

CEREMONIAL KNIVES. These implements are more than 18 inches long. The blades and handles are decorated and engraved, functional objects now seen as art. The knives are believed to have originated with the Bakuba people.



BASHILELE PIPE. The carving is particularly fine, and the pipe was obviously used — the bowl and mouthpiece still smell of tobacco.



FOOTSTOOL & NECK RESTS. From bottom: a Pende stool, used before purchase; a Luba (or possibly Songye) neck rest depicting two figures, one with an elaborate, cascading hairstyle; and a small Kuba neck rest with engraved top.

Out of Africa

Editor's Note: The following introduction was written for *A! Magazine for the Arts* by Pam McClusky, Curator of Art of Africa and Oceania, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Washington.

Flashback to Paris in 1905-06. African art was the talk of the town. Pablo Picasso had just discovered cases filled with masks and sculpture in the Trocadero Museum and could not stop wondering about them. Soon thereafter, he ignited a new perception of what art could do. Faces wore masks, figures became cubes, and surfaces fractured. It was an exhilarating time for artistic experimentation.

Throughout the early 20th century, African art continued to fuel the imaginations of many European artists — Braque, Matisse, Brancusi and Giacometti among the most notable. In America, huge waves of creativity flowed out of African sources to be seen and heard in jazz and the Harlem Renaissance. By the latter half of the century, certain people had recognized the need to formulate collections of African art that could be seen near the paintings by artists like Picasso who had been inspired by it.

One such collector was a young woman named Katherine White who convinced the Museum of Modern Art in New York to produce exhibitions in the 1960s that focused attention on aspects of African art. For 20 years, White traveled throughout Africa, Europe and the U.S. with a determination to assemble the best masks, sculpture, jewelry, furniture and textiles she could find. By her death at age 51, she had managed to pull together a premier collection that was to find a home at the Seattle Art Museum. Following in her footsteps, the museum has continued to look at what subtle and surprising twists African artists have to offer.

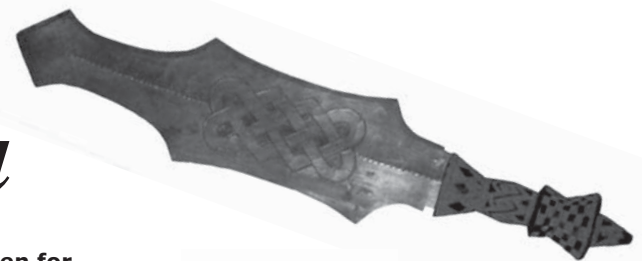
The result of this century of discovery will be on view Jan. 27-Apr. 30 in "African Voices, African Art: Long Steps Never Broke a Back" at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville, Tennessee. This exhibition, whose title originates in an African parable, highlights the artistic heritage of a number of sub-Saharan cultures. Both traditional and contemporary works will be on view, illustrating both of the worlds that modern Africans inhabit.

Tribal Art in Local Collections

Two anonymous local collectors acquired most of their tribal art from relatives who were missionaries in Africa. A few items are tourist art, but most are museum quality.

One woman was born in the Kasai Province in the Belgian Congo and lived there for many years as a child. As a young adult, she and her parents considered Zaire their home after they lived in the U.S. and Togo. "With a few exceptions, my father acquired the collection," she explains. "He did not consider himself a collector, but the word was out that he would buy art when you 'needed' him to buy. He had a maximum price he would spend, and the dealers would come to him at the end of the month when they needed cash."

Another local collector inherited several pieces of Bakuba art from her uncle who was stationed during the 1950s at the Presbyterian mission at Lubondai in the Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). *A!*



DIVINERS. Known as "friction oracles," used to answer questions, often relating to health. The Bashilele (Lele) example, below left, uses a rattan stopper to slide across a wooden base while the Chokwe, right, is wood on wood.



BAKUBA CUP. This carved wood cup, nine inches tall, has geometric patterns typical of Bakuba designs.



BANDUNDU DANCERS. These small figures in wood and raffia depict how the masks we think of as art are actually worn.

Africa . . . More photos on pages 6-7