

## Beyond Borders: Global Africa

UMMA -- August 11, 2018 - November 25, 2018

### (Post)colonial Encounter

Many of the objects in *Beyond Borders: Global Africa* form responses to, or reflections on, the history of colonization and its aftermath. The so-called "scramble for Africa" redrew cultural boundaries throughout the continent to suit the needs of imperial powers and their colonial administrations on the ground, and in many cases, the arts of Africa continue to be classified along these lines. Additionally, the extractive nature of colonization on the African continent, both in terms of slave labor, raw and cultural materials, meant that the colonization of this area had long-lasting effects. The Yoruba *bata ileke* (oba's slippers) and *timùtimù* (beaded foot cushion) incorporate a British crown and Victorian wallpaper motifs into two objects used to display the power of Yoruba kings (*obas*), thereby using the symbols of one's oppressor to subvert existing power structures. Power figures or *minkisi*, while likely predating the colonial period in countries like the DRC, Angola and the Republic of Congo saw an increase in use during the late 19th century suggesting that these objects formed one likely response to colonization especially under the brutal regime of King Leopold II of Belgium.

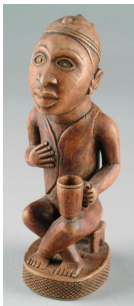
William Adjété Wilson's *Colonisation* is a contemporary depiction of this history. The exploitation of the African continent by European powers is symbolized through the flags loaded onto the back of an African man, around whose neck is a rope, the



Artist Unrecorded, Oba's slippers (1997/1.307.1-2)



Artist unrecorded, Chokwe Chair (1992/1.136)



Artist Unrecorded, Yombe Seated Figure (2005/1.186)



Artist unrecorded, Songye Power Figure (2005/1.228)



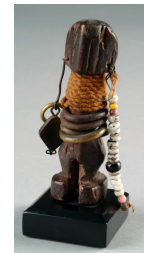
Possibly the Workshop of the Adesina family, Beaded Foot Cushion (1997/1.308)



Artist unrecorded, Bwende Power Figure (2005/1.178)



Artist unrecorded, Vili (Kongo) Power Figure (2005/1.180)



Artist unrecorded, Zande Power Figure (2005/1.236)



Artist unrecorded, *Zande Power Figure* (2005/1.237)



William Adjete Wilson, *Colonisation* (2015/2.48)



Chéri Samba, *Hommage aux Anciens Créateurs (A Tribute to Earlier Artists)* (loan)



Fabrice Monteiro, *Signare ile de Goree 10* (Loan)

strings of which are held by a colonial administrator in whose wake follows industrialization, pollution and death. Chéri Samba's *Hommage aux Anciens Créateurs (A Tribute to Earlier Artists)* considers the history of colonial collecting within Africa and the long-term effects of such collecting in terms of exhibition narratives and display strategies, which for a long time presented the people and cultures of Africa as monolithic and primitive, in spite of the fact that many of the objects collected directly challenged such narratives.

Fabrice Monteiro's *Signares* series recalls the history of a particular group of women called *signares* (meaning married woman in Portuguese), who successfully navigated Senegal's colonial system by forming marriage alliances with sailors, merchants, and soldiers. These women ultimately amassed a great deal of wealth, power, and independence which in some circumstances outlasted the marriages themselves. At the same time, these unions implicated the *signares* in the Transatlantic slave trade and the active stripping of agency and independence from those sold into it. The *Paket Kongo* and Omar Victor Diop's *Project Diaspora* are indicative of some of these farther reaching and long-term effects. The *Paket Kongo* is an object used in religions like *vodun*, which itself is the outcome of numerous African faiths meeting and mixing with indigenous American ones, and Christianity in places like Haiti, Louisiana, and Florida. These religions emerged in part because of the Transatlantic slave trade and are still practiced today.



Artist unrecorded, *Yombe Power Figure* (2005/1.191)



Kudzanai Chiurai, *Leviathan* (Loan)



Nandipha Mntambo, *Ukugenisia* (Loan)



Fabrice Monteiro, *Signare ile de Goree 1* (Loan)



Omar Victor Diop, *Frederick Douglass* (Loan)



Artist Unrecorded, *Paket Kongo* (Loan)



Kehinde Wiley. *On Top of the World* (Loan)

Diop's portraits stress the impact of famous African and African American figures on the development of countries outside of Africa. Frederick Douglass and Jean Baptiste Belley impacted the course of history in the U.S. and Haiti, respectively. Both successfully fought for the abolition of slavery in these countries, Belley in the Haitian Revolution and Douglass as a poignant social reformer, orator, and preacher during the mid-nineteenth century in the U.S. Finally in Kehinde Wiley's *On Top of the World*, a young Nigerian man appears in a pose emulating that of a famous sculpture in Lagos which depicts Obafemi Awolowo, a chief and politician who played an important role in Nigeria's independence movement. Wiley's portrait also resonates with postures related to the Black Power Movement in the United States, thereby bringing together several movements fighting for the independence and equality of people of color in a variety of times and places.



Omar Victor Diop, *Jean Baptiste Belley* (Loan)



Alison Saar, *Janus* (Loan)