

Exhibition: *Ritual Expressions: African Adornment from the Permanent Collection*

Dates: February 23–July 6, 2025

Location: Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 2)

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Ritual Expressions: African Adornment from the Permanent Collection*. Bodily adornments, such as ritual textiles, clothing, and headwear, are created by the many cultures throughout the African continent. A testament to the meticulous craftsmanship of its creators, these pieces display vivid colors, mesmerizing patterns, and symbolic motifs that often signify prestige and power. *Ritual Expressions* is a focused presentation that brings together more than 30 examples of a rich diversity of textiles, clothing, and headwear representing more than 20 cultures from Africa, all drawn from LACMA's permanent collection.

The exhibition explores how adornments are constructed to express societal conventions, and reveals their critical role in establishing and transmitting the wearer's identity and rank. For example, a striking 28-foot-long raffia palmfiber textile is wrapped around the body to transform into a dimensional ceremonial skirt, enlarging the wearer's figure while indicating status and wealth within the community. Dramatic headdresses sculpted with diverse natural materials, such as gourds, raffia palms, bast fibers, and cotton, are embellished with distinctive elements, such as pigments, feathers, fur, shells, or glass beads. A person's individuality, intelligence, and spirit are acknowledged by crowning the head with structures imbued with cultural traditions, which encircle and rise above the head, magnifying the subject's stature and status. African adornments such as these are testaments to the meticulous craftsmanship of their creators, physically and symbolically linking the present with past legacies.

LACMA has developed and presented a number of exhibitions of African Art, including *Shaping Power: Luba Masterworks from the Royal Museum for Central Africa* (2013), *African Cosmos* (2014), and *The Inner Eye: Vision and Transcendence in African Arts* (2017), all curated by the late Dr. Mary (Polly) Nooter Roberts, consulting curator of African Art. Many of these exhibitions featured

significant works from the permanent collection. Additionally, LACMA will be working with artists and creative leaders in West Africa on future collaborations and programs that will augment the museum's exhibition programming.

Ritual Expressions is curated by Sharon S. Takeda, Senior Curator and Department Head of Costume and Textiles.

Credit: This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

All exhibitions at LACMA are underwritten by the LACMA Exhibition Fund. Major annual support is provided by The David & Meredith Kaplan Foundation, with generous annual funding from Louise and Brad Edgerton, Edgerton Foundation, Tanya Fileva, Mary and Daniel James, Bert Levy Fund, Justin Lubliner, Alfred E. Mann Charities, Kelsey Lee Offield, Maggie Tang, Lenore and Richard Wayne, and Marietta Wu and Thomas Yamamoto.

About LACMA: Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 150,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

Image captions: (Left to right) *Man's Royal Ceremonial Robe*, Africa, Nigeria, Yoruba people, early 20th century, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Marcel and Zaira Mis Collection, purchased with funds from the LACMA 50th Anniversary Gala; detail of *Man's Royal Ceremonial Robe*, Africa, Nigeria, Yoruba people, early 20th century, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Marcel and Zaira Mis Collection, purchased with funds from the LACMA 50th Anniversary Gala; *Man's Headdress*, Gishu or Acholi people, mid-20th century, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Marcel and Zaira Mis Collection, purchased with funds from the LACMA 50th Anniversary Gala; *Robe*, Africa, Cameroon, Grasslands Bamum people, mid-20th century, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Marcel and Zaira Mis Collection, purchased with funds from the LACMA 50th Anniversary Gala; all photos by

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