

**AFRICAN ART  
WORKSHOP  
WEDNESDAYS**

[ o n l i n e ]

# The Eyes Have It



**Smithsonian**  
*National Museum of African Art*

# INTRODUCTION

Throughout history artists from various cultures around the world have depicted the human eye in many ways. Some developed and employed distinct canons or rules to govern artistic systems; for instance, the exact repetitions of the eye.



# CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE EYES?



(a)



(b)

The eye is often used as a design element whether the artist takes a realistic, abstract, or decorative approach. Today we will use artworks from the National Museum of African Art to provide ideas for your creations.



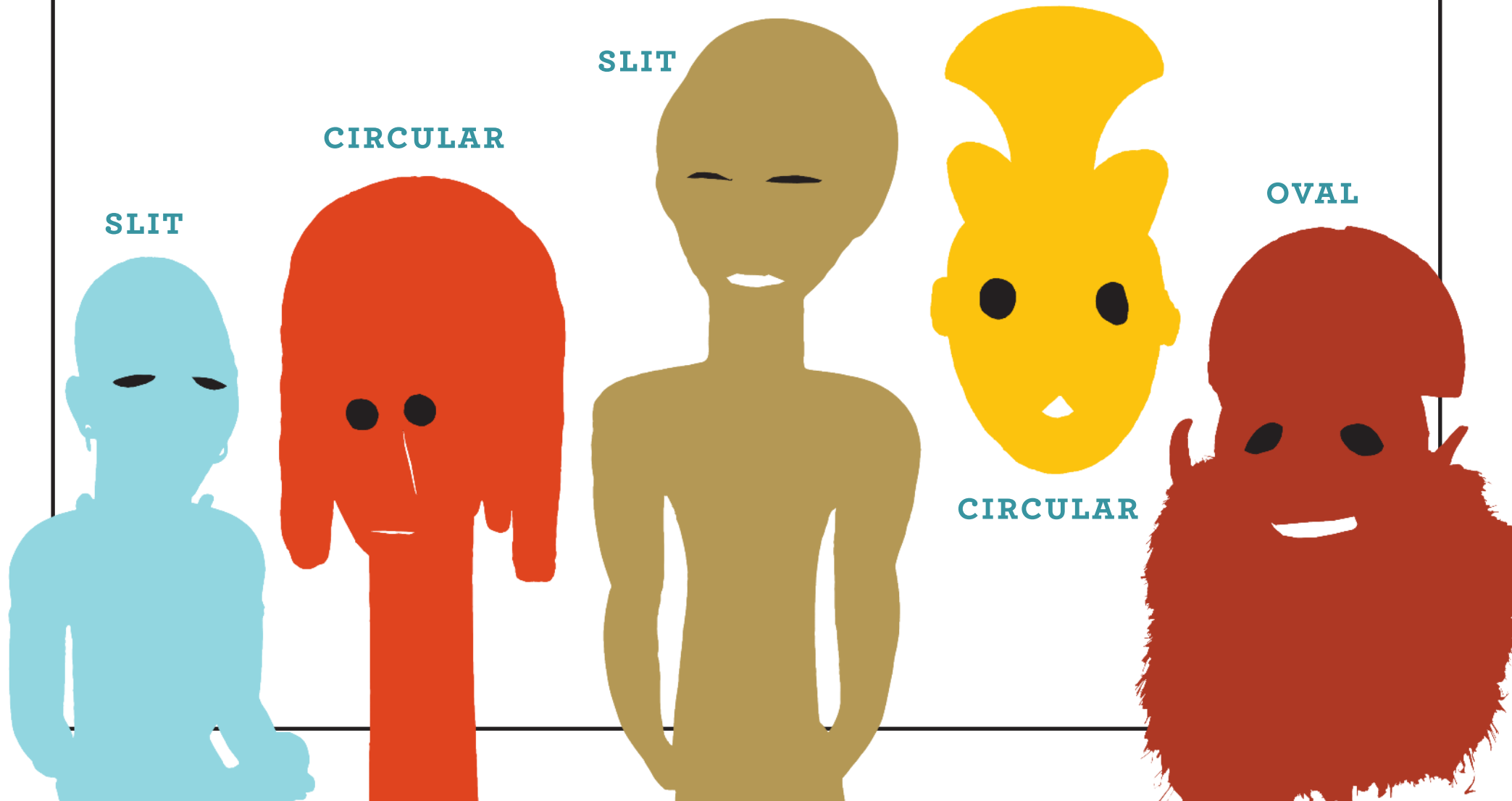
# THE EYE AS A DESIGN MOTIF

What eye  
shapes do  
you see?

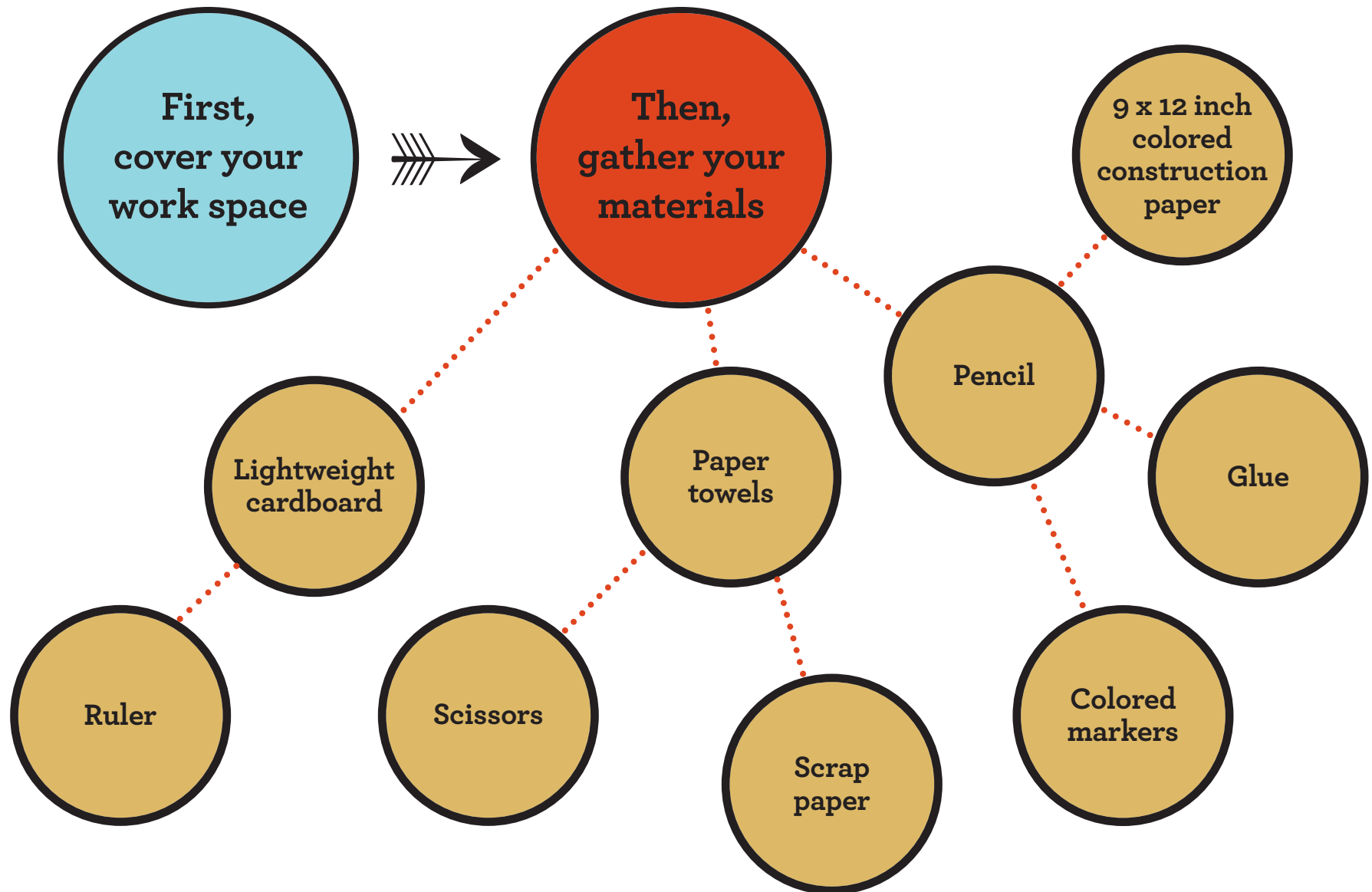


## *Shapes of Eyes in African Art*

With careful observation you have discovered . . . African artists break down the eye into very simple lines and shapes that tend to be quite stylized. Some are mere dots, others concentric circles, while others are differently shaped slits or simple lines.



# LET'S GET STARTED

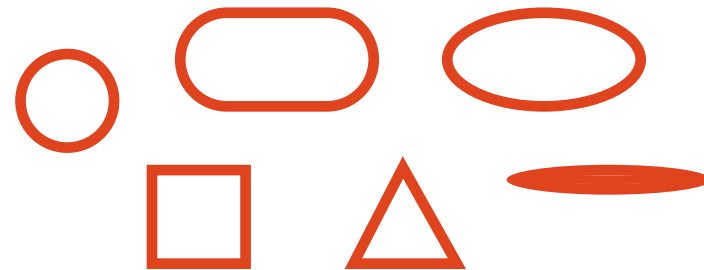


## Instructions

**Keep the different shapes in mind  
and follow the steps outlined**

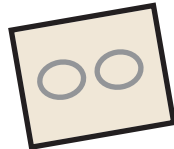
### STEP 1

Decide on the shape of the eye for your design. Will it be circular, oblong, oval, slits, square, triangular, or a combination?



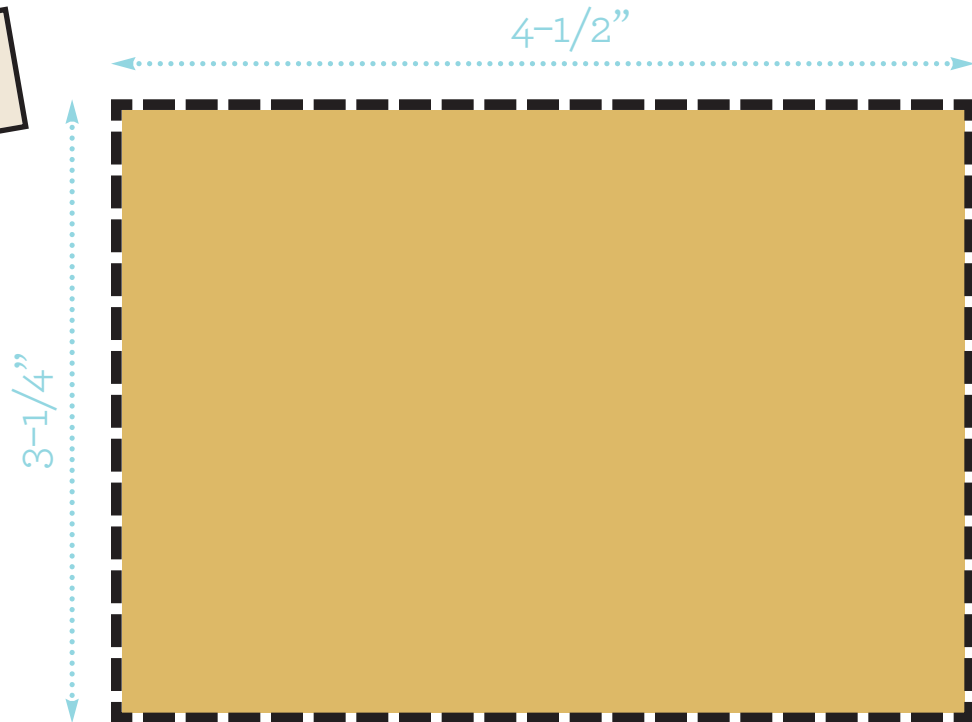
### STEP 2

Do a quick sketch on scrap paper and put it aside.



### STEP 3

Cut out a rectangle measuring 4-1/2 inches wide, and 3-1/4 inches high from the lightweight cardboard.



*An empty  
cereal box  
works great!*



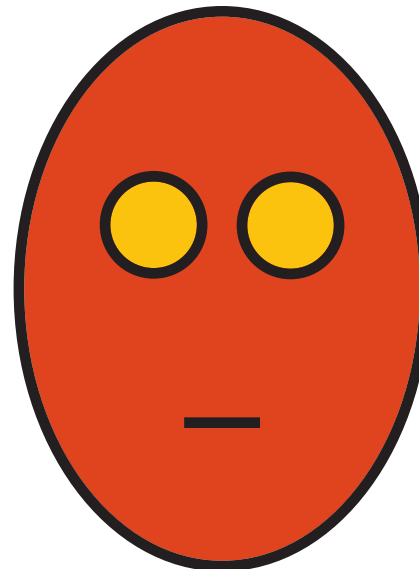
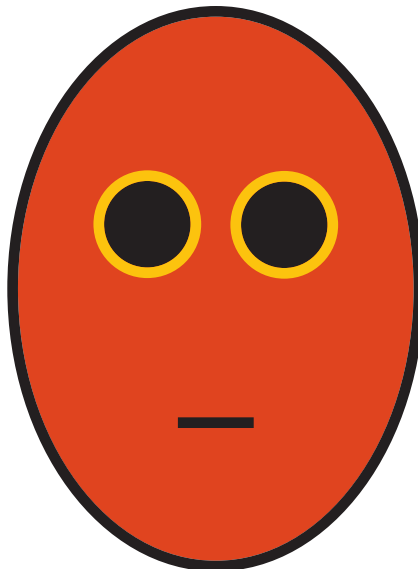
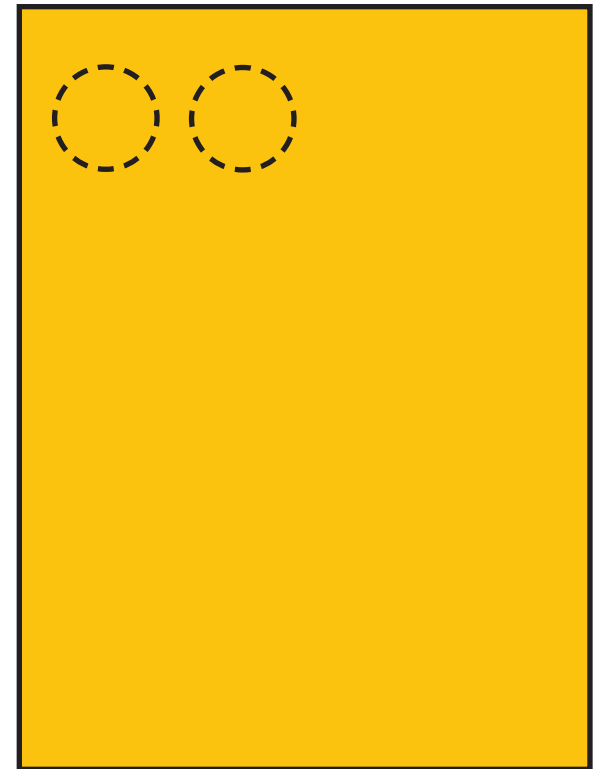
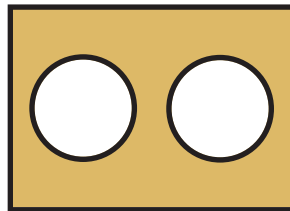
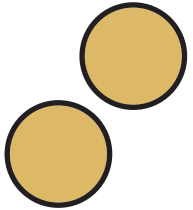
## STEP 4

Look at your sketch and transfer your idea onto the cardboard rectangle. This will be your template (or pattern).



## STEP 5

Decide which parts of the eye you want to be positive and negative. Cut out and trace your eye design onto the colored construction paper.





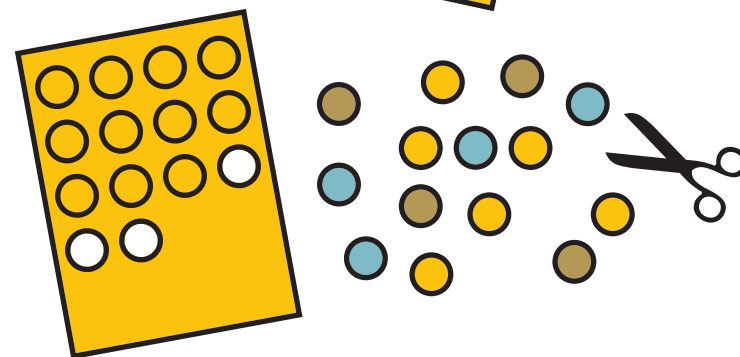
## STEP 6

Select three different colors from the package of colored paper. Set aside a color to use for the background.



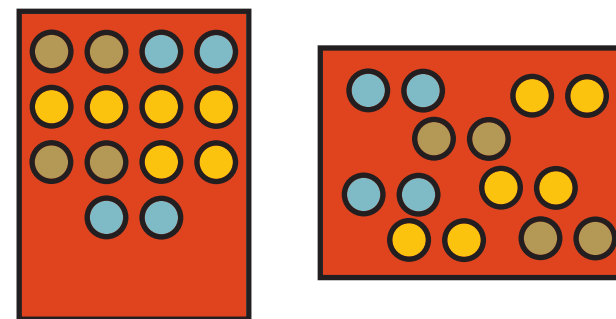
## STEP 7

Trace your template onto the other two colors **7** times so you will be able to fill your space with a design.



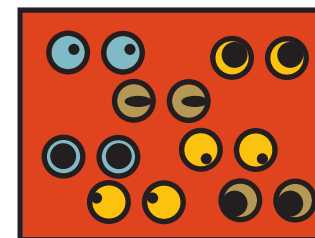
## STEP 8

Organize the cut out eye shapes onto the background paper, arranging them symmetrically or asymmetrically.



## STEP 9

Once satisfied, glue and add detail with marker or additional colored paper.



# OUR WORKSHOP

**Share your creations!**



**Send your creations to  
NMAFA-Workshops@si.edu  
to post on the museum's website**

NOTE: We will make every effort, but cannot guarantee, to include your artwork.

PAGE 3 ANSWERS: (a) The Eye of Horus, (b) The Eye of Fatima, Turkey

*Thank you!*



*Chokwe artist  
North or South Lunda Province,  
Angola, or Kwango Province,  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Pwo (face mask)  
Early 20th century  
Wood, plant fiber, pigment, copper alloy  
Museum purchase, 85-15-20*



*Ogoni artist  
Rivers State, Nigeria  
Mask  
Mid-20th century  
Wood, pigment  
Museum purchase, 2004-1-1*



*Bamum artist  
Manje Nkoutou, Grassfields region,  
Cameroon  
Mask  
Late 19th to early 20th century  
Wood, horn, plant fiber, spider silk  
Gift of Walt Disney World Co., a subsidiary  
of The Walt Disney Company, 2005-6-95*



*Possibly the Master of Kasadi  
(Kongo [Yombe subgroup] artist)  
Kongo Central Province,  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Phemba (maternity figure)  
Mid-19th century  
Wood, glass, glass beads,  
brass tacks, pigment  
Purchased with funds provided  
by the Smithsonian Collections  
Acquisition Program, 83-3-6*



*Fang artist  
Gabon  
Eyema bieri (reliquary guardian head)  
Late 19th or early 20th century  
Wood, metal, oil  
Gift of Walt Disney World Co., a subsidiary  
of The Walt Disney Company, 2005-6-98*



*Hemba artist  
Mbubula, Tanganyika Province,  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Singiti (ancestral figure of a man)  
Late 19th or early 20th century  
Wood  
Museum purchase, 85-1-13*

*page 3 illustrations | COURTESY WIKI COMMONS OPEN SOURCE  
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