

Captions

StrawGold – Cultural Transformations Rendered Visible

25 October 2014

Museum der Kulturen Basel
as from 29 June 2012

Fig. 1

Necklace, *soltiss necklace*

In 2009 the designer Florie Salnot and the British NGO Sandblast organized a workshop in a Sahrawi refugee camp in south-western Algeria with the aim of producing from locally available materials – discarded PET bottles, paint, sand, tools – jewellery by means of simple technology. The idea was to generate an income opportunity for women and thus extend their range of options.

In 2010 Florie Salnot refined the technique and went on to create a jewellery collection inspired by traditional designs used by Sahrawi women. The aim of the collection was to promote the *Plastic Gold Project*.

Design: Florie Salnot; Hamburg, Germany; 2014; PET bottles, acrylic paint, cotton threads; III 27767, acquired with the support of the Georges und Mirjam Kinzel-Fonds

Fig. 2

Necklace, *guinda maé*

In Timbuktu, once a hub in the trans-Sahara trade and a religious centre in northern Mali, Songhai women have been producing jewellery from bee's wax and straw for many decades. The items look very much like gold jewellery. But if you take a closer look you will discover a number of creative reinterpretations as far as material, technique and usage are concerned. In shape the necklace looks like the clasps found on a type of bracelet that was very common in the Middle East from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. Later the form reappears in the adornment repertoire of the Fulani – a pastoral society in West Africa – in the shape of close-fitting gold necklaces. These became so popular in the Timbuktu area that local Songhai women appropriated the design and began producing them from straw and wax.

Songhai; Timbuktu, Mali; before 1951; straw, beeswax, cotton threads; III 11344

Fig. 3

Crown cap necklace

This necklace represents a synthesis of east African and Arabic jewellery and the creative use of waste materials, in this case the caps of Coca Cola bottles. For his lamp and jewellery collections the artist Yoav Kotik relies on crown caps and other forms of scrap metal, which he reworks, polishes and occasionally gilds.

Kotik-Design; Mishmeret, Israel; 2014; wire, crown caps; Ild 3160, acquired with the support of the Georges und Mirjam Kinzel-Fonds

Fig. 4

Waxprint kimono

Design: Serge Mouangue, Paris, France, Kyoto, Japan; 2014; cotton, silk/cotton; Ild 15804/III 27756 (alternating exhibited)

Fig. 5

Dirndl à l'Africaine

Since the beginning of the century Bavaria has experienced a veritable dirndl and lederhosen boom. People who wear this kind of dress express their appreciation of values such as local tradition and cultural heritage.

Originally the dirndl was an undergarment worn by maids. Towards the end of the nineteenth century bourgeois city women had dirndls fabricated as summer dresses to wear on holiday. Then, as now, the dirndl has betokened the ennoblement of rural life. In recent years, dirndl designers have increasingly begun experimenting with new fabrics, styles and embellishments. The dirndl became international. Our dirndl bears evidence of this transformation: it was designed and sewn by the two sisters Marie Darouiche and Rahmée Wetterich who grew up in Cameroon. In 2010 in Munich they founded the fashion label NOH NEE, which means as much as "God's gift" in Swahili. For their new dirndl they combined classical models from the 1950s with colourfully designed African waxprints. The tailor-made dirndls not only create a visible bridge between Germany and Cameroon, they also sell like hot cakes among Munich's society ladies.

Design and manufacture: Marie Darouiche, Rahmée Wetterich; Munich, Germany; 2014; cotton, synthetic yarn, cowry shells, lace; III 27745.01-04, acquired with the support of the Georges und Mirjam Kinzel-Fonds

Fig. 6

Bag

During a stay in Cambodia, Nina Raeber, founder and designer of the brand coll.part, came across colourful plastic bags used for packaging fish fodder. Inspired by the colours, the graphic motifs, and the material's light weight and tear resistance, Raeber began designing trial models for a new bag collection. Since 2003 Cambodian fish-fodder bags have been converted to fashionable bags and accessories for the Japanese and European markets, thus creating an opportunity for many Cambodian women and children to learn a trade and earn some money in the local sewing workshops. (lp)

Cambodia; 2013; polypropylene, synthetic yarn; Ild 15800, acquired with the support of the Georges und Mirjam Kinzel-Fonds

Fig. 7

Plastic kettle

Plastic kettles like this are common in all parts of West Africa. They are based on European metal kettles but in West Africa they are made of recycled plastic. They are normally used for the ritual washing that precedes the Islamic hours of prayer when the believers prepare for praying.

Dakar, Senegal; around 2013; recycled plastic; III 27729.01-02, Coll. F. Jenni

Fig. 8

Kerosene lamp

Funtua, Nigeria; around 1980; tin can, tin plate, cotton wick; III 21681, Coll. R. Boser-Sarivaxévanis

Fig. 9

Nike Air Revolution Sky Hi

The paisley pattern is one of the so-called signature patterns, meaning the label of the Liberty department store in London, famous for its textile collection ever since it opened in 1875. A modern example is the Liberty Collection designed by the sports corporation Nike. In cooperation with the London department store, Nike developed a sneakers collection featuring the paisley pattern. The design on this shoe is called Bourton and is found on Liberty clothes that go back to the 1960s. Nike describes its collection as a combination of modern street style and classical English heritage.

London, Great Britain; 2013/14; synthetic material, plastic; IId 15801.01-02, acquired with the support of the Georges und Mirjam Kinzel-Fonds

Fig. 10

Mandala of the Avalokiteshvara

In the centre of the mandala, a four-armed form of the transcendental bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara can be seen. He embodies an all-encompassing compassion. A mandala, a diagram of circles and squares, serves as an aid and a guideline for meditation. At the same time it is a reflection of the cosmos and the physical structure of man. During contemplation, practitioners move from the outer edge inwards to the centre of the image. The goal is to transform negative emotions step by step into a healing attitude and to become one with the central figure.

Nepal; 19th–20th c.; canvas, brocade, gouache; Ila 1796, deposit E. Rauch

Fig. 11

Seat of a stool, *agba*

The wooden board once made up part of a royal stool in the Kingdom of Benin. The stool's design is probably based on a European model. At the centre of the board one identifies the divine king, Oba. He is wearing a ceremonial coral garment and is adorned with bead necklaces, pendants and a crown. In his right hand he holds a ceremonial sword, in his left a

ritual device. His mudfish-like legs are a reference to the intimate link between the Oba and Olokun, the god of the seas. The Oba is regarded as the terrestrial personification of Olokun. The Oba is flanked by two dignitaries. One is holding a ceremonial sword, the other is providing shade with an umbrella. The figure on the far right represents a European, recognizable by his suit and his straight hair. He is wearing a beard and a hat. In one hand he is holding a spear, in the other a scimitar. Representations of Europeans begin appearing in the art of Benin in the fifteenth century when trade relations with Europe began to develop, at first with the Portuguese, then with the British, the Dutch and the French. Images of foreigners were a means to express the power and grandeur of the Benin kings. They indicated that the Oba not only ruled over his own people but also over representatives of foreign countries. In this way the Europeans were safely integrated into the reigning worldview, even though, in the early years, they were regarded as a threat to the reigning social order owing to their possession of firearms and because of their Christian belief.

Edo; Benin, Nigeria; before 1897; wood, iron nails; III 1034, Coll. P. and F. Sarasin