

Culture&

WHOSE HERITAGE? RESEARCH RESIDENCY PROGRAMME

A Culture& programme offering residencies to new diverse arts professionals at leading arts and heritage organisations.

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Programme Manager
Sandra Shakespeare

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EDITORIAL NOTE



‘Unless the younger generation has access to...cultural repertoires and can understand and practice them, to some extent at least, from the inside, they will lack the resources – the cultural capital – of their own 'heritage', as a base from which to engage other traditions.’

Stuart Hall (1999) 'Whose heritage? un-settling 'The Heritage', re-imagining the Post-nation'
Third Text 49: 3-13,

PREFACE: WHOSE HERITAGE?

THE OPEN CALL

Sandra Shakespeare

Whose Heritage? Residencies were undertaken by New Museum School graduates at the following National Trust sites: Sutton House, 575 Wandsworth Road in London, Runnymede & Ankwerwyke and Clandon Park in Surrey. Online organisations Art UK and the Collections Trust and Milton's Cottage Museum in Buckinghamshire. Researchers brought diverse perspectives to specific areas of research at each organisation. Each researcher was mentored by curatorial, research, or interpretation staff in their quest to reveal new narratives behind objects and sites to connect meaningfully with diverse audiences - those communities who might not feel the collections or sites are 'for them'.

INTERSECTIONALITY

DECOLONISATION

ACTIVISM

Residencies allowed researchers creative opportunities for the interrogation language and terminology, traditionally used when classifying or describing objects. The reports capture this tension with contemporary forms of decolonisation practice to challenge accepted institutional practice. For example: Sutton House's intangible history linked to 'squatter activism' explored local communities and new insights conveyed through archives, protest banners and posters through a digital zine. This ezine also speaks to Gen Z, the accessibility and consumption of heritage through online digital media expressed through non-conformist DIY art forms

Or with Art UK and research into Bi-visibility: the importance of bisexual+ representation in UK art collections. At 575 Wandsworth Road research and re-interpretation of the times and life of the owner Khadambi Asalache will help enhance and understand how BAME visitors experience topophilia at this site. Whose Heritage? Residencies:

- Revealed new narratives behind objects, collections, sites, and monuments in ways that connect meaningfully with diverse audiences
- Brought new research and interpretation to heritage assets
- Illustrated the value of a diverse workforce
- Supported the careers of graduates through an outcome driven residency with leading heritage organisations
- Shared knowledge with the wider sector with work and outcomes on a new [online platform](#) this provides the context for the broader debate of diversity issues across the arts and heritage sector.

SIOBHAN WILLIAMS

National Trust: 575 Wandsworth Road



Siobhan Williams is a recent graduate of the Culture&, New Museum School programme, based with the National Trust. Her background and creative practice in visual arts underpins her experiences, which now spans across research, consultancy, community engagement, event and exhibition curation. Currently, Siobhan freelances on project-based work within the Cultural Heritage sector. She is interested in unearthing hidden histories, particularly concerning people of colour, by exploring creative and experimental methods to widen access. Siobhan's holistic approach to addressing inequalities when learning about and working with archives, collections and interpretation, has led her to begin reviewing working practices and how that applies to the wellbeing of ethnically diverse communities.

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Research project by Siobhan Williams for the National Trust, 575 Wandsworth Road as part of the *Whose Heritage?* residencies in partnership with Culture&.

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Introduction

Whose Heritage? residencies aim to provide new and revised interpretations and interrogate accepted modes of classification, description, and the terminology the arts and heritage sector uses. It is hoped that through these interrogations the sector will better reflect our national identity and be able to reach out to all communities, particularly BAME and those who do not currently feel connected with their heritage in public arts and heritage spaces. Residencies featured on Culture&'s website and special online events are and will be curated to disseminate findings and stimulate broader debate across the sector on issues such as workforce diversity and decolonisation.

The Whose Heritage? research residency, based at National Trust: 575 Wandsworth Road and entitled 575 Wandsworth Collection Review, had the project aim to increase the understanding of the nature and cultural significance of the wider collection at 575 Wandsworth Road, addressing

some of the inaccuracies and inadequate or non-confirmed information. This topic of research focused specifically on an intentionally small select number of objects within the wooden carved collection, currently on display.

Executed in three key stages, the residency consisted of an initial collection and object selection process, conducted research, followed by the collation of findings and recommendations found in this report.

Six objects were identified for research. Initially this was partially based on what the resident personally felt to be aesthetically interesting. The focus on carved wooden objects, implemented welcomed parameters for further selection. Seemingly, it felt appropriate to the resident as a homage to the previous owner of 575 Wandsworth Road, Khadambi Asalache, and the signature visual trope of the house, his hand carved fretwork. The criteria included the resident's assumption that the initial research conducted would likely result in diverse historical narratives in comparison with one another. Historic mis-cataloguing and knowledge gaps about these objects was a major consideration during the selection process. Primarily when what can be considered as homogenized labelling, 'African' was noted in the summaries without a note of further action required, despite vaguely correct in location, it presented a challenging opportunity to address this. Another anticipated common factor was that each object would yield findings demonstrating the cultural significance and relevance, particularly but not exclusive to, the communities and artisans whose heritage have been recognised through the objects' country of origin. It is possible that these specific communities, all considered as BAME ethnic sub-groups, may feel disconnected from the wider 575 Wandsworth Road collection or the National Trust more generally. This may be due to the lack of research, similar to this residency, extracting and highlighting more nuanced narratives regarding collections, appearing externally simply as a lack of representation or irrelevant. In the case of this residency, this would answer the rhetorical question, Whose Heritage? which aims to tackle a much wider conversation than the parameters of this research. (*Stuart Hall (1999) Un-settling 'the heritage', re-imagining the post-nation Whose heritage?, Third Text, 13:49, 3-13, DOI: [10.1080/09528829908576818](https://doi.org/10.1080/09528829908576818)*)

The objects reviewed are currently considered as Khadambi Asalache's personal possessions as opposed to artworks within the collection. The findings summarised in this report have derived from predominantly non-traditional and alternative forms of research; all

of which has consisted of qualitative research by researchers, ethnographers, artisans, reporters, and sellers of similar objects.

CMS is the commonly used acronym across the sector, standing for Collections Management System, the database used for web-based cataloguing and the archiving of collections.

Online museum and gallery collections can differ in terms of classifications. Some offering more generalised categorisation. Additional categories and considered semantics such as: production place, location, country of origin and findspot, are non-existent on the current property CMS. Therefore, the informed predictions, and specifics of each object is listed in the CMS summary category.

All provenance categories for each object in focus currently state of the following. "Bequeathed to the National Trust by Khadambi Asalache upon his death in 2006; acquired fully in November 2010." Although this is factually correct, this report aims to identify and provide the heritage locations, highlighting the cultural significance of each object of the collection, as previously mentioned.

The significance of this residency has been recognised for the following reasons including the original anticipated beneficiaries:

- To enable 575 Wandsworth property team to assess their knowledge on the wider collection
- Prevents the house team from avoiding subject areas regarding the objects in focus due to a lack of knowledge
- Enables the house team and volunteers to voice the initial steps taken to become better acquainted with the wider collection, informing person-led interpretation.
- Academics, Researchers, and students of various disciplines
- The general public through access to the National Trust's public collections website
- Visitors to 575 Wandsworth Road (post re-opening)
- Community groups engaging in participatory programmes i.e., where objects facilitate conversation and encourage the sharing stories and amplifying voices of more diverse audiences, particularly BAME communities
- Community partnership organisations support the development of participatory programmes inspired by objects in the collection
- The wider Trust (other properties and staff) contributing to the National Trust's understanding of different ways of working and interpreting diverse narratives, providing a legacy.
- Through undertaking the residency, Siobhan Williams will develop valuable research, curatorial and interpretation skills, enhancing career prospects

The underpinning research entailed:

- Review of the 575 Wandsworth Road CMS database to identify gaps in knowledge or inaccurate information on specific entries
- Undertaking in-depth research to improve 575 Wandsworth Road's knowledge and interpretation of the collection
- Researching potentially contentious objects identified as part of the Slavery and Colonialism Audit if applicable.

The anticipated outputs included:

- Recommended changes to entries on the CMS database
- Recommended changes to property interpretation, including programming
- Recommendations relating to ongoing best practice in the National Trust

Initial Research Findings: Objects in Focus

Tonga Stool



Current CMS Listing

Stand

Category

Ethnographic material

Date

1950 – 1990

Materials

Hardwood

Measurements

295 x 209 mm

NT 1512341

Summary

An African carved hardwood stand. With circular top incised with bands of lines across the top, upon two vertical arms joining the main central support, which is carved with ten triangular protrusions. Upon six downward curved supports.

Findings

Despite the listing of this object as a stand, it is highly probable that this object should also be considered as a stool. The dimensions listed and appearance are in accordance with the old traditional Tonga stools only used by men. Despite the decorative sculptural nature, they are said to be surprisingly comfortable. It is for this reason that men would bring such stools to chiefs during trials. (*Tonga Stool "D", 2020 africaandbeyond.com*)

The Tonga tribe/community, also called 'BaTonga', mainly reside in Zimbabwe, but all Tonga people are said to be or descend from Bantu, who have migrated and settled or have been displaced across the Earth since the 1500s. (*KHAYNI Tonga Stool Zimbabwe, 2019 Khadyini.com*). The Tonga, Bantus, are found in the Pacific Islands, USA, the Sudan, Malawi, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Although the African origins of all Tonga groups is argued amongst scholars, the similarities with communication can be notably seen in their craftworks, particularly basket weaving and wood carving.

To avoid this contentious and contested debate, for the purpose of this report references of Tonga, are regarding the Tonga residing in Zimbabwe, where the stool originated from or was created. It is possible that the stool may originate from a neighbouring country in Southern Africa such as Zambia. Unsurprisingly, the stools are named after the African Tonga tribe, amazingly they are still being produced and used in rural African villages. (*Tonga Wood Stools, n.d. thewanderlane.com*)

Carved from one single piece of wood the Tonga stools, also referred to as Chigaro to the Tonga people, were a status symbol used by the head of its household. (*Tonga Chigaro Stool, Zimbabwe, n.d. CHRISTA's Fine Tribal and Modern Art Gallery*).

The Materials currently listed on CMS are correct, as hardwood is what must be used to create such traditional geometric and durable stools. Tonga stools are most appropriate for nomadic lifestyles and cultures but are occasionally used as a table-top accessory or a small table. (*Tonga Stool A, 2021 Africanluxe.com*)

Drinking Cup (Vintage Yugoslavian)



Current CMS Listing

Drinking Cup

Category

Wooden objects

Date

1950 – 2000

Materials

Rosewood

Measurements

126 x 220 x 81 mm

NT 1512430

Summary

An African decorative drinking cup, possibly rosewood, with a dished rim flanked by two flared handles pierced with triangles and with incised decoration. The body carved with three stylised trees to each side on a stippled background.

Findings

This drinking cup summarised as African, is considered as a vintage piece created in formerly known Yugoslavia, currently the Republic of Serbia since 2006 (*Croatia/North Macedonia/Balkans: Bosnia-Herzegovina: Bosnia*) *Vintage Yugoslavian Wedding Cup Sheperds Cup Folk Art, 2021 www.etsy.com/listing/*. Used the Britain, Europe and Prehistory online collection as a point of reference to make comparisons with the other links previously found, which confirmed the fundamental aspects of the findings, excluding the cultural significance. *Drinking-cup, 2021. The British Museum*). Various wood types are

used to create this drinking cup, which may have been changed over time. It is disputable as to whether drinking cups such as this are currently made and used as widely, as all sale listings for similar cups are listed as Yugoslavian.

They are also widely described as Vintage Scandinavian, Nordic, 'wedding shepherd cups', 'wood loving cup' or a wooden pitcher, occasionally included in the Kuksa carving style with single but usually double handled vessels. (*Yugoslavian Shepard's Cup, Wooden Pitcher, Hand carved Folk Art, 2021 www.etsy.com/listing/*). A spoon can sometimes accompany similar drinking cups, which indicates that they may have been part of a traditional dining or gift set. (*VTG Hand Carved Wood Yugoslavian Wedding Cup, Small Intricately carved Wood Double Handled Shepard', n.d. www.pinterest.co.uk/*). They were customarily used as ceremonial weddings cups, where both bride and groom drink at the same time "an indication of their union and willingness to share amongst each other". (*Yugoslavia. This amazing hancarved shepherd wedding cup is a fine..., n.d. www.pinterest.co.uk/*)

Headrest (Karamojong)



Current CMS Listing

Head Rest

Category

Ethnographic material

Date

1950 – 1990

Materials

Wood Leather

Measurements

200 x 183 x 109 mm

NT 1512305

Summary

An African head rest with two splayed supports, with three twisted leather strands threaded through each support and running between them. It is made of finished wood, etched on the sides with pictures of animals, in panels bordered with rough criss-cross design.

Findings

The Karamojong are a community of many tribes, including Bokora, Pian, Jie and Matheniko, mainly from and residing in northern Uganda. As a Nilotic and nomadic people from East Africa, the Karamojongs help up make up the “Karamoja Cluster”, which assembles tribes from Southern Ethiopia and Sudan and neighbouring country tribes, such as the Turkana in Kenya. (*Karamojong/Uganda 2013 African Shapes and Materials*). Headrests are prolifically used in and predominately used by men in rural East Africa. As a result, to the untrained eye it can be challenging to identify the heritage of each headrest, due to the diversity of African headrests. Authentic headrests, serving as both sculpture and utilitarian personal effect are said to smell distinctly like goat fat. (*Hurst, 2016 www.youtube.com*). One can conclude that goat fat would be a natural, biodegradable and free by-product for rural farmers to use as a hair moisturising product, which overtime affects the original smell of the headrest. It is possible that headrests like this one can last for around or over a hundred years. (*Hurst, 2016 www.youtube.com*). This may be dependent on whether the headrest in question is in constant use. When carried around they act as a status symbol. However, at night while watching over their livestock, men protect their heads and hair by resting on the top of their headrests. They are carved in a way that cradles the neck, supports and elevates the head for sleeping, ‘thereby preventing attacks by snakes or scorpions. (*Uganda Headrest, n.d. www.christas.dk/uganda-headrest/*).

On occasion these headrests are used as stools, buried with the owner when deceased or passed down to his heir, who would be entrusted with the personal effect embodying the spirit of the deceased individual. Despite the respect and care needed to be shown, as a prevention from unwanted users, breaking a significant part of the headrest is not unheard of in this circumstance, rendering it unusable. (*Uganda Headrest, n.d. www.christas.dk/uganda-headrest/*). Although there is complexity and diversity amongst the Karamojong community settled throughout East Africa, there is a distinctively Ugandan Karamojong aesthetic. This is apparent in the shape and in the visual trope of incised animals carved in criss-cross patterns across the headrest in panels and sections. (*Karamojong Headrest, 2001 randaffricanart.com*). Karamojong headrests are commonly ‘rectangular’ with the legs, pedestals and decorations vary and demonstrate the cultural style and the work of the individual artist’. (*Headrest, 2021 Africa.si.edu/*).

‘Literature: “Sleeping Beauties”: The Jerome L. Joss Collection of African Headrests at UCLA First Edition by William J. Dewey (Author), Toshiko M. McCallum (Author), Jerome Feldman (Author), Henrietta Cosentino (Author) Africa in Repose: Stools and Headrests Author(s): Margaret Rose Vendryes. Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University, Vol 58, No. 1/2 (1999), pp.3853 Published by: Princeton University Art Museum’. ((Recommended Literature cited from a source of findings due to its relevance but has not been read as part of this residency and has no contents included in this report). (*Uganda Headrest, n.d. www.christas.dk/uganda-headrest/*))

Chair (Ethiopian)



Current CMS Listing

Chair

Category

Ethnographic material

Date

1950 – 1990

Materials

Hardwood

Measurements

615 mm (Height); 470 mm (Diam)

NT 1512349

Summary

An African hardwood low chair. Seat constructed from a dished ring of tree wood, the back constructed from a carved panel pierced with eight triangular holes. Supported on three outswept legs joined to the underside of the seat with vertical supports.

Marks and inscriptions

Underside: Inscribed in black ink “S234”, and further paper label inscribed in thick black felt tip pen ink “FDEJ”.

Findings

This Chair was potentially created by the Wanza, Gurage or more than likely the 'Jimma People' of Ethiopia. (*Vintage African Ethiopian Jimma Tribal Chair, 2021 www.vinterior.co/*). However, it is possible that a carver from one tribe has used a neighbouring tribe's wood. Indeed, one's ability to differentiate between 'tribal' designs is challenged due to the various location and cultural overlaps and/or immersion in each other's cultures. (*Gurage Tribal Carved Wanza Wood Throne Jimma Chair from Ethiopia, 2021 www.1stdibs.co.uk/*). The production date of this chair could be any time between 1880 and 1990 due to the durability of Ethiopian chairs, despite the wear sometimes seen on older chairs. However, it is probably fair to say that this chair was produced in the early twentieth century, rather than in the mid-century piece, but without disregarding the possibility. (*Photographic print, n.d. britishmuseum.org*). (*Solid wooden chair, n.d. estherfitzgerald.com*).

It is suggested that each traditional Ethiopian chair is created for one individual or ends up belonging to a highly respected individual. Traditional Ethiopian chairs are not exclusively used by tribe elders and community meetings, demonstrating their highly respected standing and status. (*Ethiopian Chair – Ethiopia – SOLD, 2020 africaandbeyond.com/*). As with most African hand carvings, these chairs are made from a single piece of hardwood. Where the chair backs may vary in simple and impactful geometric designs and heights, the three-legged chair, which can occasionally be used as a stool, is a unique motif and indication of the heritage it concerns. (*Ethiopian Throne – Jimma and Gurage People, Omo River Region, Ethiopia, 2020 africaandbeyond.com/*).

Visual Reference. (*Visual research. Cultural Wooden Chair Ethiopian House Décor – 12, 2019 habeshakemise.com/*)

Fabo Perczel, C., Ethiopia: Folk Art of a Hidden Empire, Mingei International Museum of World Folk Art, 1983. (*Recommended Book cited from this website, included due to its relevance but it has not been read as part of this residency and has no contents included in this report. Backman, n.d. www.michaelbackmanltd.com*)

Makonde Sculpture



Current CMS Listing

Decorative Carving

Category

Ethnographic material

Date

1980 - 2006

Materials

Wood

Measurements

190 x 98 x 133 mm

NT 1512412

Summary

A wooden carving depicting stylised African boys with textured hair and clothing. There is one large figure around which the other boys are crouched or clinging to. The sculpture is made from a piece of wood which is ebonised at the front but unfinished and still with bark at the back.

Findings

The Makonde (or WaMaKonde), a matrilineal society, are originally from Southern Tanzania and Northern Mozambique, where much of the population are based. Most Makonde carvers are based in Mtwara, a region in South Tanzania. (*Wood Culture, 3013* www.youtube.com) As a result, women are often centred and celebrated in sculptured pieces, representing themes of birth fertility and survival. The minority that travelled in the late 1800s settled on the East African coast. 'The centres of Makonde carving are in south-east Tanzania and in the capital Dar es Salaam'. (*Library, n.d. objectlessons.org*). The Makonde people respond creatively to spiritual and philosophical concepts and the 'mysteries of life'. As a result, their ancestors are honoured and revered. "The life of the wood had entered the woman's body and forever marked the matrilineal character of this tribe. At the water's edge, the woman gave birth to a stillborn child. So, they both fled this valley to take refuge on the arid plateaus. There the woman gave birth to many children. From this ancestor, father of the tribe and from this woman who was its mother, the Makonde received the customary laws that govern them: laws of experience, respect for women and the tradition of ebony wood carving which gave birth to a being the source of life. (Matriarchate Makonde. Tanzania, Mozambique: masters of sculpture honour motherhood, n.d. matricien.wordpress.com)

They are renowned for their unique and intricate figurative carved sculptures, masks and figurines that recount generational stories. It could be argued that Makonde art acts as a form of educational curriculum, modernised over time, as a current reflection of each era, with social commentary and teachings of morality or intrinsic values and virtues. Despite this evolution, techniques have remained the same. Most elaborate sculptures with multiple figures represent family trees, with the individuals engaged in daily activities. Despite this, they are carved out of single pieces of wood. 'Expressive facial tattoos' and scarification is a classic means of the identification of Makonde art. (The Mystical Sculptors Makonde community, 2020 www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTO1B3hPtpE). However just like this sculpture based within 575 Wandsworth Road's collection, it is not uncommon for there to be no scarification on faces, particularly when there are no gaps between the figures that make up the piece. In some cases, Makonde carvings encased in a rustic unfinished wooden frame, defining the front from the back of the sculpture, while other distinctively Makonde sculptures are carved so that the narrative can be seen from every angle. (Visual reference. Ebony Life Tree framed with Bark, n.d. tanzanianfineart.com)

Despite being referred to as a singular tribe by arts and heritage professionals, they are in fact multiple tribes that make up the Makonde community. They refer to their own carvings as Makonde also. It can be ambiguous as to whether this exclusively applies to traditional, taller and family orientated pieces or simply all carvings made by the Makonde people. Originally a rural group of farmers and carvers, traditionally working as a community, the Makonde people have dispersed and migrated to cities and central Tanzania from places such as Makonde Plateau. This has been due to the advent of the modernisation of Tanzania changing the working sectors and prospects of the community. More importantly, many highly skilled carvers have had no choice but to change their trajectory, namely due to the change in market and lack of substantial reward, non-reflective of the time-consuming nature of the craft. Consequently, remaining Makonde carvers in the Mtwara and other southern regions of Tanzania have begun carving pieces in greater demand within the past decade. This is reflected in the reduction of scale, inevitably reducing the number of figures and removing the context of family, creating ambiguity for the tourist market. Increasingly, non-traditional Makonde carvings are of a single figure or a bust.

Ebony, the traditional material of choice, has become an increasingly challenging resource to obtain, also increasingly expensive due to its rarity. For this reason, carvers expect the Tanzanian Government to host more art events for international groups aid the situation, in the hope of fostering a better national balance between commerce and artistic practice. Despite the mass change in occupation, Mwenge Woodcarvers market in deep South Tanzania, is still a thriving small, local but internally recognised district for the Makonde carvers. (Wood Culture, 3013). Based on visual reference, it is most likely that his carving based at 575 Wandsworth Road is made from ebony or African blackwood (Mpingo, Library, n.d. objectlessons.org), or *Dalbergia Melanoxylon*, which is internationally known for its Conservation Campaign. (Wood Carving Artists of Eastern Africa: Makonde Art). As previously mentioned, sculptures that are referred to as crowded, clustered or climbing without gaps are known as the 'Dimoongo' which translates as the 'Tree of Life' or '*Ujamma*' translating as the Swahili term for 'family' or 'unity' carvings, appropriate to its intrinsic theme. (Makonde People of East Africa – the Newport Connection, 2016 newportmiddlepassage.org). They are often several meters in height. (Library, n.d. objectlessons.org). Ujamma, one of eight Makonde carving styles, was pioneered by Mozambiquan Roberto Yakobo Sangwani, who emigrated to Tanzania, along with many others in the 1950s. "Originally depicting wrestlers carrying a champion on their shoulders, it later transformed to a family tree, headed by a female figure. Later, in the 1960s-70s, the art Tanzanian President Nyerere's Ujamaa Party adopted it as a symbol of national political unity. (Makonde People of East Africa – the Newport Connection, 2016).

"The Makonde people of Mozambique living south of the Rovumba River and those living north, in Tanzania, occupy the high plateaus. They lived in isolated, sparsely populated hinterland, often purposely to avoid slave traders, but nonetheless lost untold thousands to the holocaust of the 18th and 19th century slave trade. But generations later, their descendants carved these works of art from African blackwood. While some of their ancestors may have sailed across the Atlantic to the Americas as captives, today these sculptures arrive in Newport as homages to Makonde family, community, and cultural regeneration. (Makonde People of East Africa – the Newport Connection, 2016).

Stool (Ashanti/Asante)



Current CMS Listing

Stool (Ashanti Tribe)

Category

Ethnographic material

Date

1900 - 1950

Materials

African hardwood

Measurements

378 x 555 x 325 mm

NT 1512450

Summary

A carved Ghanaian tribal stool, probably Ashanti tribe. With dished rectangular seat pierced with 12 small rectangular and two semi-circular holes.

Upon five columnar supports, the central one decorated with two vertical panels of horizontal incised line and two vertical panels of rectangular piercings, upon a rectangular sledge base.

Makers and roles

Ashanti Tribe, maker

Findings

Present day Ghana/Ivory Coast are renowned for their gold but also have some of the most unique wooden utilitarian carved pieces, which make them easily identifiable, as seen accurately listed on CMS regarding place of origin and heritage. This part of West Africa has been inhabited for thirty to forty thousand years, proven by fossil evidence. This may partly be attributed to the consistency of their creativity and remained deeply attached to their culture and tradition, despite the adversity and conquest faced over time.

The Asante, contemporarily known as Ashanti tribe/people make up 45% of the Akan people, of the Gold Coast. (Stool, n.d. www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_Af1953-05-1). Although considered one of the best-defined African groups regarding culture, they are the result of much 'mixing' over time, especially from the 13th century. As communities began to settle, they developed chiefdoms, including the Asante with more complex social, political and economic systems. Favouring hill-top points, Kumasi became the location to establish their civilisation, North-West of modern-day Accra. This presented an advantage to readily access resources such as the forestry and palm oil, gold and fish via the sea.

"By the second half of the 19th century, rival Fanti rulers along the coast were increasingly keen to assert themselves and wanted to take control of coastal trade." Due to the significant British presence in the region, the Fanti approached the British to form an alliance. In 1874 the British "ransacked Kumasi" and burnt the city. Once it was pronounced a colony it was named by the British conquerors as 'The Gold Coast'.

Asante King, Prempeh I, enstooled in 1888 was deceived, arrested and forced into exile by the British at the age of 26. During this time, the British search for the Asante Golden Stool was made priority, due to its value, cultural and spiritual significance to the tribe. Demanding the surrendering of the stool and the Ghanaian resistance, this became known as the "War of the Golden Stool" 1900. The Asante Queen Mother elder, Yaa Ansantewaa aged 65 (1840-1921) led the military and people into battle by proxy in King Prempeh I's place. Yaa Ansantewaa was instrumental in hiding the Golden stool in a forest, as it was the "epitome and strength of the soul of the Ashanti."

When overcome by the British, the Asante people swapped the golden stool with a model to protect the kingdom. In 1902, the region became a formal British colony. Despite this, the moral spirit of the Ghanaian tribe remained intact due to the knowledge of the safe dwelling of the Golden stool. As a result, Chiefs are responsible for the maintenance of the Ashanti/Asante tradition and customs, such as the Enstoolment. (Africa, 2020 www.youtube.com). It is from this golden stool that similar wooden stools have been made consistently since this time.

Prior to the carving stools, libations are traditionally poured to request and ensure the piece will be carved accurately and for thanksgiving, for spiritual guidance and to circumvent accidents. It was previously believed that if this was not done, the carver could cut themselves. Despite their ability to use foreign tools, carvers insist on making their own tools and improvised gauges. It was traditionally believed in some Ghanaian communities that if a woodcarver passes away other woodcarvers in the locality are not permitted to carve on that day. Known as "evil days" carvers would refrain from carving on days now understood to be observed for environmental and sustainability. Also, women were not permitted to carve wood, which has now changed since women have become more formally educated. Although used as a utilitarian piece of furniture, it has spiritual connotations throughout Ghana. The wooden stool is the representation of the soul of the nation. The design in the middle of the stool, is telling of the individual it has been carved for. This will visually carry the message of the status of the individual also. "Wood carving in Ghana is a cultural heritage, which needs to be preserved". (Wood Carving in Ghana and its Cultural Undertones, 2013 www.youtube.com/).

It was, and in some cases still is believed that when the stool is not in use, it should be leaned up to one side, to ensure spirits do not inhabit the stool while vacant. It is also believed that the owner's stool is tied to their soul as well as being tied to their soul as well as being of national significance. As a result, after the owner's death, Asante stools were locked away or blackened. (Wooden Stool with Applied Gilded Copper Decoration, n.d. Michaelbackmanltd.com). "Later they were sometimes put into an ancestral shrine". (Akan Asante Fanti Ghana Seat Traditional African Stool Tribal African Art, 2021 1stdibs.com).

Research Reflections

All CMS fields were completed in 2010, when the National Trust acquired the house. However, despite the fact that little was known about the diverse ethnographic nature of much of the house collection, no note was made for the house or CMS team to review and complete the records at a later date.

Aside from the examination of unknown or misrepresented information, prior to the creation of the slavery and colonialism audit, I found the collections data accessible to the public and via CMS to fall short of the arts and heritage museum standard of online listings in certain respects. To ensure this was not primarily subjective and not due to the nuance of 575 Wandsworth Road, I conducted a meeting to informally interview a previous research intern from a collaboration with a community partner, who will remain anonymous. It became clear that their viewpoint echoed mine when it was stated that many collection objects had to be avoided to complete the internship within the scope, due to the lack of knowledge surrounding them.

The original aim of this project was to increase understanding of the nature and cultural significance of the wider collection at 575 Wandsworth Road, and address inadequate or inaccurate information, particularly relevant to contentious objects relating to slavery and colonialism. However, during the initial stage of the project, I deemed it imperative to choose objects whose narratives would probably be non-contentious and would mainly relate to the uniqueness and diversity of African and diasporic woodwork and sculptural practice.

Despite the inadequate information on each object, I felt confident that any research conducted would not yield direct connections to slavery and colonialism. This was due to the objects in focus being omitted from the mandatory slavery and colonialism audit that 575 Wandsworth Road was required to produce. Nevertheless, the history of slavery and colonialism was unavoidable during the research process. Upon reflection, this was to be expected as all countries mentioned in this report have historically adapted or been forced into changing their customs or belief systems, either due to colonialism, socio-economic or political relations internally or with the West.

As mentioned in the introduction, I chose to focus only on six objects partly to keep within the amount of time available in the residency scope, but as an attempt to highlight the diversity of what I believed to be all African wooden carving craftsmanship. This indirectly celebrates Khadambi Asalache as an African creative and woodcarver.

Most of my research entailed visual comparisons. Apart from the Asante/Ashanti stool, there were no other educated guesses of where in Africa the five other objects may originate from or whose heritage it may pertain to. This resulted in non-traditional qualitative forms of research as mentioned in the introduction.

My primary concern throughout the writing of this report was that my research would be not provide sufficient awareness to make informed choices when referring to community groups and tribes, I only became aware of due to this residency. As a result, I conducted additional research outside of the project timeline, in an attempt to avoid discussing cultural objects and their heritage with a lack of sensitivity.

Although this was not an original objective, I feel a failing was a lack of confrontation I was able to provide on object eras and specific production time periods. (See Recommendations).

While researching, unsurprisingly I was aghast and appalled by some of the personally unacceptable terms used in the sector, by academics, specialists and museum professionals alike. The terms included “Tribal Arts”, “Primitive Arts and objects”, “Colonial Art” and “Ethnic works”. Although the arguments and debates requesting the arts, heritage and scientific sectors to refrain from these forms of classifications are decades old, it is gradually becoming apparent that this is not best practice unaware and politically incorrect. Some of these terms can be seen in some sources referenced and citations in this report, which I ironically heavily relied upon to conduct my research as a key part of this residency. Subtly offensive terminology such as these fosters a psychology of institutionally accepted white supremacy and inferior complexes in minority groups and othering, while avoiding the accreditation of highly skilled practitioners in BAME heritage.

CMS Classification

The objects in focus are currently listed under the Ethnographical material or Wooden objects category. Whereas the material classification describes the confirmed, presumed or vague material type(s). Although theoretically the term Ethnographical material is not incorrect in its usage, as arguably all local materials and resources used globally for any form of creative practice and craftsmanship can be considered as an ethnographic material, I felt uncomfortable with its usage. This is primarily because I was not and am not able to comprehend the justification of its usage and why it should remain as a category/classification choice. The term *Ethnographic material* could be deemed offensive, as it subtly alludes to negative and reductive connotations of approaching institutional ignorance of multiple cultures. Sub-communities within the wider BAME community, particularly of African descent, ‘may lament the perceived sequestration’ of the non-western collections within a wider diverse collection, previously owned by a ‘BAME’ multi-skilled individual, in Western institutions. (Thomas, 2016 www.apollo-magazine.com/fiji-pacific-ethnographic-art/).

“The reservation of the art museum for the West and modernity, and what is seen as a pernicious relegation of Black and minority-ethnic culture and communities to a separate, relatively devalued context. In practice, curatorial approaches have moved on and the supposed antinomies of art and ethnography are often transgressed”. (Thomas, 2016 www.apollo-magazine.com/fiji-pacific-ethnographic-art/).

Despite this being perceived and questionable as it is only one term, relegated as subjective semantics, the negative affect on the community its use pertains to is insidious. If the question posed, as to whether the term ethnographic material would apply to an object with an undoubtedly European in origin or not? The honest answer will verify if any disparities in treatment of artefacts/objects based on its location of heritage. In order for National Trust collections, and the 575 Wandsworth Road collection, to be decolonised, some potentially challenging reflections must take place. (See Recommendations).

Due to the parameters and limitations of this residency, I was unable to check the book collection at 575 Wandsworth Road (Khadambi’s possessions) whilst researching to identify its likely relevance to any of the objects in focus. This I feel would have strengthened the validity of my findings as well as providing context for the objects’ positioning in the living room.

I hope that I have demonstrated that more nuanced and complex information is needed on CMS relating to the collection at 575 Wandsworth Road, information that goes beyond the identification of provenance, date, material and aesthetics.

Vintage Yugoslavian Drinking Cup

I struggled to find substantial information on its cultural significance and historical context from deemed credible sources. As a result, the visual leads with a likeness to the drinking cup based at 575 Wandsworth Road, directed me to online retail listings. Although these may seem to have been unreliable sources, I often found that notes and descriptions from these sources corroborated one another.

The main limitation of this project was the scope of 24 days (see original timeline below). On reflection, the report may have been improved if I had selected three objects for example, ensuring a sufficient time for a more in-depth understanding and articulation of each culture's usage and belief systems for the object in question.

Timeline (research days, interpretation and output delivery)

- 7 days for Audit
- 14 days Research
- 3 days for Recommendations

Recommendations

Internal Sharing, Interpretative & Accessibility Recommendations

The following recommendations for internal sharing and interpretative engagement has been suggested for the National Trust to implement as potential short- and long-term actions in no particular order.

Internal Sharing

- Update CMS Records for the six objects within 575 Wandsworth Road's collection, stating all changes made are based upon initial research findings.
- Review and update the 575 Wandsworth Road Tour Script (both virtual and physical visits) to incorporate key findings as points of references.
- Identify all objects within 575 Wandsworth Road's collection that lack fundamental or provisional information, and ensure they are reviewed at a later date through an in-depth research project. An additional label should state this, acknowledging inadequate information listed at present with consideration of the appropriate steps to be taken when possible.
- Ensure conversations take place regarding semantics and terminology of homogenised, reductive, residually racist or colonial language, particularly regarding African and non-Western practice. This also refers particularly to the use of the classification 'Ethnographic material' and the rationale of how objects are categorised as such, followed by the consideration of contemporary best practice for the removal or addition of entry categories.
- If the staff member(s) whose forte is in line with this critical reflection are unavailable, engage with an external consultant with expert knowledge and awareness of basic curatorial, archival, ethnographical, anthropological or diversity and inclusion current practice. (preferably of BAME heritage to ensure future decision making surrounding diverse culturally significant collections are non-contentious or potentially inoffensive)
- Engage in consultation with external specialists relevant to the wooden objects collection, where there is insufficient information.
- Identify and explore how this report and residency is relative to 575 Wandsworth Road's participation in the Everyone Welcome initiative, in addition to the wider Trust's ambitions for the initiative.
- Consider how the recently discovered provenance/production location/country of origin of each object researched in this report can be relevant particularly to the local communities from each respective background and heritage, providing a genuine and nuanced approach to future programming, outreach and engagement.
- Examine how 575 Wandsworth Road can consistently and creatively achieve its goals to amplify black voices, in a sustainable way. This must engage members of the community internally and externally as part of the ideation process.
- The previous recommendation will ensure strategic and innovative deliverables that can be achieved annually for Black History Month.

Interpretative Recommendations

- Panel discussion with specialists or relative proximity through lived experience or cultural heritage to an object in focus, recorded and disseminated amongst partners and the local community.
- Short video/snippets of individuals sharing their knowledge on one or more objects
- A form of audio (possibly a podcast)
- Temporary interpretation (such as labels with brail)
- Commissioning artists with existing relevant practice to respond to an object in focus as a stimulus and the initial findings of this report.
- Identify any potential books relating to the wooden/carved collection, more specifically the objects in focus or themes expressed in this report. This will more than likely provide more of a rich awareness of the wider collection, as the book collection mirrors the diverse nature of Khadambi's personal collection.
- Handling collection for blind and visually impaired audiences (in person) and/or community outreach projects e.g., hospitals, care homes, schools (offsite)

Accessibility Recommendation

Any/all interpretative outputs or responses to this report must be accessible to diverse and disabled communities. This is to be considered especially if embarking on an audio, visual format or focusing on a physical presence or footfall. The following potential recommendations would evidently depend on the nature of the project delivery, the audience and their needs (which may be hidden).

Seek consultation with internal diversity and inclusion staff, in conjunction with appropriate disability agencies/organisations to best advice on relevant actions to be taken or provide support for its implementation.

- Arm volunteers with basic level Verbal Description Training (this may include touch or handling objects for partially sighted visitors)
- British sign-language tours for deaf and hard of hearing audiences (in person and online)
- Captioned tours for deaf and hard of hearing audiences (online)
- Audio-described tours for blind and visually impaired audiences (in person and online)