
José de Guimarães

José de Guimarães International Arts Centre

Guide to the Collection

José de Guimarães
Fim (End), 1968
Painted hessian
252 × 110 cm

The short guide published on the occasion of the inauguration of the José de Guimarães International Arts Centre, brings together a sample of pieces taken from the collections which José de Guimarães has been putting together for several decades and whose material and symbolic importance confer on the final collection gathered here a status of great uniqueness. The collections of African tribal art, Chinese archaeological artefacts (jades, bronzes, and terracottas), and pre-Columbian art from Mexico, Peru, Guatemala and Costa Rica (terracottas, textiles, and metals), correspond to the mental map, the atlas which the artist has been designing as a structure for his artistic and humanist research.

A filigree of relationships, more or less visible to the naked eye, results from bringing these pieces together and expresses concerns and obsessions, a *visual universe* whose nature is to be permeable, hybrid, cannibalistic. To ingest and let himself be transformed by the magical powers of the objects he owns and with which he is in daily contact – this is what José de Guimarães established as a programme. The study of this web of connections and the subsequent creation of meanings begins with the opening of the exhibition *Beyond History*, performed as one of the key tasks that lie within the scope of the José de Guimarães International Arts Centre, based in the city of Guimarães, the artist's hometown. This is a structure that will house these collections in dialogue with the artist's own works, objects of Portugal's folk and religious heritage, and works by other contemporary artists.

José de Guimarães' modus operandi is in fact unique, not so much for gaining form, from the outset, in a recollection of objects and artefacts – in the context of approaching the culture of the "other", the figure of the artist-collector is recurrent –, but rather for the way it gains shape as a process of assimilation of the values inherent to the cultures that interest him. José de Guimarães' practice as a collector is idiosyncratic, and yet, despite being systematic, it is as obsessive as that of any other collector, with

clear guidelines that lead to the choice of objects. The subject of death is predominant, due to the presence of funerary pieces but also due to the archaeological nature of the collection – a wide range of exhumed objects that return to the world of the living. There are other elements present in a large number, such as the mask, which raises the issue of the double, or the animal, that refers to a question of alterity, to a parallel cognitive order. Yet, also clear and constant is his interest in everyday objects which allude to a naïve, brutalist or vernacular language that follow a folk matrix which, often enough, brings them close to objects of Portuguese traditional culture. These guidelines reflect, firstly and on the one hand, the cultural context in which José de Guimarães grew up, the city of Guimarães, fertile in symbolically meaningful folk rituals, but also and on the other, a second phase of his development when during his adolescence he first came into contact with the practice of archaeology, the first step as it were to accessing the magico-ritualistic dimension of artistic creation.

The objects that José de Guimarães collects have the particularity of assimilating both of these dimensions: it is precisely at the point of intersection between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic dimensions that José de Guimarães' attention as a collector has been falling on. The choice of objects is dictated primarily by the formal and symbolic intensity of the object – its presence, its energy, and its quality of mystery –, which takes precedence over a concern for comprehensiveness or incidence, so often associated with the assembling of the most varied collections. It seems therefore decisive to look at José de Guimarães' oeuvre as a whole, without separating his activity as a collector and his work as an artist per se. One could argue they are one and the same. The first look that leads to a choice is the codified look of the artist who captures his prey for its attributes, for the energy it can bring him.

I have previously mentioned in an earlier text the articulative and genetically interracial dimension of José de Guimarães' method. "The collector's gesture at once presupposes, apart from a choice, a concern with the assembly, the articulation of a language. Such is the drive behind José de Guimarães' work and thought, to place the objects and the images he has been finding, collecting and re-contextualising, in a sort of meeting-place, an emporium, an anthropophagous platform, to evoke Oswaldo de Andrade and his founding concept of Brazilian culture, so dear to José de Guimarães."

José de Guimarães collects in order to understand the other (the quality of being) and the others – that which is diverse, whose heritage and habits are radically different from his own. The artist refers to his project as a spiritual project, as a (individual) journey in the form of a circle in which a type of (eternal) return to the same condition of the (collective) origin is achieved. In a certain way this journey is a spiritual exercise, in the broad sense of the term, a ritual reiteration, a way of acting, a renovated and ever demanding discovery, the discovery of himself through the other.

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The José de Guimarães International Arts Centre is a structure focused on contemporary art and the relationships it establishes with arts from other eras and different cultures and subjects. Based on a conception of art as a space of experience and freedom, not subjected to the categorisation of history, form or style, it will have special interest in issues which have become important operative concepts in contemporary art and the present-day world, such as: energy vs. form, circular vs. linear conception of time, archaeology of knowledge, nomadism, migration – of forms, motives, ideas, people, goods –, individual and collective memory, hospitality, community, exchange, miscegenation, cultural anthropophagy, and utopia, among others. In short, the International Arts Centre will be an Atlas, bringing close and articulating objects, images and ideas from cultures belonging to places very distant from each other.

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Nuno Faria, *Difference and Repetition in the Work of José de Guimarães: On Negreiros e Guaranis*, in: *Negreiros e Guaranis*, Lisboa, Athena, pp. 13-15.

José de Guimarães

The universe of works by José de Guimarães gathered in the collection of the José de Guimarães International Arts Centre (CIAJG) is large, plural and spans almost half a century. It includes works in media as ill-assorted and diversified as drawing, painting, sculpture, objects, boxes, light pieces, reliquaries and textiles, establishing a perfect summary of the modulations which have marked an oeuvre that has been so extensive, so open to the influence of three cultures which are as complex as they are diverse.

The collection has assembled into clusters works which, in a way, reflect the concepts, themes and areas of interest of the CIAJG, which not only help define the artist's path, but which also establish a dialogue with the objects of the personal collections that José de Guimarães has been assembling for the last five decades, in a process of exchange and appropriation inspired by the model of cultural anthropophagy.

In fact, José de Guimarães' modus operandi is unique in the precise way the artist operates as a gatherer to then establish the most improbable syntheses. In this sense, the route outlined in the CIAJG's inaugural exhibition, *Beyond History*, divided into four main sections – *The Origin*, *Emergence*, *Soft Nucleus*, and *The Party* – evokes that unique syncretism, establishing constellations of objects, energies and memories whose connections belong to the order of the visible, but also of the invisible, of the material but also of the spiritual.

In conclusion, the contemporary artist who operates as an archaeologist of (the) knowledge(s).

NUNO FARIA

from the African Alphabet series
1970-1974
Indian ink on sholler stern paper
25 × 32,5 cm

The Angolan period effected a radical transmutation in José de Guimarães's thought and language, the most tangible testimony to this being the "Alfabeto Africano" (*African Alphabet*), produced between 1970 and 1974, which is, in short, the acquisition of a new language influenced by ideographic thought, inherent to African tribal culture.1 The *Alphabet* is the learning of a language based on a cosmogonic wealth, in a permanent reinvention of the origin myth and not reified or mediated by the word. To say something, to communicate with another or the other, implies a negotiation with the complexity and the radical diversity of nature, a transformative and animistic capacity, the use of imagination and the evocation of the founding creator dynamics.

From his study of African art, in its primitive, ritualistic, and initiatory form, the artist adopted what became his vocabulary, the foundation of all his work, whose grammar, operating through the articulation of recurring fragments in combinatorial possibilities, alludes to the ideographic language which is particular to an oral culture that works by way of transmission and direct, objectual and metaphoric exchange. Ideograms, the use of the symbol, the sharp form, usually expressed in negative through the use of the silhouette, became, more than an important form of recognition, the possibility of overcoming a dialectical and rhetorical vision of the world.

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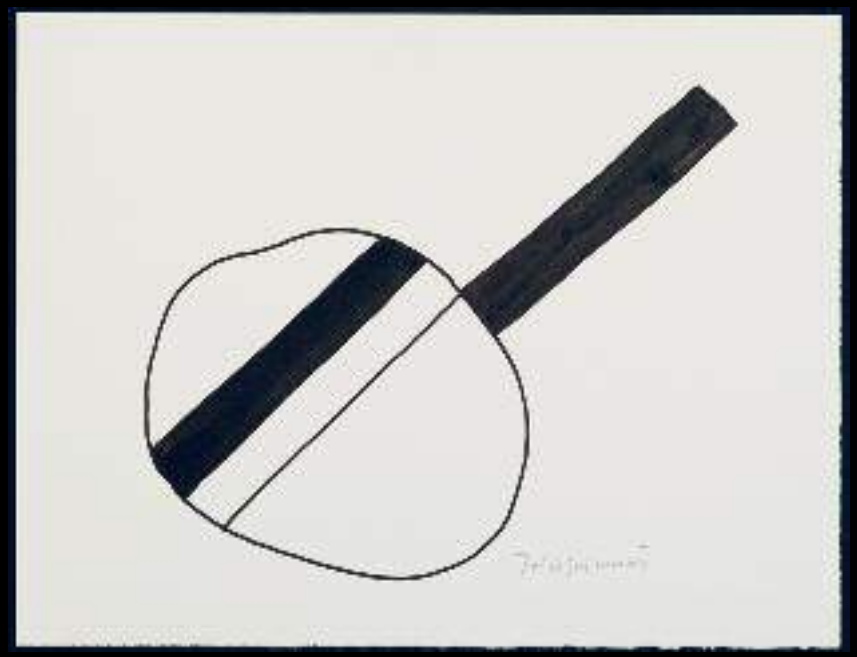
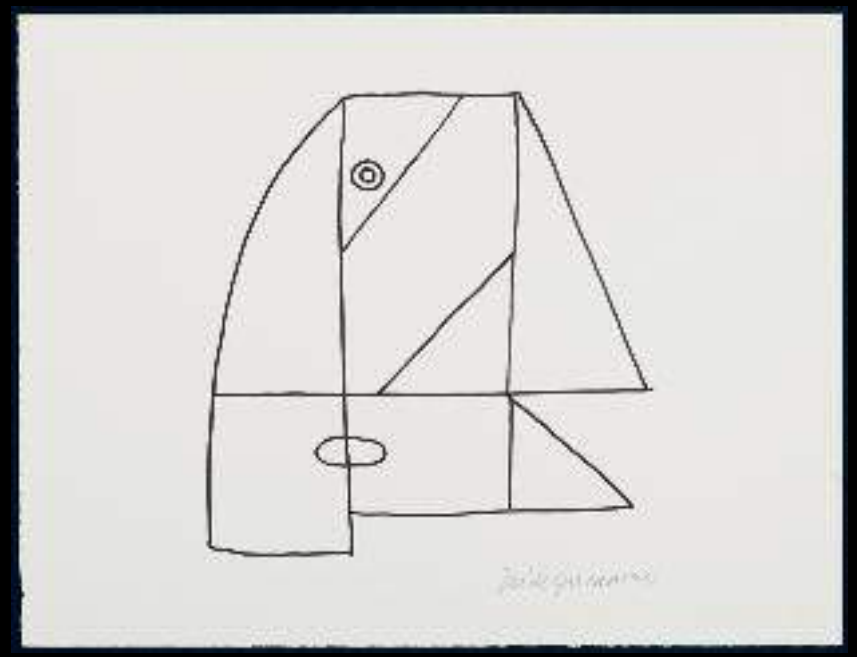
1 From then on, after this point of no return, transformation became the key word in the work of José de Guimarães, there being a structuring vein of his production of drawing which is writing – drawing-writing. The learning of other forms of writing, other signs, other calligraphies, would become for José de Guimarães the most efficient and comprehensive process of assimilating other cultures which, in their turn, when ingested in the anthropophagous sense of the term, become imbricated over each other, in a process of synthesis and coalescence. Therefore, the interminable variation on the theme of the erotic ritual of death from Mexican culture, discovered in the codexes, or the redrawing of an erotic print of Hokusai, approximate processes of writing as self-constitution.





Installation at the Museu de Luanda, 1968

The installation at the Museu de Luanda (*Museum of Luanda*), created in 1968 when the artist was in Angola serving in the Portuguese army during the Colonial War, marked a very important moment in José de Guimarães' path, resulting from the relational dynamics developed at the time with Luanda's artistic and intellectual circles.

Created with precarious means, it is an example of ingenuity regarding the solutions he came up with for the exhibition: panels apposed to the circular walls of the museum's space lined with jute, self-supporting lighting, reduction of the exhibition area between wall and space, diversity of media and materials.

In fact, the installation was based on a principle of difference and repetition, to quote Gilles Deleuze's highly influential concept (in the exact year the French philosopher's seminal thesis was published), following the projection of the image of several elements, which were sometimes repeated (body fragments, numbers, signs), on various surfaces (cloth, paper, wood), and an idea of modularity that explored mechanisms of the combination, juxtaposition and overlapping of objects (in transport boxes, for instance, which became a recurring and distinctive element in the artist's vocabulary, and other containers, like a telephone box).

The installation was developed on concepts such as those of nomadism, transference, recycling, circulation and circularity.

1º de Maio *(1st of May)* I to IV, 1976
Screen-print
76 × 57 cm [1]
66 × 51 cm [2; 3; 4]

Since Surrealism, chance has been one of the driving forces of the practice of art, as a form of delving into the unfathomable designs of life. In this sense, experimentalism has become, in the practice of the artistic act, a particularly privileged tool of accessing the forces of the unconscious by way of freeing the body from the control of the intellect and the erotic drives from the command of the superego. From the very beginning, José de Guimarães' work has included a clear erotic dimension which runs parallel to a declared openness to the emergence of the unexpected, the unthinkable, to what is uncontrollable.

Produced during the euphoric post-revolutionary period, the so-called political screen-prints, evoking the 1st of May (International Workers' Day) or the anti-fascist struggle, constitute a point of arrival and synthesis in José de Guimarães' vocabulary.

Screen-printing, as a process of appropriation and synthesis, proved pivotal for the structuring of his artistic development, particularly because it became a field in which distinct realities can converge and settle their differences, where elements which have been found can be reused. Besides combining, according to a tripartite logic, elements of the then recently created *African Alphabet* with images of erogenous parts or naked female bodies, the screen-prints include a fragment of a torn poster, naturally evocative of the galvanised and galvanising post-revolutionary period, referring one also to the European Affichiste movement, whose practice of tearing posters and placing them in a different context called on chance as a constructive and subversive potency of the form.

Both curious and revealing is the fact that the form which emerged from that subversive gesture of tearing the poster off the wall resembles the head of an African woman, with exaggeratedly prominent lips and a head covered with a turban, which many years later would become an iconic image of José de Guimarães' artwork. As the saying goes, "chance does things well".

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from the Masks Series, 1973
Acrylic on canvas
74 × 60,5 cm

The mask is aptly the symbol of this liminal, porous, impure territory where José de Guimarães' cultural identity is (re)constructed. Appearing in the artist's visual universe after his stay in Angola between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s, the mask summons and represents the ancestral spirits, often combining human and animal motifs in an attempt to unite man with his natural environment. The mask becomes a recurrent theme in the work of José de Guimarães, obsessively revisited, in black and white or in colour, drawn from sight or imagination, as if the act of creating were a rite of possession or transformation – the exercise, always reiterated, of impersonating another so as to find himself again.

In this series of paintings, created in the early 1970s at a time when he was developing his *African Alphabet*, the artist intersects two distant and apparently disconnected realities, such as the tradition of European painting, with special focus on the decline of a visual universe related to Nouvelle Figuration, Primitivism or Art Brut, and the learning of the language of African popular art, composing the space of the canvas around the (de)construction of the idea of visage and a constant experimentation with regard to the multiple possibilities of combination of colours, forms, signs and symbols.

Favela, 2010
Box, wood, painting
186 × 110 × 45 cm

The box is a central element in José de Guimarães' work, one which is simultaneously given the ambiguous and inconstant condition of container or holder – of objects, images, etc. – and symbol, which directs us to the idea of journey, a theme and device which has been omnipresent in the artist's discoursive strategy.

Understood in the broad sense of the term – as a physical, but also a spiritual exercise – the idea of journey appears here symbolised by the box which is used to ship works of art, in a process of meta-reflection and self-irony.

Nomadism, the circulation of concepts, exchange, cultural anthropophagy, are all themes which have been obsessively revisited by José de Guimarães. How do ideas, forms and influences travel? How do they settle and change, acquiring new uses or configurations?

In this box, which already bore the marks of a previous existence, José de Guimarães superimposed the drawing, doubly in negative, of two cut-out silhouettes (apparently African) which are revealed from the background painted in black, evoking, once again, processes of transference proper to printing or engraving techniques, means of dissemination or contamination, defining of a multicultural world in perpetual miscegenation. Or how the form becomes a ghost of itself.

The Collection of African Art

Comprising some 2000 items, José de Guimarães's African Collection was started by the artist in 1967, after a visit to the Museum of Angola in Luanda which left a permanent mark on him.

Despite his daily contact with these objects in his studio-home and the accumulated knowledge, he is pursued by the restlessness of the first sighting.

Probably due to the original impact, and for considering that the artistic productions of Africa[1] are still little known in Portugal – except in the perverse form of the global handicraft market – the artist had part of the Collection moved to the CIAJG (José de Guimarães International Arts Centre).

The number of artefacts collected during more than four decades could make us think of a collecting urge. But this is not the case, the Collection grew in combination with his life: the move to Paris, visits to museums all over the world, and the amassing of a vast bibliography as part of the research he systematically carries out on the specimens he gathers. The pleasure of receiving the emotionally charged objects from Africa projected him, almost simultaneously, towards a substantial intellectual contemplation. These are objects that cannot be taken in by a simple gaze, and which have indelibly influenced his production and his perception of the constancy of artistic work.

In general terms, the Collection has its origin in a small part of the African continent between the Niger and Congo rivers, encompassing the tropical rainforest ecosystem of the Gulf of Guinea, interrupted in Togo and Benin, and continuing on through Cameroon, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville and northern Congo-Kinshasa. It roughly encompasses Western and Central Africa, regions inhabited by agricultural populations of the tropical rainforest and tree savanna, authors of the most celebrated African art. The relation between these two ecosystems and the quantity and diversity of sculptures the Collection magnificently reveals, is imposing. Particularly since, besides large-sized sculpture of a religious

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In Portugal, the first exhibition of African sculpture took place in 1985 at the Museum of Ethnology. Oliveira, Ernesto (1985) *Escultura Africana em Portugal*, IICT/Museu de Etnologia, Lisboa.

nature or which celebrates political authority, the tribal societies scattered in the rainforest as well as the complex kingdoms of the savanna – Benin, Yoruba, Danhome, Ashanti, Fon, Kongo, or Kuba – developed scrupulous work based on the abundant local raw materials: wood, vegetable fibres, metals, clay and stone. In this context any object has a unique character and, in general, is of individual use, including agricultural and cooking utensils, and hunting and war weapons (which the Collection does not contemplate), crafted by the owner himself or ordered from a professional.

In this, there is something of an obsession for working the raw materials the unbounded nature of the tropical rainforest exudes, in contrast with the sobriety of the material cultures of the nomad and semi-nomad peoples of the Sudanese savanna and the herders of Eastern and Southern Africa, which rarely display works of sculpture.

In Western and Central Africa, the almost omnipresence, in both sculpture and masks, of animal or hybrid beings – monkey-men, bird-men, leopard-men, etc. –, or human figures that represent ancestors, which is to say, abstract entities but never anyone in particular, bespeaks of a thought which is structured based on the principle of the interdependency between the categories of "forest" – comprising the wild animals, the dead, the ancestors, or the rivers –, and "humanity", which includes the entire village, the agricultural lands, the domestic animals or the trails.

EGLANTINA MONTEIRO

Sculpture
Senufo – Ivory Coast
Wood
235 × 100 × 90 cm

In the past, many of the Poro – male secret societies in the Senufo region – had a large sculpture of a bird that was kept in the sacred forest and used in rites for the admission of initiates to the highest rank. The bird's hollow base enabled the initiates to transport it on their heads. Some specimens, such as this one, have holes in the wings so they could balance the bird with the aid of cords. The bird's species has been hard to determine. Its large, curved bill suggests a bird of prey, but there is no consensus among Senufo informers, who at times have identified it with the crow, the vulture, the eagle and the hornbill.

The meaning of the bird is rendered clearer in the two other names by which it is known: *kasingele*, which means "the first ancestor", the creator of the forest or the founder of the human race; and *poropia nong*, which literally means "mother of the Poro child". Both of these names highlight the value of the leadership and authority of the elders who oversee the initiation ceremonies.

Bibliography: Garrard, T. F. *in* Phillips, Tom *ed.* (1995), *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, Munich – New York, p. 457.

Fetish
Fang – Gabon
Wood, gourd, monkey skulls,
shells, horns, cloth, hair, metal
60 × 36 × 33 cm

This object belongs to the category of fetishes, a term derived from the French *fétiche*, which in turn comes from the Portuguese *feitiço*, meaning charm, sorcery. Banned by the colonial administrators and missionaries, these objects also inspire fear in those who resort to their services. As this anthropomorphic specimen clearly reveals, the fetish is a container of very diverse substances associated with death: monkey skulls, clay (normally taken from burial grounds), cowrie shells – which for centuries were used as currency for the exchange of goods, now used for bartering with the invisible –, horns, claws and skins of forest animals, vegetable fibres, etc. The basic concept behind the fetish-object lies in it being a receptacle of forces directed at a very precise objective, and which lies at the source of some kind of suffering. For this purpose, the object is included in a ritual ceremony which involves the officiant, the consultant, many other objects, dances, drinks, incantations and food. Despite also being repressed by modern common sense, fetishes remain very popular, even in urban areas.

Bibliography: Wyatt, MacGaffey *et al.* (1993), *Astonishment and Power, The Eyes of Understanding: Congo Minkisi / The Art of Renee Stout*, Washington, National Museum of African Art.

Nkisi *nkondo* fetish
Kongo, Congo
Wood, nails, iron blades, feathers,
vegetable fibres and resins
38 × 63 × 36 cm

These figures are a type of declaration of ethical and moral principles on catching offenders who remain unknown and, in this sense, allude to the active relationship between the world of invisible causes and their visible effects.

The better known Kongo *minkisi* pieces belong to the *nkondi* category, which means "hunter". These are used in the identification of dissimulated transgressors – thieves, or people responsible for someone's illness or death through obscure means. The *nkondi* vessels are usually wooden figures to which several substances were added by filling strategically placed cavities in the head, the belly, between the legs, the back or other parts of the body, and sealed with a resin. The ritual practices that activate the *nkisi*, involve libations, nails and blades which are embedded into the figure. With time, the marks accumulated by the *nkisi* reveal their successes, also increasing their plastic dimension and ability to inspire fear.

Bibliography: MacGaffey, William *in* Phillips, Tom *ed.* (1995), *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, Munich – New York, Prestel, p. 246.


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***Byeri* reliquaries**
Kota – Nigeria
Wood and brass
83.5 × 32 × 12 cm [1]
78 × 30 × 12 cm [2]
60 × 30 × 8 cm [3]
60 × 24 × 10 cm [4]

Directly associated with the predominant ancestor cult, the Kota and Mahongwe, who live in the dense forests of north-eastern Gabon, place the bones of the founders of the clan in a basket topped by a wooden sculpture decorated with thin layers of brass or copper. The temple is located in the village.

Bibliography: Picton, John *in* Phillips, Tom *ed.* (1995), *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, Munich – New York, Prestel, pp. 316-317.

***Kananga* mask**
Dogon – Mali
Wood and pigments
92 × 54 × 18 cm

More than 70 Dogon types of mask are known, both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, made of wood or vegetable fibres. They are made by the members of the *awa* society and worn in homage to the *dama* dead. The *kananga* mask represents the *kommolo tebu* bird, and is the most common type of mask. Its origin is traced back to a mythical hunter who, having killed one of these birds, took it as model to make the first *kananga* mask. The colours of the top part of the mask – black squares on a white background – evoke the *kommolo tebu* bird.

The dancing ceremonies with these masks are quite spectacular, not only for their size, but also because they are always used in great numbers. For a ritual which is held every five years celebrating the dead, at least 400 masks are needed. In their choreographies the dancers mimic the gestures made by Amma, god of creation, as he was creating the universe. Today, these have become an important product for the tourist industry.

Bibliography: Hahner-Herzog, Iris (1997), *L'Autre Visage – Masques d'Afrique*, Tervuren, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, p. 50.

Male *kifwebe* mask
Songye – Congo
Wood and pigments
42 × 23 × 19 cm

The *kifwebe* mask is a ceremonial object belonging to the society of the same name which has great prestige in the eyes of the Eastern Songye people. Its members are sorcerer-sculptors whose knowledge enables them to manipulate the spiritual and divine forces. These masks, worn with a long costume and long beard made of woven bark, are present in many ceremonies and are always used as a form of policing and maintaing social order in the service of authority. The fine incisions that cover the surface of the mask, the triangular and prominent nose, or the jutting mouth, are elements that individualise it, while the sagittal crest identifies it as being male. Associated with different forest animals – the lion, the zebra, the crocodile or the porcupine –, the colours and the movements of the masqueraders express their character and a great variety of emotional states.

Bibliography: de Husch, Luc *in* Phillips, Tom *ed.* (1995), *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, Munich – New York, Prestel, p. 281.

Masks
Kru / Grebo,
Ivory Coast
Wood and pigments
38 × 20 × 34 cm

Commonly attributed to the Grebo people (a generic term that includes the Kru, a small population of the western coast of the Ivory Coast, and their neighbours from eastern Liberia), these masks with two rows of tubular eyes are rare objects, and information on them is also scarce. Their unique and powerful feature is the exaggerated number of projected cylindrical eyes placed on the facial planes. The phrase "four eyes", very common in the vast region of West Africa and a reference to the power of the "witch" to see and gain access into the realm of invisible forces, may have inspired the sculptor in the multiplication of eye forms.

Worn vertically, Kru masks were fitted below a huge headdress which consisted of an arc-shaped structure made of vegetable fibres, covered with cloth and trimmed by a stiff fringe of palm-leafed fibres and long waving feathers, creating awe-inspiring effects.

Bibliography: M.A. *in* Phillips, Tom *ed.* (1995), *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, Munich – New York, Prestel, p. 465; Vogel, Susan (1990), *Close Up – Lessons in the Art of Seeing African Sculpture*, New York, The Center for African Art, pp. 63-66.

Mask
Katana / Mama
Nigeria
Wood and pigments
46 × 26.5 × 18 cm

The Katana, formerly known as Mama, live in the north of Nigeria, where the wild buffalo roam the bush. The presence of horns in the majority of cap masks, used in agricultural festivities, symbolises these animals.

Instead of using this type of mask vertically over the face, the dancer wears it atop the head so it can be perceived horizontally – in the way most people imagine and depict animals –, supporting themselves on two sticks that act as the animals' front legs. The ceremonial dance includes extremely vigorous and threatening movements, contained by ropes managed by the viewers, and the rhythms of singing and drumming.

Bibliography: Adams, M. *in* Phillips, Tom *ed.* (1995), *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, Munich – New York, Prestel, p. 362.

Masks
Bidyogo – Guinea-Bissau
Wood, pigments, ropes
45.5 × 40.5 × 37 cm [1]
49 × 39 × 28 cm [2]
61 × 38 × 31 cm [3]
36 × 45 × 27 cm [4]

Among the Bidyogo, martial virtues are cultivated during a long process of learning organised into age groups, which convokes the knowledge of the behaviour, abilities and virtues of the most powerful animals of the land and sea. While younger boys use calf and fish masks, older, uninitiated youths, use bull, shark or swordfish masks. Any of the ceremonial dances associated with these masks is unpredictable and violent, reflecting the character of the animal and its own undomesticated nature.

The rope that passes through the nostrils of some of these masks, symbolises that the initiate is like a tethered bull, belonging to the group which precedes the phase of initiation, meaning he is a being whose strength only then will start being tamed.

Bibliography: Gallois Duquett, Françoise, *in* F. Roberts, Allen (1995), *Animals in African Art – From the Familiar to the Marvellous*, New York, Prestel, Museum for African Art, p. 112.


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***Okuyi* mask**
Punu – Gabon
Wood and pigments
42 × 29 × 31 cm

This mask is a variation of the "white masks of the Ogooue", present in a large area of Gabon up to the border with the Congo and used by the Kota people in the eastern interior of the country. Known as *okuyi*, or *mukuyi*, these are used in festivities for the amusement of the people. Apparently they once had a ritual dimension associated with the ancestors and funerary celebrations. Dressed in cloths, vegetable fibres or animal skins, the masqueraders walk on a pair of stilts shouting piercing cries that recall the most fearsome animals of the forest, frightening, scaring away and amusing the people.

Bibliography: Hahner-Herzog, Iris (1997), *L'Autre Visage – Masques d'Afrique*, Tervuren, Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, p. 186.

Head of a Queen
Benin Empire, Nigeria
Bronze
58 × 19 × 26 cm

Located in southern Nigeria, the Benin Empire founded in the 13th century was one of the largest powers in pre-colonial West Africa. The art of the court of Benin is characterised by the representation of its dignitaries with their ensigns and hieratic positions. The empire's golden age was the 16th century, which corresponds both to a period of territorial expansion and the peak reached by this art that benefited from the importation of large quantities of bronze through trade links established with Europeans. This relationship is particularly documented in the pieces in bronze and ivory – noble and precious materials reserved for the arts of the court.

The title of Queen Mother was instituted in the early 16th century by King Esigie, in memory of his mother Queen Idia who was an experienced political advisor, thus establishing the tradition of placing these bronze heads on altars devoted to the ancestors. During the festivities marking the king's succession, the heir had the head of his predecessor cast in bronze.

Bibliography: Plankensteiner, Barbara (2008) *Bénin – Cinq Siécles d'Art Royal*, Musée Quai Branly, Paris, p. 2; Bem-Amos, Paula (1979) *L'Art du Bénin*, Hong Kong, Rive Gauche Productions.

Sculpture
Igbo – Nigeria
Wood, vegetable fibres, pigments
149 × 29 × 25 cm

The beliefs and religious practices of the Igbo-speaking peoples identify a constellation of tutelary deities known as *alusi* or *agbara* – messengers of the supreme deity Chukwu – sensitive to the desires, sacrifices and offerings of men. These invisible entities include places, principles and peoples: earth, rivers, prominent landscape features, markets (and the days on which they take place), war, ancestors – founders and legendary heroes. In general terms, the cults of tutelary deities propitiate a series of practices which contribute towards good health, prosperity, agricultural production, the maintenance of high morale and social and ecological order. Each of the main cults involves an officiant and his aides who perform weekly rituals which regularly include the offering of blood sacrifices, and who also supervise the annual festivals held in honour of the gods. The figures in solid wood that represent these deities vary between 45cm and 180cm in height, and are sculpted in a conventional, static and symmetrical form. There are regional variations, and in certain areas they are kept in groups in relatively elaborate temples located in the centre of the villages, next to markets and the place where the ceremonial dances are performed. These temples can be large and lavishly decorated. Minor deities also appear grouped into domestic clusters. Due to the lack of precise information, it is not possible to determine the entities represented in each figure, since the hundreds of known figures report to generic types and have no specific attributes. They are invariably sculpted by men, and then painted by women with red, orange and white pigments, with patterns similar to those of the people, asserting personal beauty and full social status. The height of the statues in the collection – between 1m and 1.80m – refers to the main entities.

Bibliography: Cole, H. M. *in* Phillips, Tom *ed.* (1995), *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, Munich – New York, Prestel, p. 386.

***Boli*, portable altar**
Bamana (Bambara) – Mali
Wood, packed mud, libations and artificial blood
55 × 23 × 53 cm

Used by the Bamana in their secret societies, the *boli* (pl. *boliw*) accumulates and stores huge quantities of life force (*nyama*) which the priests and the elders manipulate in order to help dispel evil or help fulfil a need. Many of these altars are shaped like a hippopotamus or a cow, others are shaped like a human figure. However, sometimes the shape becomes unrecognisable; an intentional incomprehensibility associated with the principle that the most powerful things are opaque to the people in general, and only accessible to the initiates. The sombre ambiguity of these forms, and the lack of knowledge about them, keeps the uninitiated from the invasive and terribly persuasive power of the *nyama*.

Bibliography: Brett-Smith, Sarah (1994), *The Making of Bamana Sculpture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 24.

Terracotta sculpture
Nok – Nigeria
Ceramic
108 × 40 × 17 cm

The Nok were one of the first Iron Age cultures of West Africa. They lived in the western and southern slopes of the Jos Plateau in northern Nigeria. A large number of terracotta heads and sculptures was found by chance during a tin mining operation in 1928. Very little is known about the Nok culture. Probably associated with funerary ceremonies, ancestor cults or other religious practices, these objects seems to be connected with the elites of a highly hierarchical society.

Bibliography: Dias, Jill (1992) *África*, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, Lisbon. Fagg, William; Picton, John (1978) *The Potter's Art in Africa*, London, Museum of Mankind.

Vessel
Mambila – Nigeria and Cameroon
Terracotta
46 × 24 × 32 cm

The Mambila live to the south of the Adamawa range, on either side of the Nigeria-Cameroon border.

The artistic productions of the Mambila have very specific characteristics. Masks, sculptures and also these terracotta objects depict concave and exceptionally expressive faces or snouts. There is no real knowledge of the circumstances in which these vessels were used and what they might have contained. However, Mambila wooden masks are usually painted with a red wood dust imported from western forests. It is also known that the *kiavia* masks, of which there is also little knowledge about the circumstances they were used in, would once have also been made of terracotta.

Bibliography: Vogel, Susan (1990) *Close up – Lessons in the Art of Seeing African Sculpture*, New York, The Center for African Art, p.161.


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Sculptures
Bura – Nigeria and Cameroun
Terracotta
37 × **33** (Ø base) **cm** [1]
47 × **12** (Ø base) **cm** [2]
57 × **11** (Ø base) **cm** [3]
88 × **24** (Ø base) **cm** [4]

The recent discoveries of terracotta sculptures, first those of the Nok culture, followed by those of Djenné, and in 1997 those of the Bura culture on the left bank of the Niger River, identified and recognised as having developed more than 2,000 years ago, has definitely changed those ideas on Africa and its inhabitants disseminated during the colonial period.

Like the other terracotta objects, these consist of funerary offerings and were found buried with their openings facing down and filled with the belongings of the dead, teeth and some of the main bones.

The Collection of Pre-Columbian Art

The art of the pre-Columbian cultures is a magnificent display of the multiplicity and richness of landscapes and peoples encountered by the first Spaniards who set foot in those parts in the late 15th century.

From the Antilles to the so-called "Intermediate Region" (Costa Rica, Panama, etc.), together with the Andean region, the Amazon region, the coastal deserts of Peru and Chile... an immense bioenvironmental variety was conquered long before the arrival of the wrongly called "discoverers" of America – by the peoples who began settling there since at least 15,000 years before our era.

The need to express the vision of the surrounding world, of himself, his beliefs and his fears which characterises man, led these American peoples to explore, from the very beginning of their development, the possibilities offered by the different raw materials that surrounded them.

Stone, wood, ceramic, vegetable and animal fibres, seashells, metals and minerals soon became the medium for geometric or curvilinear, abstract or realistic images, of man and his environment, of the human element and the supernatural, in a unique collage of beauty and complexity.

In the vast domain of pre-Columbian art the primitive and the sophisticated were also expressed, both in terms of technique and aesthetics. The sophistication of Andean textiles was thus achieved with surprisingly simple technical means, while the unequivocally elaborate Mixtec or Aztec statuary offers an image that brings to mind that which is ancestral and simple: the primitive.

The Pre-Columbian Art Collection of the José de Guimarães International Arts Centre (CIAJG) comprises some 300 pieces, through which we can cover more than two thousand years and thousands of square kilometres of history and culture, and discover both the primitive and sophisticated nature of the pre-Hispanic American cultures.

Beyond its "documental" or historic character, this collection provides a complete picture of the universe,

or the “universes”, such as they were envisaged or imagined by the ancient Americans. We see, for instance, how death had great presence among the living in Mixtec or Aztec sculpture, which we mentioned before for its image of the primitive. A mythical divinity or hero such as Naymlap, founder of the Lambayeque civilisation, shows himself to be distant and hieratic. This is an anthropomorphic figure with the attributes of a bird in a piece of unique beauty and sobriety, far removed from the plasticity and colourfulness of Nazca art, with its abstract images and sacred beings, with their long, serpentine appendages.

To a great extent, pre-Hispanic American art was an art for death more than for life. The majority of objects were found in tombs, where they belonged to the funerary furnishings of powerful individuals. Many of these were never used, and we can in fact infer they were expressly made to accompany the person to whom they were associated at the time of his death. We can, therefore, think that their beauty was not created to be admired by the eyes of others – at least not those of a majority –, but rather that, for those who made them, the beauty, the value of each of these pieces lay in their creation.

The manufacturing process, from the intellectual conception of each piece to the accomplishment of the last detail, must have been a ritual in itself. It was a ritual that was often social, since we know that in the manufacture of a single object more than one craftsman could be involved, and a process into which flowed ancestral ideas concerning the symbolic value of the materials employed, and in which a special character was imprinted onto a particular piece through a stroke which was not immediately perceptible or legible to just any viewer.

From this perspective, the Pre-Columbian Art Collection of the José de Guimarães International Arts Centre enables us to reflect on the very different ways in which these mortuary offerings could have been conceived and crafted, and on the different methods of working with similar raw materials (clay, metals...) in the various eras and cultures of America. We can therefore enjoy the beauty which our eyes – our culture, our education – take in and at the same time look into the method, the symbol, the detail which, in the eyes of the craftsman and his peers, conferred artistic value to a given object.

Our attention is drawn to the existence of certain “common grounds” in pre-Columbian art, such as we see them through this collection: the importance of death, as mentioned before; the predominant role of pottery, numerous and abundant in all regions and all cultures – mainly for conservation reasons –, together with that of metal, which was also one of the great treasures of these peoples; the importance of the feline, which can be seen in Nicoya pieces from Costa Rica, Moche from Peru, the serpent, etc. And at the centre of all of this is man, intimately connected with the divinities to whom he often provides his anthropomorphous attributes to bring them closer to his world.

We can thus get to know, imagine, speculate about those men and women whose messages reached us so many centuries later, messages which the Pre-Columbian Art Collection, a magnificent selection of which is here presented, summarises and offers in all its splendour.

MARÍA JESÚS JIMÉNEZ DÍAZ

Figure of a woman
Nayarit (Mexico)
500 BC – AD 500
Terracotta
38 × 26 × 10 cm

This magnificent terracotta effigy is a typical example of the Nayarit manifestations, a style which developed in the western region of Mexico, spanning the two historic eras.

This is an image of a female, dressed in a skirt decorated with white motifs. The upper part of the figure is uncovered, revealing her breasts, and displays a circular headdress on her head, together with bracelets, earrings and a nose ring. The figure is holding a cup in one of her hands in an attitude that confers a certain degree of dynamism to the representation.

The intense brownish-red of the clay is characteristic of this culture's terracotta production, which we know especially for these anthropomorphic representations, but also for the identically realistic representation of certain species of animals.

Tripod vessel
Nicoya (Costa Rica)
AD 800 – 1200
Terracotta
37.5 × 30 cm

The Nicoya style tripod vessels, such as this one, are regarded as some of the finest of the Intermediate Cultural Area.

The motifs in black appear on a cream-coloured background, according to the negative painting technique, with details in red, complementing the sculptural decoration which, like the present case, is usually feline, depicting a head with open jaws and pointed ears.

These globular-shaped vessels with a wide, straight mouth were destined for ritual purposes and they might have contained liquids or any other such offering of a sacred nature.

Tripod vessels with a globular body and wide mouth also appear in other pottery traditions, for instance those of Nicaragua, Panama and even those of some regions of Mexico. This may be indicative of the contacts which, at different times, were established between the peoples of these distant places.

Figure of a monkey
Aztec (?)
AD 1200 – 1518
Stone
29 × 9 × 16.5 cm

The theme of death became among the Aztecs, or Mexica people, a type of official "state image", with its main emblem, the skull, being depicted in many artistic media: codices, architectural decoration or, such as this case, stone sculpture.

The Aztecs founded a great empire, whose capital Mexico-Tenochtitlan was one of the most important cities of pre-Columbian America. Buried underneath the present Mexican capital, this pre-Hispanic city had a vast number of temples and sacred spaces. One of them, known as the "Temple of Skulls", displayed a great number of these elements as a type of architectural decoration, revealing the importance of death and the divinity associated with it within the Mexica state apparatus.

In this Mixtec sculpture, death takes on the form of a cadaverous image expressed through the skull and a skeletal or perhaps fleshless body.

This sculpture may have been part of an architectural ensemble of great religious and ritual importance.

Globular vessel
Chancay Style (Peru)
AD 1000 – 1450
Terracotta
38 × 31 × 24 cm

This fine specimen of a Chancay globular vessel with side handles, exhibits traces of anthropomorphism on the face, or "face-neck", of a figure which displays face painting and adornments on the ears, all of which point to its importance and status.

On the rest of the body, the black decoration on white background is characteristic of the ceramic of this style, displaying typical motifs such as diagonal undulations or dots. The equal-armed cross with a superimposed square, known as the Chakana cross, is very characteristic of pre-Columbian art and would become especially important during the Inca Empire (AD 1400 – 1532).

During the period that preceded the formation of the Inca Empire (Late Intermediate Period, AD 1000 – 1450), a whole series of artistic manifestations developed along the central coast which have been lumped together under the designation "Chancay style", and among which stand out the black-on-white ware, such as the fine specimen illustrated here, the small figures called "cuchimilcos", and a great number of textiles. In all of these, the same decorative pattern with small figures repeated in diagonal or horizontal rows appears.

All of these objects were part of the funerary possessions which illustrated the importance the deceased had held in his community during his lifetime. This practice was common to all Andean cultures throughout the Pre-Hispanic Period and survived even after the arrival of the Spanish, creating a complex religious syncretism between the new Christian beliefs and the old Andean rites.

Globular vessel
Chancay Style (Peru)
AD 1000 – 1450
Terracotta
27.5 × 20 cm

This type of globular vessel in white clay with black decoration is characteristic of the Chancay style, which developed in the central valleys of the Peruvian coast during the Late Intermediate Period (AD 1000 – 1450).

Together with small figures also in terracotta (commonly called "cuchimilcos"), a great number of textiles and other objects formed part of the funerary posessions, all of which reproduced the same iconography.

Among the most important iconographic motifs of this style are precisely the birds and the schematic undulations in diagonal rows which decorate the globular mouth of the vessel.

These are schematic images of small seabirds that reflect the close relationship these peoples had with the coastal areas they inhabited.

The rhythmic alternation of the different decorative motifs (as can be seen in this case) is a particular characteristic of the Andean art of this period: the regular repetition of small-sized identical figures (besides the birds, we also find fish, felines and monkeys, to mention but the most common figures) also appears in other contemporary styles, such as the Chimú or the Chincha.

Whistling bottle
Vicus Style (Peru)
200 BC – AD 500
Terracotta
13 × 8.5 × 26.5 cm

The Vicus culture developed a characteristic ceramic style, of which this whistling bottle is a fine example.

The figure represented here has characteristic facial features (large nose, coffee bean eyes, incised mouth) and its body extending backwards, with the bridge handle running along the back. It displays decoration with white painting, which is also found on other specimens of this style.

Specialists have recognised a stylistic evolution within this culture's ceramic production, distinguishing between the Early, Medium and Late periods, particularly according to their decorative motifs. They have also registered the existence of four types of anthropomorphous figures which provide the configuration for many of the vessels, according to the shape of certain facial features. All this points to a developed society whose ceramic production was organised and carried out by different pottery workshops.

The Vicus peoples lived in the coastal valleys of the extreme north of Peru, in the present-day region of Piura. During the later eras of their development they came into contact with Gallinazo and Moche peoples, receiving influences from both, which became clear in their ceramic and metallurgy.

Throughout the Andean past there was constant interaction between the different coastal peoples, both among themselves and with their highland neighbours, playing a key role in the cultural dynamics which gave shape to the prehistory of this region.

Figure
Mixtec (Mexico)
AD 1200 – 1518
Stone
27 × 16 × 14 cm

The duality between life and death this piece seems to want to express is present in many cultures of pre-Hispanic Mexico, becoming especially present in the later cultures, immediately prior to the arrival of the Spanish.

Death, which was usually expressed by skulls and fleshless bodies, as in this case, is furthermore painted red here, accentuating the contrast between the two halves.

There is no doubt about the ritual function of this image, which must have played an important role in the religious context for which it was conceived and created.

Death remains an important cultural reference in Mexico to this day, and the *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), celebrated on the 1st of November, is a festivity in which the keynote falls on the religious syncretism between the pre-Columbian traditions, such as that of this piece, and the contribution of Christianity.

Burial urns with lid
Tamalameque (Colombia)
0 – AD 1000
Terracotta
65 × 38 × 35 cm
103 × 30 × 330 cm

Death played a central role in the beliefs of the pre-Hispanic American peoples, and a whole series of complex rituals were created around it with their own paraphernalia and material culture, reflecting a great variability throughout time and in the different cultural areas.

The funerary urns illustrate the practice of secondary burials, in which the individual was cremated and his remains deposited in this type of vessel.

Both the dignity and social importance of the individual were expressed in the effigy, such as the one illustrated here, a fact that highlights the idea that what the person was in life transcended the moment of his death.

Textile
Central-Northern Coast (Peru)
AD 700 – 1000 (?)
30 × 31.5 cm

This fragmented textile piece is a fine example of the ideological complexity and the intensity of the movements of people and ideas that took place during the period we know as Middle Horizon, or Huari.

A great quantity of materials was produced during these centuries, especially textiles, with a northern origin, which are found in places in the central coast, such as the big temple complex of Pachacamac, in the outskirts of the present-day city of Lima. Besides this, local imitations of textiles that reproduce the iconographies of the northern productions were also produced in these valleys of the central Peruvian coast.

Such is the case of the specimen here reproduced, in which we find a series of iconographic themes, such as that of the "Moon Animal", in a late and probably reinterpreted version, or the character with a headdress in the shape of a half-moon or two side tufts, characteristic of the northern tradition but represented in a style which is closer to the local productions of the bordering valleys of the Rímac River, or even farther south.

Also characteristic of this phenomenon is the typology of this composition, which consists of a series of rectangular pieces woven in "mass", to be then individually used as decorative applications in articles such as shirts.

This type of textile, with the same designs and very similar elaboration, has been found in particular in ceremonial enclaves such as Pacatnamú, in the northern valley of Jequetepeque, and the previously mentioned Pachacamac, pointing towards the existence of pilgrimage routes between both sanctuaries.

Textile
Coast or Southern Highlands (Peru)
AD 1000 – 1470
29 × 71 cm

The arid climate of the Andean coast allowed for a relatively important quantity of textiles to be preserved until our days, enabling us to carry out a reconstruction of the textile art of the last five thousand years.

It is therefore not surprising to come across specimens today – such as the one documented here – which have retained great part of what must have been their original colouring. In this specific case, the chromatic range which was used, especially the combination of red, yellow and a particular tone of blue, recalls the Ica style, which developed mainly in the valley of the same name and the surrounding region approximately between the years AD 1000 and 1470.

On the other hand, the main decorative pattern, called interlocking and which consists in schematic figures of serpents with serrated edges which interlock with each other, was more frequent in the central region of the coast. This piece seems thus to blend features from the textile styles developed in both regions – central coast and southern coast – during the Late Intermediate Period (AD 1000 – 1470).

The fabric was made with cotton wefts and camelid fibre warps, an element that is more common in the textiles of the central and northern coasts of this period.

The horizontal direction of the decoration may indicate that this is a fragment of a feminine piece, probably a shawl or *lliclla*, since many studies have demonstrated the association between horizontal axes and woman in the Andean pre-Hispanic world. It is worth noting that this association is still currently in practice in traditional communities of the Andes.

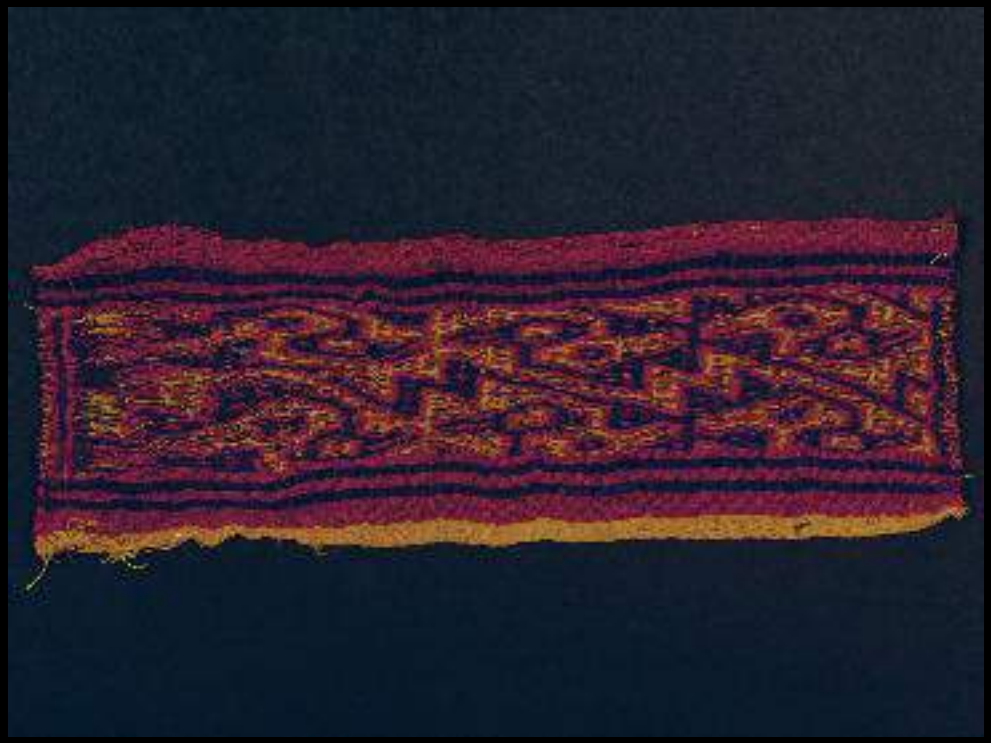
Textile
Coast or Southern Highlands (Peru)
0 – AD 600 (?)
13 × 85 cm

Textiles were without doubt the most important expression of Andean pre-Columbian art. Through their designs, colours, techniques, shapes, etc. they reveal the complex world vision of the pre-Hispanic communities.

This remarkable textile fragment in the shape of a band displays a chromatic scheme in which the alternation of the three main colours – red, yellow and ochre – applied in the background and decorative motifs, give the pattern rhythm, a technique widely used by pre-Columbian weavers.

These geometric motifs seem to be connected with the southern region of the Peruvian Andes, resembling the patterns of the Sihuas and Nazca styles, located, respectively, in the regions of present-day Arequipa and Nazca. On the other hand, it was exclusively woven with camelid fibres, a particularity which characterises the textiles of the highlands but which is not uncommon in the Nazca style.

The intense interaction that existed between the Andean communities of different bioenvironments (coast, mountains, mountainous jungle and low jungle) during the region's prehistory – and which continues today –, gave enormous complexity and wealth to the cultural panorama, which is reflected in the textiles as in very few other artistic media.



Textile
Inca – Extreme South (Peru)
AD 1450 – 1532
12.5 × 35.5 cm

This unique textile band is an excellent sample of the aesthetic canons which the Inca Empire disseminated throughout its vast territory, and which the different regions reproduced, adapting it to their own traditions.

The combination of red and yellow was paradigmatic of this Empire which developed from the Andean Altiplano, being furthermore displayed in combinations that transmit the idea of opposition and complementarity, a fundamental concept during the Inca Empire. This concept, in reality an integral part of the Andean thought since its first cultural developments, was taken up by the Incas and "disseminated" in an explicit and systematic way in all the regions that came under their control.

Woven with camelid thread using the discontinuous warp and weft technique, a chromatic opposition in diagonal axes was used in this specimen, so as to express this idea and simultaneously create a rhythm in the decorative composition.

Pieces with the same techniques, materials and chromatic combination have been documented in contexts of the extreme south of what nowadays is Peru (regions of Arequipa-Moquegua), demonstrating the existence of a strong political control over the region, which was expressed in an organised and controlled artistic production that followed the aesthetic canons dictated from the capital, Cuzco.

The Collection of Chinese Art

The collection of Chinese art assembled by José de Guimarães over several decades represents one of the most significant periods of the cultural and artistic history of China, from the development of Chinese civilisation during the Neolithic (ca. 10,000 – ca. 2000 BC) to the unification of the empire during the Qin (221 – 206 BC) and Han (206 BC – AD 220) dynasties.

In its essence, the collection of jades, bronzes and terracottas constitutes an approximation to a *visual universe* that reflects the matrix structures of the ethical and aesthetic thought of Chinese civilisation. The ritual, ceremonial, sacrificial and transcendental nature of the objects was the catalysing element for the choice of materials, the technical refinement in the execution of the forms and the artistic sophistication that reflects the objects' importance in the context of the sacred and of political authority.

One of the fundamental features inherent to the funerary and ritual character of the objects is the context of their use. The consummation of the ritual act, by way of the ceremony or the sacrificing of animals and humans to communicate with and worship the ancestral spirits, imbues them with supernatural properties. The objects' practical and utilitarian nature is transmuted beyond their materials and their worldly dimension. Despite being, according to their morphology, instruments and utensils fundamental to the ritual practices, the performative, participative and collective principle of the celebrations demonstrates that they were also conceived to be exhibited and contemplated, one of the key features inherent to a work of art.

The material properties of the jade, bronze and ceramic objects were valued for their physical characteristics associated with the objects' integrity, resistance and durability, but also for a set of symbolic and mythological values given to them by man in line with the cultural context of the time. In the *visual universe* of the ancestral civilisations, jade, as well as other lithic materials of extraordinary natural beauty, was extracted

from the course of the rivers or from the womb of the mountains, representing in itself supernatural manifestations which determined the lives of men. The metals that make up bronze (copper, tin and lead) are likewise extracted from the earth, place of birth and death, of origin and destiny. The ceramics and the terracottas are shaped from the union of clay and water, which lies at the origin of several creation myths not only in Chinese mythology but also within the context of the myths of American Pre-Colombian civilisations. Despite the unchanging nature of the materials, the objects' symbolic and mythological value varies according to the predominant cultural, religious and political environment in different eras. It is the instances of the course of history, of the cultural intercessions and the construction of knowledge which determine the objects' contexts of usage and the reasons behind their symbolic and mythological value.

The typological diversity of the objects results from a systematisation of the ritual procedures, from a growing complexity of the spiritual fabric and, naturally, from important changes that characterised the course of history. In this context, the objects can be grouped into three distinct categories: ritual objects, ornamental objects, and funerary paraphernalia.

The ritual objects include the shamanic instruments, the vessels for offerings and the weapons used in animal and human sacrifices. The bronze vessels used for the preparation, conservation and serving of food, water and wine were developed in several typologies taking into account their function in the context of the rites, but also the object's visual presentation which established a proximity between the owner and the ancestral spirits.

The ornamental objects comprise the pendants, bracelets and elements applied to clothing and weaponry which enabled the aristocracy elites and other important figures of the society to be identified and distinguished, constituting proof of prosperity and political authority.

The third typology of objects refers to the funerary paraphernalia that consists of all the objects of a utilitarian nature in the context of the rites and of a life after death. Among these objects are the mirrors, the censers, the lamps, the representations of models of the real world, and the various groups of servants who protected the tomb and maintained the continuity of the palatial life of the occupants.

Finally, one of the essential and most interesting aspects of the ritual and funerary objects is the iconographic representation of mythical and real animals, a feature common to the jades, bronzes and funerary terracottas. In Ancient China, real animals performed a key role in the mediation between man and the sacred, be it the broad sense, by way of sacrifices and offerings, or in the figurative sense, through symbolic representations, since there is a correspondence between the animals that were sacrificed and the animals that were represented in the ritual objects.

The representation of masks, associated with mythical animals or human representations, alludes to an idea of alterity or, rather, to an identitarian frontier, of space and time, which dissipates and results in a coalescence between distinct universes.

The uniqueness of José de Guimarães' collection of Chinese art, which, unlike the traditional practice of collecting in Portugal, is somewhat distant from being focused on the cultural relations between Europe and China, is characterised by the consistency of a collecting criterion that aims to know and reveal the structural principles of the development of Chinese civilisation, through a set of ritual, funerary and ceremonial objects.

RUI OLIVEIRA LOPES

***Gu* 觚, wine vessel**
Shang dynasty (1600 – 1045 BC)
Bronze
29.2 × 15.5 cm

Wine vessels of the *gu* (觚) type are among the most elegant ritual vessels found in the tombs of the elites. The cup is formed by three sections, displaying a base in the shape of an inverted vase, on which rests a ring with two cross-shaped perforations. From the middle body of the piece which, like the base, is divided by four vertical protruding flanges, rises a trumpet-shaped body.

The decoration follows the traditional models of the late Shang dynasty, with the representation of real and imaginary animals set against the usual spiral pattern background. The representation of the *taotie* (饕餮) mask, on the underside of the cup, is not as common as habitually found in identical pieces, although the eyes, the eyebrows, the horns in the shape of a serpent, and the jaws on the lower part can be recognised. *Long* dragons and elephants with raised trunks are represented on the band, over the *taotie*. The outer part of the body is decorated with ogival motifs.

The inner wall of the mouth features an inscription with the characters *zi* 子, *jin* 今 and *ge* 戈, which very likely indicates the name of its owner.

***Gong* or *Guang* 觥, wine vessel in the shape of a dragon**
Shang dynasty (1600 – 1045 BC) / Western Zhou dynasty (1045 – 771 BC)
Bronze
20 × 22 cm

The *gong* (觥) are ritual vessels in the shape of a pitcher with an asymmetrical flange and ascending spout, covered with a lid in the form of a dragon head. The pitcher is formed by an oval base and a slightly larger body, to which a bow-shaped handle is attached on the end opposite the spout.

The entire surface of both sides of the body are decorated with *taotie* (饕餮) masks set against a background of spirals. The handle, on its end near the flange, has the shape of a ram head. The highly decorated lid has the shape of a three-dimensional dragon head on the part that rests on the spout and, on the opposite end, a high relief representation of the head of an animal which appears to be a tiger. In the centre of the lid a longitudinal protruding flange determines the symmetrical representation of the *taotie*. An interesting feature is the angular tongue that extends beyond its surface, possibly used for raising it slightly in order to pour the wine.

Lamp in the shape of a duck
Eastern Zhou dynasty, Warring States period (475 – 221 BC) / Western Han dynasty (202 – AD 23)
Bronze with jade inlays
37 × 38.5 cm

As lanternas de bronze surgem no contexto funerário de uma forma sistemática a partir da dinastia Han, desempenhando um papel funcional de iluminação do espaço. As características formais dos diversos elementos que compõem as lanternas demonstram uma preocupação dos artistas chineses num equilíbrio entre a decoração, a beleza visual destes objectos e o seu carácter funcional e tecnológico. As lanternas são normalmente constituídas por um depósito com água no interior, uma campânula com uma pequena pega que permite rodar e controlar a direcção da luz, um tubo que liga a campânula ao depósito para permitir a condução do fumo para se dissolver na água e um pequeno prato onde era colocado o óleo para queimar. Desta forma, para além de controlar a intensidade e direcção da luz, o depósito com água absorvia o fumo e as cinzas que caíam do prato.

Bi 璧
Liangzhu culture (3200 – 2200 BC)
Jade
29.3 cm
19.2 cm

Bi (璧) jade discs are the most intriguing and unique jade objects of the Neolithic, abundantly produced by the Liangzhu culture and highly valued and reproduced later throughout the Shang, Zhou, and Han dynasties. During the Neolithic these disc-shaped objects with a circular hole in the middle were placed in the tombs according to their different sizes. The larger discs were placed in the area of the head (near the nape of the neck and over the face), under the body, on the chest and stomach, and near the knee joints, while the smaller discs were arranged around the body. Both the meaning and the function these objects bore during the Neolithic is unknown, except that they held an important role in the sacred rites and funerary practices.

Generally, Neolithic *bi* discs do not display any kind of decoration on the surface, other than the distinctive animal / mask motif, characteristic of the jade objects of the Liangzhu culture. The representation of this motif, with bulging eyes in relief, drawn by a set of concentric circles or oval shapes, displays similarities with the *Zhulong* (豬龍). Another decorative motif found on the *bi* discs of the Liangzhu culture is the representation of a man mounted on an animal wearing a crown of feathers.

Cong 琮
Neolithic
Jade
33 × 10.1 cm

The *cong* are prismatic jade objects with a circular hole, frequently found in the tombs of the Liangzhu culture, placed all around the body along with small-sized *bi* discs. It is believed that these objects, like *bi* discs, were associated with the ruling class as a symbol of political power and, possibly, spiritual power as well. The corners were often decorated with *taotie* (饕餮) masks or simply with horizontal cuts along the object, revealing advanced knowledge of the techniques of cutting, perforating and abrading the surface of jade.

Pendant
Liangzhu culture (3200 – 2200 BC)
Jade
20.5 × 17.1 cm

Jade pendants, carved in the shape of animals or simply with geometric forms and anthropomorphic representations in relief, were part of a set of ornamental objects used by members of the elite or shamans during the sacred rites and funerary practices. Jade ornaments played a key role in the distinction of certain elements of society and in communicating with the ancestral spirits.

Funerary mask ornaments
Western Zhou dynasty (1045 – 771 BC)
Jade
Various sizes

During the Warring States period jade was thought to possess magical properties that preserved the body from decomposition, which led to the practice of swallowing small jade stones as a means of extending life. On the other hand, with regard to funerary practices, the figures of the elite were buried with masks made from small pieces of jade, which formed a human face.

Figure of a female attendant
Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220)
Painted terracotta
40.5 × 12 × 9 cm

Despite holding a marginal role in a deeply patrilineal social structure, the depiction of women in the tombs reveals their importance in several contexts. Both in mural painting and in terracotta sculpture, women are frequently portrayed standing up, with long-sleeved gowns and their hands clasped over their waist, expressing their willingness to serve the needs of the women of the aristocratic elite or the royal family. These figures were usually placed in the tombs in relatively large groups, mirroring what took place in real life.

The representation of *mingqi* 冥器 in the form of human figures in the tombs of the Han Dynasty is relatively diverse from the iconographic point of view. However, these sculptures always represent figures from the lower social strata, normally associated with the services provided in the manor houses or the imperial court, whether they are servants, cooks, animal keepers, musicians, dancers or other figures connected with the entertainment and well-being of the elite.

The simplicity of the sculptures, both in terms of their attire and the uprightness and readiness of the figures or the absence of iconographic attributes, are indicative elements of the personal servants who usually accompanied the aristocratic elite or the imperial entourage.

Figure of a horse
Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220)
Painted terracotta
44 × 45 × 18 cm

In the mid-2nd century BC, Emperor Wu (r. 140 – 87 BC) of the Han Dynasty revealed great interest in the West, ordering missions of exploration with the aim of establishing military alliances that would guarantee the territorial hegemony of the empire, especially near the frontiers of northern China, under threat by the Xiongnu nomads. In the first years of Emperor Wu's reign, General Zhang Qian was charged with the mission of forming an alliance with the Yuezhi of Central Asia. These missions of exploration to the West led him to Ferghana, with the objective of acquiring horses, since these were bigger, stronger, and faster than those native to China, whose characteristics were fundamental for the demands of the battlefield.

Since the Shang Dynasty (1600 – 1045 BC), the horse had stood for a symbol of prestige, of military strength, but it also played a key role in the sacred rites. The royal tombs of the last capital of the Shang included collective sacrifices of horses, buried with all their ornaments, saddles and harnesses, or alongside the chariots they drew and the charioteers who drove them.

During the Han Dynasty, the horse was decisive for the success of military campaigns and the expansion of the territory, and also for the pomp ceremonies in which horsemen exhibited their skills while riding a horse, shooting arrows and overcoming obstacles.

Emperor Wu regarded horses not only as an advantage in terms of military strategy and as a key element from the point of view of the demonstration of power, he also valued them for their mystic qualities, believing that the Heavenly Horse (*Tian ma* 天马) could render him immortal, taking him to the Kunlun Mountains, where Xi Wangmu, the Queen Mother of the West, lived. In the funerary context, the horse is portrayed as a symbol of freedom, as the ride of the spirits and as axiological element between Humanity and the Heavens.

Basin
Yangshao Culture, Majiayao Phase (c. 4000 – 3500 BC)
Terracotta
14 × 31 cm

The Yangshao Culture developed between 5000 and 2800 BC in the provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Shaanxi and Henan. Painted pottery is one of its main characteristics, which can be divided into four distinct phases.

The Banpo phase developed between 5000 and 4000 BC, in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province. Its pottery is characterised by the depiction of human heads with feathers and other ornaments in the form of fish. The depiction of fish is another of the iconographic elements characteristic of the painted earthenware of the Banpo phase. The representation of human figures wearing feathers and other adornments could point to the existence of rites and shamanistic practices. Besides representing the figures usually with their eyes closed, alluding to the idea of abandonment of the body and spiritual journey, the presence of the man-animal motif represents the archetype of the animal as vehicle of spiritual journeying, playing a key role in the communication with the ancestral spirits. In some archaeological sites, the larger basins painted with these motifs were used as urns for the burial of children, providing a spiritual meaning to the decoration of the pottery associated with funerary practices and death.

Between 4000 and 3500 BC, the Yangshao Culture extended its area of influence to Gansu Province, to the west, and to Henan Province and the region of Zhengzhou, to the east, giving rise to the Majiayao and Miaodigou phases, respectively. The painted pottery of the Majiayao phase is distinguishable from that of the Banpo phase both for its greater diversity in terms of typologies and forms and for the decoration of the objects. Between the Banpo phase and the Majiayao phase, this decoration changed from figurative to abstract. The contrast between the black pigment on the orange-brown ceramic reveals an inclination towards the complete decoration of the piece, which leads to the idea that the importance of the pottery was related not only to its utilitarian and ritual nature, but also to the ostentation and sophistication of the objects inherent to the establishment of social hierarchies and the institution of political authority.

Figure of a musician playing *guqin* 古琴
Figure of a musician playing *xiao* 簫
Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220)
Terracotta
58 × 45.5 × 26.5 cm
58 × 28.5 × 24.5 cm

In the aftermath of the musical tradition institutionalised during the Zhou Dynasty through the development of fundamental musical instruments in the context of the rites, ceremonies and palatial entertainment, music was given great importance during the Han Dynasty, in both political and cultural terms.

After the imperial unification of China there occurred a significant cultural and artistic exchange, bringing the Han into permanent contact with both the other ethnicities of China and the peoples of Central Asia and the Mediterranean along the Silk Road. Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty promoted the institution of music with the aim of collecting and organising the various genres of popular music characteristic of the several regions of the vast empire, including the remote areas to the west. Music emerged thus associated with the extension of imperial authority over the territory and China's diverse cultural realities, playing at the same time a key role in the context of the representation of different identities, corresponding to the taste for the exotic that circulated along the Silk Road.

Music, along with dancing and poetry, was one of the main forms of entertainment of the aristocracy and the learned class of Han society, being thus widely portrayed in funerary sculpture.

Among the variety of musical instruments, both the *guqin* 古琴, a stringed instrument of the zither family, and the *xiao* 簫, a vertical end-blown bamboo flute, are widely represented in the iconography of the terracotta funerary sculpture. The *guqin* 古琴 was regarded as the instrument of the sages for its association with the philosopher Confucius, being considered one of the four arts of the scholar, together with painting, calligraphy and the *weiqi* 圍棋, a board game. The *xiao* 簫 is precisely one of the characteristic musical instruments in the music of the Qiang, one of the ethnic minorities of the north-western region of Sichuan Province, which became popular during the Han Dynasty, becoming one of the main instruments that accompanies the *guqin* 古琴.

***Lokapala*, funerary guardian**
Tang Dynasty (AD 618 – 907)
Terracotta
126 × 51 × 24 cm

Buddhism exerted a vast influence in China during the Tang Dynasty, especially with regard to art and literature. The coexistence between Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism as the "Three Teachings" gave rise to a religious syncretism and a confluence of the visual arts. The profusely visual and iconographic character of Buddhism placed an emphasis on Taoism's representation schemes of the sacred and pantheon.

Lokapala is a Sanskrit word which means *guardian of the world*, referring to the Four Heavenly Kings responsible for protecting each of the four cardinal directions against evil spirits. The Buddhist guardians match the Four Heavenly Kings of Taoism *Si Da Tian Wang* 四大天王, normally represented on the doors or entrances of the temples, as anthropomorphic depictions of the Four Symbols of the Chinese constellation.

The ceramic funerary sculptures of *lokapala* can depict the guardian on his own or above the evil spirits, with one foot placed on the lower abdomen and another placed on the head or the shoulder. These sculptures were usually placed at the entrance of the tombs, along with a pair of *zhenmushou*, a spirit portrayed in the form of a hybrid doglike creature with wings and a prominent feather, which protected the dead from evil spirits.

The *lokapala* are represented with a terrifying facial expression, wearing armour according to the style used by the military of the Tang Dynasty. The depiction of a bird above the head may be a reference to the Vermilion Bird, one of the Four Symbols of the Chinese constellation and the Guardian of the South.

Publisher
Guimarães 2012

Editorial coordination
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Executive production
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Texts
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Translation and Proofreading
Miguel Moore

Photography
Vasco Célio / Stills
José de Guimarães Studio
(cover and pp. 4, 12, 15, 19)

Photographic post-production
Ricardo Nascimento and
Carlos Barreto / Stills

Graphic design
Atelier Pedro Falcão
Proportion
[A5] – 14,8 × 21 cm
Tipefaces
Figgins
Scotch

Printing
Norprint

Print run
7500 cópias

ISBN
978-989-97921-0-4

Legal deposit
345674/12

Copyright images
José de Guimarães

Copyright texts
The authors

Organization

FUNDAÇÃO CIDADE DE GUIMARÃES
Capital Europeia da Cultura

Financial Support

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