

RESILIENCE, RESISTANCE AND REVIVAL

in 20th-Century Yoruba Art

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Kruizenga Art Museum, Hope College
Catalog for exhibition: “Resilience, Resistance
and Revival in 20th-Century Yoruba Art”

Exhibition dates: January 17—May 16, 2020

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Kruizenga Art Museum at Hope College

Catalog by Charles Mason
Photography by Andrew Near



RESILIENCE, RESISTANCE AND REVIVAL IN 20TH-CENTURY YORUBA ART

The Yoruba are one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa, numbering more than 40 million people. The majority of Yoruba live in southwestern Nigeria, where from the 12th to the 18th centuries, the Yoruba kingdoms of Ife and Oyo ranked among the most powerful states in West Africa. A succession of civil wars and conflicts with neighboring ethnic groups seriously weakened the Yoruba during the 19th century, leaving them vulnerable to invasion and colonization by European nations. Great Britain was the primary colonizer of Yoruba lands and people, starting with the seizure of Lagos in 1861 and culminating with the establishment of the British Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria in 1914.

The imposition of British rule affected every aspect of Yoruba society and culture. In the arts, the diminished power and wealth of Yoruba kings and chiefs meant less patronage for artists who produced household furnishings, clothing and ceremonial objects for the Yoruba ruling classes. The conversion of increasing numbers of Yoruba to Christianity and Islam reduced demand for sculptures, paintings and other art forms associated with traditional Yoruba religion. Further, the introduction of imported manufactured goods undermined many of the traditional arts used in everyday Yoruba domestic life, including textiles, ceramics, basketry and metalwork. Yet, despite all the challenges, traditional Yoruba art survived the impact of British colonization, and contributed to a growing sense of Yoruba ethnic pride during that period.

After Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960, the Yoruba found themselves competing for power and resources with other Nigerian ethnic groups, especially the Hausa in the north and the Igbo in the east. These ethnic rivalries created a new context in which art became an important means of preserving and promoting Yoruba identity and culture. The first distinctly Yoruba art movement emerged in the city of Osogbo in the early 1960s, and quickly attracted national and international attention. Additional Yoruba art movements arose in the cities of Ibadan and Lagos in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the collective success of which helped to ensure that Yoruba culture remains vibrant and relevant within Nigeria and beyond to this day.

Resilience, Resistance and Revival was organized by the Kruizenga Art Museum in conjunction with Hope College Art History Professor Anne Heath and the students from her Spring 2019 Art 360 Class: Nina Kay, Sylvia Rodriguez, Holle Wade, and Caleigh White. The museum is grateful to Professor Heath and her students for the research and presentation ideas that underpin this exhibition. The museum is also immensely grateful to all of the donors and lenders who made this exhibition possible: especially Dr. Bruce and Ann Haight of Grand Rapids, MI, as well as Mary Vande Poel '59 of Zeeland, MI; Leif Jacobsen '60 of Sarasota, FL; Dr. Neal '68 and Elizabeth Sobania of Lakewood, WA; and Yorgo and Kelly Demtrakopoulos of Kalamazoo, MI.



TRADITIONAL YORUBA ART

Traditional Yoruba art encompasses a wide range of genres, from mural painting and wood sculpture to textiles, ceramics, basketry and metalwork. It includes objects used in both secular and religious contexts. The production of traditional Yoruba art was historically divided by gender, with men practicing the arts of weaving, woodcarving and metalsmithing, while women practiced the arts of mural painting, ceramics and basketry. Art making was often a hereditary occupation, with family members working together and passing down knowledge and skills from generation to generation. Artists were typically well respected in their communities, and although they usually did not sign their works, their names were often known and preserved in local memory for many years.

The social and cultural disruptions caused by civil wars, external conflicts and British colonization during the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries had a detrimental impact on many traditional Yoruba art forms. In particular, the integration of Nigeria into Britain's global colonial economy created new jobs that lured many people away from traditional art occupations, and introduced new competition into the market for secular art products such as textiles, ceramics, baskets and metal-wares. At the same time, the widespread conversion of many Yoruba to Christianity and Islam led to a decline in demand for traditional religious

art, while the reduced power and wealth of the Yoruba kings and chiefs led to a decline in demand for traditional ceremonial art. Nonetheless, traditional Yoruba art survived during the 20th century, and became an important vehicle for preserving and promoting Yoruba identity and culture, first in the context of British colonial rule and later in the context of competition with other Nigerian ethnic groups.



Egungun Dance Costume

Nigerian, Yoruba

Early to mid-20th century

Cotton, silk, velvet, metal

Hope College Collection, 2019.70

Egungun is a type of Yoruba masquerade in which the spirits of deceased ancestors return to the world of the living through the forms of elaborately costumed dancers. Egungun masquerades were traditionally held at festivals, funerals and other important community events. The returned spirits were thought to bring good luck and protection to the community, and were also invoked to settle disputes and reinforce social bonds. This Egungun costume is made from strips of brightly colored indigenous and imported cloth that would have covered the dancer's head and body. As the dancer whirled through space, the costume's textile strips would have fanned out to spread blessings on the audience. Although Egungun ceremonies became less common over the course of the 20th century as more Yoruba converted to Christianity and Islam, the custom survived and is still practiced in parts of Nigeria today.



Sacred Twin Figure (*ere ibeji*)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Early to mid-20th century

Wood

Gift of Leif Jacobson '60, 1985.4.16

The Yoruba have one of the highest rates of twin births in the world. Twins are considered auspicious in Yoruba culture and are believed to be exceptionally spiritual beings with a strong affinity for the deities Sango and Eshu. Traditionally, if one or both of a set of twins died in childhood, their family would commission carved wooden figures called *ere ibeji* to commemorate the deceased children and to function as repositories for their souls. The carved figures were often kept on the family altar, and were sometimes ritually fed, bathed, clothed and cared for as if they were real children. Although *ibeji* sculptures commemorate deceased children, the figures are usually represented as idealized adults with hairstyles, facial scarifications and other markers of identity that are appropriate to the region where the figures were made. This figure is typical of *ibeji* sculptures from the area around Abeokuta in Ogun State.

Agricultural Ritual Staff and Sheath

(opa orisa Oko)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Early to mid-20th century

Iron, wood, leather, beads

Hope College Collection, 2018.49A-B

Historically, many Yoruba people lived in villages and supported themselves by growing crops and raising animals on small family farm plots. This ceremonial staff was used in rituals honoring Oko, the Yoruba god of agriculture. It is made of iron re-claimed from old hoe blades. Between ritual uses, the staff would have been stored in a beaded sheath to protect it and preserve its spiritual power. As Nigeria became more urbanized and less reliant on small-scale farming in the second half of the 20th century, staffs like this fell out of common use and have ceased being made.







Ifa Divination Bowl (agere ifa)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Early to mid-20th century

Wood

Purchased with funds donated by Neal '68

and Elizabeth Sobania, 2019.72

Ifa is another name for Orunmila, the Yoruba god of wisdom and knowledge. In traditional Yoruba culture, people with problems may seek guidance from Orunmila with the help of a diviner called a *babalawo* (male) or *iyanifa* (female). The divination process begins with the diviner casting sixteen sacred palm nuts from hand to hand. Depending on the number of nuts that are left in the diviner's hands after each cast, he or she then uses a pointed wand to make marks on a powder-covered tray. The pattern of marks on the tray in turn directs the diviner to one of 256 verses in a sacred oral text called the *Odu Ifa*, which the diviner recites and interprets according to the client's situation. Diviners undergo years of training to learn the divination process, and to memorize and understand all of the *Odu Ifa* verses. Rooted in traditional Yoruba religion, Ifa divination practice survived through the 20th-century and is still practiced by some Yoruba today. Ifa divination was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2005 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

This bowl originally served as a container for a set of sacred palm nuts used in Ifa divination practice. The bowl is supported by the figure of a rooster holding a snake in its beak. Roosters were symbols of vigilance and courage in traditional Yoruba culture, and were also used as sacrifices to the gods to ensure success in a new venture.



Ifa Divination Tray (opon ifa)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Early to mid-20th century

Wood

Gift of Leif Jacobson '60, 1985.4.15

Most Ifa divination trays are round; rectilinear trays, like this example, are comparatively rare. The carved face at the top of the tray represents Eshu, the messenger god who connects the divine and human worlds.

Ifa Divination Wand (iroke ifa)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Early to mid-20th century

Wood, iron

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2017.60.61

To establish a spiritual connection with the Yoruba god of wisdom and knowledge, Orunmila, Ifa diviners often tap on their trays with a curved wand as they chant praise songs to the deity. This particular wand has a piece of iron in its handle so that it can also function as a rattle. The wand is carved with an image of a kneeling woman holding her breasts with both hands, which functions here as a symbol of respect and humility.



Ifa Diviner's Bag (apo ifa)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Mid-20th century

Leather, cotton cloth, beads

Hope College Collection, 2019.36

Ifa diviners traditionally wear white garments that are accentuated by colorful beadwork sashes and shoulder-bags. Beadwork was an important art form in traditional Yoruba culture, and beaded garments and objects were regarded as symbols of status and wealth. The design on this beadwork bag of a kneeling woman holding a bowl on her head probably represents an Ifa divination bowl.







Man's Robe (agbada)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Early 20th century

Dyed cotton, embroidery

Hope College Collection, 2019.61

Clothing functioned as an important marker of status and identity in traditional Yoruba culture. This voluminous robe would have been worn by a socially prominent man at public events such as weddings, funerals and religious festivals. Its trapezoidal shape gives the wearer a large profile and conveys a sense of physical power. The garment was made by stitching together narrow strips of hand-woven, indigo-dyed cloth (aso oke). Such cloth was typically woven by men and dyed by women, and was used by both genders to make clothing, blankets, burial shrouds and other forms of textiles. The manufacture of indigenous Yoruba textiles continued well into the 20th century, but production levels have declined steadily in recent decades as a result of competition from mass-produced factory textiles and changing clothing fashions.

Ogboni Society Figures

Nigerian, Yoruba

Mid-20th century

Brass, iron

Loan from the collection of Yorgo and Kelly

Demetrakopoulos

Metalsmithing has been an important part of Yoruba art and culture for more than 700 years. This pair of male and female brass figures (*edan*) connected by a chain was made to be worn around the neck of an Ogboni Society member as a status symbol. The Ogboni Society is a fraternal organization composed of town and village elders who adjudicate local disputes, provide guidance to local chiefs and kings, and perform religious rituals intended to bring good health and prosperity to their communities. The Ogboni Society remains an influential force in Yoruba society and culture today.





Storage Jar with Flared Rim

Nigerian, Yoruba

Mid-20th century

Earthenware

Hope College Collection, 2019.55

The Yoruba traditionally used ceramic vessels to store a wide variety of dry goods and liquids, including grains, nuts, seeds, water, palm wine, cooking oil, and textile dyes. Some Yoruba ceramic vessels are purely utilitarian and exhibit few decorative features. Other vessels—like this jar—are more obviously artistic, featuring dramatic shapes and elaborate surface designs. Most of the ceramic vessels used in Yoruba culture were made by women, and knowledge of the art was typically passed on within families from generation to generation. However, as opportunities for girls and women to pursue education and employment outside the home increased during the 20th century, the number of female potters declined. Ceramic production has also been negatively affected by the introduction of vessels made from other materials such as metal and plastic.



Basket with Shells and Coins

Nigerian, Yoruba

1960s

Raffia fiber, cowry shells, metal coins

Hope College Collection, 2019.56

Baskets were used in traditional Yoruba culture for many different purposes, from collecting food and firewood to storing clothing and personal possessions. This basket originally had a matching lid, and was probably used to house a personal spirit fetish called an *ori inu*. The decoration of the basket with cowry shells and coins was intended to signify the owner's wealth and social importance. Cowry shells were historically used as a form of currency in many West African cultures, including the Yoruba. During the Colonial period, the British introduced the use of coins as a way to standardize values and simplify tax collection. The coins on this basket range in date from the late 1930s to the late 1950s, suggesting that the basket was probably made in the 1960s, after Nigeria's independence but while the old colonial coinage was still readily available.



Gelede Mask with Teapots

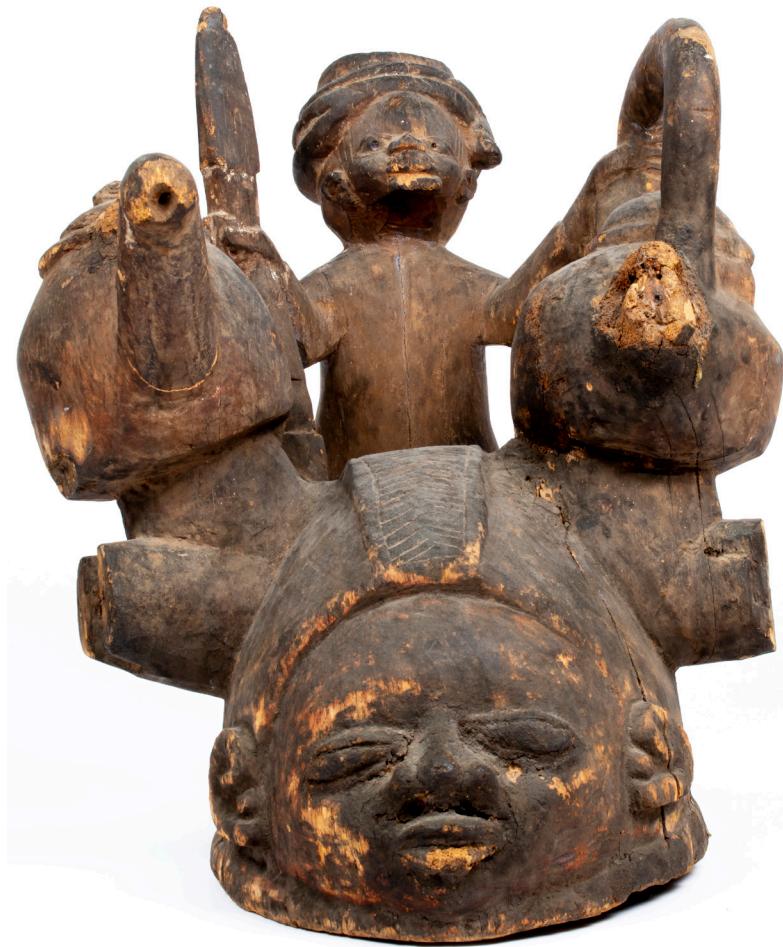
Nigerian, Yoruba

Early to mid-20th century

Wood

Gift of Leif Jacobson '60, 1985.4.6

This mask and two sculptures on the following pages were collected in 1960-61 in Lagos, Nigeria by Hope College alumnus Leif Jacobson. The carvings were said to have come from an abandoned shrine in Abeokuta, the largest city in Nigeria's Ogun State, and also a major base of operations for Christian missionaries working in Nigeria during the 19th and early 20th centuries. By the 1950s, many traditional Yoruba religious shrines in Abeokuta had fallen into disrepair, and the ritual objects stored in those shrines had either been destroyed or allowed to decay. The obvious weathering and damage on these objects suggest such a scenario, but it is also possible that these items were simply older ritual objects that were decommissioned from religious use and replaced with newer versions of the same forms.





left:

Shrine Figure of a Mounted Warrior (jagunjagun)
Nigerian, Yoruba
Early to mid-20th century
Wood
Gift of Leif Jacobson '60, 1985.4.9

right:

Shrine Figure of an Ifa Diviner
Nigerian, Yoruba
Early to mid-20th century
Wood, traces of pigment
Gift of Leif Jacobson '60, 1985.4.10



Courtroom Scene

Attributed to the George and Isaac Studio
(Nigerian, active 20th century)
Mid to late 1960s
Thornwood
Hope College Collection, 2019.62

The genre of thornwood carving was invented by the Yoruba artist Justus Akeredolu (1915-1983) in the late 1930s. Akeredolu used large thorns from the cottonwood tree to depict scenes of everyday Nigerian life in a way that dignified the subjects and avoided racist colonial stereotypes. His expressive figures first caught the attention of local audiences in his hometown of Owo, and later became popular with foreign expatriates and tourists as well. Other

artists soon began to imitate Akeredolu, and by the 1960s, thornwood carving had become a well-established form of folk art in Nigeria.

This elaborate courtroom scene is unsigned but was most likely produced in the city of Ibadan by the George and Isaac Studio. It depicts two people arguing before a judge, who sits at a table set with three symbols of authority: a Bible, a Koran and a traditional Yoruba chief's sword. The clerk and guards wear colonial-style uniforms, while the people in the audience are dressed in traditional Yoruba garments. The carving can be dated by the image of General Yakubu Gowon that appears on the wall above the judge. Gowon was a military officer who ruled Nigeria from 1966 to 1975 after seizing power in a coup. The carving was brought back to the United States by an American expatriate family in the mid to late 1960s, so the carving must date to around that time.







LAMIDI FAKEYE

Lamidi Fakeye was born into a family of traditional Yoruba woodcarvers whose history in the art stretched back five generations. He began his training as a carver with his father and elder brother in the late 1930s, but because fewer people were commissioning the traditional religious sculptures and architectural elements that provided carvers with much of their income, it was initially uncertain if Fakeye would be able to continue in his family business. After working as a sawyer, tailor and bicycle repairman, Fakeye was on the verge of joining the colonial Nigerian police force when he found employment in the Oye Ekiti arts workshop run by Roman Catholic priest Father Kevin Carroll. In that workshop, Fakeye continued his artistic training under the supervision of master woodcarver George Bamidele Areogun, and by the mid-1950s Fakeye had emerged as a nationally recognized artist and teacher in his own right.

In 1960, Fakeye had his first major solo art exhibition at the British Council in Lagos. That exhibition, and a second exhibition in Ibadan in 1961, helped Fakeye win a grant to study art in France and England in 1962-63. Shortly after returning from England, Fakeye accepted an invitation for an artist residency at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. That residency was followed by many additional residencies and exhibitions

across the United States and Europe, and by the mid-1970s Fakeye was widely regarded as one of Nigeria's leading traditional artists. In 1978, Fakeye was appointed to the teaching faculty at the University of Ife (later re-named Obafemi Awolowo University) in Ibadan, where he taught traditional woodcarving techniques to multiple generations of art students. Fakeye also trained several generations of younger male relatives in his own family, who have continued his artistic legacy since his death in 2009.

details on right:

Model for a Veranda Post

Lamidi Olonade Fakeye

(Nigerian, 1928-2009)

1990

Mahogany

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2017.60.2



Tall, carved veranda posts were traditionally placed under the eaves of many Yoruba chiefly and royal residences as well as some religious shrine buildings. The posts functioned as status symbols, and typically featured images of important figures from Yoruba history and culture, such as kings, warriors, priests and maternal icons. The top half of this model for a veranda post depicts a kneeling woman with one baby suckling at her breast and another baby strapped to her back. The bottom half of the carving depicts a male Ifa diviner holding a pipe in his mouth, and a sacrificial chicken and tusk in his hands. Together the images symbolize a wish for fecundity, prosperity, wisdom and the continued blessing of the gods.





Shrine Figure of a Kneeling Flutist

Lamidi Olonade Fakeye

(Nigerian, 1928-2009)

Ca. 1990

Mahogany

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2017.60.3

This shrine figure depicts a devotee of the god Eshu playing a curved flute. Eshu is the traditional Yoruba messenger god who connects the divine and human realms. Followers of traditional Yoruba religion often pray to Eshu for help solving problems.

Shrine Figure of a Kneeling Ifa Diviner

Lamidi Olonade Fakeye

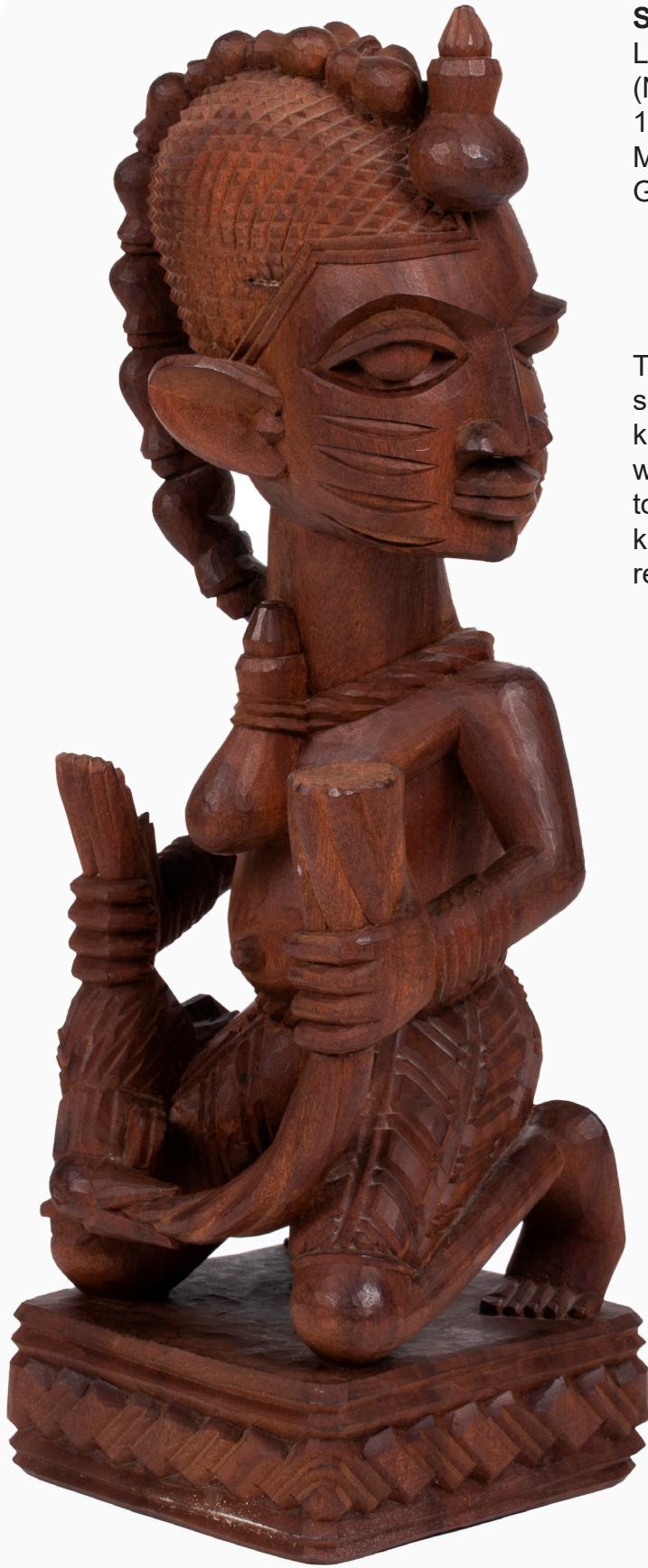
(Nigerian, 1928-2009)

1993

Mahogany

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2017.60.5

The partially shaved head, medicine gourds, sacrificial chicken and tusk identify this kneeling figure as an Ifa diviner. Such figures were traditionally placed on shrines dedicated to Orunmila, the Yoruba god of wisdom and knowledge. The figure kneels as a sign of respect for the deity.







Shrine Figure of a Standing Bata Drummer

Lamidi Olonade Fakeye
(Nigerian, 1928-2009)

1991

Mahogany

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2017.60.4

Bata drums are conical, two-headed drums that are usually suspended on the front of the drummer's body by a strap and are played either with the hands or with a curved drumstick. They are a regular feature of most Yoruba festivals, religious ceremonies and other major social events. The face and double axe-shaped form that appear on top of the figure's head symbolize Sango, the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning. Sango is considered to be one of the most powerful deities in the traditional Yoruba pantheon.

Shrine Figure of a Kneeling Woman with Child and Covered Bowl

Lamidi Olonade Fakeye

(Nigerian, 1928-2009)

1990

Mahogany

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2017.60.6

The covered bowl held by this female figure represents a container of kola nuts. Kola nuts come from trees of the *Cola* genus that is native to West Africa. They contain caffeine and were traditionally enjoyed as a mild stimulant at social gatherings, and as an aid to digestion at ceremonial feasts. Kola nuts were also used as offerings to the gods, so this figure of a kneeling woman with child—representing fertility and humility—would have been suitable for use on shrines dedicated to many different deities.





Shrine Door Panel

Lamidi Olonade Fakeye

(Nigerian, 1928-2009)

1990

Mahogany

Hope College Collection, 1990.4.51

The scenes on this carved door panel represent three different deities from traditional Yoruba religion. The top scene depicts a priest associated with Sango, the god of fire, lightning and thunder. The middle scene depicts a mounted warrior accompanied by a bound captive, probably representing Ogun, the god of war and hunting. The bottom scene depicts an Ifa diviner associated with Orunmila, the god of wisdom and knowledge. Carved panels like this were traditionally fitted into the doors of palaces, chiefly residences and religious shrines.



Justice

Lamidi Olonade Fakeye

(Nigerian, 1928-2009)

Ca. 1994

Mahogany

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2017.60.3

Lamidi Fakeye was not an overtly political artist, but this panel uses traditional Yoruba imagery to make a decidedly political statement. The central figure in the panel is an allegorical image of Justice, here portrayed as a priest of Sango, the Yoruba god of thunder and lightning. The priest is blindfolded to signify impartiality, while his hands hold a sword and ritual wand to signify power and wisdom. A guard and two prisoners appear beside Justice, but are depicted on a smaller scale to signify the comparative insignificance of individual fates in relation to universal ideals. Lamidi Fakeye was inspired to carve this panel by a 1993 democracy movement in Nigeria that aimed to end decades of military rule and restore civilian control of the government. Although the 1993 democracy movement failed, continued pressure on the military eventually resulted in the restoration of a civilian government in 1999.



E. Olotuntoba
71 ARISTON

OSOGBO SCHOOL

Located 120 miles northeast of Lagos, Osogbo is home to a major complex of shrines and sacred groves dedicated to the Yoruba river goddess Osun. Those shrines and groves fell into serious disrepair during the British colonial period, but in 1958 a restoration effort was launched by Austrian-born artist Susanne Wenger and a team of Nigerian artists led by Adebisi Akanji. The renovation of the Osun shrines sparked a broader movement to revive Yoruba art and culture in Osogbo, which in turn resulted in the publication of a Yoruba poetry collection in 1959, the formation of a Yoruba theater troupe in 1961, and the creation of an experimental Yoruba visual arts workshop in 1962.

The Osogbo visual arts workshop was known as Mbari Mbayo after the name of a club in Ibadan frequented by Yoruba writers and artists. Mbari Mbayo was first led by Austrian linguist Ulli Beier and his wife Georgina. The workshop was intended to provide a creative outlet for Yoruba artists who lacked formal art training, and its curriculum was developed with the help of foreign instructors hired by the Beiers during the summers of 1962 to 1964. The Mbari Mbayo workshop quickly gained national and international attention, and several of its top artists went on to enjoy successful careers both in Nigeria and overseas. Because the art produced by the workshop often lacked

technical finesse, it was initially disparaged by some Nigerian academic artists and critics who were jealous of its fame and commercial success. Today, however, most critics recognize that the Mbari Mbayo workshop helped to create a distinctly modern form of Yoruba art that has remained an inspiration to many generations of Nigerian artists.



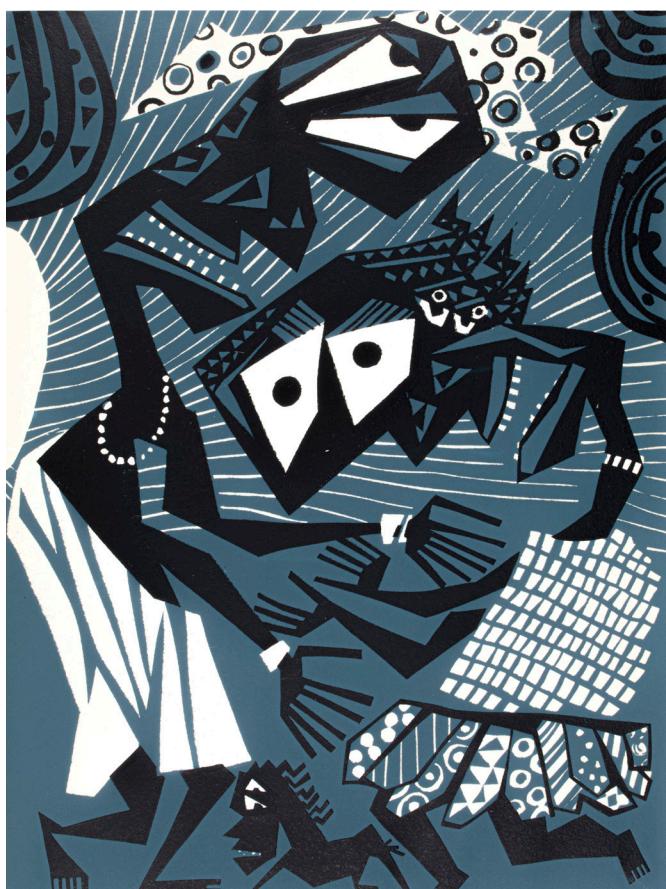
KOREBA
POETRY

Illustrations for Yoruba Poetry

Susanne Wenger, aka Adunni Olorisha
(Nigerian, born Austria 1915-2009)
1959
Screen prints
Hope College Collection, 2019.60

Born and raised in Austria, Susanne Wenger studied art in Graz, Vienna and Paris, and was especially influenced by the Surrealist and Art Brut movements. In 1950, Wenger moved to Nigeria with her first husband, Ulli Beier, when he accepted a teaching position at University College in Ibadan. She soon became fascinated by Yoruba culture and formed close friendships with many leading Yoruba intellectuals, writers and artists. In 1959, Wenger created a series of prints to illustrate a volume of Yoruba poetry that was collected, edited and translated by Ulli Beier and Bakare Gbadamosi. The figures in Wenger's prints are drawn in a deliberately naïve style inspired by Yoruba folk art images, while the colors reflect the palette of traditional Yoruba textiles. After Wenger and Beier divorced, she married a Yoruba chief and undertook a serious study of Yoruba religion and spirituality. She was eventually ordained as a Yoruba priestess and helped lead an effort to restore the sacred Osun Grove in Osogbo. She remained living in Nigeria until her death in 2009.









Figures and Animals Beneath a Tree

Asiru Olatunde (Nigerian, 1918-1998)

Early 1960s

Hammered aluminum

Purchased with funds donated by Mary Vande

Poel '59, 2019.77.2

Born into a family of Yoruba blacksmiths, Asiru Olatunde was trained in traditional metalworking techniques by his father and grandfather. When health problems forced Olatunde to stop working with iron, he instead began making jewelry and household objects using copper and aluminum. In the early 1960s, the Austrian linguist Ulli Beier encouraged Olatunde to apply his metalworking skills to pictorial art. Olatunde created his metal pictures by first drawing a design on a thin metal sheet, and then hammering the image into relief using a variety of different punches. Olatunde's designs typically depict Yoruba stories and scenes of everyday life. The subject of this panel is not clear. It portrays two men in a tree looking down at a pair of bulls, while another group of men drink and converse in a nearby house.



Egbere, The Weeping Spirits

Jacob Afolabi (Nigerian, born 1940)

Mid 1960s

Linocut

Hope College Collection, 2019.58

In traditional Yoruba mythology, egbere are malevolent spirits that live in remote forest areas and make fearsome wailing noises at night. They are said to possess great wealth that can be obtained by anyone brave enough to steal an egbere's sleeping mat and withstand its frightening night cries. Jacob Afolabi was the most successful graduate of the first Mbari Mbayo workshop in 1962. Afolabi had no formal artistic training, but with his vivid imagination and the skills he acquired through the workshop, he emerged as one of the early leaders of the Osogbo Movement.

below:

Unknown City

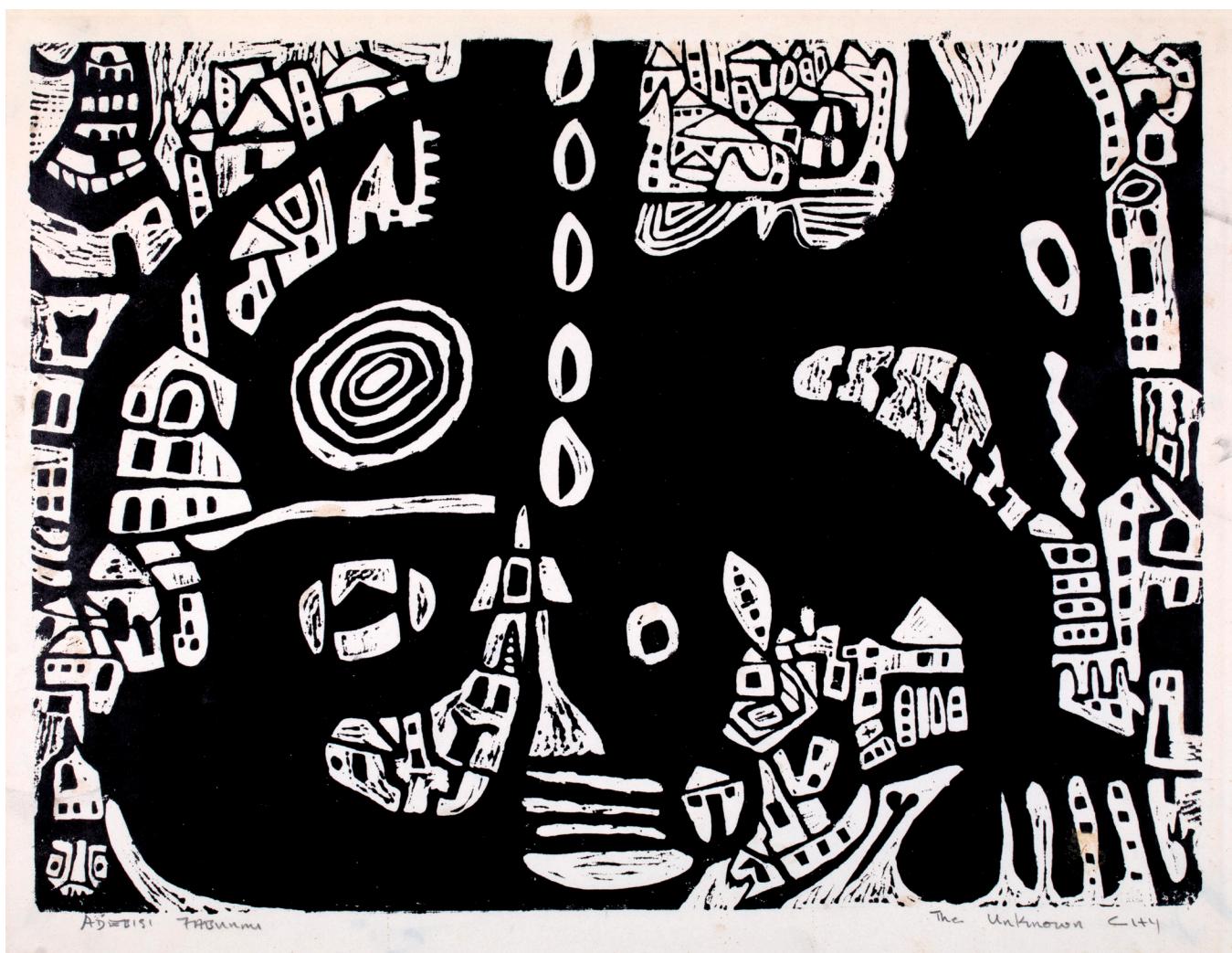
Adebisi Fabunmi (Nigerian, born Ghana 1945)
1960s
Linocut
Hope College Collection, 2018.19.2

Adebisi Fabunmi participated in the third Mbari Mbayo workshop in 1964 and quickly gained a reputation as one of the Osogbo Movement's most talented printmakers and textile artists. He is best known for his complex black and white designs that combine stylized cityscape images with images of fantastic birds and animals.

right:

City of Latanga

Adebisi Fabunmi (Nigerian, born Ghana 1945)
1960s
Linocut
Hope College Collection, 2018.19.1





ADEBISI TABUNMI

The city of Latungba (an unknown world)
creator



Rabbit on the Run, Stop for an Apple

Prince Twins Seven-Seven

(Nigerian, 1944-2011)

1968

Ink and pastel on paper

Hope College Collection, 2018.46

Twins Seven-Seven was the adopted name of Taiwo Olaniyi Oyewale Aitoyeje, who chose his adopted name because he was the only surviving child from seven sets of twins born to his mother over a period of years. He later added the title Prince to his name after he discovered that he was descended from a Nigerian noble family. Twins Seven-Seven was the most notable artist to emerge from the third Mbari Mbayo Workshop in 1964. He won national and international acclaim for his densely patterned images of fantastical creatures inspired by traditional Yoruba myths and folklore. Yoruba folklore includes many stories about rabbits, which often appear as clever tricksters whose ambitions are thwarted by their own greed and overconfidence.



Pygmy Ghosts in a Musical Mood

Prince Twins Seven-Seven

(Nigerian, 1944-2011)

1971

Ink and pigments on cotton cloth

Hope College Collection, 2019.50

Twins Seven-Seven was heavily influenced by Amos Tutuola's 1954 novel *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, which is full of stories about ghosts, spirits and other fantastical creatures drawn from Yoruba oral traditions. This painting does not correspond to a specific episode in the novel, but the psychedelic imagery effectively captures the book's spirit. Twins Seven-Seven's rapid rise to fame in the mid to late 1960s brought him great wealth, but also placed him under great pressure to maintain a high volume of artistic production. By the early 1970s he was churning out paintings at a rapid rate, sometimes quite sloppily, as this painting illustrates.



Dream Figures

Zacheus Olowonubi Oloruntoba
(Nigerian, 1934-2014)
1960s
Ink and pigments on cloth
Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2018.3.154

Zacheus Olowonubi Oloruntoba was born into a Yoruba chiefly family and was recognized from a young age as a mystic and healer. He joined the Osogbo Movement in the mid-1960s and soon began producing elaborately patterned paintings and drawings based on his own dreams and visions. In 1971, Oloruntoba met the African American jazz musician Ornette Coleman, who helped Oloruntoba come to the United States and develop a new client base here. Oloruntoba eventually returned to Nigeria, but he continued to exhibit his art regularly in venues around Africa, the United States and Europe until shortly before his death in 2014.

Prosperity

Zacheus Olowonubi Oloruntoba

(Nigerian, 1934-2014)

1991

Dyed silk thread on canvas

Hope College Collection, 2017.40.2





Woman's Wrapper with Stylized Floral

Design (adire eleko)

Nigerian, Yoruba

Late 1960s

Dyed cotton cloth

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2018.3.106

This large cloth would have been worn as part of a traditional Yoruba woman's outfit, wrapped around her body like a long skirt or dress. The cloth is decorated with a stylized floral design that was created by painting the original white cloth with a paste made of cassava flour and copper sulphate. When the cloth was soaked in a vat of indigo dye, the paste acted as a resist and prevented the dye from completely coloring the painted areas. This type of paste-resist, indigo-dyed textile (*adire eleko*) first became popular among Yoruba women in the 1920s, and was then revived again in the 1960s as part of a broader Yoruba cultural identity movement. Some designs on these textiles have specific symbolic meanings. The design on this wrapper is associated with a Yoruba phrase that means "I'm getting myself together."



CONTEMPORARY YORUBA ART

The commercial success of the Osogbo workshop artists inspired artists in other parts of Nigeria to explore ways of creating work that is both contemporary and rooted in Yoruba culture. Much of the impetus for these efforts has come from artists associated with academic institutions in the Yoruba-dominated cities of southwestern Nigeria, including the University of Ife (now called Obafemi Awolowo University), the University of Ibadan, the University of Benin, and the University of Lagos, among others. From the 1970s to the 1990s, a succession of individual artists and groups emerged from these institutions who used contemporary art techniques and theories to create artworks that are new and yet still distinctly Yoruba in subject, design and aesthetics.

Although academically-trained artists have played an important role in the development of contemporary Yoruba art, there are also many contemporary Yoruba artists who received their training through informal workshops, or who are self-taught. In addition, while most contemporary Yoruba artists currently live in Nigeria, there is also a significant contingent who have moved abroad and are practicing elsewhere in Africa, Europe or the United States. Because contemporary Yoruba art is so diverse, it encompasses a wide range of styles and subjects. The artworks displayed

here represent just a small sampling of contemporary Yoruba artworks that illustrate how Yoruba art has been shaped by the forces of continuity and change in the late 20th and 21st centuries.



hincut artist proof

The Music Maker - Mood V

Irene Wanghøj 1965

Music Maker-Mood V

Solomon Irein Wangboje

(Nigerian, 1930-1998)

1965

Linocut

Purchased with funds donated by Mary Vande

Poel '59, 2019.77.1

Solomon Wangboje studied art at the Nigeria College of Arts, Science and Technology in Zaria from 1955 to 1959, and later at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan from 1961 to 1963. He soon emerged as one of Nigeria's most innovative printmakers and developed a national reputation for his images inspired by everyday Nigerian life. This print depicting a seated figure playing a Yoruba double-headed bata drum belongs to a series of images Wangboje created to celebrate traditional Nigerian music. From 1968 to 1971, Wangboje headed the Ori Olokun Workshop at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in Ibadan, which attempted to combine the experimental spirit of the original Osogbo Mbari Mbayo workshops with more sophisticated technical and intellectual foundations. The Ori Olokun workshop eventually evolved into the Department of Fine Art at the University of Ife, which in turn became one of the leading centers of contemporary Yoruba art production and theorizing in the 1980s and 90s.



Between Birds and Beasts

Oluwole Olayemi

(Nigerian, born Ghana 1947)

1986

Intaglio print

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2018.3.17

Oluwole Olayemi was born in Ghana to Nigerian Yoruba immigrant parents. Like many Nigerian immigrants, his family was expelled from Ghana in the 1960s and returned to live in Ibadan. Olayemi received his first artistic training at the 1969-70 Ori Olokun Workshops led by Solomon Wangboje, and later went on to study under Yusuf Grillo at the Yaba College of Technology in Lagos. His work often depicts subjects drawn from traditional Yoruba culture. This image of fantastical creatures recalls similar works created by artists associated with the Osogbo Movement in the 1960s and 70s.



The More You Look

Kunle Filani (Nigerian, born 1957)

1989

Pen and ink on paper

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2018.3.5

Kunle Filani earned a BFA degree from the University of Ife in 1980, an MFA from the University of Benin in 1984, and a PhD from the University of Ibadan in 2002. In 1989, Filani helped start the Ona Movement, which aimed to create contemporary art styles that were rooted in traditional Yoruba aesthetics and design principles. As this drawing illustrates, Filani's artwork from the late 1980s and early 90s often features highly complex linear patterns and segmented compositions. The stylized figures at the center of this image may represent a costumed dancer or ancestral spirit accompanied by two small bata drummers. The significance of the various vignettes around the figures is unclear, but the title suggests that the scenes are intended to encourage close visual inspection of the drawing.

People's Mandate

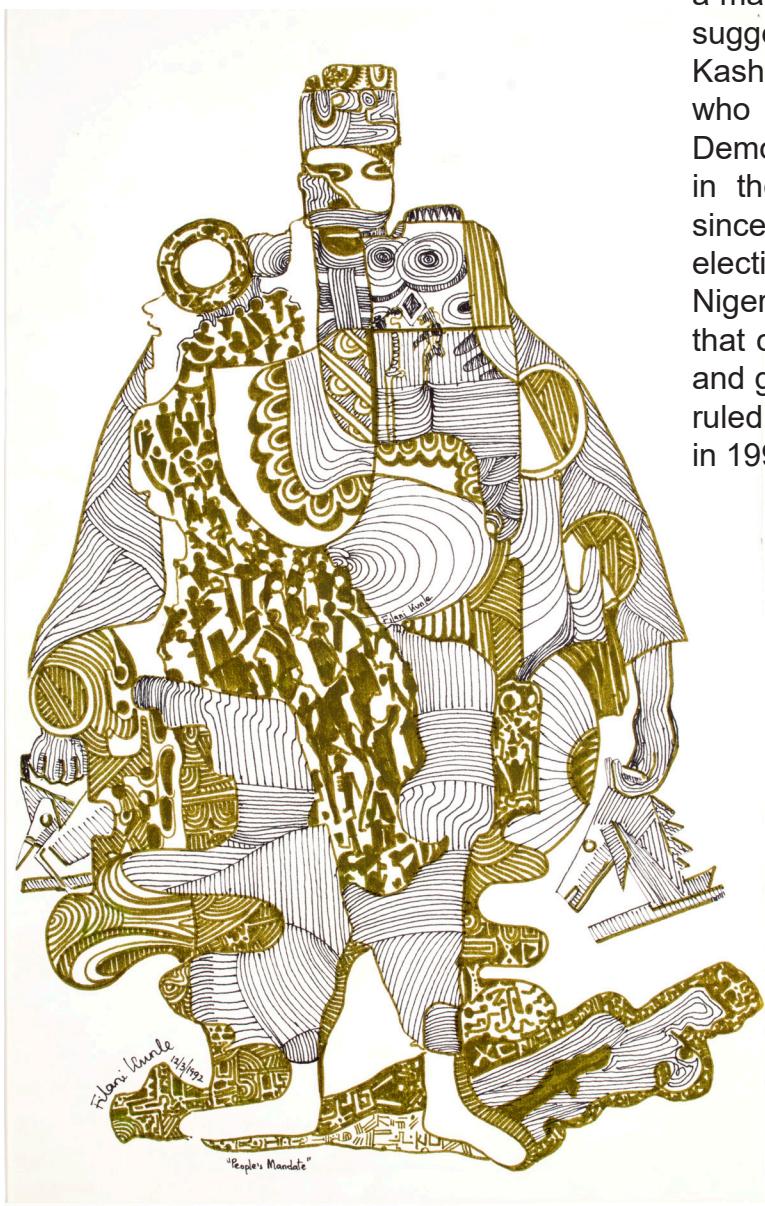
Kunle Filani (Nigerian, born 1957)

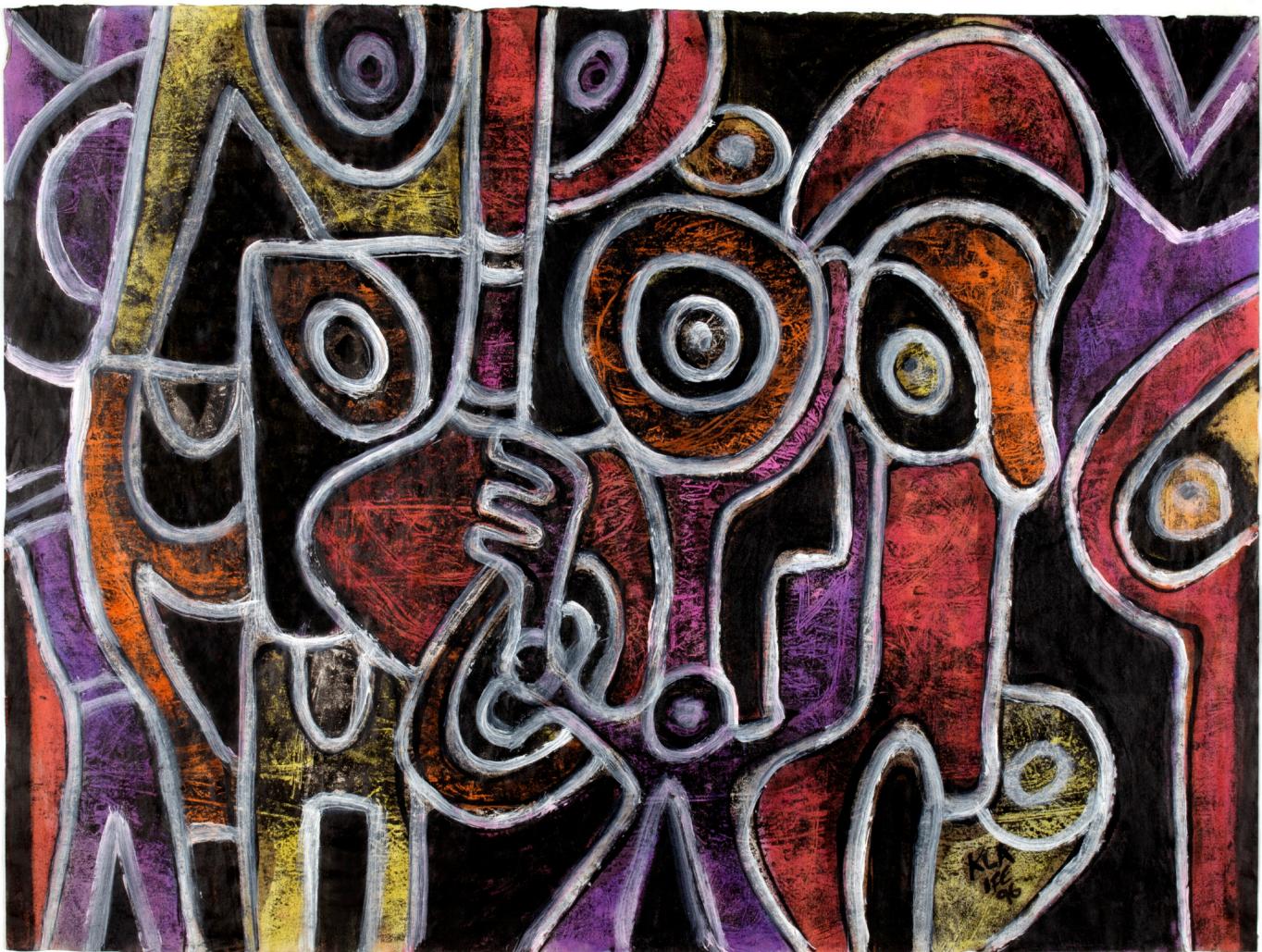
1992

Pen and ink on paper

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2018.3.6

The Ona Movement was not exclusively an art movement; by promoting Yoruba cultural identity, it had a strong political dimension as well. The title of this heavily stylized drawing of a male figure wearing traditional Yoruba dress suggests that it may represent Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, a Yoruba politician who in 1992 was nominated by the Social Democratic Party to run for president of Nigeria in the first democratic elections held there since 1983. Chief Abiola won the presidential election, and thus a popular mandate to rule Nigeria, in June 1993. But the military junta that controlled the country negated his victory and gave power to General Sani Abacha, who ruled the country with an iron fist until his death in 1998.





above:

Target

Kunle Akintububo (Nigerian, born 1958)

1996

Mixed media on paper

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2018.3.23

right:

Womanhood

Arayela Lesy (Nigerian, born 20th century)

1999

Ink and pigment on paper

Gift of Bruce M. Haight, 2018.3.54

The Ona Movement had a huge impact on art students at Obafemi Awolowo University and other artists active in the city of Ibadan during the 1990s and 2000s. The two drawings displayed here are examples of contemporary Ona-influenced interpretations of traditional Yoruba imagery. Kunle Akintububo's *Target* recalls the strong linear patterns of traditional Yoruba shrine paintings, while Arayela Lesy's *Womanhood* offers a stylized rendition of a traditional Yoruba maternal icon figure.



ARATELA LESTYOP



Virtuous Women

Ebenezer Akinola (Nigerian, born 1968)

2004

Paint on canvas

Hope College Collection, 2019.65

Ebenezer Akinola earned his BFA in painting from the University of Benin in 1989. After spending several years in the United States, Akinola returned to his hometown of Ibadan where he currently maintains a full-time studio practice. Akinola's work is primarily figurative and his style ranges from realistic to expressionistic. This painting depicting three Yoruba women in traditional dress comes from a period in which Akinola experimented with a Cubist-like approach to imagery, breaking it down into geometric shapes and flat areas of color.



Patterns of Hope

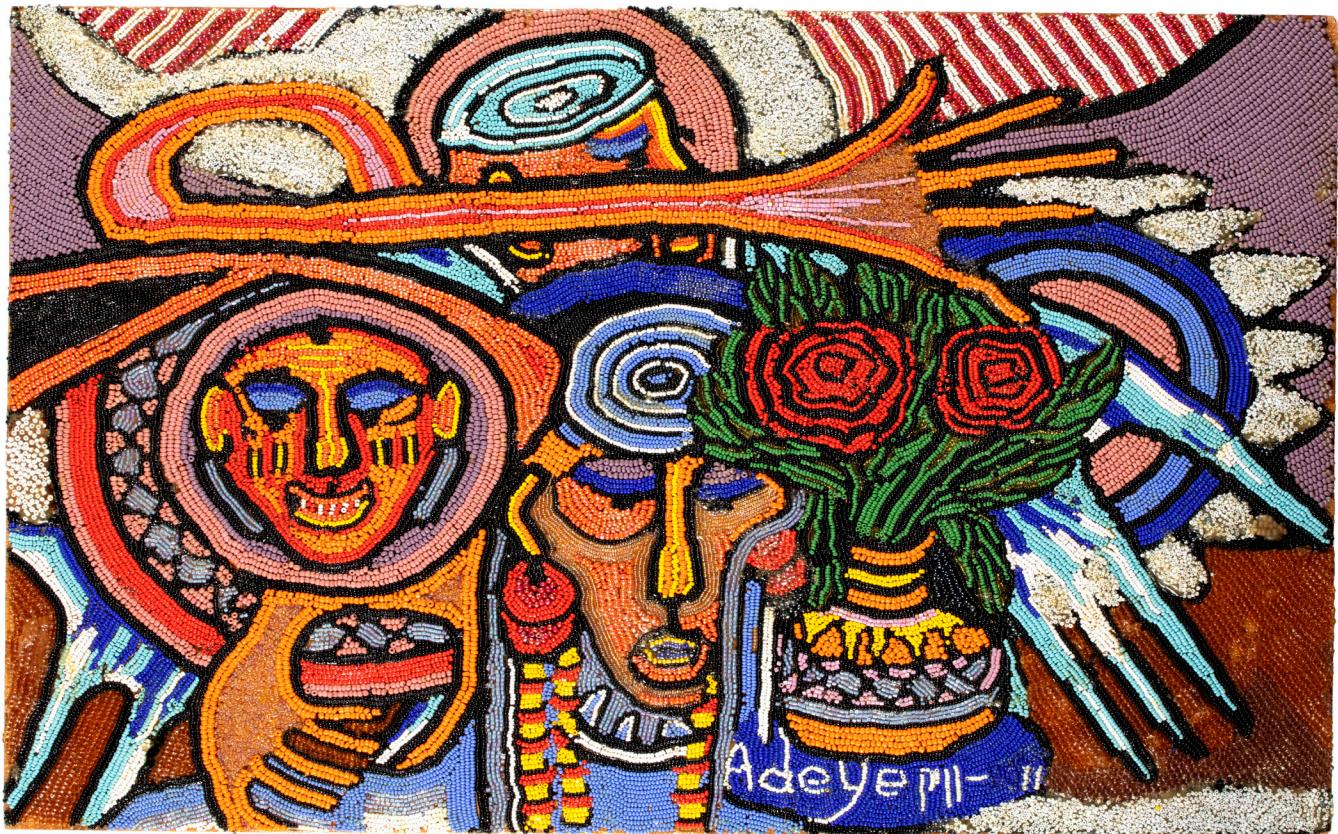
Tunde Odunlade (Nigerian, born 1954)

2008

Batik and appliquéd

Hope College Collection, 2019.57

Tunde Odunlade first studied art with Yinka Adeyemi at the University of Ife in the 1970s. His practice mixes traditional craft and contemporary fine art techniques, and spans a variety of genres, including painting, printmaking and textiles. Odunlade drew inspiration for this piece from traditional Yoruba strip-woven and wax-resist textiles. By adding blocks of brightly colored fabric, he has created a basket-weave pattern that gives the textile an unexpected sense of depth and movement. Odunlade currently lives and works in Ibadan. In addition to being a visual artist, he is also a skilled flutist and political activist who campaigns against poverty and corruption.



The Hand of Fellowship and the Spirit of Love

Yinka Adeyemi (Nigerian, born 1945)

2011

Beads, wood

Hope College Collection, 2019.63

Yinka Adeyemi was part of the first generation of artists to train at the Mbari Mbayo Workshops in Osogbo in the early 1960s. He later served as an instructor at the Ori Olokun Workshops in the early 1970s, and as an artist in residence at the University of Ife in the 1980s. He is a painter, printmaker and textile artist whose work has remained strongly tied to his Osogbo roots. This image offers a contemporary take on traditional Yoruba beadwork, but rather than stringing the beads and sewing them onto a backing material, the beads are instead glued onto a support board like a mosaic. The mask-like faces and ghostly hands in this composition gives the image a surreal quality that is characteristic of Adeyemi's mature art.



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Kruizenga Art Museum is to educate, engage and inspire the students, faculty, staff and alumni of Hope College, as well as the broader communities of Holland and West Michigan. By presenting art from a wide range of cultures and historical periods, the museum fosters the qualities of empathy, tolerance and understanding that are essential components of Hope College's mission to provide an outstanding Christian liberal arts education while preparing students for lives of leadership and service in a global society.





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