



EMORY

MICHAEL C.
CARLOS
MUSEUM

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**AFRICAN ART AND RELIGION EXHIBITION AT THE CARLOS MUSEUM
EXPLORES PROTECTION, HEALTH, AND HEALING**

ATLANTA, GA (December 17, 2010)—Michael C. Carlos Museum presents “Divine Intervention: African Art and Religion” on view from February 5 through December 4, 2011.

“Divine Intervention: African Art and Religion,” drawn from the Carlos Museum’s rich collection of African art, with select loans from private collections, illustrates the traditional African belief that works of art function as a bridge between the human and divine worlds. The exhibition features over 50 works from over twenty African cultures including shrine sculptures, masks, divination instruments, and body adornments.

The works in “Divine Intervention” illustrate the active nature of African art, in which works of art are not passive representations of gods, deities, ancestors, or spirits, but rather agents of communication between the divine and earthly realms for the purpose of addressing fundamental human concerns regarding physical health, psychological well being, and social harmony.

This relationship can be explored in objects such as the Yoruba Ere Ibeji, or Twin Memorial figure, created as a physical stand-in for a deceased child. Not only does the carved wooden figure provide a new physical body in which the deceased child’s soul can rest, but it is also a positive psychological vehicle to assist a mother overcome the grief of losing a child. She will bath, feed, dress, and play with the Ere Ibeji just as she would a living child.

The exhibition also explores the presence of Islam and Christianity in Africa, and their intersections with other African religions. Islam and Christianity entered Africa soon after their initial emergence in the Near East, and were quickly integrated into African cultural practices through trade and commerce and became a vibrant part of local artistic and social responses to daily living. A hunter’s jacket from Mali, covered with two kinds of amulets is a good example of this. The leather tooled packets contain folded pieces of paper with magic formulas and Khoranic inscriptions as well as a plethora of amulets made from animal teeth, talons and horns, the cavities of which are packed with pharmacological substances from the wild containing *nyama*, a substance that, like words from the Koran, are empowering and direct protective physical transmissions from God.

Jessica Stephenson, curator of African art, explained, “In many cultures of Africa, including Yoruba and Kongo cultures a work of art becomes powerful through its creation or through its use in ritual. It is filled with the authority of the spirit and ancestral realms, and can effect change and transformation in the lives of human beings.”

About the Michael C. Carlos Museum

The Michael C. Carlos Museum of Emory University collects, preserves, exhibits, and interprets art and artifacts from antiquity to the present in order to provide unique opportunities for education and enrichment in the community, and to promote interdisciplinary teaching and research at Emory University. The Carlos Museum has grown to become one of the Southeast’s premier museums with collections of ancient art from Greece, Rome, Egypt, Near East, Nubia, the Americas, Africa, and Asia, as well as a collection of works on paper from the Renaissance to the present.

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