



Currently on Loan

Two masterpieces from the University of Pennsylvania Museum's African collection are currently on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where they are being featured in an exhibition celebrating the career of Walker Evans (1903-1975). The exhibit, entitled "Perfect Document: Walker Evans and African Art, 1935," runs from February 1 to September 3, 2000.

In 1935, the UPM lent these and other works of art to The Museum of Modern Art in New York for what has become known as a groundbreaking exhibition. While there had been many exhibitions of African art before 1935, the MoMA show, entitled "African Negro Art," was important because for the first time the traditional arts of Africa were displayed in the same manner as European and American sculpture, as unique works of art with formal, artistic, and abstract qualities, rather than as ethnographic specimens or curiosities. The show was intended to change the way the public viewed African art and show how its forms and materials had influenced the works of modern artists.

The now well known American photographer, Walker Evans, was in the formative years of his career when he was commissioned to make a portfolio of photographs of the 1935 exhibit for educational purposes. Evans's photographs are historical records that document the condition of the pieces, show how MoMA displayed them, and

provide provenance information. They serve as a fundamental resource for scholars interested in African art.

At the current show at the Metropolitan, Walker Evans's famed photographs are displayed with the pieces pictured, including the two UPM objects. The Senufo door (30-10-1) from the Ivory Coast is a particularly fine and well preserved piece that displays the full range of design elements commonly found on Senufo doors. The Nkisi N'kondi figure (Nail Figure) from the Kongo is perhaps the oldest example of a human sculpture in the UPM's African collection. Nail Figures of this size have great power and are the property of the entire village.

We are fortunate to have these works of art to share and encourage you to visit them at the Metropolitan, or in the UPM's African gallery upon their return in October 2000.

Dwaune Latimer

Jean Friendly Keeper, African Section



(above): Objects intended for display at the 1935 exhibition, "African Negro Art," at the Museum of Modern Art.

Photograph ©2000 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

(left): Nkisi N'kondi figure from Kongo, Zaire. This piece is at the far left in the group photo, with the UPM's Senufo door leaning against the wall behind it.

UPM 30-46-2. Wood with iron nails and blades, mirror, and magic material. H. 105 cm. Collected in Cabinda and purchased in 1930 from Summer Healey