Art of Identity, Expression, and Adornment: Africa Outreach Suitcase

“Your suitcases truly make our social studies and culture units come to life for our students.”
—Middle School Language Arts Educator

ABOUT THE SUITCASE
This suitcase explores the diversity of Africa by discussing art objects of identity, expression, and adornment. Students can use the objects in the suitcase, many of which are original from Africa, to gain new understandings of African art and culture and to share perspectives based on their own lives. Using these objects, students have the opportunity to discuss the traditional and contemporary cultural practices of Africans and the global impact of their cultures.


LOOKING QUESTIONS
Encourage your students to look closely at the objects in the suitcase and images from SAM’s Collection with questions like:

• How do individuals communicate their identity through objects they own, use, and wear?
• How do symbols help identify a person as a member of a certain community?
• What can you determine about a person based on his or her clothing or possessions?
• What can you tell about your classmates based on the type of items that they carry with them?
WHAT’S IN THE AFRICA OUTREACH SUITCASE?

Educator Resource Guide
• A list of relevant objects in the suitcase
• A list of images on the prints and CD that relate to these objects
• Guiding questions
• Background information on the objects and images
• Activity ideas
• Related resources and glossary
• Washington State, Common Core, and National Core Arts Education Standards

Objects in the Suitcase (Pictured on Front)
• Ghanaian stool
• Ethiopian cross
• Cowrie shells
• Gelede mask
• Papyrus scroll
• Obama khanga cloth
• Recycled bike sculpture
• Recycled rubber bracelets
• Pop tabs
• Maasai necklace
• Kente cloth
• Adinkra stamps
• Adire cloth
• Books and music CD

Supplemental Images from SAM’s Collection (on CD and 11 X 17” Prints)
Theme: Individual Identity
• Stool, Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.338
• Lion Stool, after 1957, Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.545
• Mercedes Benz coffin, 1991, Kane Quaye, Gift of Dr. Oliver E. and Pamela F. Cobb and Mark Groudine and Cynthia Putnam in honor of Pam McClusky, 93.163, © Kane Quaye

Theme: Group Identity
• Belt mask of Iyoba (Mother of the Oba) Idia, ca. 1517-1550, Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.493
• Head of Amun, ca. 1200 B.C., Eugene Fuller Memorial Collection and Hagop Kevorkian, 51.69
• Hand Cross, Gift of Tom Joyce and museum purchase with funds donated by John and Robyn Horn, 2007.243

Theme: Adornment
• Bull necklace (Norkitenog), General Acquisition Fund, 2000.12.2
• Sunday cloth (Kwasiada Adinkra), 20th century, Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.657
• Takpekpe (Conference), 2006, El Anatsui, Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, T2006.105

SAMPLE ACTIVITY: SYMBOLS AND STOOLS
• Begin with popular symbols used in Ghana (from the booklet in West African Stamps in the suitcase) and ask students to use them to design their own personal stool. Have students think about how they would identify themselves and create stools based on their identities. Students can display their drawn stool designs throughout the classroom or in the hallways.
• Extension: Use either Ghanaian patterns or symbols from another culture to create paper decorations that students can tape to their chairs at school. Sitting on their “stools,” have students share with the class what these symbols mean and how they incorporated them in their design to express who they are.