



THE
GLOBAL AFRICA
PROJECT

CONTENTS

- 1**
6 Foreword
HOLLY HOTCHNER
- 2**
8 Acknowledgments
LOWERY STOKES SIMS
LESLIE KING-HAMMOND
- 3**
10 The Global Africa Project:
Contemporary Design,
Craft, and Art
LOWERY STOKES SIMS
LESLIE KING-HAMMOND
- 4**
39 Branding Content
Patricia Blanchet
Victor Ekpuk
Janet Goldner
Keith Haring
Lyle Ashton Harris
Rachid Koraïchi
Gonçalo Mabunda
Zwelethu Mthethwa
Ruth Omabegho
Kim Schmahmann
Yinka Shonibare, MBE
Hank Willis Thomas
Tony Whitfield
Kehinde Wiley
Wu-Tang Clan
- 5**
60 My Africa
TONY WHITFIELD
- 66 Global City, Urban Flux:
Three Models of Globalization
from and in Africa
NAOMI BECKWITH
- 6**
73 Intersecting Cultures
Ardmore Ceramic Art
Willie Birch
*Black Coffee (Danica Lepen
and Jacques van der Watt)*
Sheila Bridges
iona rozeal brown
*Stephen Burks (Readymade
Projects)*
Nick Cave
Victor Glemaud
Alex Locadia
Missoni SPA
Serge Mouangue
Duro Olowu
Cheryl Riley
*Adejoke "Wahala Temi"
Tugbiyele Sedita*
Daniele Tamagni
Mickalene Thomas
Iké Udé
Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko
Vlisco
Fred Wilson
- 7**
102 A Critical Space:
Notes from the Global Yard
CHRISTOPHER COZIER
- 8**
108 Eclectic Dialogue:
The Architectural Search for
an Afro-centric Design
Aesthetic
JOSÉ J. MAPILY
- 9**
117 Competing Globally
Kossi Aguessy
Alice Yard:
*Christopher Cozier / Marlon
Darbeau / Sheldon Holder /
Nicholas Laughlin / Sean
Leonard / Richard Rawlins*
Alexandre Arrechea
Mervyn Awon
*Birsel + Seck (Ayse Birsel
and Bibi Seck)*
Cheick Diallo
Ndidi Ekubia
Meschac Gaba
Andrew Lyght
Sakina M'sa
*Mabeo Furniture (Peter
Mabeo)*
Esther Mahlangu
Taslim Martin
Odili Donald Odita
Magdalene Odundo
Billy Omabegho
Jack Travis FAIA NOMAC

10

- 134 Utopian Processes, Dystopian Premonitions: African Craft and Design Answer Questions We Have Yet to Ask
KEITH RECKER

11

- 143 Sourcing Locally
Olu Amoda
Kossi Assou
Egg Designs (Greg Dry and Roché Dry)
Nomoda Ebenezer Djaba (Mr. Cedi)
Groupe Bogolan Kasobane
Bright Ugochukwu Eke
Aboubakar Fofana
Anggy Haif
Romuald Hazoumè
Satch Hoyt
Ousmane M'Baye
Giovanna Menard
MUD Studio (Philippa du Toit and Werner du Toit)
Heath Nash
Vincent Niamien
Beverly Price
Shompole Collection Makers
Willowlamp™ (Sian Eliot and Adam Hoets)

12

- 162 From Masquerade to Fashion and Back
JUDITH BETTELHEIM

13

- 169 Transforming Traditions
Joël Andrianomearisoa
Xenobia Bailey
Chakaia Booker
Mark Bradford
Sonya Clark
Melvin Edwards and Manufacture sénégalais des arts décoratifs
Gee's Bend Quilters Collective
Hair Wars
Harlem's Heaven Hat Boutique (Evetta Petty)
Maren Hassinger
Mary Jackson
Nesta Nala
Ntombe Nala
Thembi Nala
Reuben Ndwandwe
Beauty Ngxongo
J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere
Joyce Scott
Siddi Women's Quilting Collective
Clive Sithole
Ubuhle Beads

14

- 190 Bushpunk and the Future of Africa
JULIE LASKY

15

- 197 Building Communities
Gahaya Links Weaving Association
Loring Cornish
Victor Harris and Fi Yi Yi
The Heidelberg Project (Tyree Guyton)
William Kamkwamba
Maker Faire Africa
Algernon Miller and Sanaa Gateja with Kwetu Afrika Women's Association Angels
Paa Joe
zenzulu™

16

- 208 Artist Profiles
RENÉ TREVIÑO
with
NATALIE BALTHROP
LISA MARIE HARRIS
MONIQUE LONG
BRITTANY MARROW
SABINA PIESLAK

17

- 248 Bibliography
AIDEN L. FAUST

18

- 252 Exhibition History: Art from Africa and the African Diaspora, 1989–2010
AIDEN L. FAUST

19

- 263 About the Authors



LOWERY STOKES SIMS

LESLIE KING-HAMMOND

The Global Africa Project: Contemporary Design, Craft, and Art

Rather than speaking about “African contemporary art,” I would rather speak about “contemporary African art”; . . . the former caters for the international market . . . in much the same way as African traders have always done. “Contemporary African art” on the other hand presupposes a sense of the present, of the contemporary spirit and is always in motion, always fluid and resisting classification. . . [It] is more viral and hence dangerous as contemporary art should be.

—KENDELL GEERS¹

This exhibition asserts the strong and influential presence of creators of and in Africa and portrays the truly global—and extraordinarily variant—nature of being African, or African-descended, in the contemporary context. *The Global Africa Project* is not about defining an overarching African identity or aesthetic. That such a notion might reveal itself in the lives and careers of the individual creators and their work is largely incidental. If anything the exhibition reveals stories of individuals working in the psychic and physical space that is known as “Africa” in the world today. Collectively, these stories reveal certain commonalities—or what the late African-American painter Al Loving described as “agreed assumptions”—about being black, African, or Afro-centric in the world today. Those “agreed assumptions” reflect the wide range of African-ness, and the thesis of this exhibition focuses on the origin of African identity in relationship to place rather than to cultural difference. Debunking the notion of “race(ism),” historian Jared Diamond has argued for a

more concrete plausible rationale for “how Africa became Black,” stating that:

it was due to accidents of geography and biogeography—in particular, to the continent’s difference areas, axes, and suites of wild plant and animal species. That is, the different historical trajectories of Africa and Europe stem ultimately from differences in real estate.²

The Global Africa Project seeks to explore the African experience through the broad scope of that real estate—the stories, geography, and individuals. The resulting aesthetic responses, as expressed in design, craft, and art, have manifested new innovations and unpredictable outcomes throughout the trajectories of the diaspora of a globalized Africa.

The genres that are represented in *The Global Africa Project* include ceramics, basketry, textiles, jewelry, furniture, and other decorative arts and design objects, and architecture and fashion. Photographs, painting, and sculpture are presented to provide a clarifying and complementary presentation of the contents of the exhibition. It is widely accepted that the familiar boundaries among genres in contemporary art are permeable, and the works in this exhibition have been chosen to demonstrate that proposition. In this way the exhibition not only asserts the current curatorial perspective of the Museum of Arts and Design but also reflects the sense of interrelatedness among artistic genres that marks more traditional African object use, symbolism, and presentation.

While these considerations were the initial impetus behind the exhibition, as research and development progressed, it became clear to the co-curators that this project would exist within the context of specific economic and political dialogues. Aesthetic considerations certainly formed the basis of our curatorial decisions, as did the conceptual and technical acuity of the creators. Empirical evidence, however, demonstrated the extent to which design, craft, and art were important economic engines for the individual creators and the contexts within which they work. Creativity also figured in the growing debate on the viability of long-term aid to the African continent and other African communities and contexts in the world versus the desirability of investment as a way to achieve economic sustainability in Africa.³ These issues were boldly and controversially addressed by the Zambian-born economist Dambisa Moyo.⁴ In a conference jointly sponsored by the International Monetary Fund and the Republic of Tanzania in March 2009, two key questions were posed: What do Africa’s successes tell us about the main bottlenecks and risks to sustained growth and poverty reduction? And how best can countries tap into the potential of the private sector and the financial sector to advance these goals?⁵

Design, craft, and art clearly provide a “third way” to collective support and individual entrepreneurship, highlighting the strength of internal creative initiatives.⁶ Many of the creators in this exhibition are one-person production entities, while a few work for larger corporations. Many of the works in the exhibition come from

community contexts where they represent the morphing of traditional skills into a global commercial entity. Both the corporate and collective models frequently feature women, giving *The Global Africa Project* an interesting gender nuance that reflects the lessons of the global micro-loan program pioneered by Muhammad Yunus through the Grameen Bank he established in Bangladesh in 2006. These grass-root entrepreneurs are garnering world attention. The inveterate champion of Africa, the Irish rock musician Bono, for example, founder of the advocacy group ONE and (Product) RED, noted his experience of the “new rules for the game” in Africa’s juggling of the aid/investment dichotomy.⁷

What was telling in Bono’s observations in the *New York Times* was the fact that these new rules in many cases were being written by nonpolitical individuals such as musician Youssou N’Dour of Senegal or soccer star Didier Zokora of the Ivory Coast. By dint of their international reputations—whether pursued or enforced by circumstance—these individuals have the clout and resources to exert far-reaching influence in their respective countries and communities. These observations confirm that the creative sector has and continues to have a sizable impact on the global economic, political, and social scene beyond the art market. Whether initiated by a celebrity do-gooder, international star, or local creator, all of these forces have been coming together to change the global perception of Africa and the African global universe. This brings us back to the impetus for organizing *The Global Africa Project* and the art world context in which it has been conceived.

Since the 1980s there have been several important surveys of contemporary African and African-American art. In 1988 the co-curators of *The Global Africa Project* conceived the exhibition *Art as a Verb: The Evolving Continuum* which was organized and opened at the Maryland Institute College of Art and traveled to The Studio Museum in Harlem and The Met Life Gallery in New York City. We addressed the question of what the twenty-first century would mean to the vision, identity, and place of the African-American artist. Technology, telecommunication, and digital media were certain to have a significant impact on the intersection of African identities and place in the new century. Critics and historians as well as artists would have to grapple with the new cyber landscape. These new media would clearly affect the way artists process information and materials and contextualize African identities.

The 1989 *Magiciens de la Terre*, a pioneering exhibition organized under the leadership of Jean Hubert Martin, presented contemporary African creators on the world stage. It focused on traditional forms and positioned African artists as shamanistic entities. This image was countered by *Africa Explores: Twentieth-Century African Art* organized by Susan Vogel in 1991, the first complete survey. It revealed the richness of African art in this time period, from work informed by European modernism to “folk” manifestations. Okwei Enwezor’s 2001 exhibition, *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994*, was “interdisciplinary.” It “link[ed] historical documents with modernist and contemporary artistic standpoints, and confronts the creation of colonial and anti-colonial

propaganda . . . from 1945 to the end of the Apartheid regime in 1994.”⁸ In 2003 the Museum of African Art in New York exhibited *Looking Both Ways: Contemporary African Diaspora*, curated by Laurie Ann Farrell, whose objective was to showcase artists looking at the “psychic terrain between African and the West.” The selected artists were Africans who worked and lived in Western countries.

Africa Remix (2004), organized by Simon Nijami, surveyed a decade of paintings, drawings, sculptures, assemblages, multipart installations, photography, videos, furniture design, music, literature, and fashion. The conceptual realm in America become the focus in 2005 for *Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art 1970*, organized at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, by Valerie Oliver Cassel and Franklin Sirmans. This exhibition examined the historical, critical, and contemporary sites of black aesthetic “double consciousness” as first articulated by W.E.B. Du Bois’s classic work, *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903).

The Studio Museum in Harlem’s exhibition *Flow* (2008) provided a model for examining a more transnational sense of African identity and sensibility, while also examining work that “extends beyond geographic borders and is informed by the complexities” of black culture which is too often subject to reductive essence by the global media.⁹ *Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art*, organized in 2007 by Tumelo Mosaka at the Brooklyn Museum, presented a newly global sense that characterized Caribbean art, revealing “the region’s dynamic mix of cultures, its diasporas, and its socio-political realities,” which are in a state of constant flux and transformation.¹⁰

The Global Africa Project builds on all these exhibitions but especially on *Design Made in Africa* (2004), which included both African and European designers working in Africa and was organized under the auspices of the Biennale internationale design Saint-Étienne and the Association française d’action artistique. *Global Africa* distinguishes itself by surveying four areas of the world that have been especially impacted by African culture: Africa, Europe, the United States, and the Caribbean.

The challenge of *The Global Africa Project* is indicated in its title. Given the nomadic, even migratory nature of artistic careers today, what is a “global Africa?” This existential question is particularly vexing for designers, craftspersons, and artists working where access to the art market and art press is a challenge. The concept of Africa, then, is as much a specific identity (or cultural origin), as it is an idea, even a stereotype waiting to be discredited. *Global Africa*, therefore, set out to problematize notions of “The Africa” and to encourage the viewer to consider the nomadic, mutable experience of “the African.” Certain shared characteristics of creativity can be identified in the work in *Global Africa*, including a focus on surface and pattern; the use of unexpected materials (and the prevalence of recycled and repurposed items); and various intersections between traditional techniques and forms and contemporary design.

A “global Africa” can accommodate equally such makers as the Gahaya Links Weaving Association, a collaborative of Hutu and Tutsi women working in traditional basketry techniques in Rwanda, and Kossi Aguessy,

a Togolese-Brazilian designer working in Paris who has collaborated with Renault, Yves Saint Laurent, Cartier, Swarovski, S.T. Dupont, and Branex. By including work by designers, craftsmen, and artists—both traditional and contemporary—a global Africa also challenges the usual distinctions between “professional” and “artisan” in the art market. It highlights the economic and social issues navigated by its designers, craftsmen, and artists in careers both “in-country” and in the diaspora, as well as in and out of the prevailing cultural mainstream, and in the global arena. It charts how these creators engage the contemporary art market in inventive and provocative ways.

Despite the erratic nature of documentation in print media, information about these individuals is available via the Internet: the World Wide Web, artists’ websites and blogs, Facebook, the Creative African network, the Creative Caribbean network (both sites sponsored by Puma), Flickr, and YouTube. These vehicles have been invaluable tools for tracing the latest developments in the work of this community of creators, whether they are major presences in the international market or traditional craftsmen in local neighborhoods. Many of the artists in the exhibition function primarily, even exclusively, in a virtual format—such as the Caribbean e-journals *Small Axes* and *Draconian Switch*—and *Global Africa* seeks to convey this experience to visitors.

To accommodate the varied aspects of the global African world *Global Africa* is organized around several themes that reflect strategies of concept and production in the contemporary diasporic African art world: intersecting

cultures; competing globally; sourcing locally, transforming traditions; and building communities. These five themes were determined by issues raised in a series of interviews with contemporary African designers and design educators.¹¹ These themes also encourage *Global Africa* audiences to discern how global African artists grapple with the commodification of art and its meaning and value in society—increasingly significant issues for nations in a rapidly changing global context.

A sixth theme suggested itself during the organization process: branding content. In this section we highlight works of art that not only address specific political ideas or issues, but also demonstrate how the most basic aspect of life is impacted by design, whether intentional or opportunistic.

BRANDING CONTENT

The use of excess, section and pleasure in my work always remains political but without preaching politics. . . . I’m never moralistic. Instead it’s a question of working through political issues as well as being seduced by the actual form.

—YINKA SHONIBARE, MBE¹²

At the International Gift Fair at the Javits Convention Center, New York, in the spring of 2010, designer and craftsman Oumar Cissé of Mali—known more familiarly as Peace Corps Baba—showed his jewelry in the booth of the organization Africa Now! For each piece, he scrupulously identified the source of the material or the meaning



Figure 1
RUTH OMABEGHO
Pectoral Amulet, 2010
Copper triangular forms,
heat-oxidized and verdigris-patinated biconical brass beads, copper links
L. 22 in. (55.8 cm); closed:
Diam. 6 in. (15.2 cm)
Collection of the artist
Photo: Gary Breckheimer



Figure 2
 KIM SCHMAHMANN
Apart-Hate: A People Divider, 2005–10
 (detail)
 Various hardwoods, veneers, newspapers, documents, steel, aluminum
 7 ft. 9 in. × 44 in. × 7 ft. 10 in. (236.1 × 111.7 × 239 cm)
 © Kim Schmahmann
 Photo: Jim Baxter

of the forms—all diverse and certainly not unique to one particular culture. A few months earlier, Ruth Omabegho, an American who'd spent over thirty years in Nigeria, (fig. 1), displayed her cast and beaded jewelry. She too meticulously recited the origin of the various elements in her jewelry and again the sources were varied. Despite the fact that these two designers were working within a contemporary context, it was as if both had found some occult energy in the accumulation of the cultural assemblages of various materials in their work. The choice of materials and their particular configuration was not gratuitous and could have a content and significance that went beyond face value.

Yinka Shonibare, MBE, who is quoted above, is a painter /photographer /sculptor /cineaste. He eloquently states the challenge for designers, craftsmen, and artists in presenting content around world issues in their work. What do we think of first when we think of Africa? It may be any number of things—oil, gold, diamonds, slavery, The Middle Passage, apartheid, war, genocide, HIV/AIDS, and homophobia. Where Africa is concerned, the conflict and exploitation of these elements provide the fodder for newspapers, magazines, television and web-based news. In two works from his *Black Gold* series (2006), Shonibare not only interrogates the nature of painting in the twenty-first century, but also alludes to both positive and detrimental results of exploiting Africa's resources such as oil (black gold). The presence of the toy soldiers, planes, and armored vehicles contrasts with the sumptuousness of the fabric that represents yet another foreign element to have

an impact on African economies. Gonçalo Mabunda's *Hope Throne* rehabilitates instruments of war—once used in the long civil war in Mozambique (1977–92)—by transforming them into sculptures and chairs that also represent the Africa-wide practice of repurposing foreign “cargo.”¹³

Apartheid was perhaps the most riveting and rallying aspect of African culture before the 1990s. Keith Haring's 1989 *Free South Africa* poster exemplifies the galvanizing effect this system had on the world stage. By the end of the 1980s, as anti-apartheid sentiment gained momentum, it was a powerful image of liberation. In the necklace and earrings by Janet Goldner, cartouches with photographs of black South African miners are attached to a neckpiece of gold-gilded barbed-wire. The ironic “gold-washing” of the cruel material of confinement reeks across time, space, and conscience. Similarly, Kim Schmahmann's *Apart-Hate: A People Divider* (fig. 2) chronicles the history of apartheid in exquisite marquetry used for a room divider. Intimations of the tromp l'oeil versatility of traditional techniques, like those in the celebrated fifteenth-century Studiolo Gubbio at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, draw us into the surface. To paraphrase artist and writer Joe Lewis: “Beauty is the Bait.”

In October 2009, word that legislation would be introduced in Uganda to impose the death penalty on homosexuals reached the world press. Furthermore, the bill would broaden the criminalization of homosexuality by

introducing the death penalty for people who have previous convictions, are HIV-positive, or engage

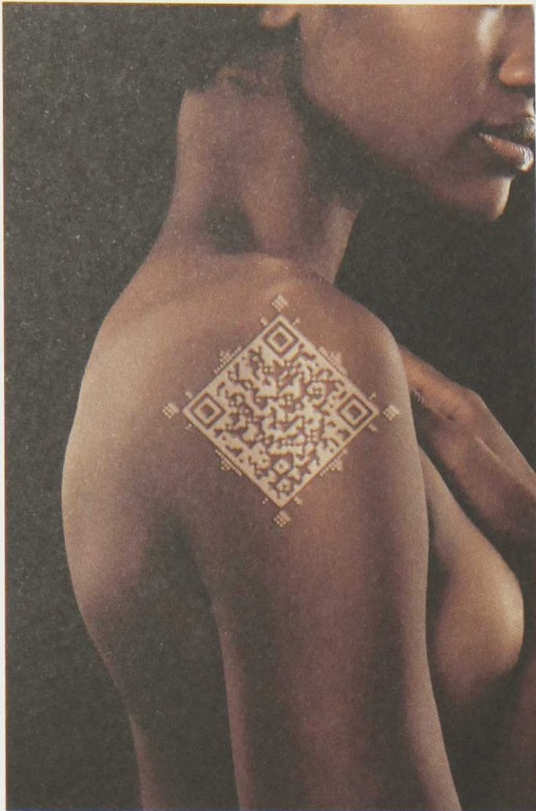


Figure 3
Serge Mouangue
Scarification, 2010
Computer rendering
Courtesy of the artist

in same sex acts with people under 18 years of age. The bill also includes provisions for Ugandans who engage in same-sex sexual relations outside of Uganda, asserting that they may be extradited for punishment back to Uganda, and includes penalties for individuals, companies, media organisations, or non-governmental organisations that support LGBT rights.¹⁴

While knowledge of homophobia in Africa—particularly in South Africa where the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community organized protests under the auspices of groups such as the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality—was widespread, this development had an unusual connection to conservative groups in the United States, making it all the more striking.¹⁵

In response, designer Tony Whitfield created *Uganda Chapel*, a plywood coffinlike structure embellished with “handmade and industrial tiles with patterned photographic images of wounds layered onto various dark skin tones. The roses are a hanging chain of white porcelain roses splattered with blood red paint.”¹⁶ Whitfield papered the exterior with “broadsides of the proposed laws and

news items that pertain to the topic.”¹⁷ The inscription on the interior was a plaintive reproach:

Because you hate me, I must be murdered.
Because you think I am not alone, I must be
turned in.
Because your god condemns me, I am godless.
Because you fear me, I have no value.
Because you believe I have no power, I can be
destroyed
Because your love has limits, I cannot exist
Because your body is unavailable, I desire the
forbidden.
Because you do not value me, I must be betrayed.
Because you hate me, I must be despised.
Because lust consumes you, I am consumed by sin.

I am murdered because you hate me
I am turned in because you think I am not alone
I am godless because your god condemns me
I have no value because you fear me
I can be destroyed because you believe I have
no power
I cannot exist because your love has limits
I desire the forbidden because your body is
unavailable
I must be betrayed because you do not value me
I must be despised because you hate me
I am consumed by sin because lust consumes you.¹⁸

Figure 4

HANK WILLIS THOMAS

I Am A Man, 2009

Liquitex on canvas

55½ in. x 19 ft. x 2¼ in.

(140.3 x 579.1 x 5.7 cm)

(installed)

25¾ x 19¾ x 2¼ in.

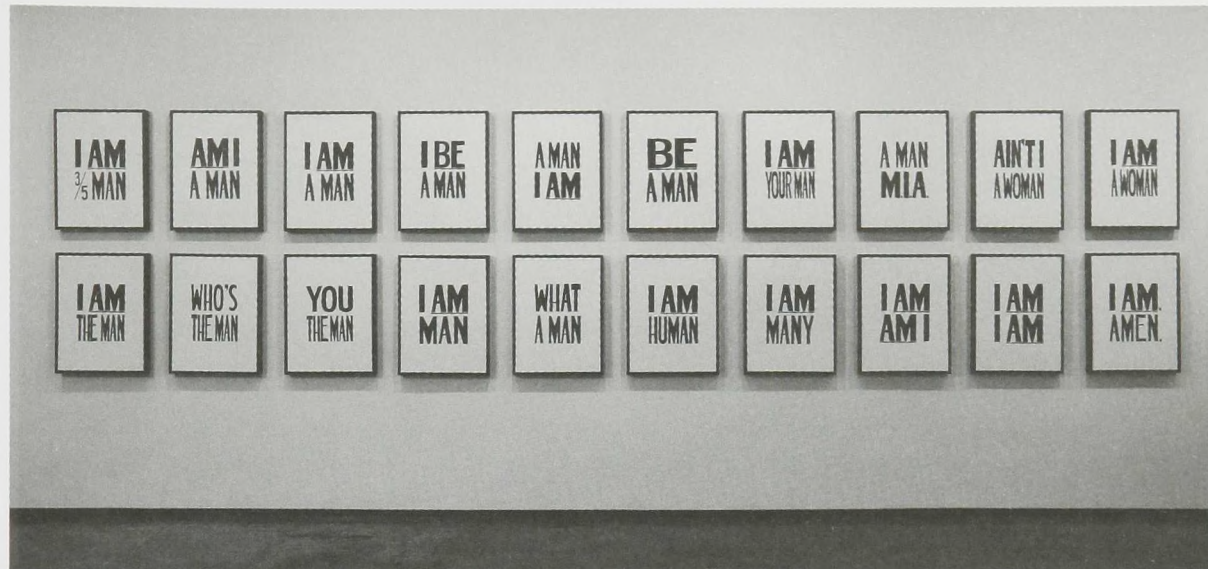
(64.1 x 48.8 x 5.7 cm)

per panel

Photo: Courtesy of the artist;

Jack Shainman Gallery,

New York



A closer look at Schmahmann's room divider reveals a similar strategy. The panels that unfold are literally stuffed with photographs, newspaper and magazine clippings, identity papers, and passbooks that black South Africans had to carry under the apartheid system.

These two works introduce the idea of text, sign, and symbol (logo) as conveyors of meaning in design. The surface elements of Victor Ekpuk's painting is the *nsibidi* script system of the ancient Ejagham society in Nigeria that negates popular attitudes about the illiteracy and oral focus of African culture. Keith Haring brought an ideographic hieroglyphic figural style to his anti-apartheid poster, and he created a hieroglyphic equivalent in his collaborations with dancer-choreographer Bill T. Jones and pop diva Grace Jones in the 1980s. Haring's interest in African art can be seen in his drawings of certain head-dresses and costumes that relate to the diverse traditions of African cultures. These works implicate the black body and convey myriad meanings in terms of sexuality, commodification, and identity.

Serge Mouangue's *Scarification* project (fig. 3) combines traditional African means of identification with twenty-first-century nanotechnology whereby embedded symbols became carriers of personal information. Memory and invention come together in this piece. Mouangue explains that he experiences

curious parallels . . . between scarification and nanotechnology. . . . one makes a message visible, the

other makes a function virtually disappear. . . . Yet deep within this apparent dichotomy lies a sense of wonder about the creative possibilities of transformation and intelligent living surfaces. I too wonder about the functional dimensions of skin coding and see further crossroads of communication to explore, paths as yet unmapped.¹⁹

Hank Willis Thomas's contribution to the Absolut vodka advertising campaign reaches back into history for the well-known eighteenth-century diagram of the slave ship *Brookes*, which was a demonstration of the efficient use of space in a slave ship to carry the maximum number of bodies to the Americas for sale. Thomas also wades into the subject of the commodification of the black body in the arena of sports in his provocatively framed black male torso branded repeatedly with the Nike "swoosh" symbolizing product endorsements by black athletes, such as basketball icon Michael Jordan and golfer Tiger Woods. His 2009 work *I am a Man* (fig. 4) references the signs held by black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee during their historic strike in 1963 (made memorable by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King who came to support their efforts). This simple affirmation becomes an extended meditation on black male identity so often defined by physical prowess and attributes—"Who's the Man"; "Am I a Man?"—and crosses the gender divide with a quote from the nineteenth-century abolitionist and women's rights advocate Sojourner Truth: "Ain't I a Woman?"



Figure 5
PATRICIA BLANCHET
Untitled from the Burkina Reflected Series, 2003
C-print
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Patricia Blanchet

Patricia Blanchet documents the second life of these corporate branding symbols in her photographs of acquaintances in Burkina Faso (fig. 5), where she has worked for several years. Her subjects wear tee shirts and hats proclaiming “Nike,” “Structure,” and “Marlboro,” the latter particularly censored for glorifying maleness through smoking. The merging of art and design was achieved by Kehinde Wiley who brings a sense of pattern and design and talent for portraiture to a line of merchandise that he created for Puma for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, the first time the championship has been hosted by an African country.

The design and patternlike quality of text and typography become an ersatz decorative element in township homes when newsprint serves as wallpaper, an environment captured in photographs by Zwelethu Mthethwa. In African and African-American traditions, the printed word has been seen as a protection against evil spirits who would be distracted by the text and images on the wall before they caused mischief.²⁰ Rachid Koraïchi demonstrates a similar fascination with symbolic portent of symbols/text/script in his banner *Invisible Masters*. His background in Sufism, the mystical aspect of Islam, underlies “his quest to unite the ancient and the contemporary” through his work in ceramic, metal, stone, and textile.²¹ The Jordanian artist Wijdan notes that Koraïchi’s work

focuses on the spiritual representation of objects and beings, not on their material qualities. Neglecting the exact imitation of nature, the Islamic artists

chose a two-dimensional stylisation to represent their visions. The artist’s quest was for the eternal representation of the spirit.²²

This extends the profane plane to logos that have meaning in the black community worldwide. From Johnson and Johnson products or the symbol adopted by rock musician Prince to represent his new identity, these modern-day symbols and logos are as important as writing systems such as those that appear on the Adinkra cloth of Ghana which has formed the basis of the paintings of Owusu Ankomah (fig. 6). In *Global Africa*, several works feature the corporate logo for *Ebony* magazine which was founded by John H. Johnson and has published continuously since 1945. They also publish *Jet* magazine and originated the Fashion Fair runway show that brought couture to the black community at a time when that experience was not readily accessible to African Americans.²³

The ubiquitous presence of the *Ebony* logo is captured in works by Hank Willis Thomas who merged it with the *Life* magazine logo to celebrate “Ebony Life.” Lyle Ashton Harris documents *Ebony*’s global impact not only in his photograph of a man in Ghana wearing a tee shirt with the familiar logo, but also in his commemorative reconstruction of the magazine’s December 2007 cover which featured Michael Jackson. Harris borrowed the image and painted it on black funerary cloth found in Ghana. He collaborated with sign painter Nicolas Wayo, a commercial artist from Nima in Accra,²⁴ and in this way recognized the role of hand-painted signage in advertising, something

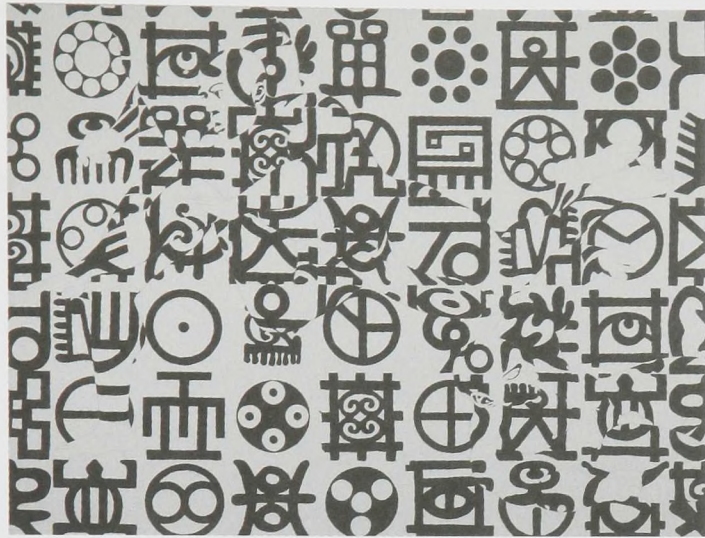


Figure 6
OWUSU ANKOMAH
Movement #36, 2002
 Acrylic, pigment on canvas
 6 ft. 3 in × 8 ft. 2 in. (190.5 × 250.1 cm)
 Newark Museum; Purchase 2007 Helen
 McMahon Brady Cutting Fund 2007.23.1

requiring the skill and services of various providers—particularly barbers and hairstylists—all over western Africa.

The explicit role of branding in projecting a corporate, institutional, or creative entity has never been more intense than in the last three decades. Logos have become an integral element of many an artist's identity. The hip-hop group Wu-Tang Clan, for example, which includes eight members (originally nine) working both collectively and as solo artists, has adopted a distinctive logo created by Allah Mathematics (R. Bean), something between "a sword" and "a bat."²⁵ As Wu-Tang leader RZA (Robert Diggs) noted, the notion of the sword was associated with Islamic imagery (the sword and the crescent) and its shape seemed to rise up like "a raven or a phoenix." Also, "it had some Batman flavor. Not that I meant it to—but it didn't hurt."²⁶ Such rich and motley references reflect the melding and co-opting of cultural references by artists in *Global Africa*. Wu-Tang also developed a clothing line, Wu-Wear, not merely as a commercial venture, but also as an attempt to create clothing that reflects the group's values and beliefs.

INTERSECTING CULTURES

Global mixing brings cultures into unpredictable terms of contact, and under these circumstances the desire of "purity" is not only somewhat anti-modern and a bit quaint, but also practically and logically impossible.

—KOBENA MERCER²⁷

One of the most striking aspects of *The Global Africa Project* is the way younger African and African-descendant creators are defying cultural stereotypes and classification while merging references to their culture with vernacular icons and forging a thoroughly original contemporary expression. This provides seemingly endless opportunities for creators to function within postmodern strategies of appropriation, pastiche, and mimicry. Such modalities highlight the hybrid nature of global African life and culture and allow these artists to grant access to their work across cultural divides. "Riffing" off familiar motifs or themes exposes pretensions and parochialism, thus demonstrating the dynamics of cultural fusion.

This appropriation, however, goes both ways in the global market. The noted Italian design firm Missoni has contributed to *Global Africa* the African-themed fashion line that the company produced in 1990 when the World Cup competition took place in Milan. The patterns they used then indicated how Africa has been evoked in the design ethos of the company. A decade later American designer Stephen Burks of Readymade Projects was commissioned to create a Missoni pattern, featuring



Figure 7
 VLISCO
Sparkling Grace Collection, 2010
 Cotton; wax block printing
 Courtesy of Vlisco
 Photo: Sjoerd Geuke

their signature zig-zag pattern in vivid colors collaged onto vases of various configurations. In the company's announcement of "Missoni-Africa," fashion writer and style icon Anna Piaggi observed that this line "was born out of a context of geometries so primitives, so instinctive as to turn into tribal history."²⁸ She continued:

In the Africa collection . . . the body stocking is . . . a stimulus to ethnico-cultural references: Masai necklaces and neckband, the earrings of . . . Mali, short Atuna skirts (rites of expiation and purification from Senegal), the gall crests of the Dogon (for the dances of male initiation), the manes of the people of Chad and of the Senufo of Upper Volta for the dances of female initiation, . . . and, in a stylized metamorphosis, the translation into knitwear of the glass bead jewelry of the Bantu.²⁹

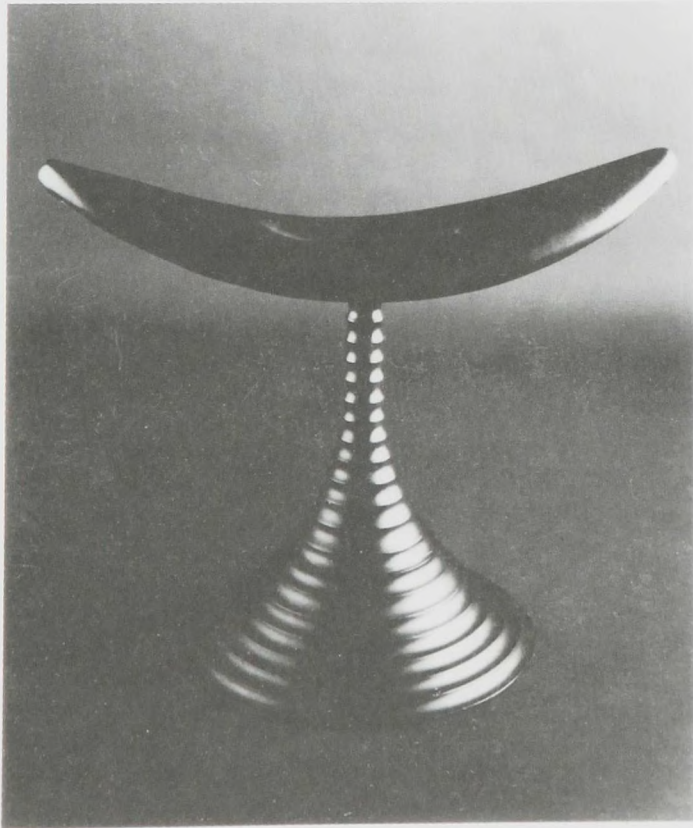
Likewise Ardmore Ceramic Art achieve a fusion of British ceramic techniques and African motifs, the ornamentation literally taking over the basic form of the pottery. South Africa's fashion label Black Coffee, headed by Jacques van der Watt and Danica Lepen, weaves African influences and motifs into its work—including references to colonial days and a collection inspired by the silhouettes of African women carrying children on their backs (winner of the prestigious Mercedes-Benz Award for Fashion). Their 2008 collection, *Everyone can be a designer*, featured versatile pieces which together, in the words of the designers, "leave it up to the consumer" to fashion her own presence.³⁰

This sense of cultural fusion may be most clearly expressed in the arena of fashion and textile design. Ironically it is Vlisco, a Dutch company headquartered in the Netherlands, that has been supplying fabric and apparel to the African market for more than 150 years (fig. 7), often customizing it to contemporary events and tastes. This exchange has served to animate the conceptualization and meaning of Yinka Shonibare's historical tableaux. Exchange of materials is even more complex in Serge Mouangué's *Wafrika* line, which consists of Japanese kimonos in printed fabrics made by Vlisco. As Mouangué has observed:

I now reside in Japan, but I am African. I've studied in France, lived in Australia, and have been fortunate to travel and connect with varying cultures. These experiences force me to ask myself again and

again . . . where do we come from? . . . Where do we feel our origins? What are “identity” and “values”? These questions arise from looking at the present and towards the future, rather than at the past, which we carry inside us. Thus, considering these questions delivers a new vision that transcends both cultures; Japanese and African. Wafrica wasn’t possible in our pasts. Today it becomes so, and it belongs to our collective future.³¹

Consideration of the new global economic line-up, whereby fabrics used by Shonibare are mimicked and produced in China, segues into thoughts on the interchanges between African and Asian cultures, particularly music—first jazz and more recently hip-hop. The paintings and graphic work of Iona Rozeal Brown explore Japanese infatuation with hip-hop culture. Conversely, hip-hop culture sometimes borrows from Asia, as exemplified by the Wu-Tang Clan’s distinctive logo. This triangulated relationship among Africa, Japan, and America would be familiar and ironic to those cognizant of a similar pattern of exchange involving Europe, Africa, and the Americas during the slave trade.



There are many other modalities in cultural fusion represented in *The Global Africa Project*. Alex Locadia, Cheryl Riley, and Willie Birch pay homage to their African ancestry: Locadia adapts the Ashanti stool in his *Ass Rest* seating design (fig. 8), and Riley and Birch use assemblage and accumulation similar to Congo *nkisi* or Malian hunter’s coats in which the addition of materials and objects allude to and possess occult powers. Fred Wilson’s chandelier and mirror, rendered in black Venetian glass, reference history along a path he began to explore in his 2003 installation for the United States pavilion in the Venice Biennale, relating to the presence of Africans in the history of that port city (fig. 9). Sheila Bridges’s signature wallpaper design, *Harlem Toile*, fuses historical motifs and compositions with contemporary signifiers of black culture, such as boom boxes and basketball hoops, while the figures sport pastiches of eighteenth-century apparel.

The profusion of patterns—seen in the work of designer Duro Olowu, painter and photographer Mickalene Thomas, sculptor and performer Nick Cave, and documented by photographers Patricia Blanchet and Nontsikelelo “Lolo” Veleko—can be observed throughout the global African community. While this strategy is usually associated with quiltmaking, patterns are also part and parcel of many weaving traditions in which the variety of patterns indicate class and status and serve a similar prophylactic function as newsprint text on the walls of interiors.³²

Another approach to cultural fusion can be seen in the “remixing” of elements from various periods and culture. This strategy assumes formal as well as cultural

Figure 8
ALEX LOCADIA
Ass Rest, 1988
Wood, leather, steel
18 × 24 × 10 in. (45.7 × 60.9 × 25.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist

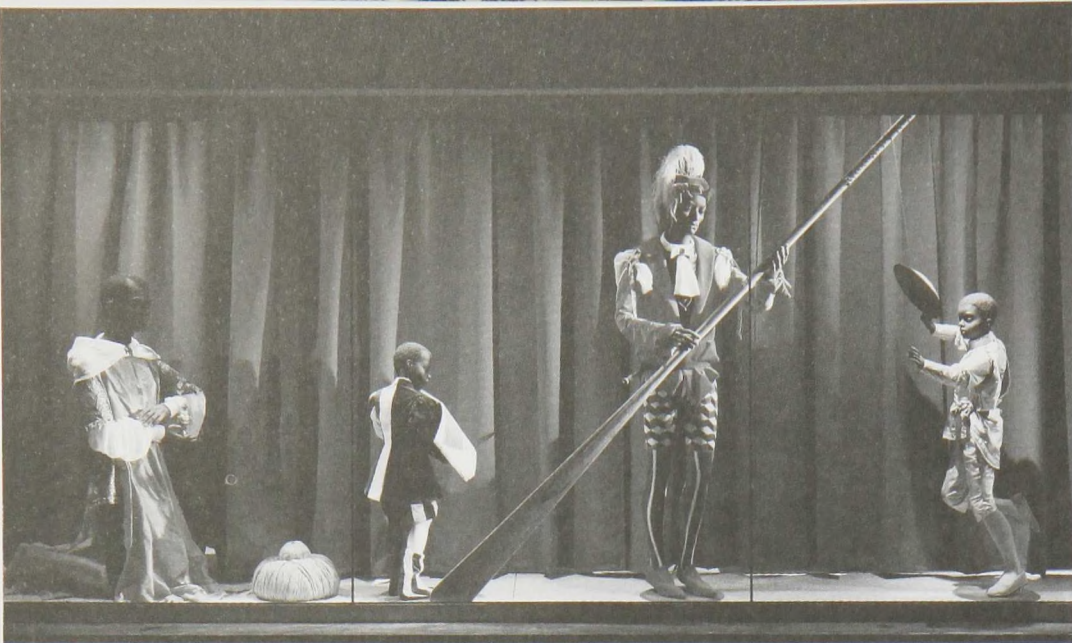


Figure 9

FRED WILSON

Speak of Me as I Am: Sacre Conversazioneu, 2003
Installation view at the United States Pavilion,
50th Venice Biennale (*The Structure of Survival*),
2003, curated by Kathy Goncharov

Mixed media

Dimensions variable

© Fred Wilson, courtesy of The Pace Gallery,
New York

Photo: R. Ransick/ A. Cocchi, courtesy of
The Pace Gallery, New York

manifestations as seen in *AFRIKEA*, Adejoke “Wahala Temi” Tugbiyele Sedita’s reconstruction and customization of prefabricated furniture from the furnishing and lifestyle giant IKEA. She covered her revised seating form with an African-styled fabric. As the artist notes:

Reconfigured, the chair critiques mass-standardization and conformity in Western culture—an affordable, one-size-fits-all approach to design. To give the stools cultural significance to me, I play with traditional fabric and organize shapes in ways that resemble traditional Yoruba thrones. Ironically, thrones were usually reserved for men.³³

The Haitian-American designer Victor Glemaud reflects the sartorial remix in his designs celebrating the urban hipness of contemporary fashion (fig. 10). Nontsikelelo “Lolo” Veleko views the young fashionistas she photographs through a similar lens. Formal sensibilities coexist with casual ones. The finished and rough edges distinguish Glemaud’s line, which brings a sense of urban nonchalance to it. In other manifestations of male sartorial individuality we can see a cultural fusion in the new work of photographer and designer Iké Udé, who lives his artistic philosophy which is grounded in traditions of the dandy as both a symbol of assimilation and a critique in the African diasporic context.³⁴ For *Global Africa* Udé has created a series of new self-portraits in which he mixes elements associated with different genders and different periods to express the elegance and power of what he has dubbed “Sartorial Anarchy.”

The anarchistic aspects of this kind of fashion sense not only relate to the free-wheeling manner in which various style elements are mixed in these individual expressions, but also in the fact that this tendency can be found in the most unlikely places. This is the case with the Sapeurs—“les SAPHES” (Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes) in the Congo—a style movement of elegance and moral and social courtliness that involves assembling couture or high-style clothing to create personas that function as arbiters in a given context.³⁵ Photographer Daniele Tamagni’s images (fig. 11) capture the fact that the Sapeur aesthetic persists regardless of time and circumstance, and often in stark contrast to the chaos of contemporary African life, in places impacted by war and poverty. This kind of particularly male elegance has crossed the Atlantic as well and in the United States speaks to the notion of “cool,” which was identified by noted African scholar and art historian Robert Farris Thompson as the essence of an African identity:

To be cool means to become composed in a sharing sense, to remember the way one ought to be. Intensity can be matched with ecstasy, a fixed expression with solemnity of mien, opposing immobile face with the pulsations of the body. . . . Cool is also a sign of a positive transition to ideal worlds.³⁶

Figure 10
 VICTOR CLEMAUD
*Outfit from the Fall/Winter
 Collection, 2010*
 Courtesy of the artist
 Photo: Dan Lecca



Figure 11
 DANIELE TAMAGNI
*Lahlande the Young,
 Brazzaville, 2007*
 C-print, mounted on acid-
 free lambda paper
 39²/₅ × 27¹/₂ in. (100 × 70 cm)
 Courtesy of Michael
 Hoppen, London
 © Daniele Tamagni



COMPETING GLOBALLY

Afrikan designers offer the world uniqueness in terms of products. Design is influenced by a number of factors, but creativity is still one of our greatest assets that we can use to gain competitive advantage. Another thing is inspiration from the Afrikan continent which is still virgin and unexploited.

—MASANA CHIKEKA³⁷

One of the most daunting challenges faced by the designers, craftsmen, and artists featured in *The Global Africa Project* is what the Nigerian designer Karo Akpokiere described as “stereotypes and perceptions concerning Afrikan design held by design consumers and design producers in continents other than Afrika.”³⁸ In fact many of these creators work primarily from individual impulses and background issues of culture and heritage. But as Togolese-Brazilian designer Kossi Aguessy noted in a 2009 interview with design consultant Tiana Evans, this does not mean a complete denial of their African heritage or culture in their work. Aguessy, who is based in Paris, would describe any reflection of his African heritage in his work

as indefinable, but he nonetheless acknowledge that “it’s there,” and perhaps the “acceptance and consideration” of one’s cultural background “is significant” in and of itself.³⁹

An example of such references can be observed in the *The Secret Dovetail* stool (2005) designed by British designer Taslim Martin. This work is reminiscent of “the carved wooden stools of the Ashanti and Yoruba Peoples” while its material (sand-cast aluminum) and finish “reference the craft of coach building for the car industry.”⁴⁰ Similarly, the plexiglas side table designed by Nigeria-born Billy Omabegho—thoroughly contemporary in spirit and material—found its inspiration in a table among Omabegho’s possessions, made by the Dan people of Liberia. In this case it is interesting to consider whether the transposition of meaning can be effected even when the materials are modified.

Another challenge faced by global African designers is the lack of government support. Masana Chikeka, sector manager of the design unit in South Africa’s Department of Arts and Culture commented that “design was one of the most misunderstood sectors of the economy.”⁴¹ As a result, there has been a paucity of educational resources in Africa-based design training. With little documentation of design history and culture in Africa, what exists is focused on Western and Asian models. There are also difficulties in maintaining consistent production standards because there is little competitiveness, which in turn “is a result of scant investments in skills development, especially in the areas of enterprise and technical skills.”⁴²

South African designer Peet Pienaar urges others to “stop worrying about governmental or any other support and just start working harder at developing” their “own markets and exporting.”⁴³ Individuals such as Cheick Diallo and Billy Omabegho, show their entrepreneurial spirit in employing local labor to produce their furniture so that it can be brought to the international marketplace. Peter Mabeo (Mabeo Furniture) of Botswana has also taken independent initiative to establish a business that offers international designers a means to bring their concepts to fruition working with a cadre of skilled craftsman under Mabeo’s leadership. He has worked with such luminaries as Patricia Johnson of Canada and Patricia Urquiola of Spain. Bibi Seck and Ayse Birsel (Birsel + Seck), who have designed for firms as diverse as Renault, Henry Miller, and Target, have been inspired by recycling efforts in Senegal and conceived Taboo (fig. 12), a new line of occasional furniture. The forms are molded out of locally recycled plastic by Transtech, a factory in Senegal that is owned and run by Marie Jo Sanchez Giradon. These examples hold great promise for the future, in terms not only of fulfilling the creative potential of the global African world but also of showing a way to provide for production and distribution.

Most designers work with European and American concerns to distribute their designs, even when they do not have the means of production. Kossi Aguessy, as already mentioned, has worked with several European companies; American Stephen Burks has produced designs not only for Missoni but also Capallini, Calvin Klein, Estée Lauder,

and Boffi.⁴⁴ The Parisian-based fashion designer Sakina M’sa has partnered with Gemey-Maybelline and has been recognized for her experimentation with deconstructed apparel and for “straddling two cultures.”⁴⁵

One of the concerns within design production is maintaining a high level of craftsmanship. American Cheryl Riley has expressed this priority in her creative process. Ndidi Ekubia (fig. 13) and Magdalene Odundo have established a place in the international market with their own interpretations of traditional forms, moving them to a uniquely personal and transnational form. Similarly, the gifted Ndebele painter Esther Mahlangu brought her craft skills to the decoration of a BMW car, part of their program of Art Cars.⁴⁶ As Mahlangu brought the color theory and practice of architectural painting to Ndebele women, so Odili Donald Odita of Nigeria creates site-specific wall paintings and gallery work, reflecting his artistic goal to create “a fusion of cultures where times that seem far away and disparate have the ability to function within an almost seamless flow.”⁴⁷

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



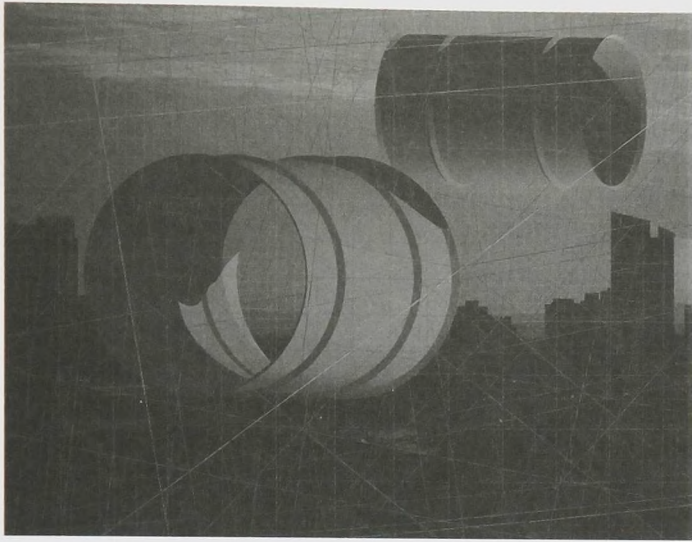


Figure 14
 ANDREW LYGHT
Air Rights NYLyght NY 6136, 2009–10
 Mixed media, hand-drawn color pencil lines on
 cotton photo rag paper
 22 × 27 in. (55.8 × 68.5 cm)
 Courtesy of the artist
 Photo: Andrew Lyght

the United States, and Asia.⁴⁸ He thus dubbed his creations *métissage* (“mixed race”) as a “metaphor for global culture.”⁴⁹

In the Caribbean, some global competition focuses on conceptual and cybernetic forms. This is seen in the work of the Cuban-born artist Alexandre Arrechea, Guyanese-born Andrew Lyght, and the Alice Yard collaborators in Trinidad (sculptor Christopher Cozier, designer Marlon Darbeau, architect Sean Leonard, publisher Richard Rawlings, and critic Nicholas Laughlin). Arrechea’s restless experimentations with materials and forms have resulted in highly poetic interpretations of objects that in his words “reach across worlds.” Architectural forms are imagined atop chairs or spinning tops or are unfurled around wheels in ways reminiscent of the fantastic architectural schemes

of eighteenth-century Italian conceptualist Piranesi. As Arrechea noted about his recent exploration of form:

The idea of the object “intersected” by other objects, or ideas like the rolled building, become an expression of the contemporary “cultural battle” or the drama of self-definition, which we all are in: who are we truly? The dysfunctional object as an artifact or engine perpetuated seamlessly and pervasively articulating the new worries in an attempt to broaden its own boundaries—I believe this can be a coherent way to intersect with global Africa.⁵⁰

The conceptual drawings of Andrew Lyght (fig. 14) explore the structural nature of pictorial space, seamlessly integrating photography, CAD technology, and drawing to produce scenes of buildings, water tanks, and crowded air spaces modified with digitally rendered structures that float above and among the images of “reality” in a kind of futuristic cityscape. Alice Yard in Port-au-Spain, Trinidad, functions of as a container for a network of young collaborators and contributors. As one member, critic and writer Nicholas Laughlin, observes, “Alice Yard offer[s] a possible sense of relevance to younger creative practitioners grappling with the imperative to survive in a mercenary time and place.”⁵¹ Their concern is navigating the Caribbean as both an “imagined” and “interconnected” space that reflects the movements of Caribbean’s outside the realities of tourism. As Cozier observed, “just look at the varied and unique circumstances of Cuba, Puerto Rico or Martinique. What happens if an artist arrives in Jamaica

Figure 12 (opposite left)
 BIRSEL + SECK / BIBI SECK
Design for Taboo Stool, 2010
 Computer rendering
 Courtesy of the artists

Figure 13 (opposite right)
 NDIDI EKUBIA
Feathered Twist, 2007
 Hand-raised Britannia silver
 8½ × 11¾ in. (22 × 30 cm)
 Courtesy of Peter Ticher
 Photo: Stephen Brayne

with a Haitian passport or Barbados with one from Guyana? How much paperwork is needed to invite someone from Cuba to another island?"⁵²

Architect Merwyn Awon in Barbados, works in more concrete ways. He and RTKL, Inc./The Freelon group have produced modernist architecture that features their personal interpretations of contemporary styles and alludes to geographical and cultural touchstones. In New York, architect Jack Travis, FAIA NOMAC, works in the mainstream, while also considering ways he can interject an Afro-centric ethos into his designs without relying on traditional materials and techniques that may not meet the needs of contemporary society. The work of these artists—as of all the artists in *The Global Africa Project*—demonstrates how designers in the global African world are finding ways to place their production on the global market despite setbacks and obstacles, while transforming attitudes about design in their home contexts. They are showing that what is popularly conceived of as an elitist arena is very much relevant to the lives of everyday people. By relying on materials at hand—whether natural, indigenous, or leftover cargo from foreign trade—artists are now being given free rein.

SOURCING LOCALLY

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

—FRIEDA LÜHL⁵³

Writing in *Africa Explores: 20th-Century African Art*, noted African art historian and museum founder Susan Vogel recalled painter Fode Camara's observation that the essence of African-ness in contemporary creative production is grounded in "amalgamation and recycling."⁵⁴ This describes a number of object-making practices in traditional African art, particularly in the Congo where objects are made with materials perceived to have power in order to achieve a desired effect or to communicate with a metaphysical power. Willie Birch's bone-infested shirt surrogate and the nouveau hunter shirts by the Groupe Bogolan Kasobane codify such amalgamated practices into an aesthetic approach that relates them to Western modernist movements or Assemblage. Recent art from the global African world demonstrates the creators' ingenuity in using available materials rather than imports, and in recognizing the impact of their production on local economies. The work of El Anatsui (fig. 15) and his students Nnenna Okore and Bright Ugochukwa Eke demonstrates the relevance of this accumulative approach in contemporary art. Additionally, their engagement with discarded manufactured elements, such as plastic bottles, metal bottle caps, and the metal sheaths around bottlenecks, brings meaning

Figure 15
EL ANATSUI
Skylines, 2008 (detail)
Aluminum, copper wire
8 × 27 ft. (243.8 × 823 cm)
Courtesy of the artist;
October Gallery, London
Photo: Ed Watkins



Figure 16
SHOMPOLE COLLECTION MAKERS
The Bakuba Shawl, 2010
Kenyan goat suede, snake skin, cow
leather
24¾ in. x 8 ft. 7 in. (61.5 x 261.5 cm)
Photo: Liz Gilbert



to materials and objects of daily life, making associations that resonate across time and place. At times this strategy is an economic solution, as El Anatsui explained to Alisa LaGamma, curator of African Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art:

As an artist I think I should work with processes and media that are immediately around me. And in Africa, just like everywhere in the world . . . we create waste. . . . And as an artist, I . . . have always even advised my students to work with materials that you don't have to spend anything to [get], where they have the freedom to play around. . . . and you can't play with something which is expensive.⁵⁵

And certainly that has been the impetus behind the use of materials by many African creators, such as Ousmane M'Baye whose furniture is made from recycled barrels and galvanized iron; or Olu Amoda who makes sculpture from found metal parts fashioned into gates for the doors of the security conscious in Lagos; and Romauld Hazoumè who makes masks, columns, and sideboards from discarded plastic and rubber containers, hoses, and implements.

This strategy of scrounging and collecting the remnants of foreign cargo dumped in various economies can provide occasions for political commentary, explicit or implicit in the work of artists in the global African world. In Chakaia Booker's work for example, the association of rubber with the exploitation of resources and people in Liberia cannot be ignored.⁵⁶ Romuald Hazoumè exposes the issue of pollution by petroleum companies in the Niger Delta—an

issue receiving renewed attention in the United States in the aftermath of the oil spilled from British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. About the pillar-like sculpture *TCHIN-TCHIN* Hazoumè notes:

I have used iconic oil canisters to construct an ironic working-man's version of the crystal champagne flute. The title represents a cynical salute to the "oiligarchs"—Your very good health! Tchintchin! (Cheers!).⁵⁷

The so-called "African" beads have also found a new, more indigenous source. Formerly traded primarily with Italy, former Czechoslovakia, and Romania, glass beads



Figure 17
MUD STUDIO / WERNER DU TOIT
AND PHILIPPA DU TOIT
Beaded Chandelier, 2004 (detail)
Clay, crystal, steel wire
Photo: Peter Murdock

are being made today by enterprising creators such as Nomoda Ebenezer Djaba (Mr. Cedi) using recycled glass which is crushed and fired in bead molds. A commodity formerly traded from abroad has become a local one. Cedi is the director and owner of the Retado Bead Industry in Odumasi/Krobo, Ghana, a family business where he once worked with his grandfather. The Krobo are known for their beads and Cedi is one of the best-known bead makers, selling both locally and internationally. His large workshop employs and trains local workers; similar workshops for recycled glass beads can be found in Kenya and Nigeria.

While these examples of local sourcing are specifically related to recycling and repurposing, another more traditional application of this strategy is to work with raw materials that are available locally. Aboubakar Fofana's dramatic indigo-dyed fabrics, for example, involve indigenous dyes and materials along with traditional techniques. The fashion statements of Anggy Haif reconfigure gourds and

local grasses into dramatic, fantastic garments, that exist somewhere between fashion and costume. Local animal products are another source. In Haiti, Giovanna Menard transforms cow horn and wood into rings, while in Kenya, in-country craftsmen working with the American photographer Liz Gilbert for the Shompole Collection also use horn to make cuffs and appointments. They transform goatskin into elegant shawls (fig. 16) that approximate the cloaks worn by the Masai and other nomadic peoples in the area. Combined with gold, pearls, garnets, and other semiprecious stones, these pieces pay homage to traditional forms while updating their style and aesthetics.

In other instances, local sourcing involves the use of local woods as in the furniture by Vincent Niamien of the Ivory Coast and Kossi Assou of Togo. While Niamien's distinctive chair shapes take their cues from traditional forms, Assou—who also has turned recycled metal oil barrels into seating and tables—gives a new interpretation to low seating forms and floor-orientated sleeping furniture. In South Africa, MUD Studio creates fabulous riffs on traditional crystal chandeliers in mud (fig. 17), while the Willow-lamp partnership turns premanufactured chains and fixings into incandescent fixtures that cascade through space. The distinctive shelving by Egg Designs recycles the format of lockers that were used by Africans in South Africa's diamond mines, bringing decorative motifs that locate them in nature. Heath Nash's lighting elements reconstitute plastic detergent bottles into attractive floral motifs that belie their origins. Beverly Price uses found letters and elements recycled from magazines in her jewelry adding

Figure 18
**MALENE B CUSTOM
 HANDMADE CARPETS**
Tap Tap, 2010
 Hand-tufted, hand-carved New
 Zealand wool
 6 × 9 ft. (182.8 × 274.3 cm)
 Courtesy of Malene B Custom
 Handmade Carpets



Figure 19
 ARTIST UNKNOWN;
 MADE IN ZIMBABWE
Beetle, 2000
 Tin
 Approx. 10 × 20 in.
 (25.4 × 50.8 cm)
 Courtesy of Phil Patton



a personal nuance to the work and inserting political content depending on the source publication.

The automobile has been a site of much invention in the global African world. While the auto has been a symbol of prestige and pride, particularly in the United States, vehicles in general—cars, trucks, and buses—have been the canvas for personal and civic expression in Africa and the Caribbean. Scholars such as Robert Farris Thompson have chronicled the “Tap-Tap” buses in Haiti—as well as their counterparts in the Congo and Nigeria—where “color, slogans, and phrases all work to pay homage to the gods and secure protection for their drivers.”⁵⁸ These colorful interventions have in turn inspired a rug project by American designer Malene B which relies on the rhythms and tones for its own pattern (fig. 18).

No period in the history of the automobile has seen so many global African designers involved in car design—Bibi Seck at Renault, Ed Welborn at General Motors, Earl Lucas at Ford, and Jeffrey Banks for Kia, for example. Yet, the remixing of automobile parts has long been a distinctive impulse in the *Global Africa* world. In addition to the toy cars that populate the global market—here represented by an example from Zimbabwe (fig. 19)—the Jamaican-British sculptor and installation artist Satch Hoyt has remixed tire rims into a sound piece that evokes urban spaces, and Tyree Guyton, the artist behind the renovative Heidelberg Project in Detroit, has taken to incorporating auto parts, such as car hoods and rims, into his found object aesthetic (fig. 20).

TRANSFORMING TRADITIONS

Afrika’s greatest design contribution to the world is its ability to merge high-end design skills with artisanship and furthermore utilizing nature resources that are readily available.

—SARA ABERA ALEMU⁵⁹

The *Global Africa* world represents a rich intersection between traditional craft and contemporary art practice, as creators continue to find contemporary interpretations of materials and techniques. Magdalene Odundo has found a contemporary interpretation of form in her pottery, drawing on her experience working and training with traditional practitioners in eastern and western Africa. More traditional ceramicists such as Nesta Nala have revived and passed on traditional skills in making Zulu beer pots to the next generation. Nala taught her daughters Jabu, Zanele, and Thembi. At the same time Ntombe Nala takes these forms and through virtuoso skill enlarges them until they transcend notions of utility. Clive Sithole defies gender roles through his adoption of ceramics as a career, indicating his masculine identity by the addition of bull motifs, a symbol thoroughly associated with men in Zulu society. Reuben Ndwandwe is credited with revitalizing men’s basketry among the Zulu (endangered when so many men left to work in the South African mines). He also revolutionized it through his innovative over-coiling technique. And Beauty Ngxongo introduced a unique shape, the oblong basketry form, thus inserting herself



Figure 20
THE HEIDELBERG PROJECT /
TYREE GUYTON
War Hero, 2004
Mixed media
57 × 42 in. (144.7 × 106.6 cm)
Courtesy of the Heidelberg
Project
Photo: Michelle Figurski`

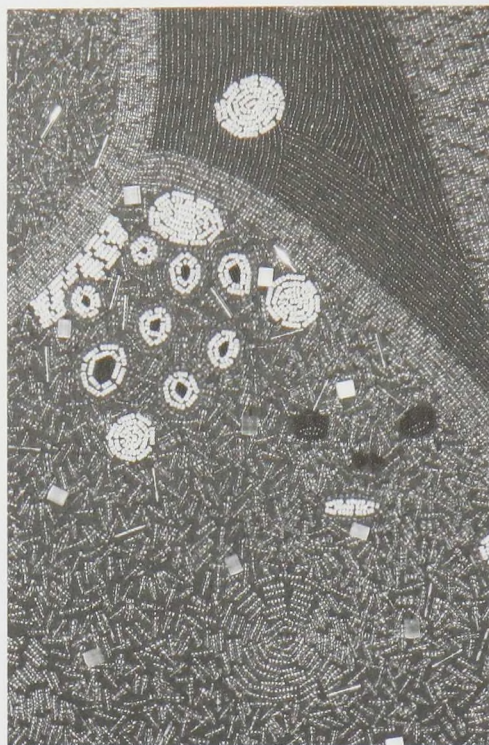


Figure 21
UBUHLE BEADS
Artist: Thulsile Hlatshwayo
Umontho (Wealth), 2008 (detail)
Fabric, glass beads
50 × 50 in. (127 × 127 cm)
Courtesy of Amaridian, New York
Photo: Robert Selby

into the traditionally Zulu male domain of basketry, as Sithole has done in ceramics.

One of the most interesting permutations of traditional African basketry has come with the introduction of telephone wire as a medium. Sandra Klopper, vice-dean of arts at the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa, reports that telephone wire began replacing hard-to-find copper and brass wire in the 1930s, but it was not widely adopted until the 1990s when manufacturers expanded the range of colors.⁶⁰ The work of zenzulu™ in *Global Africa* demonstrates the visual feast that this has brought to traditional patterns as they merge contemporary design and décor interests with traditional methods. Their innovative products respond to market demand. A recent line of wall pieces, for example, with overlapping floral motifs has greatly expanded the range of the basket form from which they are derived.

If materials and techniques are vehicles for conveying cultures from one part of the world to another, then Mary Jackson demonstrates the transmission and survival of African basketry techniques in the United States. Belonging to the Sea Islands community, off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina, Jackson produces a wide variety of forms that are suitable for a variety of uses. Among artists working in textiles and fabric, the Gee's Bend Quilters

Collective astounded the mainstream art world with their creations, displayed in a 2002 touring exhibition organized by Alvia Wardlaw and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Critics focused on the formal and aesthetic relationship of the strip-work quilts—a distinguishing feature of quilts in the African-American context—to abstract painting. ABC Carpet in New York has arranged to produce a number of carpet designs inspired by the Gee's Bend quilts.

Visual continuity merges with cultural continuity in the quilts produced by the Siddi in the Karnataka state of southern India. Descendants of Africans who came to India through a variety of circumstances over the last few centuries, the Siddi, in the words of African diasporic art historian Henry Drewal, "are renowned for their unique patchwork quilts known as *kawandi*. *Kawandi* consist of pieces of old, worn-out clothing gathered by the quilters from family and friends."⁶¹ A cotton sari is used as the backing for the quilt. "Starting at one corner of the *sari*, they begin to work their way around, fixing the patches with a running backstitch that eventually covers the entire quilt, both patchwork top and *sari* bottom. The stitches exhibit a distinctive rhythm that is part of the 'visual signature' of the artist along with the colors, sizes, shapes, and designs of the cloth patches."⁶²

This type of abstract composition achieves a more symbolic content in the Haitian “drapos” whose beaded compositions signify the various deities celebrated through Vodun. The work of George Valris exemplifies the creative license each craftsperson can bring to this form. The density of the beadwork creates a rich composition that invites comparison with the work of the Ubhle beaders in South Africa (fig. 21). Their work combines abstraction and figuration seamlessly into compositions that can reach monumental dimensions, belying the small scale of the component parts.

Because many designers, such as Peter Mabeo in Botswana, promote the availability of skilled craftsmen available to work with designers on production, trends in the design world now focus on the unique or small edition over mass production. This style of collaboration also relates to so-called green issues in providing nonintrusive techniques to bring designs to fruition. Similarly, the Manufacture sénégalais des arts décoratifs in Thies, outside of Dakar, has been directed by Pap Ibra Tal since 1966 as a resource for artists and artisans specifying high-quality tapestries in their work. In 2009 they collaborated with sculptor Melvin Edwards, translating several of his sculptural motifs into tapestry. The location in Senegal provides an alternative to artists more accustomed to going to China for such products.

Jöel Andrianomearisoa also creates intricate textiles that challenge the notion of mass production. His textiles are juxtaposed with those of Chakaia Booker who works in reconfigured automobile tires. Maren Hassinger twists

text-laden newspaper into wearable forms that mimic costume accessories used in traditional and ritual dance. Craft and sculptural forms become animated, mutable, and transformative. Like Andrianomearisoa’s work Hassinger’s creations contain a performative nuance. These artists tread the line between design, craft, and art. Likewise Sonya Clark affirms her affinity for what could be described as an aesthetic of improvisational materiality when she notes that her “creative process starts with a question about the function or use of an object of material culture.”⁶³ In a similar way, Joyce Scott and Xenobia Bailey engage craft skills such as beading and crochet to produce highly crafted glass vessels, jewelry, and apparel that pay homage to African and transnational roots. Their materials and techniques also convey very contemporary issues and subject matter.

What Clark, Scott, and Bailey also do in their work is to disrupt the usual connection of material and function (a necklace made out of entwined branches, beaded necklaces with narrative elements, and cotton clothing rendered in crocheted yard). They encourage us to seek synchronicities between genres and materials in other instances. Hair culture has long played a role in the global African universe. In traditional African society, hair, like

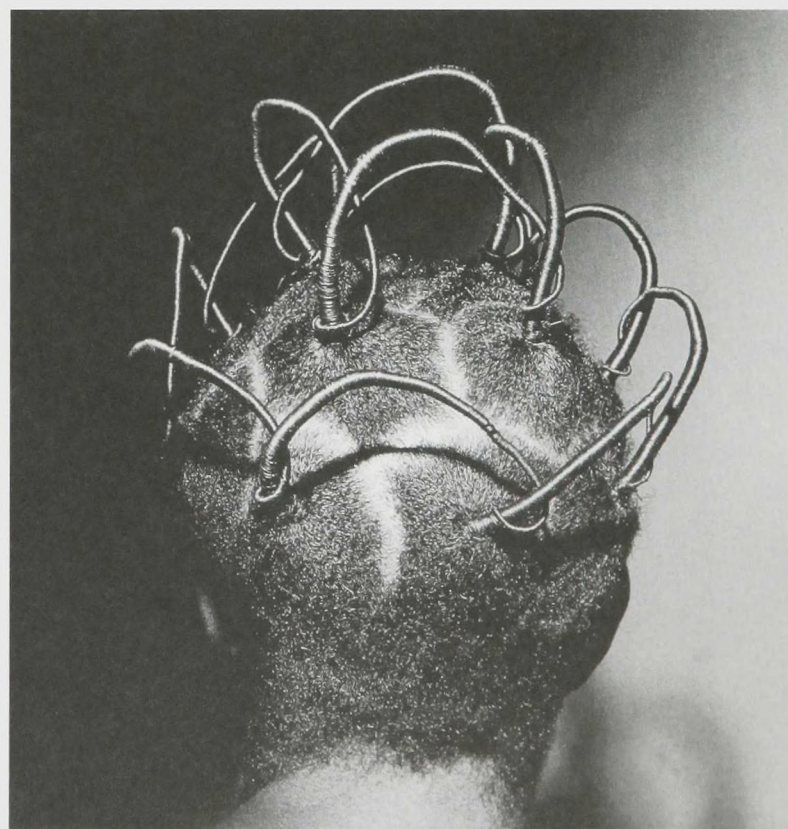


Figure 22
J.D. 'OKHAI OJEIKERE
Ogun Pari, 2000
Gelatin silver print
24 × 20 in. (60.9 × 50.8)
Studio Museum in Harlem; Museum
purchase with funds provided by the
acquisition Committee 1.20.1

textiles are important indicators of status, age, and position. Its artistic role is reflected J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere's efforts to chronicle the various styles of hair and head wraps in contemporary African society (fig. 22). As ubiquitous folk signage in Africa advertises the hirsute virtuosity of various stylists, in Europe and the United States competitions take this African tradition to new heights of creativity and invention. These national competitions by salon stylists are dubbed "Hair Wars." Evetta Petty, owner of Harlem Heaven's Hat Boutique, creates hat shapes that have the layered complexity of hair and headwraps, another indicator of the cross-genre possibilities between materials and function. Los Angeles-based artist (and sometime hair salon stylist) Mark Bradford brings together the economic and design elements of hair in the global African context in his *Miss China Silk* series of 2005. By creating elaborate African-inspired hairstyles on Asian models, he reminds us of the intricate relationship between Asia (particularly India, the source of human hair used in hair extensions, and China, exporter of this hair), Africa, and African America.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

[The] Afrikan designers' way of thinking is influenced by their culturally rich lives, the unique experiences that come from living in developing contexts, as well as their socio-political implications. . . . [T]hese often provide designers with challenges to come up with unique, creative, functional and cost-effective design solutions that will impact on the lives of ordinary people.

—LINDI NDEBELE KOKA⁶⁴

The commitment of African designers and craftsmen to use their skills to solve local needs and sustain their communities is probably the most inspiring story to emerge from *The Global Africa Project*. In the context of the mission and concerns of the Museum of Arts and Design, the distinction often made between the agents of conception and the agents of construction of objects is provocative. In addition to the relationship between craftspersons and the market, there are the questions of how individuals are positioned within the market, and what kind of recognition or identification they receive.

As a result, the meaning of "design" and "craft" in the context of evolving societies cannot be ignored; nor can its role as a catalyst for social change. Observers

of social, political, and economic aspects of the global African world—such as Ester Boserup and Jane Kani Edward—have noted that "craft" is often the default resource in communities when the global situation disrupts women's traditional roles in society.⁶⁵ For example, when agriculture—one domain of women—is disrupted, women frequently fall back on craft work, which formerly might have constituted the fabrication of everyday personal items. This development has been encouraged by international agencies for a number of decades, and especially so today in communities devastated by HIV/AIDS, where large numbers of supporters for families and communities have been lost.

Various non-government organizations (NGOs), such as AIDS to ARTISANS, and community-based endeavors have provided economic resources to groups in Africa. These include Ardmore Ceramic Art (South Africa); Bandid (Haiti); Ba Ba Blankets (Ghana); Shompole Collection Makers and Brandmasai (Kenya); the Gahaya Links Weaving Association and Same Sky (Rwanda); the Chalky Mountain Potters (Barbados); the Gees Bend Quilters Collective and Alabama Chanin (United States); the Etsha Weavers Group (Botswana); and Monkey Biz and Wire Women (South Africa).

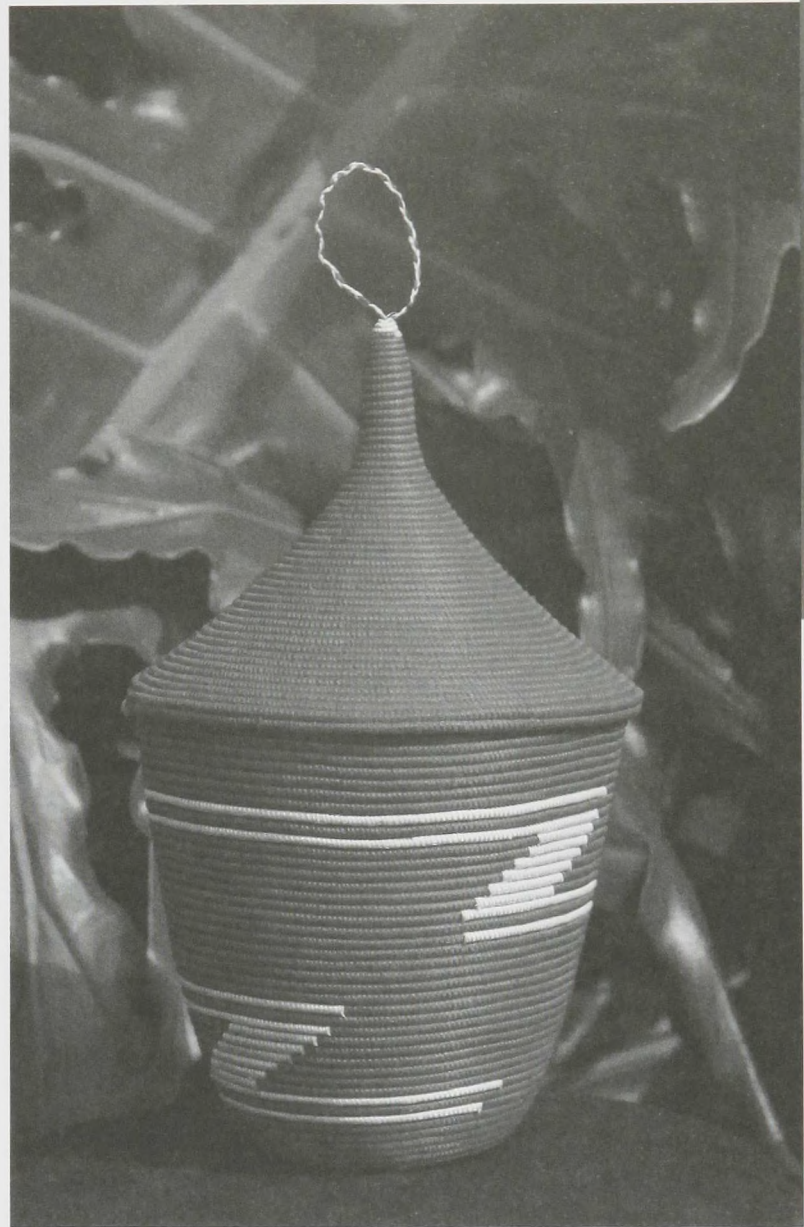
Artists shown in *The Global Africa Project* who work outside mainstream markets, often still have access to them. This inevitably raises questions: What is the working relationship between a creator and his or her liaisons with the "outside" world? How is the creator recognized for his or her creative output? How does compensation for works of art reach their creators? And finally, have the demands of the global art market had an impact on traditional techniques, motifs, and so on?

The collaborative model has certainly been instrumental in preserving traditional techniques and encouraging innovation, providing a market for artisans, and training for community residents. The question now becomes: how are these "anonymous" individuals credited and compensated in these situations? In a few instances, such as in Barbados, Jamaica, and Ghana, government initiatives promote craft as a national expression and a transnational commodity. These include some of the most interesting permutations on the interrelationship between artists and craftspersons: collaborations between visual artists and traditional craftspersons. In the 1980s, for example, several

Figure 23
GAHAYA LINKS WEAVING
ASSOCIATION
Friendship Cathedral Basket,
2007
Sweet grass, sisal
12 in. (30.4 cm)
Courtesy of Fairwinds
Trading, Inc.
Photo: Dean Ericson

artists in the United States—such as Tina Giraud of Louisiana, who worked with bead artists in Haiti—began to explore these possibilities. Today, several artists have committed themselves to working with craftsmen around the world. They will realize their artistic vision while providing economic resources to those communities. New York artist Liza Lou, for example, recently began to work with communities in South Africa in producing her elaborately beaded projects.⁶⁶

Synchronicity between a global arena and a local situation can lead to unexpected results. The Ugandan designer Sanaa Gateja, whose neckpieces made from recycled paper were shown in the *Design Made in Africa* exhibition in 2005, has been working with the wives of Ugandan soldiers, making beads and fashioning them into bags and other items. Gateja's American colleague Kathe Kexel came upon a cache of Obama campaign literature that was to be recycled. She sent it to Gateja in Uganda, and in March 2010, at the Go-Green Expo in New York City, she displayed some of the paper-beaded products made by Gateja and the women beaders who worked with him. At the expo Kexel met sculptor and installation artist Algeron Miller who was impressed by the beadwork. He suggested a collaboration on a large-scale work based on his conception. Kexel, Gateja, and Miller collaborated by texting, email, and telephone, with Miller submitting a design concept from New York that was transformed into *Change*, an 8-by-10-foot wall piece made in Uganda of beads of varied shapes that reveal snippets of content related to the Obama campaign. Not only does this piece reveal the



intense interest in Obama memorabilia in Africa, but it also demonstrates how a collaboration between an artist and a designer with a dedicated workforce could transform the aspirations of the workers in creating objects for a global market.⁶⁷

This has already been achieved by the Gahaya Links Weaving Association in Rwanda, which was founded in 2004 by Janet Nkubana and Joy Ndungutse to help women in the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The association has effected a reconciliation between former enemies and created economic opportunities for over four thousand genocide survivors who weave traditional Rwanda baskets (fig. 23), with designs created by their

own designer, master weavers in each cooperative train and mentor other weavers and ensure quality specifications and standards. The association creates baskets for local resorts and markets and has brokered a deal with the Fairwinds Trading Association to sell an exclusive line of “peace baskets” through Macy’s.⁶⁸

While this exhibition focuses on the creation of objects by citizens of the global African world, it was inevitable that research would shed light on the working conditions of the creators of those objects. One of the most striking aspects of community involvement occurs when creators from within design for their communities and find solutions—both economic and cultural—to benefit those communities. Over the last two years Maker Faire Africa has begun to assert its influence. It held its first event in Ghana in 2009 and a second event is planned for Kenya in 2010. The Faire celebrates “arts, crafts, engineering, science projects and the Do-It-YOURSELF (DIY) mindset.” The concept is the brainchild of venture catalyst and entrepreneur Emeka Okafor, whose on-going blog *Timbuktu Chronicles* and *MAKE Magazine* report on new products, tools, and innovations in developing countries and the United States.⁶⁹ Okafor wanted to create “an event where Afrigadget-type innovations, inventions and initiatives can be brought to life, supported, amplified, propagated.”⁷⁰ The Faire focuses on talent, and entrepreneurial spirit in manufacturing remains trapped in the informal sectors—bricoleurs and tinkerers who ingeniously meet local demands.

Perhaps best-known among these inventors is William Kamkwamba whose exploits were recorded in the book *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*.⁷¹ As a young teenager in Malawi he was forced to leave school due to the poverty of his family. Neither his family nor the Wimbe public primary school had power or clean water. After seeing a photograph of a windmill in a textbook, he designed his own windmill from found parts and local materials. This personal initiative was so successful that by the age of twenty he has partnered with an NGO based in Stamford, Connecticut, that builds public schools in developing countries. Kamkwamba also teaches other students how to build windmills, fostering invention and productivity in their communities and villages. Kamkwamba now has his own company, Moving Windmills, and his mission heralds the future of Africa and the world: “Moving Windmills is

about clean power, water, sanitation and education but we don’t have experience building schools . . . we need to help my village educate the next generation of children in a better environment that I had.”⁷²

Many endeavors in design and craft in the *Global Africa* world also speak to the preservation and transmitting of skills to another generation. The Black Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans create elaborate costumes that express community ethos and history and are working to pass the production skills on to a new generation. These New World Indians take their reference and inspiration from their deep respect and homage to the indigenous Native American cultures of the United States. Black Americans have had a close and complex relationship with a people who had a great and powerful cultural legacy. The making of the “suits”—brightly colored beaded feather creations weighing up to 300 pounds and measuring 8 to 10 feet in height—and the tradition of “masking” at Mardi Gras involve families and communities collectively throughout the year.

Big Chief Allison “Tootie” Montana is revered as the “prettiest” of the spectacular Mardi Gras Indians, often dancing with his grandchildren in suits he and his family have made.⁷³ In 2004 a new Mardi Gras Indian appeared—Big Chief Victor Harris of the Mandingo (Fi Yi Yi) warriors. Harris’s suit was African in design, and its beaded iconography demonstrated the vitality, evolution, and continuance of a tradition designed to keep the community committed to common goals and values as captured in the 2010 television series *Tremé*.⁷⁴

This commitment to passing on traditions that are closely connected to the self-image of a community or group captured in the photography of Seydou Keita and Malik Sidibe in Mali and a number of popular photo studios in Nigeria and Kenya.⁷⁵ Working collaboratively with their clients, these photographers created portraits that both affirmed traditional roles and presented newly crafted persona inflected by a sense of modern (meaning Western) values. In a comparable way the Ga people of southern Ghana celebrate an individual’s life through their funerary traditions whereby the individual can customize the style and form of their coffin to reflect their persona. Generations of skilled craftsmen, such as Kane Quaye and his nephew Paa Joe, have used their woodworking skills to bring these visions to life (fig. 24). *Global Africa* includes a

Figure 24
PAA JOE
Lion-Shaped Coffin, 2001
Wood, enamel, raffia, fabric
6 ft. 10 in. x 28 in. x 8 ft. 6 in.
(210.8 x 71.1 x 259 cm)
The Mint Museum, Charlotte,
North Carolina. Museum Purchase:
Exchange Funds from the Gift of
Harry and Mary Dalton and Gift of
Michael Schenck and the Savé Val-
ley Conservation Company. 2002.86



coffin in the shape of one of the numerous coastal forts in Ghana (formerly known as the Gold Coast) that served to protect the country's economic and strategic interests and to warehouse slaves before shipment to the Americas. This may be an ironic vessel for an African to spend time in for eternity, but Paa Joe has brought an inventive eye and attention to detail that characterizes the genre of Ghana fantasy coffins.

Design and craft are important vehicles for resuscitating challenged neighborhoods in the United States that resemble a developing nation under siege. Often it is the self-taught designer, artist, or inventor who takes decisive action to improve the quality of the environment that is home to the community. In a devastated neighborhood of Detroit, Tyree Guyton began to reclaim the abandoned houses in which drug dealers and their clients had been operating. He turned each structure into a sacred sculpture or site installation which was meant to drive away negative community forces. Using found objects—automobile and bicycle parts, dolls, toys, televisions, and lots of paint—he transformed each building, house by house, street by street, into a ritual environment, the Heidelberg Project, named after one of the streets, protected by the energy and power of recycled objects. The drug culture left the area.

Loring Cornish chose classic row houses in Baltimore as the site for his creation of "Praise houses." He covered the facades of the three-story houses with found and recycled

broken glass, colorful tiles, mirror glass, paint, pebbles, and pennies. They illuminate the neighborhood with an almost celestial presence of power and energy. Cornish believes that his work is a way through divine sources to protect and empower the place in which he lives and works. These two artists represent one of the most potent forms of African-centered spiritual practice. They have reclaimed a negative space, transforming it into a sacred site of power and spiritual energy.

The Global Africa Project is organic by design and intent. The makers, thinkers, tinkerers, inventors, designers, doers, and seekers from the African diaspora are ever changing and evolving. Senegalese designer Xuly B'et asserts that "Africa is a melting pot of influences: you can call it 'ethnic.' But it's also important that this diverse Africa be competitive, a source of inspiration. It creates positive energy. The setback however is that you don't hear much about African [Diasporic] designers."⁷⁶ Ultimately, the question becomes, why *The Global Africa Project*? Art critic and cultural historian Franklin Sirmans assesses the role of the artistic African mind in the larger world—forcing us to answer, why not?⁷⁷ The significant effects that black sensibilities have had on the world state and the ability of global African creators to "continuously reshape and assert" new aesthetic lexicons demonstrate that creative strength in that sector is "by its own existential nature, unbreakable."⁷⁸

1. Quoted in Katerina Gregos, "Kendell Geers: Out of Africa," in *Africa*, sale cat., Phillips de Pury & Company, New York, May 2010, 57.
2. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 401.
3. See Ron Nixon, "Just When Africa's Luck was Changing," *New York Times*, August, 1, 2009, available online at www.nytimes.com.
4. See Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).
5. See *Changes-Challenges*, Changes: Successful Partnerships for Africa's Growth Challenge, conference held March 10–11, 2009, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, conference brochure, http://www.changes-challenges.org/pdf/tanzania_brochure.pdf.
6. This is a reference to Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989).
7. Bono, "Africa Reboots," *New York Times*, April 18, 2010, available online, www.nytimes.com.
8. Press release/review, May 2001, quoted from *Universes in Universe: Visual Arts from Africa, Asia, the Americas* (under "specials, exhibitions") <http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/>.
9. Press release, The Studio Museum of Harlem, Summer 2008, http://www.studiomuseum.org/pdf/flow_release.pdf.
10. Quoted from "Infinite Island," under "Exhibitions / Past / 2007," <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org>.
11. "Afrikan Thought Leaders," *Design in Formation*, no. 13 (2009), 26–37.
12. Yinka Shonibare, "Yinka Shonibare Talks about *Un Ballo in Maschera*, 2004," *Artforum International* (January 2005), 172–73.
13. Jared Diamond wrote: "Whites had arrived, imposed centralized government and brought material goods whose value New Guineans instantly recognized. . . . In New Guinea all these goods were referred to collectively as 'cargo.'" Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, 14.
14. "Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill," *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/>.
15. See Jeffrey Gettleman, "America's Role Seen in Uganda Anti-Gay Push," *New York Times* January 3, 2010, online at <http://www.nytimes.com>.
16. Tony Whitfield, email to Lowery Stokes Sims, May 6, 2010.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., file attachment.
19. Serge Mouangue, email to Elizabeth Kirrane and Lowery Stokes Sims, May 6, 2010.
20. Maude Southwell Wahlman, *Signs and Symbols: African Images in African American Quilts* (Atlanta GA: Tinwood Books, 2001), 40.
21. Lydie Diakhaté, "Rachid Koraïchi," in Lynn Gompert, ed., *The Poetics of Cloth: African Textiles/Recent Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 2008), 62.
22. Quoted in exhibition description for *Rachid Koraïchi: Ecstatic Flow*, June 10–July 10, 2010, October Gallery, London, under "exhibitions," www.octobergallery.co.uk.
23. Fashion Fair launched the careers of noted black model Pat Cleveland, media personality Janet Langhart Cohen, actress Judy Pace, and actor Richard Roundtree. In addition to European couturiers, the Fair also showcased the work of black designers such as Stephen Burrows, James Daugherty, B. Michael, and Quinton de Alexander. The Fashion Fair brand then spun off a line of cosmetics specially colored to complement the complexions of black women. See "History," *Ebony Fashion Fair*, <http://www.ebonyfashionfair.com>.
24. For Wayo, see John Owoo, review of *Art in the Garden 2*, December 2003, Foundation for Contemporary Art, Ghana, <http://www.fcaghana.org/>.
25. RZA with Chris Norris, *The Wu-Tang Manual* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 63.
26. Ibid.
27. Kobena Mercer, "Radio Ethiopia: African Transcultural Influences," in *Africa*, 32.
28. Anna Piaggi, "Fashion: Soul and 'Body,'" *Africa di Missoni per Italia 90* (Milan: Edizioni Electa, 1990), 25.
29. Ibid., 27.
30. Camilla Canocchi, "New Designer Spotlight: South Africa's Black Coffee Steps into the Global Spotlight," *JC Report: Inside Global Fashion Trends*, July 29, 2009, (search, "black coffee"), <http://jcreport.com>.
31. Lisa Marie Harris, "Transcending Cultures," Museum of Arts and Design, blog entry, November 9, 2009 (search "Lisa Marie Harris"), <http://www.madblog.org>.
32. Wahlman, *Signs and Symbols*, 36, 40.
33. Ralph J. Bellantoni, "Exhibit Showcases Newark's Newest Generation of Artists," review of *Brick City 07101*, July 31, 2009, <http://www.mycentraljersey.com>.
34. See Monica L. Miller, *Slaves to Fashion* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2009).
35. Daniele Tamagni, *Gentlemen of Bacongo*, preface by Paul Smith (London: Trolley, Ltd., 2007).
36. See Robert Farris Thompson, "An Introduction to Transatlantic Black Art History," in Roger D. Abrahams and John F. Szew, eds., *Discovering Afro-America*, International Studies in Sociology and Social Anthropology, vol. 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1975).
37. "Afrikan Thought Leaders," 29.
38. Ibid., 33.
39. See Tiana W. Evans, "Interview with Kossi Aguessy," Museum of Arts and Design, blog entry February 1, 2010 (search "tiana evans"), <http://www.madblog.org>.
40. Taslim Martin, email to Lowery Stokes Sims, April 20, 2010.
41. "Afrikan Thought Leaders," 34.
42. Ibid., 33.
43. Ibid., 34.
44. See Tiana W. Evans, "Interview with Stephen Burks," Museum of Arts and Design, blog entry, March 8, 2010 (search "tiana evans"), <http://www.madblog.org>.

45. See artist's website, <http://www.sakinamsa.com/>; and Bérénice Geoffroy-Schneiter, *Africa is in Style* (New York: Assouline Publishing, 2006), 73.
46. For history, see "BMW Art Cars" (BMW 525i by Esther Mahlangu, 1991, includes video) at <http://www.bmwdrives.com>.
47. "Statements," Odili Donald Odita website, <http://www.odilidonaldodita.com>.
48. Gaba, email to Christine Y. Kim, quoted in *Tresses*, exh. cat. (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2005).
49. Exhibition announcement, "Tresses, 16 August–15 September 2007," under "Artists / Gaba," Michael Stevenson Gallery, <http://www.michaelstevenson.com>.
50. Alexandre Arrechea, email to Lowery Stokes Sims, May 31, 2010.
51. Laughlin, quoted in Christopher Cozier, "A Critical Space," in this volume.
52. Cozier, "A Critical Space," in this volume.
53. "African Thought Leaders," 29.
54. Susan Vogel, "The Official Story," in *Africa Explores: Twentieth-Century African Art*, essays by Walter E. A. Van Beek, et al. (New York: Center for African Art in association with Prestel-Verlag, Munich, 1991), 184.
55. Alisa LaGamma, "Interview with El Anatsui," January 21, 2008, Met Podcast and transcript, Metropolitan Museum of Art, <http://www.metmuseum.org>.
56. See Lowery Stokes Sims, "Seeing Chakaia Booker's Sculpture," in *Chakaia Booker*, exh. cat. (New York: Marlborough Galleries, 2009), n.p.
57. From Romouald Hazoumé, artist's statement, in this volume.
58. See Robert Farris Thompson, "Tap-Tap, Fula-Fula, Kíá- Kíá: The Haitian Bus in Atlantic Perspective," *African Arts* 29, no. 2 (spring 1996), 36–45.
59. "African Thought Leaders," 29.
60. Sandra Klopper, "Necessity and Invention: The Art of Coiled Basketry in Southern Africa," in Dale Rosengarten, Theodore Rosengarten, and Enid Schildkrout, eds., *Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art*, exh.cat. (New York: Museum for African Art, 2008,), 179.
61. Henry Drewal, email to Elizabeth Edwards Kirrane, June 18, 2010.
62. Ibid.
63. Sonya Clark, email to Elizabeth Edwards, Museum of Arts and Design, February 22, 2008.
64. "Afrikan Thought Leaders," 26.
65. See, e.g., Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970); and Jane Kani Edward, *Sudanese Women Refugees: Transformations and Future Imaginings* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
66. Keith Recker, "Grit and Glitter," *Hand/Eye* (Summer 2009), 2–3.
67. Algernon Miller and Lowery Stokes Sims, conversation, New York, June 17, 2010.
68. Kelly Parker, "Rwandan Hand-woven Baskets are Weaving a Path to Peace for African Women," *Louisiana Weekly*, December 28, 2009 (search "Rwandan baskets"), www.louisianaweekly.com.
69. <http://timbuktuchronicles.blogspot.com/>.
70. Website, <http://makerfaire.com>; see also <http://makezine.com/magazine/>.
71. William Kamkwamba and Bryan Meador, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope* (New York: William Morrow, 2009).
72. William Kamkwamba blog, <http://williamkamkwamba.com>.
73. William A. Fagaly, "He's the Prettist: A Tribute to Big Chief Allison 'Tootie' Montana's 50 Years of Mardi Gras Indian Suiting," *Louisiana Folk Life / Louisiana's Living Traditions*, November 21, 2006 (search "Fagaly"), <http://www.louisianafolklife.org>.
74. *Tremé* (2010), American television drama, aired on the HBO cable network. Created by David Simon and Eric Overmyer, it is set in Tremé, a New Orleans neighborhood, three months after Hurricane Katrina, as ordinary citizens try to rebuild their lives, culture, and community.
75. See Christopher Pinney and Nicolas Peterson, eds., *Photography's Other Histories* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).
76. Bererice Geogrey-Schwiter, *Africa is in Style* (New York: Assouline, 2006), 13.
77. Franklin Sirmans, "An American Art Job," in Valerie Cassel Oliver and Franklin Sirmans, eds., *Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art Since 1970* (Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 2005), 15.
78. Ibid., 26.



SONYA CLARK
Roots Necklace, 2002
Linen, silk
Diam. 12 in. (30.4 cm)
Collection of the artist
Photo: Tom McInville



SONYA CLARK
*Hook Head from the Crossroads
Series, 2003*
Wool, felt, beads
20 × 22 × 12 in.
(50.8 × 55.8 × 30.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Tom McInville

Esu, the Yoruba deity (*orisa*) who serves as a messenger between the other *orisa* and mankind, is known for his phallic headdress that points toward the earth.



Presenting the makers, thinkers, tinkerers, inventors, designers, doers, and seekers from the African diaspora, *The Global Africa Project* displays the truly global—and extraordinarily varied—nature of being African, or African-descended, in the context of contemporary arts and design. Accompanying a groundbreaking exhibition, this volume reveals, without attempting to define an overarching African identity or aesthetic, the ever-changing stories of individuals working in the psychic and physical space that is known as “Africa” in the world today.

ISBN-978-3-7913-5084-4



9 783791 350844

WWW.PRESTEL.COM