

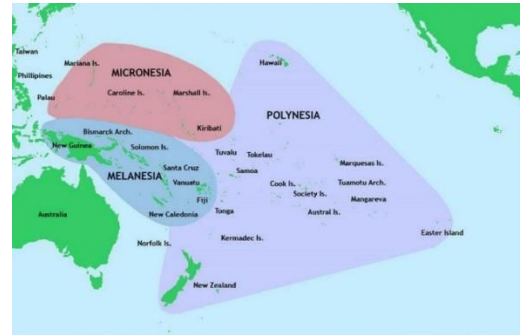
FAQS about this exhibit

Where do these objects come from?

Africa and Oceania.

What is Oceania?

Oceania includes all the islands in the Pacific Ocean, stretching between Asia and the Americas. It is traditionally divided into four parts: Australasia (Australia and New Zealand), Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.



What is Africa?



Africa is a continent, not a country! It is one-fifth of the world's land and today is the home of 54 countries and several thousand ethnic groups. It is best described by the word “diverse” applied to climate, ecosystems, cultures, languages, religions, art traditions, and histories.

Why are the arts of Africa and Oceania displayed together?

African and Oceanic art were important to the transformation of Western art at the end of the 19th century. Their simplified or imaginatively distorted forms appealed to early modern artists. This art showed a way of portraying the world that was radically different from the naturalism of Western art.

How did FAM get these objects?

Most of these works have been gifts to the museum from individuals, foundations, or even other museums. Some of the art was purchased by the museum at auction, from galleries, or from the artists themselves.

What is Provenance?

‘Provenance’ is the history of an object’s ownership. If complete, it traces the journey the object takes from its point of origin to the Fitchburg Art Museum. With African and Oceanic objects, it is rarely complete, unless the object was commissioned and collected from the artist by a representative of the museum. Often we only have information on where our donors purchased the objects.

What is an accession number?

An accession number is given to each art work when it enters the museum collection. It usually gives the year and the number indicating its location in the sequence of objects acquired that year. "2009.56" tells us the object came into the collection in 2009 as the 56th object that year. It is placed on the object label along with other information.

Why are there QR codes on some labels?

Those black squares arranged in a square grid on a white background, if read by your smart phone or tablet, will take you to a YouTube film that gives you more information on how the object on display is used.

How do I read a QR code?

First, you need a QR-code app and a smartphone or tablet equipped with a camera. iOS users should check out RedLaser. Android fans can try either RedLaser or QRDroid, and BlackBerry users will like QR Code Scanner Pro. All of these apps are free to download, and each one should handle any standard QR code just fine. https://www.pcworld.com/article/242873/how_to_read_qr_codes_with_a_smartphone.html

Who gave the artworks on display to FAM?

Four major donors are Dwight and Anna Heath, the Genevieve McMillan-Reba Stewart Foundation, William and Bertha Teel, and Bobbi and Tim Hamill (the Hamill Gallery). Other donors include members of the community such as Cora Hatch who gave the Tongan tapa cloth in 1931, trustees and board members or their families such as Paul Rossi who gave things in honor of his father Robert who had been chairman of the Board from 2008 to 2010, museum staff including curator Jean Borgatti, and visitors to the museum such as John and Jane McWilliam who gave the commemorative Obama cloth after seeing **Global Africa** (2014-2018).

How did the donors get this art?

Many of the donors traveled to the areas where these works were made, purchasing them from local people, artists, or galleries. Mr. Lonergan traveled to the Pacific during WWII and later returned with his wife, purchasing artifacts from an Australian gallery. Genevieve McMillan, Reba Stewart, Helen Slosberg, and May Gruber all traveled to Oceania or Africa to see the art they admired in its own context and to buy work that they saw. Others purchased art works at auction, from art galleries in the United States or Europe, from itinerant African art dealers (often referred to as 'runners'), and most recently, from sources on-line through ebay, galleries, and shops.

Who are 'runners'?

'Runners' are African traders who bought traditional art in rural areas of Africa and shipped it to Europe and the United States in order to sell to individuals and galleries beginning in the late 1960s. Subsequently, many opened their own galleries in the United States and travelled to fairs and flea markets to sell these goods, either making periodic trips back to Africa or liaising with a family member to run the African side of the business.

Abdoul Keita shown in his booth at Brimfield is from Guinea. He has been selling in the United States for 30 years or more and coming to Brimfield for much of that time. He has sold many objects to the Heaths, Genevieve McMillan, and Tim Hamill. He is an American citizen today.



What can this art tell us?

This art can tell us how people lived their lives, worshipped their God(s), but most important, how vast the human imagination is and how very creative all human beings are!