Continuity and Change* will introduce a number of these artists to U.S. audiences for the first time. Of the 23 artists in the exhibition, 20 are still living and active as artists. The exhibition is organized by Harn Museum Director Rebecca Martin Nagy and North Carolina Central University Professor Achamyeleh Debela. Made possible by Northern Trust Bank.



Lulseged Retta, born 1952

Jazz Night (Tribute to Gebre Kristos Desta)

1993, acrylic on cotton cloth on board

59 1/4 x 29 3/4 in. (150.5 x 75.6 cm.)

Collection of the artist

Art of the Ethiopian Highlands from the Harn Museum Collection

Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, Rotunda Gallery, January 23, 2007 - May 06, 2007

Curator: Rebecca Martin Nagy with the assistance of Nicholas Frech

This Rotunda Gallery installation showcases for the first time the museum's notable collection of mural paintings, icons, illustrated manuscripts, bronze processional crosses and carved wooden hand crosses created for use in Christian churches of the Ethiopian highlands. A particular highlight of the exhibition is a rare 25-foot long mural painting portraying the war of King Takla Haymanot with the Dervishes, painted in the late 19th or early 20th century. Historical figures are identified by inscriptions. Clothing, royal regalia, armor, weaponry and horse trappings are rendered in great detail, providing insight into customs of an earlier period. Art of the Ethiopian Highlands provides a historical context for the adjacent exhibition *Continuity and Change: Three Generations of Ethiopian Artists*, which focuses on modern and contemporary Ethiopian art. In addition, other Ethiopian icons, crosses and healing scrolls from the collection are featured in *Highlights from the Harn Museum African Collection* and the *African Arts of Healing and Divination* exhibition. Made possible by the Frederick and Aase B. Thompson Foundation.



Ethiopian
*The Battle of King Takla Haymanot
of Gojjam against the Dervishes*
(detail)
c. 1896-1910
Paint on Cloth
textile only: 50 1/2 in. x 24 ft. 11 in.
(128.3 x 759.5 cm.)
Museum purchase, gift of Michael A.
Singer

IMAGinING TOBIA

Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, Langley Foyer, January 23, 2007 - May 06, 2007

Video Installation by artist Salem Mekuria

IMAGinING TOBIA is a triptych video installation by artist Salem Mekuria that will be installed in the Langley Foyer adjacent to the Rotunda Gallery exhibition *Art of the Ethiopian Highlands from the Harn Museum Collection*. *IMAGinING TOBIA* is an exploration of the lush southern as well as the forbiddingly rugged but starkly beautiful northern landscapes of Ethiopia. Mekuria intends the installation to be a mirror on which to reflect the problems of and as a space in which to meditate about the disjunction between the “real” and imagined knowledge of Ethiopia and its multi-faceted history as it approaches its third millenium. The landscape’s immense visuality is seductive, its topographic variety alluring and challenging. Mekuria uses the triptych, a reference to Ethiopia’s ancient religious art form and ubiquitous in Ethiopian everyday life, to juxtapose, layer and contrast glimpses of this landscape, opening a space for making multitudes of meanings and associations. *IMAGinING TOBIA* insists in foregrounding Ethiopia’s physical and human potential. The repetition of images – of lakes, waterfalls, rivers inundating roads, the deep green, misty hillsapes – set against hundreds of miles of roads snaking through steep escarpments of over-used, denuded and rocky landscape proposes that the problems confronting Ethiopia are neither natural nor normal.



Video still from *IMAGinING TOBIA*:
waters flowing through underground caves
in the highlands of Ethiopia.

From Ogun's Forge: Metal Art for the Orisha

The Thomas Center, Main Gallery, February 24 – April 1, 2007

Curators: Robin Poynor & Ade Ofunniyin

Iyanifa Vassa and Yaw Shangofemi arrived at creating metal sculpture that refers to and honors orisha, the deities that comprise the Yoruba pantheon, in different ways.

Yaw Owusu Shangofemi was trained as a welder, but he has been practicing the art of blacksmithing for some thirty years, having apprenticed himself in 1976 to Phillip Simmons, a renowned blacksmith in Charleston, S.C. Shangofemi has also studied the religion, art and traditions of the Akan of Ghana and the Yoruba of Nigeria and continues to embrace these cultures in order to reclaim the African heritage of his ancestry. From his forge in rural Hawthorne, Florida, Yaw produces practical and utilitarian iron objects as well as iron sculpture. Most of his sculpture relates to his personal exploration of Akan and Yoruba social and religious practices.

Vassa began as an Interior Architect in Chicago and worked with craftsmen in a variety of fields to create one-of-a-kind designs to incorporate into unique residential and commercial projects. Her initiation as an orisha priest in her early 30's allowed her to open what she refers to as "the inner doorways" that allowed far more creativity. A welding class provided the medium with which Vassa felt at ease. As she developed her own spiritual connections with the orisha, especially with Ogun, the god of iron and also of creativity, she also developed her skills as a metal sculptor. Many of Vassa's pieces are used in her healing work as well as positioned in spiritual ceremonies that derive from Yoruba traditions, many of them taking place at the Ifa Foundations' spiritual retreat located outside of Crescent City, Florida.

The focus of the exhibition centers on both artists' interest in sculptural forms in metal as a conduit for expression of and devotion to the Yoruba orisha, including Ogun. All works are inspired by the artists' participation in the intricacies of Yoruba tradition and religion transplanted to this side of the Atlantic.



Iyanifa Vassa, *Eyes of the Soul*, iron, raffia and photographs, 1997. The Ifa Foundation Collection of Spiritual Art.



Yaw Shangofemi, *Ogun Man*, automobile hubcaps, fenders, springs, palm fronds, and metal rods, 2006. photograph by Ade Ofunniyin.

Cybervisions: Digital Paintings by Achamyelah Debela

“the gallery” at J. Wayne Reitz Union, March 12 – April 1, 2007

Curator: Nicholas A. Frech

Working largely within a context of traditional painting, over the past two decades, Achamyelah Debela has become established as a leading international figure in the cutting-edge developments of ‘digital art’. This exhibition features 26 of the artist’s latest works reflecting his active engagement with the computer canvas as a means of exploring the synergistic relationship between traditional and digital painting techniques. Technical virtuosity aside, the *tour de force* behind these digital compositions is further enhanced through the reverent use of an aesthetic visual language that is chiefly informed by the distinct iconography and practices of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity.



Achamyelah Debela, *Magic Scroll*,
Digital cibachrome print. 27 X 19 in.
From the collection of the artist

In the House: Domestic Arts from the Horn of Africa

Grinter Galleries, March 5 – September 1, 2007

Curator: Nicholas Frech

From pastoralist nomads to modern urban-dwellers, complex patterns of social organization subsist among the diverse ethnic groups throughout the Horn of Africa. While maintaining the integrity of their respective cultural and religious identities, this exhibition will examine the evolution of the distinctive stylistic traditions that appear both in secular and religious arts from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. With reflections on the interconnected influences of Judaism, Islam, Orthodox Christianity, as well as various indigenous ideologies, this exhibit will feature material culture from the realm of domesticity including an assortment of utilitarian objects, religious paraphernalia and items of personal adornment.



Handpainted Ceramic Coffee Set. Late twentieth century. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. From the collection of Dr. Anita Spring

Imagining Africa: European maps and what they tell us about their makers

Maps & Imagery Library on the ground floor of the Marston Science Library, specific dates to be determined and will include March 28 – April 1, 2007

Organizers: Carol McAuliffe, Maps Librarian; Peter Malanchuk, Africana Bibliographer; Dan Reboussin, Anthropology Selector

Antique maps of Africa provide glimpses into the history of European exploration and expansion into the continent as it unfolded over five hundred years or more. These maps' decorative and cartographic elements provide insight into how Europeans viewed Africa and Africans from their first tentative coastal explorations to expansive mercantile enterprises, missionary undertakings and efforts at political and military control. The Map & Imagery Library and the Africana Collection at the University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries have selected a number of cartographic treasures for this exhibit to highlight the scholarly research and teaching value of this important collection.



John Speed, 1552?-1629. *Africae described, the manners of their habits, and buildings: newly done into English* / by L.S. published at the charges of G. Humble Ano 1626, Abraham Goos sculpsit. G. Humble, 1631 (with detail)

Homage in Miniature: The Works of Kofi Cole

Fine Arts C Building Foyer, March 14 – April 13, 2007

Curators: Genia Martinez and MacKenzie Moon

Kofi Cole is the pseudonym of Dr. Herbert “Skip” M. Cole, a renowned scholar of African art history. Through his field research, publications, and mentoring of students, he has helped to advance African art history as a discipline. Dr. Cole has long had a personal interest in woodworking, and some years back he carved a miniature *akua ba*, a figure customarily carried by Akan women to ensure a safe birth and the welfare of their children, for his daughter-in-law: a timely gift, as she was expecting (the birth of) a child. Those close to Dr. Cole admired the miniature carving, and he tried his hand at other tiny versions of canonical examples of African art. Before long, he began giving his works to friends – scholars, collectors, and other patrons of African arts.

An obvious question one might ask is why carve such small facsimiles. Imitation proverbially has been the highest form of flattery, and for Dr. Cole this remains true in his intent. He is also aware of problematic issues regarding authenticity and forgery. He states, “...there is praiseful imitation and copying, sometimes to the point of fakery; the two can be the same form, I guess, though the intention is different.” Dr. Cole’s decision to carve miniatures clearly separates his works of tribute from any original works of African art.

Not only has Dr. Cole paid homage to original works, but by giving his carvings to those who contribute to the field, he is also paying tribute to his fellow proponents of African art. Our exhibition pays homage to Kofi Cole, who recognizes not only the contributions of his colleagues, but also the dynamic inventiveness of African art.



A miniature Cameroon mask by Kofi Cole based on photographs of Tukar and Fungom examples, Cameroon Grassfields, Cameroon. 2 x 3 x 3 in. Collection of Christraud M. Geary.



Mabu masker in Weh, Fungom Region, Cameroon Grassfields. Photograph by Christraud M. Geary, 1984.

Ogun Altar from North Florida: Ogun in a Time of War

Location: tentatively planned for the outdoor area between Fine Arts A and Little Hall, dates to be determined and will coincide with March 28 – April 1, 2007

Artist/Curator: Ade Ofunniyin

Ogun is one of the Yoruba deities now worshipped throughout the African Diaspora. In Yorubaland he is known as Ogun, in Brazilian Candomble as Ogum, in USA and Cuban based Santeria as Oggun, and in USA Yoruba communities as Ogun.

Ogun is the ironworker, blacksmith, carpenter, and patron of all metals and of war. He is also the overseer of surgeons, policemen, barbers, hunters, butchers, and soldiers. He is the Orisha that is associated with bloodletting and all violent acts. As a symbol of war, Ogun is much respected, because many will suffer pain and horror because of war and violence. He is also believed to be the symbol of absolute justice and is often called upon to witness a pact between people.

Orisha Ogun is worshipped and propitiated so that he will protect his followers from the very things that he represents. This exhibit is designed to be interactive and all are invited to make an offering and/or prayer to Ogun to end the rampant violence in our communities and in communities throughout the world.

The simplest offering is fruit or palm oil. Ogun's colors are green and black. PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE ANY ITEMS OR OBJECTS FROM THE EXHIBIT!



Altar for Ogun. Hawthorne, Florida. By Ade Ofunniyin, 2007.

African Pathways to Urbanism: Photographs by Peter Schmidt

Florida Museum of Natural History, March 22 – July 22, 2007

Curator: Peter R. Schmidt

This gallery shows features University Anthropology Professor Peter Schmidt's documentation of ancient urban centers in the Horn of Africa. Schmidt is an anthropologist and archaeologist with a background in African studies that goes back to his undergraduate studies, when he met Kenya's future President, Jomo Kenyatta, during a visit to colonial Kenya in the early 1960s. Schmidt has been engaged in African archaeology for nearly 40 years. He uses photography to document ancient communities and the landscapes they occupied.



Matara is a site in southeastern Eritrea. It dates from 500 BC to about 600 AD. The building is an Axumite period building, likely an elite dwelling, that dates to about 500-600 AD.



The overview of Matara captures some of the excavated ruins as well as the grain fields that surround it today, as in the past.

Photographs taken by Peter R. Schmidt between 1995 and 2002.

Senegalese reverse-glass painting – Strength and Fragility: A Unique Vision

Grinter Hall 471, Center for African Studies – Conference Room, March 19 – ongoing
Curators: Amy Schwartzott and Fiona McLaughlin

This exhibition draws from the rich legacy of the Senegalese reverse-glass painting tradition, the most widely known and popularized art form in Senegal. Reverse-glass paintings play an important role as a testimony to the culture and history of the Senegalese people as well as a leading force in the commercial tourist market.

The paintings are created as the images are initially drawn and then vividly painted on the backs of panes of glass. As a result of this process, the viewer sees a reverse of the image the artist has initially created. Creating an irony, these forms are noted for their vibrant and powerful depictions on a fragile medium of glass. These reverse-glass paintings present a unique view of the Senegalese world of such varied themes as Islamic religious imagery, history, as well as secular images of portraiture.



Mor Gueye, *Musician*, 1999, oil paint on glass.
Collection of Leonardo Villalón and Fiona McLaughlin