LESSON 16: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

A Wall of Status and Prestige, Africa, Asia and the Americas

Fig. 3.9

Belt mask. Edo peoples, Kingdom of Benin, present-day Nigeria, 18th century. Brass. H: 19.05 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.9087.

Unit 3

LESSON 16: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

A Wall of Status and Prestige, Africa, Asia and the Americas

Lesson Summary and Objectives

Through a study of twelve works on display, students investigate how works of art can convey status and prestige. Provided with short commentaries on the objects, they should determine how the works confer status and then add to the list prestige objects of their own choosing, justifying their selections with short written discussions on the objects. Students will

- Study twelve works of art to investigate how art can convey an individual's status and importance.
- Explore objects of power in their own lives through a creative writing activity.
- Make judgments about works of art that express notions of power and status.

Background Information

Personal power and prestige can be expressed through articles worn on the body, carried, displayed near an individual of importance, or displayed in a place of importance in the home. These may include emblems, insignia, or jewelry; objects made from rare and precious materials; labor-intensive works of art; and things of beauty, refinement, elegance, and grace. This section, *Status and Prestige*, features articles in a variety of materials, from gold, ivory, jade, and brass to hippopotamus teeth, shell, and feathers.

Prestige objects can be found in almost every culture worldwide, and their role often is to augment a person physically and metaphorically. Dramatic garments aggrandize their wearers, emblems extend their owners' reach, and worldly possessions signal wealth and power. Through the ownership of such objects, a person symbolically becomes more than him- or herself.

Tusk, Kongo peoples, Loango Coast, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Circa 1850. H: 42 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. The Jerome L. Joss Collection. X91.297.

LESSON 16: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

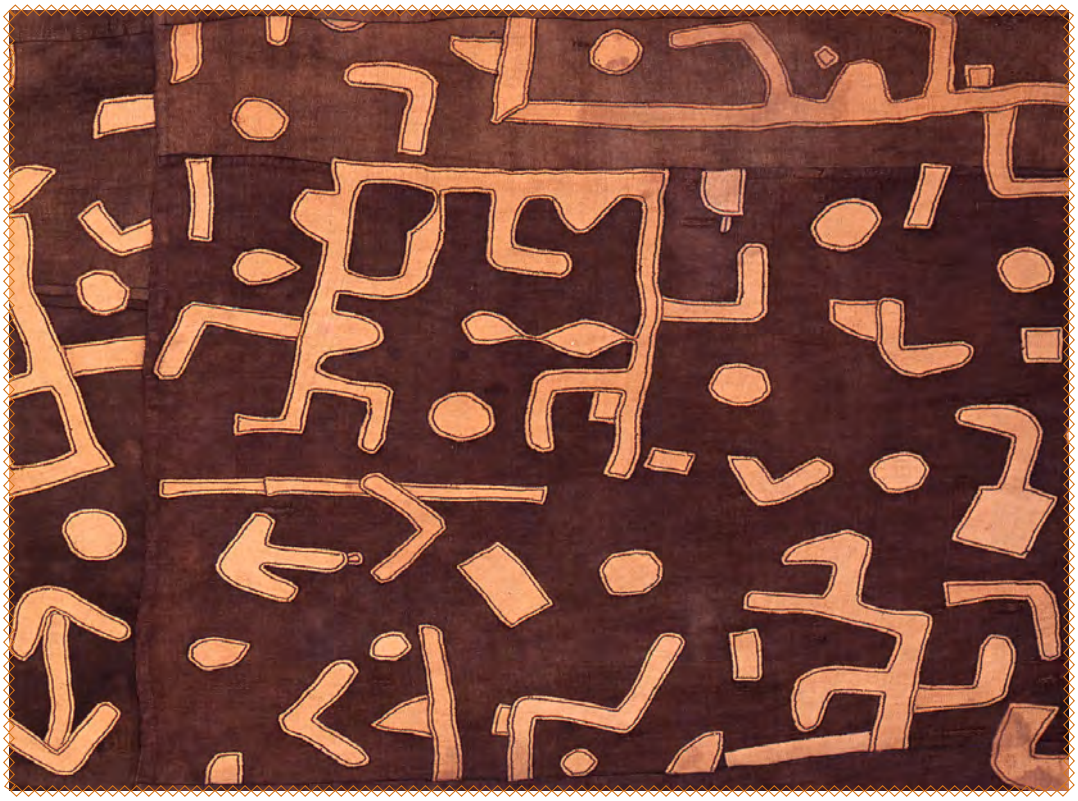
A Wall of Status and Prestige, Africa, Asia and the Americas

About the Artist

Even though only one object on this wall carries the name of its artist-maker, (the counselor staff made by Osei Bonsu [1900-1977]) we can say with some assurance that the makers of most, if not all, of the objects displayed here, held status of their own by virtue of their skills and talents.

Some of the objects here are the result of concentrated, long-term labor by a single artist; others result from more erratic attention given to the production after satisfaction of regular daily chores, such as farming, were completed.

Some of the artists worked alone to create a piece, and other objects (i.e., the Loango tusk, on page 159) represent the cooperative work of members of recognized guilds. And while the working of some materials was the prerogative of only men, and others that of women, some pieces were customarily produced by members of both groups. The Kuba cloth on display (detail below), for instance, bears geometric designs added by women to the raffia leaf fibers that had been woven by men.



Detail
Skirt. Kuba peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century. Raffia, natural dye. L: 404 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Christensen Fund. X86.904.

Curriculum Connections

1. Proclaiming Status

Activity

In the *Art and Power* section of ***Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives*** one wall displays over twenty objects of status and prestige representing a variety of cultures. Some of these are included here as **Handout STATUS AND PRESTIGE**.

Information about these objects, in the form of museum labels, accompanies their illustrations in a simplified format. Typically on the first line the artist is identified if known. If the artist is unknown, the object is identified, followed on the second line by the people with whom it is associated. The third line tells the date of manufacture (sometimes beginning with "circa" when dating is problematic). The last line names the material(s), usually with the most important or prevalent material listed first. Sometimes, as in these labels, additional information about the object is given.

> **Osei Bonsu (Kumase, Ghana 1900-1977)**.
> Counselor's staff.
> Circa 1930.
> Wood, gold leaf
>
> Carried by the cief's counselor on all public occasions, the staff is an important piece of Akan regalia, and conveys the importance of the chief and of the counselor who acts as his spokesperson and advisor.

The objects are included here because their use or display calls out the high standing of an individual. As students look at the variety of pieces with their annotations, they should try to determine why an object confers prestige by the culture for whom it was made. Is it because the object is made of rare or precious materials? Is it because the execution of the work required an extraordinary amount of time or skill? Is it because wearing or displaying the object is the prerogative of a select few?

What other qualities might make any of the objects worthy of display on this *Wall of Status and Prestige*? Students will be able to respond to the above issues on the **Handout STATUS AND PRESTIGE**.

Let students also select one or more of the objects as subject for discussion on how (or if) students consider it a work of art. In what way does (or did) it add to the prestige or status of the owner or wearer?

Activity

You can have students categorize the objects into lists of a) items that are worn on the person or carried, and b) those that were used for display or decoration. For further consideration have students select an object from each category as the subject of an essay or story on how they feel when they wear the piece or when they come into a room where it is displayed.

Although it is not stressed, students could benefit from locating the continent for each object, and include Asia, Africa, and the Americas as categories for discussion.

Activity

Tell the class that this wall could be enlarged to accommodate three more cases. Have them decide what in their culture they would place in this display. Include at least one object to be worn or carried and one for display or decoration. A written language activity, prose or poetry, would elaborate on the experience.

Necklace. Zande peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 18th–19th century. Hippopotamus teeth, hide, metal. H: 33 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X67.881.

Photograph Captions

Handout STATUS AND PRESTIGE

A. Royal stool ornaments, Asante peoples, Kumase, Ghana. Before 1874. Gold. H: 12.5 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.8524, X65.8525

B. Belt mask, Edo peoples, Kingdom of Benin, present-day Nigeria. 18th century. Brass. H: 19.05 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.9087

C. Headdress, Paiwan peoples, Taiwan. Early 20th century. Cotton, glass beads, theeth, claws, hair, feathers, shell, fiber, yarn, bamboo, metal, brass. H: 47 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Museum purchase. X65.8159

D. Pectoral (*sipattal*). Isneg peoples, Apayao, northern Luzon, Philippines. Early–mid 20th century. Shell, beads, string. H: 24 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of Mrs. W. Thomas Davis. X85.446

E. Necklace, Zande-Mangbetu peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 18th–19th century. Hippopotamus teeth, hide, metal. H: 33 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X67.881

F. Necklace, Yemen, obtained in Israel. 19th–early 20th century. Silver. H: 37 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene L. Trope in memory of Sophia Friedman. X77.486

G. Jaina figure in ceremonial garb, Maya, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, or Honduras. Late Classic, 600-900 C.E. Ceramic, pigment. H: 20 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Promised gift of Barbara and Joseph Goldenberg. X2005.18.3

H. Dish for o'olikin oil, Tsimshian peoples, British Columbia, Canada. 19th century. Wood, paint. L: 24.5 cm, Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.7474

I. Container, sarimanok bird, Maranao peoples, Mindanao, Philippines. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, horn, metal. H: 22.8 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of Mrs. Elizabeth Lloyd Davis. X82.1545

J. Osei Bonsu (Kumase, Ghana, 1900-1977), Counselor's staff. Circa 1930. Wood, gold leaf. H: 38.5 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of Steve and Linda Nelson. X88.680a-c

K. Tusk, Edo peoples, Kingdom of Benin, present-day Nigeria. Early 19th century, probably commissioned by Oba Osamwende. Ivory. H: 179.7 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.9129

L. Skirt, Kuba peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo. 19th century. Raffia, natural dye. H: 404 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Christensen Fund. X86.904

Unit 3

LESSON 16: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

A Wall of Status and Prestige, Africa, Asia and the Americas

Note to Teachers:

This lesson is part of the curricular materials developed to accompany the exhibition ***Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives***. Although this and companion lessons are self-contained, each will be enhanced when used in conjunction with others in this resource. Addressing several lessons within each unit will facilitate the incorporation of the study of world arts and cultures into your curriculum.

The lesson is based on works in the thrid section of the exhibition called *Art and Power*. In this gallery works are introduced that serve to define and assert power. See "Unit Three—Art and Power" for an introductory statement on the unit, along with some provocative "Questions for Thought," and suggestions that will inspire the students to relate the unit to their own lives.

Images of objects to be shown to students may be printed as handouts (from within each lesson), viewed online at the ***Intersections*** web link http://collections.fowler.ucla.edu, or downloaded from the curriculum page on our website.

In this unit the topics and lessons are

Lesson 12: Empowering Leaders: Leadership Art of the Cameroon Grassfields, Africa

Lesson 13: Negotiating Gender: Portrayal of a Hunter: *Ere Egungun Olode*, Nigeria

Lesson 14: Negotiating Gender: Powerful Mother: *Ere Gelede*, Nigeria

Lesson 15: Status and Prestige: To Make the Chief's Words Sweet: A Counselor's Staff, Ghana

Lesson 16: Status and Prestige: A Wall of Status and Prestige, Africa, Asia, and the Americas

Lesson 17: Harnessing Spirits: Pacific Northwest Arts, United States and Canada

Lesson 18: Harnessing Spirits: The Hornbill: Bird of Prophecy, Malaysia

Unit 3

Handout: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

These photographs illustrate objects on the *Wall of Status and Prestige* and each is identified by a letter (A-L). Match the illustrations to the examples of museum labels on the accompanying 2-page handout by writing the correct letter in each box. Use the lines at the end of each label to express how the object denotes status or prestige.

Unit 3

Handout: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

FOR THE STUDENT

Benin belt mask

Edo peoples, Kingdom of Benin, Nigeria; Circa 1550–1650 B.C.E.; Brass

Edo chiefs wore this mask, its cheeks decorated with frogs. As frogs live in two worlds—those of land and water—royalty was thought to travel between the human and spirit worlds. This mask denotes status or prestige because _____.

Pectoral

Isneg peoples, Philippines; Early-mid 20th century, Shells, beads, string

On special occasions Isneg men and women wore cut shell pectorals suspended from a beaded collar. This pectoral denotes status or prestige because _____

_____.

Necklace

Zande-Mangbetu peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo; 18th–19th century; Hippopotamus teeth, hide, metal

The necklace effectively announced the wearer's skill as a hunter or his authority as a ruler who claims the rights to all big game animals. The necklace denotes status or prestige because _____

_____.

Bird container

Maranao peoples, Philippines; 19th–early 20th century; Wood, horn, metal

This sarimanok bird container, probably from a sultan's household, was used to hold lip wax or betel-chewing ingredients. The container denotes status or prestige because _____

_____.

Jaina figure in ceremonial garb

Maya peoples, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras; Late Classic, 600–900 C.E.

A figure such as this shows us how early Maya peoples displayed status and prestige through dress, jewelry, and ornamented headdress. These figures denote status or prestige because _____

_____.

Skirt

Kuba peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo; 19th century; Raffia, natural dye

Both men and women wear these textiles with bold geometric patterns. The skirts are markers of status and wealth and have been used as currency and in marriage negotiations. They are given to the family of a deceased person so he or she will be recognized in the land of the dead. This skirt denotes status and prestige because _____

_____.

Unit 3

Handout: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

FOR THE STUDENT

Tusk

Kongo peoples, Loango Coast, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Circa 1850; Ivory

European images of fact and fantasy—Queen Victoria and unicorns—share this elephant tusk with African elephants, leopards, and chimpanzees. This tusk denotes status and prestige because _____.

Dish for oil

Tsimishian peoples, British Columbia, Canada; 19th century; Wood, paint

The bowl in the form of a reclining male figure was a prestige item in a potlatch, a celebration that required elaborate feasting and gift giving. The bowl denotes status or prestige because _____.

Osei Bonsu (Kumase, Ghana 1900-1977)

Counselor's staff; Circa 1930; Wood, gold leaf

Carried by the chief's counselor on all public occasions, the staff is an important piece of Akan regalia, and conveys the importance of the chief and of the counselor who acts as his spokesperson and advisor. This staff denotes status or prestige because _____.

Royal stool ornaments

Asante peoples, Kumase, Ghana; Before 1874; Gold

These precious metal objects were attached to a chief's stool but when the British destroyed the Asante capital they took possession of the pieces and removed them to Britain to be made into jewelry. These denote status or prestige because _____.

Headdress

Paiwan peoples, Taiwan; Early 20th century; Cotton, beads, feathers, teeth, claw, hair, shell, fiber, yarn, bamboo.

With decorations of precious beads and wild animal teeth, this was the property of a person with high status. This headdress denotes status or prestige because _____.

Necklace

Yemen, obtained in Israel; 19th–early 20th century; Silver

Jewish silversmiths in Yemen made valuable heavy necklaces of solid silver that were worn by both Muslim and Jewish women. Many such necklaces were taken to Israel when Yemeni Jews emigrated there. This necklace denotes status or prestige because _____.

Unit 3

Handout: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

FOR THE TEACHER

B

Benin belt mask

Edo peoples, Kingdom of Benin, Nigeria; Circa 1550–1650 B.C.E.; Brass

Edo chiefs wore this mask, its cheeks decorated with frogs. As frogs live in two worlds—those of land and water—royalty was thought to travel between the human and spirit worlds. This mask denotes status or prestige because _____.

D

Pectoral

Isneg peoples, Philippines; Early-mid 20th century, Shells, beads, string

On special occasions Isneg men and women wore cut shell pectorals suspended from a beaded collar. This pectoral denotes status or prestige because _____

_____.

E

Necklace

Zande-Mangbetu peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo; 18th–19th century; Hippopotamus teeth, hide, metal

The necklace effectively announced the wearer's skill as a hunter or his authority as a ruler who claims the rights to all big game animals. The necklace denotes status or prestige because _____

_____.

I

Bird container

Maranao peoples, Philippines; 19th–early 20th century; Wood, horn, metal

This sarimanok bird container, probably from a sultan's household, was used to hold lip wax or betel-chewing ingredients. The container denotes status or prestige because _____

_____.

G

Jaina figure in ceremonial garb

Maya peoples, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras; Late Classic, 600–900 C.E.; Jaina

A figure such as this shows us how early Maya peoples displayed status and prestige through dress, jewelry, and ornamented headdress. These figures denote status or prestige because _____

_____.

L

Skirt

Kuba peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo; 19th century; Raffia, natural dye

Both men and women wear these textiles with bold geometric patterns. The skirts are markers of status and wealth and have been used as currency and in marriage negotiations. They are given to the family of a deceased person so he or she will be recognized in the land of the dead. This skirt denotes status and prestige because _____

_____.

Unit 3

Handout: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

FOR THE TEACHER

K

Tusk

Kongo peoples, Loango Coast, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Circa 1850; Ivory

European images of fact and fantasy—Queen Victoria and unicorns—share this elephant tusk with African elephants, leopards, and chimpanzees. This tusk denotes status and prestige because _____.

H

Dish for oil

Tsimishian peoples, British Columbia, Canada; 19th century; Wood, paint

The bowl in the form of a reclining male figure was a prestige item in a potlatch, a celebration that required elaborate feasting and gift giving. The bowl denotes status or prestige because _____.

J

Osei Bonsu (Kumase, Ghana 1900-1977)

Counselor's staff; Circa 1930; Wood, gold leaf

Carried by the chief's counselor on all public occasions, the staff is an important piece of Akan regalia, and conveys the importance of the chief and of the counselor who acts as his spokesperson and advisor. This staff denotes status or prestige because _____.

A

Royal stool ornaments

Asante peoples, Kumase, Ghana; Before 1874; Gold

These precious metal objects were attached to a chief's stool but when the British destroyed the Asante capital they took possession of the pieces and removed them to Britain to be made into jewelry. These denote status or prestige because _____.

C

Headdress

Paiwan peoples, Taiwan; Early 20th century; Cotton, beads, feathers, teeth, claw, hair, shell, fiber, yarn, bamboo.

With decorations of precious beads and wild animal teeth, this was the property of a person with high status. This headdress denotes status or prestige because _____.

F

Necklace

Yemen, obtained in Israel; 19th–early 20th century; Silver

Jewish silversmiths in Yemen made valuable heavy necklaces of solid silver that were worn by both Muslim and Jewish women. Many such necklaces were taken to Israel when Yemeni Jews emigrated there. This necklace denotes status or prestige because _____.

LESSON 17: HARNESSING SPIRITS

Pacific Northwest Arts, United States and Canada

Fig.3.10

Mask. Haida peoples, British Columbia, Canada. 19th century. Wood, graphite, paint, fabric, metal. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.4280.

Unit 3

LESSON 17: HARNESSING SPIRITS

Pacific Northwest Arts, United States and Canada

Lesson Summary and Objectives

A study of selected works of art from the Pacific Northwest will introduce students to the symbolism, materials, and uses of masks, and serve as inspiration for artmaking. Another activity focuses on students' discussion of the potlatch with its distribution of gifts. Students will

- Explore the uses and visual forms of masks in the Pacific Northwest (United States and Canada) through visual analyses and artmaking activities.
- Analyze the potlatch as a means of exchanging wealth and expressing status through discussion and oral language activities.
- Express their interpretation of the concept of transformation through the making of masks.

Background Information

Included among the arts of this region of the United States and Canada is a vast array of forms—among them wooden masks and containers, woven baskets and hats, horn bowls and spoons, and argillite (a type of stone) figures adorned with images of animals, humans, and spirits. A long history of interaction among Native American groups, including the Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit, contributed to the sharing of artistic ideas and images. Many art forms represented spirit beings and were made for their most important ceremonial occasion, the potlatch.

A potlatch is held to celebrate major events in the lives of individuals and groups (bestowing a name on an infant, initiation, marriage, death, passing on of a title), at the same time as it affirms lineage and the authority of high-ranking members of the community. It offers a major impetus for the production of art forms, conspicuously displayed and bestowed upon guests as thank-you-for-being-in-attendance gifts. The event, which can last several days, begins with a welcome by the host's representative, is followed by honoring the ancestors, and continues with feasting, music, dance, oration, and storytelling. These are reenacted as dance or drama, or told with masks and other visual props that depict animals and lineage crests.

When Europeans first arrived on the Northwest Coast in the 1700s, the potlatch was a well-established tradition, but its continuance was soon threatened. Along with newly acquired wealth from trade with Russian, Spanish, English, and American fur traders, came conflict and disease. Missionaries and government authorities

Background Information (cont.)

disapproved of many traditions and tried to end the potlatch observance, finally outlawing it in 1884. It was not until 1934 in Canada, and in 1951 in the United States that the governments repealed the laws. This once again made legal what had been practiced secretly in the intervening years.

About the Artist

By the early 1900s many Northwest Coast Indian traditions had been lost under government suppression of both daily and ceremonial life. Art continued to survive, though, in part because of tourist interest in carved wood, silver, gold, and stone. When the potlatch ban ended, artists created works not only for sale but also for ceremonial use in their own communities. Today artists still learn from each other as they share and develop their own styles. Many are trained in non-Native schools and produce work of both tradition-based and contemporary styles.

Frontless headdress, white owl. Nisga'a peoples, British Columbia, Canada. 19th century. Leather, vegetable fiber, walrus whiskers, wood, shell, paint, flannel. H: 17.8 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.4024.

Curriculum Connections

1. Four from the Pacific Northwest

Students will use the images (**Handout PACIFIC NORTHWEST ARTS**) for a variety of visual literacy activities.

Activity

Have students study the images, looking for similarities and differences among the objects from the Pacific Northwest that are displayed in this section of *Harnessing Spirits*. They will note the animal imagery, the use of wood, and the choice of shell for the eyes in two of the pieces, etc. The availability of materials, of course, determines their use and additional materials here include fabric, fiber, and walrus whiskers.

What animals do they see depicted on these objects? The animals are identified as follows: (a: orca whale headdress, b: raven rattle; c: wolf, dog or bear; d: white owl frontlet headdress)

Activity

Discuss the form and use of these objects. The masks and headdresses are worn at potlatches and other important events. The smaller frontlet headdresses function as important chiefly status symbols and the face-covering masks often display the transformation of animals into humans and back into animals. These masks are known as transformation masks.

Activity

Students can make their own transformation masks. Each mask will consist of three parts: two symmetrical sides representing the chosen animal and one complete representation of a human face comprising the center. When finished each of the two sides will be attached at their outer edges to the background center human face. The construction must allow for the two parts of the front mask to open and to close (small pieces of Velcro serve as convenient attaching mechanisms when glued to the base full mask and correspondingly to both half-masks.

Before students select the animal for their masks, they should consider the traits and abilities of the animals and the story they want to tell. Will theirs be an animal that comes to help them, or one they would like to become?

Activity (cont.)

They should think about the colors they will use (many groups in the Pacific Northwest use only black, red, and cream in their designs, others black, red-brown, and green), the size of the mask (will it cover the face or be more like a frontlet headdress?), and its shape. As they construct the masks they should incorporate techniques to help modify the shape by cutting, tearing and scoring the paper, and by curling and folding parts of it. Remember the mask needs to be "readable," both open and closed.

Artists manipulate designs to fit the shape of an object on which they are painting. Therefore it is common, when looking at examples of Northwest Coast art, to see shapes that are distorted and split. Students should have several opportunities to look at books addressing arts of the region to see examples of pieces displaying this characteristic. They will then be ready to experiment on their own, drawing within a shape the many separated segments of a figure (animal or human) often placed in unexpected juxtapositions to fit the space. Masks often incorporate this feature.

Students can utilize the basic shapes that are used as design elements in this region. The ovoid is a rounded rectangle often used to portray eyes, joints, and sometimes nostrils and ears. The U-form, resembling a thick letter "U" with ends tapering to sharp points, is used for body contours, tails, and ears.

Mask. Tsimshian peoples, British Columbia, Canada. 19th century. Wood, shells. H: 10.5 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.4267.

2. Four from the Pacific Northwest

A major component of the potlatch is the distribution of gifts to guests. By the host giving away valuable property, he is demonstrating his wealth (though it probably has taken a long time to accumulate the quantities he needs to give to the large number of invited guests) and it is with this wealth that a person gains social status. Elevated status generates respect from others and acknowledgment of the person's leadership. The recipients, in acknowledging the host's role and accepting his gifts, will in turn want to be recognized for their own importance, and reciprocate with potlatches at a later date.

Activity

Lead the students in a discussion about how we gain status, receive respect, and accumulate wealth. And then consider how we share our wealth—with whom and under what circumstances? (For many Northwest Coast Indians, the wealthiest people are those who not only accumulate the most, but also give it all away in a potlatch, as a sign of their ability to do so.) Does art figure in our acquisition or retention of status and wealth? Do we value respect? How can we gain respect in our society? Do we ever give people gifts hoping to gain their respect?

- "We are rich by measure of how much we give, not by what we gain" (Joseph 2005, 29).
- "When one's heart is glad, he gives away gifts. It was given to us by our Creator, to be our way of doing things, we who are Indians. The potlatch was given to us to be our way of expressing joy. Every people on earth is given something. This was given to us" (ibid., 59).
- "The gifts are a way of thanking people for witnessing the events of the potlatch" (ibid., 82).

Raven rattle. Tlingit peoples, Alaska. 19th–20th century. Wood, pigment, seeds. H: 30.50 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of Dorothy M. Cordry in memory of Donald B. Cordry. X84.715.

LESSON 17: HARNESSING SPIRITS

Pacific Northwest Arts, United States and Canada

Useful Readings

Alfred, Agnes
2004 *Paddling to Where I Stand.*
Vancouver: The University of British Columbia: UBC Press.

Hoyt-Goldsmith, Diane
1997 *Potlatch: a Tsimshian Celebration.*
New York: Holiday House. *

Joseph, Robert, ed.
2005 *Listening to Our Ancestors.* Washington, D.C.: National Museum of the American Indian Smithsonian Institution in Association with National Geographic.

McDermott, Gerald
1993 *Raven—A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest.*
New York: Voyager Books, Harcourt, Inc. *

* Children's books

Photograph Captions

Handout PACIFIC NORTHWEST ARTS

A. Headdress, killer whale, Haida peoples, British Columbia, Canada. 19th century. Wood, pigment, fiber. H: 68.58 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.4284

B. Rattle, Tlingit peoples, Alaska. 19th–early 20th century. Wood, pigment, seeds. H: 30.5 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of Dorothy M. Cordry in memory of Donald B. Cordry. X84.715

C. Mask, Tsimshian peoples, British Columbia, Canada. 19th century. Wood, shells. L: 22 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.4267

D. Frontlet headdress, while owl, Nisga'a peoples, British Columbia, Canada. 19th century. Leather, vegetable fiber, walrus whiskers, wood, shell, paint, flannel. L: 20.3 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.4024

Unit 3

LESSON 17: HARNESSING SPIRITS
Pacific Northwest Arts, United States and Canada

Note to Teachers:

This lesson is part of the curricular materials developed to accompany the exhibition ***Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives***. Although this and companion lessons are self-contained, each will be enhanced when used in conjunction with others in this resource. Addressing several lessons within each unit will facilitate the incorporation of the study of world arts and cultures into your curriculum.

The lesson is based on works in the third section of the exhibition called *Art and Power*. In this gallery works are introduced that serve to define and assert power. See "Unit Three—Art and Power" for an introductory statement on the unit, along with some provocative "Questions for Thought," and suggestions that will inspire the students to relate the unit to their own lives.

Images of objects to be shown to students may be printed as handouts (from within each lesson), viewed online at the ***Intersections*** web link http://collections.fowler.ucla.edu, or downloaded from the curriculum page on our website.

In this unit the topics and lessons are

Lesson 12: Empowering Leaders: Leadership Art of the Cameroon Grassfields, Africa

Lesson 13: Negotiating Gender: Portrayal of a Hunter: *Ere Egungun Olode*, Nigeria

Lesson 14: Negotiating Gender: Powerful Mother: *Ere Gelede*, Nigeria

Lesson 15: Status and Prestige: To Make the Chief's Words Sweet: A Counselor's Staff, Ghana

Lesson 16: Status and Prestige: A Wall of Status and Prestige, Africa, Asia, and the Americas

Lesson 17: Harnessing Spirits: Pacific Northwest Arts, United States and Canada

Lesson 18: Harnessing Spirits: The Hornbill: Bird of Prophecy, Malaysia

Unit 3

Handout: PACIFIC NORTHWEST ARTS

A

B

C

D

LESSON 18: HARNESSING SPIRITS

The Hornbill: Bird of Prophecy, Malaysia

Fig. 3.11
Hornbill figure. Iban peoples, Sarawak (Borneo), Malaysia. 19th–20th century. Wood, paint, thread, cloth. L: 84 cm. Fowler Museum at UCLA. Gift of the Wellcome Trust. X65.5653.

Unit 3

LESSON 18: HARNESSING SPIRITS
The Hornbill: Bird of Prophecy, Malaysia

Lesson Summary and Objectives

Study of a hornbill mask from Borneo introduces students to the natural history of the bird and to cultural practices related to it. Students' study leads to visual and performing arts activities and to their understanding of and respect for omens and other beliefs that are centered on observations of the natural world. Students will

- Explore the natural history and the symbolism of the hornbill in Borneo through research and artmaking activities.
- Engage in performing arts activities centered on an understanding of indigenous beliefs concerning the hornbill.
- Contextualize their study of the hornbill in other learning activities related to the study of the art and ritual of rice in Asia.

Background Information

To the Iban peoples of Borneo, the hornbill is known as a bird of prophecy. At the Gawai Kenyalang, greatest of all Iban festivals, many carved and painted hornbill figures are raised on tall poles. Perched on high, the spirits of the hornbill are ready to take messages from the human world to the upperworld, the world of spirits.

The Gawai Kenyalang is a major event requiring many months of preparation. The festival may last many days and people throughout the area are invited to partake of large quantities of food and drink. Preliminary rites begin at the flag-decorated longhouse—dwelling place of community members—and involve prayers, chants, offerings, dance, and the playing of drums and gongs to summon the spirits. Finally, after hours of incantations, the carved and painted hornbills are brought outside. More sacred speeches follow, offerings are placed in the birds' beaks, and the sacred images are attached to the poles, which are then raised into place.

In earlier times the Gawai Kenyalang celebrated victories of warfare. Today on Borneo, third largest island in the world, it celebrates the rice harvest. It is the most important festival in a year-long series of rites considered essential to the fundamental well-being of the community and to the successful cultivation of rice. The grain is believed to have a soul and must be treated respectfully.

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About the Artist

The Iban value creativity and artistic skills, especially in the carving of wood by men and the weaving of cloth by women. Before he is five years old a boy imitates his father, grandfather, and other local men as he makes simple items to be played with; works made later include more intricately decorated canoe paddles, armlets, and household and weaving tools. Not until his early forties will a talented carver be commissioned to carve a kenyalang such as the one displayed in the ***Intersections*** exhibition.

Curriculum Connections

1. Hornbills, Quilled and Otherwise

There are more than fifty species of hornbills, mainly in Africa and southern Asia. Of varying colors, dark and light, they are mainly recognized by their huge, downward curving bill topped by a large horny growth called a casque, and their long tail. The ivory-like casque of the Borneo species is larger than most others and prized as material for personal prestige ornaments. The bird's wingspan can measure up to six feet. Its flight begins with a loud rocket- or jet-like sound made by its large wings. Other sounds come from its great variety of birdcalls variously described as trumpets, bellows, brays, toots, barks and grackles. (See San Diego Zoo's website www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-hornbill.html. [8/11])

The breeding behavior of the hornbill is noteworthy. The male and female search together for a hole in a dead tree trunk. With the female inside, the two seal up the cavity's entrance, leaving a slit only large enough for the male to feed the entombed female, and after about 39 days the chicks as well. The mother bird breaks out of the nest after about a month following the hatching; the chicks remain about another 80 days.

The rhinoceros hornbill plays a major role in the origin stories and ritual life of nearly all groups on Borneo and at different levels it is important to nearly all. The birds serve as inspiration for Iban art, particularly the Gawai Kenyalang. Their graceful movements are emulated in dances, they symbolically play roles in young men's initiations, and they are used to foretell or prophesize the future. Their influence is seen in death rituals that last about the same time as the nesting period of the hornbill, after which the soul of the dead is considered set free from captivity.

Activity

Students can further research this unique bird and its relationship to human life, not only on Borneo, but also particularly in many parts of Africa. They can use this information for a creative dance or art project. One such activity follows.

The large carved birds at the Gawai Kenyalang festival, and on display in the *Harnessing Spirits* portion of the exhibition are noteworthy for the many curved embellishments of a basic bird form. After viewing the carved bird or its image here (**fig. 3.11**), students may interpret its appearance in a paper sculpture project. Using cut strips of paper and tagboard, they will first construct an outline version of the hornbill by joining the paper lengths to form the shape, including the casque. Use quilling techniques of rolling and creasing the paper strips to fill in and elaborate the form, taking inspiration from what the carvers have done with wood. Several sites on the Internet (keywords: paper, quilling instruction) illustrate the many possibilities with this effective technique.

2. Omens and Augury

For the Iban, spirits manifest as animals, insects, and birds to communicate with humans and to give them warnings and advice. Birds are particularly important and the Iban closely watch their flight and ground movements and listen to their calls. According to Scholar Jensen (1974), "When a bird utters a call and appears in sight, this is meaningful. The interpretation, however, depends on the direction of its flight. This may be either from right to left, called *mimpin* (which also includes passing on the right), or from left to right.... If the bird flies in the same direction as the Iban is himself progressing, this is a good sign. If it flies in the opposite direction, the Iban is more likely to consider it a bad omen. When the bird flies both ways across the Iban's track...it lacks confidence...and the prospects are not encouraging" (1974, 132).

Equally significant are the birdcalls—which bird is heard, when heard, when heard in relation to the person's activities (i.e. heard when first leaving the longhouse, while walking to [or from] the field, while hunting a prey, etc.).

Jensen writes, "Although general principles certainly apply, the birds may have differing significance for different people at different times. Individual Iban are permitted their own interpretation and the validity of this is borne out by the subsequent failure or success of their undertakings" (1974, 131).

Activity

Students' discussions on augury and omen should be grounded in their respect for the beliefs of a given community—traditions that are rooted in faith, accepted custom, and lived experience. Emphasize that using terms like "superstition" devalues the context and values from which the beliefs emerge.

Activity

Students can begin by talking about omens and predictions they have encountered in our contemporary society. Sports figures are known to go through specific routines before throwing a ball to ensure a good pitch, or wearing a specific item of clothing such as a jersey or a hat for each game to extend a winning streak, etc. Some people believe that if their hand itches they will receive money, others say a foot itching portends a trip, and an itching ear (or eye) means one will hear (or see) something new.

Activity

Give students the opportunity to set up specific situations in which events or actions can be seen as omens. You may want to limit the subject to animals (knowing full well about black cats crossing a path, and a groundhog seeing its shadow). Consider a spider: what might follow seeing a spider walk up (or down) a wall, or spinning a web between two trees or between two branches of one tree, or finding one in the living room (or another room) of the house, or seeing a web before arriving at school, or seeing a web with an insect already caught in it. Or you might want to limit the activity to bird subjects. Students can look up the significance of birds in many cultures including the owl as symbol of wisdom in ancient Greece, cranes as symbols of long life in many parts of Asia, and the dove as a sign of peace, before they propose possible situations of omens and consequences.

LESSON 18: HARNESSING SPIRITS

The Hornbill: Bird of Prophecy, Malaysia

. Rice and Art

Although earlier generations of Iban celebrated Gawai Kenyalang for wartime victories, today the festival is held to celebrate the rice harvest. Most Iban groups are engaged in rice cultivation, which continues to be a highly ritualized activity, although modern methods and concerns threaten perpetuation of many of the traditions. The festival is one of many rituals held throughout Asia to honor rice deities and ensure successful growth of this all-important crop. As elsewhere in Asia, art and ritual are often important components of the growing cycle. A wide variety of art traditions, specific to each group, includes representations of the rice deity; offerings to the rice goddess; painted and sculptural images of animals important to the growing; implements for planting, harvesting, and protecting the crops; decoration of the granaries that house the harvested crop, and pictorial representations of the rice agricultural calendar. The power of art is evidenced in all of these. Many are discussed in the Fowler Museum's Curriculum Resource Unit, *The Art of Rice: Spirit and Sustenance in Asia*, that accompanied the 2004 exhibition of that name, and there are appropriate classroom activities suggested.

Useful Readings

Avins, Lyn, and Betsy D. Quick
2004 *The Art of Rice: Spirit and Sustenance in Asia* Curriculum Resource Unit. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History.

Bosse, Malcolm
1993 *Deep Dream of the Rain Forest.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. *

Chin, Lucas, and Valerie Mashman, eds.
1991 *Sarawak Cultural Legacy: A Living Tradition.* Sarawak: Society Atelier Sarawah.

Jensen, Erik
1974 *The Iban and Their Religion.* London: Oxford University Press.

Myers, Christopher, and Lynne Born Myers
1994 *Forest of the Clouded Leopard.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. *

Sellato, Bernard
1989 *Hornbill and Dragon.* Jakarta: Elf Aquitaine Indonesia.

* Children's books

Unit 3

LESSON 18: HARNESSING SPIRITS
The Hornbill: Bird of Prophecy, Malaysia

Note to Teachers:

This lesson is part of the curricular materials developed to accompany the exhibition ***Intersections: World Arts, Local Lives***. Although this and companion lessons are self-contained, each will be enhanced when used in conjunction with others in this resource. Addressing several lessons within each unit will facilitate the incorporation of the study of world arts and cultures into your curriculum.

The lesson is based on works in the third section of the exhibition called *Art and Power*. In this gallery works are introduced that serve to define and assert power. See "Unit Three—Art and Power" for an introductory statement on the unit, along with some provocative "Questions for Thought," and suggestions that will inspire the students to relate the unit to their own lives.

Images of objects to be shown to students may be printed as handouts (from within each lesson), viewed online at the ***Intersections*** web link http://collections.fowler.ucla.edu, or downloaded from the curriculum page on our website.

In this unit the topics and lessons are

Lesson 12: Empowering Leaders: Leadership Art of the Cameroon Grassfields, Africa
Lesson 13: Negotiating Gender: Portrayal of a Hunter: *Ere Egungun Olode*, Nigeria
Lesson 14: Negotiating Gender: Powerful Mother: *Ere Gelede*, Nigeria
Lesson 15:Status and Prestige: To Make the Chief's Words Sweet: A Counselor's Staff, Ghana
Lesson 16: Status and Prestige: A Wall of Status and Prestige, Africa, Asia, and the Americas
Lesson 17: Harnessing Spirits: Pacific Northwest Arts, United States and Canada
Lesson 18: Harnessing Spirits: The Hornbill: Bird of Prophecy, Malaysia