



## African Collection

Since the Harn Museum was established, the African collection has grown steadily, from a modest selection of primarily West African sculpture to a collection that encompasses objects from many areas of Africa. The African collection includes sculpture, ceramics, textiles, garments, metalwork and furnishings. The collection has benefited from the generosity of local donors, most notably Rodney D. McGalliard, who gave many major gifts in the 1990s.

The historical depth of the collection is extensive, relative to the original collection, which primarily included objects from the 20th century. In the last 20 years the Harn has acquired objects that more fully demonstrate the continent's long history of art production. Such works include a Nok head from the Jos Plateau of Nigeria (500 B.C. - A.D. 500), Ethiopian Christian Orthodox processional crosses and icons from the 12th -17th centuries from the Faletti collection, and a collection of 18th century Somali jewelry and metalwork from the Loughran collection. Some late 19th or early 20th century objects of note include a rare mural from Ethiopia depicting the 1881 battle between king Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam and the Muslim forces of Sudan and Yoruba, shrine objects such as a fine Ogun axe and a wooden relief-carved Owo altarpiece.

Some important items of personal adornment include a married Mfengu woman's dress and accoutrements collected by Joan Broster in 1950. The ensemble includes more than 100 assembled items, including brass bracelets, beaded necklaces, beadwork panels, a purse, a beaded tobacco pouch and pipe, and rubber gasket anklets, ranging in date from the 19th century to the mid 20th century. In addition to this rare ensemble, the Harn has a large range of southern African beadwork, dolls and other personal adornment items used for initiation, courtship and for daily wear that date from the late 19th century to the late 20th century. Among these are a collection of Zulu earplugs that illustrate the progression of styles and techniques used in the 20th century and were created from horn, wood, celluloid, vinyl and Perspex.

Attributions of traditional or historical artists, hands and workshops has increased in recent years, and the Harn's collection now includes works by Olowe of Ise, Agbonbiofe Adesina, Osei Bonsu, Qes Adamu Tesfaw, Ubah of Usumbu and others. The museum has identified important workshops for several objects, including an Ethiopian triptych identified with the Q<sup>w</sup>ārāña school, a workshop patronized by Emperor Iyasu II, and a horizontal *n'gonzon kun* head crest from a recognized workshop of the Djitoumou region of Mali that originated in the late 19th century.

The ceramic arts are represented in the Harn collection by a range of domestic wares and ceramics used in religious contexts in south, east, west and central Africa. The collection also includes a wide variety of architectural elements, including posts for palaces and shrines, roof finials, doors and door frames, and varied interior furnishings and implements such as stools, chairs, headrests, baskets, boxes and screens.

In 2001, the Harn began to acquire examples of works from contemporary African artists, and the museum plans to continue growing this collection, which now includes works by major artists and features painting, video, prints, sculpture and photography. Contemporary works are showcased in both African and contemporary exhibitions, to reinforce historical continuities and the global presence of artists of African descent in today's art world.