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***Images Available Upon Request**

Cincinnati Art Museum's redesigned African art gallery opens December 10



CINCINNATI — The reinstatement of the Cincinnati Art Museum's permanent collection of African art will be unveiled on December 10. African artifacts, including masks worn by ritual performers, the tools of healers, objects of status used by community leaders, textiles and other decorative items used in the home, will go on view, some for the first time.

The new African art gallery includes an updated exhibition design and layout for visitors to experience these pieces through the lens of thematic groupings, revealing a cultural and historical context. The new location, in Gallery 103, on the first floor near the Rosenthal Education Center (REC), allows easy access for visitors.

Cincinnati Art Museum's African art collection has a rich history that started in 1889, just three years after the museum opened its doors, with an exhibition featuring artwork collected by Carl Steckelmann.

The Steckelmann collection of nearly 1,300 objects was purchased in 1890, making the Cincinnati Art Museum one of the first to acquire a major collection of African art. Steckelmann's personal story and his collection are featured in the new gallery space. Some objects will be on display in visible storage drawers, revealing the depth and breadth of this impressive and extensive collection.

The museum has continued to expand its African art collection over the years with the help of donors and patrons, widening its geographic reach beyond central and western Africa—the areas most traveled by Steckelmann.

The reinstatement was led by Cincinnati Art Museum Chief Curator Cynthia Amnéus. Nichole Bridges, associate curator for African art at the St. Louis Museum of Art, and local scholar William Hommel lent their expertise to this project, choosing works of the highest aesthetic merit.

"We are very excited to reintroduce our African collection reinstated in a new gallery with a new interpretation," said Amnéus. "The museum has an important and historical connection to African art in the Carl Steckelmann collection. Accompanied by other important pieces, this gallery will bring African art to life and make it relevant for all ages. Some of the objects in the gallery are light sensitive, requiring that they be rotated off view from time to time. This will give us the opportunity to bring additional objects out of storage and we encourage visitors to return again and again to engage with the objects created by these accomplished African artists."

In line with the Cincinnati Art Museum's strategic plan and just over a year after the reinstatement of the museum's permanent collection of Western antiquities was unveiled, the new African gallery will help expand the museum's diverse, encyclopedic collection on view.

cincinnati art museum

“We are immensely proud to open our new African art gallery at the Cincinnati Art Museum. Our African collections are an early part of the museum’s collecting history and are evidence of the deep, rich and complex story of a diverse continent. It is my hope that our new African gallery will link people and perspectives across cultures and history at the Cincinnati Art Museum,” said Cameron Kitchin, the Louis and Louise Dieterle Nippert Director of the Cincinnati Art Museum.

The redesigned gallery is just one of the many exciting experiences at the Cincinnati Art Museum this winter. [Van Gogh: Into the Undergrowth](#) and the [Tree of Life](#) are on view until January 8. In addition, [Kentucky Renaissance: The Lexington Camera Club and Its Community, 1954–1974](#) will be on view until January 1. An additional photography special feature, [The Poetry of Place](#), will also be on view from December 10, 2016–June 11, 2017.

Carl Steckelmann and the Cincinnati Art Museum

Carl Steckelmann was a German American from Indiana who acquired an extensive collection of art and ethnographic materials while working for an English trading company along the coast of equatorial and central Africa in the 1880s and 1890s. His 1889 exhibition at the Cincinnati Art Museum was well-received by the public, prompting the museum’s director at the time, Alfred Goshorn, to raise funds to purchase the collection with the support of other museum patrons. The Steckelmann collection was purchased in 1890, making the Cincinnati Art Museum one of the first to acquire a major collection of African art.

Image credit: Agunna of Oke Igbira (d. circa 1930), Yoruba culture, Nigeria, *Veranda Post*, early 20th century, wood, pigment, Museum Purchase, Lawrence Archer Wachs Fund, 2003.271

About the Cincinnati Art Museum

The Cincinnati Art Museum is supported by the generosity of individuals and businesses that give annually to ArtsWave. The Ohio Arts Council helps fund the Cincinnati Art Museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The Cincinnati Art Museum gratefully acknowledges operating support from the City of Cincinnati, as well as our members.

General admission to the Cincinnati Art Museum is always free. The museum is open Tuesday – Sunday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. with extended Thursday hours until 8 p.m. cincinnatiartmuseum.org

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