

**Divination** facilitates communication between earthly and spiritual realms. *Babalawo* or “fathers of ancient wisdom” are Yoruba practitioners of *Ifa* divination. *Ifa* refers to Orunmila, the god of divination, and to sacred text used in divination practice.

The *babalawo* initiates communication with the spiritual realm by drawing two intersecting lines onto the powdered surface of a divination board. To gain Orunmila’s attention, the *babalawo* taps on this board with a conical tapper (*iroke Ifa*). Sacred palm nuts are cast onto the powdered surface. By studying the marks left in the sawdust, the diviner determines which *Ifa* chapters should be recited. He calls out a series of verses from this section, until the client recognizes one as significant. The *babalawo* repeats the process many times until a meaningful message emerges and appropriate actions are identified.

Dress for Orisha Oko (*Ewu Orisha Oko*)  
from Yoruba People of Nigeria, 20th century  
Beads, cloth, leather  
Gift of Diane R. Wedner and Ron M. Ziskin,  
1999.133.6

This beaded sheath honors and beautifies the symbol of the farm deity orisha Oko—an iron staff fashioned from farming hoes. Priestesses demonstrate their devotion by enclosing the staff in beaded “clothing” that often includes a miniature beaded crown similar to those worn by Yoruba rulers.

Shango Figure from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, late 19th–early 20th century  
Wood  
Gift of Jeremiah H. Fogelson, 2000.9.9

“Soothing are the hands of the female.”  
– A Yoruba saying

This priestess’s composure and idealized femininity counter the volatility of the deity she serves—Shango, the Thundergod. The double-ax that surmounts her head signifies the presence of Shango, who can be both graciously generous and violently vengeful. The figure is for an altar.

Pair of Twin Memorial Figures (*Ere Ibeji*) from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, Ibarapa region, town of Eruwa, ca. 1940

Wood, copper

J. David and Laura Siefried Horsfall

Endowment Fund purchase, 1991.30.1-2

Twin Memorial Figure (*Ere Ibeji*) from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, 19th–20th century

Wood, beads, cowry shells, paint, cloth, and leather

Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain, 1993.82a-b

Maku of Erin, Yoruba maker

Twin Memorial Figure (*Ere Ibeji*) from Nigeria, 20th century

Wood, beads, pigment

Gift of Drs. Gladys, Jay, Jeffrey, Jamie, and James Strain, 1999.131.3

These sculptures memorialize twin children who died and became ancestors. Variations in adornment reflect the uniqueness of each child and convey the supernatural status of twins. Their stylistic diversity reflects the craftsmanship of various carvers and workshops. Although small in size, the assertive stance and fully developed breasts on female figures portray the twins as though at the prime of life. Parents decorate the sculptures with beads, clothing, and jewelry to convey their love, respect, and honor for the sacred status of twin ancestors.

Beaded Ceremonial Sword and Sheath from  
Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, 20th century  
Metal, beads, cloth, coins, brass, cowry  
shells, leather  
Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain,  
1992.84a-b

Only Yoruba kings and prominent warriors wear the sword (*udamalore*). Covering the sword and sheath are fiery colored beads representing Ogun, god of war and iron. The presence of such attachments as a conical leather object, a shell shrine, and artificially aged cowry shells suggest this object may have been made for export.

Shrine Post from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria,  
Ekiti region, town of Efon Alaye, ca. 1940  
Wood, iron  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1991.31

The balanced pose and serene expression on these male and female figures evoke Yoruba attributes of inner beauty and moral character. The master sculptor uses the figures and their ritual objects to honor both the earthly realm of female/male relationships, and the spiritual world of ancestors.

Hat with Beadwork for the *Egungun*  
Masquerade from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria,  
early 20th century  
Beads, cloth, wood  
Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain, 1992.87

This headdress is part of the costume worn by  
an *Egungun* masquerader in performances  
that honor the spirit of departed ancestors.  
The crested form of the hat resembles the  
beautiful hairstyle of a bride.

“*Owolewa*” (“Beauty is Money and Money is  
Beauty”) *Egungun* Masquerade Ensemble  
from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, ca. 1951  
Cotton, wool, silk, metal, leather  
Collection of Helen Louise Allen Textile  
Collection, School of Human Ecology,  
University of Wisconsin–Madison, Gift of Dr.  
and Mrs. Jeffrey Hammer, 1992.09.001

*Egungun* masquerade festivals honor the  
spirits of ancestors. Such costumes conceal  
and transform chosen male family members  
into otherworldly beings capable of

transmitting messages from the spiritual realm. As the dancer whirls, the multicolored panels fly outward creating a “breeze of blessing” for family members and community.

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Beaded Cap for an *Egungun* Masquerade  
from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, mid 20th  
century

Beads, cloth, wood

Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain,  
1992.80

The crested hairstyle of this beaded cap represents a bridal style worn by priests and priestesses to signify their “marriage” to their deity. The floral patterns are reminiscent of works from the Adesina family, famous artists responsible for the resurgence of beadwork in Yoruba society in the second half of the twentieth century.

Elders' Society Drum (*Oshugbo Agba*) from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, early to mid 20th century

Wood

Frank and Roa Birch, Eugenie Mayer Bolz, Harry and Margaret P. Glicksman, J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall, Ruth C.

Wallerstein Endowment Funds, and W. R. Mitchell Art Center Fund and Charlotte Calvin Voorhis Estate purchase, 1992.37

This drum belongs to the Oshugbo society of elder women and men, the judges in Yoruba culture. The central figure with splayed legs is based on the mudfish (*Clarius lazuris*), regarded as a spiritually powerful creature: it disappears into the mud in the dry season but reappears with rain. Its ability to be "reborn" explains why it is an important symbol of reincarnation and spiritual rejuvenation. The figure holds a ritual bell and a fly whisk, signs of high status and authority. At the sides, images of linked, paired figures symbolize the equality and unity of the female and male members of Oshugbo.

Paired Figures (*Edan Oshugbo*) from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, 19th century  
Bronze and iron  
Bequest of Alexander and Henrietta W. Hollaender, 1992.205

These bronze figures represent the elderly female and male members of the Oshugbo society, the supreme court of Yoruba communities. The chain that joins them together connotes the unity and collaboration of Oshugbo members in all their deliberations. The large eyes suggest the insights and wisdom associated with elders.

Royal Beaded Crown (*Adenla*) from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, early 20th century  
Beads, cloth, wood  
Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain,  
1993.80a-b

The images on Yoruba crowns symbolize the ruler's spiritual powers and his connection to an unbroken royal line. The faces refer to the watchfulness and protection of royal ancestors, and the bird refers to the mystical powers of women whose support is necessary for the success of any ruler.

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Royal Beaded Coronet (*Orikogbofo*) from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, early 20th century  
Beads, cloth  
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Hammer,  
1992.61

Yoruba rulers' beaded coronets often betray multiple cultural and religious influences. While the shape of this one suggests a European crown, the cylindrical bands around the base are reminiscent of Muslim turbans. The bird at the top is an indigenous Yoruba symbol for the mystical powers of women.

Royal Coronet (*Orikogbofo*) from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, mid 20th century  
Beads, cloth  
Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain,  
1993.79

The heads of Yoruba rulers should never be left unprotected. The shape and floral patterns of this beaded coronet are modeled after European crowns, specifically English ones, reflecting the history and impact of British colonial presence in Nigeria from the late nineteenth century to 1960.

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Beaded Fan from the Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, early 20th century  
Beads, cloth, brass tacks  
Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain  
1992.62

A symbol of office for a priestess of the goddess Oshun, this fan was carried in annual festivals. Typically made of solid brass, this beaded version emphasizes the spiritual importance of the priestess. Blue and white beads in the center and on the handle identify the fan specifically with Oshun.

Divination Necklace (*Ide Odigba Ileke*) from  
Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, early 20th  
century  
Glass beads, string, cloth  
Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain,  
1992.69

This necklace, worn by a divination priest or *babalawo* ("father-of-ancient-wisdom"), includes two small bags that contain empowering substances for his protection and power. The colors symbolize spiritual forces such as gods and ancestors and mark him as an important leader and mediator.

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Divination Tapper (*Iroke Ifa*) Fragment from  
Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, early 20th  
century  
Ivory  
Gift of Drs. Gladys, Jay, Jeffrey, Jamie, and  
James Strain, 1999.131.6

This object is the remaining portion of an instrument used to create the sacred sounds that call worldly and otherworldly forces to divination sessions. The female figure draws attention to her breasts, confirming her femininity and life-giving abilities. Her

posture and greeting gesture have a cooling effect on the gods.

Diviner's Bag (*Apo Ileke Ifa*) from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, ca. 1930s  
Beads, cloth  
Gift of Diane R. Wedner and Ron M. Ziskin, 1999.133.3

Yoruba diviners, called *babalawo* or "fathers-of-ancient-wisdom," use such bags to carry their sacred implements for divination—a wooden tray, tapper, and sacred palm nuts. The "eternal knot" motif in the center and at the edges of the bag symbolizes infinite creation, reincarnation, and the complexities of life.

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Yinka Adeyemi  
Nigerian, b. 1941  
*Music Makers*, 1971  
Woodcut  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John T. Medler, 1976.25

This artist of the Oshogbo School in Nigeria during the 1960s recalls his ancestors in depicting traditional Yoruba musicians. The circular lines and trancelike bulging eyes suggest the expression of spirituality in an era of postcolonial independence.

Sowei Mask from Sewa-Mende Peoples of  
Sierra Leone, ca. 1945  
Wood, blackened raffia  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1992.36

At puberty, Mende girls are initiated into the all-female Sande society. The highest-ranking officials wear the Sowei mask to signify the guiding, protecting presence of female spirits. The closed mouth symbolizes restraint or self-containment, while the neck rings represent fertility and beauty.

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Goli Dance Mask from Baule Peoples of  
Côte d'Ivoire, 1950s  
Wood, carved and stained  
Gift of Lester Wunderman, 62.3.1

Goli masquerades are for entertainment and social comment. Each performance requires a set of four masks. The first to appear is the least important while the last has the highest status. This mask, considered female, appears third in the sequence, suggesting

the importance given to women among the Baule peoples.

*Pwo* Mask from Chokwe Peoples of Angola,  
mid 20th century  
Wood, raffia, woven twine  
Gift of Lester Wunderman, 62.3.9

Young woman (*pwo*) masks represent female spirits who are role models for Chokwe women. A male dancer wears the mask as part of a costume to transform himself into a female spirit. He dances sensuously and speaks slowly, modeling the behavior of an ideal woman during a performance honoring women.

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Dance Wand from Kuyu Peoples of Democratic Republic of Congo, late 19th or early 20th century  
Wood, brass  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.27

This work represents a Kuyu married woman with a dramatic bi-lobed hairstyle. The incised lines running horizontally across her cheeks depict scarification marks.

Parted lips reveal sharpened teeth, a mark of beauty. Historically used to honor the creator in the Kebe-kebe snake dance, the wand now appears in secular performances.

Mask from Lula Peoples of Democratic Republic of Congo, late 20th century  
Wood; red, white, blue, and black pigment  
Gift of Drs. Gladys, Jay, Jeffrey, Jamie, and James Strain, 1999.131.7

The colors on this Lula mask from central Africa are associated with boys' initiation. Red signifies rebirth. White represents the spiritual realm, where deities reside. Blue-black symbolizes ancestors. This mask lacks the empowering medicine bundles found on similar masks, which suggests it may have been made for export.

*Bugle* Warrior Mask from Dan Peoples of  
Côte d'Ivoire, early 20th century  
Wood  
Gift of Jeremiah H. Fogelson, 2000.9.8

Dan masks contain powerful spirit forces known as *gle*. The man who wears the mask takes on the characteristics associated with these spirits. This *bugle* mask, associated with courageous warriors, creates excitement and fear with its aggressive, fearsome forms.

Masquerade Headdress from Ijo Peoples of  
Nigeria, mid 20th century  
Wood, pigment  
Gift of Michael Oliver, Class of 1966, 2001.6

Painted and worn with a full body costume, this headdress belonged to the all-male Ekine society and was used in masquerades honoring water spirits. Geometric facial features are typical of the Ijo but the vertical format and crown of birds suggests influence by other cultures such as the Ijebu-Yoruba.

Seri Mask Honoring Mami Wata from Guro Peoples of Côte d'Ivoire, ca. 1960s  
Wood, enamel paint  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall,  
Endowment Fund purchase, 2001.8

Seri masks are for entertainment. This one portrays two powerful female spirits. Above, Mami Wata, "mother of water," materializes as a woman from "overseas" holding snakes. She provides wealth to individuals who worship her. Below, the green-faced Gu, a goddess, gazes demurely downward, evoking preferred feminine demeanor.

Gelede Headdress from Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria, early 20th century  
Wood, paint  
Gift of Drs. James and Gladys Strain,  
1993.78

Gelede masquerades honor the spiritual powers of elderly women called "our mothers" and comment on society, the "children of our mothers." Here, the master carver has fashioned the portrait of a man wearing a dog-eared cap, a popular fashion among elderly Yoruba men during this period.

Champion Cultivator Staff Fragment from  
Senufo Peoples of Côte d'Ivoire, early 20th  
century

Wood

Gift of Lester Wunderman, 62.3.10

Awarded in agricultural competitions, this sculpture capped a five-foot long trophy staff that promised a fruitful marriage for the champion. Protruding breasts and stomach symbolize fertility, while the dignified posture represents the cool temper of Senufo women. The half-moon shaped coiffure and scarification patterns are the carver's individual choices.

Figure with Elaborate Bustle from Bijogo  
Peoples of Bissagos Islands,  
Guinea-Bissau, 20th century

Wood

J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.28

This sculpture depicts a Bijogo man between seventeen and twenty-seven years old. His hip and waist decorations are worn for a popular dance performed by men of this age group. The sculpture's striking stance and idealized features evoke youthful confidence and also appeal to the Western patron for whom it was carved.

Justice Staff (*Mihango*) from Pende Peoples  
of Democratic Republic of Congo, mid 20th  
century

Wood

J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.29

Male orators hold this emblem of authority in  
the matrilineal Pende society. It is decorated  
with idealized female figures and an open  
oval form that honors female life- and  
care-giving roles. The figures' smooth  
foreheads, hooded eyelids, and closed  
mouths convey Pende ideals of feminine  
demeanor.

Dignitaries' Chair (*Asipim*) from Asante  
Peoples of Ghana, early 20th century

Wood, leather, brass tacks

Gift of Drs. Gladys, Jay, Jeffrey, Jamie, and  
James Strain, 1999.131.1

The Asante believe seating forms contain  
their owners' souls. Decorative details on  
this prestigious chair, derived from foreign  
European renaissance models and local  
status symbols such as gold-weighting  
spoons, honor men important in the  
community. When not in use, they are

leaned against a wall to protect the souls of their owners.

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Kola Nut Bowl from Igbo Peoples of Nigeria,  
early 20th century

Wood

Gift of Drs. Gladys, Jay, Jeffrey, Jamie, and  
James Strain, 1999.131.5a-b

Igbo men use such bowls to serve kola nuts,  
an expression of hospitality and sincerity.

The intricate detail on this shallow bowl, and  
the lidded center section (used to serve  
condiments) decorated with two bearded  
male heads, symbolize the owner's  
affluence and increase the prestige of his  
home.

Heddle Pulley from the Senufo People of  
Côte d'Ivoire, ca. 1950

Wood

Gift of Jeremiah H. Fogelson, 2000.9.3

Heddle Pulley from the Guro Peoples of  
Côte d'Ivoire, ca. 1950

Wood

Gift of Jeremiah H. Fogelson, 2000.9.4

Heddle Pulley from the Baule People of  
Côte d'Ivoire, ca. 1950

Wood

Gift of Lester Wunderman, 62.3.5

Pulleys decorate the looms of male weavers among Baule, Guro, and Senufo peoples. A weaver commissions a male sculptor to carve a beautiful image, whether of a powerful mask or an elegant woman with shiny black skin and elaborate hairstyle to embellish his loom where he spends long hours. As one weaver explained, "no one wants to live without things of beauty."

Doll / Power Figure from Namchi Peoples of northern Cameroon, ca. 1960–1970

Wood, animal horn, cowry shells, shells, leather, animal bone, seeds, glass beads

J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall

Endowment Fund purchase, 2001.7

Dolls are used for play and ritual purposes in Namchi society. Unadorned dolls are playthings for girls, but when decorated they become fertility instruments to increase the chance of pregnancy for women with conception difficulties. The decorations and lack of wear in this example suggest it may have been made for export.

Side-Blown Horn from Mangbetu or Azande Peoples of Democratic Republic of Congo, ca. 1930

Ivory

J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall

Endowment Fund purchase, 1991.32

Ivory horns symbolize a Mangbetu king's power and status as ruler. Like a flute, a horn is played laterally. On this horn, the symbol near the serpent's head refers to

Mangbetu throwing-knives, symbols of male strength and power. Court musicians probably played this horn during hunting expeditions, celebrations, or war.

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Ezrom Legae  
South African, 1938–1999  
*(Thinking) Freedom*, 1996  
Ink  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.17.5

The birds and disembodied human head in this image look in different directions, as if contemplating the same situation from differing viewpoints. The owl near the center stares out, challenging the observer to engage with the restrictive lines and shapes that enclose the figures, referring to apartheid, the governmental structure of “separation.”

Ezrom Legae  
South African, 1938–1999  
*Dakar*, n.d.

Ink  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.17.6

This drawing pays tribute to the multitude of animals Legae observed in his travels through Africa and his personal experiences at Goree Island, Senegal. Many Africans had passed through this island as they were taken from their homeland and enslaved in the Americas.

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Ezrom Legae  
South African, 1938–1999  
*Bull*, 1996

Ink and collage  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.17.8

In this collage, the text, in English, has been placed upside down, subverting its meaning. The calm bird and bull's head on the right may be alternate manifestations of their turbulent counterparts in the center.

Ezrom Legae  
South African, 1938–1999  
*Ancestor*, 1997

Ink  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.17.1

Legae often used animals in his work because he considered the representation of human beings inappropriate in the horrible situations he wished to depict. The monkey in this image makes an attempt to look out of his space but is thwarted by the mass of dark lines covering his head.

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Ezrom Legae  
South African, 1938–1999  
*Mangy Dogs*, 1995

Ink  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.17.2

This image depicts Legae's observations of a malnourished dog. Over time he watched as the creature scrounged in the streets until the day he observed the dog had become pregnant. At first dismayed that the dog had been taken advantage of, he later realized that the spirit of life had prevailed over adversity.

Sam Nhlengethwa  
South African, b. 1955  
*Team Leaders II*, 1996  
Five-color hand printed lithograph  
J. David and Laura Seefield Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.19

Inspired by Nhlengethwa's personal experiences in South African diamond and coal mines, this bold lithograph celebrates the courage, dignity, and endurance of the miners who risk their lives unearthing South Africa's mineral wealth, yet receive little in return.

Moses (Shakes) Buthelezi  
South African, b. 1967  
*Transportless*, 1994  
Screenprint  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.20

The unusual, aerial perspective in this work is meant to convey the disorientation of the alcoholic person carried in a wheelbarrow by a friend. Bright colors and humorous details evoke a sense of levity toward this serious social problem, while the birds may suggest freedom and hope for the future.

Helen Sebidi  
South African, b. 1943  
*Life Is an Uphill Struggle (Bo Moepa Thutse)*, 1996  
Etching  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.22

The emotionally charged imagery in this work suggests that South Africans cannot escape horrible township living conditions or their bleak futures. These faces are worn and their bodies are awkwardly positioned, suggesting pain and struggle. The man wrestling with an animal in the lower right-hand corner may symbolize a person's struggle against oppression.

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Vuminkosi Zulu  
South African, 1948–1996  
*African Women Dressing Traditionally*, 1991  
Etching in aquatint with dry point  
J. David and Laura Seefield Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.23

Three women are shown standing in front of a typical Zulu landscape, wearing the traditional dress of married women—a skirt, topknot, shawl, beaded headpiece, and knee ornaments. Their attire sustains Zulu cultural and artistic traditions. In contrast, migrant working Zulu men often adopt European dress.

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Wonderboy Thokozani Nxumalo  
South African, b. 1975  
*Make a Fire Without Matches (Basa Umlilo  
Ngaphandle Kukamatches)*, 1995  
Screenprint  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.26

Wonderboy Nxumalo's fable-like stories  
idealize the peace of the natural world while  
drawing parallels with human culture.

Nxumalo's creative storytelling reflects the rich oral traditions of his rural Zulu heritage.

"It was early in the morning. The sun was started to rise up at that time. When that would happened, they were called one another. Then they go up where the big boss is. This amazing thing like this: was be under the mountains near the river called, Sounding River. Alot of baboons were wish to see this man. Now they're very quiet. The river's sounding sound like songs of the mountains, for praying. OOOH!!! A boss of the baboons was stand up and sit down at the same time, he points on the woods and from the wood comes a fire. The whole of them say YEEEH!! They're saying that because of happiness. They enjoy to see that performances of this man. Thereafter one of them was stand up and fetching some maize from the big bucket, then he cook for the whole troop. Their beautiful party was gone allright. At the end, a man who was going was cried about his starmach, he say OOH! My starmach OO! My starmach. When he's saying that, his starmach came up like a buble and strong like a stone. They came and help this man, then he coming better. By Wonderboy."

Willie Bester  
South African, b. 1956  
Untitled, 1997  
Mixed media, photo-collage with oil  
J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall  
Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.18

This vibrant, mixed-media piece depicts the harsh conditions of township life. Shown here is the uniformity of ramshackle houses, children playing amidst debris, and political graffiti protesting the injustices and short-comings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which allowed many who committed brutal acts under apartheid to go free.

Sthembiso Sibisi

South African, b. 1976

*Welcome to KwaZulu Land*, 1997

Color lithograph and screenprint

J. David and Laura Seefried Horsfall

Endowment Fund purchase, 1997.21

Juxtaposing Westernization and Zulu culture, Sibisi depicts native homesteads and a store that advertises Coca-Cola. A man wearing western dress rushes past women clothed in traditional garb in order to catch the bus. Perhaps they laugh at him because he has abandoned Zulu cultural traditions in favor of Western dress.