

STRATEGIC PLAN

National Museum of African Art
Smithsonian Institution
FY 2011-2016

right
MASK (DETAIL)
ARTIST: ATTRIBUTED TO
AJERE ELEWE OF EPE
YORUBA PEOPLES, OPIN AREA, NIGERIA
LATE 19TH TO MID-20TH CENTURY
WOOD, PIGMENT
GIFT OF WALT DISNEY WORLD CO.,
A SUBSIDIARY OF THE WALT DISNEY
COMPANY, 2005-6-77

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FATHI HASSAN

B. 1957, SUDAN/EGYPT

GLANCE TOWARD THE UNKNOWN

(DETAIL)

1985

PHOTOGRAPH

GIFT OF THE ARTIST, 2008-4-2

To inspire conversations about
the beauty, power and diversity of
African arts and cultures worldwide

OUR MISSION

FEMALE FIGURE WITH CHILD (DETAIL)
SENUFO PEOPLES, CÔTE D'IVOIRE
20TH CENTURY
WOOD, OIL
GIFT OF THE WALT DISNEY WORLD CO.,
A SUBSIDIARY OF THE WALT DISNEY
COMPANY, 2005-6-51



To be the world's **leading center** of scholarly and artistic **excellence** on the arts of Africa. The museum's **unparalleled** collections, exhibitions, programs, publications and educational initiatives will be **widely accessible** and strengthened through **collaborations** with African, diasporic and **global arts** communities.

**OUR
VISION**

Letter from the Advisory Board

Arts institutions everywhere are facing challenges—to meet demographic shifts in audiences, to address difficult economic realities, to educate in new ways, to adapt to new technologies that affect how and what we exhibit, as well as how we engage with our audiences, with one another and the world, all while competing in the din of an ever-growing information marketplace. We at the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) and the Smithsonian Institution are not exempt from these realities.

The advisory board is, however, encouraged by the fresh direction of the leadership at both the Smithsonian and NMAfA, and remains proud to be part of the museum's work and continuing excellence. It is in this climate that I am pleased to present the National Museum of African Art's Strategic Plan for FY 2011–2016.

We applaud the inclusive process demonstrated in the preparation of this strategic plan and its policy direction, which included a survey of more than 300 stakeholders, input from every member of the staff and the hard work of the museum's strategic planning team and board subcommittee. NMAfA's plan fits squarely within the Smithsonian Institution's newly launched strategic plan and overall vision, "Inspiring Generations through Knowledge and Discovery." Just as these two plans must work in concert, so too must the National Museum of African Art and the Smithsonian to achieve our mutual ends.

To create the vision and fulfill the ambitious objectives of this plan, the museum will draw on its renowned collections, extraordinary scholarly resources and remarkably dedicated staff of employees and volunteers. It is true that there are major staffing and budget challenges confronting the museum. We on the board and at the Smithsonian are well aware of these challenges and the fundraising that is a necessary underpinning for the attainment of our strategic goals. Each individual member and the board as a whole are committed to fulfilling

right

MALE FIGURE
BAMUM PEOPLES,
GRASSFIELDS REGION, CAMEROON
LATE 19TH CENTURY
WOOD, BRASS, CLOTH, GLASS BEADS,
COWRIE SHELLS
GIFT OF EVELYN A.J. HALL AND
JOHN A. FRIEDE, 85-8-1



Adinkrahene, chief of the adinkra symbols, embodies greatness, charisma and leadership.

our fundraising responsibilities and assisting the museum staff in the achievement of this strategic plan.

Accordingly, we, the members of the advisory board, fully and enthusiastically endorse the policy direction and the plan's priorities, goals and strategies. It is with great confidence in the mission and vision that we encourage you to join with us as we support the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art and its mission to create global conversations that showcase the beauty, power and diversity of Africa's arts and cultures.

Art U. Mbanefo
Chair
Advisory Board
National Museum of African Art





PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID E. DEPAS PHOTOGRAPHY, 2009

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of the National Museum of African Art,

As the leading museum dedicated solely to the impressive breadth and scope of the arts of the continent that is the cradle of humanity, we embrace our responsibility to create opportunities for all people who visit the museum—whether on the National Mall or online—

to experience the diversity and dynamism of Africa’s visual arts,

to appreciate the continuity with tradition in works of art from Africa’s diasporas as well as change and progress in the arts of the continent and

to affirm the key role of Africa and art in the global community.

As the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) enters its fourth decade, my colleagues and I are excitedly looking toward the next five years. We are inspired, and we welcome your engagement and support as we move forward guided by our strategic vision. The possibilities ahead are endless. We have opportunities to serve diverse audiences, use advances in technology, present innovative exhibitions and offer scholarly publications and educational programs that will challenge people of all ages to reflect, re-imagine and reinvent how they think about Africa—its history, art, cultures and current realities.

In crafting this plan for our museum’s journey, we have benefitted from the process that culminated in the Smithsonian Institution’s overarching strategic plan and look forward to collaborating with other Smithsonian units. Drawing on input from NMAfA stakeholders, we have set six priorities for the museum:

- **Become** the leading center of excellence for African art and scholarship
- **Establish** our brand and raise our profile

Good beginnings make good endings

—Swahili proverb

- **Enhance** the museum’s physical presence
- **Broaden** public outreach and service
- **Promote** organizational excellence
- **Secure** financial strength

The strategies outlined in our plan will be integrated into the ongoing operations of the National Museum of African Art, and we will measure our efforts periodically and hold ourselves accountable. We have already begun to institute many of the small, and even some of the large-scale, changes that are called for in this plan. We know that fully honoring the potential of the vision and strategies outlined in this plan will require substantial resources and the ongoing dedicated involvement of our advisory board, staff, volunteers, stakeholders and friends.

“To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.” These words of Anatole France capture what is required as we undertake this strategic plan, which began with our staff’s dreams and is centered in our belief that with concerted action we can, together, turn our vision into a reality.

I invite you to dream with us, to believe with us, to plan and to act with us as we work toward the fulfillment of the mission and the achievement of the goals of this strategic plan for the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art.



Johnnetta Betsch Cole
Director
National Museum of African Art

Values

At the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) we share the values of the Smithsonian Institution as expressed in its overarching strategic plan “Inspiring Generations through Knowledge and Discovery,” which we articulate for our museum as follows:



PHOTOGRAPH BY KATHERINE NEHRING, 2010

Innovation and Creativity

We approach our work with imagination, artistry and flexibility as we embrace increased effectiveness, productivity and outreach.

Teamwork and Collaboration

We promote cooperation and effective communication, encourage partnerships and create a supportive environment in which to achieve shared goals.

Diversity

We value perspectives shaped by differences. By respecting the opinions, beliefs and attributes of every staff member, visitor and stakeholder, we welcome and create opportunities for positive, constructive exchange.

Excellence

We accomplish all endeavors with passion and commitment to provide services and products of unsurpassed quality. By offering meaningful experiences, we are of greater service and value to our stakeholders and public.

Growth

We integrate into our work continual learning, professional awareness and acceptance of new challenges to meet demands and opportunities.

Integrity

Our words and actions align to reflect our commitment to responsibility, accountability and the highest professional standards.

Priorities

Since its inception in 1964, the National Museum of African Art (NMAfA) has steadfastly promoted a deeper understanding of Africa's rich artistic heritage and cultures. Today, the museum is unwavering in its commitment to champion the contributions of Africa's artists and diverse peoples. In 2010, as the museum looks toward its 40th anniversary, it consists of the smallest staff among Smithsonian art museums. Dedicated is the word most often used to describe the commitment of the staff, volunteers and others who, on behalf of the museum and its mission, create and maintain a robust calendar of exhibitions and public outreach programs. To maintain the museum's current standard of excellence and achieve its vision for the future, NMAfA staff has identified, in concert with the museum's advisory board and diverse stakeholders, six priorities:

Become the Leading Center of Excellence
for African Art and Scholarship

Establish Our Brand and Raise Our Profile

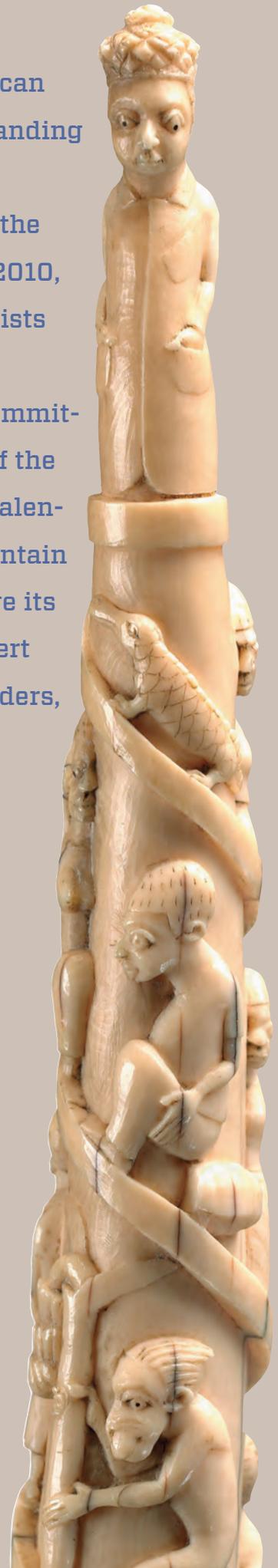
Enhance the Museum's Physical Presence

Broaden Public Outreach and Service

Promote Organizational Excellence

Secure Financial Strength

TUSK (DETAIL)
KONGO PEOPLES,
LOANGO COAST,
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
AND ANGOLA
LATE 19TH CENTURY
IVORY
MUSEUM PURCHASE,
2007-1-3



Priority 1

Become the Leading Center of Excellence for African Art and Scholarship

As a center of critical thought and exchange, NMAfA will expand and distribute its research to move the field of African art forward. We will serve as a nexus of critical sources for scholarly and creative endeavors relating to the arts of Africa. As the major comprehensive repository in the United States for African arts across time and media, we will be the role model for best practices in collecting, care and conservation, research, exhibition and programming.

GOALS

- **Broaden** depth, breadth and accessibility of permanent collections
- **Foster** learning through improved exhibition planning and expanded programming
- **Advance** scholarly and artistic exchange through residencies, research and publications
- **Provide** models for best practices in museum stewardship and collections care

ARTIST VICTOR EKPUK AT HIS STUDIO IN FRONT OF *COMPOSITION #1* (2009), WHICH WAS LATER ACQUIRED BY THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART



STRATEGIES

- **Focus** the collections policy to increase our holdings of cutting-edge contemporary art, including time-based, photographic and new media works, without losing sight of opportunities to add to the collection's strength in traditional art
- **Increase** storage capacities and improve the quality of the collections overall through collector cultivation and targeted deaccessions
- **Broaden** exhibition concepts to include juried arts competitions and virtual exhibitions
- **Reconstitute** the Point of View gallery as an experimental art lab in which to feature special artworks and explore provocative display ideas presented by artists, fellows and others
- **Expand** our lecture series and convene symposia and conferences that are webcast and employ interactive media
- **Extend** programming to include more high-profile performing arts events
- **Strengthen** and expand our publishing program, including trade publications, exhibition materials, symposia papers and research, and curricula and teaching materials
- **Create** a residency for African colleagues to curate exhibitions
- **Collaborate** with counterparts on the African continent to create artist-in-residence and museum exchange programs for professionals and students
- **Enrich** staff development through participation in professional training programs, professional organizations and conferences

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

*Within two years
{with a review after the first year}*

Revise and implement a collections acquisition strategy

Initiate a Director's Lecture series

Develop viable partnerships with African universities and museums

Define a publications plan for each exhibition

Devise a plan for a juried competition to yield new art installation

Determine the structure for the museum exchange and artist-in-residence programs in advance of issuing first call for applications

Establish Our Brand and Raise Our Profile

The museum’s prominence and profile must match its distinction as the nation’s first museum of African art. We must define and convey NMAfA’s unique character to our stakeholders—sponsors, partners, constituencies, audiences and visitors around the world.

GOALS

- **Establish** graphic identity for NMAfA, including a tagline, that incorporates our relationship to the Smithsonian Institution and its brand
- **Communicate** the museum’s purpose and programs effectively to encourage local, national and international audiences to become stakeholders
- **Cultivate** greater awareness of NMAfA’s specific strengths—collections, programs, exhibitions and staff expertise—among constituents
- **Ensure** our graphic identity and tagline attain high-profile recognition and resonate positively with all visitors and audiences

STRATEGIES

- **Create** a graphic presence and museum environment that thoroughly, consistently and readily communicates NMAfA’s distinctive characteristics
- **Extend** general and targeted communication strategies to inform our stakeholders and audiences about the variety and availability of the museum’s resources, programs and offerings
- **Expand** NMAfA’s digital reach using a redesigned website and social media to interactively and dynamically share resources, exhibitions and programs

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

*Within two years
{with a review after the first year}*

Develop a plan of action to

- encapsulate the NMAfA brand
- heighten the profile of the museum and its services

Assert our graphic identity, including tagline, by consistently communicating the museum’s brand

SALL
N.D., SENEGAL
PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN (DETAIL)
LATE 20TH CENTURY
PAINT ON GLASS
GIFT OF THE WIL AND IRENE PETTY
COLLECTION, 2008-5-6



SALL

Enhance the Museum's Physical Presence

The museum is located in a distinctive underground building on the National Mall. We seek to establish an environment and physical space that will support institutional growth, staff creativity and productivity, and that will make the nation's museum of African art a visible, welcoming and engaging destination for our visitors.

GOALS

- **Improve** the museum's visibility
- **Apply** the museum brand throughout our galleries and public spaces
- **Create** an inviting, vibrant and interactive environment throughout our public and work spaces
- **Design** new spaces and repurpose existing ones to address collection, exhibition and programming needs as well as to make NMAfA more comfortable, accessible and user-friendly for visitors and staff

STRATEGIES

- **Undertake** feasibility studies to
 - add a café in pavilion and/or garden space
 - construct a flexible space to accommodate performing arts and family-oriented activities
- **Commission** an architectural assessment to maximize office and storage spaces and to improve flexibility and flow in public spaces
- **Pursue** improvements to museum façade and exterior gardens
- **Select**, by commission or juried competition, an artist to design site-specific works for public spaces that are not designated galleries
- **Incorporate** interactive technologies in galleries and public spaces



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEREMY JELENFY

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

*Within two years
{with a review after the first year}*

- Ascertain** and address space needs
 - conduct a broad survey to better understand visitor use of and needs for space
 - commence the necessary building feasibility studies
 - complete space assessments and identify the appropriate next steps, especially in regard to exhibition, programming and storage space
- Assess** the feasibility of creating a sculpture garden
- Appoint** a research and design team to improve visibility of the pavilion and visitor engagement within it
- Select** an artist, through commission or contest, to design site-specific work for NMAfA

Broaden Public Outreach and Service

To support our commitment to public service, we will establish strong community ties, understand our diverse audiences and visitors, and balance our decision making with constituency wishes and preferences. NMAfA will increase awareness of its available resources and maximize all available avenues to provide access to the museum's collections and programs.

GOALS

- **Make** information about NMAfA's resources easily accessible
- **Better understand** the spectrum of current visitors and identify new audiences
- **Respond** to the diverse needs and wishes of the museum's audiences
- **Encourage** dialogue, collaboration and development within the field of African art studies and among museum professionals



STRATEGIES

- **Make** NMAfA's website robust, easily navigable and useful
- **Increase** access to museum collections
- **Explore** the feasibility of traveling exhibitions
- **Develop** broad public relations and marketing programs
- **Identify** communities and needs that are underserved and expand communication efforts to reach them
- **Engage** African communities here and abroad
- **Improve** visitor relations by
 - enhancing services and amenities
 - providing opportunities for visitors to connect with the museum and one another through traditional and social media
- **Establish** our presence at major international arts events

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

*Within two years
{with a review after the first year}*

Launch a redesigned website that includes analytic measures for tracking its use

Ensure social media is part of our outreach efforts

Develop a sustainable program to digitize collections

Plan for innovative interactivity in permanent collection gallery space

Establish measures that track community impact to enhance audience and visitor participation

Increase outreach into local communities, schools and universities, and design curriculum-based materials

Promote Organizational Excellence

We recognize the great asset we have in our human resources. Comprised of full-time permanent staff, temporary and intermittent employees, docents, volunteers, contractors and consultants, interns and fellows, this team of dedicated individuals makes up the dynamic workforce necessary to carry out our work and mission. NMAfA is committed to creating a work environment and culture of accountability that supports diversity among our staff, open communication, ongoing education and high performance standards for everyone.

GOALS

- **Set** healthy and complete staffing levels for all museum departments and functions
- **Equip** a highly motivated staff with the resources, tools and processes needed to become an increasingly efficient and more productive team
- **Establish** systems to measure accountability and transparency across our workforce
- **Maintain** a culture of excellence and high performance

STRATEGIES

- **Conduct** an organizational review and assess our current and future needs by
 - identifying gaps in staffing
 - addressing diversity issues
 - planning for succession
 - evaluating skill sets and providing opportunities for professional training and growth
- **Assess** and improve our project management structure and internal communication practices
- **Continue** involving all staff in the museum's ongoing process of assessment and improvement
- **Evaluate** our system of awards and recognition
- **Promote** professional development and training

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

*Within two years
{with a review after the first year}*

Complete a comprehensive and inclusive analysis of NMAfA's workforce and organizational systems

Include measures that are aligned with NMAfA's strategic plan in staff performance plans

Conduct a process for 360-degree performance feedback



Priority 6

Secure Financial Strength

The National Museum of African Art recognizes that significant funding increases are essential to achieve this ambitious yet attainable vision. Therefore, we will endeavor to ensure stable and diverse funding sources for our operations, exhibitions, educational, public and scholarly programs and services.



GOALS

- **Equip** NMAfA's committed advisory board with strong development skills
- **Broaden** and diversify NMAfA's constituency for support
- **Create** endowments and increase nonrestricted funding sources

STRATEGIES

- **Work** with the museum's advisory board to ensure it reaches and maintains full membership
- **Collaborate** with the advisory board to develop specific strategies for friend- and fundraising
- **Enhance** the profile of our advisory board and increase its role in cultivating major donors, including foundations, corporations and philanthropic individuals
- **Establish** a strong annual giving program
- **Build** a broad volunteer fundraising and membership base
- **Increase** foundation and private giving
- **Reach out to**
 - individuals and corporations that have not yet supported Smithsonian museums and research centers
 - international companies that have interests in Africa or have supported African art
- **Endow** key staff positions, such as directorship, department heads and curators
- **Initiate** art- and culture-centered tours to Africa to cultivate and educate potential donors
- **Develop** list of prospective high-level donors for major gifts

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

*Within two years
{with a review after the first year}*

Advisory board achieves
100 percent of its give-and/or-get goals, individually and as a group

Increase membership by 25 percent each year

Develop our process for attaining major gifts, including prospect lists for high-level donors

Produce a campaign brochure

Secure three multiyear foundation grants

left

JUG

BAULE PEOPLES, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

LATE 19TH TO EARLY 20TH CENTURY

WOOD, GOLD LEAF, STAPLES

GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. A. DE MONBRISON,
2005-8-1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



WEIGHT (*ABRAMMUO*)
AKAN PEOPLES,
GHANA AND CÔTE D'IVOIRE
18TH TO LATE 19TH CENTURY
COPPER ALLOY
GIFT OF EMIL ARNOLD, 68-36-67

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Timothy Bork
Co-Vice Chair ■

R. Lucia Riddle
Co-Vice Chair ■

Doreen Bassin
Stuart Bohart
Camille O. Cosby
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Bennetta Jules-Rosette
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Noah A. Samara
James H. Small
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Richard Kurin
Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture
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Johnnetta Betsch Cole
Director, National Museum of African Art

■ *members of the ad hoc committee
on Strategic Planning*

STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

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Educator for Scholarly Programs

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■ *retired or resigned*
■ *contractor*

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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART