

Fragments: Pots, Patchwork, Power Figures

The title “Fragments” alludes to two categories of works: such that have been assembled from separate pieces, and such that have fallen to pieces or are in the process of doing so. We focus on the power of combining, the art of separating, and the force of destruction.

From modest to precious, from pragmatic to exclusive, from self-evidential to extraordinary, and from deserted to ruined – in each case, the fragments stand for individual skills and culture-specific knowledge, for histories and stories that may well also tell of injuries, wounds, and destruction. Even in their fragmentary makeup, the pieces remain recognizable and stimulate one’s imagination. On top of that, they disclose cultural requirements and functions by means of their nature and the materials used, and reveal aesthetic dimensions.

Work categories – The works on display belong to different categories and are distinguished by the way they came to be. Whether we are dealing with purposefully created assemblages, potent objects, power-enhancing arrangements, everyday objects saved from withering away, things left to decay, and leftovers from acts of destruction – what all the works have in common is that they embody fragments of history and narratives.

Contexts and perspectives – Fragments refer to the restoration or creation of order. They reveal how people act with or through material things, they can confer or withdraw power and strength, they require care and attention, and occasionally – for whatever reasons – they have to be discarded. Depending on the perspective, processes of fragmentation look quite different: there is a fundamental difference between the way the societies of origin look at them compared to the scholarly approach; economic dynamics result in a different approach than one guided by ethical principles; finally, it also raises the question as to how far or in which way, Western museums were involved in or even provoked the fragmentation of individual works.

Qualities – All the pieces on display embody poetic and aesthetic qualities. Each one of them stands for itself but, at the same time, it bears evidence to the culture-specific use of different materials, how they were combined and what impact they had. Fragments, splinters, shards, particles, and shreds hold the potential to articulate what is suppressed, to shift the divergent into focus, and to open up new perspectives on specific events or on life as such. Ethnographic museums in particular are challenged to deal with parts, fragments, and splinters in order to better understand and address a splintered world.

Bark cloth from a lime or maple tree, dried seaweed, black kelp, and heaps of rushes are held together by strings made of rice straw. The single elements as such are nothing to write home about; it’s only when they are combined through diligent work in all their shades of colour that they create an impressive assemblage: we are speaking of a Japanese rain cape, *mino*. This pieced-together work is an article of daily use; for ages it was worn as a protection against rain and snow, not only over a samurai armour but also on journeys and for work in the fields and similar daily chores.

Some figures in the classical Japanese theatre wear a *mino* just as groups of men do in the northern part of the island of Honshu when they dress up and parade in the streets to

usher in the New Year. Recently, the *mino* has become popular in the cosplay scene in which people take on the shape of manga and anime figures.

A *mino* is a single object and an ensemble at the same time; its production required skilled hands and a sense of aesthetics. As early as the 17th century, the cape inspired the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashô (1644-1694) to write:

The first winter shower –
even the little monkey craves
for a cape of straw!

1 Rain cape *mino*, Prefecture of Akita, Japan; 20th c.; rushes, bark cloth, seaweed, rice straw, vegetable fibre; Noemi Speiser, purchased in 1971, IId 8128

Wallen Mapondera combines in his work national and international incidences with personal experiences. For this he has developed a radically abstract language with the aid of fragments and found pieces: from packaging (as for foodstuffs in *Tribal Print*) and cardboard to torn tent canvases and used floorboards to egg shells. He is interested in the volatility and transience of meanings and values as embodied by these materials through focusing on the transformational potential inherent in the materials.

2 a

Tribal Print

Wallen Mapondera, 2020

Cardboard, thread, mixed technique

Courtesy of SMAC Gallery, © Wallen Mapondera

Open Secret with its gaping red wound is a commentary on the fragility of things and living beings. With this work, Mapondera denounces the rampant state corruption in Zimbabwe.

b

Open Secret

Wallen Mapondera, 2020

Cardboard, wax paper, cotton, waxed thread on canvas

Courtesy of SMAC Gallery, © Wallen Mapondera

The aesthetics of joining

All pieces on display at this station are pieced together from single parts. Sometimes scraps or patches were used, other times fabrics specially produced for the purpose. Embroidery, tassels, mirrors, cowrie shells, cardamom pods and similar items lend the assemblages an added dimension. Each work bears evidence to production processes that include either planning or chance, skill and passion, imagination and creativity in working with textile materials and appliqués.

New creations – While, originally, the piecing together of scraps of cloth was most likely a result of failing resources, in time it developed into a veritable art form in many places. Relying on the principle of bricolage – bringing together found and on-hand pieces – the combination of planned and chance assembly led to something new.

Production and usage – In each of these works we find evidence of collaboration and presentation of a societal position. Joint work on a piece created or strengthened the sense of community. The textiles lend expression to wealth, status and prestige, religious affiliation or a political attitude. Some of them formed elements of exchange relationships, others were part of a dowry, yet others reflect a specific worldview or an individual personality. The arrangement of fragments according to colour, pattern, texture, and material result in assemblages of great stylistic variety and expressiveness.

Aesthetic qualities – The pieces challenge us to question our own value judgements – for example regarding beauty – and acknowledge their inherent aesthetic power. The combination of different materials and techniques creates ever new outcomes: works may resemble one another but they are never identical: each one is unique.

The sleeves, hems, and borders of traditional Bulgarian costumes are often richly embroidered. It is these adornments that make out of a shirt or a jacket a particularly precious garment. Here it appears that parts of such discarded clothing items were joined together to make a rug. In some places we can identify the red stitching. The alternating placement of like patches creates a rhythm that lends the rug a distinct design as a whole.

3 Rug; Bulgaria; 19th c.; linen, woollen yarn; bequest of Victor Rilliet, August Waldburger, purchased in 1918, VI 8066

Patchwork quilts stand as an emblem of the United States in its quality as a melting pot. In quilting, the topside, the filling, and the underside – that is, three layers – are sewn together resulting in chambers that hinder the filling from slipping or bunching up. The surface is made up of patches that are sewn together to create a geometric pattern. The optical illusion of stacked, tripartite cubes is created by the way the differently coloured, diamonds-shaped pieces of cloth – light, intermediate, and dark – are arranged. So-called “quilting bees” or “quilting frolics” were not only occasions when women got together to produce quilts, they were, above all, also important in terms of social interaction and communication.

4 Patchwork quilt *Baby Block, Tumbling Block*; USA; undated; cotton toile, cotton filling; School of Design Basel, gifted in 2016, GM 1985.3758

Producing patchwork fabrics from small pieces of textile had its advantages. It allowed the creation of something new from small fragments of used clothing items. Women got together to work collectively on the units of a larger entity. Later these elements were sewn together. The printed cotton fabrics – arranged scale-like here – featured motifs from Asia and became known under the name *Indiennes* in the latter half of the 19th century.

5 Patchwork piece *Top*; USA; cloth prints: end of 19th c.; cotton; Joan Kessler, New York, gifted in 1981, VI 55517

The town of Panajachel on Lake Atitlan in Guatemala became a hotspot for tourists and downshifters in the latter half of the 20th century. To cater to the growing tourist market, people began producing rucksacks and clothing items and developing new techniques such as patchwork. For this they used cloth rests and discarded textiles made according to one of the many local Maya weaving traditions.

6 Part of a skirt; Panajachel, Guatemala; ca 1974; cotton; Thomas Meyer, purchased in 1974, VI 42854

The quilt, *ralli*, was used either as a blanket, bedspread, or wall hanging. It consists of several layers of cotton joined together in long parallel lines with the aid of running stitches. In South Asia, quilting serves as a form of community-building work to which female relatives and friends are invited. The fabrics and pieces of cloth reflect the women's economic and family background. What makes this *ralli* special are the mirrored and symmetrically arranged motifs: here the women first fold the top layer and then make incisions to create the pattern.

7 Quilt *ralli*; Sindh, Pakistan; before 1975; cotton, synthetic dyes, mirror; coll. Georges Gogol, purchased in 1975, IIa 6324.

The monk's robe *kesa* is a rectangular cloth sewn together from pieces of fabric. The patchwork robe is an expression of the propertylessness of monks and nuns. In Japan, precious cloths were donated to Buddhist monasteries where they were worked into *kesa*. The pattern of this *kesa* has only partly survived: the dark-dyed silk threads have largely corroded owing to the use of iron-oxide mordant, while the remaining colours have faded somewhat. The interwoven silver-coated strips of paper have turned dark over the years due to oxidation.

8 Monk's robe *kesa*; Japan; late 18th / early 19th c.; silk brocade, silk; coll. Marianne Gilbert Finnegan, gifted in 1976, with support of Eberhard Fischer, IId 8628

In European carnival traditions, we encounter a range of figures whose costumes are made of cloth patches and fabric remnants. This costume was sewn for the Basel carnival. The makers didn't use scraps but cloth samples instead normally used to demonstrate the quality, colours, and patterns of a fabric collection. In this case, no further use was intended for the samples. They made their last appearance in the shape of a costume.

9 Carnival costume; Basel, Switzerland; around 1980; textile, paper; Peter Hanauer; gifted from a bequest in 1998, VI 69262

In spring, large decorated oak logs were drawn through villages of the Bernese Lakelands. The so-called *Trämelfuhr* processions were accompanied by an array of costumed figures, among them the so-called *Plätzlimaa*. His costume consisted of myriad small rectangular pieces of cloth sewn on to a two-piece suit. The zigzag cut, which prevented the patches from fraying, and their more or less equal size suggest that the patches were produced exclusively for the purpose.

10 Smock and trousers of a *Plätzlimaa* figure; Kallnach, Bern, Switzerland; 1950; cotton, paper; Fritz Marti; purchased in 1952, VI 19816.01-02

In many African societies, the manufacture and processing of textiles was in the hands of men. This cloth, however, was probably made by a girl in a mission school. It consists of 163 rectangular patches of European, industrially produced cotton. It features a purposely designed composition based on a set of longitudinal strips. Paper labels point to the use of leftover cloth samples. Most likely, we have here a cloth with which young women learnt how to sew.

11 Patchwork cloth; Ghana; before 1981; cotton, paper; Basel Mission Collection, gifted in 2015, III 26484

Young girls in Ghana and Cameroon were taught sewing by the wives of the missionaries. The sewing lessons were held in the afternoon on the balcony of the missionary's house and were meant to instil in the girls work discipline and a sense of duty. At the same time, they were familiarized with stories, songs, and verses from the Bible. The sale of the handicrafts also

brought a little extra income for the girls – that is, as long as it didn't flow into the mission's coffers.

- 12 Girl's dress; Ghana or Cameroon; before 1981; cotton, paper; Basel Mission Collection, gifted in 2015, III 2638

In many parts of West and North Africa, patchwork robes were considered symbols of power, prestige, and status. The cotton fabrics of this dress printed in Europe imitate the motifs found on African cloths such as *kente* and batik. The dress was sewn together by girls at a mission school, using a sundry array of pieces of cloth. Here, the girls not only learned how to sew but also how reuse fabric remnants and create something new from old.

- 13 Girl's dress; Ghana or Cameroon; before 1981; cotton, paper, metal; Basel Mission Collection, gifted in 2015, III 26479

The Kuba peoples are renowned for their fine raffia cloths. The fabrics were produced in a series of collaborative work steps: young boys procured the raw materials, the weaving was done by men, and women created the complex geometric patterns, using cut pile and cloth appliqués. Wraparound cloths like this were worn by women of lower rank at ceremonial events and dances.

- 14 Wraparound *ntshak*; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo; 20th c.; raffia, appliqués; coll. Dieter and Marianne Pfaff-Weber, purchased in 1986, III 23807

The appliqués on the women's garment *jumlo* reflect the numerous influences that trade relations and pilgrimages had on the region of Kohistan. The area was part of the extensive network that made up the traditional Silk Road.

jumlo are famous for the embroideries and appliqués on the garment's sleeves, chest inserts, and skirt. The appliqués made of metal buttons and coins produce a sound at every step; this is believed to ward off all evil.

- 15 Women's dress *jumlo*; Kohistan, Pakistan; after 1947; cotton, glass beads, buttons, coins, metal plates, silver, brass, aluminium, plastic; coll. Alfred Bühler, purchased in 1974, IIa 5914

The women's blouse, *cholo*, was made for and worn on festive occasions. The individual composition of geometric patterns, animal and plant motifs, small mirrors, silk tassels, and cardamom pods join to form a unique garment. Colours, form, and motifs inform about the woman's marital status, number of children, background, and kin affiliation. The combination and positioning of the appliqués reflect the wearer's social identity and status within her group.

- 16 Women's blouse *cholo*; Sindh, Pakistan; before 1972; cotton, silk, mirrors, cardamom, synthetic dyes; coll. Georges Gogol, gifted by the company Sandoz AG in 1972, IIa 5463

The designs on Ainu garments made of elm bark cloth, worn today mainly for certain cultural and ceremonial events, vary according to kin group. The motifs are completely internalized so that according to Ainu understanding it is the heart and not the head that guides the hand when creating them. The dyed cotton cloths used for the appliqués were imported from Japan or from the Western. As they ranked as precious well until into the 20th century, they were used only sparingly.

- 18 Coat *attush*; Hokkaido, Japan; mid-19th c.; elm bark cloth, cotton, indigo; coll. Jaap Langewis, purchased in 1964, IId 6556

The basis for this garment is an “Ainu-ized” Japanese kimono: the shape of the sleeve was adjusted, and the fabric was decorated and embroidered with appliquéd patterns. Cotton strips were added in the shape of the characteristic swirls and spirals. The thorn or spike motif was embroidered directly on to the fabric using a stem stitch; this adds additional depth to the design.

19 Ainu garment *kaparamip* or *ruunpe*; Hokkaido, Japan; 19th c.; cotton, pigments; coll. W. Koller, purchased in 1910, IId 627

The inside of the coat reveals that it is made up of multiple layers of cotton and that it has been mended repeatedly. This type of patched-up fabric is referred to as *boro*. In the 19th and early 20th century, these coats were common in the rural areas of northern Japan. Predominantly scraps of blue fabric were pieced together using an embroidery technique called *sashiko*, a running stitch that passes across the fabric in parallel lines, thus creating a design that visually enhanced the patched-up garment. A practical spin-off: the fabric became thicker, sturdier, and warmer – definitely an advantage in winter.

20 Coat *hanten*; Honshu, Japan; end of 19th / early 20th c.; cotton, indigo; coll. Jaap Langewis, purchased in 1962, IId 6062

During the Mahdi Wars (1881–1899) against British-Egyptian colonial rule, the *jibba* became an emblem of resistance. The Sudanese leader Muhammad Ahmad ordered his followers to wear the *jibba* as a sign of their religious and political allegiance.

While the patches were originally used to repair damaged parts, over time they became signs of military rank. The lower ranks wore garments featuring patches with only two colours, whereas the higher ranks enjoyed the privilege of multiple colours.

21 *jibba*; Sudan; late 19th c.; cotton, wool; coll. Ludwig Keimer, C.L. Burckhardt-Reinhart Foundation, gifted in 1956, III 14658

The Illanun, a community that originally immigrated from the Gulf of Illana in Mindanao (Philippines), today live in Mindanao as well as in Sabah (Malaysia) and the Sulu Archipelago. For many years, they were active sea traders and dreaded as pirates and warriors. Their main trade goods included textiles from India and China. On this jacket, elements from near and afar have been combined into a representative garment for young men: imported blue and red cotton cloth, local ikat fabric, and sequins are a reference to the Illanun’s extended trade network in the past.

22 Young men’s jacket; Illanun, Sabah, Malaysia; before 1943; cotton, sequins; coll. Mattheus Vischer, gifted by Hans E. Moppert in 1980, IIc 18691

Women’s blouses from Sulawesi are made of beaten and black-dyed bark cloth, *fuya*. These items are easier to manufacture than cotton garments. However, they withstand water poorly and have only a short lifespan. While in some regions the production of *fuya* ceased, it is still practised in others. Today, such garments are worn mainly for ceremonial events. Although the blouses are similar in shape and basic material, the various ethnic groups in the region decorated them according to their own aesthetic fancies: the blouse from the Palu Valley includes under the arms two appliqués made of red, industrial cotton and the body section features white painted lines as well as regularly affixed pieces of aluminium foil.

23 Women’s blouse; Kantewo, Palu Valley, central Sulawesi, Indonesia; before 1953; bark cloth, colour, aluminium foil; Paul Schudel, gifted in 1953, IIc 14568

This blouse from the Lake Posso region has somewhat larger red cotton gussets and a collar made of the same material additionally decorated with white and orange-yellow zigzag embroidery and tassels of the same colour.

24 Women's blouse; To Pebato, Labungeo, Poso District, central Sulawesi, Indonesia; before 1895; bark cloth, cotton, colour, string, palm leaf; coll. Paul and Fritz Sarasin, gifted in 1904, IIC 464

The Guna people in Panama and Colombia refer to rectangular pieces of fabric as *mola* (pl. *molagana*). To produce a *mola*, women sew together several pieces of rectangular, coloured cotton, one on top of the other. Then the most important design elements are drawn on the cloth before cutting out the motifs from the top surface, thus revealing the underlying layer. Apart from this technique known as reverse appliqué, the women also apply traditional appliqués by adding cut-to-size motifs from fabric leftovers to the other layers of textile. For the shoulder pieces and sleeves of a *mola* blouse, the women usually use industrially produced and printed cloths.

25 *mola* blouse, Guna, Ustupu, Gunayala, Panama; 1963; cotton; coll. Adolf Richard Herrmann, purchased in 1964, IVb 3858

Today, the *mola* is considered the pivotal material expression of Guna identity. In fact, however, it is a creation of Guna women from the late 19th century when, through missionary contact, new attitudes concerning morality reached these people, for example with regard to covering the upper body. The women transferred their traditional body painting to clothing items, like an additional layer of skin. By 1918, *molagana* had already attained such cultural significance for the Guna that the Panamanian government saw themselves forced to prohibit the wearing of *mola* blouses. The state attempts at assimilation failed in 1925 with the so-called Guna revolution, which finally led to the creation of an autonomous region administered by the Guna themselves in 1938. Since the 1960s, the sale of *molagana* and *mola* blouses to tourists and museums has become one of the main sources of income. This also prompted the use of sewing machines.

26 *mola* blouse, Guna, Ustupu, Gunayala, Panama; 1963; cotton; coll. Adolf Richard Herrmann, purchased in 1964, IVb 3852

The Guna associated *mola* designs and blouses with body creation, human reproduction, beauty and social order. The amniotic sac in which the foetus grows is described by the Guna as the first *mola*; it was created by female beings in the invisible world. At birth, midwives interpret the patterns shown on the inner caul since they are believed to contain information about the child's potential skills and nature. On a different level, the sewing of a *mola* signifies a woman's ideal daily routine and a life of peace and quiet in the surroundings of her family and community.

27 *mola* blouse, Guna, Ustupu, Gunayala, Panama; 1963; cotton; coll. Adolf Richard Herrmann, purchased in 1964, IVb 3870

This men's shawl consisting of three weave strips features in the mid-section seventy small, red rectangles. In addition, twenty-four circles of cowrie shells are appliquéd at regular intervals across the entire spread of the shawl. The cloth, almost one hundred years old, formerly belonged to Toshi Wungtung, an anthropologist and member of the Nagaland parliament who recently passed away. His grandfather had attained the privilege to wear the shawl, owing to his prowess and success as a warrior. After staging feasts of merit together with his wife he received the right to add the cowrie shells, an emblem for persons and families of high status and wealth.

Wraparound / shawl *rehükhim*; Yimchungrü Naga, village of Sangpurr, Tuensang District, Nagaland, India; around 1930; cotton, warp-faced weave, brocaded decorative elements, cowrie shells; gifted by Shri Toshi Wungtung in 2006, IIB 3993

Walk-in workshop – conservation from close up

For each exhibition, the MKB team of conservation specialists take on tasks which the audience barely takes note of. In the exhibition “Fragments”, a walk-in workshop provides a chance to watch them at work.

Preserving – When preparing objects for public display, the first thing that needs doing is to check whether they can be presented as they are or whether any alterations are required. In other words: conservation or restoration? Is there any dirt or harmful rust? When does an object require gluing or sewing, when does it need a supplement? How is an object to be treated in order to avoid further damage? How visible should the intervention be? With regard to all these questions, the focus is always on preserving the object.

Examining – Our understanding of a work is always piecemeal. We examine the surface of an object by naked eye or with help of a microscope. We compare what we get to see with the latest expert knowledge on materials and techniques as well as with what we know about the piece’s history.

Documenting – All objects are subject to ageing and feature traces of usage. Next to that, their present condition may also be influenced by past repairs, restorations, or displays which is why it is mandatory to document the condition of an object in writing as well as in images, namely before and during the intervention. These documentations form the basis of all future interventions.

We make a fabric grow

We invite the audience to jointly work on a growing piece of fabric, relying on inspirations provided by textiles on display in the exhibition. The width of the emergent strip of cloth is 38 centimetres, which corresponds to the width of the strips of a Japanese kimono, which also serves as the basis for Ainu garments as shown in the exhibition.

A start has been made, now the fabric is made to grow piece by piece: add additional colourful pieces of cloth to the emergent strip of fabric with a running stitch. Feel free to decorate the fabric strips with buttons, mirrors, coins, and other add-ons. All the techniques you might require are explained in the film.

At the closing of the exhibition we will make out of the grown fabric little Japanese style bags which will then be raffled off. Your entry ticket is your raffle ticket. Write your name and address on the ticket and place it in the box provided. At the end of the exhibition “Fragments”, we will draw the winners. Who knows, with a little luck one of the bags might be yours.

The power of combination

In many cultures, materials and substances from different sources are combined for the purpose of imbuing things with power. In this way, powerful blends emerge from parts which in themselves are insignificant. Depending on how the pieces are used and according to cultural conceptions, additional practices are then required to activate the object's inherent power.

Basics – Prerequisite for the generation of the power of a pieced-together object is a basic material structure: a garment, a statue, a vessel, a wooden or cardboard support. On or into this foundation further items are inserted or appliquéd, and it is these elements that make the difference and hopefully create the desired outcomes.

Power enhancement – A powerful object is rarely produced in one go. Rather, it grows piece by piece and through the inflow of knowledge, personal experience, spiritual immersion, and on the merit of previous accomplishment. It can happen that such an item is bound to a single individual and only attains completion upon his or her death. Other pieces operate independently, can be alienated, and can (at least theoretically) grow endlessly through the addition of further elements. Every added element enhances the power of the total assemblage.

Activation – A work combined of single pieces often needs activating before it can develop impact. This usually requires the work of an expert capable of handling and channelling the power to be unleashed. By hammering in a nail, filling up a bag of medicines, attaching a metal feather or the like, s/he orchestrates the combinatorial expansion or at least supervises it. Usually this entails ritual acts on or with the object in question.

The term *egungun* describes a “masquerade” and the rituals associated with it. They are performed among Yoruba-speaking groups to this day in honour of the ancestors and to secure their ongoing support.

Each year, the assemblages are amended by precious cloths and appliqués; the design is subject to the highest aesthetic standards; the more varied the materials' origins and arrangement, the more impressive the performance and the more powerful the ancestor whose potency finds expression in the dance movements.

30 *egungun* masquerade; Yoruba, Republic of Benin; before 2001; wood, colour, cotton, wool, velvet, plush, artificial fibres, polyurethane foam, animal skin, cowrie shell, artificial and glass beads, sequins; coll. David Mensah, purchased in 2001, III 27401.01-05

Sakha shamans had the power to cure sickness, they retrieved “lost” souls, supported economic ventures, and were able to foretell the future. For this they relied on the aid of helper spirits believed to be present in the appliqués attached to the shaman's costume, well into the 20th century.

These metal objects transferred their power to the shaman in person as soon as he or she donned the costume. In the course of his career, a shaman added new objects to his garment with each new spirit being called into service. Thus, the number of appliqués correlated with the shaman's power.

31 Shaman's costume; Sakha (Yakutia); Russian Republic of Sakha; before 1913; fur, leather, metal alloy, copper alloy, vegetable fibres; probably coll. Nikolas Wassiljew, an associate at the museum of Emperor Alexander III; acquired by Eugen Alexander; purchased in 1922, VII 597

Hunters' associations are common to all parts of West Africa. Men who belong to such associations hunt and provide food. In addition, they have medical knowledge and access to spiritual powers which lends them respect and high social standing; they also have to adhere to high moral standards: no lying, no stealing, no cheating, protect the community, and respect and support the association.

A hunter's skills, achievements, and impact on society can be gauged from the appliqués on his shirt.

- 32 Hunter's shirt; Senufo, Cote d'Ivoire; before 1965; cotton, colour, leather, animal teeth, other animal and vegetable materials; coll. René David, purchased in 1965, III 16841b

During his initiation in the forest, a hunter learns about the animal and plant world, how it is made up, and what impact it can have. He learns how to extract powerful substances from organic materials and how to use them for healing purposes as well as for harming. He sharpens his sense of orientation, observes the behaviour of his prey, and learns to avoid danger. The more experience a hunter gains, the more his shirt "fills up".

- 33 Hunter's shirt; Senufo, Man, Cote d'Ivoire; before 1933; cotton, leather, fur, feathers, animal skin and bones, claws; coll. Paul Wirz, purchased in 1933, III 8035

In recent decades, hunters' associations have assumed new responsibilities. They have become involved in civil society matters or operate as official border guards for the state. At the same time, many hunters have also become actively involved in political affairs and claim leading roles in government.

- 34 Hunter's shirt; Togo; before 1913; cotton, cowrie shell, gourd, snake skin, feathers, vegetable fibres; coll. August Konietzko, purchased in 1913, III 4094

Colonial conquest and Christian missionization led to a temporary weakening of the hunters' associations across West Africa in the 19th century. As a result, the hunters' shirts became less adorned with amulets, medicine bags, and animal particles. According to the missionary Andreas Bauer, the owner of this shirt was a Christian.

- 35 Hunter's shirt; Asante, Ghana; before 1906; cotton, copper alloy, leather, additional animal and vegetable materials; coll. missionary Andreas Bauer, Basel Mission Collection, gifted in 2015, III 26439

Hunters' shirts differ in terms of make, cut, colour, appliqués, as well as traces of wear. The add-ons display a rich variety: apart from animal trophies such as bones, claws, and horns one also finds skin or fur-covered amulets that contain powerful and protective substances.

- 36 Hunter's shirt; Cameroon; before 1952; cotton, leather, antelope horn, animal skin and bone, metal; Lorenz Eckert, exchange in 1952, III 11965

In Mali, hunters became involved in development projects in the 1990s. At the same time, they were associated with paramilitary activities and described by many as nothing but notorious and feared troublemakers.

Occasionally, hunters' shirts also feature lose cords or knotted threads. These are believed to be encrypted incantations: when in the process of manufacture, the cords or threads are spat on, they absorb and retain the force embodied in the saliva.

- 37 Hunter's shirt; Dogon, Bamako, Mali; before 1973; cotton, sheet metal; coll. Renée Boser-Sarivaxévanis and Bernhard Gardi, purchased in 1974, III 20694

At public gatherings involving hunters' associations – parades, funerals, sacrificial rituals to ward off dangers such as attacks by dangerous animals or snakebites – musicians sing songs of praise accompanied by koras and balafons. These musicians perform exclusively for the hunters. They too wear shirts featuring amulets and signs indicating knowledge of the forest, but they differ in terms of cut and design from those worn by the hunters.

38 Shirt (prob.) for a musician; Bamana, Mali; before 1969; cotton, leopard skin, cowrie shell, leather, bristles, feathers, other animal materials; L. Doumbia, purchased in 1969, III 18076

Whether this fragment – European cloth featuring Arabic characters and leather amulets – really is part of a hunter's shirt, as the missionary Bauer claimed, is not clear. Protective amulets were also applied to other clothing items.

39 Fragment of a hunter's shirt (?); Ghana, before 1909; cotton, ink (?), leather, other animal and vegetable materials; coll. missionary Andreas Bauer, Basel Mission Collection, gifted in 2015, III 26440

Power figures, *minkisi*, served many purposes: they were used to enforce the law, in jurisdiction, when sealing treaties, and in war. They had the ability to enhance wellbeing and fertility, heal sicknesses, protect against accidents, and ward off evil, but also to punish and harm. Depending on the assignment – whether for a ruler, a kin group, or for a specific event – the rituals and persons involved as well as the size and makeup of the figure varied.

The stance and gesture of this figure signal challenge and the potential of aggression.

40 Power figure, *nkisi nkonde*; Yombe, Democratic Republic of the Congo; before 1908; wood, kaolin (?), ochre, metal, resin, animal teeth, mirror; former owner Carl Hoppe, Leopold Rütimeyer, gifted in 1909, III 2807

minkisi were equipped with medicines placed in containers on the belly, shoulders, or back. To become efficacious, the figure had to be activated by a ritual expert, in other words, charged with energies from the realm of the dead and ancestors. Every metal object hammered in was believed to persuade the power figure to perform the task set for it. The *nkisi nkonde* (hunter *nkisi*) with his fist raised indicates aggressiveness as is required when hunting down an offender.

41 Power figure, *nkisi nkonde*, Democratic Republic of the Congo; 19th c.; wood, kaolin (?), resin, metal, glass, textile, plant fibre; coll. Heinrich Umlauff, purchased in 1902, III 1391

When a figure was no longer effective, it was decommissioned. This happened when rules were no longer followed or elements were removed from the figure.

In most of the power figures in Western museums, the “medicines” are missing, that is, they are no longer operable. Why in the case of this figure *all* the components were removed is impossible to say. Were the expensive nails needed elsewhere, possibly for a new figure

42 Power figure, *nkisi nkonde*, Yombe, Democratic Republic of the Congo; before 1912; wood; Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg, exchange in 1912, III 4019

A conspicuous feature of this figure are the loose strips of cloth. Although power figures were commonly adorned with cloths around the neck, head or body to “bind” the sculpture to either a living or a deceased person, loose strips of cloth were quite rare; their movement in the air indicated that the figure was active.

43 Power figure, *nkisi*, Bakongo (?), Democratic Republic of the Congo; before 1909; wood, textile, vegetable fibre, quill, metal, resin mass, colour, glass; former owner H. Salomon, Fritz Sarasin, gifted in 1909, III 3024

The use of imported and therefore expensive materials such as glass, mirrors, and metal for power figures points to the growing importance of trade between the West African coastal regions and Europe from the 18th century onwards. Despite colonization and proselytization, the *minkisi* remained in use well into the 20th century.

44 Power figure, *nkisi*, Katanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo; before 1911; wood, resin, lime, textile, glass, seashell, metal, vegetable fibres; coll. H. Salomon, purchased in 1911, III 3670

Although colonial officers and missionaries tried to put a stop to the power figures, their local significance actually grew with the colonization of the Congo region towards the end of the 19th century. The people relied on them to bolster cohesion and boost resistance. The little wooden sticks stand for the repulsion of negative forces. It is told that even colonial officials occasionally reverted to the use of the powers of *nkisi* figures.

45 Power figure, *nkisi*, Yombe, Democratic Republic of the Congo; before 1909; wood, metal, resin mass, vegetable fibres, other plant materials; former owner H. Salomon, Leopold Rüttimeyer, gifted in 1909, III 3025

The Teke people, too, stood in close contact with their ancestors, relying on power figures as their intermediaries. On these figures, the powerful substances are mixed in with clay or resin and applied to the torso. When applying the concoction, the ritual experts often used things on which deceased people had left their mark. Charging a figure was often done in the context of a ritual in which the figure was sprinkled with fluids so that its body gradually became covered in layers of crust. The thicker the crust, the more often the figure's power had been called upon, thus keeping the "flame of the ancestors" alive.

46 Power figure, *biteki*, Teke, Democratic Republic of the Congo; before 1919; wood, raffia, resin, other vegetable materials, glass beads; Henri Gangloff, purchased in 1919, III 5078

Powerful substances were inserted into openings on the belly or the back of a *biteki* figure, with additional materials applied to the outer surface.

This *biteki* is shown with three small accompanying figures; on the right there are two figurines associated with hunting, on the left, an old man covered in scarification marks and equipped with a knife and a gourd. The small figures are "affixed" to the central figure with the aid of resin – possibly their task was to support the main protagonist.

47 Power figure, *biteki*, Teke, area of Mbé, Democratic Republic of the Congo; before 1931; wood, clay, resin, cowrie shell, feathers, cotton, colour, vegetable materials; coll. Stéphen-Charles Chauvet, purchase in 1931, III 7131

Sakpata is a deity associated with sickness – smallpox in particular – and fertility. To this day, Sakpata is both feared and venerated. When used correctly, the figure is able to ward off or heal sickness. The various containers attached to the figure hold the substances required for the pertinent procedure. The cowrie shells mark the spots where the smallpox left visible traces on the patient. Rituals and sacrifices offer protection against this deadly disease; in addition, patients are also immunized – for example through scarification – or isolated.

48 Figure Sakpata; acquired in Togo, originally from Benin; before 1980; wood, textile, cowrie shell, animal bones, glass; Marianna Fiechter-Bischof, gifted in 1983, III 23539

Among the Fang people, bone fragments of deceased relatives were cherished for the purpose of ancestor worship. Such *byeri* vessels were usually kept in a dark corner at the back of the house, and only taken to the forest for certain rituals. There, the fragments were retrieved, washed, adorned, and fed with the blood of a sacrificial animal, meat, manioc, bananas, and water. In this way, the living requested the support of the ancestors in connection with, for example, building a house, hunting, harvesting, travelling, or when going to war.

49 Reliquary, *byeri*; Fang, Gabun; before 1909; wood, textile, cowrie shell, glass beads, copper alloy; coll. Charles Hermann, purchased in 1909, III 2829

Every Fang reliquary came with a guardian figure; if the two were separated, the *byeri* lost its life-giving force. Proselytization with its negative attitude towards local religious practices changed the tradition of ancestor worship. When owning a reliquary became an issue, the Fang abandoned their *byeri* rituals. In place, the ancestors were venerated through songs, dances, music, and speeches – but without the reliquaries.

50 Reliquary *byeri*; Gabon; 19th c.; bark, wood, bone, nails, feathers, snake skin, bast fibre, red powder; coll. Charles Hermann, gifted in 1905, III 2007

The set was consigned to the museum without a frame. The bone fragments are ascribed to saints whose names are written on red strips of paper. The names are believed to embody the saints' spiritual powers. The purpose of the assemblage was to protect a farmstead – especially “contra daemones et tempestates” – that is, against demons and storms, as the inscription above the wax reads.

51 House blessing; area of Rankweil, Vorarlberg, Austria; Agnus Dei 15th c., ensemble 17th c.; bone pieces, wax, linen, brocade, silk, lace, braid, purl, paper, metal; Emanuel Grossmann, purchased in 1958, VI 23927a

The power of relics can be additionally enhanced by the power of symbols, for example, the Cross as the key token of Christianity. The value of every relic is based on the belief in Christ's death on the Cross and his resurrection. The saints were redeemed by this sacrifice just as is the believer standing in front of a cross. Thus, he or she will feel reminded of being part of the Christian community.

52 Crucifix with relics; Switzerland; 19. c.; wood, glass, bone, paper, textile, wax; Jakob Lörch, purchased in 1911, VI 4679

53 Relic cross; Switzerland, around 1920; paper, textile, gold thread; Eugen Zschokke, gifted in 1927, VI 10442

The small capsules of wood, metal, and cloth hold Christian relic particles, often labelled with a strip of paper. Usually these do not involve actual bodily fragments but with pieces of cloth or other materials that are believed to have been in direct contact with the corpse of a saint. They, too, are considered to have redeeming powers. A relic capsule may well combine the thaumaturgical powers of different saints to ensure the greatest possible protection, for instance, while travelling – the more, the better.

54 Lathe-turned reliquaries; Lucerne, Switzerland; 19th c.; wood, paper, gypsum, textile; Jakob Lörch, purchased 1910, VI 4261 and VI 4262

55 Lathe-turned reliquary; Bernese Jura, Switzerland; 19th c.; wood, paper, gypsum, textile; E. Röthlisberger, purchased in 1943, VI 16958

56 Reliquary pendant; Zug, Switzerland; 18th c.; brass, gold and silver thread, paper, textile; Jakob Lörch, purchased in 1913, VI 5586

- 57 Reliquary pendant; Zug, Switzerland; 18th c.; brass, wax, paper, textile; Jakob Lörch, purchased in 1922, VI 9603
- 58 Relic medallion; Switzerland; 18th c.; paperboard, paper, gold thread; Ernst Alfred Stüchelberg, gifted in 1909, VI 3339
- 59 Pear formed relic; Bregenzerwald, Vorarlberg, Austria; 18th c.; velvet, cardboard, paper, gold thread; Hubert Bühler, purchased in 1958, VI 24195

At the centre of the picture is a wax medallion, an “Agnus Dei” made of the wax of a Paschal candle, featuring a relief of the Lamb of God, and blessed by the pope himself. Its protective power is supplemented by small relic pouches which are barely recognizable between the colourful glass beads. A relic need not be visible to be powerful.

- 60 Agnus Dei in frame; Switzerland (?), wax medallion 1892, casing around 1900; wood, glass, textile, wax, gold and silver thread, glass stones and beads, sequins; Werner Jaggi, purchased in 1980, VI 52419

The focus of this picture is on the power of Christ’s stigmata. The watercoloured paper cut-out features the almond-shaped wound in a halo, above are the instruments of torture. An inscription band runs precisely across the length of the wound and reads “La Mesure de la Ste Playe de J.C.” (The measurements of the Sacred Wounds of Jesus Christ). The measures of Christ’s wounds, along with other parts of His body, are considered equally thaumaturgical as are relics. Further relic particles are located in the decoratively rolled paper twists.

- 61 Paper twist work with relics and silhouette; Savoy, France; around 1850; wood, glass, paper, textile; Mrs Stoecklin (antique dealer); purchased in 1962, VI 28083

The original, medieval painting of the Mother of God with Baby Jesus is revered in the Italian town of Genazzano, east of Rome. It is believed to be miraculous and is one of the most copied images of grace in Europe; not few of them are held in chapels in Schwyz. Copies of miraculous images of grace are also believed to have innate power, especially copies that were painted on site and touched to the original. As in the case of contact relics, the power of one substance is thought to pass over into the other.

- 62 Image of grace S. Maria del buon Consiglio; Schwyz, Switzerland; 18th c.; wood, textile, gauze, paper, metal foil, beads, glass base, bone fragments, stone, coloured print; Alois Blättler; purchased in 1953, VI 19861

The box image served as a record of a private pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1860. On it we see a crucifix made of palmwood from the Garden of Gethsemane, a stone from the Mount of Olives, small twigs and relic particles from sacred sites such as the Holy House of Nazareth and the Temple of Solomon, all combined into a set arrangement. Below, positioned like an altar, there is a print which bears, in abbreviated form and mirror inversed, the inscription “Nazarenus Rex Jude”. If small natural objects such as stones or twigs from Jerusalem can serve as a source of veneration, it suggests that there is an infinite supply of relics.

- 63 Jerusalem memento; Menzingen, Switzerland; around 1860; wood, glass, paperboard, paper, textile, metal foil, mother-of-pearl, gold, glass base, plastic tubes, silver thread; Jakob Lörch, purchased in 1912, VI 5416

The setting, that is, arranging, decorating, and framing single relics or groups of relics, was often done in nunneries which is why the works are commonly referred to as “convent works”. The meticulous work took time and concentration and was often practiced as a

form of meditative immersion. At the same time, the sale of the works provided an additional source of income for the nuns.

Convent work in this form is quite rare. The small pouches are described as relics of the saints Severin, Donatus, and Felix, along with an Agnus Dei.

64 Convent work with relics; Vienna, Austria; mid-18th c.; wood, glass, silk, metal threads, sequins, tinfoil sheet, glass stones, glass beads; Gabriele Folk-Stoi, purchased in 1965, VI 31754

The objects gathered in the basket included assorted paraphernalia through which Ngaju people were able to establish contact with supernatural beings and ask them for support with regard to any task or problem at hand, including a rich harvest, speedy wealth, protection against sickness and conflicts, as well as warding off negative forces. For help to come, the basket had to be suspended from a ceiling as a sign of a vow. After help had been provided, a food offering had to be made. The power of the individual elements taken together promised encompassing well-being.

65 Basket *salang uei* with 52 paraphernalia *karohei*; Ngaju; Kuala Kapuas, central Kalimantan, Indonesia; before 1934; rattan, ceramics, wood, animal teeth, animal skull, textile, stone, metal; coll. Mattheus Vischer, gifted in 1934, IIC 3088

The value of repair

Material things are fragile and impermanent. Besides unlucky accidents, it is largely the ravages of time that bring about their ruination. Repair practices can help delay that process. Results are determined by preservation strategies and the materials and tools used. Attracting growing attention and new members, pressure groups are making a stand against society's throw-away mentality and the concept of planned obsolescence.

Care – A repair represents an active effort to mend a broken item. Rather than just throw it away, a repairer chooses to make the item functional again. Decisive factors might include economic necessity, sustainability considerations, emotional attachment, or even a politically or philosophically motivated sense of care.

Skills – Vessels made of metal, gourd, wood, ceramics, stone or plastic require different repair techniques that depend on the skills, knowledge, and ideas of repairers. They invest time, energy, and, very often, extra materials so that an item that used to be broken is given a new lease of life.

A piece of an object's history – Some of these items were repaired by their previous owners or by specialists; in other cases, it was museum staff who made the repairs. Only since the business of conservation was professionalized in the second half of the 20th century have noticeable differences become apparent between items restored by craftspeople and those repaired by professional conservators. Until the 1990s, therefore, it was often impossible to determine when an item had been treated. What is certain is that each intervention and repair produces a material change in an object that also becomes part of its history.

“Lestu mich auf einen stein springen, so werden meine scherben klingen. Anno 1734” (If you make me jump on a stone, my shards will make a tone. Anno 1734).

With this inscription, the jug issues a warning regarding its own fragmentation.

66 Jug; Alsace or southwestern Germany; 1734; earthenware, glaze; Josef Anton Häfliger, gifted in 1933, VI 11481

Black traces inside this pot show it once held lots of tea. This pottery item broke into several pieces at some point. Wire (iron alloy) was used to fasten them together again. To insert the wire, holes had to be bored through the wall of the teapot. Some of the glazing has been chipped off its lid.

67 Pot; Switzerland; 19th c.; faience, glaze, metal; Jakob Lörch, purchased in 1910, VI 3412

The collector assumed this receptacle was used to store a foodstuff such as manioc flour that goes into the starchy dough called *fufu*, a staple in West and Central Africa. Such narrow-necked vessels were also used to store water or oil, however. The defects suggest this item was reconstructed in the museum, as with them it could not have fulfilled its original function.

68 Jug; Nigeria; before 1911; ceramic, glue; coll. Ernst Barth, gifted in 1911, III 3833

Households today contain plastic items that are used for any number of functions. They are usually inexpensive and sturdy, but even they sometimes get damaged. It is now possible to repair plastic items to prevent them ending up in the refuse. Fusible bioplastic is now available in small amounts for use in the home. Contact with hot water makes it soft and mouldable. In that state it can be used to repair breaks, handles and knobs can be stuck on again or – as with this jug – shaped anew. Plastic vessels repaired in this way challenge the throwaway culture of contemporary society.

69 Jug; Switzerland; 2021; plastic, bioplastic; Florence Roth and Andreas Winter, gifted in 2022, VI 72219.01+02

Earthenware vessels can readily be used to store water. Being porous and breathable, they cool the contents and keep them fresh. This water bottle was the model for the *kulleh* or *kula* unit of volume that was widely used in North Africa to measure oil and other liquids. The circumstances that led to the water bottle being broken are unknown. What is known is that it was repaired in the museum: it was repaired with glue, missing sections were filled with putty, and the existing decorative pattern completed. The interventions that preserved the object remain visible.

70 Water bottle *kulleh*; Cairo, Egypt; before 1873; ceramic, glue, gypsum additions; coll. Fritz Zahn-Geigy and Karl Zahn-Burckhardt, gifted in 1873, III 103

It is astonishing that the original form of this clay pot could be restored given that less than half of the original material is extant. These six fragments were assembled in the museum. This jar comes from the mountainous Tassili n’Ajjer area in the Sahara, known for its rock art that is up to 10,000 years old. According to the collector, its fragments were found on the surface, but they are assumed to be Neolithic in origin.

71 Pot; Algeria; ceramic, glue; coll. Maximilien Bruggmann, purchased in 1963, III 16222

Copper cauldrons and kettles were used in many Swiss homes into the 20th century. They were either hung on a hook over a fire or sat directly in the fire or on a stove. Holes developed on the underside, in their walls or along their rim. They would usually be repaired by itinerant craftsmen who would fashion a rectangular piece of copper sheet, place it on the repair area, and attach it on either side by means of rivets, and sometimes in addition welded the repair piece on.

72 Copper cauldron; central Switzerland; ca 1900; copper, tin; Hans Peter Weber, gifted in 1993, VI 66278

Bread dough was mixed and baked in this copper basin. Live coals were placed on its lid, and the metal conducted the heat inside. Following damage, the edges were notched, tucked in, and soldered inside and out with a tin alloy – the solder stands out clearly.

73 Basin for making bread; Jakarta, Java, Indonesia; before 1898; copper, tin solder; coll. Paul and Fritz Sarasin, gifted in 1898, IIc 23

Repairs conceal the holes in this cauldron. A tinker would usually tin-plate such items after a repair, as happened with this utensil that afterwards was ready for use again. This type of work was widespread well into the 20th century. Cauldrons like this remind us of the repair habits of the past.

74 Cauldron; Basel, Switzerland; around 1900; copper, tin; Emma Sophie Von der Mühl-Kern, gifted from bequest in 1939, VI 15498

It is not known when this bowl was broken; its index card merely states, “Was broken and repaired again”. A lot of material was lost along the breaks, which explains why the fragments do not make a neat fit.

75 Bowl; Bedja; Nubian Desert, Egypt/Sudan; before 1956; ceramic, glue; coll. Ludwig Keimer, Stiftung C.L. Burckhardt-Reinhart, gifted in 1954, III 14527

Felix Speiser collected in excess of 3,000 items on Vanuata, including many earthenware jars; some of them are broken. On their index cards, Speiser made drawings of them with great care and detail as they had appeared intact but made no mention of any repairs. Did they break only after reaching the museum? Some fragments even went missing.

Speiser saw this bowl being used as cooking utensil, though it was never placed on a fire directly. To heat liquids, heated stones were placed inside the bowl.

76 Bowl; Pespia, Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu; before 1912; clay, glue; coll. Felix Speiser, purchased in 1910-1912, Vb 4715

At the table, food was served to a family straight from a bowl such as this one. Clearly it was badly damaged at some point: the whole of its bottom fell out. Repairers mended it by first drilling holes in it and then drawing a wire through that was twisted on the outside to secure it. It is probable the repair was made shortly after the bowl was damaged because hardly any material is missing from the edges of the breaks; the pieces still fit together exactly.

77 Bowl; Rotenhof, Küsnacht am Rigi, Schwyz, Switzerland; 19th c.; earthenware, glaze; Jakob Lörch, purchased in 1910, VI 4321

This bowl is inscribed: “Health and peace are two fine gifts from God x 1829 x”. Was it perhaps used on Sundays and holidays to remind its users of their good fortune and to

express thanks for it? It was in pieces once, but someone put it back together again using wire staples. In one spot, a break runs through a hole made by boring through the wall. This damage probably occurred during the repair – ironically, this repair caused another fracture that in turn required further measures. The large gaps between the fragments tell us, however, that the bowl was no longer suitable for everyday use; it was probably mended with the art or antiques market in mind.

78 Bowl; Langnau, Emmental, Bern, Switzerland; 1829; earthenware, glaze, wire staples; coll. Jakob Wiedmer-Stern, purchased in 1906, VI 1442

This item might have served as a soup plate. Its two broken halves have been glued together again. Along the break and the edge of the plate, parts of the glazing have been chipped off.

79 Bowl; Langnau, Emmental, Switzerland; 1823; earthenware, glaze, glue; coll. Jakob Wiedmer-Stern, purchased in 1906, VI 1441

The hole in this stone bowl was covered with a piece of metal and both were fixed by means of a rivet. The combination of stone and metal unites two robust materials to lend this bowl particular charm.

80 Stone bowl; Tuareg; Abardak oasis, Air-Bergland, Niger; before 1970; stone, brass; coll. René Gardi, on permanent loan from FMB since 1970, III 18013

As part of a Japanese tea ceremony, guests are expected to examine the implements used in expert and appreciative fashion. A *kintsugi* repair underscores the special character of a tea bowl that is to attract a guest's attention and admiration.

Basel's Gewerbemuseum purchased this tea bowl in 1935 from a German–Jewish antiques dealer called Felix Tikotin. During World War II, he and his family had to go into hiding. After 1945, Felix Tikotin was able to resume his career as a dealer in Asiatica.

81 Tea bowl *chawan*; Japan; 17th/18th c.; ceramic, glaze, Urushi lacquer with gold pigments; collection of Gewerbemuseum Basel; purchased from Felix Tikotin in 1935, IId 10766

In Japan, *kintsugi*-style repairs use gold in the repair of earthenware, porcelain, and occasionally also bamboo items. Lacquer with admixed gold is used to cement broken fragments together and as filler where material is missing. Powdered gold, silver or platinum is sprinkled into the resin to highlight breaks rather than conceal them. A pigmented repair not only enhances the look of a broken item, but also allows expression of an aesthetic principle that accentuates the value of the imperfect and ephemeral.

82 Tea bowl *chawan*; Japan; 17th c.; clay, glaze, Urushi lacquer with powdered gold; coll. Gewerbemuseum Basel, purchased from A. Sautier in 1935, IId 10769

Unlike pottery vessels, those made from the shell of a gourd are lightweight – but just as fragile. When cracks in them are repaired, seams not only indicate how much items are appreciated, they also add aesthetic patterns to them.

In Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, the wives of carvers specialize in repairing bottle gourds, and offer their services at markets. In the case of this gourd bowl, an awl was used to bore small holes on either side of its cracks. A bead of bast-like fibre was next applied to the cracks to seal them, and sewn in place with a tough and flexible plant fibre. The resultant “scar” ensures the lines of the cracks remain visible.

83 Gourd bowl; Bamako, Mali; before 1987; bottle gourd, plant fibres; coll. Bernhard Gardi, purchased in 1987, III 24800

Gourds are grown in tropical and subtropical regions. To make containers from them, their flesh is scraped out and their shells are air-dried. When dried, they form rigid containers that are suitable for storing and transporting liquids such as water, milk and beer. Cracks in this gourd were carefully repaired using palm-leaf fibres and twine. Another crack developed in the shell on its journey from the Nubian Desert to Basel. To give it a second chance as a museum piece, the cracks were glued.

84 Gourd bowl; Bedja; Nubian Desert, Egypt/Sudan; before 1954; bottle gourd, plant fibres, cloth; coll. Ludwig Keimer, Stiftung C.L. Burckhardt-Reinhart, gifted in 1954, III 13136

Before damaged items came to be discarded as a matter of course in the 20th century, paid work repairing them was available in many places. The cracks in this much-used gourd bowl were repaired with strips of leather. Mending techniques do not just extend the life of items; they also reveal technical skills and the transmission of traditional knowledge.

85 Gourd bowl; Bedja; Nubian Desert, Egypt/Sudan; before 1954; gourd, leather; coll. Ludwig Keimer, Stiftung C.L. Burckhardt-Reinhart, gifted in 1954, III 13137

These creaming bowls were each lathe-turned from a single block of wood. Fresh milk was left to stand in these round, shallow bowls to allow the cream to be skimmed off the top after a few hours.

Cracks in the bowls were repaired using various techniques. Small cracks were stabilized with staples. If the rim began to fray, holes were burned around it to allow a metal piece to be fixed to it.

86 Creaming bowl *Gebse*; Toggenburg, St. Gallen, Switzerland; around 1900; wood, metal, paint; Emanuel Grossmann, 2009, VI 70518.02+05

Multi-purpose wooden bowls like this one are used by the Shipio-Conibo people when preparing and serving meals. Several techniques were employed in the repair of this wooden bowl. One break was stabilized with two metal staples; a piece of tin was also used to stabilize the rim of the bowl where a section had been broken off. The tin piece worked itself loose eventually, and now only the remaining nails hold its remains in place. Maybe one of the nails made the cracks worse.

87 Wooden bowl; Shipibo-Conibo; Bethel Mission Station, Ucayali, Peru; before 1968; wood, metal; coll. Gerhard Baer, purchased in 1968/69, IVc 14530

The previous owners probably used this wooden bowl for mixing dough. The knots in the bowl contributed to the development of splits and holes. In one spot, a wide split was covered over with a longish piece of metal, but the repair has proved to be ephemeral: the supposedly more robust material has corroded and largely become detached.

88 Wooden bowl; Duboševica/Vardarac, Osijek-Baranja, Croatia; ca 1900; wood, metal; collection of Eteka Liptak, purchased in 1984, VI 59420

This wooden spoon was used for cooking and eating. Six short S-shaped braces have been inserted to stabilize the split in it. Such a careful repair might be an indication of how much this spoon was appreciated – especially since wood is a rare commodity in the Sahara and Sahel.

89 Wooden spoon *assilcao*; Tuareg; Timbuktu, Gundam, Mali; before 1946; wood, metal; coll. Jean Gabus, purchased in 1946, III 9388

This decoratively notched wooden bowl was used for food. The piece that broke off along its rim has been reattached on the inside by means of two staples that on the outside have been twisted around each other. Gleaming nails highlight the line of the crack.

90 Wooden bowl; Ennedi, Chad; before 1957; wood, tin; coll. Peter Fuchs, purchased in 1957, III 14790

The striking size of this bowl points to its use in formal and informal community events. During feasts, items of food such as pork, opossum or vegetables would be served from it.

The cracks in it have been stabilized with metal pins and then sealed with a black paste that might have been obtained from the soft kernel of the Parinari nut. A coating of Parinari nut paste makes defects watertight. It is not known who did these repairs.

91 Wooden bowl; Manus, Papua New Guinea; before 1919; wood, metal; J. Weber, purchased in 1919, Vb 4976

Left do decay

When things have served their purpose, they are sometimes left to decay: they are disposed of, abandoned in a forest, thrown into a river, or simply exposed to the elements. These practices are often encountered in connection with death and dying. In many cultures, the end of life triggers strong emotions, spells danger for the bereaved, and demands a realignment of social relationships. In many instances, elaborate rituals are used to commemorate the deceased, to cope with loss, and to secure the future of those affected.

Empty shells – In museums one often encounters things that relate to death in its material dimension. These can be objects that were closely associated with specific individuals and for that reason displayed after death, or even treated with considerable aggression. When over, they are regarded as mere matter – as “empty shells” – not worthy of keeping.

Commemoration – To escort the deceased safely to the beyond, to commemorate their deeds in life, and to secure their assistance in the future, those left behind need to follow certain rules and perform certain actions. This may include erecting a monument or a building, a stela or a statue. Such commemorative works are usually placed outdoors and left to slowly weather away.

Inheritance – The discarding of objects may be related to inheritance and the passing on of privileges. When such items have served their cause, for example as temporary witnesses to a series of rituals, they are eliminated from the cycle of emergence, transfer, and passing, and left to disintegrate.

The term *malagan* not only refers to specific carvings but also to the elaborate and time-consuming rituals performed in connection with them to commemorate a deceased member of the community. During such occasions, the works are considered animated. At the height of the ceremony, the friezes are displayed publicly to be marvelled at and admired. Immediately after the display, they are discarded and left to decay. When the demand for such works of art increased, the respective communities in New Ireland began selling them off straight to collectors and art dealers.

92 *malagan* frieze; Beilifu, New Ireland, Papua New Guinea; before 1931; wood (*Alstonia scholaris*), pigments, snail shell; coll. Alfred Bühler, purchased in 1932, Vb 10578

The doorboards, which were consigned to decay, represented an important feature of local Kanak architecture. In the house of a chief, the council of elders decided on important issues such as war, alliances, or conflict resolution. The entrance to such a house was flanked on both sides by richly decorated doorboards there to protect the house. They represented guardians of clan and mediated between the spirits of the dead and the actions of the living.

The mortuary rituals for a high-ranking Kanak included a spectacular ceremony in which the maternal uncles expressed their grief over the death of their nephew by taking an axe to the doorboards and disfiguring the depicted face and body.

93 Doorboard; Kanak, Hienghiene, New Caledonia; before 1912; wood, colour; coll. Fritz Sarasin, gifted in 1913, Vb 2629

Kanak society began to change after 1853 with progressing colonization; it came with the exploitation of local resources, the use of the island as a penal colony, the introduction of foreign diseases, and a drastic decline in local population. Christian proselytization began in 1840 and affected Kanak religious practice markedly, not least their mortuary practices and mourning rituals. As a result, narrower doorboards were occasionally converted into coffins that looked like decorated chests. This violated face features a mouth framed by teeth with a severed tongue.

94 Doorboard; Canala, New Caledonia; before 1912; wood, colour; coll. Fritz Sarasin, gifted in 1913, Vb 2637

Smaller houses were furnished with narrow doorboards. Up to the mid-19th century, the expression of grief was not only focussed on these boards that represented the ancestors; the deceased's coconut palms, gardens, and personal belongings were also subject to aggression.

95 Doorboard; Nakéty near Canala, New Caledonia; before 1912; wood, colour; coll. Fritz Sarasin, gifted in 1913, Vb 2622

Members of the Konso people erected stelae called *waka* for respected community elders. Even after death, they remained responsible for the wellbeing and fertility of their group. The stelae stood for key values such as intelligence, valour, bravery, fearlessness, and prowess. They served young men as an inspiration and example. This male figure is badly weathered. Despite the signs of decay, there is a hint of a bristling head of hair or a headdress that shows this ancestor to be a hero.

96 Stela *waka*; Ethiopia; before 1977; wood; coll. Francis Bourgogne, purchased in 1977, III 21326

A *waka* is publicly erected in the context of an elaborate funeral ceremony accompanied by songs praising the deceased's deeds and merits in life. It is this act that transforms a deceased into an ancestor. *waka* are erected along roads, at crossings, in public spaces as well as on fields and in groves to mark the location of graves. Over time, the figures begin to lose their features and contours. After three to four generations, not only has the wood disintegrated, so has the collective memory.

97 Stela *waka*; Ethiopia; before 1977; wood; coll. by Francis Bourgogne, purchased in 1977, III 21324

These statues were part of a feast cycle during which privileges were passed down. For this the people relied on cross-generational and trans-ethnic ritual partnerships. Ritual partners supported each other and took on ritual tasks at each other's ritual events. But in this case, the master of ceremonies didn't follow the rules: instead of consigning the statues to the forest at the end of the feast cycle or throwing them into a river, he kept them for himself. When he was criticized by his neighbours for doing so, he passed the statues on to the collector Jürg Gasché.

98 Male statue *foonhunraaga*; Ivo'tsa (Ocaina), Murui (Witoto); La Chorrera, Colombia; ca 1963; wood (*apijona*), pigments; coll. Jürg Gasché, permanent loan in the 1970s, purchased in 2017, IVc 26752

Ritual privileges were transferred in the course of a series of ceremonies: at the first feast, the figures were carved and dressed; at the second feast they were stripped again, painted, and celebrated in song. In the course of the event, a father passed on his name and his rights to the cycle to his son. During the first two ceremonies, the figures represented the sons and daughters of the creator being. The master of ceremonies, acting on behalf of this creator being, cared for the statues as for his own children in order to ensure the family's continuity. After the third feast, it was the task of the ritual partner to throw the statues in a river or to take them to the forest to wither away.

99 Male statue *foonhunraaga*; Ivo'tsa (Ocaina), Murui (Witoto); La Chorrera, Colombia; ca 1963; wood (*apijona*), pigments; coll. Jürg Gasché, permanent loan in the 1970s, purchased in 2017, IVc 26753

foonhun is the name of a spirit being that is said to depart from the body at death. Certain things believed to embody the spirit being are left to decay as soon as they are no longer required to function.

foonhunraaga statues passed through a life cycle that was tied to a series of festivals. They were created and participated in social, economic, and religious relationships through a series of ritual acts and craft activities. Had they been consigned to the forest or dumped in a river, their bodies would have disintegrated, setting free the creator being's children to enter a new cycle.

100 Female statue *foonhunraaga*; Ivo'tsa (Ocaina), Murui (Witoto); La Chorrera, Colombia; ca 1963; wood (*apijona*), pigments; coll. Jürg Gasché, permanent loan in the 1970s, purchased in 2017, IVc 26754

In many Indonesian societies, the fate of the people living in this world depends on the well-being of the deceased in the netherworld. Accordingly, mortuary feasts can be quite elaborate. In Kalimantan, an important element in these events are commemorative figures. They often bear characteristic features of the person being honoured and indicate their original social status in life. This seated figure is typical for the Bahau people living on the Mahakam River and neighbouring groups. After the feast, these figures remained placed in front of the families' living quarters to protect them, while gradually weathering away.

101 Commemorative figure; Lawangan; central Kalimantan, Indonesia; before 1987; wood, paint residues; previous owner Anne Morley, Freiwilliger Museumsverein Basel, permanent loan 1987, IIc 20273

This mortuary figure of the Ngaju, or Ot Danum, from southern central Kalimantan was created for a major mortuary feast, *tiwah*. Crucial elements of the feast include reburying the bones, accompanying the souls of the deceased to the beyond, along with purifying and guiding the bereaved back to normal life. The purpose of these impressive statues was to commemorate and honour the deceased through display. In turn, the deceased protected the descendants and provided for their welfare.

102 Commemorative figure *kapatong* or *tempatong*; Ngaju or Ot Danum; central Kalimantan, Indonesia; before 1982; wood, paint residues; Galerie Porchez Paris, purchased in 1982, IIC 19865

This female figure once topped a sacrificial post. Among other things, the posts were used to tether the water buffalo, which were sacrificed in the context of a *tiwah* mortuary feast. At the end of the 33-day festival, the sacrificial posts and other structures erected for the purpose were taken to a designated area in the village. Facing the river or the rising sun, they remained there for many decades before gradually losing their defining features in a slow process of weathering away and decay.

103 Part of a sacrificial post *sapundu*; Ngaju; Kuala Kapuas, central Kalimantan, Indonesia; before 1935; ironwood; coll. Mattheus Vischer, on permanent loan from the Basel Mission Collection since 1981, gifted in 2015, IIC 22048

In the past, people of non-aristocratic descent in the Minahasa region of Sulawesi were buried in simple wooden coffins: a segment of a hollowed-out tree trunk was set upright and half embedded in the ground, the deceased person placed inside in a seated position, and the top covered with a stone. How and for what purpose the collectors acquired the coffin remains unanswered. Were they trying to salvage the perishable material from decay or were they aiming to document a burial practice?

104 Hollow tree coffin; Sonder district, Minahasa region, north Sulawesi, Indonesia; before 1894; wood, traces of painting; coll. Fritz and Paul Sarasin in 1894, gifted in 1904, IIC 333a

105 **Certain Fragments**

Heinz Gubler

Video installation; 3:12 min

© Heinz Gubler

Fractured

Fragments result from practices of division. Museums, art dealers, as well as private collectors were and still are involved in such processes: things are cut up, sawed apart, severed, and dismembered, and not infrequently reassembled into something new. This is particularly evident in the case of figurative representations, for instance, when certain body parts or sexual organs are missing or when relief panels, pediments, or gable figures have been removed from a building. In many cases, such pieces were constituent parts of a (domestic) environment and represented specific social, cultural, and religious concepts. We only have the fracture lines to go by to imagine which connections have been lost or destroyed, and what has been maintained.

Constitution – Fractures can be angular, pointed, split, rounded, but also come in the shape of smooth surfaces or insertion holes – in other words, any structural component that holds clues as to the original extension of an object. They are witnesses to past practices of division. Fractures were often concealed with the aid of glue, putty, or pedestals. Often, it's a thin line between preservation, damage, repair, and presentation.

Heads and bodies – The MKB collections hold numerous headless bodies and damaged figures. While in some cases, acts of violence are clearly evident, in others the fracture

lines point to normal ageing, natural fragmentation, or wear. Empty spaces raise questions as to what is missing.

Architecture – Carvings, reliefs, or painted surfaces tell of how people creatively designed their built environment. Whether ancestral representations, religious motifs or mythological figures: in order for them to become museum objects, they first had to be made “collectible”. Architectural elements were actively dismantled, severed, sawn off or gathered from building ruins before they could enter the “market of things”.

From today’s perspective, the intentions behind earlier practices of division are often not easy to comprehend, and usually not reconstructable. Whether religious motives, collecting frenzy, or mere coincidence played a part, whether the fragmentation was done intentionally or unwittingly, remains open in many cases.

According to pre-Hispanic conceptions, the head was the seat of an individual’s identity. In keeping with the principle of *pars pro toto*, the head represented not only the body as a whole but also the depicted person in total which is why special attention was given to the way heads were designed. Identities were expressed through attributes such as hairstyle and adornment as well as the rendering of eyes, mouth, nose, and ears. Depending on the cultural background, the full figures expressed ideas concerning the human body or represented individual personalities, ancestors, or deities. Among the Aztecs, such figurines were an expression of popular belief and were created for domestic healing and fertility rituals.

- 106-108 Head of a jaguar warrior; Aztec; central Mexico; 1350-1521; clay;
Two heads of deities; Aztec; central Mexico; 1350-1521; clay;
all Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 708, IVb 871, IVb 1027
- 109-112 Head; Teotihuacan; Azcapotzalco, Mexico; 600-900; clay;
Two heads; Chichimec; central Mexico; 600-900; clay;
Head; Aztec; central Mexico; 1350-1520; clay;
all coll. Aline Kugler-Werdenberg, gifted in 1948, IVb 1748, IVb 1746, IVb 1749, IVb 1750
- 113-114 Two heads; Teotihuacan, central Mexico; 600-900; clay; coll. Mario Uzielli, purchased in 1947,
IVb 1722, IVb 1727
- 115 Head; Teotihuacan, central Mexico; 600-900; clay; coll. W. Münsterberger, gifted in 1946, IVb 1703
- 116-120 Two heads; Tlatilco, central Mexico; 1300-800 BC; clay;
Head; Azcapotzalco, Mexico; 200 BC-650 AD; clay;
Two heads; Teotihuacan, central Mexico; 250-800; clay;
all coll. Hans Annaheim, purchased in 1949 from coll. Feuchtwanger, IVb 2298, IVb 2299, IVb 2300,
IVb 2301, IVb 2302
- 121 Head; Teotihuacan; central Mexico; 600-900; clay; coll. Gotthelf Kuhn, bequest in 1975, IVb 4599

On the one hand, you have, regarding figurines resting in the ground, the process of natural fragmentation caused by ongoing pressure and friction or by material fatigue with regard to the fragile extremities. On the other hand, many finds indicate the wilful fragmentation of figurines as well as of larger sculptures. Known, for example, is the ritual beheading of figurines in connection with domestic rituals, the desecration of buildings, or the New Fire ceremonies. For this ceremony, all domestic fires were extinguished and household utensils along with depictions of “idols” were destroyed. On the first day of the new year, the fires were relit and the household items replaced in a solemn renewal ceremony.

- 122 Head; Zapotec; Oaxaca, Mexico; 600-900; clay; coll. Antonie Staehelin-Schaarwächter, gifted in 1950, IVb 1902
- 123-126 Head; central Mexico; 1200-200 BC; clay;
Head; Mexico; undated; clay;
Head; Gulf coast, Mexico; 300-900; clay;
Head; Maya; Mexico; 600-900; clay;
all Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 1053, IVb 425, IVb 399, IVb 420
- 127-128 Two heads; Huasteca, Mexico; 300 BC-200 AD; clay; coll. Ernst A. Ritter, bequest in 1968, IVb 4206, IVb 4208
- 129-131 Three heads; Mexico; 700 BC-100 AD; clay, colour pigments; all coll. Locher, purchased in 1971, IVb 4395, IVb 4396, IVb 4397
- 132-133 Head; Mexico; 600-900; clay, colour;
Head; Gulf coast; Mexico; clay;
all coll. Ernst and Annemarie Vischer-Wadler, bequest in 1996, IVb 5436, IVb 5437

Many terracotta heads arrived at the museum without any clues concerning the find context which made further interpretation difficult or even impossible. The lacking context and the advanced abrasion of the fracture lines prevented establishing which fragmentations were natural and which were intended. If, on top of that, the hairdos and adornments are no longer visible, ascribing a figure to a specific culture becomes difficult. This is also the case with simple fakes, which have been produced with the help of original models since the 19th century.

- 134-137 Head; Gulf coast, Mexico; 600-900; clay; partial colouring;
Three heads; Mexico; undated; clay;
all coll. Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 421, IVb 419, IVb 1129, IVb 1133
- 138-141 Four heads; Mexico; undated; clay; coll. Antonie Staehelin-Schaarwächter; gifted in 1951, IVb 2317, IVb 2331, IVb 2337, IVb 2340

The transformation of material plays a significant role in Mexican myths of origin. Clay is a material subject to transformation through human intervention. In the course of creating figurines through modelling and sculpting, a body gradually grows. The act of creation through transforming clay into terracotta results in something permanent. Like the human body, figurines are resilient and at the same time fragile. In the cultures of pre-Hispanic Mexico, the creation of terracotta figurines had a lot to do with coming to terms with the fragility of human existence.

Terracotta heads were favoured collector items on the part of museums, travellers, and private collectors. Their physical features and exotic appearance decidedly helped to shape Western conceptions about people of other cultures. However, these heads were in no way lifelike representations. The translation of social norms into representations of the head and body not only required makers to engage with the philosophical foundations of their culture, they also had to make practical decisions: what was the ratio between head and body? Which physical aspects were worth emphasising, and which could be ignored?

- 142 Head; western Mexico; 100 BC-300 AD; clay; coll. René M. Falquier, permanent loan in 1972, AMDepFalquier 46
- 143 Head; western Mexico; 300 BC-300 AD; clay; Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 396
- 144 Head; Mexico or Guatemala; 300-900; clay; coll. Carl Gustav Bernoulli, gifted in 1878, IVb 394

- 145-146 Two heads *Smiling Faces*; Gulf coast, Mexico; 600-900; clay; coll. Ernst and Annemarie Vischer-Wadler, bequest in 1995, IVb 5438, IVb 5439
- 147-150 Head *Smiling Face*; Gulf coast, Mexico; 600-900; clay;
Head; Gulf coast, Mexico; 600-900; clay, colour;
Head of a hollow sculpture; Gulf coast, Mexico; 500-700; clay;
Head of a hollow sculpture; Gulf coast, Mexico; 200-500; clay, colour;
all coll. René M. Falquier, purchased in 1972, IVb 4504, IVb 4501, IVb 4526, IVb 4539
- 151-152 Heads; Gulf coast, Mexico; 300-900; Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 395, IVb 398
- 153 Head; Gulf coast, Mexico; 600-900; clay, colour; coll. René M. Falquier, purchased in 1972, IVb 4500

“This stone head, also of Khmer origin, has very faded features but if positioned well and illuminated from above, which should be possible in your case, its expression is still very convincing” (Rolf Eisenhofer to Fritz Sarasin, 6 Dec. 1929).

- 154 Head of a Buddha statue; Lop Buri, Thailand; undated; sandstone; former owners Rolf Eisenhofer, Jacques Brodbeck-Sandreuter, gifted in 1929, I Ib 310

The fracture lines on the head and neck reveal the fate of the recumbent pieces. Regardless of the material, they bear evidence of the force of their fragmentation. Mortise holes, wooden pegs, and metal rods are mute witnesses of past displays and of the aestheticization of their defacement. For the exhibition, we removed the bases and brackets, providing it posed no further threat to the object.

- 155 Head of a stone sculpture; ancient Gandhara, Pakistan; prob. 2nd – 4th c.; limestone, prob. travertine; coll. Jean Eggmann, gifted in 2003, IIa 11338
- 156 Head of a Buddha statue; Lop Buri, Thailand; undated; sandstone, colour pigments, wood; former owners Rolf Eisenhofer, Alfred Sarasin, gifted in 1931, I Ib 314
- 157 Head of a Buddha statue; Cambodia; prob. 11th-12th c.; sandstone, traces of glue and putty; coll. Gotthelf Kuhn, bequest in 1975, I Ib 3179

“We moved to a narrow street in the Chinese quarter where the pawnbrokers and antique dealers have their stalls. We have acquired a small collection for the museum [...]. The pillage of sanctuaries in this land has been terrible, especially in the north. Later we found hundreds of such decapitated Buddha images in temples” (Rudolph Iselin 1949). The two heads are mounted on pedestals and can only be removed at the risk of further damage. Staged in this manner, the act of “decapitation” sinks into oblivion.

- 158 Head of a Buddha statue on a pedestal; Bangkok, Thailand; undated; copper alloy; coll. Rudolph Iselin, bequest in 1963, I Ib 2154
- 159 Head of a Buddha statue; Bangkok, Thailand; undated; copper alloy, traces of a gummed label; coll. Rudolph Iselin, bequest in 1963, I Ib 2155

A Buddha head without its body is an expression of violent appropriation; it disregards the religious feelings of those practising their faith. Detached from the body and delicately aligned, the heads become mere objects of art.

- 160 Head of a Buddha statue; Northern Thailand; 17th/18th c.; copper alloy, traces of gilding; coll. Werner Rothpletz, gift from bequest in 1980, I Ib 3465
- 161 Head of a Buddha statue; China; Tang dynasty, 618-907; copper alloy; coll. Hans Merian-Roth, gifted in 1938, I Id 1650a

“I would advise placing the heads on a plain wooden pedestal before showing them to your friends at the museum” (Rolf Eisenhofer to Fritz Sarasin, 16 Nov. 1929).

The mounting of heads on a pedestal reflects the taste of the time or, possibly, a specifically intended use. Different criteria may have applied to a study collection than to a display in an exhibition.

162 Head of a statue; Ban Chiang, Thailand; 12th/13th c.; sandstone, colour pigments; coll. Werner Rothpletz, gift from bequest in 1980, Iib 3466

Whether this head in the Khmer style represents a crowned Buddha head or that of some Hindu deity remains difficult to say with certainty, owing to the missing body.

163 Head prob. of a Buddha statue; Lop Buri, Thailand; undated; sandstone; former owners Rolf Eisenhofer, Fritz Sarasin, gifted in 1929, Iib 309

In 1929, the art dealer Rolf Eisenhofer offered the MKB numerous Buddha heads, including the two on display here. In its original context, a Buddha head is not a decoration. As vessels of spiritual energy, Buddha figures and images are a key constituent of Buddhist religious practice.

164 Head of a Buddha statue; Lamphun, Thailand; undated; copper alloy; Rolf Eisenhofer, purchased in 1929, Iib 300

165 Head of a Buddha statue; Chiang Mai, Thailand; undated; copper alloy, gypsum; former owner Rolf Eisenhofer, FMB, permanent loan in 1929, Iib 301

This stone Buddha head weighing 36.6 kilos is from a cave temple in the Chinese province of Henan. The MKB purchased it for CHF 500 from an architect in Riehen during the Second World War. Thanks to the accompanying base, the head could be presented upright, at the same time, it concealed the fractures along the neck. The black line on the stone indicates the transition from the visible to the invisible areas.

166 Head of a Buddha statue; Henan, China; prob. Wei dynasty, 220-265; prob. limestone; former owner Emil Bercher, purchased in 1942, Iid 1768

Alfred Sarasin-Iselin purchased this Buddha head in Munich and donated it to the museum in 1934. Whether the fragment is actually from the ruins of the Takht-i-Bahi monastery in ancient Gandhara has still not been established beyond doubt.

A Buddha head serves as an emblematic icon: the typical features are usually easy to recognize.

167 Buddha head; ancient Gandhara, Pakistan; prob. 3rd/4th c., limestone, pigment residues; coll. Alfred Sarasin-Iselin, gifted in 1934, Iia 667

Whether this fragment is the result of wilful destruction or natural weathering is impossible to say. The object bears traces of an earlier mounting that suggest that the small head was at some time in the past displayed on a plinth, either privately or in public.

168 Head of a Buddha statue; Thailand or Myanmar; undated; sandstone, colour pigments, traces of gypsum; coll. Paul Wirz, purchased in 1935, Iib 664

The way the Buddha is to be represented was already determined in early Buddhist writings; it is still binding for artists today and remains more or less unchanged in the religious context.

169 Head of a Buddha statue; Ayutthaya, Thailand; 19th c.; copper alloy, traces of gilding, pigment residues; former owner Rolf Eisenhofer, purchased with means from the estate of Nötzlin-Werthemann, 1929, Iib 305

- 170 Head of a Buddha statue; Ayutthaya, Thailand; prob. 17th c.; copper alloy, traces of gilding; coll. August Meyer, gift from a bequest in 1977, I Ib 3380
- 171 Head of a Buddha statue; Thailand; prob. 19th c.; copper alloy, traces of gilding, pigment residues; coll. Gotthelf Kuhn, bequest in 1975, I Ib 3174
- 172 Head of a Buddha statue; Thailand; prob. 19th c.; copper alloy, traces of gilding, pigment residues; coll. Gotthelf Kuhn, bequest in 1975, I Ib 3175
- 173 Head of a Buddha statue; U^oThong, Lop Buri, Thailand; undated; copper alloy, traces of gilding, pigment residues; former owner Rolf Eisenhofer, purchased with means from the estate of Nötzlin-Werthemann, 1929, I Ib 302
- 174 Head of a Buddha statue; Ayutthaya, Thailand; prob. 16th c.; copper alloy, wood, glue; coll. August Meyer, gift from a bequest in 1977, I Ib 3379

“Nice cave of Tham Phra [...] In the first, a small temple was installed, behind it many Buddhas of stone, wood, clay, and metal, many of them without a head. Piles of Buddha rubble. Would be a good place for a dig, given a permission. Took with me a small Buddha head” (travelogue Fritz Sarasin).

- 175 Head of a Buddha statue; Tham Phra, Chiang Rai, Thailand; undated; engobe; coll. Fritz Sarasin and Rudolph Iselin, gifted in 1932, I Ib 342

This bust was given to Rudolph Iselin from Basel by the Swiss architect Charles A. Béguelin who lived in Thailand. The break line runs diagonally across the torso. The bust was mounted on a plinth the aid of an iron rod. The corrosion developing on the rod is affecting the cast core in the figure, leading to gradual decomposition. The rod will be removed after the exhibition.

- 176 Bust of a Buddha statue; Thailand; undated; copper alloy; former owners Charles A. Béguelin, Rudolph Iselin, bequest in 1963, I Ib 2153

The wish to present complete figures inspired collectors, dealers, and museum staff to come up with creative assemblages – for instance, mounting disembodied heads on different bodies. Neatly aligned and with the aid of some glue, the fracture lines, the use of different rock and clay compositions, and the different production techniques are hardly noticeable. In some cases, the head and body are from the same culture, in others from different cultures and periods.

- 177 Figure; Aztec; body and head: Mexico; 1350-1521; clay; Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 1101
- 178 Mother with child; Sukhothai, Thailand; before 1971; ceramics; coll. Lucas Staehelin-von Mandach, gifted in 1971, I Ib 2960
- 179 Seated nativity figure; body: central Mexico; 1550-1700; head: undated; clay; Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 1026
- 180 Figure; Aztec; body and head: Mexico; 1350-1521; clay; Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 1148
- 181 Seated figure; body: Aztec; Mexico; 1350-1521; head: undated; Ton; Lukas Vischer, collected from 1828-1837, IVb 526

Headless or with only one arm: missing body parts are conspicuous. Whether the fractures were intentional or due to material fragility is hard to tell. At what point in time the figures were reduced to fragments also remains unanswered: was it due to intense usage, wrong storage, or did the pieces fracture on their way to the museum? Many of the stories behind the fragmentations remain hidden, and many objects prefer to keep the circumstances of their injuries to themselves.

- 182 Seated figure; Sherbro, Sierra Leone; prob. 15th/16th c.; stone; former owners W. Greensmith,
Walter Volz, purchased in 1907, III 2557
- 183 Two standing figures; Aztec; central Mexico; 1350–1521; clay; Lukas Vischer, collected from
1828-1837, IVb 441, IVb 471
- 184 Clay figure; Gulf coast, Mexico; 500-900; clay; coll. Antonie Staehelin-Schaarwächter, gifted in 1951,
IVb 2316
- 185 Statue of a priest; Leuk, Valais, Switzerland; around 1600; wood; coll. Leopold Rütimeyer, gifted in
1919, VI 8966
- 186 Statue of Holy Mother with Child; Winterschwil, Aargau, Switzerland; 16th c.; wood; coll. Jakob Lörch,
purchased in 1909, VI 3025
- 187 Temple figure of a musician; Gujarat, India; before 1960; wood; coll. Georges Gogel, purchased in
1960, IIa 2359

On carved figures, sexual characteristics are often emphasized by enlarging the genitalia or breasts. This offensive display of sexual characteristics was often considered provocative – especially on the part of Christian missionaries. In some cases, such over-sexualized images of men and women were neutralized by simply whopping off the genitalia.

Woodcarving remains an important aspect of Māori culture to this day. Gable figures such as the one on display were secured to the roofs of storage houses and assembly halls. The depicted ancestors were believed to guide and protect the living.

- 188 Figure *tekoteko*; Ngāti Pourou, Aotearoa-New Zealand; before 1911; wood (*Podocarpus totara*); coll. Jean de Hollain, purchased and gifted in 1912, Vc 241

Along the Yuat River, wooden male and female figures were modelled on hunting and tutelary myths. Among other things, they were used to combat sickness. On this wooden male figure, not only the head and the animal figure on its back are missing. A look under the fibre skirt reveals that the genitals, too, are missing. The reasons for his “neutralization” are not known.

- 189 Male figure; Yuat, Papua New Guinea; before 1955; wood, fibres; expedition Alfred Bühler 1956,
purchased in 1962, Vb 17677

The destruction of ritual objects and religious images became part of missionary practice as early as the 16th century. Burning, smashing or dismembering effigies was regarded by missionaries as an effective method of combatting “heathendom”. The smashed figures were considered a sign of victory for Christianity and the missions, and served as a demonstration of power. These pieces of a deity or a deified ancestor come from the collection of the Basel Mission. The missionary Gustav Peter himself admitted that he had been involved in the burning down of “idol temples”.

- 190 Damaged figure of a deity or a deified ancestor; southern India; before 1904; clay; coll. Gustav Peter, Basler Mission Collection, on permanent loan since 1981, gifted in 2015, IIa 9828

If we only have fragments of figurative representations, it becomes difficult to identify who is being depicted. In this case, the stone sculpture’s attributes reveal that we are dealing with Shiva’s consort, the Hindu goddess Parvati. In her right hand she is holding a prayer cord; a lotus bud nestles against the righthand side of her body. In her left hand is a fly whisk. The fracture line is at the height of the hips; the lower body and parts of her arms are missing. The two holes on the underside reveal earlier attempts of mounting and efforts to conceal additional break lines.

- 191 Parvati; central Java, Indonesia; 9th–11th c.; stone; coll. Werner Rothpletz, purchased in 1980,
IIc 18748

Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple complex, was built as a stupa and has the shape of an accessible step pyramid. The galleries on the lower tiers are flanked by more than 1,300 narrative relief panels. In addition to the becoming and life of the Buddha, the scenes also depict everyday and ritual life in Java in the 8th century. When pilgrims take in these stories, they circle the monument several times. The stone slab is nothing more than a small section of a figurative programme that remains incomprehensible if not continued: the fracture lines sever the connection to the full narrative.

192 Fragment of a stone relief; Borobudur, central Java, Indonesia; prob. 8th-9th c.; stone; permanent loan Freiwilliger Museumsverein Basel in 1964, IIC 15924

“Given that a section of an ear and jewellery is missing, it has clearly been patched up”.

In the 1960s, the people at MKB discussed the purchase of this Bodhisattva Padmapani at great length. The diagonal fracture on the back, the righted head, and the empty spaces around the ear and (missing) adornment finally convinced them not to purchase the object. However, since Richard Koch's holdings on permanent loan were never dissolved, his widow Rose decided to donate the figure to the museum after his death. Padmapani, the “lotus bearer” is one of the many manifestations of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Even the stem of the lotus in the statue's left hand is broken, leaving the flower simply floating in mid-air thanks to the concealed fracture line.

193 Bodhisattva Padmapani; central Java, Indonesia; prob. 9th-10th c.; stone; permanent loan Richard E. Koch 1964, gifted by Rose Koch-Lampert in 1984, IIC 15925

In Hindu architecture, celestial nymphs are often displayed in dynamic motion. With the lower body missing, movement is merely implied on this relief fragment. The hexagonal piece of metal on the figure's back must have been added after fragmentation. Probably, the intention was to mount the piece vertically on a wall, allowing the half nymph to come into its own as best as possible. Unwittingly, the metal rod became a witness to the brutal display procedures; as a support, it now vividly exposes the fracture lines on the stone.

194 Fragment of a celestial nymph; southern India; before 1975; stone, metal; coll. Gotthelf Kuhn, bequest 1975, IIA 6551

The relief was probably once part of a temple car. The wooded pegs on the upper and under-sides suggest that it belonged to a larger plot but, torn from its context, it is difficult to understand the depicted scene. Possibly it shows the story of Shiva in his manifestation as Kalari-Murti who promises the youngster Markandeya eternal youth for his unwavering devotion.

195 Figure fragment from a temple car; India; prob. mid-20th c.; wood; coll. Kurt and Susanne Reiser-Erny, gifted in 2005, IIA 11414

Representations of deities serve the purpose of communication with the divine and form an integral part of Hindu sacred architecture. The wooden relief tells the story of the rescue of the elephant god Gajendra. When he was once attacked by the crocodile, the embodiment of obsession, the god Vishnu appears on his mount, the sun eagle Garuda in humanized form, and rescues Gajendra. The scene was surrounded by other pictures, as indicated by the jagged edges. A greenish mass was used to conceal the fracture lines and fill in the missing parts.

196 Relief of the god Vishnu; India; around 1880; wood; Museum.BL, on permanent loan since 1998, Ila 11131

Wooden temple cars are drawn through the streets of villages and towns on special feast days. They bring the stories of the Hindu deities to all those people who have no opportunity to visit a temple. The multi-headed and armed Subramanya is seated on his mount, the peacock, a symbol of immortality. His front right hand is performing the gesture of protection, the corresponding left hand, the gesture of the granting of wishes. His right foot rests on a lotus flower, the symbol of purity and a reference to his mother, the river goddess Ganga.

197 Subramanya, figure fragment from a temple car; southern India; early 20th c.; wood; coll. Jean Eggmann, gifted in 2003, Ila 11354

On this fragment from a temple car, we see a richly adorned dancer or celestial nymph. While the clear-cut edges on the left and right are an indication that the figure was extracted carefully from the respective architectural programme, the bottom margin has evidently suffered more heavily. Numerous drill holes on the back indicate earlier mountings.

198 Figure fragment from a temple car *ratha*; India; before 1933; wood; coll. Jean Roux, gifted in 1933, Ila 665

The dancer is shown in a stance called *tribhanga*, a triple flexion at the height of the shoulders, hips, and knees. It is reminiscent of classical Indian dance styles. Over her head she is holding a yak-tail fly whisk; the tip of it was probably forfeited to the straight cut line when the relief was severed. The jagged edge on the right suggests how much force was necessary to extract the dancer from her story environment.

199 Wood fragment with depiction of a dancer; India; 20th c.; wood; coll. Ernst Handschin, gifted in 1994, Ila 10904

From the 17th to the 19th century, terracotta reliefs adorned many temples in the Bengal region. The Hindu goddess Kali shown here is an ambiguous character: on the one hand, she is the goddess of death and destruction, on the other, she is revered as a loving maternal deity. In her wrathful manifestation, Kali has four arms and holds a sword and the severed head of a demon in her hands. Her husband, the god Shiva, has thrown himself at her feet, pleading with her to desist from her raging anger.

200 Relief of the goddess Kali; Bengal, India; 18th/19th c.; clay, wood, colours; Basler Mission Collection, on permanent loan since 1981, gifted in 2015, Ila 9825

Kali is the wrathful manifestation of the goddess Durga, one of the most beloved female deities in Hinduism. The seated figure on this relief could be Durga. The two women on the left as well as the man on the right are probably devotees. Once shattered into pieces, today wooden panels and glue hold the reliefs together. When exactly the fractures were fixed in place remains unclear.

201 Relief of the goddess Kali; Bengal, India; 18th/19th c.; clay, wood, colours; Basler Mission Collection, on permanent loan since 1981, gifted in 2015, Ila 9827

In Saruah in Peru, houses are built with the help of family and friends. A couple is chosen to act as sponsors for the blessing of the house. Their task is to produce and paint the support beams for the roof. The dedication mentions their names and the date of completion. The painting features saints, family members, and people working on the building, performing

typical tasks, as well as the sun. In today's Sarhua, painted house beams of different size are produced for sale on the market.

202 Painted support beam for a house blessing; Sarhua, Ayacucho, Peru; 1976; wood, colour; coll. Valentin Jaquet, gifted in 2012, PE 813

Kwoma ceremonial houses had V-shaped roofs and were open at both sides. Carved ridge beams made the roofs look longer. The wooden faces and birds looked down on the humans below. While the paintings and sculptures remained undisclosed to non-initiated individuals, the ridge beams were visible from a distance. Exposed to the elements, the carvings gradually lost their contours and colour. It is not known when this ridge beam broke into two. After its arrival at the MKB, the bird was reattached to the beam in 1965. Nail, glue, and a hole still remind us of the efforts to conceal the fractures.

203 Gable post in two parts; Kwoma; Washkuk Hills, Papua New Guinea; before 1955; wood, colour; Alfred Bühler and Dadi Wirz, purchased in 1963, Vb 19919a+b

Some of the ridge beams came to the museum already in pieces. The fractured wings of this bird-like figure expose the light-coloured wood and give us a sense of the force of the blow that severed it. The break at the lower end suggests that the beam once extended further.

204 Part of a gable post; Kwoma; Washkuk Hills, Papua New Guinea; before 1955; wood; Alfred Bühler and Dadi Wirz, purchased in 1963, Vb 19922

Architectural elements were favoured collector items for anthropologists. This decorative piece shows a demon's head without a lower jaw, but with a floral beard and massive fangs (*karang tapel*).

205 Decorative piece with *karang tapel* motif; Bali, Indonesia; before 1938; wood, colour, gold pigment or residues of gold leaf; coll. Ernst Schlager, gifted by Sandoz AG in 1938, IIc 7053

Mortise holes indicate that an element once used to be part of a larger structure. This support base for a roof post features a princely couple (possibly Rama and Sita) in a dance pose as well as Bhoma heads at the sides (*karang bhoma*) and raven heads as corner decorations (*karang goak*).

206 Support base *sendi*, for central roof post; Sanur, Bali, Indonesia; before 1980; wood, colour; purchased by Urs Ramseyer in 1972/73 in the context of a field research, IIc 19507

In addition to artistic quality and aesthetic expression, architectural elements embody aspects and ideas of the Hindu-Balinese religion and the world view that goes with it. The tripartite structure into an upper, a middle and a lower realm also defines the construction type of buildings with a head (roof), a body (living space) and feet (foundation). Support bases (*sendi*) are either used in the foundation as a support for pillars or as bases for the posts in the roof frame that support the ridge beam. One of the most conspicuous decorative elements in Balinese architecture refers to the head of the demon Bhoma. One encounters his face with its large, open eyes and dreadful fangs at the entrances of temples and palaces as well as on supporting pedestals. As son of the god Vishnu and the earth-goddess Pertiwi, he was born as an earth and netherworld demon. As an architectural element, he has an apotropaic function, that is, he wards off negative influences and evil spirits.

207 Support base *sendi*, from a roof structure with Bhoma head; Bali, Indonesia; before 1937; wood, colour; coll. Theo Meier, purchased in 1937, IIc 6869

- 208 Base *sendi*, with Bhoma head; Bali, Indonesia; before 1960; wood, colour; coll. Werner Rothpletz, gift from bequest 1981, IIC 18881
- 209 Base *sendi*, of a house post with Bhoma head; Klungkung, Bali, Indonesia; before 1972; wood; purchased by Urs Ramseyer in 1972/73 in the context of a field research, IIC 17611
- 210 Support base *sendi*, with Bhoma head; Klungkung, Bali, Indonesia; before 1930; wood, colour; coll. Paul Wirz, purchased in 1930, IIC 2758a+b

In Cameroon, palaces, residencies of dignitaries, and assembly halls were adorned with elaborate carvings, with human representations adorning support posts and door pillars. Set one above the other, the figures often held in their hand items such as drinking horns, gourds, and trophies. With this post it remains up to our imagination as to what the figure is holding.

- 211 Post; Cameroon; before 1921; wood; coll. Herman Rolle, purchased in 1921, III 5621

Among the Marind-anim, a variety of houses served communal and cultural purposes. The anthropologist Paul Wirz described this architectural element as a “post of a feast hut”. The fork at the top probably served as a bedding and as a support for horizontal beams. The post was carved and painted. While the human face is looking down, two crocodile figures are coiled around the post to the right and left.

- 212 Post of a feast hut; southeast coast, Papua, Indonesia; before 1923; wood, colour; coll. Paul Wirz, gifted in 1923, Vb 6318

Serving as support pillars, such sculptures propped up the porch roofs in the courtyard of the royal palace of Idanre. Scarification marks adorn the face, chest, and arms of this sculpture; it probably represents a mythical warrior. The opening above the head served as a mortise for a further beam.

- 213 Support pillar; Idanre, Nigeria; before 1976; wood, colour pigments; coll. L. Doumbia, purchased in 1976, III 19535

214 **Close-Up**

Close-ups of objects from the exhibition "Fragments", 2022.

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Iia 9825, Relief of the goddess Kali; Iia 9827, Relief of the goddess Kali; Iib 300, Head of a Buddha statue; Iib 301, Head of a Buddha statue; Iic 23, Basin for making bread; Iic 333, Hollow tree coffin; Iic 15925, Bodhisattva Padmapani; Iic 18881, Base *sendi*, with Bhoma head; Iic 19865, Commemorative figure *kapatong* or *tempatong*; Iid 1768, Head of a Buddha statue; Iid 6062, Coat *hanten*; Iid 10766, Tea bowl *chawan*; III 1391, Power figure *nkisi nkonde*; III 2007, Reliquary *byeri*; III 3025, Power figure *nkisi*; III 3670, Power figure *nkisi*; III 4019, Power figure *nkisi nkonde*; III 5078, Power figure *biteki*; III 13136, Gourd bowl; III 13137, Gourd bowl; III 14527, Bowl; III 14790, Wooden bowl; III 18076, Shirt (prob.) for a musician; III 20694, Hunter's shirt; III 23539, Figure Sakpata; III 23807, Wraparound *ntshak*; III 26439, Hunter's shirt; III 24800, Gourd bowl; IVb 3870, *mola* blouse; IVb 5438, Head *Smiling Face*; IVc 26753, Male statue *foonhunraaga*; VI 31754, Convent work with relics; IVb 4501, Head of a hollow sculpture; Vb 4715, Bowl; Vb 4976, Wooden bowl; VI 1442, Bowl; VI 3412, Pot; VI 8066, Rug; VI 23927a, House blessing; VI 66278, Copper cauldron; VI 69262, Carnival costume; VI 70518.05, Creaming bowl *Gebse*; VII 597, Shaman's costume

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