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THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART SHOWCASES AFRICAN COLLECTION IN NEW EXHIBITION SERIES

BALTIMORE, MD (November 1, 2006)—Stunning gold objects meant to dazzle the eye during sunlit performances, sacred works of art designed to radiate spiritually, and masks and vessels intended for the shadows or nighttime performances are among nearly 40 radiant objects from The Baltimore Museum of Art's collection presented in *Meditations on African Art: Light*. From **December 17, 2006–April 1, 2007**, these dramatically illuminated works of art—many on view for the first time—will demonstrate the importance of light to the design and interpretation of African art.

Meditations on African Art: Light is the first exhibition in a three-part series that will explore light, color, and pattern in the BMA's distinguished collection of African art. Highlights include a modernist bead painting by Nigerian/Yoruba artist Jimoh Buraimoh, an exceptional five-foot Fante gold staff from Ghana, and delicate alabaster treasures from ancient Egypt. The BMA has also invited international video artist Theo Eshetu to create a contemporary light-based work for the gallery. His installation will use video, photographs, light, and mirrors to address stereotypes of identity.

"The BMA was one of the first American art museums to form an African art collection," said BMA Director Doreen Bolger. "Now, we are excited to integrate classical African art with works by contemporary artists for the first time."

The exhibition galleries will be divided into four sections:

Spiritual Light: Works of art designed to radiate from within include classic and contemporary Yoruba beadwork, a prayer board with a passage from the Koran used in healing, and a modern Ethiopian illuminated prayer book.

Daylight: Objects meant for sunlight include the BMA's famed Baga *D'mba*, considered the best example of this form in the world, and a Bamana hunter's tunic covered in mirrors and amulets, on display for the first time.

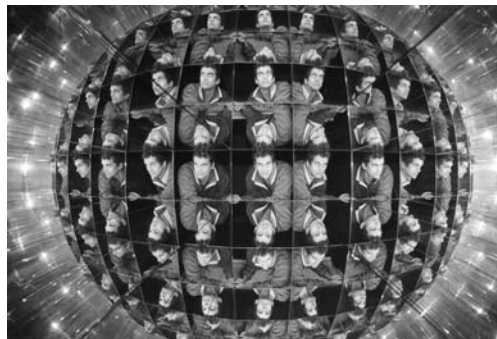


Reliquary Figure (Mbulu-Ngulu), Kota. African, Gabon (early 20th century). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Alan Wurtzburger, BMA 1955.145.64

Twilight: Entering the dimly lit gallery trips spotlights on artwork intended to be displayed in enclosures or during nighttime performances, such as glowing alabaster vessels from ancient Egypt and a glittering copper and brass Kota reliquary.

Contemporary Installation by Video Artist Theo Eshetu

The BMA has commissioned international videographer and photographer Theo Eshetu to create an installation for the exhibition. The work will incorporate video, light, and mirrors with five televisions showing multinational documentaries that comment on stereotypes of identity. Eshetu is known for using film to shape the perception of people and place, challenging our understanding of identity. He was born in London to Ethiopian parents in 1958, and spent part of his childhood in Ethiopia. He has been working in Italy since 1982.



Theo Eshetu. *Self-Portrait*, 2002. Courtesy the artist.

This exhibition series is curated by BMA Associate Curator of African Art Karen Milbourne.

The *Meditations* series is generously sponsored by Polk Audio, Matthew Polk and Amy Gould.

MEDITATIONS OF AFRICAN ART SERIES

Meditations on African Art: Light is the first exhibition in a three-part series that explores light, pattern, and color in the BMA's distinguished collection of African art. The second exhibition—*Color* (on view April 18-August 19, 2007)—will reveal the importance of color symbolism in African art and feature an installation by Tunisian-born Swiss artist Fatma Charfi. The third—*Pattern* (on view August 29, 2007-January 13, 2008)—will examine the dynamic patterns that enliven many works of African Art, including a site-specific work by London-based Nigerian artist Mary Evans.

PROGRAMS

Artful Conversations:

Filmmaker Theo Eshetu

Saturday, November 18, noon-4 p.m.

\$15; free for BMA Members

Enjoy a screening of three films directed by Theo Eshetu that delve into African identity, followed by a conversation with the artist moderated by BMA Associate Curator for African Art Karen Milbourne. Light refreshments included. Call 443-573-1818 to register.

Kwanzaa Family Day

Sunday, December 17, 2-5 p.m.

Free

Celebrate Kwanzaa with the exhilarating dancing and drumming of the Wasfiri Kenyan Dancers. Make your

own African *mbira* (thumb piano) and play along with Ikeme as he shares stories of African history and culture. Join gallery tours of the collection, enjoy a family hands-on workshop, and be among the first to see *Meditations on African on Art: Light* on opening day.

AFRICAN ART COLLECTION AT THE BMA

One of the first American museum to start an African art collection, the BMA has one of the most important collections of African art in the country, including an unparalleled Baga female dance headdress, *D'mba*, from Guinea. The African art collection now numbers more than 2,000 objects and ranges from the ancient Egypt to contemporary Zimbabwean art. Works of art originate from across the continent and were used in royal courts, public and esoteric performances, and religious contexts, with examples from Bamana, Yoruba, Kuba, Ndebele and many more communities. Highlights include works by acclaimed Liberian carvers Zlan and Sonzanlwon and the legendary brasscaster Ldamie. Recent acquisitions include a Lozi throne carved in the court of Lozi King Lewanika of western Zambia and a Hausa Koranic prayer board.

THE BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF ART

The Baltimore Museum of Art is home to an internationally renowned collection of 19th-century, modern, and contemporary art. Founded in 1914, the BMA's outstanding collection encompasses 90,000 works of art, including the largest and most significant holding of works by Henri Matisse in the world, as well as masterpieces by Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne, and Vincent van Gogh. An expanding collection of contemporary art features iconic post-1960 works by Andy Warhol and Sol LeWitt, as well as exciting acquisitions by artists such as Kara Walker and Olafur Eliasson. The BMA is also recognized for an internationally acclaimed collection of prints, drawings, and photographs from the 15th century to the present; grand European painting and sculpture from Old Masters to the 19th century; distinguished American painting, sculpture, and decorative arts and Maryland period rooms; one of the most important African collections in the country, and notable examples of Asian, ancient American, and Pacific Islands art. The BMA's sculpture gardens feature a 100-year survey of modern sculpture on nearly three landscaped acres.

VISITOR INFORMATION

General admission to the BMA is free; special exhibitions may be ticketed. The BMA is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.; and during the first Thursday of every month (except major holidays), 11 a.m.–9 p.m. The Museum is closed Monday, Tuesday, New Year's Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The BMA is located on Art Museum Drive at North Charles and 31st Streets, three miles north of Baltimore's Inner Harbor. For general Museum information, call 443-573-1700 or visit www.artbma.org.

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