

**THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS
*ADORNED: AFRICAN WOMEN & THE ART OF IDENTITY***

Works of beads, clay, and cloth made by African women signified social status

BALTIMORE, MD (November 12, 2019)—The Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) presents an exhibition that demonstrates the critical role of women in shaping social identity across 20th-century Africa. On view from December 11, 2019 through June 28, 2020, *Adorned: African Women & the Art of Identity* features two dozen artworks from across the continent, including several that have never before been exhibited.

The exhibition includes colorful jewelry and intricately decorated clothing from the Ndebele communities in South Africa, the Turkana communities in Kenya, and the Maasai communities of Tanzania and Kenya. A selection of gourd bowls from western Chad, loaned from a private collection, and a large indigo-dyed textile from Ibadan, Nigeria are also featured. Each of these vibrant works served as visual signifiers of age, marital status, ethnic identity, economic achievement, and political authority.



“For generations, African women artists have been making artworks that people used to define who they were,” said Christopher Bedford, BMA Dorothy Wagner Wallis Director. “I am pleased to tell the histories of these women and to be able to place their contributions alongside the works of other monumental women artists from around the globe.”

The vast majority of the included artworks comes from the late colonial (1920-1960) and independence periods (1960-1980). During these momentous eras, women artists played a particularly important role in shaping the visual signs of African identities. In response to colonial oppression, African women responded by innovating new styles and creating works that expressed pride in who they were. During Apartheid, for instance, Ndebele women artists asserted pride in their ethnic identity by decorating clothes and houses with traditional geometric patterns. And in the era when Africans were declaring their political independence, women artists created symbols for new nations using the works they wore and sold.

Adorned: African Women & the Art of Identity is part of the BMA’s year-long *2020 Vision* initiative highlighting women artists and leaders. The exhibition is curated by Kevin Tervalá, BMA Associate Curator of African Art.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

Founded in 1914, The Baltimore Museum of Art is a major cultural destination recognized for engaging diverse audiences through dynamic exhibitions and innovative educational and community outreach programs. The BMA’s internationally renowned collection of 95,000 objects encompasses more than 1,000 works by Henri Matisse anchored by the famed Cone Collection of modern art, as well as one of the nation’s finest holdings of prints, drawings, and photographs. The galleries showcase an exceptional collection of art from Africa; important works by established and emerging contemporary artists; outstanding European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts; significant artworks from China; ancient Antioch mosaics; and exquisite textiles from around the world. The 210,000-square-foot museum is also distinguished by a grand historic building designed in the 1920s by renowned American architect John Russell Pope and two beautifully landscaped gardens featuring an array of 20th-century sculpture. The BMA is located in Charles Village, three miles north of the Inner Harbor, and is adjacent to the

main campus of Johns Hopkins University. General admission to the BMA is free so that everyone can enjoy the power of art.

VISITOR INFORMATION

General admission to the BMA is free. Special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. The museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year’s Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The BMA is located at 10 Art Museum Drive, three miles north of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor. For general museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit artbma.org.

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