MUSEUM NIGHTS

KONGO across the WATERS

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What do our everyday household items on display here have to say to their African counterparts in the Kongo exhibit?

What do the African pieces have to say to our everyday objects we sometimes take for granted?

Praise poems were used in African communities to describe powerful animals, skilled hunters, and fearsome mother-in-laws. Other praise poems celebrated everyday household objects:

Generous wooden bowl of my father  
When I have supped from it my heart feels happy  
Wooden bowl of my parent  
Wooden bowl of the beast whose body produces delicious sauce  
Cattle of our place . . .  
—Cow Song, Hurutshe

I am like a pot with a hole at its base,  
Which decorates the shelf in the house.”  
—The lover of those yet unborn, Shona

I, mysterious tripod used for cooking,  
So the pot can stand erect;  
Two of my three legs give way  
And the pot falls off, rolling,  
Seeking the eternal cook.  
—Odo masquerade