African Art

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Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Table of Contents

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African Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts • www.umfa.utah.edu

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February 4, 1998

Image List

1. Kuba, Zaire
   Bwoom Helmet Mask
   Wood, beads, skin, raffia and copper
   The Owen Mort, Jr. Collection of African Art
   Museum # 1985.052.772

2. Chokwe, Zaire
   Chief's Chair
   Wood and metal brands
   The Owen D. Mort Collection of African Art
   Museum #1985.052.809

3. Yoruba, Nigeria
   Divination Bag
   Glass beads, cardboard and cloth
   Purchased with funds from the M. Bell Rice Fund, the John Preston & Mary Elizabeth Brockbank Creer Memorial Fund and the Friends of the Art Museum
   Museum # 1994.003.002

4. Baulé, Ivory Coast
   Goli or Guli Mask
   Wood and pigment
   Ulfert Wilke Collection purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum
   Museum # 1982.001.001

5. Songye, Zaire
   Kifwebe Mask
   Wood with polychrome,
   The Owen Mort, Jr. Collection of African Art
   Museum # 1985.052.788

6. Dogon, Mali
   Granary Door
   Wood
   Ulfert Wilke Collection purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum
   Museum # 1983.001.004

7. Yoruba, Nigeria
King's Headdress
Basketry framework with beads
The Owen D. Mort Jr. Collection of African Art

8. Kuba, Zaire
Mukyeem Mask (backside of mask)
Wood, raffia, cloth, skin, beads and cowrie shells
The Owen Mort, Jr. Collection of African Art
Museum # 1985.052.815

9. Nok, Nigeria
Male Head, c. second century AD
Terra cotta
Purchased with funds from the Marriner S. Eccles Foundation for the Marriner S. Eccles Masterworks Collection
Museum # 1995.024.001

10. Songye, Zaire
Power Figure, ca. 1900-1920
Wood, vegetable fiber, seed pods and antelope horn
Purchased with funds from the M. Bell Rice Fund, the John Preston & Mary Elizabeth Brockbank Creer Memorial Fund and the Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1992.050.001

11. Dan, Liberia & Ivory Coast
Nyon Néa Mask
Wood & fabric
Ulfert Wilke Collection purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1983.001.001

12. Ashira/Bapunu, Ogowe River, Gabon
Spirit Mask
Wood and pigment
Ulfert Wilke Collection purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1982.001.001

General Background on African Art

Written by Bernadette Brown

Land was the basis of wealth and social status for traditional cultures in Africa. The people of western and central Africa whose art is represented in the objects selected for this Evening for Educators were primarily farmers with hunting and fishing as supplementary food gathering activities. Root crops, such as yam, sweet potato, taro and manioc, were commonly grown in tropical areas while grain crops of millet, sorghum, barley, wheat, rice and maize, were grown in temperate zones. Legumes, like peanut, lentil and beans were also grown along with fruit [pumpkin, melon, grape, watermelon, pineapple, date, fig, pomegranate, mango, coconut, banana, plantain, avocado, papaya] and vegetables [beet, onion, radish, cucumber, eggplant, squash, tomato]. For textile use, flax, raffia and cotton were cultivated.

Traditional Art in Africa

It is important to remember that in traditional African art forms artists did not seek to portray particular people, actual animals, or the actual form of invisible spirits but rather to portray ideas about reality-spiritual or human - and express these ideas through human or animal imagery.

The traditional art of Africa consists principally of masks and figures of magical/religious significance; decorative objects used for personal adornment; and implements and insignia of rank or prestige. Most of these objects are in some way allied to ceremonial and other structured activities (such as singing, dancing, drumming and storytelling), without which the visual arts could not function in traditional African society. Objects for use in daily activities, like pottery, were also decorated.

The forms and functions of traditional African art are strikingly diverse. Some groups like the Yoruba of Nigeria carve a great variety of objects; others like the nomadic Pakot of Kenya express themselves by writing poetry about their cattle. Islamic influence is seen throughout the art of the west African savanna and the east African coast; populations of both areas have been involved with Islamic culture for at least a thousand years.

One cannot generalize about African societies and their art forms merely because the people live on the same continent. Certain patterns of form and meaning can be discerned, however, on both a regional and a more general level.

Characteristics

At least two basic themes occur again and again in traditional African art:
The distinction between bush and village
The struggle to control various forces, natural as well as supernatural, to achieve desired ends.

The dualism of bush and village is pervasive in Africa, although the forms by which it is expressed vary from place to place. The underlying notion is that the world consists of two complementary domains: one a wild, chaotic, uncontrolled, exuberant region (nature); the other an ordered, controlled, measured, predictable domain (culture) - the human world of the village.

The Ibo of Nigeria express this dualism by means of masks and headdresses in which the male is symbolized by the elephant, most powerful of all bush creatures while the female symbolizes culture with her delicate hair style that expresses refinement and civilization. For the Dogon of Mali, the distinction is embodied in the contrast between spirals (nature) and
rectangular forms (culture).

Africans in traditional cultures were by no means passive in the face of powerful natural or supernatural forces. Indeed, the principal function of art in traditional African society has been to help manipulate the forces that affect people's lives. These forces are not seen as either good or evil; rather, natural and supernatural powers are perceived as subject to influence and manipulation, provided the proper techniques are used. Power figures - magically constructed and empowered objects - are found throughout Africa. These assemblages are specific prescriptions aimed at bringing about a desired end, whether the breaking of a bad habit, the improvement of one's love life, the destruction of a human enemy, or the warding off of a supernatural threat. In short, traditional African art is essentially functional and optimistic. Its aims are primarily positive and are intended, through elaboration and vigorous expression, to enhance the human condition.

Regional Styles

Western Sudanic Region:
This area includes Burkina Faso, western Mali, and northern Ivory Cost. Among its most famous art-producing peoples are the Dogon, Bambara, Bwa and Senufo. The fertility of crops is of basic importance in this dry area, as is the conciliation of the ancestors and the education of the young in the ancient traditions of each society. To these ends, masks and figures representing legendary ancestors perform dances or receive sacrifices. Forms in the western Sudan tend to be relatively stylized, austere and angular.

Central Sudanic Region:
Centered in northern Nigeria, this area is dominated by the Muslim Hausa and Fulani peoples, who have developed numerous city-states. Central Sudanic art is mostly nonrepresentational and includes mud architecture, sometimes with molded, low-relief decoration; embroidered textiles; metal and beadwork jewelry; and leatherwork decorated with geometric applique. In addition, terra-cotta sculptures dating from about 500 BC to AD 200, associated with the Nok culture, have been unearthed over a 4300-mile stretch of uplands in the southern part of the region. The Nok tradition represents the earliest known sculpture yet found in sub-Saharan Africa and seems to have paved the way for the tradition of outstanding portrait terra cottas and bronzes that later developed at the holy city of Ife in western Nigeria. Some modern peoples in the central Sudanic region such as the Tiv, Goemai, Montol, Mama, Waja, Jukun, Mumuye, Chamba and Afo carve masks or figures; these objects show a striking similarity to the art of the western Sudanic peoples. This suggests ancient linkages across the savanna belt that have been disrupted only within approximately the past 1,000 years by Islamic incursions.

West Guinea Coast Region:
This region consists of Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia and the densely forested coastal portion of Guinea and southwestern Ivory Coast. Characteristic masks and figures from the area are made by the Mende, Baga, Gola and Dan. Forms in the west Guinea Coast are generally softer, shinier and more rounded than in the neighboring western Sudanic region. Carved wood masks are the dominant art form in the region, where they per-

form a great variety of functions. Masked impersonators are used to police ceremonies, punish wrongdoers, settle land disputes and start and end wars. An apt expression for the traditional west Guinea Coast way of life is "government by mask."

Central Guinea Coast Region:

The Central Guinea Coast extends from southeastern Ivory Coast, southern Ghana, Togo, Benin and southern Nigeria to the lower Niger River with an offshoot in the Cameroons grasslands. Central Guinea Coast art is the richest and the most complex of any area in Africa. Such well-known societies as the Akan (Ashanti), Fon, Yoruba and Benin inhabit this region. Traditionally, these groups were royal in character with divine kingship; their art employs refined materials including gold, silver, bronze, brass, beadwork, silk and ivory. Specialized guilds of artists attached to the courts produced intricately crafted art forms; mainly for the benefit of their leaders. Guinea Coast art forms include stools, drums, elaborately decorated cloth, pottery, terra-cotta figurines, ornamental swords, miniature masks, combs, mirrors, staffs, pipes, containers, and carved musical instruments. The affluence and accompanying artistic wealth of this region was, in part, the result of the lucrative trade with European ships that began to visit the west African coast beginning in the late fifteenth century.

East Guinea Coast Region:

The lower Niger marks the approximate boundary between the aristocratic centralized societies of the central Guinea Coast and the more loosely organized peoples of southwestern Nigeria. Here, in the absence of kings and paramount chiefs, one finds elaborately developed masquerades and plays. These performances serve to maintain law and order in groups that vest leadership in their elders. Characteristic of the east Guinea Coast area is a dazzling array of masks, puppets and headdresses. Prominent groups in the area include the Ibo, Ibibio, Idoma, Ijo, Ejagham (Ekoi) and Ogoni.

Equatorial Forest Region:

Among the best-known peoples of the equatorial forest, which extends across Gabon and northern Zaire, are the Fang, Kota, Kwele, Ngbaka, Mbole and Lega. This region is covered with dense rain forest except where trees have been cleared for agriculture. Art forms include numerous masks and figures; beautifully designed weapons, divination objects, wall paintings and musical instruments.

Lower Congo Region:

The styles that developed in the general vicinity of the mouth of the Congo River were influenced by the Portuguese, who converted the king and many of his courtiers to Christianity about 1500. During the next three centuries, Portuguese influence introduced a number of Christian themes. Following the Portuguese withdrawal, many of these borrowed symbols acquired indigenous meanings; crucifixes, for example, became symbols of chiefly power. Christian origins have also been suggested for other Lower Congo art forms, including stone mortuary statues, mother and child figures and power figures with nails driven into them.

Southern Savanna Region:

In the broad upland belt of central Africa are located the Chokwe, Luba, Songye, Yaka, Pende, Kuba, Mbundu and Makonde. Perhaps the prime catalyst for the creation of art in these groups are the initiation rites that mark the passage of boys from adolescence to manhood. Masks, figures, costumes and spectacular theatrical effects are part of these initiations which often function as pedagogical devices to instruct the boys in their culture and in proper adult behavior. In addition to complex initiation rites, the Kuba of central Zaire have elaborate courtly art forms; including royal portrait statues, elegant cups, drums, containers and numerous regalia for persons of high rank.

Eastern Sudanic Region:

The artistic production of most of the peoples in this area is restricted to the decorative arts, but a few groups

in the southern Republic of the Sudan and southwest Ethiopia, including the Bongo, Konso and Borana, carve wood figures to commemorate ancestors. This tradition probably relates more to the ancient indigenous art still discernible in a broad arc across to southern Asia than to the majority of African styles. Similarly distinct is Ethiopian art, which shows strong links with Egyptian Coptic and Byzantine art forms.

East and Southern African Region and Madagascar:
Apart from Bushman paintings and engravings, eastern and southern Africa have only a limited number of distinctive figural styles. The predominant arts in this region are architecture and architectural decorations, including the boldly patterned wall paintings of the Ndebele in the Transvaal; and personal ornamentation, especially beadwork. Madagascar, the only large island lying off Africa's coast, was first settled not from Africa but from Indonesia, perhaps early in the Christian Era. Conspicuous is the commemorative ancestor figure, typical of Indonesia. Certain raffia textiles made by the ikat process find their closest parallels in Indonesia.

Influence on European Art

From the sixteenth century, European travelers acquired objects of African art, particularly bronzes and ivories from the Benin court. Collections of African art were being formed in Europe by the nineteenth century. Early in the twentieth century, African sculpture had an impact on the work of such artists as Georges Braque, Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani and Pablo Picasso, who were all attracted by the aesthetic values they perceived in African art forms.

The Role of the Artist Within the Culture

The ability to create powerful magic through images is respected by cultures around the world, and the artist often wields great personal political power within the community. African tribal artists are not limited to making images. With other villagers they participate in many aspects of ceremonial life: dancing, playing musical instruments, decoration, carving, painting. Usually originality is not as important as is faithfulness to the images of the past, whose power is proven. This is "tradition," and marks the art of tribal Africa as a traditional art. The artist may be selected from the group for some innate talent, or may be trained as apprentice. Some artists are those who remain faithful to tribal traditions, for so long as they remain true to the ancient beliefs, they bring to their work the necessary intensity and experience. There are also professional carvers who specialize in producing objects for the market. For inspiration, the artist draws upon experiences, mythology and community traditions. The sculptor usually does not seek to express movement or violent emotion in a mask. The artist's respect for the formal canons of art and artistic precedent are combined with his ingenuity to produce even finer and more effective works, which will be approved by the people and the ancestor spirit.

Spiritual Traditions and Art

Much African art is, at its roots, sacred. All its other characteristics stem from this basic principle. In general, religious beliefs include:
Belief in a distant creator spirit or supreme being
Belief in ancestor spirits who participate actively in the activities of the living
Belief in nature spirits
Belief in an impersonal power that can assert influence in human affairs.

In traditional African philosophy the world is thought to be controlled by an arsenal of laws. A pantheon of gods observes how these laws are executed. At the top there is a single god, the founder of the universe. Below him, a number of spirits and ancestors are thought to animate each fragment of the world: the sky, the stones, the trees, the fields, the wind, the rain and so on. Each fragment of the natural world is made up of a vital force that

is commanded by a "soul" that is unaffected by events important to human beings. The humans wish to conquer these "souls" of the natural world in order to control the forces they represent. Therefore, art becomes a weapon for conquering the unknown forces controlling the natural world. For example, the statue of an animal or human may enable a person to capture its vital force and, thus, prevent it from doing harm to the person. The carving, painting or other preparation of an image is done according to a traditional ritual that brings the vital force of the subject into the new image. By means of a final prayer cycle, the power of the embodied spirit is diminished so that it will not be able to harm. To attract the spirits of the dead, there is no need to reproduce all the features. They need only to be invoked symbolically, by stressing, or expressing, a particular attribute of the dead person: tattooing, marks of dignity, prominent recognizable features. When used in dance, the masked dancer mimics those movement which best brings out the spirit's dominating characteristic.

Religious practitioners include priests who function as heads of cult groups with regular duties and calendars of events, magicians or sorcerers who control the magical side of religion, and diviners who foretell the future and deal with personal problems. Divination is the practice of foretelling the future by means of alleged preternatural powers. It is based on the belief that the future is predetermined, that all things, however casual or accidental they might appear, have significance, and that the pattern of coming events can be read from them. The practice has been common to all peoples from earliest times, often through the medium of a prophet, shaman, sibyl, or person temperamentally equipped to go into a state of trance. Diviners played an important part in determining the causes of good and bad fortune as well as the nature of disease.

Chiefs, Kings and Royalty

The regalia of African kings include not only the emblems, symbols, and royal costumes but also some furniture, weapons and musical instruments. People believed that their kings and the regalia of his office possessed supernatural, if not divine, powers, and so they venerated not just the man, but practically everything he touched. Those artists who created the royal treasures had great status in kingdoms that valued art so highly and provided them with a lucrative market for their work. These treasures included the king's staffs of office, swords, fly whisks, umbrella handles, finials, drums, carved wooden pipes, jewel boxes, drinking cups, stools, chairs, belts, hats and hat pins. The regalia or insignia differed from chiefdom to chiefdom. In addition to these items, the regalia or insignia might also include a clump of sacred kaolin, copper bracelets, a fire drill, a double iron gong and an adze with sculptured handle. The office of chief is marked by a specially built chief's house known as "the sacred houses" where his regalia is kept. The cult of the ancestors is the ritual basis of the power and authority of chiefs and kings. They are the intercessors between the living and the dead. Sculptured statues, poles, door posts, finials, stools and other objects are used in his enthronement. In many cultures the stool or chair is the highest symbol of rank and power. Often a stool will marked with geometric designs that identify a particular king.

Masks

In general, one can separate African masks into two main categories: 1) that used in connection with royalty and 2) that used in village ceremonies. The main purpose of royal art is to support the royal line and visibly impress its power on subject people. In a village situation masks are used to stabilize the flux of power between village and bush; between the material and spiritual worlds. Among the Dan of Liberia mask costumes composed of raffia and other natural fibers indicate the "uncivilized" nature of a masked spirit. The use of cloth symbolizes the spirit's home within the village.

Masks , as well as other ritual objects , are designed for the indwelling of supernatural power. They must be made with particular precision and design in order to please the spirit and invite it to be present in the object during special ceremonies. The ancestor figure is the medium of the great patriarch, the essence of the tribal soul , for it is believed that the vital force of the ancestors continues to operate after death. The mother figure is most

influential, for she grants the promise of offspring and ensures fruitfulness.

In preparing the mask, the sculptor selects the features that manifest the special power of the spirit: the great ancestor, the priest, the tribal hero, the mother, the beauty of youth. Prestige and power may be indicated by incorporating the attributes of animals. These features are exaggerated in proportion and are abstracted from natural forms. In this way, the artist creates entirely new forms, as unreal as possible. Vitality of form stems from the exaggeration of natural features and the unusual proportions which follow formal canons that have been followed for generations. Vigor is implied by the use of jagged lines, notches, edges, bold curves suggesting energy, or shadows created by deep forms. The artist may also give the impression of ghostly movement, using the lively effects of colors, feathers, beadwork, raffia and sculpted protrusions. If the mask is successful during the ceremonial invocations, and the spirit resides within it, the style or form of the mask may be repeated for generations. Its success stands or fails with the faith to which it is linked. Despite this traditional attitude of strict adherence to the canon, artists provide an astonishing range of skillful combinations and detail, ranging widely between geometric abstraction and realistic expression.

The preparation for carving may include fasting and sexual continence, while the actual carving may be performed away from onlookers, accompanied by offerings and songs to appease the spirits. The artist works with concentration, aware of his responsibility. The wooden block is shaped with an adze and, then, refined with the adze blade or knives. The carvings may be smeared with palm oil, crushed charcoal and lampblack as a protective coating. Paint is made from lime (white), crushed tree bark and laterite (red) and tannin and charcoal (black). The addition of raffia, wickerwork, beads and shells impart variation in texture and representation. The cowrie (the shell of a small mollusk that ranges in length from l/4 inch to 4 inches) is frequently used in decoration. In many regions cowrie shells have been used as money.

The dynamics of a mask can be appreciated best when seen during the ceremony. The mask-bearer appears, fully costumed, and suggests the presence of the great spirit through dance movements, speaking with a supernatural voice. The mask-bearer enters a trance, heightened by chanting and the rhythmic beating of drums, during which the possession of the divine spirit takes place. Festivals connected with the sowing of crops and harvesting, legal proceedings, initiation ceremonies, and all important occasions are marked by the invocation of the spirits, giving a sense of security and the assurance that every negative spiritual force is counteracted by a positive one.

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Bwoom Helmet Mask — *Kuba, Zaire*

Kuba, Zaire
Bwoom Helmet Mask
Wood, beads, skin, raffia and copper
The Owen Mort, Jr. Collection of African Art
Museum # 1985.052.772

The Kuba:

The Kuba are part of a large complex of tribes that is dominated by the BuShongo (Bambala) group. In the sixth century a migration into the Kasai area of Sudanese peoples under the rule of king Minga Bengela took place subjugating the native Bantu-speaking peoples. The invaders united the former village units into feudal kingdoms resulting in a political confederacy of tribes under one king [the "Nyimi"]. Kingdom comprised 17 sub-tribes of which the Bambala was the most important since all kings came from it and Mingenia, the capital, was located within its territory. Succession was in the female line and the Nyimi traces his lineage back to Bumba, the creator and first king. While his title of "Chembe Kunji" or "god on earth" indicated his divine origin, the king's absolute power was checked by a council of men and women. This political system was still flourishing in 1885 but by 1908 it had dissolved.

The Kuba are basically farmers although they hunt extensively. They worship a Creator god and nature spirits to whom they appeal with charms and devotions. Religion is under the direction of a diviner who communicates with the "ngesh" spirits.

Kuba artists relied more on color and pattern than on sculptural forms. The Kuba produced elaborate art for both ritual and secular purposes. In the textile arts they produce "kasai velvet cloth." This cloth was made from the bark of a fig tree which had been soften and beaten on a firm surface with a special mallet. After the cloth is made by the men, the women use a variety of embroidery techniques to create geometric designs on the cloth. Masks combine form with polychromy plus beads, shells, raffia and cloth. Utilitarian style also existed and also exhibited some stylization.

The Kuba have elaborate courtly art forms, including royal portrait statues, elegant cups, drums, containers, dolls and numerous regalia for persons of high rank. The Court Style is represented in the king statutes which combine stylized symbolism with individualism. In oral tradition he Kuba can list 121 kings in genealogical charts that go back to AD 490. In order the Royal Statues or "Ndop" began with Shamba Bolongongo in the seventeenth century. The images effectively communicate the dignity and sense of command that is the ideal hallmark of a king. All of the statues conform to a standard model whose attitude implies reflection, will power and aristocratic aloofness. While the carving of the royal statues was strictly confined the artist found opportunities for expression in other carvings, notably the ceremonial cups.

The Bwoom mask is thought to represent a rival of the culture hero, Woot. This helmet type mask represents an ancient category of masks. Tradition states that the first of its kind was made by the artist Shamatula under the Nyimi Bo Kena [the 73rd king who ruled sometime in the mid 1300's]. These masks are worn at initiations and show anthropomorphic features. A triple band on the forehead is either painted or carved. Tattoo marks, embellished with brass, cowrie shells and rows of beads on nose are typical of this style.

BuShongo Creation Myth:

An elderly childless couple received a visit from a white-skinned celestial being. The fair stranger identified himself as the Lord Bomazi and announced to the couple that soon they would be blessed with a child. The aged pair laughed heartily at the absurdity of this statement. Yet the prophecy came true in time and the woman bore a daughter. When the girl was fully grown, Bomazi returned to wed her. The union produced five sons who became the rulers of separate territories. The first two were the twins Woto and Moelo. Woto became the father of the BuShongo.

The first documented successor [ca. AD 1600] was Shamba of the Bonnet [Bologono], a traveler, innovator and peacemaker. The BuShongo credit a host of good things to this ruler including the introduction of raffia weaving, embroidery, crafts and the Mankala game which successfully eradicated the widespread habit of gambling. Wise and tolerant, Shamba declared that "All men are children of god with the right to live."

Bwoom Mask
Creating a Helmet Mask Lesson Plan

written by Lorie Christiansen

Objective:
Students will

- work together in groups of 2, 3 or 4 to create one helmet mask
- communicate their ideas effectively in a group
- be sensitive to other ideas
- brainstorm ideas
- choose one idea that is agreeable to the group
- collect materials for their masks
- understand symmetry in designs
- understand proportions and forms on a face

Preparation:

Show the slide of the mask to the children and discuss the history behind it (see information above).
Teach a pre lesson about facial proportions and structure to provide enough background

Vocabulary:

An/thro/po/mor/phic = adj. Attributing human form or qualities to gods, animals or things. The religion of Greece as anthropomorphic. Today, we speak of the eye of the needle, the finger of a sundial, the hands of a clock, the teeth of a comb. All of these expressions which seem so obvious, imply the use of anthropomorphic similes.

Helmet Mask (Type 1)

Materials:
each group of students will need 2-gallon plastic milk containers.
newspaper for papier maché
brown print paper or paper bag torn into pieces (approximately 2" to 4" pieces).
papier maché paste
brown shoe polish or acrylic paint to antique the brown paper
materials for decorating: beads, pasta shells, elbow past, etc., paper, fur, raffia, paint, seeds, dried peas, beans, fabrics, metallic copper acrylic paints.

Procedure:
1. Students make a plan and a sketch of design ideas for decorating their masks.
2. Cut a few inches of the top of milk jug so that it can be turned upside down and it will stand.
3. Students work together applying papier maché over 2/3 of each jug (not on the handle side. Apply a few layers, then, make crunched up paper forms of the mouth, chin, forehead and cheeks. Apply more wet layers to
4. hold these forms in place. Leave nose areas flat to cut out later for special type of fold over nose flap and ear flaps.

5. One jug will be the back of the head. Keep it smooth. After applying several layers the helmet should be dry and strong enough to take off of the plastic jug. Trim around the edges of back piece, if necessary, and over lap, joining the from of the mask to the back.
6. Papier maché together until seam is smooth and strong. The last two layers are applied with brown paper. When it dries, stain with brown shoe polish or paint to give the effect of a wood and skin mask.
7. Trim around ears for ear holes and around neck and jaw line. Make the eye-hole slits.
8. Decorate masks by gluing on embellishments in a symmetrical manner. Keeping in mind some of the traditional patterns of the triple band on the forehead and rows of beads along each side of nose and ear flaps.
9. Tattoo designs on face and around eyes.

Mask: Front only (Type 2)

Materials:

scissors/wire cutters
tape, masking tape is preferred, but scotch will work
27 gauge wire, at least 2 yards per student
construction paper (can use beads or other materials to decorate if time and money permit)

Procedure:

1. Half-helmet mask made in a unique way using hardware cloth screening which has a 1/8 inch grid made of 27 gauge wire.
2. Cut it in positions shown on pattern. Fold and tape the edges to create the form of the face. The screen should be supple enough to bend and shape by hand but sturdy enough to hold its shape.
3. Cut a 1" x 2 1/2" rectangle out of the screen for nose and attach at the bridge of the nose, using the traditional style of the Bwoom mask nose (a folded looped over flap of leather or paper decorated with rows of beads).
4. Decorate by painting, taping, weaving and tying things onto the mesh screen.

Bwoom Helmet Mask for Younger Children

Lesson plan is similar but instead of papier maché, children could use a grocery size brown bag as the helmet base. Decorate in the same style as the Bwoom mask.

Integrate Curriculum:

P.E. Dance: Children could learn some simple music and dance steps to African music with drum beats. Perform live, on video or to a grade level or the whole school.

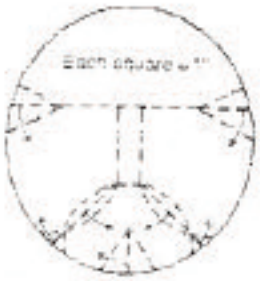
Literature: Each group that made a mask could write a poem or Haiku about their mask.

Fierce and friendly . . . easy and safe

Inspired by Caribbean carnival masks, these are made with wire screen. They're easy to see and breathe through.

THESE EERILY TRANSLUCENT WIRE-SCREEN MASKS give the spooky illusion that two faces are peering at you at once. While your eyes focus on the painted or decorated features on the screen's surface, you also see through to the wearer's face.

Each mask starts as an oval cut from hardware cloth screening, which has an ½-inch grid made of 27-gauge wire. (A 36-inch-wide roll costs about $7.25 per foot.) Check at several building supply stores to find the most pliable hard-



1 CUT OVAL shape. Dashed lines show position of fold for "darts" and wire.

2 PINCH and fold darts on outside. Hammer them flat from inside.

SUNSET

Pattern for Buroom Helmet mask (Type 2)

ware cloth (some seems stiff). It should be supple enough to bend by hand but sturdy enough to hold its shape.

Following the steps below, cut out and form a mask to fit your face. To create three-dimensional features, you'll need wire cutters, a tack hammer or small ball peen hammer, and a scrap of 1-by-8. Use colored masking tape to cover raw edges and add details. To give shapes more definition, weave pipe cleaners and yarn through the screen or apply contact paper. Use a foam brush to lightly daub paint onto screen. ■

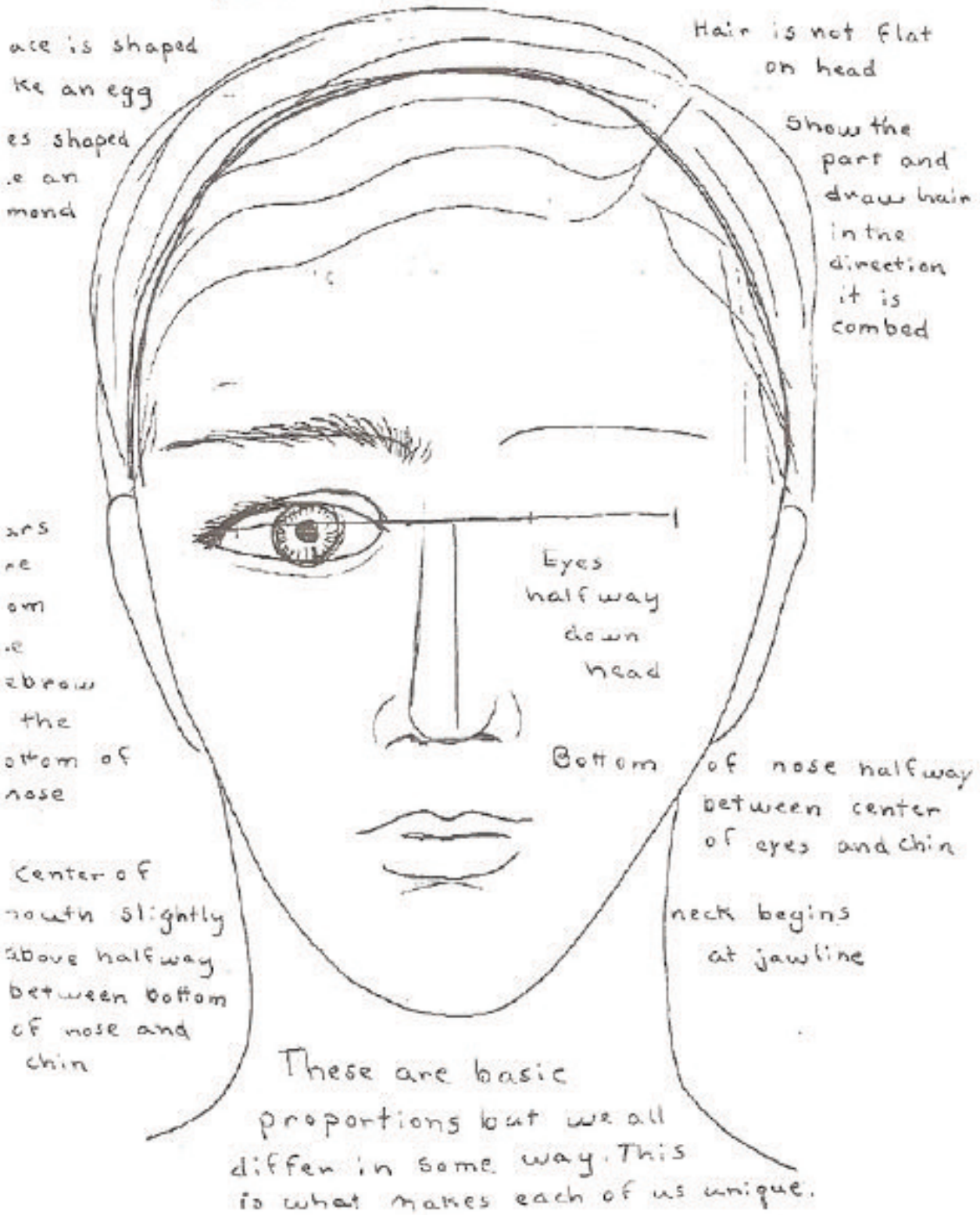
3 SHAPE NOSE on edge of board. Use fingers to contour facial features.

4 TRIM EDGE with short pieces of masking tape. Fold over and hammer flat.

5 MARK EYES after marking positions for eyes. Add two lengths of yarn to the mask on hood. (At this mask making party, adults helped younger guests with cutting the wire.

(Type 2) Broom Mask cont.

Face Proportions



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Chief's Chair — *Chokwe, Zaire*

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The Owen D. Mort Collection of African Art
Museum #1985.052.809

The Chokwe (chahk'-wee) inhabit the Southern Savanna Region of south central Africa. The Chokwe are traditionally hunters and farmers. Never united among themselves under any single paramount ruler, the Chokwe split repeatedly and now form a vast diaspora, more than a million in number, spread over rural and urban areas in at least five countries, most prominently northeastern Angola, northwestern Zambia and parts of southern Zaire. Their art reflects a range of contrasting styles that is rich both in realistically sculpted ancestor figures and in abstract human, animal, bird and snake forms.

Leaders have traditionally sat on some type of raised seating as an indication of their exalted rank. This chair is an important part of authoritative paraphernalia with which rulers emphasize their status. It's construction is copied from European chairs. The figures in the two registers around the base of the chair are characteristic of Chokwe style. The carvings represent many aspects of village life and events important to the chief's leadership for the propagation and good fortune of the village. The back of the chair has male and female figures representing Tchibenda-Ilunga, the hero-founder of the Chokwe people, and his wife. Tchibenda-Ilunga, was a Luba chief who married a woman of the Lunda tribe and sired what became the Chokwe people. The woman and child carved on the slat between the male and female figures may symbolize the chief's heirs. On the chair's right side are scenes of dancers and musicians playing drums and various instruments. On the front, top register is the police chief wearing a hat and facing his saluting men while a box of goods is being carried on poles. The lower register shows prisoners led by the police chief and followed by an elder carrying a staff. On the chair's left register a man watches a woman pounding manioc root into flour and two women assist a third in childbirth. The chair's back register repeats the childbirth scene and illustrates men deep in thought, showing the high regard for intellectual pursuits.

Chief's Chair
Lesson Plan

written by Jodi Iwasaki

Objective:
Students will decorate a wooden chair, using a collage of pictures cut out from magazines. They will cover the chair with the pictures and finish with a coat of varnish.

Elements of Art: Texture, Form & Pattern

Utah State Core Curriculum: Visual Art Standard 1000 K-12

Materials:
wooden chair
clear varnish
paint brushes
drop cloth
old magazines
scissors

Procedure:
1. Students will cut out pictures from magazines that are important to their life; that appear in their culture & environment. They will choose enough pictures to decorate their wood furniture to their liking. (Depending on the age level students may salvage old furniture from various places, or a class could do one furniture item as a group project).

2. Students will adhere their pictures onto the furniture by painting on with a clear varnish. The varnish should be applied in a thin coat.

3. The furniture should be covered with 2-3 additional coats of varnish (one coat at a time, wait until dry to apply each additional coat).

4. Hard to varnish places, like metal legs could be painted for additional design.

*This lesson could be adapted to a small piece of wood. Students could paint their collage of items onto the smaller piece of wood and attach a string for hanging.

Adaptations:
Students could paint a piece of furniture instead of decorating it by collage.
Students could used thumbtacks and cardboard to discover the use of wood & decorative rivet work.

Extensions:
This lesson could be used in conjunction with other lessons related to looking at furniture and other functional objects that appear in various cultures or time-periods. Chairs have specific meaning in different cultures; and have various functions.

African Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts • www.umfa.utah.edu

Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Divination Bag — *Yoruba, Nigeria*

Yoruba, Nigeria
Divination Bag
Glass beads, cardboard and cloth
Purchased with funds from the M. Bell Rice Fund, the John Preston & Mary Elizabeth Brockbank Creer Memorial Fund and the Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1994.003.002

The Yoruba

The Yoruba people are one of Africa's largest and most prolific art-producing groups. They live in southwestern Nigeria, and in southeastern and central Benin (formerly Dahomey). The Yoruba have a strong sense of cultural identity, partly due to their allegiance to two urban centers: Oyo, the source of political power; and the holy city of Ife where, according to myth, land first emerged from the primordial waters. Yoruba cultural unity is illustrated by an art style which, despite local variations, remains consistent throughout their geographic area.

Yoruba artistic forms present a rich and highly diverse array of image which are primarily dedicated to religious use. Orisha [òrìsà - o-ree-shah] is the generic title for a god or a deified ancestor. The orishas are natural forces that must be dealt with; they are not inherently good or evil. Each great orisha seems to have been the divinity of one of the clans and its founding father before becoming the object of general worship due to the particular power attributed to him or her. Lesser orisha seem to have been deified ancestors or heroes. In general groups of devotees are organized around each orisha or groups of orishas. "Trance possession" or the belief that the deity can enter into a worshiper is a traditional feature of Yoruba religion. Most orishas or gods are not represented in visible form. Those few who are represented are often depicted through a variety of costumes, masks, figures and other objects used by the members of groups devoted to them. Privately owned objects are used in divination and serve the cult of twins, who are considered minor deities. Other works are created for the sheer pleasure and prestige that comes from owning art.

Yoruba religion was greatly influential in the New World where thousands of Yoruba people were sent as slaves. In Brazil, Haiti, Trinidad and Cuba the pantheon of Yoruba gods along with their rites, beliefs, dances, music and myths survive intact within new religious forms. The most well known is voodoo [from "vodu" a word in the

Fon language of Benin which is equivalent to "orisha"]. Voodoo is actually a complex of religious ideas which varies from one region to another. A voodoo or orisha who is the principal deity in one sanctuary might be a secondary one in a neighboring sanctuary. In the New World Shango is better known as Xevioso, Ogun as Gu, Eshu as Legba and Ifa as Fa or Afa but they are still surrounded by groups of followers who express their devotion to a particular orisha through rituals and traditions greatly derived from the Yoruba people.

Gods in the Yoruba Pantheon:

Olorun [aw-LAW-roon - "owner of the sky"]:, the Supreme Being, who cannot be represented in person due to the fact that he is the sum-total of existence. Also known as Olodumare [Olódùmarè, o-LO-doo-mah-RAY - "owner of endless space"].

Eshu [ay shoo]:, the mischievous god of chance and messenger of the gods, who wears a long curving cap.

Ogún (Oduduwa): is the god of iron and war; protector and patron of brass casters, ironworkers, warriors and others who use iron tools. He is considered the legendary found of the sacred city of Ife. Ownership of the special ceremonial iron and brass pokers ["iwana ogun"] is restricted to senior artisans and war chiefs.

Oko [O-KO]: is god of agriculture.

Olokun [O-LO-koon]:, the god of purity and of the sea, is the supreme god.

Obatala (Orisala, Orisha-nla): is protector of the town gates and patron of the physically deformed. He is a creative coworker of Olokun.

Oro: is the god who taught man to use the bullroarer ["oro"], a flat, oval-shaped wooden object that makes a high pitched sound when whirled in a circular motion. Traditionally, members of the cult of Oro delivered execution sentences on persons guilty of exceptionally violent crimes. They announced their decision by surrounding the house of the accused and whirling bullroarers. Ceremonial versions of the bullroarer are large and often decorated with carved figures.

Orunmila:, oracular deity of the Ifa diving system.

Oshun:, wife of Shango, is a healer and mother goddess.

Osanyin:is the god of herbalism. His priests or herbalists, who treat the sick and protect them against witchcraft, own staffs of iron surmounted with birds ["opa osanyin"].

Shango [Sàngó, shahn-GO]:, the god of thunder and lightning, whose power is symbolized by the double ax. According to oral tradition, Shango was the fourth king of the ancient Yoruba city of Oyo-Ile.

Shokpona: is the earth.

Divination is the practice of foretelling the future based on the belief that the future is predetermined. From this perspective all things, however casual or accidental they might appear, have significance, and it is believed that the pattern of coming events can be read from them by those who are trained in de-coding their messages. Divination has been found world wide in some form from the earliest period of man's history.

In Africa, divination may be used to identify the ancestor whose soul has been reborn in a child, to uncover the destiny of a person, or to choose between candidates for chief, but its most frequent use is to find the cause of disease or communal disharmony. Divination takes various forms in Africa, some involving observation of the relationship between objects while others are based on the presence of a divining spirit that takes possession of the person of the diviner and speaks through him or her.

Among the Yoruba, Ifa [ee-FAH] is the diving system precede over by Orunmila, god of divination, who determines a person's fate. To ascertain the causes and remedies for any perplexing human situation, his priests or diviners use a number of carved divination instruments; trays ["opon ifa"], cups, lidded bowls or bags ["agere ifa"] in which the palm nuts are kept, small ivory heads in the likeness of Eshu, companion of Ifa ["ela" or "irin ifa"], which are placed near the diviner's tray and ivory tappers ["iro ifa"] used to strike the tray to summon Ifa's attention. Ifa is the eldest son of Olorun and is also known as Orunmila ["the sky knows who will prosper"].

The number four is the most significant in Yoruba culture. There are four directions or "corners of the world." In Yoruba mythology, it is believed that there are four gates from the outer world to the earth. There are four major deities - Shango, Obatala, Orunmilia and Oduduwa. There are four days in a Yoruba week, each day dedicated to one of the major deities. Other sacred numbers are multiples of four with sixteen[4 to the power of two] and 256 [four to the power of 4] being the operational numbers for the Ifa diving system. The diviner holds sixteen palm nuts in his left hand and scoops up as many as he can with his right. This is done several times with a notation of a single or double line being made depending on whether one or two nuts remain in his hand. If another number of nuts remains no notation is made. This process is repeated until there are two columns of notation with four notations in each column. The left column is considered female and the right male. Given the randomness of the notations each column has sixteen possible variations. Each of these column arrangements is called an "odu" or "road of Ifa." Each "odu" is connected to a series of verses that deal with real problems who which are phrased in enigmatic language that the client must interpret in the light of his problem.

For more information on the Yoruba and their numbering system, including a more complete description of Ifa divination see Section Six, particularly Chapter 16 in *Africa Counts* by Claudia Zaslavsky, Prindle, Weber & Schmidt, Inc. Boston, MA, 1973, ISBN 87150-160-0.

Divination Bag
Beaded Bag Lesson Plan

written by Sue Tice

Objectives:

-Students will learn about the Yoruba people of Africa.
-Students will learn about divination.
-Students will create their own divination bag.

Anticipatory Set:

A. Pictures of beaded objects (or the objects themselves from various cultures; e.g. Native American, African, etc.).
B. Have supplies for project out on a table along with a sample project.
C. Show slide of Yoruba Divination Bag.

Procedure:
A. Before talking about the slide, give some background about the Yoruba people (see information on slide and pull age/grade-appropriate information for your class - this could be expanded to a world history/social studies lesson and become cross-curricular).

B. Explain divination (the practice of foretelling the future based on the belief that the future is predetermined) and how it has been found worldwide in some form from the earliest period of human history. Again, see the information on the slide and pull age/grade-appropriate information for your class - I would, however, be sure to include the information regarding the significance of the number four and its connection to Yoruba mythology. This, again, could be a cross-curricular opportunity as regards Greek, Roman and other mythologies you may be studying. This will also be good information to have when considering their own stories (see D. 1.).

C. Show the slide of the Divination Bag.
- Discuss its function to hold items used in divination.
- Initiate discussion about the designs on the bag. Relate it to art elements (line, shape, color, texture) and how the Yoruba used those things without being formally schooled in them. Discuss how knowing the art elements gives us a way to discuss and evaluate art.
- Discuss stylization (simplification of recognizable objects).

D. Creating personal divination bags
- Have students write a short story foretelling the future (either personal or global). Again, this provides a cross-curricular opportunity.
- Draw a stylized picture to illustrate the story which will become the design for their divination bag.

From here, this plan can take a variety of directions depending on age/grade, time available, budget/supplies.

A, BROWN BAG AND PAINT LESSON PLAN (good for younger students)

Supplies:

brown paper bags
acrylic paints
markers
glue
beads (optional)

Procedure:
1. Cut the bigger sides of brown paper bags into rectangles.
2. Crumple the paper, then iron. This is optional but it makes the paper look more like fabric.
3. Fold up one side to three inches from the end.
4. Fold over the three inch flap.
5. Using pencil, draw design onto bag.
6. Using acrylic paints and/or markers add color.
7. Glue on colored beads in appropriate places. You can use any size from tiny seed beads up to pony beads. This is optional depending on your budget. An idea for low budget beads is to use a hole punch to create flat "beads" to glue on.
8. Glue edges of bag together.
9. Display bags and stories together.

B. APPLIQUÉ BEADWORK LESSON PLAN

Supplies:

fabric (leather, suede, ultra-leather, ultra-suede, felt, etc.)
beading needles (size 10 is suggested, be sure needles are the correct size for the beads you choose)
sewing needles (sharps)
Nymo (or other nylon thread)
embroidery hoops or stretcher bars and tacks
seed beads in a variety of colors (size 10 is suggested)

Procedure:
1. Cut fabric into a rectangle (budget and time usually determines size).
2. Hem edges if necessary (leather and the like won't need to be hemmed).
3. Trace approved design (I like to look at the stories and designs first and approve them or make suggestions for change before letting students use them).
4. Use carbon paper to transfer the design onto the fabric.
5. Stretch design in an embroidery hoop or tack to stretcher bars (frame).
6. Thread two needles - One beading needle and One Sewing needle - with a double strand of Nymo, knot the ends.
7. Begin with the beading needle. Bring it from the back to the front of the stretched material at a logical starling point. String enough beads on the thread to cover several inches of the design. Now bring the second needle up from the back of the fabric between the first and second beads. Go back through

the fabric completing the tacking of the first thread with the second thread between the first and second beads. (see illustration 1.). The remaining beads are secured the same way but in intervals of three or four beads between tacks.

8. Appliqué is done from the outside in. So, start at the outside of any design, do whole outline and then begin to work your way in.
9. When either thread is running out, pull it through to the back of the fabric and knot.
10. Re-thread and continue.
11. When the appliqué is completed, release the fabric and sew the bag together. DO NOT IRON over the beads to flatten the fabric - the beads will melt.
12. Display the bags together with the stories.

LOOM-WOVEN BEADWORK LESSON PLAN

Supplies:

fabric (leather, Suede, ultra-leather, ultra-suede, felt, etc.)
cotton/poly thread
Nymo (or other nylon thread)
sturdy, shallow box (such as a shoe box lid, candy box lid, tin box)
beading needles (correct size for the beads you choose)
seed beads of various colors
masking tape
graph paper (10 squares to the inch)
beeswax

Procedure:

1. Cut a bag from leather, suede, ultra-leather, ultra-suede, or other fabric (as in the previous plan). Don't sew the sides together yet. Set bag aside until beadwork is completed.

2. Charts (Patterns): Using graph paper (10 squares to the inch), fill in your design. If students have never done loom-woven beading before, I wouldn't have them make each design any more than 11 to 15 beads across (each square represents one bead). They will either be making several strips of the same design or they will need to draw several different designs to make to complete the whole picture. Example: People dancing because rain ended drought and plants are growing.
Tip: Charts are read left to right, top to bottom.

3. Warping the loom: You will use the sturdy, shallow box as the loom. This cuts down on expense and provides a place to have the beads as you work. The warp is the thread that goes on the loom before weaving can begin. Refer to the charted picture. Each vertical line represents one warp thread. The warp count will be three more than the number of beads across the pattern. (example: 10 beads will have 13 warp threads). This is because the outside edges of your project will have two warp threads treated as one. This adds strength and durability to the outside edges. Tape the end of the cotton/poly thread to the underneath of the box. Wrap the thread around the box the number of times necessary, then cross the end of the warp with the beginning of the warp and tape the warp threads to the bottom of the box. BE SURE TO HAVE EVEN AND TAUT TENSION.

4. Method: Thread your beading needle with a length of nylon thread (about 2-3 feet). Do not double the thread and do not knot the end. Wax the length of it by running it through a cake of beeswax. This helps to keep the thread from raveling and tangling. Holding the loom horizontally, lie the end of the thread to the left side of the warp closest to you. This is the only knot you will make while you are weaving.

Reading from left to right across the top of your pattern, pick up the beads on the needle. Slide them to the knot. Next, pass the needle and thread carrying the strung beads under the warp threads. With a finger from your other hand, push each bead up in between two warp threads. (Remember that each edge has two warp threads treated as one.)

When the entire row is in place, return the needle through the beads above the warp threads to secure the row of beads. Each row is worked the same way.

When there's only about three inches of thread left, go back one row and run the thread back the entire length of that previous row, then halfway through the row before that, cutting the thread flush with the top of the beads. Put a new length of thread on the needle, wax it and sew it through two to three rows of beads. This will secure the thread without having to make a knot. At the end of the pattern, end the thread as described.

5. Binding Off and Finishing: Masking tape is good for binding off a bead weaving project at each end. While the completed piece is still on the loom, wrap a piece of masking tape around the warp threads at each end close to the first and last row of beads. Cut the warp threads where they emerge from the masking tape. Fold the tape behind the strip of beads.

Once the project is bound, either set it aside with the cut fabric and make however many other bead-woven strips necessary to finish the proposed picture or whipstitch (overstitch) the bead weaving to the cut fabric that was set aside earlier before proceeding with other bead weaving. Time being a factor may limit the amount of bead weaving that can be done for this project. (As a reference, after learning the process, my students (high school) can bead weave a small strip in less than a week. I did bead weaving with a fourth grade class and they took about three weeks to complete their beaded strips but did not work on them dally. A large complicated piece will obviously take longer.)

6. Once all the bead woven strips are sewn onto the fabric, sew the sides of the fabric together to create the finished bag.

7. Display the bags and stories together.

Student Assessments

Story (does it foretell the future, good writing technique)
Drawn interpretation (does it fit the story, is it stylized)
Artwork (was the drawing followed, directions followed, good craftsmanship)

Questions for Observation

Did they enjoy the project?
What was the best part?
How well do they think they did?
Could anything have been done differently, either by them or by changing the assignment?
Would they recommend it to next year's class?

African Art

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Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Goli Mask — *Baulé, Ivory Coast*

Baulé, Ivory Coast
Goli or Guli Mask
Wood and pigment
Ulfert Wilke Collection purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum, Museum # 1982.001.001

The Baulé:

The Baulé live in a stratified society where the artist is held in high esteem. The origin of the Baulé as a distinct group can be traced to a migration of dissenters who left the Ashanti kingdom in 1730. Led by a queen, Awura Polu, they settled in and around the Bandama River which is their present home.

This mask is called either "guli" which means son or "goli" which means messenger. The spirit depicted by this mask is both. As the son of Nyamie, who is goddess of the sky and protector of the Baulé people, he is also her messenger. Goli, a protective deity who devours demons, is embodied in a stylized buffalo mask, painted white and red. This mask belongs to the category of headdress mask; that is, a mask meant to be worn atop a person's head. A long cape made of dried grass or raffia was attached to the bottom of the mask and completely covered the wearer's body. The person who wore this mask would run through the village at night accompanied by a "sound effects" person who reproduced the buffalo-like roar of the Goli. This incarnation of Goli as Kakaguyé or Spirit of the Dead has the power to make women barren. However, during festivals his appearance takes on a kinder aspect when Gouli the red and Pondo Kakou the black appear and indulge in mockery and the ridicule of everybody's faults.

In a special dance called Goli that symbolizes the social order, eight masks appear in pairs signifying junior or senior males or females. The animal helmet mask shown in the slide signifies the senior male person. The junior male person is represented by a disk-shaped mask while the female personages are represented by small, naturalistic face masks.

African Art

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Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Kifwebe Mask — *Songye, Zaire*

Songye, Zaire
Kifwebe Mask
Wood with polychrome,
The Owen Mort, Jr. Collection of African Art
Museum # 1985.052.788

The Songye

Like their fellow Bantu speakers, the Chokwe, the prime generators of art among the Songye are the initiation rites that mark the passage of boys from adolescence to manhood. Masks, figures and costumes, along with spectacular theatrical effects are part of these initiations, that often function as a didactic technique to instruct the boys in their culture and in proper manly behavior.

Songye masks are expressive, strongly geometric (almost cubist in form), with bright polychrome decoration accentuating the lines of the carving. Among the best known of Luba anthropomorphic masks are the Kifwebe, that belong to associations of Luba-Hemba dancers. As members of the larger Luba group, the Songye also use Kifwebe masks. The Kifwebe mask is made for the Bwadi ya (or ka) Kifwebe association; a type of policing society which provided a means of controlling social behavior and neutralizing disruptive elements within the group. The Kifwebe mask embodies supernatural forces. The members of the the Bwadi ya Kifwebe Society use it to ward off disasters or any threat. It also had the capacity to heal through its supernatural power. Substances rubbed on the masks were believed to activate forces that would transform the wearer into something that was neither human nor spirit.

These masks appeared at the installation and death of chiefs, at the initiation rites of young men, when they represent the spirits of the ancestors, and at other initiation rites of the association as well at a whole range of occasions including punishments, warfare and public works. After 1905 they were also used at receptions for dignitaries. There is great variety and symbolic meanings of Kifwebe masks; more than thirty different mask names have been recorded. Several have animal names while other masks have names of illnesses like leprosy or names denoting natural phenomena like the rainbow ("nkongolo").

The museum possesses two Kifwebe masks. The Songye Kifwebe chosen for reproduction has a series of lines carved into it which followed the planes of the mask as is typical of all Kifwebe. In the Songye version the lines are widely spread forming large areas of color as opposed to the Luba Kifwebe where the lines are closely parallel presenting a more psychedelic effect. The stripes, painted white (pemba), red (nkula) and black (busila), represent the earth and the underworld whence the spirits came.

Goli and Kifwebe Masks
Lesson Plan

written by Laura Harris

Art Concepts:
Long ago people in Africa made and wore masks for special reasons.
African Masks often used a symmetric design. You can make a symmetric design too.

Lesson Idea Number 1
Cut out two African Masks below and place them over the head of a doll (the size of a Barbie.)

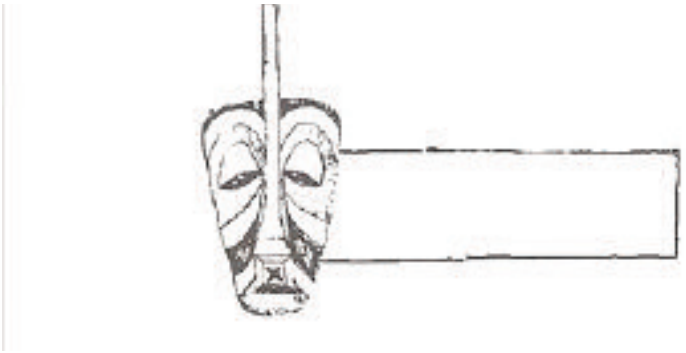

Figure 1

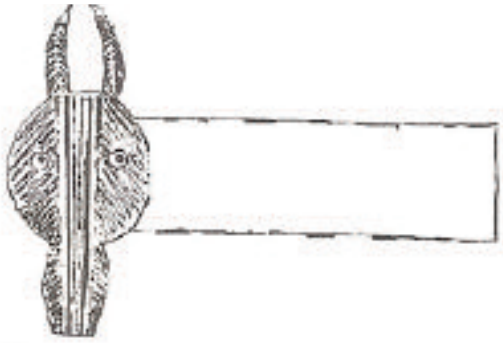

Figure 2

Show the students that the mask would go over the head and that the people could look out through the eye holes. You could even act out a buffalo masked doll running through the village (as described below for Goli Mask)

Read about each mask.

Art Activity Project:

Tell the class: "This is how some people dressed up for special occasions in Africa long ago. Do we dress up for special occasions today? When? Draw a picture of someone all dressed up in their best clothes."

Lesson Idea Number 2

Tell the class: "I am going to show you two special slides. They are both from Africa. They are both very old. As you look at the slides, I will ask you some questions. Please write down your answers on your paper."

Show slide of Kifwebe mask and ask them questions about what they see such as "How many colors do you see? Draw the shape of the eye. Draw the shape of the mouth...."

Show slide of Goli mask and ask other questions such as "What are the two things sticking out from the top of its head? What do you think it's made of? Draw the shape of its mouth...."

Compare/Contrast questions are really wonderful with these two slides. For example, you could ask, "Write down five things that are the same about these two masks." and "Name five things that are different."

By looking at both slides, help the students see that the design is symmetric on both masks. (This is common for many African Masks.)

Figure 3
This example is symmetric down the middle.

Figure 4
This example is not symmetric.

Art Activity Idea:

Tell the class: "We are going to try and do something similar to the Africans. I don't have a tree we can chop down to carve a mask, but I am going to give you a piece of paper with a beginning shape for your African mask. Let's try doing the same idea as in Africa. You may do anything you like with your mask but you must follow one rule: it must be symmetric. (Other rule ideas: pencil and crayons, add horns,....)

On the next page is a beginning shape you can copy for your class. (Some students may like the option of being given a black piece of paper so that they can come up with their own shape.)

When they are done, let them cut out the eyes and mouth and try it on their own face.

African Art

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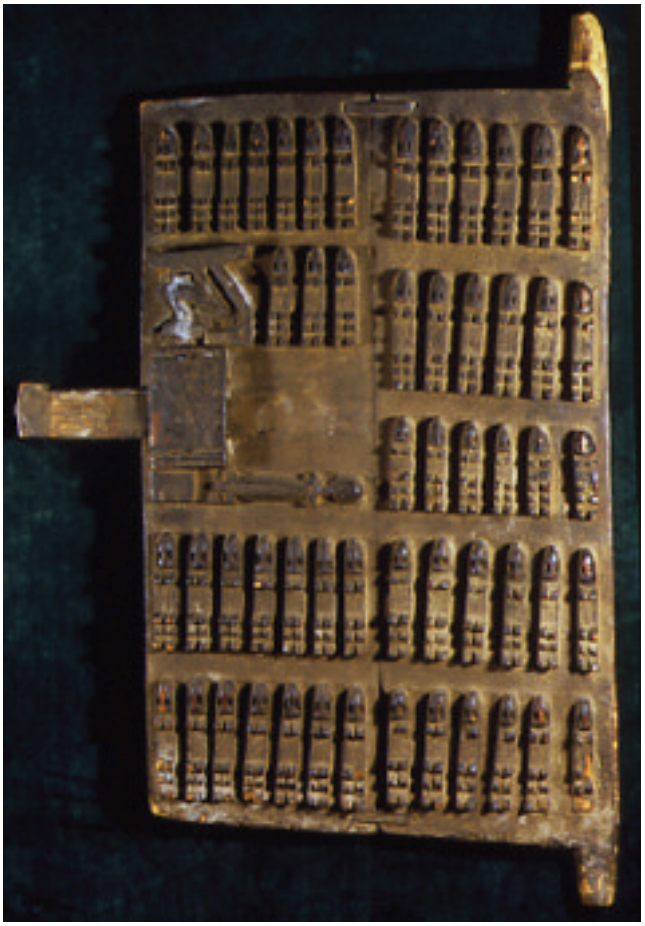
Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Granary Door — *Dogon, Mali*



Dogon, Mali
Granary Door
Wood
Ulfert Wilke Collection purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum, Museum # 1983.001.004

The Dogon

The Dogon (doh'-gahn) inhabit the West African area of Mali, where they constitute about 4% of the total population. They live by subsistence farming, mainly of grain crops. Their political structure is based on deification of the Earth. Accordingly, their villages are under the leadership of ritual headmen whose duty it is to maintain good relations between the people and the Earth. Descent is patrilineal, and marriage residence is with the father's family. Polygynous marriage is permitted but does not predominate. Members of an outcast group work as blacksmiths and wood and leather craftsmen.

The Dogon possess a rich mythology with a symbolic interpretation of the universe in which all persons are described as both male and female in body and in psyche. Their highly developed art forms include representational wood masks and figures. Ancestor worship is important in traditional Dogon religion. Among the Dogon, the ritual system integrates life-cycle rituals with vocational cults; these in turn are related to a complex cosmological myth.

Dogon Creation Myth

The Dogon have a long myth of the creation of the world from a cosmic egg. The cosmic egg originally contained twins who were to become perfect androgynous beings. Because one of the twins broke out of the egg prematurely and this plan was thwarted, humans were forced to live with the imperfection of two sexes; males and females come together in sexual union in imitation of the archetype of perfection of the original creation. Similar creation stories centered around egg-like shapes are found in other cultures and times. A story in Plato's Symposium relates that the first beings were round entities. Their perfection and strength caused the gods to fear their power. Thus, Zeus cut the creatures in half; each half then sought its other half in order to restore the lost unity.

This small door once covered the entrance to a cylindrical structure used by the Dogon people for grain storage. The door is covered with fifty-five ancestor images, each carved in simple form in accentuated symmetry. The ancestor images protect the grain which is the source of life and well-being for the Dogon. Even the elaborate lock is carved from wood.

Granary Door
Lesson Plan

written by Sue Walker

Grade Level: Elementary

Art Concepts:

Develop linear designs and geometric shape patterns.
Determine composition utilizing balance and visual weight of the objects.
Draw proportional figures.

Student Objective:

Each student will create a "refrigerator magnet" that will resemble the Dogon Granary Door using their own family members as ancestor guards.

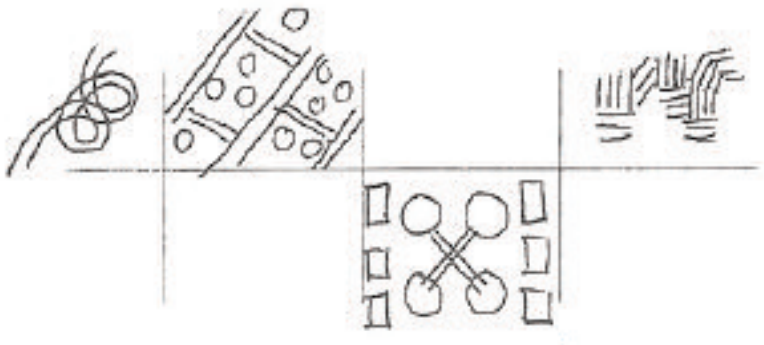
Materials:

markers
colored pencils
tempera paint graph paper
white glue
white or colored paper
drawing paper tag board or card stock
stapler scissors
self-sticking magnets, enough for entire class

Rationale:

The Dogon carved figures of their ancestors on the granary door. One of our comparisons to the granary door is our refrigerator. We, too, could symbolically protect our source of life by creating a plaque of our ancestors to place on our "door."

Preparation:



Before beginning to work on tag board, each student should explore creating spiral and rectangular patterns on practice paper. Have them create at least three to four designs of each. The Dogon used these ideas to represent nature and culture (people).

Discuss color. What colors do you want to use to express yourself. I talk of pallets: a range of colors they want to use, such as pastels for soft, complimentary for bold, traditional colors to be like the traditional people, etc. My kids seem to understand that concept well. They seem to connect some basic emotions and likes and dislikes to colors. At the least, they are giving color some fore thought.

Procedure:

1. Use crayon to apply designs to a 9 x 12 piece of tag board. Consider borders, columns and row, etc. Then use tempera paint to wash over crayon. It gives a nice etched look. Set tag board aside.

2. Teach about proportion. There are many good sources to teach proportion. Most basic "how to draw" books talk at length on the subject. They could show you far better than I. With my first graders, I want to keep it simple. I give them a silhouette or the stencil (figure) I tell them to trace it on graph paper. How many squares high does it go? How many squares wide does it go? If this is a six foot adult, how many squares would a three foot kid be? They block in 1/2 of the area. Then we look at the head - it is three squares high. So how many squares would the kid's head be? Etc.

3. Have the kids draw their family members. You decide immediate or extended. I push and push for visual detail. How do you know it is her/him? Because he wears glasses. What kind? Etc.

4. Cut out and laminate

5. Discuss composition and balance with the kids. The Dogon were very orderly and symmetrical with their placement of the figures. Show examples of what happens when you put all the figures at the bottom of the paper, or at the left hand side, etc. How can you place them so that the weight of the plaque looks balanced? That does not have to mean in the middle.... I would add a small accordion shape paper old to each ancestor (figure), then attach to tag board. This would give the piece a three-dimensional effect. You may simply want to glue the figures to the tag board.

6. Place self-sticking magnets on back of the plaque.

African Art

Utah Museum of Fine Arts • www.umfa.utah.edu

Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

King's Headdress — *Yoruba, Nigeria*

Yoruba, Nigeria
King's Headdress
Basketry framework with beads
The Owen D. Mort Jr. Collection of African Art

The Yoruba

The town of Ife (ee'-fay) in southwestern Nigeria was the seat of a powerful Yoruba kingdom from the eleventh to the seventeenth century. Noted for their long tradition of urban residence, the Yoruba trace their origins from Ife, where the first of their many independent kingdoms had been established by the twelfth century. Ife remains the sacred city of the Yoruba people where, according to tradition, the god Oduduwa created the Earth and established himself as oni (king). All later oni are traditionally believed to be descended from the mythological ruler of Ife, which is an important Yoruba cult center. Ife is also known for the many magnificent art objects in copper alloy, terra-cotta, and stone that have been excavated there. The most famous of these are naturalistic portrait heads of ancient kings, cast in metal by the lost-wax process, that date from the twelveth to the fourteenth century. Scholars have suggested that these heads were probably attached to wooden effigies of the dead leaders and used in second burial ceremonies.

Traditionally, many Yoruba are farmers, growing maize, manioc, and yams for subsistence and cocoa for export; others are artisans or traders. Descent and inheritance are traced through the male line. Marriage is polygynous; divorce is common. Traditional religion includes gods of the sky and earth, nature and ancestral spirits, divination, and secret societies. Many Yoruba are now Christian or Muslim. Yoruba art forms include carved wood masks, statuary, doors, and house posts; terra-cotta work; and cast-bronze and forged iron sculpture.

Oba or oni were the names given to the kings of the various Nigerian kingdoms. He was considered the living representative of the royal ancestors whose line stretched back into the ancient past. Through his performing of the rituals at the royal ancestral altars he ensured the continuing welfare of his people. In the past the oba was thought to be so sacred that his ordinary subjects could not look upon his face. For this reason, all crowns that an oba wore had a veil of beads that would cover his face when he went out in public. Inside the high crown would be place protective amulets and other substances that were thought to protect the king.

King's Headdress
Lesson Plan

written by Jodi Iwasaki

Objective:

Students will cut out a headdress or crown from a manila folder; draw simple objects and outline them onto the headdress; then glue a variety of beans onto the headdress; stapling folder to form the headdress.

Elements of Art: Texture, Line & Pattern

Utah State Core Curriculum: Visual Art Standard 1000 K-12

Materials:
pencil & paper
manila Folders
stapler
glue
a variety of dried beans

Procedure:

1. Students will trace and cut out a headdress using a manila folder. Measure the headdress to fit the students head. A "staple area" of 1 inch should be marked. (It is important to not draw or glue beans on this staple area. This space will be used to overlap the mosaic section onto the staple section and staple together.

2. Students will identify figures, signs, or objects that are important to their life; that appear in their culture and environment. They will choose two or three such objects, and draw a simple representation of the object onto the headdress.

3. Students will draw lines outlining the objects, or create abstract lines to fill in the blank spaces These lines should extend to the edges of the paper, but not onto the "staple area."

4. After students have completed drawing on the headdress, they will select a variety of beans to glue onto their outlined figures and line designs.

5. The headdress will be complete when their outlined figures and lines are covered with beans. It is suggested that simple figures or objects are chosen because of the time and intricate detail. It is suggested as a time saver, to use tempera paint to fill in the white spaces, or to glue sand as a filler or background color. It is also suggested to reinforce the crown by doubling the inside, dependent upon the weight of the beans and the height of the crown.

Variations:

Make one class headdress using an object selected from each student, have all students take turns in participating on gluing the various beans to the headdress.

A simple crown or headdress can be created by having students use oak-tag, bulletin-board boarders or heavy strips of paper cut to the size of a student's head & stapled to make a crown. Students can design and create their crown using a variety of materials. Students could easily design their own shape of a headdress.

This lesson could be used in conjunction with other lessons related to headdresses, crowns, hats i.e. What people of various cultures or time-periods wore on their heads and the significance of the head piece.

African Art

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Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Mukyeem Mask — *Kuba, Zaire*

Kuba, Zaire
Mukyeem Mask (backside of mask)
Wood, raffia, cloth, skin, beads and cowrie shells
The Owen Mort, Jr. Collection of African Art
Museum # 1985.052.815

For cultural background information on the Kuba see under the Bwoom Mask

This highly decorated mask is worn at the initiation rites to symbolizes the culture hero, Woot, who originated the royal dynasty, the political structure and most of the arts and crafts and his divine successors. The superstructure of the mask represents the trunk of an elephant which is a royal emblem. The mask may only be worn by men of royal descent. The dance using this mask marks the end of the initiation rites. This mask is associated with Kuba royalty and the myth of origin. This helmet mask is made of raffia cloth stretched on a wicker frame and decorated with fur, beads and cowries. It is customarily worn at initiation rites.

The Kuba possess some twenty masks. Most are related to the initiation ceremony. All masks belong to the king. Royal masks are called mbeyanyim ["friends of the king"]. Royal masks are sacred and no one can see them in an unfinished state particularly women and children because of the relationship of masks to the initiation. Only the king can give permission for a man to commission the making of a mask and, then, only on the condition that he knows how to dance. To be the custodian of a mask one has to have proven his ability to dance with a borrowed mask. In addition to his permission for the manufacture of a moshambwooy mask such as the Mukyeem the king also gives the pal - the "face of the mask." Most royal masks have disappeared since ordinarily the king is buried with them. During ceremonies the king will allow dancers to use his masks but they must be promptly returned to the palace. All masks are considered personal masks by the king who reclaims them on the death of their custodians.

The royal studios are within the palace. In principle the studios are forbidden to any but male members of the royal family. The king usually surveys the progress of the work, giving advice and demanding modifications. One of king's masks was changed five times before he was satisfied. The king is responsible for feeding his artists and allows them to take meat and fish to their families.

Three Principal Parts of Mukyeem Mask:

Pal amoshambwooy or the face plate. A piece of leather is used for rigidity and animal skin, either leopard or antelope, is used to provide a rich appearance. The eyebrows are made up of appliquéed rows of beads and the eye is represented by a cowry shell. The perimeter is decorated with cowry shells as is the lower part which widens out into the jaw and is decorated with hair. A wooden piece which will be the nose and mouth is made separately and attached to the center of the pal.

The ku, a neck covering of raffia is attached to the pal. Its main characteristic is the richness obtained by the field of beads with which it is decorated. The ears are attached to this part of the mask. The ku is elongated at the bottom by a piece of plain fabric.

Ikwoom or ilaambwoom is a rigid semi-circle which holds the ku in place and serves as the base for the super-structure. A sturdy framework of cane is covered with raffia cloth on which is attached beads and cowry shells with a finial of beads and cowries. Between the ikwoom and the upper part of the pal a spongy fabric is placed; here are attached the feathers which will top the mask. Ibeky - a mask ornament exclusive to moshambwooy consists of a large fabric fan supported by long iron shafts. The crown proper is covered with eagle and parrot feathers with a central band in a checkerboard pattern of black and blue. The perimeter is decorated with large eagle feathers, bands of leopard fur and cowry shells.

The assembly of the mask consist of adapting its parts to the head of the client. The various pieces are put together with the eye holes placed at the height and size which is convenient for the client. This operation is long and difficult. When the king is the client the whole procedure becomes an elaborate ceremony. Songs specifically created for this occasion are sung.

Information adapted from Joseph Cornet, f.s.c., *Art Royal Kuba*, Edizioni Sipiel Milano, Italy, 1982.

Mukyeem Mask
Lesson Plan

written by Sue Walker

Grade Level: Elementary

General Objectives:

1. Develop line designs and geometric shapes
2. Explore color and texture combinations

Student Objective:

Each student will create a helmet mask that mimics the traditions of the Mukyeem Mask by applying animal features and by blending those features with line design and geometric shapes.

Materials:

tag board or poster board
tacky glue or white glue
construction paper in brown, white, red and black (colors representing native pigments
colored paper
raffia, twine
beads, sequins, buttons
string or yarn
crushed egg shells (painted or dyed. Melted crayon produces beautiful color)
beans - green or red lentils, pinto, etc.
tempera paint
Styrofoam - from places like Pet Smart, Computer City, etc. Any place that unpacks breakable items. I call ahead and ask if I can have it before they throw it out. People are generally helpful when they know it is for education.
toilet paper and paper towel rolls
scissors
markers
crayons
stapler
tape

This is a very long list of possibilities. You may not have the time or energy to pursue all the items on this list. I usually send a note home asking for found objects or donations. Sometimes I call a mon and ask her to make some phone calls to other moms and to businesses. I call businesses for lots of donations. Most seem to help in some way. But if time, money and energy are not real resources for you (right now) then break down the list to on-hand classroom materials.

Procedure:

1. Show slide of mask

2. Give background information to kids
3. Discuss where the Kuba got their materials to make a mask. Some questions to ask are: Where would we get ours? Why did the Kuba pick an elephant, a chameleon, a monkey and a leopard to be part of the mask? What animal attributes would you want? Do you see shape? Do you see line? Do you see symmetry?

Art Making Project:

The Face Plate (pal amoshambwooy)

1. Trace pattern in figure 1 and have the kids cut it out. You may want to have your kids draw an oval head shape from the tag board.
2. Cut out eyes, mouth and nose still attached to the top.
3. Cut 2 inch slit in all four corners. Cross slits and staple for 3-d effect.
4. Geometric Shapes - fold paper for duplicate shape and cut out exaggerated facial features: nose, mouth, eyes, ears, cheeks, brow, etc.
5. Appliqué onto mask
6. Apply objects in linear line around mask; forming patterns and utilizing geometric facial features.
7. Add raffia or twine in hair-like fashion.
8. Add animal features and patterns to mask. Use Styrofoam or cardboard to form features. If you are at a loss as to how to incorporate animals, check out face painting books. They have tons of ideas.

The Ku (neck covering)
Some kids may want to add a collar. Have them emphasize an animal quality or pattern.

The Ikwoom or Ilaambwoom (back of the mask)
This is a piece that fits around the back of the head and holds the mask in place. The Kuba artist makes this pieces a 3-dimensional semi-circle. We will decorate a strip of paper with line, pattern or animals markings.

This can be a long project. I would explain to my students that in the traditional culture it takes may hours of concentration to achieve such a beautiful mask. We will take our time to do a quality job. Each unit of the mask can be done at a different time and combined at still another session.

Extensions:

Art History: Artists like Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were fascinated by the work of African artists. Show works by Picasso and/or Braque and ask your students to compare and contrast with African Art.

Communities: compare village and city.

Cooking: cook dishes based on African recipes in class.

Drama: create a dance and/or ceremony using the masks. Act out animal movements, sounds, behaviors, etc.

Field Trips: visit the African art collection at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts. Visit a wood carving or wood sign-making business.

Geography: Where is Zaire? What is its climate?

Literature: There are some great African folktales. I found many in my school and many great bibliographies in activity books. Read African folktales to your students.

Reading: Have them read African folktales. Have them write their own folktales.

Science: What is a rain forest? Explore with your students the rain forest environment in which the Kuba live.

African Art

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Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Male Head — *Nok, Nigeria*

Nok, Nigeria
Male Head, c. second century AD
Terra cotta
Purchased with funds from the Marriner S. Eccles Foundation for the Marriner S. Eccles Masterworks Collection
Museum # 1995.024.001

Sculpture

Sculpture is generally considered Africa's greatest achievement in the visual arts, but, although sculpture is found in many parts of Africa, this medium of expression occurs with the greatest frequency in western and central Africa. The majority of sculptures are of wood, but objects are also made in metal, stone, terra-cotta, mud, beadwork, ivory and other materials. The terra-cotta sculptures associated with the Nok culture represent the earliest known sculpture yet found in sub-Saharan Africa and seems to have paved the way for the tradition of superb portrait terra cottas and bronzes that later developed at the holy city of Ife in western Nigeria.

In addition to masks examples of sculpture include figural representations such as power figures and the statues of ancestors and kings as well as objects of daily use such as cups and boxes.

Nok Culture

Nigeria is part of the Central Sudanic Stylistic Region. Nigeria is unusual in that its modern-day inhabitants either settled there very early in its history or adapted to the long established traditions they found there. The first objects connected to the early Nok culture were discovered on the site of a tin mine. They were identified as Nok by the archaeologist Bernard Fagg in 1943. Radiocarbon dating has place the original pieces to between 500 BC and AD 200. Terra-cotta sculptures from c.600 BC to AD 200, associated with the Nok culture, have been unearthed over a 300-mile stretch of uplands in the southern part of the region. The Nok tradition represents the earliest known sculpture yet found in sub-Saharan Africa and seems to have paved the way for the tradition of superb portrait terra-cottas and bronzes that later developed at the holy city of Ife in western Nigeria. The art of Ife in turn inspired and stimulated the later Benin and Yoruba artforms.

The pieces of sculpture associated with the Nok culture seem to represent a mature, developed style. They show none of the traces of tentativeness usually associated with a beginning phase of an artistic tradition but rather a stylistic unity characteristic of an established one.

The styles to be found in the art of the Nok swings between an almost abstract stylization to that of a more naturalistic mode. This head exhibit naturalism but in a minimal fashion. It is the earliest example in Africa of human figural sculpture on a scale approaching life-size. From the nature of their breaks near the neck many of the head seem to have been part of or destined to be part of a body. Looking to later cultures such as the Benin where naturalistic modeled bronze heads were part of royal ancestral altars it could be hypothesized that these heads might have been part of the art objects connected with royalty and the worship of the ancestors. s of now there is insufficient evidence to do more than hypothesize from later cultures that developed in Nigeria.

Male Head
Lesson Plan

written by Ila Devereaux

Clay figures unearthed in the mid-twentieth-century provide a cultural link even though their origins are obscure. In Nok, Nigeria certain terra cotta heads-named after the small village on a northern plateau in western Africa-represent the earliest known sculptures, sculpted and used from c. 600 BC to AD 200.

Grade Level: Sixth grade

Visuals:
Slide of Nok Head
Three Slides of Kenya - Maasai taken from *The Art of Africa* by Shirley Glubok (New York: Harper & Row)

Materials:
Modeling Clay - earthen gray or terra cotta
Clay tools
Paper bowl
Antique Glaze -reddish-brown tones

Preparation and Subject Integration:

Students should develop an awareness of the stylistic differences between ancient African tribes. The Maasai tribe in Kenya is compared with the Nigerian, Liberian, and tribes within the Central Sudanic Stylistic Region. Tribal features, customs, and beliefs will be learned as Visual Art is integrated with Social Studies.

Some artistic practices include the use of bright colors. Such colors, especially red, oranges, and blues were used by the Maasai to cover their bodies during tribal ceremonies, as they portrayed the importance of contrasting themselves with the brown tones of earth. The Yoruba often decorate doors and walls with beautiful carved wooden reliefs. Wild animals, human figures, and mythical beings are popular subjects. Some ceremonial masks weigh as much as eighty pounds, while others, usually worn by women and children, are small. Some hide just the face. Others cover the entire head. Some are used once and thrown away following a ceremony. Others are sculpted with great care.

At present the origin of the Nok culture or links from this to later tribal societies has not been discovered. Terra cotta heads were discovered in 1944 during mining operations. These clay figurines had been buried centuries before, and are the oldest known pieces of African sculpture. The male head dates to shortly after the time of Christ. It can only be assumed that the head portrays an important and actual person within the Nok society, because of the sensitively modeled clay, the elaborate headdress, and the inclusion of ornaments. In other civilizations such ancient terra cottas were used as tomb furniture and part of public or domestic shrines. These sculptures paved the way for the tradition of portrait terra cottas and bronzes that later developed in the city of Ife in western Nigeria. The art of Ife inspired and stimulated the later Benin and Yoruba artforms.

The sculptures will take several sessions to complete. Students will preplan by studying and drawing a head before molding one from clay. If terra cotta clay is used glazing is not necessary, otherwise earthen clay can be glazed with a flat reddish-brown finish. Kiln-firing will complete the procedure.

Procedure:

1. After wedging clay, roll and hand build a clay face, fashioned after the style of a Nok head sculpture

2. Form, roll, and symmetrically shape the clay over the outside of a paper bowl, evenly cutting away the outside edges.

3. Keep the sculpture from drying out by spraying it with water and keeping it covered with plastic between working sessions.

4. Score the damp clay and use slip to add facial features, a headdress, or decorative ornaments.

5. Allow the clay to dry and kiln fire as greenware.

6. Use fine sandpaper to smooth away rough edges.

7. Using a reddish-brown antique glaze, brush the earthen-clay head with 3 coats of glaze, or leave the terra cotta head as is.

8. Thoroughly dry the sculpture and kiln fire the sculpture at cone .05.

African Art

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Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Power Figure — *Songye, Zaire*

Songye, Zaire
Power Figure, ca. 1900-1920
Wood, vegetable fiber, seed pods and antelope horn
Purchased with funds from the M. Bell Rice Fund, the John Preston & Mary Elizabeth Brockbank Creer Memorial Fund and the Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1992.050.001

Power Figures

Witchcraft and sorcery are traditionally a significant social and psychological element in many parts of Africa. Many sculptures were created to serve as protective devices or as manipulators of spiritual power. These are called power figures. A power figure is a man-made object that is believed to contain a supernatural force within it. This force can be controlled either by the maker of the power figure or by someone else who has the special knowledge of how to control its power. The maker of power figures among the Songye is called "wechi." A power figure is supposed to bring happiness to the possessor and unhappiness to his enemies.

Power figures were not used for religious worship. The figures were often specially designed to hold organic substances such as special herbs, grasses or powders along with charms or potions believed to have magical power. "Bwanga" is the name among the Songye of the symbolic "charge" inserted into the figure, usually in the crown of the head and/or the stomach. The organic materials were the source of the power within the figure and the sculpture was only a framework to hold them. The head or stomach was often enlarged and hollowed to hold packets of these powerful materials. Sometimes the legs and feet were enlarged to counterbalance the hollowed areas. Illness, accident, or other misfortunes and death were believed to be caused by the magic of some vengeful or angry person or spirit. Therefore, a priest/healer would empower his figure to guard against evil and misfortune.

Power figures are often richly decorated with amulets and other power symbols. This assures the success of the village and any activities in which they might engage. Once endowed with spiritual power via the "bwanga," amulets and other attachments, power figures are never directly handled but are carried with sticks placed under the arms. When not in use the figures are often kept in a public place so that they may guard the village.

The Songye

The Songye believe in a creator who is thought of as the first ancestor of the group. This supreme being, Efile Mokulu, created the world and receives the sprits of the dead. While no prayers or offerings are made to Efile Mokulu, his name is invoked during the preaching of sermons. The Songye believe in the existence, within themselves, of a spirit which they call "echimba." The "echimba" is that part of yourself where you think, rejoice and are sad. The Songye believe that people are composed of two parts - tulu," the body and "kikuli," the soul. Some sorcerers are said to possess a third element called the "doshi" with which they may inflict harm.

A considerable religious force is projected by sorcery and is very evident in the lives of the Songye and their art. The "nagana" or priest/healer who uses various medicines and charms to effect their cures is greatly revered by the people.

This power figure is characteristic of Songye carvings which are typically angular with almost cubist forms.

Contemporary Version of an African Power Figure Lesson Plan

written by Lorie Christiansen

History:
Show the slide of the Power Figure to the children and discuss the history behind it (see information above).

Peer Positive Power Figures:
These power figures will have similarities to the African power figures in that they will be sculpted with an emphasis on the simplified cubistic facial features and exaggerated body parts, i.e. feet, stomach or head to counter balance the hollowed out area. This area is for the "power" materials which will be positive statements about a student written by their peers.

The Sculpture: (fourth to sixth grades)

pre Lesson: form of the body, movement of joints and limbs. Proportions of facial features, bone structure of face, mask-making.

Ideas for the power figures: use Papier Maché or Clay Sculptures. Papier maché over a wire frame works well for a form that is standing.

Materials:
one block of wood per student, 2 x 4 cut in 4" lengths, for base of sculpture.
2 nails per student
2 wires approximately 20" each.
newspaper, whole pieces and half-inch strips.
paper maché paste
small water balloon size balloons
paint
paint brushes
colored paper or cardstock

Objectives:
To create a simple human form to use as a container for their power figure. Create the basic form with two wires, keeping in mind the human anatomy, and bending at the ankle, knee, hip, back, neck, shoulder, elbow and wrist.

Build upon this framework with bunched newspaper forms for the bulk of the muscles and attaching them to the frame with half-inch strips of paper and paper maché paste.

Attach the balloon (head) to the wire neck stem.

Body Building Helps: (from the feet up)

Bend a small circle at the end of each wire. Nail through this circle, attaching wires to board. Bend both ankles creating the feet. Bend both knees creating the calves. Bend both hips creating the thighs. Attach both wires together at this point twisting around each other to create the spinal column and neck. Turn both wires back down the neck, creating a loop at the top of the neck (to tie the balloon head onto). Twist wires around where shoulder area should be, creating shoulders. Bend at elbows, creating upper arm. Bend at wrists, creating forearms. Bend the end of the wire for the hands into a circle, oval or square. Trim any excess wire off or simply twist it back up the arms.

Wire frame is now read for paper maché. Add several layers of paper and past over crinkled up paper formed around wire for feet, legs and arms. Form a ball of paper for torso and layer paper maché strips attaching body to spine. Attach head securely after body is well formed. Paper maché several layers connecting the torso, neck and head. The head will be hollow inside and the flops will be cut off and flops of paper attached to serve as a lid to the head.

Final Touches and Creating Details:

Students study the look of African Art masks and power figures to get ideas for facial features. Geometrical basic features are cubistic in style. 3-D decorations on sculpture such as rolled paper or braided belt or arm bands, necklace, skirt, shirt, or loin cloth could be added now as part of sculpture or they could be separate materials added later, after sculpture is painted.

The "Peer Positive" Power

Materials:

piece of lined paper
pencil

Objectives:

The students will create a source of "Positive Power" for their peers to enable each other with the means to fill their power figure with some of the most powerful things on earth -- a good self concept and positive mental attitude.

Activity:

Instructor briefs the students again on the history of the African Power Figures and the reasons they used them and why they need the powerful substance inside the figure. SAY "We need something powerful to put into our figures to turn them into "Peer Positive Power Figures." Each student is given a piece of lined paper. They write their names at the top. Explaining that their paper will be passed around the room to each person and each person's job is to write down one sentence of why they think that person is special or one positive thing about that person. No negative statements are allowed.

After all papers have been to each student the instructor will collect all papers, proof read them before students see them, and type all the pages on single space lines. The next time the class is together the instructor will award each student with their own positive poser for their sculptures. Students will save this sheet of paper and after the sculptures are painted or decorated, the positive sentences will be cut and separated into strips and curled into coils and put into each Peer Positive Power Figure's head. This can be a powerful tool for students' self-esteem when they are feeling down about themselves of to use just as a powerful pick me up! Just take out and read a few sentences and you're cured!

Painting or Decorating:

The choice of colors used on their figures can also represent a Positive Power. The sculpture could represent the student. Each color they pick could represent a positive trait they have or would like to have. They could design their own color code on a 4 x 4 card and glue it to the bottom of the sculpture base. As a class you could make a list of positive traits that students could draw ideas from. Display the list for reference during class time.

Example of a color code: green=strength, red=kindness, blue=patience, orange= creativity, violet=peace, yellow=happy, white=truth, etc.

After the students have painted the body parts different colors, they could add details such as hair, jewelry, braided skirt, etc. Using beads, buttons, string, yarn, papers and more. The facial features could be cut out of colored cardstock or bright paper in geometrical, cubistic shapes keeping in tradition with the look of so much of the African art. Fold a crease in nose and other parts to give a 3-D form effect and glue on.

Language Arts Extension:

They could create a story or poem about their figure, telling why they chose the colors they did or how the Power Figure came to have such strong and magical powers. Let their imaginations go wild! Let the students share if they want to.

Clay Power Figures:

You could implement the basic idea and theme with clay as you could with Papier Maché. It is just a different medium with which to create the sculpture. If you worked with white clay you could easily use the color code idea and paint the ceramic figure after it has been fired. You would have to teach the children to make a scoop pot type head with a lid, and attach it to the body so there would be a hollowed-out area for the "Peer Positive Power" statements. Or, if you used the terra cotta clay, you could with a more traditional looking Power Figure. Have fun with it! And May The "Power" Be With You!

African Art

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Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Nyon Néa Mask — *Dan, Liberia & Ivory Coast*

Dan, Liberia & Ivory Coast
Nyon Néa Mask
Wood & fabric
Ulfert Wilke Collection purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1983.001.001

The Dan:

Among the Dan the cult of the ancestors is predominant. While they believe in a Creator he is only approached through intercession of the ancestors. The Poro society, which is found in some form throughout the western coast of Africa, is the most important mask-using group. The Poro of Liberia and Sierra Leone exerts its political influence in a number of chiefdoms and is involved in legal matters and in the education of boys.

Such masks are thought to be the incarnations of the spirits of the bush. The importance of a mask is in direct proportion to its size. Masks were categorized by their functions; some watched over boys during initiation while others - singers, dancers and beggars - were meant to entertain. The mask is considered the medium of contact between the earthly world and that of the spirits. In style, these masks adhere to the human face but reflect refined realism rather than naturalism.

The festival in which these masks are used takes place right after the rice harvest. Only initiates of the Poro society were permitted to wear such masks. Masks were present at public functions and life crisis ceremonies. The Nyon Néa wears a conical-shaped hat on top of her smooth oval face. The features of the néa are expressive of beauty and serenity; the ideals represented by the Mother Mask. The high, bulging forehead, prominent cheek-bones and symmetrical mouth are all features to be found in the young women of the area. The Nyon Néa is accompanied by a male counterpart, the Nyon Hiné, a cylindrical headdress adorned with cowrie shells, and a black face which is half human and half animal. The masks are accompanied by an interpreter and orchestra. The function of these masks is to bring to the initiates a sense of their second birth within the Poro. Although deconsecrated today and viewed by all villagers, these masks still evoked the beginning and end of a cycle. The presence of the hiné and néa masks during the relative prosperity after the harvest symbolizes the success of the people in diminishing the negative effects of uncontrolled nature.

African Art

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Evening for Educators

February 4, 1998

Spirit Mask — *Ashira/Bapunu, Ogowe River, Gabon*

Ashira/Bapunu, Ogowe River, Gabon
Spirit Mask
Wood and pigment
Ulfert Wilke Collection purchased with funds from the Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1982.001.001

Ogowe River Area, Gabon

There are a number of groups living in and around the Ogowe River area in Gabon. All have a mask style featuring a stylized female face painted white with an elaborate hairdo painted in a stark, contrasting black. These groups include the Lumbo and M'Pongwe.

This small delicate mask represents the spirit of a deceased woman; "the girl from the Land of the Dead." While the mask represents the group's ideals of feminine beauty, they always depict actual women. The chalk white color is associated with the color of the ghost or spirit at night. The narrow eye slits are a ritual requirement intended to prevent the spirit evoked from adversely affecting the wearer. Although representing a woman, such masks are always worn by men. The impersonator wears stilts that raise him far above the viewers.

The vision of the artist is fundamentally realist. His proportions are natural and the features are realistic but idealized. Faces are smooth with serene expressions. The masks, known as Huma (Duma) or Muvdi, are worn by members of a secret society and are used at burial ceremonies, in the ancestor cult and in dances of the full moon. They represent the guardian spirits during the initiation of adolescent girls. The high arched brows, half-closed eyes and formal hairdo all represent the feminine ideas of beauty.

Nyon Néa and Spirit Masks
Lesson Plan

written by Bernadette Brown

Art Concepts:

What is beauty? Although these two masks come from different geographical areas within Africa they are both based on the ideals of feminine beauty of each group.

Grade Level: Fourth to sixth grades.

Student Objective:
Students will create a mask demonstrating their personal ideal of beauty.

Materials:

drawing paper
pencils
Model Magic or clay
construction paper in various colors.
markers, crayons or colored pencils
tempera paint
scissors
glue

Process:

What is beauty? In many African cultures it was thought that inner beauty is reflected in how a person presents her/himself to the world. A woman who took great care with her hair, who selected her dress carefully and arranged its folds artistically was said to be beautiful. This judgement did not take into account her physical appearance but rather her ability to translate her inner tranquility and poise. Among the Ashanti a round head with a smooth, large forehead was the standard of beauty while the Mende people of Sierra Leone thought a young woman, whom we might consider overweight, was beautiful since extra fat was a symbol of her future ability to nourish and care for her babies. In addition to clothing and hair styles many African cultures also included facial and body decorations, such as scarification and tattooing. Facial decorations would usually be placed on the forehead between the eyes and on the temple area near the eyes.

Discuss with your students the concept of beauty in our culture. Have them bring in pictures from magazines of people they think are beautiful. What makes them beautiful?

Discuss with them the African concept that inner beauty is reflected in how we care for and present our physical appearance not in the arrangement of our features. Show the two slides and discuss with your students what the standards of beauty were among the Dan and among the Ogowe River groups. See the information on each of the slides.

Art Making Project:

Give each student enough Model Magic or clay to make a mask that would be face-size. Have each student create a mask that represents his/her ideal of beauty. Model Magic can be colored using markers, crayons or paint.