

johannesburg  
**a r t** gallery

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REFERENCE LIBRARY  
**JAG ARCHIVES**

**TRADITIONAL  
COLLECTION**

**BRENTHURST  
COLLECTION  
FROM LOWEN  
COLLECTION  
11/1A VOL1 10/58  
11/1A VOL 2**

**ART&AMBIGUITY  
EXHIBITION  
VOL1  
CORRESPONDENCE  
REPORTS  
10/58**

11/1a Vol 1

11/1a Vol 1

Brenthurst Collection  
(for. Lowen Collection)

- Correspondence
- Reports

10/58

Art and Ambiguity Exh.

10/58

11/1a Vol 1

Brenthurst Collection

BRENTHURST COLLECTION OF AFRICAN ART

Information drawn from letters written by Lowen

Collected by Lowen between 1971 - 1983;

Card index compiled by Margaret Carey in the Winter of 1983 - 84;

Some published in Gillon, *Collecting African Art*, pp. 168, 169;

Some items from collections in England and Europe;

Two principal aims:

(1) to select items reflecting the creative ability and artistic genius of the people who made the pieces

(2) to represent the range and context of Aesthetic qualities which make Southern African Tribal art so distinctive;

"An art collection and each piece was carefully considered aesthetically to form a comprehensive artistic statement assembled over 12 years of passionate searching".

BRENTHURST COLLECTION OF AFRICAN ART  
LIST OF HOLDINGS

The works were listed according to the following order:

- 1 object type, vernacular name
- 2 medium
- 3 dimensions
- 4 inscriptions/original labels
- 5 attribution
- 6 provenance
- 7 references
- 8 comments
- 9 Lowen number

1 OBJECT TYPE, VERNACULAR NAME

Drawn from the cards, are descriptive titles created by Margaret Carey. She was formerly keeper of the British Museum of Mankind and was employed by Jonathan Lowen in the winter of 1983-1984 to document his collection. Where available, the vernacular name is included here.

Problems:

- a) Objects were grouped according to their descriptive titles, then according to their attribution (which MC seems to have determined on the basis of style). She is, however, not consistent. Objects which seem to have been later acquisitions are added to the back of each category e.g. a mish-mash of Shona/Zulu/Pokot/Pondo headrests occurs from JL-E-119 onwards, whereas their 'sections' occur earlier. If the collection is to be considered a fixed entity (i.e. without reference to their accumulation over a period of time), should this problem be addressed? Since attribution has been shown to be difficult to determine (see PD's "Catalogue of the Brenthurst Collection"), due to lack of provenance etc, this exercise may be futile.
- b) JL-A-59, which should have been a figure carving, was replaced by a stool (this stool is also very different from the other stools - in the 'stool' section: D). There is also a 'stool' which could also be a figure carving (JL-D-5).
- c) Clubs which could also be considered to be staffs.
- d) Gourd vessels which are classified as snuff-boxes because of their size.
- e) Vernacular names are difficult to determine (there are many variations).

## 2 MEDIUM

The predominant material (which gives the object its form) is listed first, thereafter other materials are listed alphabetically (in groups of predominance - particularly the beadwork) e.g. wood precedes horn if horn is used as a stopper.

For that which is classified beadwork:

the support is listed first, this could be:

- brass (curtain ring)
- clay
- cob (mealie)
- fibre
- grass
- gourd
- hide (untanned)
- leather (tanned)
- metal (safety pin)
- textile
- wood

what the beads are strung on is listed next:

- cord (tassles)
- leather (thong)
- sinew
- thread (cotton)

then, type of beads:

- brass (beads)
- clay (beads)
- glass (faceted bugle-beads; seed-beads; cane-beads)
- plastic (seed-beads)
- seed (oblate)

then, other:

- brass (buttons; tacks; wire)
- plastic (buttons)
- porcelain (buttons)
- metal (nail; pin; safety pin)

This becomes a problem when a material (e.g. brass) recurs in each of these categories.

### 3 DIMENSIONS

a) For three dimensional objects (e.g. headrests, figure carvings):  
H x W x D (the largest measurement in each case)

b) For beadwork:

the way in which the object was worn was prioritised and measured as:  
L x W x D

L = the vertical measurement (parallel to a standing person) determined by the way in which the object is worn e.g. a necklace (if it has a button, measured with the button closed) is measured from the area which supposedly goes behind the neck down to the end of the pendant.

W = perpendicular to L, is the greatest measurement.

D = perpendicular to W and L

#### problems:

circlets (e.g. JL-U-37) to be consistent should be measured as the others, but this would involve either flattening the object or standing it upright to form a circle. In cases such as this, it was resolved that the object be measured 'double' and that the depth measurement be omitted.

### 4 INSCRIPTIONS/ORIGINAL LABELS

Listed under the heading of 'insc.' or 'original label'.

### 5 ATTRIBUTION

Margaret Carey's attributions are listed, followed by '(MC)'; attributions which differ are listed, followed by '(JAG)' - a note will precede the catalogue list, stating that this indicates new research; where the attribution seems accurate this is listed, followed by '(MC & JAG)'

### 6 PROVENANCE

Where available, is listed under the heading of 'prov.'. Since the fact that the objects were collected by Lowen and bought by Oppenheimer is part of their provenance, should this information also precede the catalogue list?

### 7 REFERENCES

Listed under the heading of 'ref.'. This includes references to publications in which similar objects are illustrated and museums which have similar objects in their holdings. The references are mostly MC's and seem to have been included by her in order to support her attributions.

problems: These references are arbitrary and sometimes inaccurate - they sometimes refer to publications where attributions are inaccurate. Some items have no references and implies that similar objects don't exist in other museums. Since the inclusion of references would necessitate further research, should they be included under each entry? Perhaps a bibliography could be included under the heading of 'Further Reading'?

8 COMMENTS

This includes information on the object e.g. the way in which it was used. Only Margaret Carey's comments are followed by bracketed information, '(MC)'.

9 LOWEN NUMBER

The number assigned to the object by MC and is Jonathan Lowen's initials followed by a dash, followed by the file number, followed by a dash, followed by the object's number in the file (e.g. JL-A-1)

STILL TO BE DONE:

- 1 Redo problematic beadwork measurements.
- 2 Resolve whether or not to include references and if so to decide on a format.
- 3 Regroup?



AN AFRICAN ART COLLECTION FOR THE JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

The Johannesburg Art Gallery is a cultural amenity for the public of Johannesburg and of South Africa. It is also a showcase for the international visitor who expects to find in the Gallery a full representation of the art of this country. Besides the excellent international collections, the Johannesburg Art Gallery has a collection of early and modern South African art. However, there is no traditional African art represented. As this forms the basis of the artistic endeavour of black South Africans, its lack in our Art Gallery, being a Gallery on the continent of Africa, is a serious gap in the art of this country. The Johannesburg Art Gallery will increasingly become a focus of cultural and artistic endeavours in the City and should represent to scholars, students, international visitors and the general public a cross-section of the aesthetic evident in Southern Africa. This was very successfully pursued by the National Gallery of Rhodesia, later Zimbabwe, and worked well in establishing a greater awareness of specific cultural identities.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery has the opportunity to rectify this gap with the acquisition of a collection of Southern African Tribal Art presently in London. The Director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery recently visited London to view the collection. Prior to proceeding there he conducted research into the availability of material of this nature in South Africa. He visited various museums, including the Africana Museum, Johannesburg, the South African Museum, Cape Town, the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, the Killie Campbell Museum, Durban, and the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, Pretoria. The collections of these institutions were examined by the Director of the Johannesburg Art Gallery and the photographic and written evidence regarding the collection was shown to the relevant experts. All were of the opinion that the collection was of great importance to South Africa and that the availability in this country of the material was now practically non-existent.

The collection has been put together not as an ethnographical assembly but from an artistic point of view with each piece selected for its aesthetic quality, and accordingly it is a comprehensive statement of the artistic endeavours of the people represented.

The tradition of wood carving has died out in large areas of Southern Africa and accordingly the availability of this kind of material here is very limited. Scattered and isolated items of the same aesthetic standard can be found in South African museums; however, none of the museums has as representative, diverse and large a collection as this collection of Southern African Tribal Art. All the museums have stated that the items, if and when found today, are of vastly inferior quality, largely due to the change in the nature of Black rural society. As confirmed in the letters from various authorities, the assessment is that this collection of Southern African Tribal Art is of a particularly high quality and the majority of pieces represented in the collection display an inordinately high degree of craftsmanship and aesthetic excellence.

The majority of early pieces of quality have left the country via the early missionaries and private collectors. As little interest existed in Southern Africa compared to West and Central Africa, the owner, in the first five years of collecting specifically Southern African pieces, appears to have obtained the very best at modest prices. As confirmed by Sotheby's, London, in part due to this growing collection, a new interest and realisation that there was a tradition of wood carving in this area was created and other collectors began to take notice and buy. The result is that pieces from this geographical area have become very expensive and rare. Sotheby's confirm that while pieces do come up for auction, they are few and far between. They also confirm that the owner has been the main buyer from their sales of this material and his collection is considered to be possibly the finest and most representative outside the British Museum.

The geographic area represented is almost entirely within the present-day boundaries of South Africa and is made up of approximately 750 pieces by the Nguni people (Zulu, Xhosa, Southern Transvaal Ndebele, Northern Transvaal Ndebele) as well as Swazi who are also of the Nguni people. In addition, where stylistically relevant, a few pieces from the Ndebele (Matabele) and Shona in Zimbabwe and from the Kenyan and Sudanese people are also included. The majority of the collection is devoted to the art of the carver who worked in wood, bone, rhino and cattle horn. The collection is fully catalogued, indexed and cross-referenced, with each item photographed on a 5 x 4 inch colour plate. The range of material consists of figuratively carved staffs, dolls, pipes, spoons and over 60 figures. Also included are abstract decorative carvings consisting of 120 head/neck-rests, containers, vessels, utensils and weaponry.

The asking price for the collection is Pounds Sterling 250 000 which was first given one year ago. In assessing the worth of the collection a guide of the value of the individual pieces can be given by the auction sales figures over the past few years. Pounds Sterling 250 000 would seem a realistic price to pay for the collection based on what individual pieces would be likely to fetch on auction and notwithstanding the increased value as an entire collection.

The particular relevance of the collection to this region and the rarity of such items would make its acquisition for the Johannesburg Art Gallery an event of great artistic and cultural significance. To be able to redress the dearth of African and specifically Southern African art in this country with some of the finest examples is an opportunity not to be missed.

Specific details, photographs and the assessment of museum and university authorities are available for inspection.

In the interests of the owner and the Johannesburg Art Gallery, it is requested that this report be considered confidential.

11/1A

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

CMT/jw  
11/2A

14 January 1986

Mr and Mrs J Lowen  
26 Fife Road  
East Sheen  
LONDON SW14  
England

Dear Jonathan and Eve

I wish firstly, very belatedly, to thank you both for your hospitality during my and Councillor Malan's visit to London. I must apologise for not having written to you sooner than this. You may have heard that I have been out of action for a while undergoing operations on my hip. I am, however, now back at the Gallery, albeit on crutches.

The report on the Lowen collection was tabled today at Management Committee and the decision taken not to purchase the collection at present. The reason is purely financial with the exchange rate having effectively doubled the price since our first negotiation. I have, however, taken it on myself to continue to secure the collection and have made two other approaches to corporations with a view to them purchasing the collection directly and presenting it to the Art Gallery. I firmly believe that the collection should be in South Africa and feel it would be a tragedy if it was lost to us.

Thank you for your patience and I apologise if our protracted negotiations had inconvenienced you in any way. I will keep you informed of developments regarding my negotiations with other potential donors.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

C M TILL  
DIRECTOR

MC

Minutes  
13/1/86

11/1/86

(hh) LOWEN COLLECTION OF  
AFRICAN TRIBAL ART

RESOLVED

- 1 That no steps be taken to purchase the Lowen Collection of African Tribal Art and that the Culture and Recreation Committee be advised accordingly.
  
- 2 That the report on the overseas visit be submitted to the Council for information.

Initially Mr Lowen appears to have obtained the items at moderate prices. When other collectors became interested, pieces from this geographical area became very expensive.

Mr Lowen wants 250 000 sterling (approximately R1 000 000) for the collection. Although it is a fine collection, we cannot recommend that the city spend approximately R1 000 000 in these difficult times to purchase it.

While in London we visited various museums, including the Geological Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum, The Tate Gallery, The British Museum, the Museum of London and the Museum of Mankind. Lighting systems, hanging methods, security systems, methods of display, restaurants and book shops were looked at in view of the Gallery extensions under construction.

A courtesy call to the South African Embassy to meet the Cultural Attaché was made and the opportunity taken to see the Pierneef paintings in the Embassy building.

Prior to the London visit, the Director of the Art Gallery attended an international council of museums conference in Lisbon, where he presented a paper on the extensions to the Art Gallery. After the London visit, Councillor Malan returned home while Mr Till paid a visit of three days to Switzerland, - a visit which will hopefully lead to a Centenary exhibition loaned from a private collection."

RESOLVED

1 That no steps be taken to purchase the Lowen Collection of African Tribal Art and that the Culture and Recreation Committee be advised accordingly.

2 That the report on the overseas visit be submitted to the Council for information.

(160/3/1)

/(11) BUSHKOPPIE

Draft  
typed  
in Dec. '85  
and revised  
in Jan. '86.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
CULTURE & RECREATION COMMITTEE

LIBRARY DEPARTMENT (ART GALLERY)

REPORT ON THE LOWEN COLLECTION  
OF AFRICAN TRIBAL ART

Background::

The Lowen collection of African tribal art is the property of Mr and Mrs Jonathan Lowen and is situated in London. Mr Lowen lived in South Africa until 1964 when he left to live in England where he now practises at the English Bar. Prior to taking his law degree, Mr Lowen studied art history at the University of the Witwatersrand under Professor Rankin, the present head of the department of art history.

The collection was purchased and assembled by Mr Lowen over the past twelve years from private collections and public auctions in Europe.

The collection was first offered for sale to the University of the Witwatersrand which had expressed its interest and who attempted, unsuccessfully, to find funds to purchase the collection.

Having heard of the collection previously, an investigation into the possibility of acquiring it for the Johannesburg Art Gallery was begun. A report from Mrs Margaret Carey in London, an expert on Southern and Eastern African material, was received and it was decided to send Councillor D G Malan and the Director of the Art Gallery to view the collection in London.

Prior to proceeding to London, the Director of the Art Gallery conducted research into the availability of material of this nature in South Africa. He visited various museums including the Africana Museum, Johannesburg, the South African Museum, Cape Town, the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, the Killie Campbell Museum, Durban, and the National Cultural History and Open-Air Museum, Pretoria. The collections of these institutions were examined by the Director of the Art Gallery, and the photographic and written evidence regarding the Lowen collection was shown to the relevant experts. Written assessments from these museums as well as from the University of the Witwatersrand on the Lowen collection and the availability of similar material are attached.

While in Lisbon, Portugal, the Director visited the ethnographic museum and was shown their collections. Material from the geographic area covered by the Lowen collection was practically non-existent.

/In

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
CULTURE & RECREATION COMMITTEE

LIBRARY DEPARTMENT (ART GALLERY)

In London the Director and Councillor Malan visited the Museum of Mankind and looked through their computer print-outs and available photographic records. The Director returned to the museum and studies its library holdings. The Director visited Sotheby's, London, and discussed Southern African art with the African art expert, Roberto Finello, and looked through the pieces from Africa to be offered on their next sale in December 1985. The Lowen collection was examined by the Director and Councillor Malan at length on three occasions over three days.

Motivation

The reason for considering the purchase for the Johannesburg Art Gallery is based, firstly, on the specific relevance of the collection to this region and, secondly, to represent the entire spectrum of art in the country in the city's art gallery. As an art gallery in Africa and specifically in South Africa, international visitors to the Gallery continually question the lack of African art in the collection. A list of the 43 nationalities who have signed the Visitors' Book over the past year is attached.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery will increasingly become a focus of cultural and artistic endeavour and should represent to scholars, students, international visitors and the general public a cross-section of the aesthetic evident in South Africa. This was very successfully pursued by the National Gallery of Rhodesia, later Zimbabwe, and worked well in establishing a greater awareness of specific cultural identities.

The opportunity of acquiring a collection of Southern African materials of the calibre represented was felt to be one which should not be overlooked if the Gallery is to achieve these goals.

The collection:

The geographic area represented is almost entirely within the present-day boundaries of South Africa and is made up of approximately 750 pieces by the Nguni people (Zulu, Xhosa, Southern Transvaal Ndebele, Northern Transvaal Ndebele, as well as Swazi who are also of the Nguni people. In addition, where stylistically relevant, a few pieces from the Ndebele (Matabele) and Shona in Zimbabwe, and from the Kenyan and Sudanese people are also included. The majority of the collection is devoted to the art of the carver who worked in wood, bone, rhino and cattle horn. The collection is fully catalogued and indexed and cross-referenced, with each item photographed on a 5 x 4 inch colour plate. The range of material consists of figuratively carved staffs, dolls, pipes, spoons and over 60 figures. Also included are abstract decorative carvings including 120 head/neck-rests, containers, vessels, utensils and weaponry. A list of items is attached.

/Assessment



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
CULTURE & RECREATION COMMITTEE

LIBRARY DEPARTMENT (ART GALLERY)

Assessment:

The Lowen pieces have been collected not as an assembly of ethnography but from an artistic point of view, with each piece assembled for its aesthetic quality and is accordingly a comprehensive statement of the artistic endeavours of the people represented.

As confirmed in the letters from various authorities (attached), the assessment is that the Lowen collection of African tribal art is of a particularly high quality and the majority of pieces represented in the collection display an inordinately high degree of craftsmanship and aesthetic excellence.

The tradition of wood carving has died out in large areas of South Africa and accordingly the availability of this kind of material in South Africa is very limited. Scattered and isolated items of the same aesthetic standard can be found in museum collections; however, none of the museums in South Africa have as representative, diverse and large a collection of the kind of works contained in the Lowen collection.

All the museums have stated that the quality of items, if and when found today, are of inferior quality, largely due to the changes that have taken place in the rural and urban society.

The majority of early pieces of quality collected by missionaries and private collectors have left the country. As little interest existed in Southern African material compared to that of West and Central Africa, Mr Lowen, in the first five years of collecting specifically Southern African pieces, appears to have obtained the very best at modest prices. In part due to Mr Lowen's growing collection (confirmed by Sotheby's, London), a new interest and realisation of the tradition of wood carving in this area was created and other collectors began to take notice and buy.

The result is that pieces from this geographical area have become very expensive and rare. Sotheby's confirm that while pieces do come up on auction, they are few and far between. They also confirm that Mr Lowen has been the main buyer from their sales of this material and his collection is considered to be, possibly, the most representative and finest outside the British Museum.

/Financial assessment

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
CULTURE & RECREATION COMMITTEE

LIBRARY DEPARTMENT (ART GALLERY)

Financial assessment:

The asking price for the collection is Pounds 250 000 which was first given over one year ago. In assessing the worth of the collection, a guide of the value of the individual pieces can be given by the auction sale figures over the past few years. A summary of these is attached.

While Pounds 250 000 would seem a not unrealistic price to pay for the collection based on what individual pieces would fetch on auction, notwithstanding the increased value as an entire collection the reduced value of the Rand against the Dollar regrettably makes the collection financially prohibitive, and the proposed method of financing the purchase non-viable. However, should the financial situation change dramatically, the situation could be reconsidered.

While in London, Councillor Malan and the Director visited various museums including the Geological Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, The Science Museum, The Tate Gallery, The British Museum, the Museum of London and the Museum of Mankind. Lighting systems, hanging methods, security systems, methods of display, restaurants and bookshops were looked at in view of the Gallery extensions under construction. A courtesy call to the South African Embassy to meet the Cultural Attaché was made and the opportunity taken to see the Pierneef paintings in the Embassy building.

IT IS RECOMMENDED

That the Lowen collection of African tribal art not be considered for purchase.

# THE ARCADE GALLERY

THE ROYAL ARCADE  
28 OLD BOND STREET,  
LONDON W1X 3HD

Telephone: 01-493 1879

Directors:  
PETER WENGRAF  
MONIKA WENGRAF  
ELIZABETH WENGRAF



20th. September 84

Mr Jonathan Lowen,  
26 Fife Road  
East Sheen,  
London SW14

## VALUATION

I have examined the collection of Mr Jonathan Lowen at his home in London, and have divided it up into 14 separate categories in order to simplify the process of establishing a fair market valuation. The complexity and size of this collection and the fact that the material is of such a great rarity makes the placing of individual values very difficult. This is especially so in the case of categories such as head rests, or bead work, because it has now become very difficult to find genuine old material and when it does appear on the market, it can sometimes fetch extraordinary high prices individually especially if it is of a rare type.

Tribal sculpture of the peoples of Southern Africa has undergone a very marked increase in rarity and, correspondingly in price, over the last few years. Important works in sculpture, when they do appear can command a price in keeping with the greatest works from the Congo or Nigeria. I have tried to estimate the current value of this collection in keeping with the prices paid at major auctions in this area, but in all fairness, I may be erring on the conservative side. It would be quite impossible now, to create a collection of Southern African Tribal Art which is as complete and of such an overall high aesthetic standard. I have not estimated the additional value for an institutional purchaser, such as a Museum, particularly in the USA, which would accrue from that fact, as well as the thoroughness of the cataloging and the high level of expertise in maintaining the integrity of authenticity and also the ethnographic documentation of function and origin.

Peter Wengraf  
Director

# THE ARCADE GALLERY

THE ROYAL ARCADE  
28 OLD BOND STREET,  
LONDON W1X 3HD

Telephone: 01-493 1879

Directors:  
PETER WENGRAF  
MONIKA WENGRAF  
ELIZABETH WENGRAF



Mr. Jonathan Lowen  
26 Fife Road,  
East Sheen  
London SW14

18th February 84

## VALUATION

Category A	Figure Sculpture.	Items A1-A62	65,700
Category B	Dolls	Items B1-B33	9,000
Category C	Staffs and Clubs	Items C1-C64	38,550
Category D	Stools	Items D1-D12	11,950
Category E	Headrests	Items E1-E119	55,350
Category F	Pipes	Items F1-F54	20,250
Category G	Snuff Boxes	Items G1-G83	12,930
Category H	Snuff spoons	Items H1-H19	1,825
Category J	Wooden containers	Items J1-J20	18,800
Category K	Clay Vessels	Items K1-K11	750
Category L	Gourd Vessels	Items L1-L5	645
Category N	Wooden Spoons	Items N1-N32	3,130
Category P	Earrings & Brass	Items P1-P16	395
Category S	Bladed instruments	Items S1-S12	4,400
Category U	Beadwork	Items U1-U180	7,320
Category W	Beaded Aprons	Items W1-W9	2,300
Category X	Other artifacts	Items X1-X12	<u>1,363</u>
TOTAL.....			<u>.254,748</u>

I hereby confirm that in my opinion, this collection of African Tribal Art, would achieve a price in total of about 250,000 pounds if sold at the present time.

Peter Wengraf  
Director

AFRICANA MUSEUM

The Lowen collection

The Africana Museum's ethnographic collecting policy is as follows:

To gather objects together that document the dress, customs, rituals and other cultural aspects of the Bantu-speakers, San and Khoi of Southern Africa. Objects are chosen because they manifest a certain method or style of work; because they were used at an important ceremony or by an important person; or because they demonstrate a stage in a process of change or development.

The museum then looks at items from a cultural and 'technical' viewpoint, using an anthropologist's eye, and not an artist's. This is not to say that these items do not have aesthetic appeal - they do - but they do not demonstrate systematically the aesthetic value that existed among craftsmen in Southern Africa, and that has been underrated for so long.

The Museum has a large collection of headrests, the majority of which are on loan from the Jacques Family and Elim Mission School, and which are destined to be returned to the Tonga people one day. When that occurs the Museum will be left with a small collection which will not be representative of the wide range of designs and styles that were available. This means that the Lowen collection's portion of headrests will be a valuable one to have in Johannesburg.

Many of the items in the Lowen collection were selected because they have representational carvings on them. This is not the case in the Africana Museum.

On the whole the Lowen collection would complement rather than duplicate or compete with the collections of the Africana Museum.

*EB*  
*6/12/85*

## AFRICANA MUSEUM

### The Lowen collection

The Africana Museum's ethnographic collecting policy is as follows:

To gather objects together that document the dress, customs, rituals and other cultural aspects of the Bantu-speakers, San and Khoi of Southern Africa. Objects are chosen because they manifest a certain method or style of work; because they were used at an important ceremony or by an important person; or because they demonstrate a stage in a process of change or development.

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*EB Hoyle post*  
*6/12/85*

October 8, 1985

The Director  
Johannesburg Art Gallery  
JOHANNESBURG

Mr. Till,

Based on the evidence that you have presented, in my opinion, the Lowen Collection is composed of very high quality items. It would be impossible to go into the field and put together such a collection today. I spend approximately six months of the year in kwaZulu doing ethnoarchaeological research, and I have not seen comparable items that can be obtained now.

The age, quality, and provenance of the items in the Lowen Collection make it very desirable to bring the collection to Southern Africa. So much of Southern Africa's heritage has been sent overseas, leaving the general public, as well as artists, art historians, and ethnographers, with inadequate samples of Southern African material culture to study and enjoy.

I wish you success in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

*Dana Oswald*

Dana Oswald  
HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY  
NATAL MUSEUM



SOUTH AFRICAN MUSEUM

P.O. Box 61

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

8000

ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED  
TO THE DIRECTOR

OUR REF. ....

4 October 1985

The Director  
Johannesburg Art Gallery  
JOHANNESBURG

Dear Mr Till

JONATHAN LOWEN COLLECTION

It is regrettable that the finest ethnographic collections from southern Africa are not to be found in South African museums but in collections in America, England and Europe.

For the serious student of African art and material culture there is relatively little material of quality housed in our public institutions to provide a basis for discernment or, indeed, an understanding of the richness of the South African cultural heritage.

In a study of Nguni wood carving undertaken by the Ethnography department at this museum it was found that South African collections by no means represented the extent, skill and finesse of Nguni craftsmanship. By contrast the fine examples of Nguni carving in the Lowen collection are of exceptional quality. Comparable pieces seldom appear in salerooms and have long since ceased to be produced by craftsmen working in significantly changed historical, social and cultural conditions.

The acquisition of the Lowen Collection by the Johannesburg Art Gallery would be a singular opportunity to bring back to a public institution in South Africa, material of undoubted cultural and artistic merit which will increasingly be recognised as an important part of our heritage.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davison  
HEAD, DEPARTMENT OF ETHNOGRAPHY



1 Jan Smuts Avenue  
Johannesburg  
2001 South Africa

Telegrams 'Uniwits'  
Telex 4-27125 SA  
☎ (011) 716-1111



**UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG**

DEPARTMENT OF ART HISTORY

Telephone (011) 716-3595

Enquiries Dan

Date 3 October 1985

Mr C. Till  
Director  
Johannesburg Art Gallery  
Joubert Park  
2001.

Dear Christopher

The Lowen Collection of Southern African Art

In response to your query about the Lowen Collection, I would like to make the following points.

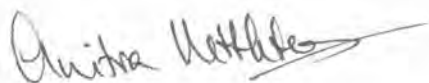
Mr Lowen built up the collection of Southern African art (by black artists) from auctions and private purchases at a period when a large amount of this material was still available. As a result, he has been able to create a collection of traditional art objects from Southern Africa which is unique outside of the larger public collections in Europe such as that at Leiden or that in the British Museum in London. Mr Lowen's collection includes works of an age and with documentation which cannot be reduplicated today. Some of the pieces in the collection date back to the middle of the 19th century while others can be dated to the late 19th century or early 20th century. Most of these works are of an outstanding technical and artistic quality. The value of the works cannot be calculated only in monetary terms. It is valuable in essence as a tribute to and historical document of the artistic creativity of Southern African black peoples.

With the inroads of Western cultural values, educational systems and migratory labour since 1900, if not earlier, many of these traditional art forms are no longer made. In field work conducted in the rural areas of South Africa and Zimbabwe in the 70s I found very little evidence that such traditions were continuing and, where they were, the objects made were generally of a vastly inferior quality. Further the traditional contexts in which they would originally have functioned have all but disappeared and any such objects that were made in this situation were for sale to a European market. I thus feel confident in maintaining that it would be totally impossible to build up from scratch a collection that could rival the Lowen collection in either quality or quantity of objects.

Similarly, it would be almost impossible to build up a similar collection by buying from auctions. Any worthwhile pieces are snapped up by museums and very few are now reaching the market. Especially active in this field are American collectors.

I feel that it is essential that we secure this collection for South Africa. It would be a tragedy if future generations, wanting to study this aspect of South Africa's cultural heritage, had to go to Europe and America to do so.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Anitra Nettleton". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Anitra Nettleton (Dr.)

The consensus was that Fairland refuse disposal site should be licensed to accept builders rubble provided that the Ward Councillor had no objection.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the agreement of the Ward Councillor, the Fairland refuse disposal site be licensed to accept builder's rubble under controlled conditions.

(13/2/2)

(1) LOWEN AFRICAN ART COLLECTION

MC MINUTES 19.8.85 11/1A

(Councillor Malan recused himself during consideration of this matter).

The Acting City Secretary said that a report had been received from the City Librarian as follows:

"On 22 April 1985 the Management Committee resolved:

'That the action by the Town Clerk in authorising the City Librarian to engage an authority on African Art in London to examine and report on this collection be confirmed."

R500 was authorised to cover this expenditure.

The Museum of Mankind in London recommended Mrs Carey, an expert on southern and eastern African work. Mrs Carey was instrumental in cataloguing the collection and accordingly is familiar with it. In her report, she confirmed the difficulty of assembling a collection of this quality from scratch. A financial assessment of the Lowen collection at £250 000 has been provided by the Arcade Gallery. The Director, Art Gallery, confirms the assessment of the collection's rarity and quality.

The Anglo American Corporation is in favour of purchasing the Lowen collection and has offered to purchase it with funds to be deducted from the R4 000 000 which it will hold in trust for the Art Gallery to purchase works of art from the accumulated interest. The Corporation would lend the collection to the Art Gallery until such time as sufficient interest has been earned on the balance of capital to restore it to the original R4 000 000.

The costs of transport, packing, insurance and customs clearance are not known at this stage and will form the subject of a further report.

The seller's asking price for the collection is £250 000. (Approximately R750 000)."

/The consensus

The consensus was that the Chairman of the Culture and Recreation Committee should be authorised to acquaint himself with this collection in London.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman of the Culture and Recreation Committee be authorised to proceed to London to view the Lowen collection of African Art and report back to the Management Committee thereon.

(160/3/1)

(m) CONTROL OVER COMMERCIAL VEHICLES  
PARKED IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Councillor Malan said that it had come to his notice that owners of heavy duty vehicles had been parking their vehicles in residential areas for extremely long periods at a time. He said that these vehicles were often parked in front of properties belonging to persons other than the owners of the vehicles, obstructing driveway entrances as well as creating a nuisance to residents. In addition, repairs to these vehicles were executed in the street and this frequently went hand in hand with extreme revving of engines. He asked whether anything could be done to prevent this practice.

The Acting City Secretary said that in terms of the Traffic By-laws vehicles with a mass in excess of 2 050 kg unladen may not be parked in any street in a municipality for longer than one hour during the hours between 30 minutes after sunset and 30 minutes before sunrise. He said that the By-laws were silent on the parking of such vehicles during day light hours.

The Director of Traffic and Security said that he had certain practical difficulties in applying the provisions of the By-laws but undertook to investigate the particular case referred to by Councillor Malan as well as the advisability of amending the Council's By-laws to limit or prohibit the parking of heavy vehicles in residential areas during the daytime and to report back to the Committee at its next meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Director of Traffic and Security investigate and report the advisability of the Council's amending its Traffic By-laws to limit or prohibit the parking of heavy commercial vehicles in residential areas during the daytime.

(287/8/1)

/(n) BEAUTIFICATION

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 22.4.85  
CULTURE AND RECREATION COMMITTEE  
ART GALLERY COMMITTEE 2.5.85

COMMITTEE

26/7/85

LIBRARY DEPARTMENT (ART GALLERY)

LOWEN AFRICAN ART COLLECTION

On 22 April 1985 Management Committee resolved

"That the action of the Town Clerk in authorising the City Librarian to engage an authority on African art in London to examine and report on this collection be confirmed."

R500 was authorised to cover this expenditure.

The Museum of Mankind in London recommended Mrs Carey, an expert on southern and eastern African work. It transpired that Mrs Carey was instrumental in cataloguing the collection and accordingly is familiar with it. She would not accept any payment for her services. In her report she confirmed the difficulty of assembling a collection of this quality from scratch.

A financial assessment of the Lowen collection has been provided by the Arcade Gallery, a copy of which forms an annexure to this report.

The Director, Art Gallery, has consulted a local collector, Mr Egon Guenther, and has shown him photographs and documentation provided. He confirms the assessment of the collection's rarity and quality.

The Director, Art Gallery, has further consulted the Sotheby's (London) African art specialist, Mr Roberto Finello, when he was on a recent visit to South Africa. He is familiar with the collection and concurs with the assessments made with regard to the quality and stressed its importance to this region. He further stated that a premium over and above the value of individual pieces alone would have to be taken into consideration for the complete collection in assessing its value.

Without the Director, Art Gallery, personally viewing the collection, but on the evidence provided and the opinions given, it is considered that the quality of the collection has been established and that its desirability for acquisition for the Art Gallery is confirmed.

On 2 May 1985 the Art Gallery Committee decided that if the report from the London expert was favourable, a recommendation be made for Council to acquire it.

2/The

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 22.4.85  
CULTURE AND RECREATION COMMITTEE  
ART GALLERY COMMITTEE 2.5.85

COMMITTEE

The collection would be purchased by the Anglo American Corporation which is in favour of doing so and loaned to the Art Gallery until such time as the capital amount of R4 million, donated to the Art Gallery by the Anglo American Corporation for the purchase of works of art, less the purchase price, generates sufficient interest to buy the collection from the Anglo American Corporation which would then restore the purchase price to the capital amount.

The costs of transport, packing, insurance and customs clearance are not known at this stage and will form the subject of a further report.

The seller's asking price for the collection is £250 000.

IT IS RECOMMENDED

- (i) That the Lowen Art Collection in London be acquired for the Johannesburg Art Gallery;
- (ii) That an initial offer of the Rand equivalent of £200 000 be made to the owner of the Lowen African Art Collection.



# Nasionale Kultuurhistoriese en Opelugmuseum

☎ 3233128/9/0  
✉ 3300  
BOOMSTRAAT  
PRETORIA  
0001

U VERW.

GEDATEER

ONS VERW.

DATUM

1.3.12  
MNR J VAN SCHALKWYK

1985.11.07

Mnr C Till  
Johannesburg Kunsmuseum  
Posbus 23561  
JOUBERTPARK  
2044

Geagte mnr Till

Na aanleiding van die inligting wat u aangaande die Lowen-versameling aan my verstrek het, kan ek nie anders as om tot die gevolgtrekking te kom dat u alles in u vermoë moet doen om hierdie versameling aan te koop nie.

My ondervinding op die gebied van hierdie tipe materiaal strek oor 'n hele aantal jare en dek die hele Suid-Afrika, asook sy buurstate. Ek kan dus met vertroue dit stel dat materiaal van hierdie aard, omvang en kwaliteit, soos verteenwoordig deur die Lowen-versameling, net nie meer geproduseer word nie. Dat materiaal van hoogstaande gehalte nog soms in die veld aangetref word, is wel waar. Om egter 'n versameling wat in omvang en gehalte gelyk is aan die Lowen-versameling op te bou, is weens die tydsduur en finansiële implikasies daaraan verbonde vandag nie meer 'n gangbare proposisie nie.

Dit beteken egter nie dat die materiaal wat tans geproduseer word, geïgnoreer mag word nie, maar dat dit wel binne die konteks van veranderde omstandighede, waardes en norme geïnterpreteer moet word.

2/.....

● KULTUURMUSEUM, Boomstraat  
● KRUGERHUISMUSEUM, Kerkstraat  
● VOORTREKKERMONUMENTMUSEUM

● PIERNEEFMUSEUM, Vermeulenstraat  
● PIONIERSOPELUGMUSEUM, Silverton  
● WILLEM PRINSLOO-LANDBOUMUSEUM, Rayton

Direkteur: U S KÜSEL

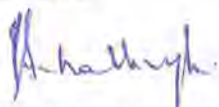
Dit maak egter net die waarde van die Lowen-versameling soveel groter, aangesien dit byeengebring is op 'n stadium toe faktore ten gunste van verandering nog nie sulke groot en verrykende gevolge gehad het as wat vandag die geval is nie.

'n Ander aspek wat die waarde van die versameling verhoog is die feit dat dit goed gedokumenteer is ten opsigte van die herkoms van die individuele stukke. Na my persoonlike ondervinding is dit 'n rariteit by hierdie tipe van versamelings. Dit opsigself is klaar 'n aanduiding dat die versameling iets heel besonders moet wees.

Dit is dan ongelukkig ook so dat groot hoeveelhede materiaal, wat vandag as uniek bestempel kan word, in die verlede (en selfs tans nog) deur privaatversamelaars en handelaars uit die land geneem is. Die Lowen-versameling blyk een so geval te wees. Anders as in die meerderheid van gevalle, is hierdie egter één waar die materiaal weer na Suid-Afrika teruggebring kan word. Hier sal dit nie net vir die professionele antropoloë en kunshistorici van groot waarde wees nie, maar vir die breë publiek behoort dit 'n stimulus te wees vir die ontwikkeling van 'n beter begrip van mekaar en mekaar se herkoms.

Ek wens u alle voorspoed en sukses toe met u projek.

Die uwe



J VAN SCHALKWYK

HOOF MUSEUMGEESTESWETENSKAPLIKE

JVS/jdk



rs. MARGRET A. CAREY, B.A., F.R.A.I.

Ethnographical Consultant

2 FRANK DIXON WAY

LONDON SE21 7BB

01-693 3930

5.6.1985.

Dear Dr. Till,

Thank you for your letter of 29 May 1985. I think that the most objective way of giving you an appraisal of the collection which contains over 750 entries, would be to give you on an attached sheet a break-down of the number of pieces with the occasional comment on quality and recent auction prices.

You have asked me to provide an assessment of the financial value of the collection; this is something that I am reluctant to do, but with the auction price guidelines I am giving, you would be able to judge whether the price that Jonathan Lowen is asking represents a worthwhile investment for Johannesburg. It is certainly true to say that the market in South African pieces is definitely rising; quality carvings, being less thick on the ground than, say, Nigerian art objects, tend to be that much more keenly bid for, and that it would be a daunting task to assemble a corpus of the range and quality of the Lowen collection from the starting post today.

Yours sincerely,

*Margaret A Carey*

REVIEW OF THE JONATHAN LOWEN COLLECTION

- Figures: 60 : Includes some fine large and old pieces and others giving a range of most of the types to be found. A pair of good ones reached £ 5500 last year; one like that in Gillon's Short History of African Art fig 254 would easily fetch that, and I think that is one in the collection!
- Beaded dolls: 32 : Includes Sotho, Zulu, Ndebele.
- Wooden vessels: 20 : Includes 3 Swazi Queen-mother's milk pots, which are rare, and would probably go for a few thousand. Also Zulu and Ndebele milk pots and food trays; and 'baroque' Zulu dated pre-1890.
- Smoking pipes: 52 : A comprehensive range including several with figures incorporated. Some pipes of that type went for about £ 1000 apiece last year, double the estimate. An "ordinary" pipe would hardly fetch less than £30
- Snuff-spoons: 19 : Zulu or Pondo. Tend to be about £ 30 each +
- Snuff-boxes: 82 : Range includes gourds ornamented with wire patterns; "blood and mud" oxen; carved wood; lovely ivory ones; horn ovoids on long prongs; chain-linked pairs. *beaded gourds*
- Gourds: 9 : includes Shangaan/Thonga beaded-impressed. (cf. Sieber, African Furniture, p. 201)
- Pottery: 11 : Zulu, Lovedu etc.
- Combs: 12 :
- Spoons: 32 : Linked spoons, Zulu spoons + their baskets, Lozi spoons with figures; some like nos 7 and 8 on Sieber op. cit p. 67; strainer spoons etc
- Clubs: 14 : Wood and rhino horn, some with plaited brass and copper and iron wire.
- Staffs: 64 : Some of these might be classifiable as clubs (light-weight). Many with human and animal carvings at top or with decoratively carved shafts. Zulu, Swazi, Shangaan/Thonga, Venda. Beaded, from Zulu and Ndebele.
- Knives and axes: 12 : Sotho knives with ivory or rhino horn carved hilts and carved bone ivory or wood sheaths; Shona with carved wood hilts. Thonga and Lozi axes.
- Stools: 12 : Range includes S. Tanzania and Zambia.
- Headrests: 120 : Some really fine ones here of sort that would go for £750 nowadays down to an average of £ 120 for an "ordinary" one. Many Shangaan/Thonga pieces, see article by Revd A. A. Jaques for Fine Arts Society of Johannesburg of c. 1940 of which I have seen a bad photocopy. Also from Zulu, Swazi, Mpondo etc.
- Beaded aprons: 14 : Ndebele (Mapogga). Becoming popular and more expensive, say £300 each. Ranges from early to recent styles, includes all types.
- Beadwork: 180 : from Zulu, Mpondo, Sotho, Ndebele etc including a set all belonging to one man.
- Non-beadwork ~~clothing~~ *body ornament*: 16: Carved armlets, carved tambuti-wood necklet.
- There are two carved staff posts from the Lovedu royal enclosure as illustrated in Tyrrell, Tribal Peoples, p. 64, or at least the same sort of thing.

I could expand quite easily, but this ought to give you a fair idea of the scope and quality of the collection.

ALSO ENCLOSED A COPY OF MR TILL'S PAPER  
PRESENTED AT THE SAMA 49TH AGM AND  
CONFERENCE ENTITLED THE JOHANNESBURG ART  
GALLERY : 75 YEARS IN COMPLETION (ON  
FILE 1/1).

CMT/jw  
11/2A

29 May 1985

Mrs M A Carey  
2 Frank Dixon Way  
LONDON SE21 7BB  
England

Dear Mrs Carey

Thank you for your letter of 15 May 1985 regarding the Jonathan Lowen collection. I appreciate your prompt reply and will endeavour to give you a broader picture of our institution and collections.

I have included for your information a copy of a paper given on the Gallery recently which gives a brief history and development plans. As you will see from the attached material the Gallery's collection is largely Western European from the 17th Century to Modern. Our South African collection includes work of black South African artists but we do not have a traditional collection at all.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery is municipal as is the Africana Museum which has a collection of Southern African tribal pieces which are presented as ethnographic objects. A collection of African art, mainly from West and Central Africa, is housed at the University of the Witwatersrand and is used for teaching purposes.

We have a close working relationship with both the Africana Museum and the University. Prof Elizabeth Rankin, Head of the Department of History of Art, was initially involved in attempting to secure the collection for the University but that proved to be impossible and she, knowing our desire to acquire a collection of African art, contacted me.

The Johannesburg Art Gallery, being a public institution, aims itself at the broad spectrum of the South African public and has felt that in order to be relevant, it must address itself to all forms of art of the region.

The historical prototype presented in the form of the African tribal art is missing in this institution, with only the work of contemporary black artists represented. Our visiting public includes many black visitors and our education programme, aimed at black schools, brings a great number in to the Gallery.

/The

THE JOHANNESBURG ART GALLERY

For a publication to mark the Centenary of Johannesburg in 1986

The Johannesburg Art Gallery, initiated by Mrs Florence (later Lady) Phillips and designed by the distinguished British architect, Mr (later Sir) Edwin Lutyens, opened its doors to the public in November 1915. Florence Phillips was the wife of the mining magnate Lionel Phillips who was knighted in 1912. She had long cherished the idea of a picture gallery for the mining town of Johannesburg but it was only in 1909 that the Gallery's collection of art was actually begun. Florence Phillips had wanted a collection of Old Masters but Sir Hugh Lane, a well-known connoisseur who was then collecting for the Dublin Gallery of Art, persuaded her to invest in contemporary art which he felt would become the master-works of the future. With money from the sale of a blue diamond ring that her husband Lionel had given her, Florence Phillips purchased three paintings by Phillip Wilson Steer from the Goupil Gallery in London on the recommendation of Hugh Lane. She then enlisted the active support of wealthy mining magnates, Max Michaelis, Otto Beit, Julius Wernher, Herman Eckstein, Sigismund Neumann and Abe Bailey, among others. Her enthusiasm and example persuaded them to respond generously. By 1909 a fund of £20 000 had been secured which was entrusted to Hugh Lane for the purchase of works of art.

The nucleus of the Gallery's collection (consisting of some 130 paintings and sculptures) which had been enthusiastically acclaimed by the London Press when part of it was shown at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in May - June 1910, was brought out to South Africa by Sir Hugh Lane in September 1910. It was exhibited at the Transvaal University College, Eloff Street (School of Mines) - the present-day Technikon, Witwatersrand - the opening function being held on 29 November 1910, where it remained until 1915 as a great embarrassment to the College which needed the space.

Florence Phillips had foreseen the need for a Gallery building and early in 1910 she requested the assistance of the Transvaal Colonial Secretary, General J.C. Smuts, in accommodating the collection. She suggested rooms in the City Hall which was about to be built. Several other venues were proposed and by June 1910 the Town Council had been persuaded to provide a site in Joubert Park. General Smuts agreed to grant a percentage of the rental of the Government-owned Market Buildings if the Johannesburg Town Council would contribute its share. The Council agreed to this arrangement and voted an amount of £20 000 to build an Art Gallery.

11/2A

rs. MARGRET A. CAREY, B.A., F.R.A.I.

Ethnographical Consultant

2 FRANK DIXON WAY  
LONDON SE21 7BB

01-693 3930

15. 5. 1985.

Dear Dr. Till,

Thank you for your letter of 7<sup>th</sup> May. I gather that the collection in question is one belonging to Jonathan Lowen, which I catalogued for him in the winter of 1983-1984, and which in consequence I know well.

I could only give you an indication of the sort you are asking for on the understanding that I am to receive no payment or expenses from either party.

I would welcome confirmation and clarification of Jonathan Lowen's information that in this proposed purchase you are acting in conjunction with the University of the Witwatersrand.

As I do not know your collections, it would obviously be difficult for me to say much in regard to para. 3 of your letter to Dr. Mack. I do not know the size of your Gallery, its range, and what material you already hold from West, Central or South Africa.

Yours sincerely,

Margret A. Carey.

ART GALLERY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE ART GALLERY, JOUBERT PARK, JOHANNESBURG,  
ON THURSDAY, 13 DECEMBER 1984, AT 12 h 30

AVAILABILITY OF A COLLECTION  
OF SOUTHERN AFRICAN ART

The Director said that apart from informing the Committee about the Anglo American Trust, the main purpose for calling the meeting was to tell members about the availability of a collection of Southern African Tribal Art from an overseas source. It was a collection of great quality, its importance being that it was a collection of Southern African Art as opposed to existing collections of East and West African Art.

In reply to questions from Professor Crump, the Director said that the main thrust of the collection was specifically Southern Africa, mainly the work of the Inguni peoples, i.e. Swazi and Zulu. He considered it an ideal opportunity of obtaining a collection which would be a strong basis to build upon. The collection contained some 700 pieces.

Continuing, the Director said that members of the Committee were well aware that he considered that the Johannesburg Art Gallery should have an African Art Collection, and that it was now possible to fill this gap with an authenticated collection - an opportunity which presented itself once in a lifetime.

Replying to questions from members of the Committee, the Director said that the collection had been seen by Mr Roy Sieber who was an American Art Historian who had lived and worked in Africa. The Director circulated photographs of selected pieces from the Collection and an extract from a catalogue regarding the Collection.

The Director sounded the warning, however, that should the owner exhibit the collection in America, it could be lost to the Johannesburg Art Gallery.

Professor Odendal said that whilst he shared the feeling that the Collection should be acquired, he wished to know how the Gallery would be able to finance the building up of three separate collections, i.e. the South African Collection, the European Collection and an African Art Collection.

Replying to Professor Odendal, Dr Zoellner said that the interest accruing from the investment of R4 million in an Endowment Trust Fund would be of the order of R800 000 per annum and a portion of this money could be used for the building up of the collection over the years.

The Director explained that the Art Gallery would not receive the entire amount of interest accruing from the investment of the R4 million, as a portion of this would be paid back into the Capital account to ensure that it was not eroded by inflation. He further said that once the extensions to the new Art Gallery building were completed, it was anticipated that the Council would substantially increase its contribution towards the purchase of works of art.

/Members

Members of the Committee shared the Director's enthusiasm regarding the Southern African Collection and the consensus was that he be authorised to continue his investigations, and if necessary, arrange for the Collection to be examined by other African Art experts as well.

In conclusion the Chairman said that he wished to thank the Director for the competent manner in which he had researched the Collection and for the way in which he had handled the whole matter.

Professor Odendal associated himself with the Chairman's remarks, and said that it was almost unbelievable that the possibility of acquiring something of this nature was now within the reach of the Art Gallery.

NOTED

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of the Committee be provisionally set down for Thursday, 7 February 1985, at 13 h 00.

9 GENERAL

(a) AFRICAN ART COLLECTION :  
PROFESSOR D. SCHOLTZ

The Chairman referred to the collection of African Art which belonged to Professor Scholtz in Cape Town, and said that he was sure Professor Lindenberg would be able to give the Committee more details about the collection, as he considered that it might be possible to enter into negotiations regarding what Professor Scholtz had in mind for his collection.

The consensus was that further discussion on this matter be left in abeyance until Professor Lindenberg could be present at a Committee meeting.

NOTED

(b) PAINTING OF DR THELMA GUTSCHE

The Director showed members a painting of Dr Thelma Gutsche as a young woman, by Gladstone Solomon which the Friends of the Johannesburg Art Gallery wished to be displayed in the Gallery.

/The consensus

Jonathan & Eve Lowen  
26 Fife Road  
East Sheen London SW14  
Tel. 01-878 9474

Mr. Christopher Till,  
Johannesburg Art Gallery,  
PO Box 23561,  
Joubert Park,  
2044 South Africa.

10th December 1984

Dear Mr. Till,

Having an arts rather than anthropological background, I have focused my art collection upon two principal aims. First and foremost to select items reflecting the creative ability and artistic genius of the people who made the pieces. Secondly, to represent the range and context of aesthetic qualities which make the Southern African Tribal art so distinctive.

Through the range of the collection, it is possible to detect a continuity of symbolism in which the characteristics of the greatest figurative sculpture are clearly abstracted, but repeated, in the forms of small containers, clubs, neckrests etc.

It was a coherent, confident and distinct culture which produced these magnificent things. Through dissemination of the objects, and the fragmentation of the tribes who made them, any real sense of the culture has been lost.

South Africa is not alone in its loss. Now, Americans are getting to see the brilliant sculpture and decorative genius of the North American Indians - through diligent and carefully formed collections.



New Zealand is waking up to the importance of Maori art and its museums are frantically trying to re-assemble representative material from European collections.

It is a tragedy that South African Tribal art, which is rarer, and every bit as exciting and beautiful at its best, has slipped into oblivion without, it seems, anyone even knowing it was there. It was very much present before the advent of the camera and the ethnologists. Every personal item, every household artefact, was carefully conceived and fashioned according to the highest aesthetic standards. No more! One only has to look at what field researches dredge out of the pits of a material culture all but dried up. Scarcely an object found in the last few decades has any but functional merit. No attempt is made, it seems, to enrich an already poor environment. Indeed, among the present day Tribal people there appears no recollection of the strong and proud artistic traditions they had. That, in human terms, is the greatest tragedy.

I believe in this collection as a mirror of the past. As an essential voice to South Africa's black people from their Ancestors, expressing confidence and dignity. As a reminder to South Africa's white people that there was, and is, something to respect and look to in the tribal past. Almost everything in the collection was taken from South Africa decades ago. Some over a century ago.

This collection is not an assembly of ethnographica. It is an art collection and each piece was carefully considered aesthetically to form a comprehensive artistic statement assembled over 12 years of passionate searching. The card index catalogue pictures each item on 5x4 colour plates. Every item is numbered and cross-referenced within the collection, and as far as I was able, also refers to known works in other public collections.

The Geographic area represented is almost entirely within the present day borders of the Republic of South Africa. However, where stylistic influences are strong, I have included items from further North to illustrate context. For example, the headrests and snuff containers of the Shona and the headrests of some Kenyan or Sudanese cattle people show a fascinating line of influence grounded in ancient Egypt.

Most of the collection is devoted to the art of the Carver who worked in wood and bone and rhino horn. The reason is that beadwork, basketry and the the potters art has not ceased entirely and the decorative traditions may still be found. As an art collector, I have been more interested in sculptural quality and, of course, rarity. Consequently, though there are beaded items, mostly pre 1920, and a dozen clay pots - not as old -, also a few newish N'debele Aprons, the main categories are:-

Figurative Carving - including Dolls, Staffs, Pipes  
and spoons

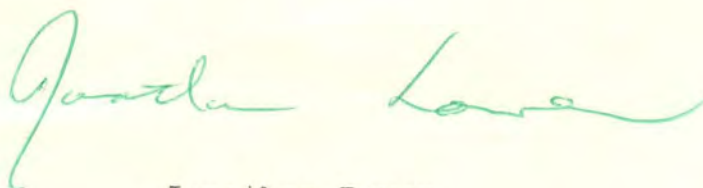
Abstract Carvings - including a spectacular group of  
over 100 headrests; containers  
vessels, utensils, weapons

From these categories, purely functional objects with no aesthetic aspirations have been eliminated. I have attempted always to collect items evidencing substantial Tribal use, patina and provenance. In the end, what says most about this collection is the fact that those who know best the art of Nigeria, West Africa and the Congo now accept that items from Southern Africa warrant recognition as equally fine and certainly more rare.

Auction prices are now exceptionally high for such pieces - far outstripping prices of comparable items in other areas of African art. A good deal of this interest was generated by those who have seen, and been amazed by, this collection. It has changed their view - I hope it continues to provoke the revision of ideas.

If there is any further information you require, I should be glad to assist. In the end, I must recommend that you see the card index or the collection.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Lowen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

Jonathan Lowen

Jonathan & Eve Lowen  
26 Fife Road  
East Sheen London SW14  
Tel. 01-878 9474

18th April 1984.

Mrs. Elizabeth Rankin,  
Dept. Art History,  
University of the Witwatersrand.

Dear Elizabeth,

Please note the change of address. As from May 1st it will be as above.

With reference to your letter of 12th April, let me say that I would not be averse to your finding another buyer. I would be most grateful for your help though I am anxious for it to go somewhere where it can be seen and enjoyed by people and safe from pillage by dealers and collectors.

Having said that, I would not rule out a logical split of the collection. It would be preferable for it to be sensibly divided between a couple of suitable homes than for it to be unsatisfactorily placed.

There are a number of possible ways of dividing the material which could be considered. At the moment I don't really understand what you have in mind so it's difficult to be more specific. I would not, of course, want to retain the bulk of my collection denuded of the most attractive pieces.

As it stands, the collection as a whole reveals an established, self-confident and distinct style. The cultural coherence is only evident through stylistic inter-relationships within the collection. I fear that if items are disseminated, much of the impact and indeed value to students, may be lost.

Splitting the collection therefore will require careful consideration in the light of the aims of the purchasing body. Perhaps there are

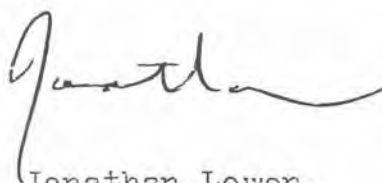
relations compatible with all the considerations and as I say, I would be prepared to discuss anything.

Recently a pair of figures came up for sale at Christies and we have also added those to the collection. Perhaps you saw them pictured in the catalogue ?

I have heard your view of the South African financial scene also expressed by others. Perhaps it's at times of high inflation that capital investment, such as this make most sense !

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Jonathan Lowen', written in dark ink.

Jonathan Lowen.

Jonathan & Eve Lowen  
41 Kelso Place London W8  
Tel: 01 937 1288

6th February 1984

Mrs E. Rankin,  
Dept. of Art History,  
Witwatersrand University,  
Johannesburg.

Dear Elizabeth,

In your letter of the 18th January you ask for access to the catalogue of my South African tribal Art collection and/or photographs to have to hand.

It is difficult to imagine without an explanation why that is not as simple a request as it sounds. The catalogue is a card index. Every single item in the collection is numbered. For each item there is a 5x8 inch index card filed in categories. On every card there is a 5x4 professionally photographed colour picture of the item and the written information, dimensions, provenence etc is all recorded on the cards. The cards represent considerable photography and cataloguing costs and I feel I cannot take the risk of allowing them out of my possession.

However, since the catalogue shows the entire collection so clearly, I would of course be prepared to take it to South Africa to enable you and any serious sponsor or purchaser to examine it before making any final decision. You will appreciate though that the costs of such a trip would be considerable and I would only be happy to incur the expense once there is the likelihood of an agreement.

Any specific information you require, I can provide and we would of course welcome any visit you could make or inspection of the collection here on your behalf.

Meanwhile, I have enclosed a catalogue in which a few of my pieces are pictured (154-166). Bear in mind that apart from the neckrests shown here, there are about 125 more of equivalent or greater quality. Similarly, there are only 5 of about 70 figurative staffs and there are many more containers etc. What the pictures show however is the sort of standards represented throughout the collection. Everything is of the highest quality as art objects and things of great beauty. I have also enclosed a few photographs to whet the appetites of those who still believe that South African carvers were inferior to those in West Africa. The Staff photo A was sold by Webster to Pitt Rivers in 1897. It is pictured in a catalogue of that date.

The figure photo B was bought on auction - total cost £6000. I've since turned down serious offers of double that price. You will find the auction catalogue note by William Fagg enclosed.

PhotoC is a staff head by clearly a master carver, bought from the owner whose Grandfather had lived in Natal in the 1850's and always had it in the family.

I have written separately to a few potential South African sponsors or purchasers since by promoting interest both ends as it were, it is more likely to bring results. Surely Standard Bank would enable you to acquire this collection once they realise that never again will this important part of South African heritage - or anything like it, be available to you to display close to their origins, and where people who are associated with their history may enjoy their presence.

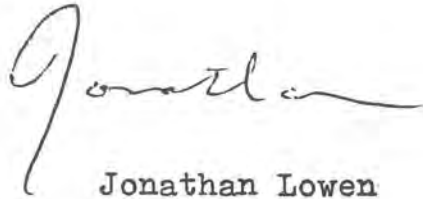
We are in fact moving from this address on the 30th April whereafter the collection will be stored in packing cases. If you are able to see it before then, so much the better even though

the card index is very clear.

It was interesting to read of the development of your department. I would enjoy knowing that you have the facilities not only to display the collection but to work on, and with, it.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jonathan Lowen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Jonathan Lowen



11/1a Vol 2

11/1a Vol 2

Brenthurst Collection  
(form. Lowen Collection)

Brenthurst collection

11/1a Vol 2

## ONAL PLC

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Director)  
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Stockley, D.A. Tyler, F.C.M.A.  
(Secretary)

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V.A., Carey Wallace  
en, M. Wilkinson, D. Williams

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.. A.C.A. (Finance Director)  
Director)  
ager), Marina Castillo (Purchasers' Accounts)  
Press Officer), Lynn Guha (Commission Bids)  
oye (Reception)

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# CHRISTIE'S

Christie's South Kensington Ltd., 85 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 3LD  
Telephone: 071-581 7611 Telex: 922061 Fax: 071-584 0431

## TRIBAL ART

For sale by Auction

Tuesday, 2 October, 1990  
at 10.30 a.m.

On View:

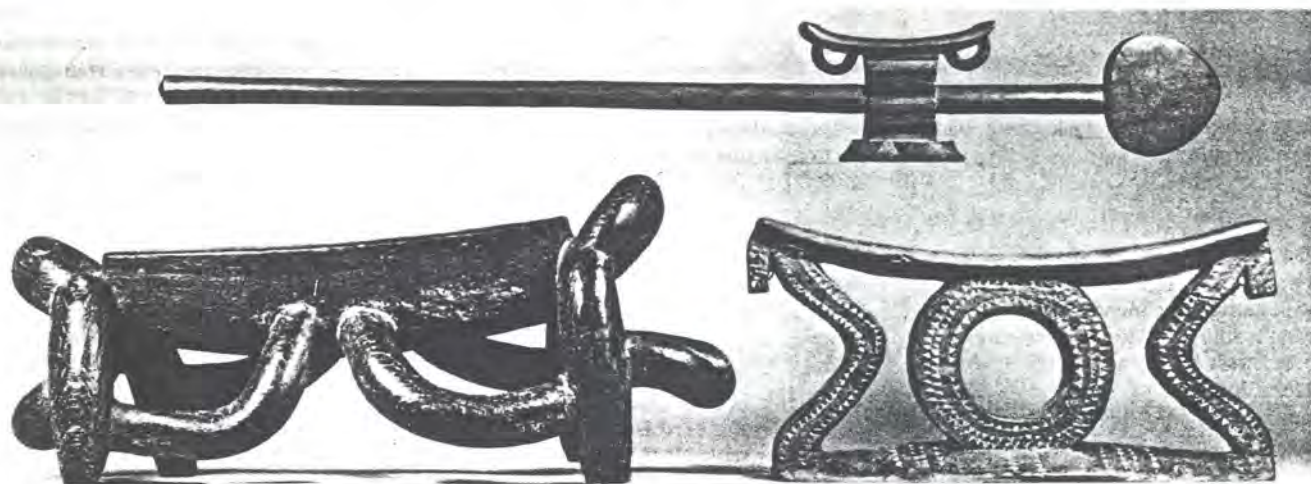
Friday, 28 September, 1990 from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.  
Monday, 1 October, 1990 from 9.00 a.m. to 7.30 p.m.

Sale No. ETH 3927

Enquiries regarding this sale should be addressed to:  
TIM TEUTEN (ext 3286) OR HELEN TWEED (ext 3286)

Catalogue Price £4.00

Front cover illustration: lots 173, 175, 174 and 101



266

AN UNUSUAL SOUTHERN AFRICA HEADREST, the four curved cylindrical legs joined by loops at the top and centre, four further loops connecting the legs with the centre of the top, dark glossy patina, crack to one side  
45cm. wide

266

£200-300

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A SOUTHERN AFRICA HEADREST, the curved top with a pendent panel to each end, the central circular support, flanking concave supports and rectangular base all with incised zigzags  
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Major Leonard Cherry.

Major Cherry went to Africa in 1915 and served with a Gurkha regiment in Mesopotamia. He later became a Military Administrator, travelling extensively throughout Africa, and returned to England in 1918.

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AN AFRICAN IVORY BRACELET, of D-section, golden patina; a zebra mane headband; and a skirt of fur the bracelet 10cm. diam. (3)

PROVENANCE:

Collected in the 1890's by a missionary with the Church of Scotland

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A ZULU MILK POT of tapered cylindrical form, carved in relief with two lug handles and seven rectangular panels of cross-hatched ornament; and a pottery two-handled vessel ornamented with bands of stippled ornament, chips  
39cm. and 27cm. high (2)

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A ZULU CIRCULAR BOWL, on four square feet, two short lug handles carved below the rim, dark patina with black glossy exterior  
40cm. diam.

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267

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A ZULU STAFF FINIAL, carved as a standing female figure with hands on thighs, wearing six blue and white bead necklaces, one suspending a triangular openwork beaded panel, an apron of blue and white bead tassels about the waist, two bead anklets about each ankle, dark glossy patina  
39cm. high

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FIVE AFRICAN STICKS: one with a figure in European dress below the spherical finial, one with stylised figure finial, another with Janus head finial, another with waisted cylindrical finial inscribed: *Nhlenhle Fancy Knob Stick Zululand*; the last covered with zigzags in coloured beads, metal tip  
81cm. to 1m.15cm. long (5)

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A NGUNI BEADED NECKLACE, the multiple strands of predominantly white beads divided by three panels of predominantly dark blue beads sewn with triangular motifs in white and red and suspending beaded tassels  
1m.13cm. long

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TWO NGUNI DRESS ORNAMENTS, a necklace suspending an openwork panel of coloured beads, and a fibre belt sewn with coloured beads; and a fibre penis cover (3)

275

A NDEBELE RECTANGULAR HIDE APRON, sewn with geometric designs in coloured beads, beaded hide tassels below; and a Zulu headrest on two cross-hatched supports  
the apron 50cm. long, the headrest 25cm. wide (2)

276

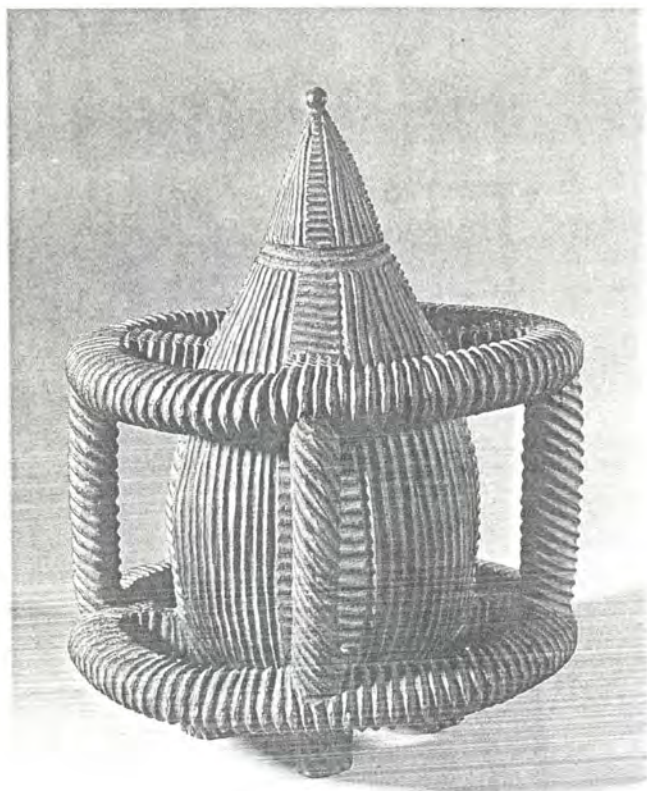
AN NDEBELE APRON, the canvas ground sewn with geometric designs in predominantly white beads, hide tassels at bottom, small native repair  
53cm. long

277

A MADAGASCAR FIBRE POUCH, finely woven with geometric motifs in blue and brown  
13.5cm. long

278

AN AFRICAN MATERNITY FIGURE  
1m.57cm. high



[90]

SOUTHERN AND EASTERN AFRICA

90

A RARE SWAZI VESSEL AND COVER, of ovoid form within double oval rings linked by four vertical struts, carved all over with deep grooved ornament, on four short cylindrical feet, the conical cover with spherical finial, dark patina, minor damages 64cm. high

PROVENANCE:

R.E. Summerfield

Cf. Till et al., 1991, pl.32

£2,000-3,000

91

THREE SOUTHERN AFRICA PIPES: one with the bowl carved as a head with lead inlaid eyes and moustache, lead inlay to the back of the head, old label: *Gealeka pipe C.W.M.A.*; another with a carved boot joining the stem to the bowl; the third with the stem spirally bound with lead bands

(3)

each about 14cm. long

£400-500

92

A SOUTHERN AFRICA STAFF AND TWO KNOBKERRIES: the staff with two pairs of oval projections to the head, two plain and two with scorched chevrons; one knobkerrie with oval boss to the top of the ovoid head, the other with carved indentations to the top and base of the ovoid head, hatching to the top of the shaft, some cracks, dark glossy patinas

(3)

60cm. to 91cm. long

£400-600

93

TWO SOMALIA HEADRESTS, each with conical base and curved top, one with curved chevron support to each side linking base and top, dark glossy patinas

17.5cm. and 15.5cm. high

£300-500

94

AN ARUSSI CIRCULAR EMBOSSED HIDE SHIELD, with ridges radiating from the central vertical spine between oval bosses, finely tooled surface ornament, curled rim, traces of red paint, native repair to small split

75cm. diam.

200-300

MELANESIA

95

A TROBRIAND ISLANDS FIGURE, crouching with the hands held to the chin, a disc on the head incised with scrolling motifs heightened with lime, further scrolls on the limbs, glossy patina

30cm. high

£150-200

96

TWO SOLOMON ISLANDS SPEARS, each with two addorsed figures carved on the shaft below a rectangular panel carved with zigzags, one with barbed point, the other with a stylised snake carved in relief to one side of the tapered head, fine dark glossy patinas, San Cristobal

2m.66cm. and 2m.25cm. long

(2)

£300-500

97

A SOLOMON ISLANDS DANCE PADDLE/PARRYING SHIELD, a seated figure with arms akimbo carved between the grip and the tapered finial, the asymmetrical blade with curved ridge in low relief on each side, tip deficient, ridge damaged

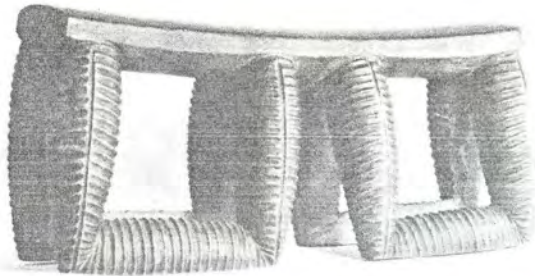
1m.23cm. long

£800-1,200

African sculpture from private collections in London  
19 Oct - 8 Nov 1979 South London Art Gallery



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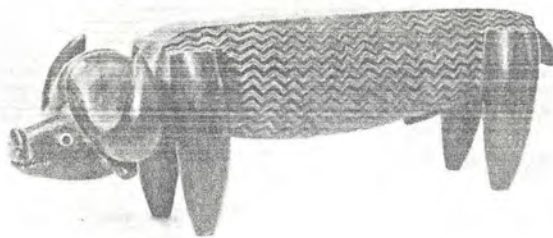
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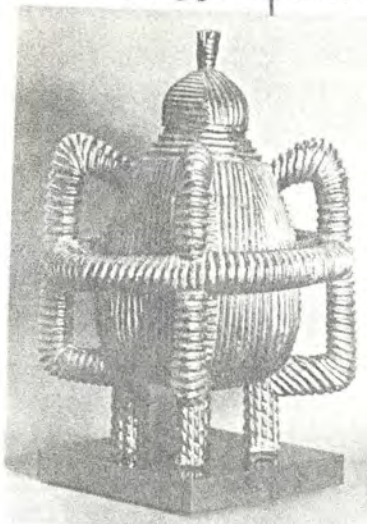
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African sculpture from private collections in London

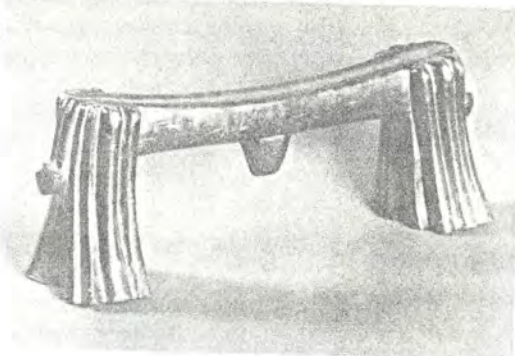
1900s - 8 Nov 1979

South London  
Art Gallery

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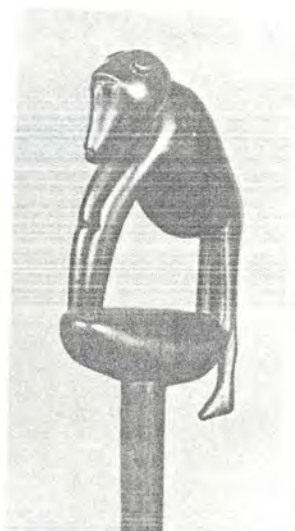


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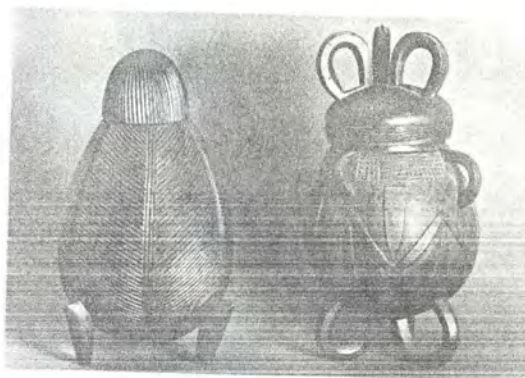
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155

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156



160

- 154 Nguni (Swazi) Neckrest
- 155 Nguni (Zulu) Tobacco jar  
a & b
- 156 Nguni (Swazi) Container
- 157 Nguni (Swazi) Container
- 158 Nguni (Zulu) Staff with baboon
- 159 Zaramo Staff
- 160 Nguni (Zulu) Staff
- 161 Nguni (Zulu) Staff
- 162 Nguni (Zulu) Staff
- 163 Nguni (Zulu) Neckrest
- 164 Nguni (Shangaan Tsonga)  
Neckrest a & b
- 165 Nguni (Zulu) Neckrest
- 166 Nguni (Zulu) Neckrest
- 167 Bushman Rock painting  
(fragment)



128



129

□ 129

An Nguni Figure, standing on elongated feet with knees bent, supporting a forward projecting torso with swollen abdomen and articulated arms secured with wooden dowels terminating in cupped palms, surmounted by a prognathous head with incised up-turned mouth, swollen triangular nose, and small depressed eyesockets inset with beads beneath a smooth domed forehead; smooth dark brown patina. Height  $9\frac{7}{8}$  in. (25.1 cm.)

*Provenance:*

James Willis, San Francisco

A companion piece to the offered lot is in the collections of The Detroit Museum of Art. see *African Arts*, vol. XX, no. 2, February, 1987, p. 65

\$4,000-6,000

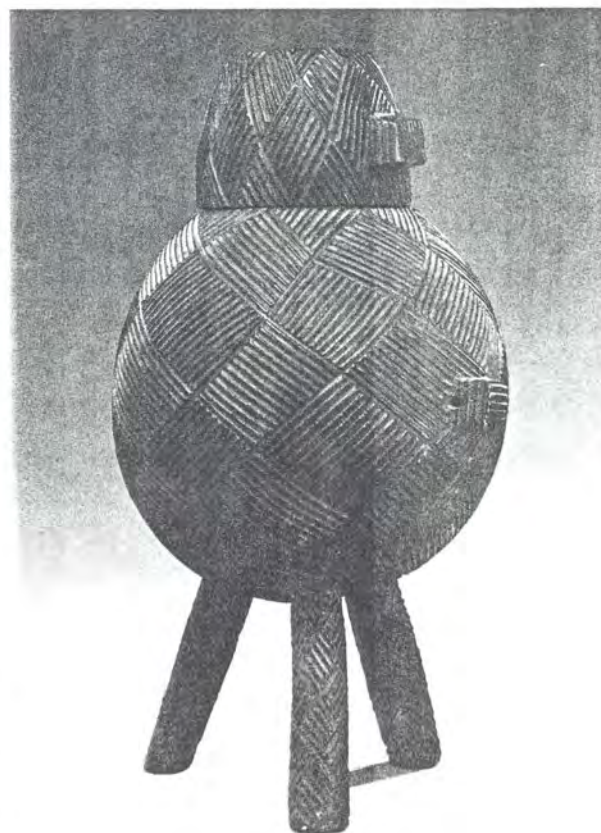
□ 130

A Zulu Vessel, the tapering tripod support composed of three cylindrical legs, supporting a deep spherical bowl fitted at the top with a truncated lid, a squared projection on the bowl and lid for alignment, decorated overall with interlocking ribbed diamonds; black patina. Height  $17\frac{1}{2}$  in. (45.1 cm.)

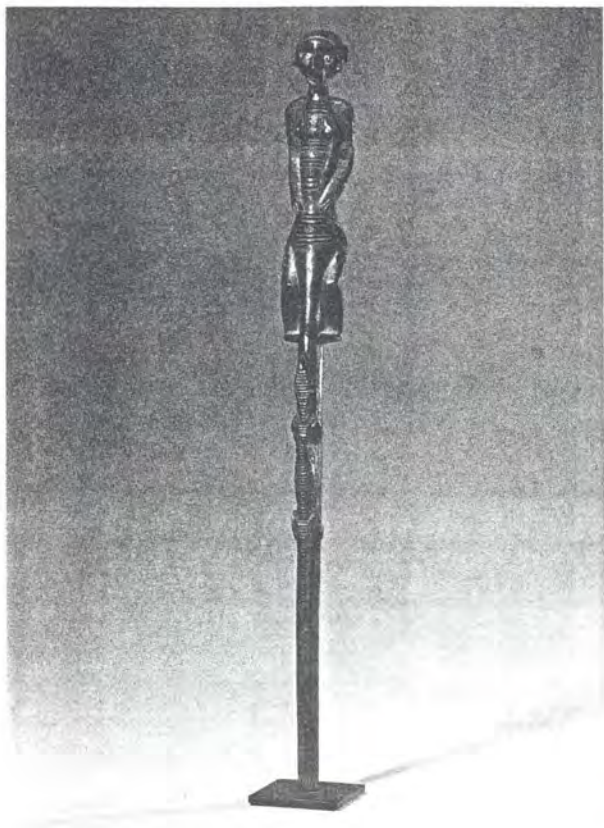
*Provenance:*

Gallery Concorde, Los Angeles

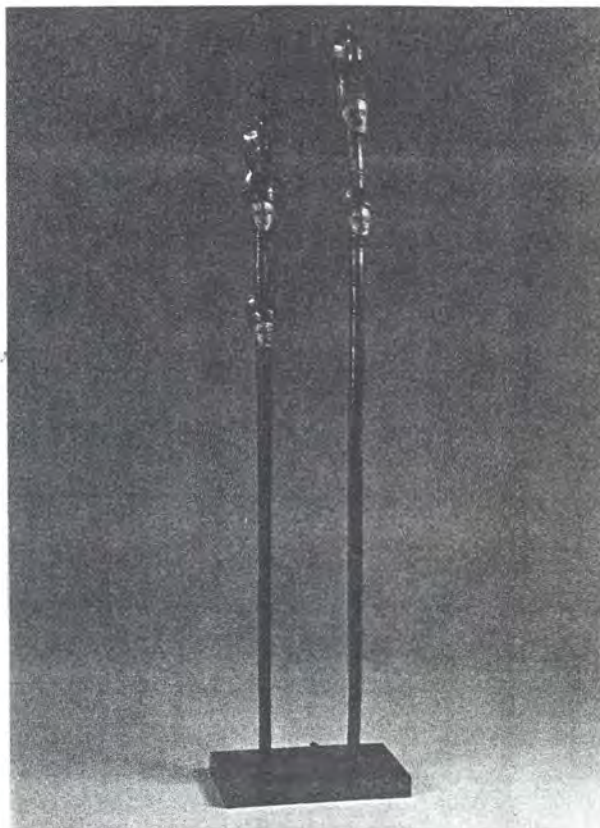
\$4,000-6,000



130



134



135

□ 136

A Tsonga/Nguni Figural Pipe, with slender cylindrical stem and bowl carved in the form of a female figure, with outstretched legs bending up from the hips, tapering torso with small hollowed navel and splayed triangular breast, framed by sharply bent arms held to the sides with hands resting on the stomach, her detachable head of oval form, with diminutive rectangular mouth, knob-like nose and depressed eyesockets with small beads inset as eyes beneath a domed forehead and cropped coiffure, blue and white glass beads strung on sinew encircling the neck and waist; smooth dark turning to light brown patina. Height  $13\frac{1}{2}$  in. (34.3 cm.)

\$10,000-15,000

□ 137

A Shilluk Terracotta Pipe, of zoomorphic form, with finely incised and hollowed cylindrical stem, supporting the bulging midsection forming the animal's body, a cylindrical projection to the back, the waisted neck terminating in a tapering head with arched ears, hollowed yawning mouth, knobbed nose and circular eyes, decorated with triangles on the body and head; black patina with the remains of white and red pigment. Length 5 in. (12.7 cm.)

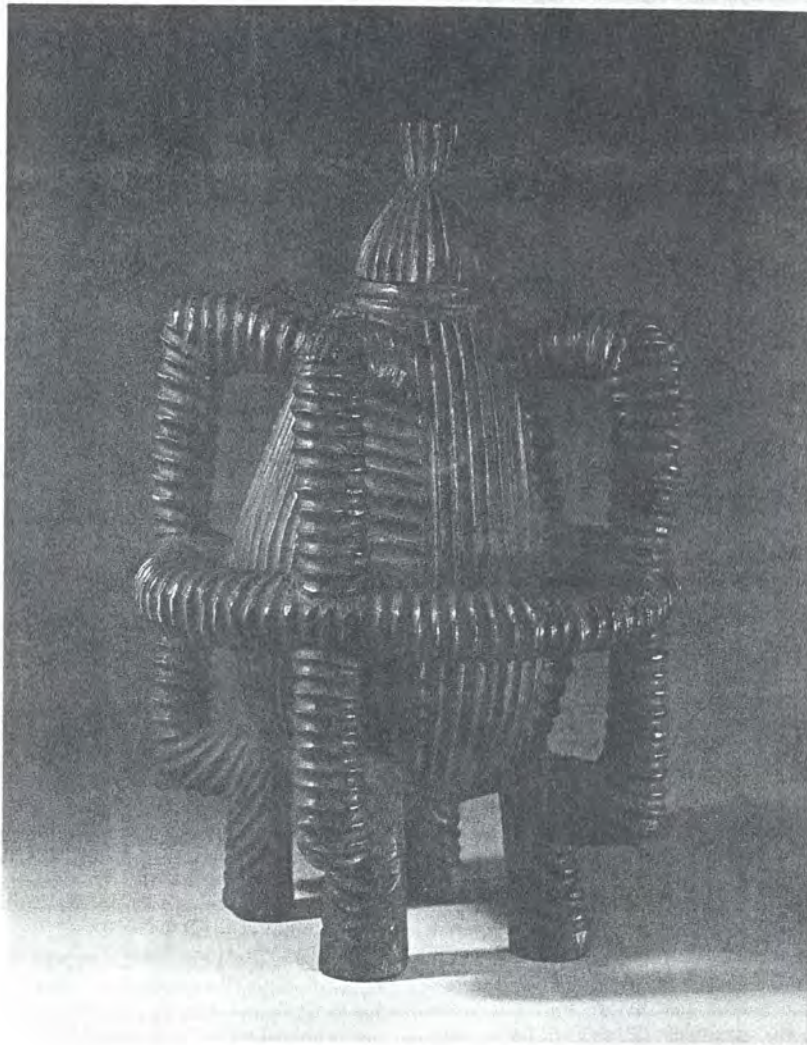
\$800-1,200

See illustration with lot 138



136





220

*Various Owners*

□ 218

A Chokwe Stool, with an openwork criss-cross design on the circular base, and four seated caryatids supporting the concave seat, one playing a drum, the next with hands resting on the chest, another with hands flanking the genital area, and the last holding his right hand to his right ear, the left arm missing; glass bead and wire ornaments, aged brown patina with faint traces of red pigment.

*Provenance:*

Collected between 1899 and 1904 by Mr. Jules Ganty Sotheby's, New York, March, 1981, lot 289

*Exhibited:*

Gand, Compagnie du Kasai, 1913

*Literature:*

Bastin, 1982, p. 261, pl. 177

\$3,000-4,000

□ 219

A Chokwe Stool, with perforated circular base, surmounted by a female caryatid seated with her elbows resting on her knees and hands placed behind the ears, with concentric circular scarification deeply incised on her buttocks, rolls of flesh indicated above her deeply carved genitalia, the attenuated triangular head with pierce ears and geometric coiffure, supporting the concave seat, brass wire on the left wrist; shiny rich brown patina. Height 10 3/4 in. (27.3 cm.)

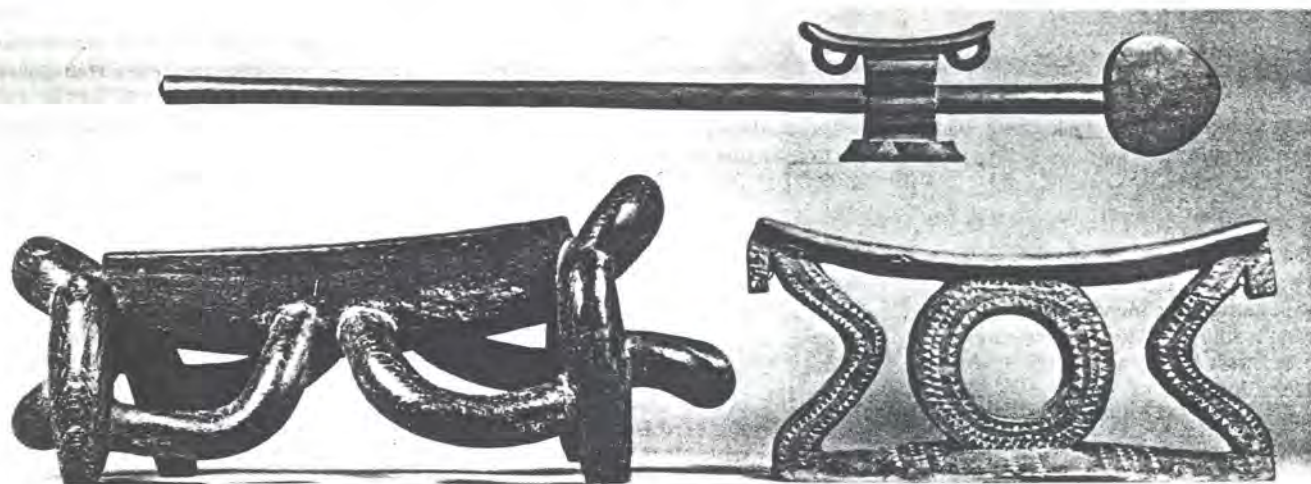
\$4,000-6,000

□ 220

A Fine Zulu Vessel, of openwork form, standing on four cylindrical feet supporting an oval bowl within a single ring structure connected by four posts and struts, surmounted by a conical lid with a knob-like projection, decorated overall with deeply grooved spirals and striations; dark brown patina. Height 20 in. (50.8 cm.)

\$7,000-10,000

END OF SALE



266

AN UNUSUAL SOUTHERN AFRICA HEADREST, the four curved cylindrical legs joined by loops at the top and centre, four further loops connecting the legs with the centre of the top, dark glossy patina, crack to one side  
45cm. wide

266

£200-300

267

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AN AFRICAN IVORY BRACELET, of D-section, golden patina; a zebra mane headband; and a skirt of fur the bracelet 10cm. diam. (3)

PROVENANCE:

Collected in the 1890's by a missionary with the Church of Scotland

269

A ZULU MILK POT of tapered cylindrical form, carved in relief with two lug handles and seven rectangular panels of cross-hatched ornament; and a pottery two-handled vessel ornamented with bands of stippled ornament, chips  
39cm. and 27cm. high (2)

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A ZULU CIRCULAR BOWL, on four square feet, two short lug handles carved below the rim, dark patina with black glossy exterior  
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267

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the apron 50cm. long, the headrest 25cm. wide (2)

276

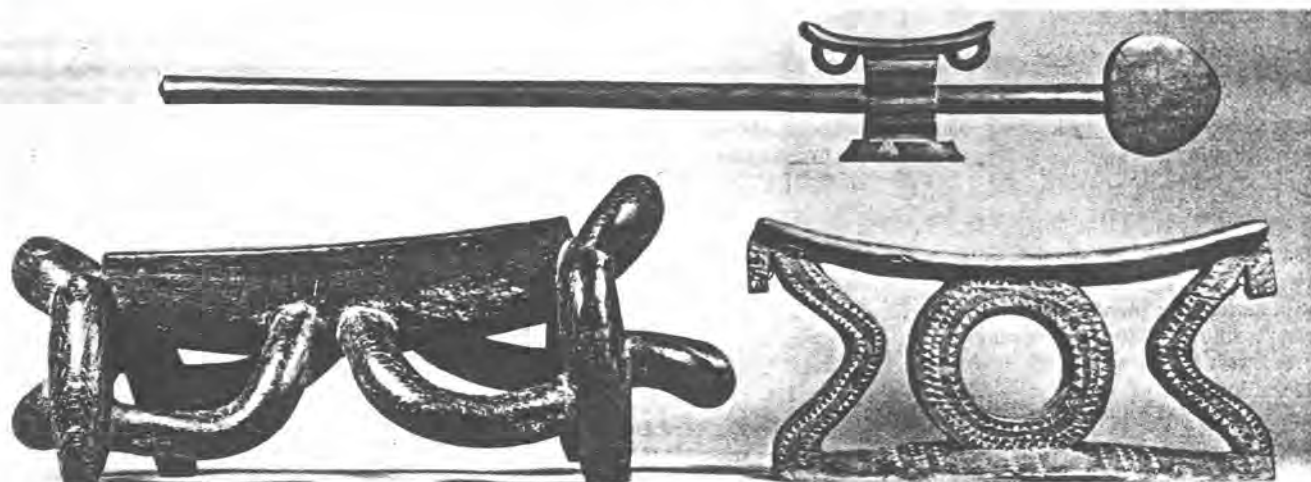
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1m.57cm. high



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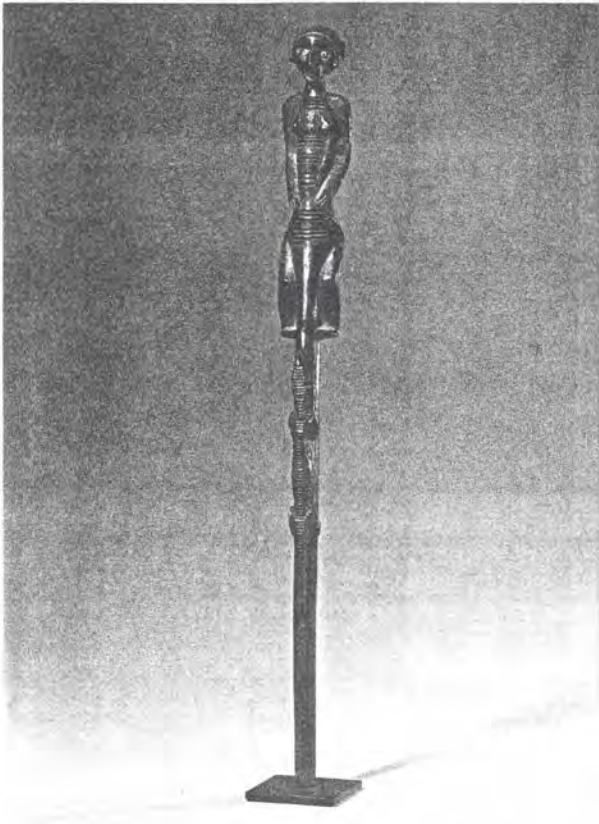
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277

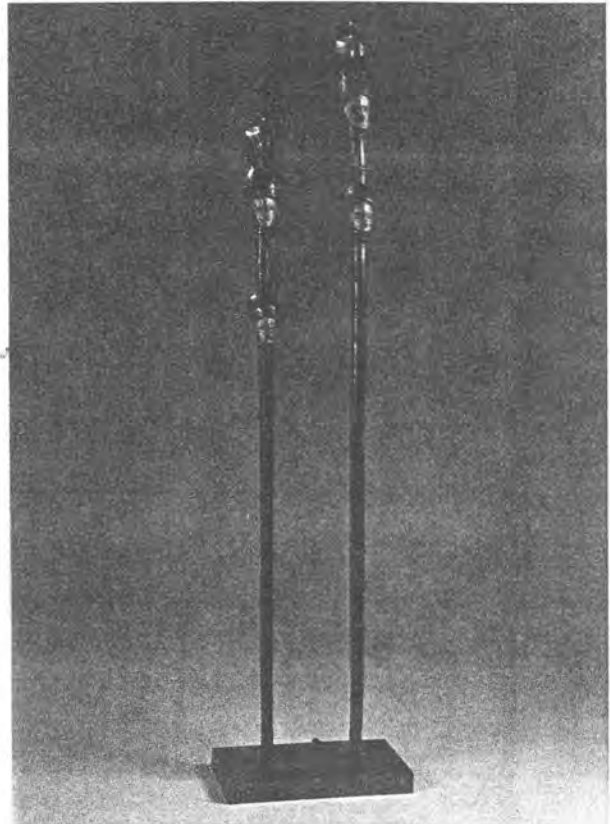
A MADAGASCAR FIBRE POUCH, finely woven with geometric motifs in blue and brown  
13.5cm. long

278

AN AFRICAN MATERNITY FIGURE  
1m.57cm. high



134



135

□ 136

A Tsonga/Nguni Figural Pipe, with slender cylindrical stem and bowl carved in the form of a female figure, with outstretched legs bending up from the hips, tapering torso with small hollowed navel and splayed triangular breast, framed by sharply bent arms held to the sides with hands resting on the stomach, her detachable head of oval form, with diminutive rectangular mouth, knob-like nose and depressed eyesockets with small beads inset as eyes beneath a domed forehead and cropped coiffure, blue and white glass beads strung on sinew encircling the neck and waist; smooth dark turning to light brown patina. Height 13½ in. (34.3 cm.)

\$10,000-15,000

□ 137

A Shilluk Terracotta Pipe, of zoomorphic form, with finely incised and hollowed cylindrical stem, supporting the bulging midsection forming the animal's body, a cylindrical projection to the back, the waisted neck terminating in a tapering head with arched ears, hollowed yawning mouth, knobbed nose and circular eyes, decorated with triangles on the body and head; black patina with the remains of white and red pigment. Length 5 in. (12.7 cm.)

\$800-1,200

See illustration with lot 138

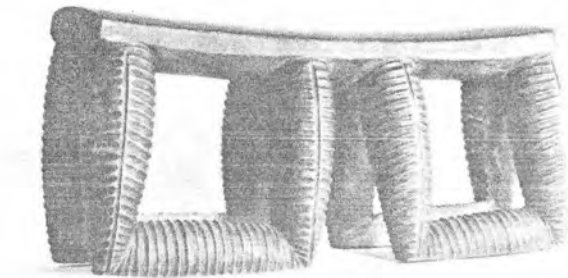


136

African sculpture from private collections in London  
19 Oct - 8 Nov 1979 South London Art Gallery



161



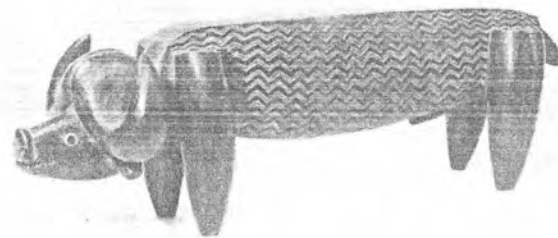
163



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