



Homecoming

Domesticity and Kinship in Global African Art

**HOOD
MUSEUM
OF ART**

HOOD MUSEUM OF ART, DARTMOUTH

Homecoming: Domesticity and Kinship in Global African Art is rooted in Black, queer, and feminist curatorial and scholarly practices. The exhibition surveys themes of home, kinship, motherhood, femininity, and intimacy in historical and contemporary art from and about Africa and the African diaspora. In curating this project, my goal was to highlight and celebrate the work women do, both in and outside of their homes, to sustain their families and communities.

I began imagining plans for *Homecoming: Domesticity and Kinship in Global African Art* in early 2021 at the tail end of the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, a period that coincided with an uptick in conditions of and activist responses to anti-Black racism and xenophobia. At that time, I personally was immersed in the literature on women-of-color feminisms and notions of home and labor, which I had encountered during a Yale graduate seminar called “Colonial Domesticity” that was taught by Professor Lisa Lowe. This course shaped my thinking on the work that women do to build and maintain their families and communities. These experiences ultimately came together to form my commitment to narrating and exhibiting stories of African and African-diasporic domesticity and kinship.

Homecoming facilitates a visual gathering of artists of African descent across space, place, and time. Specificities of region, ethnicity, migration, gender, sexuality, and historical moment are explored in this exhibition, which maintains that there can be a robust dialogue among different African and African-diasporic art histories without an erasure of local distinctiveness.

“Domesticity” is a capacious term that refers to matters of the home and family, including reproduction, housework, the use of common household items, and philosophical understandings of home. “Kinship” is used to describe relationships among families and communities without strictly defined geographical or biological boundaries.

Throughout the globe, Black women’s quilting practices blend ancestral traditions with contemporary creative innovations to produce garments that are simultaneously gorgeous and can be used to comfort and adorn the body. As such, textiles provide a fruitful site of inquiry for this exhibition. One of the many indigo textiles on



display is *Untitled (Adire Quilt)* by Nigerian artist Nike Davies-Okundaye. Its geometric designs and varied shades of blue are characteristic of the West African art form. In southwestern Nigeria, Yoruba women have long created *adire*—indigo-dyed fabrics that are known to the world for their dazzling colors and intricate patterns. Historically, the dye used for these garments was sourced from local plants, but industrialized forms of the dye are now readily available, too. In Yorubaland, *adire* cloths are made by a resist-dyeing technique to make various tints and designs. Generations of Yoruba women maintain the tradition of designing and wearing these indigo textiles.

Photographs from South African artist Senzeni Marasela’s *Baby Doll* series reveal how artmaking can be entangled with the emotional processing of traumatic histories. A Black baby doll, shown against bright green grass, is captured as it unravels—or, perhaps, as it is sewn together. It is ambiguous, powerfully so, as the artist uses the image to gesture toward the uncertainty and violence of being a Black child growing up under South African apartheid. This photograph is from a series of twelve, each of which pictures the doll at a point of destruction or

construction. Regarding the series chronologically, what is occurring is a process of dismemberment, achieved by the artist's placement of herself in the photographs. The ripped-apartness mirrors the artist's own childhood; Marasela was sent to a boarding school to avoid apartheid atrocities and her mother was forced to be a domestic worker in a white household, a fate shared by many Black women during that era. When the series is shown in fragments, as it is here, one might initially read individual photographs as images of construction. There is certainly a feminist polemic and emotional release generated in the tearing apart of the doll. What does it mean to unpack, or dismantle, the symbols of one's childhood? Can destruction be a form of creation?

Masks from the African continent offer a strong political and aesthetic component to the themes of domesticity and kinship. One example in *Homecoming* is the Gelede mask representing Osanyin, the orisha of herbal medicines, surrounded by four disciples, which was made by an unidentified possibly Egbado or Ketu maker. The four figures atop the mask are disciples of Osanyin, the *orisha* (deity) of herbal

medicine. At Gelede festivals, Yoruba men perform a masquerade in honor of the significant roles women play in the community as mothers, traders, elders, and ancestors. Blue pigment, either natural Indigo or an industrialized dye called washing blue, is applied to many Yoruba sculptures, like those on this mask. The blue expresses coolness, purity, discretion, and composure. It is often associated with water deities, such as Yemoja, who is the goddess of rivers and is known as a patron deity of pregnant women.

I hope the exhibition encourages everyone to discuss the kindred themes of domesticity and kinship in their everyday lives. Who performs the labor that builds and sustains our communities and how is that reflected in the visual and material culture of the world around us? What does home look and feel like to you? *Homecoming* makes it possible for visitors of the Hood Museum of Art to delve into these questions while simultaneously engaging with the abundant history of African and African-diasporic art.

Alexandra Thomas
Curatorial Research Associate



Checklist

Sadatu Abu, Yoruba/Nigerian, active 20th century. *Baby Carrier*, collected 1977, hand-woven cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25822

Bhasha Chakrabarti, American, born 1991. *It's a Blue World*, 2021, hand-quilted used jeans and natural indigo-dyed handloom fabric, with hand embroidery. Purchased through the William S. Rubin Fund and the Stephen and Constance Spahn '63 Acquisition Fund; 2022.61

Ernest Levi Tsosloane Cole, South African, 1940–90. *Below the Bread Line #13*, 1960, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the Contemporary Art Fund, the Elizabeth and David C. Lowenstein '67 Fund, the Virginia and Preston T. Kelsey 1958 Fund, and the Fund for Contemporary Photography; 2020.191

Nike Davies-Okundaye, Nigerian, born 1952. *Untitled (Adire Quilt)*, 2002, indigo-dyed cotton and thread. Purchased through the William B. Jaffe and Evelyn A. Jaffe Hall Fund, and through gifts from the Dickey Fund and the Leslie Humanities Center; T.2003.6

Jabulani Patrick Dhlamini, South African, born 1983. *Untitled (Woman seated on a bed near a TV)*; from *The i-jusi Portfolio Number 3: South African Photographs*, 2013, gelatin silver print on Baryta Fibre 300g archival paper. Gift of Marina and Andrew E. Lewin, Class of 1981; 2013.67.3

Roland Dorcély, Haitian, 1930–2017. *Mother and Son*, before 1957, tempera on composition board. Gift of Diana J. and Professor Emeritus H. Wentworth Eldredge, Class of 1931; P.984.39.3

The Two Sisters #2, about 1957, tempera on cardboard. Gift of the artist; P.958.46

Angèle Etoundi Essamba, Cameroonian, born 1962. *Noir #211*, 2000, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the Alvin and Mary Bert Gutman 1940 Acquisition Fund; PH.2003.30.1

Lamidi Fakeye, Yoruba/Nigerian, 1928–2009. *Yoruba Kneeling Female Figure Holding a Bowl*, early 1960s, wood. Gift of Ginna Fleming and Murray Frank; 2013.98.2

Nomusa Makhubu, South African, born 1984. *Inhlamvu Yamehlo (The gaze)*, from *The Self Portrait Project (2007/2013)*, 2014, archival digital print on 35 gsm Hanhnmule cotton photo museum paper. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2014.58.10

Lover from The Self Portrait Project (2007/2013), 2014, archival digital print on 35 gsm Hanhnmule cotton photo museum paper. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2014.58.3

Ntombi (Young girl), from *The Self Portrait Project (2007/2013)*, 2014, archival digital print on 35 gsm Hanhnmule cotton photo museum paper. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2014.58.6

Ubuhle (Beauty), from *The Self Portrait Project (2007/2013)*, 2014, archival digital print on 35 gsm Hanhnmule cotton photo museum paper. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2014.58.5

Umasifanisane I (Comparison I) from *The Self Portrait Project (2007/2013)*, 2014, archival digital print on 35 gsm Hanhnmule cotton photo museum paper. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2014.58.7

Umasifanisane II (Comparison II), from *The Self Portrait Project (2007/2013)*, 2014, archival digital print on 35 gsm Hanhnmule cotton photo museum paper. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2014.58.8

Umqela Nombhaco (Beautification scar), from *The Self Portrait Project (2007/2013)*, 2014, archival digital print on 35 gsm Hanhnmule cotton photo museum paper. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2014.58.4

Senzeni Marasela, South African, born 1977. *Baby Doll*, 2006, series of six digital prints on mat archival paper. Purchased through the Charles F. Vernick 1936 Fund; 2008.8.1–6

J. E. Middlebrook, the Premier Studio, Kimberly, South Africa, South African, 19th century. *A Natural Disposition of a Zulu Family at their Home*, about 1888–94, albumen print. Gift of Dori and Daniel Rootenberg; 2019.51.1

Sabelo Mlangeni, South African, born 1980. *uMkhosi Gadisa*, from the series *Country Girls*; from *The i-jusi Portfolio Number 3: South African Photographs*, negative 2004; print 2013, gelatin silver print on Baryta Fibre 300 g archival paper. Gift of Marina and Andrew E. Lewin, Class of 1981; 2013.67.9

Zanele Muholi, South African, born 1972. *ID Crisis*, from the series, *Only Half the Picture*, 2003, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the Hood Museum of Art Acquisitions Fund; 2006.42

Magdalene Odundo, Kenyan, born 1950. *Untitled*, 2001, blackened terracotta. Purchased through the William B. Jaffe and Evelyn A. Jaffe Hall Fund and the Claire and Richard P. Morse 1953 Fund; C.2003.50

Untitled (Sketchbook Drawing), 2005; vessel dated 2001, charcoal on paper. Purchased through the Miriam H. and S. Sidney Stoneman Acquisition Fund; 2008.74.2

Toyin Ojih Odutola, Nigerian (works in New York City), born 1985. *Pregnant*, 2017, charcoal, pastel, and graphite on paper. Purchased through the Florence and Lansing Porter Moore 1937 Fund; 2018.8

J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, Nigerian, 1930–2014. *Abebe*, 1975, gelatin silver print. Gift of Robert J. Grey; 2017.55

Agaracha, 1974, gelatin silver print. Gift of Robert J. Grey; TL1912.4

Onile Gogoro or Akaba, 1975, gelatin silver print. Gift of Robert J. Grey; TL1912.3

Pineapple, 1969, gelatin silver print. Gift of Robert J. Grey; TL1912.5

Two in One, 1970, gelatin silver print. Gift of Robert J. Grey; TL1912.2

Udoji, 1975, gelatin silver print. Gift of Robert J. Grey; TL1912.1

W. W. R. Pearse, Ladysmith, South Africa, active 1888–94. *Possibly a Zulu Nurse holding a White Baby*, about 1888–94, carte-de-visite; albumen silver print mounted on card. Purchased through the Mrs. Harvey P. Hood W'18 Fund; 2019.33.4

Etiyē Dimma Poulsen, Ethiopian, born 1968. *Woman in Orange Cloth*, 2006, ceramic, mixed media. Purchased through the Charles J. and Opel Zimmerman 1923 Fund; 2006.22

Joyce J. Scott, American, born 1948. *Mammy Under Undue Influence*, 2007, blown, cast, and lampworked glass, and beadwork (peyote stitch). Purchased through the Virginia and Preston T. Kelsey 1958 Fund; 2007.51

Yinka Shonibare, English-Nigerian, born 1962. *Doll House*; *Peter Norton Family Christmas Project 2002*, 2002, resin, wood, fabric, and ceramic. Gift of the Director of the Hood Museum of Art; S.2002.65

Malick Sidibé, Malian, 1936–2016. *Back Views (Vues de Dos)*, 2002, gelatin silver print, glass, cardboard, tape, and string. Purchased through the Olivia H. Parker and John O. Parker '58 Acquisition Fund; PH.2003.36

Untitled (Crying Child), negative 1960s; print 2006, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the William B. and Evelyn F. Jaffe (58, 60, & 63) Fund and the Hood Museum of Art Acquisitions Fund; 2006.82.2

Untitled (Girl with Child), negative 1960s; print 2006, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the William B. and Evelyn F. Jaffe (58, 60, & 63) Fund and the Hood Museum of Art Acquisitions Fund; 2006.82.3

Lorna Simpson, American, born 1960. *Cure/ Heal*, number ten of ten, from the *Portfolio*, 10: *Artist as Catalyst*, published 1992, three-color serigraph on Lenox 100 paper. Purchased through the Anonymous Fund #144; 2008.53.10

W. Eugene Smith, American, 1918–78. *Nurse Midwife*, 1951, gelatin silver print. Purchased through a gift from Andrew E. Lewin, Class of 1981; 2008.63

South African Photo and Stereo Company (SAPSCO), Johannesburg, South Africa. *"Motherhood,"* early 20th century, photo offset lithograph postcard. Purchased through the Hood Museum of Art Acquisitions Fund; 2006.18.28

Unidentified Agni maker. Figure of pregnant woman, 19th century, wood, beads, and cotton. Gift of Evelyn A. Jaffe Hall; S.973.306

Unidentified American maker. *The Ole Mammie*, early 20th century, postcard, hand-colored colotype. Anonymous gift; 2007.20.2

Unidentified Ashanti maker. Fertility figure, collected 1966. Museum purchase; 167.6.24033

Unidentified Dan maker. Mother and child seated on a carved log, early 20th century, bronze. Gift of Peter H. Voukos; 2001.51.34356

Unidentified possibly Egbado or Ketu maker. Gelede mask representing Osanyin, the orisha of herbal medicines, surrounded by four disciples, early 20th century, wood, cotton, and paint. Museum purchase; 167.6.24038

Unidentified Fon maker. Indigo cloth batik, collected 1966, indigo-dyed cloth. Museum purchase; 167.6.24144

Unidentified Hausa maker. Adire cloth, collected 1977, indigo-dyed cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25840

Cloth, collected 1977, indigo-dyed cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25841

Unidentified Makonde maker. Njorowe or ndimu (body plate/mask), late 19th–early 20th century, wood, beeswax, iron, fiber, and pigment. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2005.69

Unidentified Mende maker. Initiation society mask, mid-20th century, wood. Gift of Burton Elliott, Class of 1948; 992.42.29086

Unidentified South African maker. *A Zulu kraal*, 19th century, possibly a gelatin or collodion printed-out print. Purchased through the Mrs. Harvey P. Hood W'18 Fund; 2019.33.7

Zulu mother and child, 19th century, possibly a gelatin or collodion printed-out print. Purchased through the Mrs. Harvey P. Hood W'18 Fund; 2019.33.9

Unidentified Yoruba maker. Boy's sleeveless tunic (danshiki) and trousers (nagudu), collected 1977, cotton, rayon, and embroidery. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25826

Cloth stencil, about 1976, tin sheeting. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25850

Cloth stencil, collected 1977, cloth. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25851

Female twin figure, mid-20th century, wood. Gift of the Estates of Catherine L. and Robert A. McKennan, Class of 1925; 985.20.26446

Male twin figure, 19th–20th century, wood and indigo. Gift of Evelyn A. Jaffe Hall; S.973.310

Male twin figure, mid-20th century, wood with accoutrements of organic material. Gift of the Estates of Catherine L. and Robert A. McKennan, Class of 1925; 985.20.26445

Mask, collected 1966, wood. Museum purchase; 167.6.24040

Mask, 20th century, wood and pigment. Harry A. Franklin Family Collection; 990.53.27156

Woman's wrapper, collected 1977, indigo-dyed commercial cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25837

Women's wrapper, collected 1977, indigo-dyed commercial cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25838

Women's wrapper, collected 1977, indigo-dyed cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25843

Women's wrapper, collected 1977, indigo-dyed commercial cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25845

Women's wrapper, collected 1977, indigo-dyed commercial cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25848

Women's wrapper, 1978, indigo-dyed cotton. Gift of Adrian Walsler, Class of 1932; 178.30.25844

Unidentified western Yoruba maker. Mask representing a woman trader, mid-20th century, wood and pigment. Harry A. Franklin Family Collection; 990.53.27136

Unidentified Yoruba/African-diaspora maker. Power basket, 20th century, iron, basketry, horn, bone, fur, shell, hide, wood, and string. Purchased through the William B. and Evelyn F. Jaffe (58, 60, & 63) Fund; 995.54.30220

Unidentified Zulu maker. Beaded doll depicting a married woman's clothing, 1965, yarn and beads. Museum purchase; 166.115854

Broom, 1965, tree root. Museum purchase; 166.115836

Broom, collected before 1885, wood and organic fiber. Gift of Reverend Josiah Tyler; 13.25.844

Eating mat, collected before 1885, grass. Gift of Reverend Josiah Tyler; 13.25.879

Wooden spoon, collected before 1885, wood. Gift of Reverend Josiah Tyler; 13.25.845

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Cover image: Senzeni Marasela, *Baby Doll*, number nine of a series of twelve photographs, 2006. © Senzeni Marasela

Inside left: Nike Davies-Okundaye, *Untitled (Adire Quilt)*, 2002. © Nike Davies-Okundaye

Inside right: Unidentified possibly Egbado or Ketu maker, Gelede mask representing Osanyin, the orisha of herbal medicines, surrounded by four disciples, early 20th century.