

WELTKULTUREN MUSEUM

Press kit for the exhibition

"Invisible Inventories:

Questioning Kenyan Collections in Western Museums"

6 October 2021 to 9 January 2022

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Preprint from WELTKULTUREN NEWS 05:

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WELTKULTUREN MUSEUM

PRESS INVITATION

HYBRID EXHIBITION OPENING

"Invisible Inventories: Questioning Kenyan Collections in Western Museums"

Tuesday October 5 2021, 2 pm (CET), Schaumainkai 37

Exhibition preview possible from 1:30 pm!



Dear Journalists,

We cordially invite you to the opening of the exhibition "Invisible Inventories: Questioning Kenyan Collections in Western Museums". The event will start at 2 pm (CET) on October 5 2021 and will take place in hybrid form at Schaumainkai 37. You hereby have the opportunity to participate either on site (with prior registration) or digitally. Members of the press attending on site can preview the exhibition as early as 1:30 pm.

Speakers at the opening will be Dr. Ina Hartwig (Head of the Cultural Department of Frankfurt am Main), Dr. Eva Ch. Raabe (Director of the Weltkulturen Museum), Prof. Dr Carola Lentz (President of the Goethe-Institut), the exhibition curators as well as the following participating artists: Julia Friedel and Leonie Neumann (both Weltkulturen Museum), Jim Chuchu and Njoki Ngumi (The Nest Collective), Sam Hopkins and Simon Rittmeier (SHIFT Collective) as well as Juma Ondeng' (National Museums of Kenya).

The speeches will be held partly on site and partly online. As a guest, you will have the opportunity to ask the speakers questions both on site and digitally (via a chat function). The

curators and artists will also be available for analogue interviews afterwards. Separate digital interview appointments can be arranged.

On-site participation:

Should you wish to participate on site, please register in good time at julia.rajkovic-kamara@stadt-frankfurt.de, as the number of participants is limited due to current spacing rules. Also note that the 3G rule applies (please bring a document that verifies you being fully vaccinated, recovered or tested) and that wearing a medical mask is obligated during the event and in the exhibition. We can provide you with a free medical mask for mouth and nose protection for the press event.

Digital participation:

To participate digitally, please click the following link at the time of the event:

<https://www.weltkulturenmuseum.de/de/presse/eroeffnung-iip/>
Registration at julia.rajkovic-kamara@stadt-frankfurt.de is desired. If you would like to ask the speakers a question via the chat function, it is important that, apart from your question, you state your own name and the person to whom your question is directed.

The Exhibition:

How can we make Kenyan cultural artifacts that are possessed by institutions in the Global North accessible to present-day Kenyan society?

Since 2018, this question has been addressed by the International Inventories Programme (IIP), which brings together Kenyan and European artists and scholars. The core aim of the project is to develop a database of all Kenyan objects in European and North American museums. Following exhibitions in Nairobi (18.3.-30.5.2021) and Cologne (28.5.-29.8.2021), the visualisation of this database will now be presented in the Weltkulturen Museum along with further scholarly and artistic contributions.

As well as negotiating issues about restitution, a forum will be created for addressing individual objects from intellectual and emotional points of view. The exhibition also deals with the psychological and political consequences of the loss or absence of certain objects from the societies in which they were created.

Perspectives and voices from Kenya are central to the approach taken at the Weltkulturen Museum. There are works on show by artist collectives The Nest and SHIFT, interviews with members of local Kenyan societies, footage from the discussions organised by the project, and the results of joint research on objects from the collection. In order to highlight the diverse range of opinions about how these objects should be presented, the artist collectives will redesign a room of the exhibition during its runtime: this will turn the museum display itself into a subject for debate.

You can find out more about the exhibition and the entire project here:

[Weltkulturenmuseum - Future](#)

<https://www.inventoriesprogramme.org/invisible-inventories>

Participating scholars and artists:

The Nest Collective: Jim Chuchu, Njoki Ngumi (Kenya) SHIFT collective: Sam Hopkins (Kenya/Germany), Marian Nur Goni (France), Simon Rittmeier (Germany)

National Museums of Kenya: Lydia Nafula, Philemon Nyamanga, George Juma Ondeng', Njeri Gachihi, Lydia Galavu and the Tuzi collective (Kenya)

Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum: Clara Himmelheber (Germany)

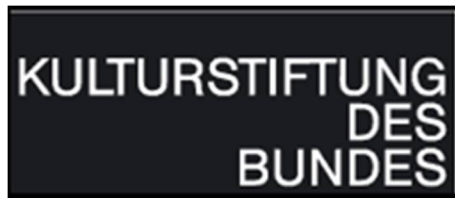
Weltkulturen Museum: Julia Friedel, Leonie Neumann (Germany)

Duration of the exhibition: October 6 2021 until January 9 2022.

In Cooperation with the Goethe-Institut Nairobi



Funded by



Weltkulturen Museum, Ein Museum der Stadt Frankfurt am Main, Schaumainkai 29-37, 60594 Frankfurt am Main

Admission fee: 7€ / reduced: 3,50€

Free admission to children and young adults up to 18 years old!

Opening hours: Tuesday-Sunday 11 am - 6 pm, Wednesday 11 am - 8 pm

Follow us at

@weltkulturen.museum

With kind support:



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THE INTERNATIONAL INVENTORIES PROGRAMME

How can we make Kenyan cultural assets that are possessed by institutions in the Global North accessible to present-day Kenyan society?

This issue is addressed by the **International Inventories Programme**, for which artist collectives The Nest and SHIFT have joined forces with the Nairobi National Museum in Kenya, the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne, the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main and the Goethe-Institut. In order to enhance transparency in museum archives they are jointly producing a database containing an inventory of Kenyan objects. The **database** currently comprises over **32,501 objects from thirty different institutions** that have made the information in their archives available. In May 2021 the database was also opened up to the public. This is being accompanied by public discussions in Kenya known as **Object Movement Dialogues**. In addition to negotiating restitution issues, these provide a forum for intellectual and emotional responses to individual objects. As Njoki Ngumi of The Nest asked in one of these dialogues, "Who are the people the object left behind? And if the object is to return to a people that were bereft of it, who are the people that the object meets?"

This long-term collaborative and interdisciplinary process has resulted in several **publications** and the **exhibition "Invisible Inventories"**, three different versions of which are being shown in 2021. The exhibitions are funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, under the collective artistic direction of the International Inventories Programme team.

More information can be found at: www.inventoriesprogramme.org

The International Inventories Programme is a project by the artist collectives The Nest (Kenya) and SHIFT (Germany/France), National Museums of Kenya, the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne, the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main and the Goethe-Institut. The "Invisible Inventories" exhibition project is funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

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"INVISIBLE INVENTORIES": THE 2021 EXHIBITION

In nearly seventy years of British colonial rule (from 1895 to 1963), not only did countless Kenyans lose their lives as a consequence of colonial oppression and the resistance shown to it, but thousands of historical artefacts of Kenyan culture and art were also removed from the country and sold to museums and private collectors throughout Europe and the United States. Tens of thousands of historical Kenyan objects are still held by European museums. What does this absence mean for Kenya? And what does their presence mean for the European and North American museums where they are currently situated?

Answers to these questions are sought in the **international exhibition "Invisible Inventories: Questioning Kenyan Collections in Western Museums"**. Under the collective artistic direction of the International Inventories Programme team, different versions of the exhibition are being shown at three venues in 2021:

Nairobi National Museum

Opening: 17.03.2021

Dates: 18 March - 30 May 2021

www.museums.or.ke

Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne

Opening: 27 May 2021

Dates: 28 May - 29 August 2021

www.rautenstrauch-joest-museum.de

Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main

Opening: 5 October 2021

Dates: 6 October - 9 January 2022

www.weltkulturenmuseum.de

The exhibitions bring together the scientific and artistic research findings produced over the last two years by museum professionals, scholars and artists. They have approached Kenyan objects in terms of how they are culturally intertwined and how in each case they were appropriated by institutions in the Global North. Their investigations also focus on the psychological and political consequences of the loss or absence of these objects from the communities where they were originally created. "Invisible Inventories: Questioning Kenyan Collections in Western Museums" attempts to explore the asymmetry of the shared history and painful relationship upon which it is based.

What links the exhibitions, which have been funded by the German federal Cultural Foundation and coordinated by the Goethe-Institut,

is the shared research undertaken over the past two years within the framework of the International Inventories Programme, along with current perspectives by the artist collectives The Nest und SHIFT.

What initially struck the visitor to the National Museums of Kenya above all is the absence of cultural goods. **Empty display cases** symbolise a selection of ten objects held in the collections of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum and Weltkulturen Museum, which were examined more closely as part of a cooperation between German and Kenyan museum professionals. Moreover, there are video works in which various **representatives of local communities** have their say.

This selection of absent historical objects was supplemented by current works from the two artist collectives. The Kenyan collective **The Nest**, represented by Jim Chuchu and Njoki Ngumi, presents the work "**31,302**", with what seems like infinitely snaking shipping labels that visualise the sheer mass of objects and their differing values - ranging from the purchase value to the insurance value and through to the emotional value - as well as the power of individual Western dealers and institutions. Sam Hopkins and Marian Nur Goni of the collective **SHIFT** also presented a sound installation on the manifold histories of the creatures known as the "**Man-Eaters of Tsavo**". Around the turn of the twentieth century, these two legendary lions succeeded in blocking British imperial railway construction machinery in East Africa. They are currently on display - stuffed - in Chicago. Many Kenyans view the two lions as National Treasures that absolutely have to be repatriated to the country. Simon Rittmeier, who is also part of the SHIFT collective, addressed an international case of successful restitution with his work **Lightning Strikes the Obelisk**, which looks at the return of the Axum obelisk from Italy to Ethiopia.

After this, in Cologne, the IIP curatorial team presented the entire Kenyan **collection comprising 82 objects** which the RJM acquired between 1905 and 2006, the vast majority of which have never been exhibited. The way they are set out plays on the presentation of the objects in storage during a visit by the IIP team in 2019, thereby rendering visible an inventory which had hitherto remained invisible. It is the first time that scholars from Nairobi have communally developed **comprehensive object biographies** for some of these objects, which underscore the continuing importance of these objects in Kenya and among members of the Kenyan diaspora community in Germany.

Perspectives and voices from Kenya are central to the approach taken at the Weltkulturen Museum. There are works on show by artist collectives The Nest and SHIFT, interviews with members of local Kenyan societies, footage from the discussions organised by the project, and the results of joint research on objects from the collection. In order to highlight the diverse range of opinions about how these objects should be presented, the artist collectives

will redesign a room of the exhibition during its runtime: this will turn the museum display itself into a subject for debate.

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SHORT PROFILES OF THE EXPERTS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Sheila Akwany is a project assistant at Goethe-Institut Nairobi. She has been active in the Kenyan culture scene for the past eight years and continues to cooperate closely with cultural professionals in developing dynamic new programmes. Sheila has a master's degree in strategic management.

Leonie Chima Emeka is enrolled in the master's programme for curatorial studies at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. Her specialism is the post-colonial history of art with a focus on provenance research and representing Blackness in early modern European painting. Leonie is currently an assistant for provenance research at the Museum Fünf Kontinente in Munich. In addition, she writes articles about Blackness in European art for the project Exploring Visual Cultures.

Jim Chuchu is co-founder and general manager of The Nest Collective and is himself a filmmaker, musician, and artist. His photographs and visual artworks have been shown around the globe. His series "Invocations" belongs to the collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. From 2012 to 2019, Jim directed and played in film projects for The Nest and recorded and produced film projects. Moreover, he is responsible for strategic planning and programming at The Nest.

Julia Friedel studied African languages, literatures and art at the University of Bayreuth and the interdisciplinary master's programme in the theory, history and criticism of curatorial studies at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main. At the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein she was the curatorial assistant for the touring exhibition "Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design". Julia has been curator for the Africa collection at the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt since 2016, and her special interests are contemporary African art and research into objects in the collection from colonial contexts.

Njeri Gachihi is an anthropologist with particular interests in Indigenous knowledge, medical anthropology, forensic anthropology, traditional African religion, visual African art, material culture, museology and collections management. For the last fifteen years she has been working for National Museums of Kenya as a curator, coordinator for public programmes and research scientist.

Frauke Gathof studied ethnology, social and cultural anthropology, and peace and conflict research at universities in Frankfurt and

Marburg. Her specialist areas are material culture, conflict anthropology and migration research with an emphasis on North and East Africa. Since 2019 she has been active as a research assistant in the Africa collection of the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main.

Clara Himmelheber is head of the African collections at the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne and a lecturer at the University of Cologne. She has been curator and co-curator of numerous exhibitions, including "Namibia - Germany: A Shared/Divided History, Resistance, Violence, Memory" (Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne, 2004 and Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin, 2004/2005). Clara has a doctorate in African studies from the University of Cologne.

Sam Hopkins is an artist who is interested in how various media can produce different truths. He has participated in diverse exhibitions such as biennials in Lagos, Dakar and Moscow, and has exhibited in museums such as Dortmunder U, Kunstmuseum Bonn and Kunsthaus Bregenz. In addition, his works are represented in the collections of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Abteiberg Museum and Iwalewahaus. Currently he is an assistant professor at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne (KHM). In 2014, "Foreign Policy" magazine named Sam one of the hundred most important global thinkers.

Lydia Nafula has an academic background in anthropology and development studies. She now works for National Museums of Kenya (NMK) as a research scientist in the Cultural Heritage department. Lydia has been involved in the development of several exhibitions, including "Kanga Stories: The Cloth That Reveals" in 2011. Through her role in science and ethics at the NMK, every two years she heads scientific exhibition projects and conferences for the institution.

Leonie Neumann studied ethnology, sociology and cultural anthropology at the University of Göttingen, where she specialised in East Africa with an emphasis on Zanzibar. She has been working at the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main since 2018. As the deputy head of the department for visual anthropology she has been involved with two exhibitions at the museum, Moreover, in 2020 she curated the special exhibition "SW5Y - Five Years of Civilian Sea Rescue" in conjunction with the sea rescue organisation Sea-Watch e.V. She has been a curator in the Africa section since May 2020.

Njoki Ngumi is an artist, writer and feminist thinker who has held positions in private and public health care sectors in Kenya. As a founding member of The Nest Collective, she has been co-writer and screenwriter for many of The Nest's film projects. Her keen eyes and ears are a critical component of the collective's post-production process, as well as its strategic and research outputs. Moreover, she coordinates external collaborative projects for The Nest and serves as programmes and strategy lead for its sister company HEVA.

Marian Nur Goni is a historian and art historian whose work is primarily concerned with collection histories in and from East Africa, which she often investigates from a diasporic perspective and which raise questions about historiography and processes surrounding the creation of cultural heritage. Marian is currently researching the collection of Joseph Murumbi in Nairobi as part of the pan-African debates on issues surrounding material culture, museums and restitution from the 1950s to 1970s. She did her PhD in history and art history at EHESS in Paris.

Philemon Nyamanga has a background in anthropology, heritage conservation and risk management. He is a research scientist working for the National Museums of Kenya in the Cultural Heritage department. He has been involved in developing several exhibitions including "Kanga Stories: The Cloth That Reveals" (2011), "Jomo Kenyatta International Airport Exhibition" (2016), "Abasuba Pictorial Exhibition" (2017), "Omieri Exhibition" (2018), "Central Bank of Kenya Numismatic Exhibition" (2018), "Biennale NMK Science Expos" (2010-2019) and "Nelson Mandela: A Centenary Celebration" (2018). Philemon has been a member of the exhibitions committee at Nairobi National Museum since 2012.

Niklas Obermann studied art history and visual history at the Humboldt University in Berlin. After a semester at the University of Nairobi he took up his work for IIP. His research primarily investigates political iconography and cultural memory, particularly traces of colonialism in visual cultures.

Juma Ondeng' studied cultural heritage and international development at the University of East Anglia in the UK. He was involved in training programmes for museums as institutions in East Africa, focusing on collections care, exhibitions, museum education and public programmes. He is currently the principal curator at Kitale Museum, the regional museum in western Kenya. Juma was involved in curating the exhibitions "Nelson Mandela: A Centenary Celebration" (2018) and "Jijirama: 50 Years of Religion and Culture Change in Marsabit" (2008) at the Nairobi National Museum.

Simon Rittmeier is an artist and filmmaker. His works are both experimental and essayistic, addressing the power of images and their political consequences. From Havana to Ouagadougou via Tel Aviv, his films constantly shift between documentation and fiction. They are always the result of a close association between individual stories and places. Simon's works have been shown at international festivals and exhibitions, including the Oberhausen Short Film Festival, Visions du Réel in Nyon, Switzerland, and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York.

Anisha Helen Soff studied curatorial studies, art and cultural anthropology at the University of Bayreuth. Her research focused on

contemporary art in Nairobi with respect to the post-colonial discourse, gender and queer theory and the performative body. She has worked as a curatorial assistant on various exhibition projects at Iwalewahaus in Bayreuth. Since 2017, Anisha has been coordinating cultural projects at the Goethe-Institut in Kenya, where she is project manager for the International Inventories Programme.

Jane Pauline Waithera studied anthropology at the University of Nairobi, where she specialised in particular on various aspects of the human experience with respect to diverse cultures and demographics. She is also an intern at The Nest, with responsibility for the collective's social media engagement, website and newsletter, and joint responsibility for communication between Strictly Silk and IIP.

External authors:

George Abungu is a Cambridge-educated archaeologist and former general director of National Museums of Kenya. His research, publications and teaching span the fields of archaeology, cultural heritage management and museology. George is the founding professor of the MA for heritage management at the University of Mauritius and a member of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. He is the CEO of Okello Abungu Heritage Consultants.

Philip Jimbi Katana is an ICCROM-trained monument conservationist with a postgraduate degree in heritage management from Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage in the UK. From 1978 to 2011 he worked for National Museums of Kenya, initially as a researcher in the Coastal Archaeology and Heritage Conservation department and later as head curator of the Fort Jesus World Heritage Site and Museum. Since his retirement, Philip has been working with local communities along the Kenyan coast in order to transform their cultural heritage into a resource for development.

Jacky Kwonyike is a lawyer at the High Court of Kenya. She is passionately dedicated to her work for advocacy groups, government leadership, the media and social justice. In addition, Jacky was also part of the global movements seeking to improve health provision and creating an awareness of the health provision for mothers, family planning and the right to menstrual health.

Chao Tayiana Maina is a digital heritage specialist and digital humanities scholar. She is the founder of African Digital Heritage, a non-profit organisation based in Kenya that seeks to encourage a more critical, holistic and scientific approach to the design and implementation of digital solutions within African cultural heritage. Clara is also a co-founder of the Museum of British Colonialism and the Open Restitution Project Africa.

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PROJECT PARTNERS

The Nest (Kenya)

Experts: Jim Chuchu, Dr. Njoki Ngumi

A multi-disciplinary art collective based in Nairobi which undertakes projects that explore Kenyan identities in the fields of film, fashion, music and visual art.

www.thisisthenest.com

SHIFT

Experts: Sam Hopkins, Dr. Marian Nur Goni, Simon Rittmeier

A collective of creative practitioners who engage in speculative imaginations about the cultural ebb and flow between the African continent and beyond.

National Museums of Kenya

Experts: Juma Ondeng', Lydia Nafula, Philemon Nyamanga

The National Museums of Kenya is a multi-disciplinary state corporation of over thirty regional institutions, tasked with collecting, preserving, studying, documenting and presenting Kenya's past and present cultural and natural heritage.

www.museums.or.ke

Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum Cologne

Expert: Clara Himmelheber

In the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum still enjoys a special status: as the sole public institution of its kind, for more than a century now it has been dedicated to educating people about aspects of non-European history, culture and art through a wide-ranging programme of exhibitions and events. As such it is fulfilling an educational remit that is increasingly important in negotiating current issues and problems of the sort that emerge when people live together in a multicultural society: it is only by knowing about other cultures and other ways of living that we can promote mutual understanding, regard and tolerance between people who are living side by side.

www.rautenstrauch-joest-museum.de

Weltkulturen Museum Frankfurt am Main

Experts: Leonie Neumann, Frauke Gathof, Julia Friedel

The Weltkulturen Museum is an ethnological museum dedicated to interdisciplinary collaboration. It operates at the interface between ethnology and art. As a museum run by the city of Frankfurt it links

the local with the global. The museum is engaged in active international exchanges with partners from Indigenous cultures and non-European societies.

www.weltkulturenmuseum.de

Goethe-Institut

Experts: Anisha Soff, Sheila Akwany

The Goethe-Institut is the globally active cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany. With 158 institutes in 98 countries it promotes the study of German abroad, encourages international cultural exchange and gives an impression of what Germany is like today. Through partnerships with institutions in numerous other locations, the Goethe-Institut has about a thousand points of contact around the world.

www.goethe.de

www.goethe.de/kenia

German Federal Cultural Foundation

The German Federal Cultural Foundation promotes art and culture within the scope of federal competence. One of its main priorities is to support innovative programmes and projects at an international level. It also develops the potential for artistic and interdisciplinary knowledge in order to address social issues. The Federal Cultural Foundation focuses on cultural exchange and cross-border cooperation by initiating projects of its own and funding project proposals in all areas of the arts with no stipulations as to theme or subject. Moreover, it promotes cultural highlights such as the documenta art show, the Theatertreffen theatre festival, and the Donaueschinger Musiktage music festival. The Foundation was established on 21 March 2002 by the German federal government represented by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. It is a civil-law foundation and has its headquarters in Halle an der Saale, Germany. The Federal Cultural Foundation is financed with a fixed amount of 35 million euros annually, provided through the budget of the State Minister of Cultural and Media Affairs.

www.kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de

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OBJECT DESCRIPTIONS FOR COLOGNE (SELECTION)

Five objects from the collection of the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum
(Cologne)



***Kondo*, head covering**

Luo, Kenya, 20th century

Leather, horn, kauri, gourd, hair (of animal origin)

Height 31.6 cm, width 32.3 cm, depth 21.4 cm

Artist / artisan: not documented

Collector: probably Ernst Kotz, Cologne

Previous owner: Georg Küppers-Loosen, Cologne

In Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum since 1910

Inventory number: 25163

This head covering (*kondo*) came to the RJM in 1910 as a gift from Georg Küppers-Loosen, one of the museum's patrons. The donor probably purchased the object from Ernst Kotz, a missionary who had worked in the Luo region. In the museum's original records the object is erroneously labelled "~~Häuptlingskrone der Kavirondo~~" ("~~Chieftain's crown of the Kavirondo~~"), thereby containing not one but two derogatory terms no longer in use today. Thanks to the work of research scientists at the NMK, it became apparent that the label was incorrect not only linguistically but also in terms of its content. The object is the standard head covering of an older man rather than the status symbol of a figure with political authority. It is unclear who labelled the object inaccurately, but designating it as a "crown" certainly raised its (market) value.



Adwel, woman's apron

Turkana, Kenya, 20th century

Leather, glass (beads)

Height 61 cm, width 31.4 cm, depth 4.3 cm

Artist / artisan: not documented

Previous owner: Institut für Afrikanistik, University of Cologne

In Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum since 2006

Inventory number: 61880

The Turkana use beads not only on account of their beauty but also because they indicate the status of an individual in society: they show the wearer's age, marital status and status. Beads have a special significance not just in Kenya, but also among members of the Kenyan diaspora, because they represent their Kenyan identity. The beads on this apron probably come from what used to be Bohemia (nowadays in the Czech Republic). As long ago as 1830, traders from New England (United States) sold large quantities of Bohemian beads along the East African coast - an early example of globalisation.



Ndoyo, tobacco pipe

Kamba (Akamba), Kenya, late 19th / early 20th century

Clay

Height 2.8 cm, width 20.2 cm, depth 3 cm

Artist / artisan: not documented

Collector: Eduard Itzerott, Nassau (Lahn)

In Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum since 1905

Inventory number: 14998

This pipe, which was originally used by women, is a fascinating testament to cultural change. Today women in Kenya are accused of "Westernised behaviour" if they smoke. Yet research by scholars at the NMK has shown that women did indeed smoke until the early twentieth century, and the condemnation of this practice most likely emanated from Western missionaries.

The pipe is part of the first collection of Kenyan objects that came to the RJM in 1905. In that year the museum acquired a collection of thirty-one Kamba objects from Eduard Itzerott, a florist from Nassau (in the Lahn region of North Rhine-Westphalia). So why did a flower trader specialising in roses travel from Germany to Kenya around 1900? Today Kenya is the largest supplier of roses for the European market. However, the scanty available information suggests that the flower trade in Kenya only began after the Second World War, rather than at the start of the twentieth century. Did this mean that Eduard Itzerott was possibly a pioneer?



Kichanuo, comb

Swahili, Kenya, 20th century

Wood

Height 6.5 cm, width 19 cm, depth 0.8 cm

Artist / artisan: not documented

Permanent loan: Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde zur Förderung des Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museums, Cologne

In Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum since 1987

Inventory number: 52552

The comb was donated in 1987 by a married couple who lived near Cologne. The couple gifted the museum a collection of twenty-four objects from Kenya which had been collected between 1968 and 1973. They were given a receipt for the donation which noted the value of the entire collection at over 2,000 deutschmarks (by way of comparison, in 1987 the average monthly income was 2,096 deutschmarks while a loaf of bread cost 3.06 deutschmarks). Judging by the kind of objects in the collection, the collectors seem to have been employees of international organisations or tourists who had bought items from Kenyan markets. Wooden combs like this one play a major role in the natural hair movement today. Since the era in which people of African heritage were enslaved, afro hair has been depicted as supposedly "other", "exotic" or "inferior". The pressure on Black, Indigenous

and People of Colour (BIPoC) to straighten their hair in order to make it more similar to the hair of white people is one result of this racist discourse. The afro became a symbol for the re-emergence of Black self-confidence during the Black civil rights movement in the United States of the 1960s and 1970s. In the last twenty years, "natural hair" has once more become an issue among BIPoC.



Ngakoromua, coin necklace

Turkana, Kenya, 20th century

Leather, metal

Height 10.5 cm, width 9.7 cm, depth 0.7 cm

Artist / artisan: not documented

Previous owner: Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde zur Förderung des Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museums, Cologne

In Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum since 1987

Inventory number: 52563

Why are there Italian coins in Kenyan jewellery? The modern-day state of Somalia was originally divided into two states, under Italian and British colonial administration. Italian-administered Somalia bordered Kenya's northern territory. Thus today there are still Somalis living in Kenya who have close cultural, clan-related and economic ties to the former colony. This explains the presence of Italian coins in Kenya.

Even today, many Kenyans hold on to old coins for a while before throwing them away. Some people give them new value through recycling: while conducting research for the exhibition, Kenyan scientists interviewed Lucas Chelelgo, a self-taught ringmaker who produces wedding rings from old coins. Media exposure has made him a local celebrity in Kenya. In Germany, an interview was conducted with coin-cutter Katrin Thull, who manufactures high-end jewellery from cheap coins at Münzsägewerk in Bonn.

PRESS CONTACT Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum - Cultures of the World

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www.rautenstrauch-joest-museum.de

WELTKULTUREN MUSEUM

OBJECT DESCRIPTIONS FRANKFURT AM MAIN

Eight objects from the collection of the Weltkulturen Museum
(Frankfurt am Main)



Kanga, Wrap

Producer: Tasini, Tanzania, 1971

Cotton

H. 153cm, W. 103,2cm

Collector: Dr Johanna Agthe

In the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt am Main since 1974

Inventory Number: N.S. 51206

Photo: Peter Wolff

The *kanga* is a rectangular printed cloth that is used by women children and occasionally by men as an item of clothing. It is also used to carry heavy loads or a baby on the back. This *kanga* was acquired by Dr Johanna Agthe, the curator at the time for the Africa Department at the Museum für Völkerkunde (now Weltkulturen Museum) during her research and collecting trip to Mombasa in 1974. It was printed by the company Tasini in Tanzania, presumably in 1971. In that year, Kenya was celebrating its eighth anniversary of independence from British colonial rule. For this reason, the emblem - the cockerel - of the then ruling party, the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU), and the former President of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta (1964-1978) are shown on the *kanga*. As well as the colours of the national flag - black, red, green and white - are used.



Ndoome, 'Dance Shield'

Kikuyu, Kenya, 19th/20th century

Wood, colour pigments

H. 66.5cm, W. 40.5cm, D. 2cm

Artist/craftsperson: not documented

Dealer: William Ockleford Oldman

In the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt am Main since 1911

Inventory Number: N.S. 13361

Photo: Peter Wolff

Ndoome is a Gikūyū name referring to a leaf-shaped wooden object that has an arm grip on the back to fasten it on the upper arm (biceps). It is used during dances and circumcision ceremonies. On March 25, 1911, the Völkermuseum (today the Weltkulturen Museum) in Frankfurt a.M. (Germany) acquired this Kikuyu 'dance shield' from the London-based dealer William Ockleford Oldman (1879–1949) for 90 marks. Oldman was a British dealer and collector. He bought and sold objects from Africa, America, Southeast Asia and Europe with a collecting focus on weapons and armour. Today, the collection of the Weltkulturen Museum contains about 490 objects acquired from Oldman, four of them from Kenya.



Elongo, Shield

Maasai, Kenya, 19th/20th century

Wood, buffalo skin

H. 117cm

Artist/craftsperson: not documented

Previous owner: The Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, London,
Great Britain

In the Weltkulturen Museum Frankfurt since 1955

Inventory Number: N.S. 39208

Photo: Peter Wolff

This wooden- and buffalo skin-made shield of the Maasai is mainly used for defense and protection during wars and hunting. Also the shield is carried during dances in special ceremonies to mark the coming of age of a new group of initiates. This *elongo* was originally part of the collection of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum in London that was built on the collection of the British entrepreneur Sir Henry Wellcome (1853-1936). The Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt am Main received this shield within a donation of around 500 objects in 1955 from the Wellcome Museum.



Hirizi, Necklace (Talisman/Charm)

Swahili, Kenya, 20th century

Silver

L. (chain) 34cm

Artist/craftsperson: not documented

Collector: Dr Johanna Agthe

In the Weltkulturen Museum since 1974

Inventory Number: N.S. 50964

Photo: Peter Wolff



Hirizi ya fedha, Amulet (protective silver amulet)

Swahili, Kenya, 20th century

Silver

H. 3.2cm, W. 4.8cm

Artist/craftsperson: unknown goldsmith in Mombasa

Collector: Dr Johanna Agthe

In the Weltkulturen Museum since 1974

Inventory Number: N.S. 50987

Photo: Peter Wolff

These talismans were originally made by silver/gold smiths of the Swahili community. The Swahili are a Bantu speaking community who is well known for their cultural heritage. There are situated along the East African Coast between southern Somalia and northern Mozambique. *Hirizi* are worn around the neck or waist and are used for protection. Usually there is a verse of the Koran in the pendant. The necklace (*hirizi*) and the amulet (*hirizi ya fedha*) were acquired in the spring of 1974 from various goldsmiths in Mombasa by the then curator of the Africa Department of the Museum für Völkerkunde (today: Weltkulturen Museum) Dr Johanna Agthe.



Snuff box (Frankfurt)

Kamba, Kenya, 19th / 20th century

Horn, leather, iron

H. 10.5cm, stick 15.3cm

Artist/craftsperson: not documented

Collector: probably Carl Georg Schillings

Previous owner: Königlichen Zoologischen und Anthropologisch-Ethnographischen Museum (now: Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden)

In the Weltkulturen Museum since 1910

Inventory Number: N.S. 13134

Photo: Peter Wolff

Within the Kamba community, snuff is used for healing rituals and serves as a bartering commodity during wedding ceremonies. Snuff containers are personal items that are modified according to its owner. Usually they were made by men and used by old men. This snuff box was probably collected by Carl Georg Schillings - a German hunter and wildlife photographer - on his first expedition to North and East Africa in 1896. He donated it together with other objects to the Königliches Zoologisches und Anthropologisch-Ethnografisches Museum, Dresden in 1898. The Völkermuseum (now: Weltkulturen Museum) Frankfurt am Main purchased it from the Dresden Museum in 1910.



Kamba figure (Frankfurt)

Kamba, Kenya, 1974

Wood

H. 65.5cm

Artist: Joseph Mulli

Collector: Dr Johanna Agthe

In the Weltkulturen Museum since 1974

Inventory Number: N.S. 51108

Photo: Peter Wolff

This wooden sculpture of an old man is a commissioned artwork of the carver Joseph Mulli. Dr Johanna Agthe met him during her research stay in Kenya in 1974. She commissioned him to make this work, which was intended for the collection of the Frankfurt Museum. Mulli belonged to the Kamba ethnic group, who had produced a large proportion of the carvings for tourists in Kenya since the end of World War I and who operated their own company to distribute and export the goods (mainly to the USA). In an interview with Johanna Agthe Mulli criticised the restricted choice of carving motifs as a consequence of the pressure to sell. It meant that most of the sold carvings showed stereotypical figures and critical or political themes were rarely depicted.



Finger ring

Swahili (?), Kenya, 20th century

Coin, silver

Diameter 1.9cm

Artist/craftsperson: not documented

Collector: Dr Johanna Agthe

In the Weltkulturen Museum since 1974

Inventory Number: N.S. 50983

Photo: Peter Wolff

This ring was made from a one rupee coin minted in India in 1914. Dr Johanna Agthe bought this ring in Mombasa in 1974. According to her information, the ring may have been made by a Swahili. Even today, old coins are used to produce new jewellery like necklaces or rings. This recycling process gives them new value and usage.

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WELTKULTUREN MUSEUM

PREPRINT FROM WELTKULTUREN NEWS 05:

KOOPERATION/ COOPERATION

A COOPERATION AND MANY VOICES ON RESTITUTION AND COLONIALISM

**THE INTERNATIONAL INVENTORIES PROGRAMME GIVES A VOICE TO THOSE WHO
HAVE RARELY BEEN HEARD**

How can make Kenyan cultural assets that are possessed by institutions in the Global North be made accessible to present-day Kenyan society?

The exhibition series Invisible Inventories will open its last show "Invisible Inventories: Questioning Kenyan Collections in Western Museums" on 5th October 2021 at the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt.

The "International Inventories Programme" (IIP) is an artistic, research and curatorial project that investigates a corpus of Kenyan cultural objects held in institutions in the North. It aspires to open up the discourse on restitution, which has gained new momentum since 2017, by distributing African perspectives that are barely represented in international discussions. Initiated by artists and developed over three years (2018–2021), IIP brings together a constellation of cultural entities: the National Museums of Kenya, the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne, the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt, and the collectives The Nest (Nairobi) and SHIFT (France/Germany). One of the core elements of the project is the creation of a database, arguing for more transparency within museums' archives. It contains information on 32,321 objects stored in museums outside Kenya.

VOICES OF IIP:

Sheila Akwany (Goethe-Institut Nairobi): Restitution is a step toward recognising the plunder and systematic destruction and devaluing of the African culture and way of life.

Njeri Gachihi (National Museums of Kenya): In this project I have had to wear two hats: that of a museum professional and a community representative, while still remaining objective. Being part of this dialogue has been particularly enriching, allowing me to openly reflect more deeply on both perspectives.

Sam Hopkins (SHIFT Collective): Restitution means discussion, debate and education; nourishing an awareness of the injustices of colonialism, tracing how the power asymmetries were established then continue to be perpetuated today, and establishing democratic

processes which lead towards an equitable co-habitation on our planet.

Lydia Nafula (National Museums of Kenya): It has been an interesting experience in which knowledge has been exchanged and various perspectives have been shared on individual objects.

Marian Nur Goni (SHIFT Collective): Fully reconsidering, and making visible, the often dark histories of collections and objects held in European museums represent a much-needed opportunity to fully engage with a past which has never really passed: a past which not only shapes museums but also powerfully structures our cities and imaginaries.

Philemon Nyamanga (National Museums of Kenya): A cultural object has very important messages about the community from which it was made and used. If we can ascertain to what extent the objects were either craftily or forcefully acquired then we can rightly advocate for their restitution to the concerned communities, who deserve to be supported to take care of the returned objects.

Juma Ondeng' (National Museums of Kenya): The violence doesn't necessarily mean physical; some forms of violence included religious conversion, punitive military expeditions and the use of legislation to proscribe local cultural practices and the associated objects.

Anisha Helen Soff (Goethe-Institut Nairobi): As Achille Mbembe pointed out: we have to acknowledge the "radical loss" of something priceless that cannot be compensated for.

Leonie Neumann and Frauke Gathof (Weltkulturen Museum): Restitution should mark the beginning of a comprehensive process of equal exchange - a process of historical reappraisal and acceptance of responsibility. The restitution debate forces institutions to question their own collections, past and present power relations, and to engage in communication with societies of origin.

Jim Chuchu and Njoki Ngumi (The Nest Collective): We doubt, a little, the effectiveness of the exhibition format (...) in communicating some of the more affective issues on this topic - particularly as the structure of the IIP group (consisting of parties from wildly differing worldviews, backgrounds and skillsets) tends to average our ideological positions towards the neutral - but perhaps, in a post-truth world, neutral positions invite more introspection within audiences than polarising stances?

Jim Chuchu (The Nest Collective): I can't believe we're still protesting this shit.

Simon Rittmeier (SHIFT Collective): During the three-year process of IIP my opinion has changed: While in the beginning the objects were pretty much attached to the attributes "loss" and "guilt", they have

now become "traces" and "evidence". They represent an uncomfortable truth and urge us to look at our own colonial history.

Clara Himmelheber (Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum): We would like to shed light on the entangled stories behind the objects and the many different perspectives on these artefacts - and what the absence of these objects in Kenya means to Kenyans in the country and in the diaspora.

In collaboration with the Goethe-Institut Nairobi. Sponsored by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

WELTKULTUREN MUSEUM

MISSION STATEMENT

The Weltkulturen Museum is an ethnological museum which is committed to interdisciplinary cooperation. It operates at the intersection of ethnology and art.

As a museum of the city of Frankfurt, it connects the local and global levels. It is engaged in an active process of international exchange with partners from indigenous cultures and non-European societies.

As a forum for transcultural exchange we promote the diverse spectrum of worldviews, historiographies, religions and aesthetics, as well as an acceptance and appreciation of the same.

We are committed to preserving, looking after and researching the collections in dialogue with their societies of origin, and with artists and scholars.

A key goal is researching provenance and critically reappraising colonial contexts.

The Weltkulturen Museum stands against any kind of exclusion or stigmatisation and seeks to contribute to processes of decolonisation.

We work together as a team to bring our projects to fruition and value the wishes and needs of our visitors.

WELTKULTUREN MUSEUM

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EXHIBITION

"Invisible Inventories: Questioning Kenyan Collections in Western Museums"

6 October to 9 January 2022

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WELTKULTUREN MUSEUM

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW 2021 - 2022

Green Sky, Blue Gras: Colour Coding Worlds

Extended August 29, 2022

Our world(s) are full of colours, but not every culture sees things in the same way. While the biological capacity for perception is identical all over the world, the meanings and associations thereby evoked can sometimes differ greatly. Featuring exhibits in the museum's collection from locations such as New Guinea, the Amazon, Tibet and Java, this exhibition explores the material nature of colours and examines research from the perspectives of language and symbolism.

Weltkulturen Museum, Schaumainkai 29, 60594 Frankfurt am Main
Admission: € 7 / concessions € 3.50
Free admission for children and teenagers under the age of 18!
Opening times: Tue-Sun 11am - 6pm, Wed 11am - 8pm

Invisible Inventories: Questioning Kenyan Collections in Western Museums

6 October 2021 to 9 January 2022

How can we make Kenyan cultural assets that are possessed by institutions in the Global North accessible to present-day Kenyan society. This question is addressed by the International Inventories Programme, which brings together Kenyan and European artists and scholars.

The core aim of the project is to develop a database of all Kenyan objects in European and North American museums. A visualisation of this database will now be presented along with further scholarly and artistic contributions to the project in the exhibition "Invisible Inventories", held at the three participating museums.

Nairobi National Museum:

From 18 March to 30 May 2021; www.museums.or.ke

Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum Köln:

From 28 May to 29 August 2021; www.rautenstrauch-joest-museum.de

Weltkulturen Labor, Schaumainkai 37, 60594 Frankfurt am Main

Admission: € 3 / concessions € 1.50

free admission for children and teenagers under the age of 18!

Opening times: Tue.-Sun. 11am - 6pm, Wed. 11am - 8pm