

# The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

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## Advance Fact Sheet

**Title:** AFRICAN TEXTILES AND DECORATIVE ARTS

**Sponsors:** Standard Oil Company (New Jersey) and National Endowment for the Arts

**Auspices:** International Council of The Museum of Modern Art

**Dates:** THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, October 11, 1972 - January 31, 1973  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, March 20 - May 31, 1973  
M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, July 2 - August 31, 1973  
The Cleveland Museum of Art, October 2 - December 2, 1973.

**Contents:** Approximately 250 examples of textiles, jewelry and body ornaments and a few complete costumes, from 26 countries including Senegal, Nigeria, the Cameroons, South Africa, the Republic of Zaire, and Ghana.

African art has been known to the western world since Portuguese explorers first visited the West African coast almost 500 years ago. In this century the West has come to understand and appreciate the power and beauty of African sculpture, but textiles, body ornaments and jewelry have remained largely unknown to all but collectors and museum curators.

The exhibition is divided into two major categories:

1) textiles and apparel; 2) body ornaments.

1. Textiles include East African bark cloth, complex woven mixtures of cotton and silk from Ghana and Nigeria, knitted objects from the Cameroons, cut-pile embroidery from the Kasai area of Zaire, painted textiles from the Ivory Coast, applique from Dahomey, and strip weave from Upper Volta. Lengths of cloth as well as skirts, trousers, robes and costumes are shown.

2. Body ornaments and personal accessories include rings, bracelets, anklets, necklaces, pendants and earrings; in gold, silver, brass, iron, ivory, straw and leather. They range from delicate bead necklaces of the Zulu to massive brass Ibo anklets, and from the exquisite workmanship of Ashanti gold to brutally powerful forms from Liberia.

Among the symbols of high status are fans, batons and whisks. Cosmetic accoutrements include containers for body paint as well as razors, combs, hairpins, wigs and tweezers.

Hair styles and body paint will be shown in photographs of contemporary examples, as well as in reproductions of engravings from books published by the early western travelers in Africa.

(more)

Because African head ornaments are particularly inventive, the exhibition will include hats, crowns and feather top knots, grouped together in a "Hat Bar."

Guest Director: Roy Sieber, Professor of Art History, Department of Fine Arts, Indiana University; assisted by Roslyn Walker, Visiting Lecturer in the African American Studies Program, Indiana University. Katherine White Reswick traveled 75,000 miles to visit 23 public institutions and 57 private collections in preparing a photographic survey of textiles and jewelry in American collections for the exhibition. Exhibition designed by Arthur Drexler, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design, The Museum of Modern Art; special settings by Gene Moore.

Publication: The accompanying book by Professor Sieber offers background information on the people whose works are exhibited and detailed commentaries describing the objects. Approximately 244 illustrations, 40 in color.

Posters: Two large posters, one a teaching aid, one an advertisement.

Slides: Sets of slides accompanied by captions and introductory text.

Special Related Events: Preview for lenders and contributing members of the Museum - Oct. 10

Student Evening with African dance and music sponsored by the Museum's Junior Council - Nov. 10

International Council reception for U.N. Ambassadors and special view of the show. - Nov. 14.

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Additional information, black and white photographs and color transparencies available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7501, -7504

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