



V I L L E D E  
G E N È V E

## PRESS RELEASE

### Permanent Exhibition The Archives of Human Diversity From 1 November 2014

**“The Archives of Human Diversity” would be a very appropriate title for the objects selected for the MEG collection’s permanent exhibition, whose scenography has been arranged by Atelier Brückner (Stuttgart). The exhibition encompasses several centuries of history and comprises around one hundred civilisations represented by over one thousand remarkable pieces: objects of reference, historical objects, and works of art all attest to the human potential for creativity. Ange Leccia’s video *Sea* gives the permanent collection its rhythm.**

The exhibition itinerary comprises seven main sections: a prologue that focuses on the provenance of the collections, a section devoted to each of the five continents, and an area that focuses on ethnomusicology. The preparation of this permanent exhibition has brought to light hidden treasures that have sometimes been forgotten for generations. For instance, the Ming rhinoceros horn cup, which was donated to the Geneva Public Library’s cabinet of curiosities in 1758, was “hidden” in the MEG’s African collection. And a box from the Marquesas Islands — only the thirteenth known example in the world, which was acquired in 1874 by the Archaeological Museum, had found its way into a Polar Arctic Circle collection. Also revealed are Iroquois objects — a mask and a rattle from the False Face Society, the most ancient acquired by a museum, in 1825. The adoption of a historical approach aims primarily to illustrate the evolution of European perceptions of exotic cultures and to examine the changes in status conferred on objects in the various museums that preceded the MEG in Geneva. As a counterpoint to these historical testimonies, which are exhibited on a massive surface that radiates with light, *Sea* — a magnificent video work by the contemporary artist Ange Leccia, which extends over 17 metres — provides a regular beat, an endless pulsation that evokes the natural measurement of time, perpetual movement, and the power of the elements that starkly contrast with the fragility of the various cultures. The collections of the five continents comprise a thousand objects arranged around five original common threads and dozens of anthropological themes. Finally, a “Sound Chamber” explores the relationship between instruments and music recordings, as the MEG houses the famous Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP). A second visual work by Ange Leccia, based on the compositions of Julien Perez, is an important contribution to the area consecrated to ethnomusicology.



## INTRODUCTION

### The Archives of Human Diversity

About 60 metres below the ridgepole of the MEG's roof, whose golden interlacing is reminiscent of traditional wickerwork, nearly 1,200 objects are on display, treasures carefully selected from the 80,000 objects in the MEG's collections.

Designed by Atelier Brückner from Stuttgart, the permanent collection is divided into seven sections: a historical prologue followed by the collections of the five continents and the ethnomusicology collection.

Visitors start with the origins of Geneva's ethnographic collections. Unsurprisingly, they are the fruit of personal adventures and the passion and generosity of illustrious or more modest figures, and encounters with local or remote cultures. In short, they are the reflection of a cosmopolitan city open to the world.

The following sections, on the cultures of the five continents and music, focus on objects as evidence of human creativity throughout the world. Each object is situated in time – creation, use and acquisition – to avoid anachronisms.

Each department has its strong points and its masterpieces, reflected in the themes chosen for each one. So the Asia section takes us from the Bosphorus further and further east, exploring three major themes: religious iconography, writing and power. The last theme is particularly well illustrated by a magnificent set armour from a Japanese samurai with the effigy of Fudō Myōō (15-16th century); the Immovable King of Light (Fudō Myōō sanzō) is depicted on the cuirass (Genroku period, late 17th century) flanked by his boy attendants Kongara and Seitaka, affording powerful protection in Tantric Buddhism.

Pictorial art from the first half of the 20th century is the guideline for the African section, which is divided into cultural areas. Each one explores themes like sacredness, in relation to ancestor worship and magico-religious practices, and power. The names of explorers (Alfred Bertrand) and missionaries (Henry Rusillon and Fernand Grébert) who helped develop the MEG's African collections crop up here.

The section devoted to Oceania, a vast "continent of islands" (over 10,000) addresses the relationships and exchanges between indigenous societies and the paths of European explorers. The principle of cultural areas is followed here, too. A magnificent Hawaiian feather cloak *'ahu'ula*, one of only 54 surviving specimens and one of the MEG's great treasures, is on display here.

Spanning an immense area from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego, the Americas collection is highly diverse culturally and chronologically because it covers nearly 9000 years of history. The Americas section in the exhibition pays homage to this diversity, going from Inuit art in the Great North to South America, via the Plains Indians and pre-Columbian cultures. Various themes establish links between these cultures and regions, which are so far apart in time and space: adaptation to the environment, religion, power and the complex relationships between nature and culture. This path focuses particularly on the people of the Amazon today, such as the Wayana and the Kayapo, represented by magnificent featherwork in vivid colours and spectacular ant mats used to apply these insects to their boys' bare skin during physical and spiritual ordeals marking the passage to adulthood.

Few ethnography museums keep objects from the European continent because exoticism from elsewhere seems to take priority. This is not the case for the MEG, whose role it is to preserve and study material, cultural and artistic testimonies from all over the world, including Europe. Everyday objects from rural and alpine communities or from the urban working class or academic milieus raise universal questions concerning life, death, religious or political practices, which touch on notions of ecology, responsibility and reciprocity.

An entire section is devoted to ethnomusicology, combining two complementary collections: musical instruments from all over the world and the Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP). It explores organological classification (the study of instruments) – a research field to which MEG has made a major contribution – and fieldwork, from sound recording to musical instrument collecting. And to extend its horizon still further, a Sound Room presents a series of musical and visual compositions bringing out the timbres and colours of some instrumental music.

The heritage of the past assembled in this permanent collection – and supplemented by information on the eMEG – will be an inspiration for visitors, wherever they come from, sharpening or constructing the feeling of belonging to a place and an identity. They can come



back as often as they like to soak up one or another of the world's cultures since, and this is not the least of its qualities, entrance to this exhibition is free.



## HISTORY

### Room texts

#### **Ethnographic objects in Geneva's museums**

The Musée d'ethnographie de Genève was founded in 1901. But its collections have a longer history, some beginning as many as two centuries earlier. The objects in this museum tell us not only about peoples, but also about our own history and our taste for the objects of the Other.

#### **1702 – The Public Library's Cabinet of Curiosities**

The library of the Collège (now called the Collège Calvin) became public in 1702. Its purpose was to educate Geneva's intellectual elite and was visited by many travellers. The "marvels" of nature and art offered to the Library were collected together in a cabinet of curiosities. These objects were the first to enter Geneva's public collections. The surviving pieces have been distributed between the appropriate contemporary museums.

#### **1818 – The Academic Museum**

Housed in a handsome residence in the Grand-Rue that is now occupied by the Société de Lecture, this museum was founded by Geneva's leading scientists who were teaching at the Academy (or University, as we would now say). It inherited objects from the library's cabinet of curiosities related to its interests: the natural sciences, archaeology, local history, "statistics (or the study) of uncivilised peoples." From 1863, the Academic Museum was directed by Hyppolite Jean Gosse. Among his many other activities, Gosse reorganised the collections and built up interest in what was beginning to be called "ethnography".

#### **1870 – The Geneva Historical Museum, also called the Armour Room**

Created to house the collection of old armour donated by the State to the city of Geneva, this museum was installed in the former Arsenal, the present-day Geneva State Archives. Hyppolite Jean Gosse was appointed curator. After building an extension, the museum broadened its scope and regularly bought exotic armour and weapons. 132 pieces from this collection were sent to the MEG in 1901.

#### **1872 – The Archaeology Museum**

When the new university was built in at the Promenade des Bastions, the Academy Museum was split into two new institutions: the Natural History Museum in the Jura wing and the Archaeology Museum in the basement of the new Public Library. Hyppolite Jean Gosse stayed on as curator of the Archaeology Museum. The MEG was a direct offshoot of this museum in 1901.

#### **1876 – The Mission Museum**

Founded in 1821, the Geneva Evangelical Missionary Society mainly financed the missions organised by its counterparts in Basel and Paris. In 1876, it set up a museum in the now demolished "Reformation Room" facing the English garden. The museum held the objects sent by missionaries working throughout the world. Through the good offices of Eugène Pittard, the museum's collections were given to the City, in 1901, when the MEG was created.

#### **1884 – The Ariana Museum**

Created by a Genevan art collector, Gustave Revilliod, the Ariana Museum is a mansion dedicated to the decorative arts, with the accent on the exotic taste of its time. The museum and its collections were bequeathed to the City of Geneva in 1890. The collection was reorganised in the late 1930s and many objects were transferred to the MEG.

#### **1885 – The Museum of Decorative Arts**

Although the decision to create a decorative arts museum was taken in 1876, it did not open until nearly ten years later in the Watchmaking School. New design ideas inspired by exotic motifs and techniques attracted objects which were later transferred to the MEG.

#### **1901 – The Musée d'ethnographie at Mon-Repos**

The MEG, initially known as the Musée d'ethnographie, began to take shape when all Geneva's public collections were reorganised. The ethnographic collections were separated from the archaeological collections, enriched by gifts from private collectors and from the Mission Museum and installed in the Villa Plantamour, in Mon Repos park. At first the villa was used as an annex for the municipal museums and the ethnography section had to share the premises with paintings. In 1910, the entire space was allocated to ethnography, and Eugène Pittard was appointed curator and director. He had strong scientific and educational ambitions for the institution, and participated in growing the influence of the young museum, notably through its relations with the nearby League of Nations.



### **1941 – The Musée d’ethnographie in the Boulevard Carl-Vogt**

Under Eugène Pittard’s dynamic leadership the collections grew rapidly. The organisation of temporary exhibitions made the lack of space even more obvious. Pittard finally succeeded in moving the institution into a building which was at least larger, if not more suitable, as it had been an old school. Nevertheless, Pittard managed to implement a museographic approach there which he constantly tried to make more educational. In 1952, the long reign of this legendary director, then aged 85, came to an end and his former assistant, Marguerite Löbsiger-Dellenbach, was appointed to succeed him.

### **1976 – The Conches Annex**

Bought by the City of Geneva in 1972 and opened four years later as an annex to the Musée d’ethnographie, the villa in the Chemin Calandrini in Conches, on the outskirts of Geneva, served for thirty-seven years as a venue for temporary exhibitions, mainly on European themes, drawing on the Georges Amoudruz collection. The MEG Conches closed its doors in 2013.

### **2014 – A New Building for the MEG**

After dreaming of building a bigger museum on another site, Geneva finally decided to give its three-century-old collections a modern building in the Boulevard Carl-Vogt. The heritage value of these collections was evident. Bearing witness to living traditions or societies from the past, the objects have become the archives of human diversity, which is itself part of the stream of history.

## **SECTION**

### **Strange objects and natural history**

The first of what we now call “ethnographic objects” entered the Genevan collections in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at a turning point in history. Around 1750, the ambition to construct scientific knowledge of the world competed with curiosity about strangeness. Voyages of exploration, maritime trade, evangelisation and colonisation facilitated the acquisition of souvenirs, trophies or collections.

### ***Oddities***

The “wonders” donated to the Public Library by Genevan citizens or visiting travellers resonated with the books in its collection. Mysterious objects and travel stories told of the surprising encounter with an often fantasised elsewhere.

### ***The natural science of mankind***

The young science of ethnography was modelled on the natural sciences. Specimens were studied and exchanged with other institutions to build up series. Peoples thought to be “in the early stages of civilisation” were studied in the same way as their natural environment.

## **SECTION**

### **Establishing a hierarchy for mankind**

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, societies judged rudimentary lost the virtuous image that Jean de Léry, Montaigne and Rousseau had given them. The ideology of progress labelled these Others as “primitive.” Science supported European domination of the world, contradicting the equality of all men decreed in the rush of revolutionary enthusiasm.

### ***Eurocentrism and American archaeology***

When Mexico gained its independence in 1821, the country came into fashion. An exhibition was immediately held in London, laying the magnificent vestiges of pre-Hispanic America before European eyes. “American antiquities” became a separate department in the Louvre. In Geneva, a “Mexico” section was set up distinguishing pre-Columbian works from other ethnographic objects. But the association between ancient American civilisations and the declared sources of Western civilisation was short lived. In Geneva as in Paris, they were finally set aside and relegated to museums specialised in ethnography.

## **SECTION**

### **Exoticism as taste**

The word “exoticism” refers to something that is foreign to us, but also the attraction of strangeness and an imaginary elsewhere. So, for museum goers, the objects that the explorers brought back were charged with dreams of adventure.



### ***The market value of exotic objects***

The Europeans' demand for exotic objects soon created a trade between the symbols of otherness – today's tourist souvenirs – and the goods that travellers took to the natives.

### ***Our exotic objects***

The baroque ornamentation of a mancala board reveals a European's passion for a game played throughout Africa and Asia, and taken by slaves to the Caribbean. The long history of incorporating the Other into our culture can be read in the craftwork commissioned in the Far East. China, bronze and lacquer furniture adapted to European expectations have decorated our interiors since the 17th century. This taste was flourishing when the Ariana Museum was created in Geneva in 1884.

## **SECTION**

### **The picturesque economy**

The picturesque aspects of folklore and exoticism provide the features that distinguish Us from Others. In the late 19th century, the vogue for identities could be seen in Geneva's antique shops and at the Swiss National Exhibition in 1896.

### ***The colonial networks of the ethnography museums***

Ethnography and its museums first developed in a context of colonisation. Swiss museums had recourse to the French, Belgian and German markets, looking for the spectacular pieces that could position a museum on the international scene.

### ***The "primitive art" market***

A certain tradition of the so-called "primitive art" market held that art dealers and collectors "discovered" pieces of art that their makers were unable to appreciate. Aesthetic expertise was confiscated by the West and used to justify its domination of the rest of the world. Denying Others a sense of art is a form of ethnocentrism which has obvious economic advantages.

## **SECTION**

### **The ambiguities of missionary collecting**

Originally, the missionary movement aimed to spread the Christian faith and eradicate what it considered to be "superstitions." When the "idols" of the beliefs they were fighting against were not destroyed at the same time, they were sent to Europe to illustrate the "error" that had been overcome. Examples were given to show that the converted peoples had mended their ways. These edifying exhibitions were designed to encourage the faithful to donate money to missionary works.

### ***The idols' new life***

Both the destruction of the fallen idols and their exhibition in museums created an awareness of heritage which brings to mind the way the French Revolution passed from vandalism to the museum age. The market value attained by certain objects in Mission sales reveals the ambiguity of the operation. Some of the missionaries became the best connoisseurs and sometimes the defenders of these cultures, which were also threatened by colonisation.

## **SECTION**

### **Ethnography and international relations**

Diplomatic gifts are often made of "typical" objects. They refer to a self-image more or less stereotyped, which was highly integrated and/or known expected. Generally rooted in the past, this picture supports the idea of continuity of people through their traditions. It contributes then to the legitimacy of nations. Its close links with the League of Nations have earned MEG many of these political donations.

### ***Diplomats on the ground***

Diplomatic function was for them the opportunity to develop an intimate knowledge of their home ground: the Frenchman Léonce Angrand, a recognised specialist of the Andean world, or Switzerland's Edmond Rochette, an expert on Kyoto society, transmitted objects to MEG that they had long kept as souvenirs. As for the woman of letters Yamata Kiku, her dual Japanese and French culture made her a sensitive and perceptive mediator.



## **SECTION**

### **No fieldwork without theory**

Recording the breath of life. The recording session we see here is a metaphor for the theoretical apparatus used by an ethnographer. What is collected necessarily passes through a screen. This has an impact on the life being observed.

### ***Time frame***

Fieldwork provides the ethnographer with ordinary or special objects which become "evidence" of a people and its customs. Collecting such objects is inseparable from the interpretation of these signs of life. Seeing Roman Antiquity in the form of objects brought back from Romania, Eugène Pittard inscribed the population itself in the long time frame of unchanging traditions.

### ***The individual and the group***

Most of the time, traditional ethnography consider objects to be the anonymous product of a group. The German ethnographer, Hans Himmelheber, took a different approach. He valued innovation and in his fieldwork he tried to demonstrate the inventiveness of individual creators by studying the way motifs varied from one piece to another.

## **SECTION**

### **From field to museum**

Taking objects out of their original context and exhibiting them in a museum gives them a new meaning. They used to be utilitarian or religious, status symbols or hunting weapons and they become storytellers with a new aim, that of giving museum goers access to knowledge of ethnic groups living elsewhere and otherwise.

### ***How does an ethnography museum work?***

To make something into a museum object, it must first be extracted from its original context, like these trees which were carved by aboriginal people and then cut down. Once the objects reach the museum, they must be classified and interpreted, given a general meaning, by being categorised as "love presents," for example. Or samples – say of folk pottery – can be collected and compared with one another to give an idea of human diversity. Then it is time to exhibit the objects in their new context of agency, the museum.



## SEA

Between the sections devoted to History and Ethnography there is the *Sea* — the living entity that borders every continent and plays a part in every civilization. The video work of the sea faces the large Noah's Ark table, on which various objects from the Museum's collections have been placed. It interacts with this precious testimony to human know-how to illustrate more clearly the power of this untamed "otherness". The sea is so accessible, yet so unfathomable. This insurmountable gap is aptly conveyed by the video, in which the view of the sea has been turned 90 degrees.

Presented in a vertical format, the sea has become an abstract motif with two contrasting sides: the white foam from the waves on one side and the shore on the other. The luminous waves have come ashore and crashed on the black pebble beach, delineating an area of contact between the earth and sea, which is constantly renewed with each new set of waves. Hence, the sea seems to form a formidable counterpoint to linear human history and an expression of nature's cyclical time, whose endless measurement is like some sort of strange hourglass: the surf is an organic clock that constantly forms a series of sinuous lines that are continually renewed. The lines follow each other and then disappear with each set of waves. But this is not an endless cycle or repetition of the same process—it is rather one of continual metamorphosis, because *Sea* represents a state of constant explosiveness. I view this instability and violence as part of the creative process. Art is a force, but it is also an uncertainty: its power will only ever be virtual; it is a form of energy that regenerates itself through the extensive potentiality of imagination and exploration. *Sea* is a metaphor for a work that is never fixed and changes each time it is viewed. It is a surface that invites spectators to project themselves. In contrast to science and objectivity, art is always concerned with representing a world that is never as simple as it seems: it presupposes that each thing is transformed into something more enchanting by each person who observes or interprets it.

*Sea*, in fact, corresponds to Nonza beach, on the Cap Corse peninsula. I have known this place since my childhood—it is a very familiar location to me. However, having come into contact with Shinto culture, it was impossible to observe these places from the same perspective. And I remember that when I returned to my native island I found myself observing the environment around me with a sort of detachment, born of the foreign culture with which I had become so familiar, as though the beach at Nonza had become as exotic as Hokusai's painting, *The Great Wave at Kanagawa*. This immersion in the world of Japanese prints is reflected in my new vision: the removal of horizon lines and the flattening of space that attest to a quest for and a focus on the essential.

**Ange Leccia**



## ASIA

### Introduction

The MEG's Department of Asia is particularly representative of the museum's historical development. The donation of a Japanese cabinet by the Genevan merchant Guillaume Franconis to the city of Geneva in 1707 did, in fact, mark the beginning of the Asian collections, which now comprise around 15,000 objects. The collections then grew in size with the establishment of the Academic Museum (1818) and the Archeological Museum (1872), largely through donations from Geneva's patrician families, some of whose members had travelled to the Far East. To cite just the deceased contributors, Edmond Rochette, Gustave Revilliod and Jean Romieux, and Alfred and Alice Bertrand are particularly worthy of mention. Almost half of the Asian collection is still comprised of donations from private individuals. Moreover, a major contribution was made to the Asian collections when the collections from the Museum of Mission were transferred to the MEG, when the museum was founded in 1901. Indeed, of the 843 objects collected by the missionaries from the Evangelical Missionary Society, 359 pieces originate from Asia, particularly India.

Today, the largest ensembles of objects in the collection are linked to religious iconography and weaponry, their geographic provenance being mainly India, Tibet, China, and Japan. It is worth mentioning that there are also Asian objects from the Ethnomusicology Department collection, which was largely developed between 1984 and 2011 by the department's previous curator, Laurent Aubert.

### **The Asian Exhibition's Museographic Itinerary**

In the previous permanent exhibition, the Department of Asia highlighted several strengths of its collections: religious iconography, the Japan of the samurai, Nepal and Tibet, Japanese Buddhism and Yao paintings. The new exhibition is more diverse and encompasses the entire continent of Asia, taking the visitor ever further east. The exhibition begins with three jewels of the collection, which are a reminder of its age and the fact that the Asian collection not only comprises everyday objects but also some veritable creative masterpieces. The first is a Palestinian bowl, which was the first piece to enter the Archeological Museum—the MEG's predecessor—in the 19th century; this bowl is a reminder of the fact that "orientalism" was initially understood as referring to the West's interest in the Near East whereas it now encompasses the whole of Asia.

Originating from the Far East, the next two masterpieces are Chinese: an urn which is the oldest scientifically dated piece in our collections (3000 BCE) and a bowl dating from the sixth century BCE, whose technical characteristics are exceptional as there is only one other known example in the world, which is held in China.

Ancient examples of European cartography take visitors on the journey to Asia: they attest to the way in which the continent — which had long remained mysterious and fantastical — was seen by the West.

The exhibition is based on three main themes particularly representative of Asia: religious iconography, literature and power. All three are closely linked, because religion played, and continues to play, an important role in Asiatic culture — even in contemporary industrial societies — while laying the foundations of its literature and being embroiled in complex games with the secular authorities, which are seldom removed from the religious world.

### **Perspectives**

To conclude, Asia is an important mirror for the West, as it is the source of some of the most important developments in mankind's cultural history, over which the "Old Continent" has no particular monopoly; and it would be a mistake to think that this history has lost its significance today. The section devoted to power, for example, does of course also deal with regimes that have disappeared — the Chinese Empire and the British colonies, for example — and communities of dispersed cultures, such as the Tibetan diaspora. But many of the exhibited Asian objects could be used by the descendants of the people who designed and made them. Hence, this museographic itinerary adopts the same spirit in which the MEG was founded, when the museum's founder declared: "The ethnographic collections are living museums, because they embody mankind's progress."



## ASIA

### Room texts

#### Asia

The Asia department covers the immense expanse from the left bank of the Bosphorus in Turkey to the island of Borneo. This continent represents nearly 30 % of the dry land of the planet and numbers 4.3 billion habitants, some two thirds of the world population.

With its history spanning several millennia, Asia is the melting pot of some of the most sophisticated human cultures. For some years now it has emerged as one of the world's main economic players.

This section opens with *cartography*, the first European charts of Asia, and then explores three themes: *religious iconography*, *writing* and *power*, taking visitors eastwards across the Asian continent.

#### Vitrine 02

##### SECTION

##### Three remarkable objects

The MEG's Asian collection numbers nearly 15,000 objects, with a special focus on religious iconography, weapons, India, Tibet, China and Japan. Three objects are particularly impressive:

- a bowl from Palestine which was the very first object to enter the old Archaeology Museum;
- a ritual Chinese bowl with a double bottom, one with an open work snake pattern, a technical exploit of which there is only one other known example, discovered in China in 1980;
- a 5000-year-old urn, the oldest scientifically dated piece in the MEG.

#### Vitrine 03

##### SECTION

##### European cartography

The first contacts between the West and Asia occurred on land, in particular during Alexander the Great's campaign in the 4th century and along the Silk Road to China, taken by Marco Polo in the 13th century. The sea route between Europe and India was opened by the Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama, in 1498, and chart making became a speciality of the countries engaging in maritime trade.

#### Vitrine 04

##### SECTION

##### Religious iconography

The Asian continent is the cradle of all universal religions and also preserves countless other indigenous religious forms. Some forbid the representation of the Absolute, and others believe it has no form and can therefore be represented in any form. Religions are thus the source of most of humanity's art and its main architectural monuments.

##### *Aniconism in Islam*

Among the monotheist religions, Judaism and Islam refuse to represent God, in application of the third of the Ten Commandments given to Moses. He is therefore worshipped without images, the believers recite prayers simply turned towards Jerusalem or Mecca, whether in a synagogue, a mosque or at home.

##### *Aniconism in Shintō*

The indigenous religion of Japan does not usually represent its gods (*kami*神), which incarnate natural forces or ancestor spirits. The most famous is the sun goddess, Amaterasu, but the *kami* dwell in sanctuaries and houses, living in a shelter (*shintai*神体), which may be a pine branch, a sword or a mirror. The faithful appease the gods by performing rituals, reciting prayers and making offerings as a sign of purity, gratitude and respect.

#### Vitrine 05

##### SECTION

##### Hindu iconography

Hinduism is polytheist and therefore has a multitude of gods and goddesses. These deities are frequently considered to be the manifestations of a single superior principle and the incarnations of the great positive and negative forces of the universe, but they also protect their followers. The best known are Śiva, his wife Pārvatī (or Durgā) and his son Gaṇeśa (or Ganesh), who has an elephant head; Viṣṇu and his avatar Kṛṣṇa, the object of intense devotion; and the fearsome Kālī.



**Vitrine 06**  
**SECTION**

**Chinese Buddhist iconography**

During the first three centuries, Buddhism had no texts by or images of the Buddha. At the beginning of the Christian era, his sermons were written down, in Sanskrit on the Indian continent and in Pāli in the island of Sri Lanka. The Pāli texts became the norm for Theravāda Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia. The Sanskrit texts were translated into Chinese from the 1st century, when the first images of the Buddha and the numerous gods of the pantheon of the Great Vehicle (*Mahāyāna*) also appeared. The *Mahāyāna* spread throughout the rest of Asia. It asserts the universality of the Buddha among all beings, and explains that the *bodhisattvas*, who are already well on the way to enlightenment, can intervene in this world.

**Vitrine 08**  
**SECTION**

**The Buddhist iconography in Gandhara**

The art of Gandhāra, a region spanning the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, was the first to depict Buddha in physical form, in the early Christian era. The main iconographic features of a Buddha are already present: the topknot (*uṣṇīṣa*) and the tuft of silvery hairs between the eyebrows (*ūrṇā*). Buddhism disappeared from this region and from the Indian continent after the Islamic invasions of the 12th century.

**SECTION**

**Japanese Buddhist iconography**

Buddhism passed from China to Japan in the 6th century. There it was particularly influenced by its esoteric form (Tantrism). This form uses rituals to a large number of beings who incarnate various degrees of enlightenment: buddhas, bodhisattvas, gods and goddesses, “kings of science” and others. Tantric Buddhism is represented by the Shingon and Tendai schools. They specialised in iconography in order to codify the colours, postures and gestures of the various personages used not only in the rituals but as an aid to meditation.

**Vitrine 10**  
**SECTION**

**Tibetan Buddhist iconography**

Buddhism spread to the Roof of the World in the 7th century and Tibetan Buddhism is deeply Tantric. As in Japan, its iconography is extremely rich and coded. It accentuates the representation of the masters and their teaching. As in the other Buddhist countries, paintings and statues are part of a consecration ritual, which incites the divinities shown in the images to come and live in them.

**Vitrine 12**  
**SECTION**

**Writing**

Asia has yielded the earliest signs of writing, through which man managed to materialise his discourse and so – by definition – emerge from Prehistory. Writing is also a decisive factor in identity and social cohesion. One of the very first writing systems is cuneiform, which appeared in Mesopotamia (Iraq) about 3500 BC.

**Manuscripts**

Handwritten texts provide a precious and moving testimony, because they directly reflect the materialisation of their authors' thoughts. Writing materials varied: plant fibres, animal skins (parchment), engraved metal, dried or fired clay, etc. The oldest document on paper comes from China and dates from the 1st century AD.

**Printed texts**

Wishing to spread their religious texts more widely, the Chinese Buddhists invented a system of woodblock printing (xylography) in the 8th century.

**Vitrine 13**  
**SECTION**

**Power**

Power within a society is expressed firstly by the superiority of physical force and weapons. It is then consolidated by the development of administrative, governmental and economic systems and a hierarchy, which may be highly centralised, as in China and Japan, or more diversified, as in India or former East Indies.



### **India of the mahārāja**

The Mughal dynasty ruled India from 1526 to 1858, with some interruptions. Their most brilliant sovereign was Akbar (1542-1605), and the symbol of their culture remains the Taj Mahal mausoleum in Agra. The country was next ruled by the British Raj until its Independence in 1947, when it became a republic.

### **Imperial China**

Despite the immensity of its empire, the Chinese court was the most centralised and one of the most sumptuous in the world until its downfall in 1911. Its power depended on a formidable administrative pyramid and the uniform use of Chinese writing throughout the empire.

### **Vitrine 14**

#### **SECTION**

#### **Japan of the samurai**

Unlike China, Japan has always had only one imperial dynasty, which continues today. Its legitimacy stems from the uninterrupted succession of emperors, which mythology traces back to the sun goddess, Amaterasu. But from the 12th to the 19th centuries, real power was wielded by military juntas, directed by a commander-in-chief (*shōgun*) and based successively in Kamakura, Kyōto (Muromachi) and Edo (Tōkyō). The feudal period saw the rise of the military class (*samurai*侍) attached to various local lords (*daimyō*大名).

### **Vitrine 16**

#### **SECTION**

#### **East Indies (Insulindia)**

The highly diverse East Indies – over 17,000 islands – has preserved a multitude of tribal societies, in which power is linked to the magical practices in the cult of nature deities and ancestor spirits. It includes the island of Borneo as well as the archipelagos of Indonesia and the Philippines. According to its constitution, Indonesia is monotheist and the animist religion is classed by default in Islam, which makes it the biggest Muslim country in the world.

### **Vitrine 17**

#### **SECTION**

#### **Colonial power and opium**

Driven by European colonialism, opium smoking had devastating effects on all classes of society in China and neighbouring countries in the 19th century before it became fashionable among Western intellectuals. Wealthy smokers left the delicate preparation of the opium pipe to the attendants and settled comfortably on a special bed to smoke.



## AMERICAS

### Introduction

For many, the Americas conjure up the great pre-Columbian civilizations with their spectacular pyramids, Native American bison hunting in the northern plains, and the hunter-gatherers of the impenetrable Amazonian forests. Fragments of all their histories, as well as many others, are preserved in the Musée d'ethnographie. The collection contains more than 12,000 objects representing all the countries of the two Americas, from the Arctic polar circle to the Tierra del Fuego. Chronologically, it covers a considerable period of time spreading over almost 9,000 years, from the hunter-gatherers of the archaic period up to contemporary cultures, by way of the Aztec and Inca empires, thanks to field collecting undertaken by curators from the museum during the last decade of the 20th century.

### The Americas Visit in the Reference Exhibition

The presentation of the Americas in the permanent exhibition has favoured a geographic approach, sweeping across the continent from north to south. Coupled with an account of the subjects specific to each region, this choice makes for a harmonious visit in a logical sequence. In doing so, more general themes were brought to light, such as environmental adaptation, religion, power, and the complex relations between nature and culture. Together they weave the fabric of the anthropological subject and make it possible to establish links between very different regions and cultural groups.

Three large regions are represented one after the other: North America (Canada, the United States, and Greenland), Mesoamerica (Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica), and South America (Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Chile).

The North-South approach adopted here allows us to first highlight the most eloquent elements from the Northwest region of Alaska or Canada, the populations of the great Arctic region and, in North America, the Amerindian groups of the Southwest, the plains, and the east of the territory. This subcontinent is not abundantly represented in the collections, but several pieces of exceptional quality illustrate particularly important aspects of the history of certain Amerindian societies of this large region. Until the introduction of Mesoamerican cultigens in the southern part of this vast territory (whose surface area is approximately double that of Europe), the majority of Amerindian societies living there practised hunter-gathering along with intensive exploitation of fishery resources. Human ingenuity in adapting to often extremely cold or arid environments is particularly remarkable among the Inuits of the polar circle and the Hopis of the American Southwest. The kayak of the Inuits of Greenland is an exemplary illustration of this capacity to transform a few pieces of driftwood and the skins of marine mammals into a perfect boat. The kayak's shape is so well adapted to its function that its design has hardly changed for several hundred years.

A constant can be observed in the practices of each of these groups: all relations with the natural world have to be negotiated through very complex social and ritual practices. This structuring principle, which not only defines the nature of relations between humans and the "natural" environment but also forms the organizational and social foundations of many Amerindian societies, constitutes one of the main themes of the Americas visit. Although the many religions practised on this continent are very diverse, it emerges that equally complex and constantly renegotiated relations need to be maintained with the forces governing the world and animating all living things. These negotiations between humans and spirits led to very varied ritual practices and to the creation of admirable objects believed to possess exceptional efficacy, in particular an Iñupiat ceremonial pail and a Shuar shrunken head, which this work also highlights. One of the founding myths shared by several groups of the Northwest Pacific coast describes in detail Crow Spirit's trials and tribulations in introducing light to the world; it gives us the opportunity to reflect on the many different social, economic, and religious connections between the natural world and culture in its widest sense.

Mesoamerica is mainly evoked by archaeological objects from different pre-Columbian societies. Among the remarkable objects are a Maya stela representing a high-ranking dignitary and two sculptures of Aztec divinities, collected in 1855 by the renowned entomologist Henri de Saussure. His son Ferdinand de Saussure, a famous linguist and semiotician, bequeathed them in 1913. This section enables the exploration of notions such as the roles of ideology, writing, and rituals — often violent, like human sacrifices or the ball game — in the development of hierarchical societies and the reinforcement of their leaders' charisma. To treat the theme of power here, we have chosen a sculpture in volcanic rock of the Aztec god Huehueteotl. This subject, whose origin goes back to more than a thousand years before the Aztec culture, demonstrates that the will to legitimate power and its ideological discourse, by making them part of an older history, is not new. Like Mesoamerica, South America is first and foremost illustrated by objects of pre-Columbian origin. Without counting the ritual ceramics — an expression of the Tairona (Columbia), Chorrera (Ecuador), Moche and Nasca (Peru) cultures, sumptuous textiles, and a few gold objects which escaped the search for "El Dorado" — are also exhibited. Paraphernalia for taking hallucinogenic



substances, found during archaeological digs in Chile illustrates the practice, almost exclusively Americas and Siberia, altering once conscious state in order to make direct contact. This practice linked to shamanism is found, and in various forms, all over the continent and, depending on the place, involves consuming different products, including mushrooms, cacti, and even toad and fish extracts. As Quanah Parker (died 1911), a Comanche chief and founder of the “Native American Church Movement”—one of the sacraments of which consists in ingesting decoctions of hallucinogenic cacti (peyotl)—, so well put it: “The white man goes into his church and talks about Jesus. The Indian goes into his teepee and talks to Jesus.” This third and final section of the American part of the exhibition reserves a prominent place for Amazonian peoples of today such as the Kayapó, the Wayana, and the Kaapor. In addition to the spectacular Kayapó feathered regalia, two magnificent ant mats in the shape of a fish and a land mammal and embellished with multicoloured figures are presented. These objects, used during initiation rites, serve to bring live ants and wasps into contact with adolescents’ bare skin. In their way, they underline that becoming an adult is often painful. This section also emphasises the long tradition of field research at the MEG. Finally, it allows us to celebrate the people and the continuity of indigenous traditions despite the persistent pressure of uncontrolled, illegal development.



## AMERICAS

### Room texts

#### ***Vitrine 21***

##### **Americas**

The Americas conjure up the great pre-Colombian civilisations and their spectacular pyramids, the northern Plains Indians hunting bison and the hunter-gatherers of the impenetrable Amazonian forests. Fragments of their history – and many others besides – are kept in the MEG and figure in this exhibition. Three great ensembles are represented in succession: North America (Canada, United States, and Greenland); Mesoamerica (Mexico, Guatemala and Costa Rica) and South America (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Chile). Themes such as adaptation to the environment, religion, power and the relationships between nature and culture establish links between very different regions and cultural groups.

#### ***Vitrine 22***

##### **SECTION**

##### **The northwest coast of America**

The northwest coast has an exceptional climate conducive to the growth of temperate rainforests sheltering many animal species. In addition to these resources, the indigenous people took most of their food from the sea and rivers. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a population of about 250,000 people lived in this natural environment leading one of the most complex lifestyles for sedentary, non agricultural peoples.

##### ***The Potlach, a display of rank***

The Native American societies on the northwest coast were hierarchical. Each person had a specific place in a complex social structure. An influential position was often cunningly negotiated or fiercely contested. The rank and social status of an individual such as a chief was determined at potlatches, ceremonial feasts involving gift-giving on an enormous scale. Before European contact, the products distributed were mainly fur or cedar bark blankets. Later the most prized exchange goods were large amounts of easily quantifiable foreign products: woollen blankets, dishes, bags of flour, etc.

##### ***The origin of powers and privileges***

The encounters between the human and spirit worlds underlie the ritual activities of the groups on the northwest coast. The powers and privileges obtained during these supernatural encounters may be prestigious names, titles and emblems, ceremonial songs, dances, or special access to salmon rivers or hunting grounds in the forest. All these elements are validated by myths and stories and vigorously reasserted during the potlatches; they constitute the community's wealth and determine its social position in relation to its neighbours.

#### ***Vitrine 23***

##### **SECTION**

##### **The Inuit from Alaska to Greenland**

The Inuit, the indigenous people of the Great North, are scattered over the largest expanse on the planet: from the coasts of Siberia through Alaska and the great Canadian North to Greenland, a distance of over 10,000 km. Although widely scattered, Inuit culture is unified by related languages and a subsistence lifestyle adapted to the Arctic regions.

##### ***The spirit world***

The polar landscape changes ceaselessly. The Inuit believe that the spirits of the winds and storms remodel nature as they please, sweeping away all familiar landmarks. The spirits are necessarily involved in all their activities and relationships with the wilds. To ensure satisfactory living conditions, such as mammals being where they were expected to be, the Inuit invoked many of these spirits by ritual chants. They frequently made small amulets from wood, bone or ivory as souvenirs of these supernatural encounters. These magical objects were kept on their bodies, in their houses and on their means of transport.

##### ***Working skin and flesh***

Among the Inuit, the work done by men and by women is traditionally almost always complementary. The men attack nature, hunting deer, fish, and marine mammals for the group's survival. The women turn the products of the hunt into food and clothing. Working the skins is a highly skilled task. Using a simple stone or bone scraper, a knife with a semicircular blade and a few needles, the women transform nature into culture, raw skins into magnificent garments that can withstand bitter cold and harsh weather.



#### **Vitrine 24**

##### **Hunting and fishing**

For the Inuit, hunting and fishing are part of complex social contracts established with the world of the spirits ruling the animal kingdom. If people learn to read the signs the spirits have left in the wilds, if they scrupulously observe all taboos and rituals, their prey will appear at the appointed time. The animals will let themselves be caught in a net or harpooned. The Inuit make optimal use of all available resources. All the inedible parts of the animal are used to make clothing, tools, means of transport and building materials.

##### **The kayak, a sublime craft**

Unsinkable in the hands of an experienced hunter, very fast with a shallow draught, the kayak of the Great North is one of the world's finest craft. Over an immense territory stretching from Siberia to Greenland, groups like the Chukchi, the Koryak, the Aleuts and the Inuit have developed over 60 different types of kayak. A kayak must be light enough to slide over the ice or be carried over long distances by a lone hunter, yet strong enough to hunt whales and seals in the icy sea or caribou in a torrent.

#### **Vitrine 25**

##### **SECTION**

##### **The southwest and northeast of North America**

Most Amerindian societies in North America lived by hunting, fishing and gathering. In this immense region, three cultural groups have been selected: the Pueblos Indians (Hopi, Zuñi), who mainly occupied the states of Arizona and New Mexico, the Indians of the Great Plains of North America, scattered between Canada and the United States and, further east, the Haudenosaunee, grouping six Iroquois nations.

##### **Katsinam: the religion of the Hopi Indians**

The term *katsina* refers to several elements related to Hopi symbolic thought: the masked dancers who personify the spirits, the spiritual entity thus represented, clouds and the dead. The *katsinam* receive the Hopi's gifts and prayers for health, fertility and rain, and carry these offerings and supplications to the gods. They are represented by wooden figurines inspired by a repertoire of over 300 different subjects. Traditionally carved from poplar roots, these figurines are often given to the children to teach them about the spirit world.

##### **The Plains Indians, war and peace**

The recent history of the Plains Indians was disrupted by the shock of contact with the European world: diseases, wars, usurpation of territory, forced displacement and settlement in reservations. The introduction of the horse into the region in the eighteenth century transformed several of these groups of hunter-gatherers or semi-sedentary farmers, including the Niitsitapii, the Tsitsistas/Suhtai, the Apsaalooke and the Lakota, into nomadic hunters closely linked to the seasonal migrations of herds of bison. The classic stereotype of the "Redskins" in the cinema and popular imagination comes from these groups and their new equestrian lifestyle.

##### **The Iroquois and the False Face Society**

The False Face Society is an initiation society in the Great Lakes region of North America which gathered for sacred activities, such as the midwinter celebrations or healing rituals. Nobody knows exactly when the masked dances used during healing rites began to be performed, but the Jesuit missionaries reported their existence in Huronia in the first half of the seventeenth century. This mask and the turtle shell rattle come from an Iroquois group, the Haudenosaunee, and were probably used by a masked celebrant. Given to the Academic Museum in 1825, they are considered to be the oldest catalogued specimens of this type.

#### **Vitrine 27**

##### **SECTION**

##### **Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica**

Mesoamerica is a cultural area stretching from Mexico to the north of Costa Rica. This region has witnessed outstanding cultural and economic achievements: the beginnings of agriculture, the development of complex societies, trade, writing systems and calendars. The Zapotecs and Mayas in the south and the Aztecs in the central plateau of Mexico figure among the most remarkable pre-Columbian cultures.



**Vitrine 27**  
**The west coast of Mexico**

Unfortunately, little is known of cultural trajectories on the west coast of Mexico. The rich ceramic tradition of this region has come down to us through repeated pillaging of grave sites. The items presented here come from the Mexican states of Jalisco, Nayarit and Colima. Various groups occupied these regions at the beginning of the Christian era. They all laid their dead in necropolises, large underground chambers reached by a shaft. Each chamber could hold up to about ten individuals, accompanied by numerous offerings, including ceramic objects.

**Vitrine 27**  
**The Aztec Empire**

When Hernán Cortés and his army reached Tenochtitlan, in early November 1519, the capital of the Aztec Empire, gleaming like a jewel on an island in Lake Texcoco in Mexico Valley, had a population of nearly three hundred thousand. The political and religious heart of the city was organised around a large ritual wall dominated by an impressive pyramid dedicated to the god of rain and fertility (Tlaloc) and to the ancestral god of war and the sun (Huitzilopochtli). From this centre, the Aztecs and their partners in the Triple Alliance (Texcoco, Tlacopan) controlled a large part of Mesoamerica.

**Vitrine 28**  
**SECTION**  
**The Amazon**

Draining an area of 7.3 million sq. km, the Amazon Basin spreads over nine countries in South America. This vast region, with its tropical rainforest and network of thousands of water courses, including the great Amazon River, shelters about four hundred indigenous cultural groups, totalling about a million people. The MEG's Amazonian collections are among the best documented in the world; through numerous field expeditions, it has built up particularly rich and representative ensembles.

**The Kayapo and feather work**

The Kayapó live in the tropical rainforest in Brazil's central plateau; about 9,000 people are scattered over forty four villages. Like many other Amazonian groups, their history bears the marks of many disastrous encounters with non indigenous peoples: massacres, slavery, territorial spoliation, infectious diseases and so on. The Kayapó's sumptuous feather work is particularly intended for community festivities in honour of the men or the women, or the *mérèremeit* (beautiful infants), a rite of passage confirming the ceremonial names of three- or four-year-old children.

**Vitrine 29**  
**The Shuar and the art of head shrinking**

From the end of the nineteenth century, shrunken heads from the Shuar Amazonian Indians filled curiosity cabinets. The practice of severing and shrinking human heads was anchored in their religious beliefs. The Shuar recognised three kinds of souls: the *nékás wakanl* or ordinary soul, the *arutam wakanl* which can be acquired, and the *muiskak*, a vengeful spirit. The shrunken head or *tsantsa* was made to prevent the dead person's *muiskak* from taking revenge. The *muiskak* was forced to enter the shrunken head. The captive *muiskak* was then safely sent back to the dead person's home village through a series of feasts. Once the shrunken head was emptied of this angry soul, it was often sold.

**Vitrine 30**  
**SECTION**  
**Pre-Columbian South America**

Pre-Columbian cultural history is just as spectacular in South America as it is in Mesoamerica. This region also developed agriculture independently and, from the fourth century, formed states, without writing, the wheel or a market economy. The objects on display mostly come from the Andean region, particularly from Peru, the centre of complex societies and the greatest cultural deployment in this continent.



***Vitrine 31***  
***The Nazca Culture***

The Nazca from the south coast of Peru are well known because of the gigantic lines (geoglyphs) they left in the Ica desert and their multicoloured pottery. Although the Nazca culture was contemporary with the Moché in the north, it had to adapt to much more arid conditions, which prevented the development of large villages or monumental ceremonial centres. Many of their rituals, including the famous geoglyphs of trapezes, plants and stylised animals, were perhaps linked to water supplies for agricultural purposes. The geoglyphs, made by scraping away the lighter soil to expose the darker rock underneath, may have been used as paths for ritual processions.

***Vitrine 32***  
***The Mochica culture***

The Moché or Mochica culture spread along the north coast of Peru, between the first and eighth century. Archaeological digs have unearthed huge domestic areas, temples, palaces and mausoleums containing spectacular tombs. The abundant resources of the Pacific Ocean and a sophisticated irrigation system, enabled the Mochica to prosper and develop what seems to be one of the most elaborate societies in ancient Peru.



## EUROPE

### Introduction

#### Europe at the MEG

In the 18th and 19th centuries, an interest in European ethnography developed in Geneva. Collections were begun in several of the city's institutions, and were subsequently transferred to the Musée d'ethnographie; a good example of this was a collection of objects of adornment, which specialists sought to classify in a repertoire of regional styles. These collections were expanded with the help of private donations and by the contributions of various bodies, such as delegations of the League of Nations, which, from 1919 onwards, provided the museum with objects that were representative of what was then termed "folklore". The set of dolls sent by the Hungarian government in 1936 belongs to this category.

Eugène Pittard and Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach, along with other curators, decided to acquire more systematic ensembles through one-off contributions by various collaborators and illustrious colleagues. In 1902, Eugène Pittard returned from his mission in Dobrudja with Romanian and Bulgarian objects, including a small ensemble associated with Çingene gypsy culture. In 1917, he solicited the expertise of Dr Léopold Rütimeyer to assemble a sample of objects that was representative of masks from the Lötschental (an example of which is presented in the permanent exhibition). In the mid 1960s, Horace Van Berchem compiled a fine collection of around four hundred Mediterranean terracotta pieces in the framework of the Programme d'enquête ("Survey Programme"), which was launched to establish the collections dedicated to transregional themes. The characteristics of these collections and their means of acquisition attest to the museum's history, where, until the mid 1970s, the Department of Europe had not yet been established.

#### The European Itinerary in the Reference Exhibition

The collection was highly popular with Geneva's inhabitants from the mid 1970s to 2000. With a focus on local issues, the Department's teams tackled universal themes such as death, religion, the status of women, the relationship between the rural and urban worlds, the country, historical scientific figures, and so on. The careful treatment of these themes has shed light on pieces that were already acknowledged as major. This is the case, in particular, of the *Le Déserteur* watercolours, which are presented in the section of the exhibition dedicated to the cult of the saints.

The layout of the new itinerary is based on the Department's history and the exhibition has adopted a narrative approach that aims to put in perspective both the museum's heritage and the heterogeneous nature of the collections. This applies to the common theme we have chosen: the relationships between the members of a society — that of the rural Alpine world of the 19th and 20th centuries — with their environment, and the relationships experienced, conceived, and constructed around the notions of responsibility and reciprocity.

The intention is to represent Europe's diversity by exhibiting pieces that originate from various geographical zones; we also wanted to illustrate the complex nature of the collections, by juxtaposing the most modest examples of our heritage (such as cream spoons used in sheepfolds) with objects associated with scholarly culture, certain of which were loaned to us by the Art and History Museum. The itinerary also comprises contemporary pieces whose facture and functions attest to the present day, while their appearance links them with the traditional heritage of the rural communities. They reflect a research and collection policy that will shape our future programme.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the era in which most of these objects were compiled, rural practices, beliefs, and popular knowledge underwent profound transformations. Hence, it is impossible to affirm that our present-day judgement of these objects accurately reflects their original contexts of use. The exhibition itinerary therefore places great emphasis on the memorial nature of the collections, their orientations, the application of categories imposed by the fields of art and ethnography, and the assessments of "enlightened" amateurs.

The selection of an object is never an easy matter — and it is even more difficult for ethnologists, who aspire to reconstitute the know-how, tastes, interests, symbolic language, and values of those who fashioned the object and used it. This new itinerary has provided an opportunity to bring together ethnographic collections that were established according to scientific protocol and ensembles that were compiled with passion (such as the delightful painted eggs from the Joana Mirabaud Collection, through sentimental attachment, political action, or even as a result of filial piety. It is necessarily a partial and selective choice ... but it is our way of assuming the historic commitment of the Department of Europe, whose purpose has always been to represent those whose voices have been lost.



## EUROPE

### Room texts

#### ***Vitrine 33***

##### **Europe**

European unity is a relatively recent construction, resulting from historical events and political decisions. In the nineteenth century, folklorists and ethnologists began to study peasant societies and folk culture, which were then threatened by change and thought to be still close to a mythical idea of an original society. Museum collections sought to palliate the gradual loss of a sense of belonging to a territory and an identity, so the objects presented here are perceived as both artefacts and archives. Most were collected in rural alpine communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the spirit of the natural sciences.

Organised around the notions of responsibility and reciprocity, the European section mixes provenances and periods. The display of humble but skilfully made objects aims to show the diversity of this territory and the memory stored in its heritage.

#### ***Vitrine 34***

##### ***The salt of friendship***

Salt travelled throughout Europe from Antiquity to the early 20th century. In the Alps where it was rare, it was an essential commodity. It was used to preserve food and its iodine content kept people and livestock healthy. Salt was an expensive and sacred material, used in medical and veterinary practices, magic rituals and prophylactic exorcism. The Old Testament decrees that any food offering must contain salt, particularly when it accompanies the crossing of a threshold. In some regions, sharing salt, along with bread and water, cements alliances. Even today, this custom is surrounded by many taboos.

#### ***Vitrine 34***

##### ***A festive spirit***

Marriage is a legal, economic, ritual and political act which varies from one place and time to another. Its celebration brings a community together and publicly stages its values. A wedding is a time for merrymaking, protective gestures and wishes for fertility. This rite of passage is an exceptional opportunity for hospitality. Accompanied by lavish amounts of food and drink, sweets, singing and games, it reveals the new couple's social and financial status

#### ***Vitrine 34***

##### **SECTION**

##### **Welcoming and sharing**

In rural communities, hospitality is a right and a duty. Social interaction through sharing food and drink follows well-established rituals. This highly codified way of being together, regarded as a sign of civilisation, ensures respect and formality in the relationship between the people gathered around the table.

##### ***Marks of consecration***

Bread and pancakes have graced European tables since the Middle Ages. Christianity made bread into a symbol and incorporated the agrarian calendar in its liturgy. Growing cereals is hard work in an alpine climate, increasing the value of wheat and bread, the staple food. Bread making was a collective operation and the loaves were marked with profane signs and religious symbols.

##### ***Thirst and hospitality***

The rules of traditional hospitality regarding drinks are still applied today. The art of drinking is a social and physical skill which has to be learnt. Although no one is ever refused a drink of water, all other beverages, particularly alcohol and stimulants, must be made, distributed and drunk according to strict regulations, whether the drinker is alone, with his family or at a public event.

#### ***Vitrine 35***

##### ***Cream***

Alongside oil obtained from nuts and seeds, animal fats play a dominant role in the traditional continental diet. Butter and cream are eaten at feasts and prized as trade goods and gifts. Unlike lard, these dairy products are considered to be foodstuffs in their own right as well as condiments.

##### ***The poor man's riches***

Eggs are a rich source of nourishment, but they are also highly symbolic in many cultural contexts. The acts of giving, lending and sharing eggs accompany a move into a new house, a wedding, pregnancy and childbirth, even in the poorest communities. Eggs are fed to the ill and grief-stricken because they are thought to nourish the body and the soul. Plain or delicately decorated, eggs play an important role in many feast days and have pride of place at Easter.



### **Vitrine 36** **SECTION**

#### **Living in society**

In folk cultures, it is believed that balance must be achieved for individuals, societies and the natural environment to flourish. Moderation in all things – ethical, religious, ecological, medical – is important in private and public life. The "middle way" is therefore an ambiguous idea. It guarantees social order but also functions as a system of checks and balances against misuse of power.

#### ***Being born to the world***

The biological process of birth is a time of physical and symbolic vulnerability which calls for intense socialisation. Various propitiatory and prophylactic rites support individuals and their community during childbirth, then during successive transformations of their bodies and social status. These rites of passage are so many cultural "births" involving specific rights, duties, postures and conduct. To keep their place in the hierarchy of living things, human beings must learn to control themselves, to respect and dominate nature as much as they protect themselves from it.

#### ***Between order and disorder***

Until the end of the Ancien Régime the perception of time had an ecological dimension. Marked by calendar feast days, this cyclical pattern governed natural events and human behaviour. Norms were defined and the exercise of power organised on that basis. But this approach also reveals the contradiction, inherent in all cultural phenomena, between conservatism and the desire for change. For example, carnivals – which briefly reverse the rules of proper behaviour and lay bare the tensions between order and disorder – can just as well reinforce the return to the established norm as help change customs.

#### ***Dying well***

Death cannot be reduced to a biological disappearance. It involves a complex chain of events which transforms the social body. Each culture interprets death in its own way. Rituals and symbols reflect its organisation, religious beliefs and scientific knowledge. Until the nineteenth century, peasant communities were familiar with death. This proximity was long regarded in academic circles as a sign of weakness and resignation, whereas in fact it was a way of coping with personal destiny without endangering the community.

### **Vitrine 37** **SECTION**

#### **Wheat growing and human life cycles**

The traditional forms of agriculture were established in the nineteenth century. Pictures of work in the fields record changes in techniques, the transformation of the landscape and the collective imagination. Considered to be a gift of the gods, wheat imposes a duty of reciprocity. Knowledge related to the growing of wheat is paralleled by myths and rites in which the cereal symbolises the cycle of life, the need for death and the never-ending rhythm of the seasons.

#### ***Harvests***

Agrarian rituals, seen as a direct inheritance from Antiquity, have long interested the human sciences. Information collected in the nineteenth century has documented these aspects of tradition well. At harvest time, the reapers worked in parallel or converging lines. The last sheaf could be reaped by the slowest or the fastest among them. The last swathe was always celebrated. The ceremonies at the end of the harvest were a time for naming things in the natural and social worlds. The consecration of the ears distinguished the good and bad workers, while encouraging the community to share in the harvest and the festivities.

### **Vitrine 38**

#### ***Receiving and distributing***

Before agriculture was practised on an industrial scale, the production of wheat spread over almost twelve months. The important stages in the peasant calendar related to sharing out and storing the harvest are evoked here through ancient and contemporary objects. We find the idea of reciprocity which governed the management of resources in those times, involving self-sufficiency and dependence between the various members of the community at each stage.



### **Vitrine 39**

#### **SECTION**

##### **The divine at hand**

Folk religiosity is not only an interpretation of the official doctrines. It covers changing ideas about medicine, hygiene, magical prophylactics, cosmology and divination. Its scope is broad, embracing the biological life cycle (with its religious and secular rituals) as well as events in the civil or mythological calendar and even perception of the hereafter.

##### ***The cult of the saints, confidants and models***

The cult of the saints takes various forms in the three religions of the Book. For some Christian denominations, the phenomenon developed strongly in late Antiquity. But the customs practised by the ecclesiastical institution and the faithful diverged and were sometimes in contradiction. In general, saints were regarded as intermediaries between heaven and earth. They were familiar with life because they had lived it and on the strength of their experience they protected believers and interceded for them. They could be addressed directly in public or in private. The modalities of the relationship were not restricted to veneration but included affection, negotiation, even blackmail and humiliation.

##### ***The Deserter's watercolours***

The Alsatian artist Charles-Frédéric Brun, called "the Deserter", stayed in Valais between 1843 and 1844, then from 1848 to 1849. Taking his inspiration from popular prints, he drew Biblical figures and local saints. He did family portraits on the same model. His work, found in various social milieux, challenges the distinction between folk art and highbrow art, and the differentiation between the ritual and secular use of objects.

### **Vitrine 40**

#### **SECTION**

##### **Leading, directing and governing**

For nineteenth-century peasantry, the hierarchy of living things stretched from earth to heaven, with human beings placed between domination and subordination. Power symbols were a reminder that the balance between prerogatives and duties began at home and from there extended to the locality and society as a whole. Managing a house, leading a flock or directing a meeting required technical skills, ritual knowledge and personal qualities.

##### ***The household***

In traditional society, social maturity implied control of the family's material and symbolic resources. In addition to its agrarian or artisanal occupations, the domestic community took part in the housework. The tasks were not equally divided between men and women, even if the women ran the domestic economy and managed work inside the house and its outhouses. The distaff, used for spinning, is the attribute of the virtuous woman's authority and duties. Although it is no longer part of daily life, the distaff still conveys ancient symbolic values, which are found in folk tales and popular expressions.

##### ***Livestock***

Animal husbandry and agriculture shared the same spaces in a complementary or conflicting rhythm. The shepherd led his flock from the village to the pastures, often living a marginal life. Because of his frugal habits and closeness to the animals, he was sometimes regarded as a simpleton or else a wise man. People attributed him with practical knowledge of the world although they were suspicious of his ability to see everything. The crook is his main tool, symbolising his relationship with his flock. It is his constant companion when leading, watching over or caring for the livestock and even when he is just walking or sunk in contemplation. It still conveys the idea of moral and religious authority today.

##### ***Men***

Power and authority are social and cultural representations which are embodied in numerous institutions and influence relationships between individuals. In preindustrial Europe, the ideological construction of hierarchies made authority sacred. The mechanisms of political legitimisation went hand-in-hand with the administrative organisation, both for religious beliefs and the perception of history and the environment. The metaphor of the good shepherd is an excellent example: the leader of the flock becomes a leader of men; his simple crook becomes the bishop's crosier, the sceptre and sign of customary law.



#### **Vitrine 41** **SECTION**

##### **On the highways and byways**

Ancient and modern means of transport coexisted in the Alps until the 1950s. Travel was organised according to the lie of the land, the load and type of product. People, ideas and goods covered considerable distances despite natural and political borders. These economic exchanges fostered the development of occupations such as muleteers, pedlars and anchovy merchants.

##### ***Peddling***

In the seventeenth century, pedlars travelled to even very remote places to sell a range of wares such as books, haberdashery, and kitchen utensils. The development of urban shops in the nineteenth century curbed their trade in the towns, but not in the countryside where they continued their twice-yearly rounds. They went through the same regions, usually in spring and autumn, keeping up a network of friendly and business connections. The impact of peddling as a cultural and commercial phenomenon was long underestimated. Its importance and its influence on the development of contemporary commerce are now recognised.

##### ***Mule trains***

In the Alps, goods were carried by porters, sledge and beasts of burden. It was managed by guilds linking the communities living on the mountain slopes. "Marrons" accompanied travellers, while "coubles" or mule trains carried the goods. The mules were tied together in caravans, harnessed and equipped with pack saddles. In the fifteenth century, their utilitarian tack was decorated with pompons, ribbons and bells, whose tinkling urged the animals on. The ornate harness showed how powerful the convoy was and discouraged bandits. Amulets were tied on to the harness to ward off evil forces.

#### **Vitrine 42, 43, 44** **SECTION**

##### **The balance of work**

There was little machinery in preindustrial Europe and the societies shared the same work ethic based on individual responsibility and community solidarity. In these agricultural and artisanal communities, the body – human and animal – was the first and sometimes the only tool available: its skill and dependability were key assets in a precarious economy. Knowing how to economise and use its strength led to a sense of well being.

##### ***Vitrine 42***

##### ***Saving, spending and pleasure***

Food was long the main item in household expenditure, followed by accommodation, work and taxes. The eighteenth century brought a change in consumer behaviour which had an impact on lifestyles comparable to the industrial revolution. In the country, where it had always been directly related to survival, consumption gradually became a sign of distinction and status and even a source of pleasure. Five types of goods attracted buyers in search of social promotion: textiles, precious metals, art works and devotional objects, weapons and luxury furniture.

##### ***Vitrine 43***

##### ***Working with the seasons***

Along the Mediterranean and in the Alps, the livestock is not kept indoors during the summer. To take advantage of the natural pastures, the animals were regularly taken from the plains to the mountains. The practice of moving the stock up to summer pastures and bringing them down again in the autumn, still found in the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Balkans and even in Kurdistan, is known as transhumance. In Switzerland, this moment in pastoral life was often depicted in the nineteenth century. The pictures show how practices were changing and helped crystallise a certain image of rural life.

##### ***Vitrine 44***

##### ***The music of the animals***

Although the beginning of the practice is hard to date, hanging bells around the animals' necks helped locate and organise the herds and flocks. The shepherd or herdsman marked the identity of the animal in terms of size, gait and importance in the flock through the bell he hung around its neck. A characteristic sound can be attributed to all the beasts, not just to the leaders. The procession creates a halo of sound which keeps the animals together and in order. It is not simply a matter of making a noise, but of composing a recognisable ensemble that is agreeable to the ear. Putting the flock into harmony with the landscape or when it crosses a village is a prestigious skill perfected over many years.



***Vitrine 44***  
***Raising reindeer***

The Sami used to roam between the Kola Peninsula, Norway, the north of Finland and Sweden. Once nomads, they became sedentary in the nineteenth century. They still hunt, fish and raise reindeer. Traditionally the deer provided them with food and raw materials. In their relationship with the natural environment, the Sami recognise an exchange between humans and animals.



## AFRICA

### Introduction

There are a thousand and one ways to present the MEG's African collections: the collections that are highlighted in the display cases of the African section of the permanent exhibition and those in the museum's storage collection. The number of objects is noteworthy — there are 16,586 objects —, as is the geographical extent of their origins: they originate from all over the African continent, including the Maghrib, Libya, and Egypt. Despite the region's history, the fundamental links and relationships between North Africa and the neighbouring territories, located in the immense Sahelian zone, are often overlooked.

#### **African paths in the permanent collection**

Several "geographical-cultural" areas are featured in the African section. They highlight the major figures in the history of the MEG's African collections. Although the major pieces donated by Émile Chambon feature throughout the itinerary, the pieces that were brought back from Madagascar by Pastor Henry Rusillon, southern Africa by Alfred Bertrand, and the Fang country (Gabon) by Pastor Fernand Grébert constitute individual key sections in the exhibition.

Hence, the "Madagascan section" pays tribute to Henry Rusillon, a missionary and ethnographer of insatiable curiosity for "the peoples and cultures of this remote island", and who saw each mission as an opportunity to investigate, document, and collect objects of interest. The works by Henry Rusillon provide a testimony of his explorations, as are the almost two hundred magico-religious pieces which he donated to the museum from 1930 onwards. Several of the exhibited objects evoke the Madagascan divinatory sciences of sikidy and tromba and are a transversal element in the African itinerary devoted to divination, complemented in the various display cases by a Chokwe divination basket (Angola), Bamum spider divination "leaf-cards" (Cameroon), an Ifa Nago-Yoruba divination bowl (Benin), and a Baule mouse oracle (Côte d'Ivoire).

"The eastern and southern Africa" section, characterized by the sophistication of the selected objects, pays tribute to the famous Genevan traveller Alfred Bertrand (1856 – 1924), who began his lifelong passion for travelling around the world by journeying across southern Africa until he reached the "thresh old of central Africa", beyond the Zambezi River. In addition to his hunting trophies, he returned from his travels with extensive ethnographic collections (almost five hundred pieces), which he strove to document. The Bertrand collection entered the MEG in 1941; it attests to the penetration of Christian missions in southern Africa.

Lastly, the presentation of an exceptional Fang ensemble of objects in the "Gabonese section" of the exhibition pays tribute to Pastor Fernand Grébert. A missionary in Gabon between 1913 and 1931, Fernand Grébert had compiled a large collection of objects, some of which were donated to the MEG. Most of the three hundred pieces are also documented in some remarkable drawings and watercolours by the pastor, who was a gifted artist, and which he systematically annotated. One of his albums of drawings can be viewed in the exhibition.

Other works on canvas or paper — signed by the Cameroonian artist Ibrahim Njoya, the Congolese artist Albert Lubaki, the Madagascan artist Rajonah, and Ethiopian artists from the first half of the 20th century — are presented in the various geographical areas in a transversal approach that focuses on the precursors of the major movement in African pictorial art.

Other names — the names of sculptors — feature in the exhibition's itinerary and disprove the outdated adage that African art is anonymous: Fontshue Aseh, the sculptor and king of Babanki Tungo (Cameroon Grassfields) and Lamidi Olonade Fakeye, a famous figure of the neo-traditional movement in Nigeria (see the Ekiti equestrian sculpture).



## AFRICA

### Room texts

#### ***Vitrine 45-46***

##### **Africa**

The exhibition crosses Africa from east to west, looking at some of the many cultural areas that have survived the arbitrary political partitioning of the continent in modern times. The exhibits illustrate a short period in African history, starting with the exploration and then the colonisation of the continent by the European powers in the eighteenth century. Ancient African civilisations and the centuries of Islamic expansion are not touched on here.

Reflecting the high points in the MEG's history in Africa, this display explores the major theme of "sacredness". It focuses on ancestor worship and various magico-religious practices, especially the fight against witchcraft, a field in which the initiation societies are knowledgeable. "Power" through the arts that symbolise it is another major thread in this African section. Lastly, some of the precursors of the great movement of African painting are saluted through the exhibition of their work.

#### **SECTION**

##### **Ethiopia**

In the time of the Crusades, the Ethiopian Highlands overlooking the Horn of Africa were confused in the medieval Western imagination with the mythical kingdom of Prester John. In fact Ethiopia embraces many different lands just as its landscapes are grandiose in their diversity. The people speak Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic languages and practise Christian, Jewish and Muslim religions as well as vernacular ancestor cults.

##### ***The Ethiopian Orthodox Church***

The first Europeans to reach Ethiopia in the fifteenth century were astonished to discover an age-old Christian church of a very special kind. Indeed, its enculturation in the Aksum kingdom dates from the fourth century. Related to the "family" of eastern Orthodox Churches, the Ethiopian Church was quickly isolated from the other Christian countries in the Middle East by the spread of Islam. For centuries, the patriarch of Alexandria named the Egyptian bishop of Ethiopia, until the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church was granted autocephaly in 1959.

##### ***Popular art in the service of power***

Before the partition of Africa by the Western colonising nations, a succession of Ethiopian rulers consolidated their power. But in the late nineteenth century, as the threat of an Italian protectorate suddenly loomed, Africa's only Christian empire felt the need to render its national symbols visible to the foreign powers. At the same time, the influx of foreign visitors stimulated the production of secular, "popular" art. A taste for exoticism created a demand for "Ethiopian" subjects, whether historical, political or social, which the artists trained in the religious school duly produced, respecting to some degree the ancient pictorial conventions.

#### ***Vitrine 46***

##### ***Islam in Ethiopia***

Because of longstanding ties between the ruling power and the Orthodox Church, Ethiopia is considered to be Christian, despite the extraordinary diversity of its population. Islam, which originated in the neighbouring Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, was in contact with the powerful Christian kingdom of Aksum from the outset. As time went by, through territorial conflicts, Muslim sultanates along the coast of the Horn of Africa dominated trade in the Red Sea, forcing the isolated Ethiopian kings to tolerate the presence of Muslim merchants on their lands. Harar, a holy city of Islam in Ethiopia, was once a major economic hub and a renowned centre of religious teaching.

##### ***Konso ancestor figures***

A mountainous region above the Omo valley in southern Ethiopia is the homeland of the Cushitic-speaking Konso and Gato groups, whose fortified villages are listed as a Unesco World Heritage Site. Since 2009, the Karat Konso museum has taken steps to stop the pillaging of the famous *waaga* (*waka*), wooden stelae commemorating the ancestors.

Simple tomb markers for the Gato, the Konso stelae are sometimes erected in groups at busy crossroads. The main figure honours a heroic ancestor, a hunter or warrior; it is surrounded by stelae representing his wife and the enemies or wild animals he has killed.



### **Vitrine 47**

#### **SECTION**

##### **Madagascar**

Madagascar borders the Mozambique Channel off the east coast of Africa. Since the early Christian era, the Great Red Island has been a melting pot for successive waves of Austronesian, African and Arab settlers.

Malagasy spirituality is intimately related to the ancestors. It has remained primordial for the islanders, despite colonisation and the coming of the missionaries.

##### **Ody, amulets and talismans**

In Malagasy spiritual practices, magical objects or *ody* forge a link between the world of the ancestors and the world of the living.

This "talisman" takes many different forms and is mainly composed of organic materials. It is made and consecrated by the *ombiasy*, the sorcerer and therapist, and then given to its future owner(s). The protective *ody* will keep a couple together, make the owner invulnerable, protect children from an early death or ensure victory in a battle. Other *ody* have a votive function, supposed to bring the owner(s) wealth, prosperity and good health.

##### **Malagasy divinatory sciences**

The various cultural groups on the Great Red Island all use divinatory practices such as the *sikidy* and *tromba* ceremonies.

The *sikidy* is a mode of divination using seeds. This form of geomancy has Arab roots which spread into Africa with the expansion of Islam. By studying the arrangement of *fano* seeds (a variety of acacia) the diviner or *mspikidy* can tell the supplicant's fortune.

The *tromba* is another divinatory practice, in which a medium goes into a trance to establish a dialogue between the world of the living and that of the ancestors and spirits.

### **Vitrine 48**

#### **SECTION**

##### **Central Africa**

Central Africa has countless facets and only a few are shown here through sculptures, ritual instruments, weapons and watercolours. In this immense territory, once controlled by powerful African kingdoms, court arts and rituals were asphyxiated first by the slave trade and then by colonisation. In Europe, the public shuddered at the sight of "nail fetishes" and were moved by the drawings of Congolese artists.

##### **Kuyo ceremonial sculptures**

The Kuyu are a minority ethnic group among the Mbochi in northern Congo (Brazzaville), living on both sides of the river which bears their name. The French colonial administrator Alfred Poupon observed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the *Djo* (the original serpent) ceremony, during which the *kébé kébé* dance crests appeared including that of Ebongo, the Kuyu Ancestor.

##### **Receptacles for the powers from the hereafter**

Of all the ritual objects in the Kongo cultural area, the *mikondi* "nail fetishes" perhaps most deeply marked the Europeans when they discovered Africa. Considered to be violent figures used in witchcraft, they fanned fantasies of an Africa of deep forests, plunged in obscurantism. Literally inhabited by a spirit, these anthropomorphic or zoomorphic "power objects" are made and handled by *nganga* ritual specialists. The agglomerated *bilongo* clinging to the wooden sculptures give the objects magical powers and they are invoked whenever a person or a community feels afflicted or threatened.

##### **Chiefs, hunters and warriors**

Considered to be sacred kings with supernatural powers, the chiefs of the Chokwe and related groups shouldered a symbolic responsibility in a magical-religious context in addition to their political, military and judicial duties. Until the advent of colonisation, which sounded the death knell for the great chieftaincies, regalia and prestige weapons were produced to demonstrate the opulence of the courts, stimulate trade and control the circulation of gifts and counter-gifts in a subtle system of allegiances.



### ***Diviners and healers***

The cause of misfortunes, recurring pain and serious illness is diagnosed by ritual specialists, who master one of the divination techniques practised in Central Africa. The techniques range from the simple manipulation of common objects, such as mirrors, to the use of complex divination baskets or singing and dancing to enter into a trance.

### ***Albert Lubaki, Congolese "Image maker"***

In 1939, the director of the MEG wanted to enrich the collection with "indigenous" paintings. The works of Albert Lubaki, one of the precursors of Congolese painting, had been shown to the Geneva public ten years earlier, with great success. In the thick of the colonial period, Eugène Pittard thus dared combine ethnography and art history in building up the museum's African collections, as long as the pictures had a certain stamp of "authenticity".

### ***Vitrine 49***

#### **SECTION**

#### **East and Southern Africa**

The MEG has over 700 items – everyday tools, weapons, jewellery and prestigious diplomatic gifts – testifying to the strong links between the southern African kingdoms and the Protestant missionaries who invested that immense territory in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the wake of David Livingstone, these explorers and cartographers, but more importantly men of God, founded numerous mission stations.

### ***Fertility figures***

In various African cultures, especially in East and Southern Africa, the education of girls for their future role as wives and mothers is materialised by the making and symbolic use of small female figures, often called "dolls". Social artefacts and also a precaution against sterility, such fertility figures are designed by the women during the initiation practices specific to each culture. They are cherished like real children until their owners bear children themselves; they are then often given to another member of the family. Whether realistic or abstract, the aesthetic of these dolls reflects the sophistication of their creators.

### ***Ambassador objects***

During his expedition in South Africa in 1895, the Genevan traveller Alfred Bertrand, accompanied by English officers, crossed "the threshold of central Africa" beyond the Zambezi River and discovered the kingdom of the Barotse. He was welcomed by the local chiefs with numerous presents and in turn gave them the trade goods he had brought with him. These "prestige objects" were regarded as "diplomatic" gifts by the chiefs of societies that had recently come under missionary influence and were soon to come under colonial control. Bertrand showed his collections and hunting trophies at the national exhibition in Geneva in 1896.

### ***Vitrine 50***

#### **SECTION**

#### **The kingdoms of the Cameroon Grassfields**

In the west of present-day Cameroon, a highland region known as the Grasslands or Grassfields shelters numerous tiny states: the Bamenda cultural area in the north, the "Bamileke" kingdoms in the south and the Bamum kingdom in the east. Before the colonial era, these kingdoms vied with one another in prestige and riches as well as in art and architecture. The kings commissioned the best sculptors and bronze casters from the neighbouring regions.

### ***Spider divination***

Thought to be a mediator between the world of the ancestors and the world of the living, the spider is used in a divination practice in the Grassfields to determine the cause of misfortunes. The various procedures all use the same basic principle: leaves, sticks or small cards symbolising people and events are arranged around the spider's burrow. When the spider comes out to hunt at night, it disturbs the arrangement in a way which will be interpreted by the diviner in the morning.



### ***The Bamum kingdom during the reign of King Njoya***

The Bamum kingdom, founded in the seventeenth century, is the biggest of the tiny Grassfields states. The reign of King Njoya, which began in 1887, was a crucial transitional period. Over fifteen years, this little kingdom was upset by the arrival of Islam and reformed Christianity, German, British and French colonisation, their administrations and merchants. King Njoya invented an original writing system but also innovated in architecture, cartography and pharmacopoeia and instituted major reforms. Exiled by the French colonial administration, he died in Yaoundé in 1933 and is still celebrated as a hero throughout Africa.

### ***Outside vitrine 51***

#### ***Kings as artists and art patrons***

To this day, richly decorated palaces are the heart of the Grassfields kingdoms and illustrated the power of their sovereigns.

This post comes from the palace of Babanki-Tungo (also called the Kedjom Kitingu kingdom), east of Bamenda, the capital of the Northwest region of Cameroon. According to a description by the ethnologist Hans Himmelheber, it was one of the pillars in the palace reception room. A leopard, royal animal, is carved at the top, above five figures acting out the punishment for adultery. Under the musician, the man wearing the headdress of a dignitary is pointing his gun at the seducer seen from the side, while the king's adulterous wife rocks her child above the king himself, shown at the bottom of the column.

The kings commissioned artists to decorate their palaces and sometimes carved pieces themselves. This post is the work of Fontshue Aseh, an artist-king who ruled over Babanki Tungo from 1908 to 1918. His woodcarving workshop was famous throughout the region and even supplied the courts of the neighbouring kingdoms.

### ***Vitrine 52***

#### ***The "memory" of Ibrahim Njoya***

Descended from a princely family, Ibrahim Njoya (circa 1887-1966) was a relative of King Njoya and one of his closest collaborators. He had the same name as the king. He was involved in most of the royal inventions, including writing, and was a driving force in the development of drawing and wood carving, arts soon renowned throughout the Grassfields kingdoms. He thus incarnates the model of the modern Bamum artist, combining ancient know-how and renewal. His work explores several thematic registers and techniques: free drawing, portraits of the Bamum kings for which he laid down the conventions, maps, decorative motifs, carved panels, furniture. His drawings in the 1920s during the conflicts between King Njoya and the French colonial administration are essentially political. After the king's death in exile, Ibrahim Njoya worked for a varied foreign clientele of missionaries and travellers. The aesthetic value of his drawings then prevailed over their great historical value.

### ***Vitrine 53***

#### **SECTION**

#### **Gabon as missionary pastor Fernand Grébert knew it**

Gabonese reliquary statues and masks are icons of the "primitive art" invented by Western artists in the early twentieth century. At the same time, deep in colonial Equatorial Africa, many of the religious and cultural practices behind these traditions were disappearing. In this context Pastor Grébert set about collecting ethnographic objects in the Middle Ogooue, some of which came to the MEG.

#### ***The cult of relics***

Museums often show visitors only a fragment – the statuette – of the reliquary such as it was conceived in Equatorial Africa, from Cameroon to the Congo, in the early twentieth century. In Gabon, the veneration of ancestors' relics, *Bwete* among the Bakota and *Byeri* for the Fang, was a family ritual. As the guardian of the clan's genealogy, the head of the family interceded with the ancestors to ensure the well-being of his community. He was therefore responsible for looking after their bones, nourishing them with sacrifices and the care lavished on their reliquary.

#### ***Initiation societies***

Men and women who enter an initiation community in lineage societies in Central Africa seek to leave the secular world to become, irreversibly, that Other to whom the elders will pass on the tradition. There are about twenty such societies in Gabon, whose teaching and practices often overlap. Placed under the supreme authority of the protective ancestors, they rely on secrecy and the sharing of symbolic knowledge with a view to regulating the life of the group. The *Bwete*, which began among the Mitsogo, is the most widespread ritual society in Gabon.



**Vitrine 54**  
**SECTION**

**Edo and Yoruba in Nigeria**

The term "Yoruba" refers to a language and various ethnic groups in a region in West Africa stretching from the middle Niger to the Atlantic coast, between Nigeria and Benin. Oduduwa, the original Yoruba divinity, ruled over the mythical city of Ife, where the world was created. He is the ancestor of all the sovereigns in the Yoruba kingdoms (Oyo, Owo, Ketu, etc.) and of the Edo kingdom in Benin after the fall of the Ogiso dynasty.

**Yoruba sculpture**

Although Yoruba territory was and still is rich in art forms, wooden sculpture is still the most representative of its cultural practices. Majestic statues and delicate low reliefs are decorated with divinities or their officiants, twins, or power figures. The masters of workshops renowned for their style are recognised for a particular *epa* or *gèlèdè* mask, a carved veranda post or door, a statue of a rider or a maternity figure. In the 1950s, Yoruba sculpture was "modernised"; stimulated by commissions from the missionaries and then from states and cities, it developed a new "neo-traditional" style.

**The Edo kingdom of Benin**

In the 16th century, the influence of the powerful kingdom of Benin (Benin City) extended from Ouidah (in Benin) to the delta of the Niger (Nigeria). The dynasty, which reigns again today, descends from the Ife prince Oranmiyan, sovereign of Benin City in the thirteenth century. In the fifteenth century, the Portuguese established a flourishing trade there: firearms, brass and luxury products were traded for slaves, peppercorns and ivory. Commercial and diplomatic relations with Europe ceased when the capital of the kingdom was burnt and pillaged by the British in 1897 and gave way to colonisation.

**Vitrine 55**  
**SECTION**  
**Benin**

Whereas Europeans slave traders established lucrative trading posts along the aptly named "Slave Coast" as early as the seventeenth century, the powerful kingdom of Dahomey (Danxomè) exerted its influence over the other Fon kingdoms until the late nineteenth century in a frenetic bid to corner the slave trade and control European traffic on the Atlantic coast.

**Court art in the Dahomey kingdom**

The Dahomey kingdom developed a veritable court art to the glory of the Fon dynasty and its kings, who were great patrons of the arts. Created by families of artists, the prestige objects, weapons and instruments of power, heraldic statues or low reliefs decorating the Abomey Palace still preserve the memory of the Dahomey kings. These great ancestors are celebrated as gods in the *vodun* cult in Benin.

**The Vodun cult in Dahomey**

Carried across the Atlantic in the wake of slavery, African *vodun*, in its many different forms, was originally practised in the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, in present-day Benin, but also among the Ewe in Togo and the Yoruba in Nigeria.

The term *vodun* is thought to derive from a Fongbe expression "to take time to draw water", which praises a calm attitude in adversity. *Vodun* is a complex religious system based on a supreme force governing everything that exists. Followers of *vodun* honour a pantheon of powers, natural forces (the land, the sea, lightning, fertility), or deified royal or common ancestors.

**Vitrine 56**  
**SECTION**  
**West Africa**

Deprived of their costumes, adornments, torchlight and rhythmic movements, the "masks" are no longer what they were when they danced in their original context; in the museum they become mere fragments. But they escape from their dry ethnic classification to conjure up some of the great cults of sub-Saharan Africa which have existed alongside Islam since the eleventh century.



### ***Initiation societies and their masks***

In West Africa, as elsewhere on the African continent, masks and other sacred objects are used by initiation societies which communicate with the higher powers and exploit secret knowledge. In the course of rituals controlled by qualified officiants, these masks unleash and guide forces to influence social interaction between people, spirits and ancestors. The masks are sometimes powerful weapons in the fight against witchcraft.

### ***Vitrine 57***

#### ***Sculpting the invisible to make it tangible***

Like the carved masks, the anthropomorphic statues of the great Baule country evoke invisible powers, divinities and the spirits of nature, which influence human life. Other spiritual beings, such as the ancestors, never take on a human appearance.

In the *blolo*, a universe parallel to the world of the living, beings are joined to Baule men and women in an indissoluble marriage that takes precedence over their earthly unions. These "mystic spouses" are represented by statuettes with idealised features, which are showered with presents and attentions in the hope of satisfying the *blolo bla* (*blolo* woman) or the *blolo bian* (*blolo* man) and escaping their jealousy.

#### ***Mouse divination***

Consulting the mouse oracle is not the most widespread Baule divination practice. But it is also found in Guro and Yaure cultural areas. The diviner takes a pottery jar with a round base in which a hole has been drilled, places it on a bark or wooden base and covers it with a piece of tortoiseshell or a small clay bowl. A leather sheath sewn around the recipient holds the two pieces together. Two rodents locked in this double-bottomed box go from one part to the other to eat the seeds and so disturb sticks laid on a metal plate. The diviner interprets the new arrangement of the sticks and gives a sibylline answer to the question he has been asked.

#### ***Warding off evil, regulating, celebrating, entertaining***

Whether they are related to entertainment – like the portrait masks – initiation or anti-witchcraft rituals, masks always have a social function. When they come out in public, there is great excitement because they act out the social order, under the direction of the masters of the ritual, to remind everyone of their role in the hierarchy. All the villagers go to see the performance or behave in the manner that befits their status: hide, run away, help and serve the masks, answer them back, ask for their blessing.



## OCEANIA

### Introduction

Containing more than 4,500 works, the MEG's Oceania collection is the second largest in Switzerland after that of the Museum der Kulturen in Basel. It covers the whole of Oceania — Melanesia (from the Greek “black islands”), Micronesia (“little islands”), Polynesia (“many islands”), and Australia — and illustrates the extraordinary variety of cultural practices in this part of the world. If some geo- cultural zones and typologies of objects are better represented than others, this is due to the institution's history. In a country with no colonial past, the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève has lived and continues to live on the extent of the relations it has established with its residents or the travellers who roam these lands. Consequently, studying and presenting the Oceania collection not only makes it possible to discover the cultures which produced the works but also to enlighten MEG visitors about the “gazes” of those who collected and donated them. Like a sort of mirror, it allows one to see the other and oneself at the same time. The island of New Guinea, with more than 2,000 objects, and Australia, with about 900, are the most widely represented territories

### The Oceania Visit in the Reference Exhibition

Designing an exhibition is a meticulous task calling for research and knowledge about the works, their original cultural context, and the trajectory of what is called “their social life”, from their place of creation to that of their entry into a collection. However, exhibiting means first and foremost telling a story, communicating a message, and making a theme accessible and comprehensible using the objects at our disposal. All this must be done while respecting the museographical, economic, and architectural constraints. Given the polysemy of the works presented, we must choose which story to recount, then enhance the objects with a presentation that amplifies their voice, enabling to them deliver their message.

The exhibition path is based on two considerations. The first is the result of the debate on the concepts of tradition and culture. It is about underlining the idea, resulting from the work of Nicholas Thomas, Roger Keesing, and Robert Tonkinson, and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, that Oceania objects are part of a history developed by contact and changes, not only with Europeans but also with different indigenous populations, during migrations, marriages, trading, or wars. The second consideration is linked to the notion of contemporaneity: the Oceania populations continue to exist and to create artistic forms expressing their identity. In July 2007, at a conference of the Pacific Arts Association at the Musée du quai Branly in Paris, the Samoan born artist Shigeyuki Kihara stated that if her ancestors had lived today, they would have created what contemporary Oceania artists are creating.

Conceived of as a journey, the Oceania visit in the reference exhibition presents the different regions of this part of the world, while also dealing with classic and contemporary anthropological themes. At first, the inhabitants of this “continent of islands” appear isolated on more than 10,000 islands scattered over the Pacific Ocean. Yet they are connected to each other by a common history and culture. Between 60,000 and 40,000 BCE, groups of populations left South-East Asia in the direction of New Guinea and Australia. Around 3000 BCE, a second wave of migrants, from southern China and Taiwan, travelled east, discovered most of the islands and archipelagos of the Pacific, and settled there. Demographic growth, the search for land and prestige, as well as wars drove these brave sailors to the islands of Hawaii towards 700 – 800 CE, to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) around 700-900, and to New Zealand around 1100 – 1200.

The exhibition path takes us through ten sections covering what Epeli Hau'ofa (1939 – 2009), a writer and anthropologist born in Papua New Guinea but of Tongan parentage, called “our sea of islands”. The first is devoted to the art of navigation, which made the exploration and peopling of Oceania islands throughout the immensity of the Pacific Ocean possible. Then the rare feather cloak from the Hawaii Islands is presented, followed by a section in which French Polynesia reveals its insignia of rank, power, and prestige. The section on western Polynesia highlights women's creative ability — a creativity which is not the prerogative of men. The objects they produce are vital in the establishing of kinship ties, and in rituals and ceremonial exchanges. The Maori of New Zealand use the term treasures (*taonga*) for a multitude of tangible and intangible things, which, from generation to generation, accumulate histories, tales, and *mana* (a force of spiritual origin). The related themes of painting, as an expression of identity, and death are illustrated in the “Australia” section, to be more precise among the Aborigines of Arnhem Land and the Tiwi of Bathurst and Melville Islands. The “New Caledonia” part, in its turn, invites us to reflect on the most powerful symbols of Kanak society and the transmission of memory in an oral culture. Papua New Guinea is illustrated by a selection of pieces from the Sepik region, on the theme of the ancestor cult and “the men's house”, an image of the clan's primordial female ancestor and the centre of a village's political and customary power. The ritual importance of pigs is at the heart of the showcases devoted to the Vanuatu archipelago: these animals are used during customary ceremonies to seal peace, pay bride prices, or enable men to acquire higher



rank. The last two stages, on the theme of death, present *malagan* works from New Ireland (Bismarck archipelago) and those of the Asmat of New Guinea.



## OCEANIA

### Room texts

#### **Vitrine 58**

##### **Oceania**

The term Oceania refers to a huge region in the Pacific Ocean grouping Melanesia (from the Greek "black islands"), Micronesia ("small islands"), Polynesia ("many islands") and Australia. Although at first sight the inhabitants of this "continent of islands" seem to be living in isolation on some 10,000 islands scattered across the ocean, they are linked to one another by a common history and culture.

Between 60,000 and 40,000 BC groups of people left Southeast Asia and headed towards New Guinea and Australia. From about 3,000 BC, a second wave from southern China and Taiwan travelled eastwards, discovering and settling on most of the islands and archipelagos of the Pacific. Driven by overpopulation, the search for lands or prestige, and war, these brave seafarers reached the Hawaii islands about 700-800 AD, Rapa Nui (Easter Island) about 700-900 and New Zealand towards 1100-1200.

##### ***The art of navigation, or how to read Nature's signs***

The Pacific islands were explored and settled without navigation instruments, but with the help of sophisticated nautical technology based on the observation of natural phenomena: reading the sea, the sky, the winds and the land, interpreting their manifestations and memorising their variations. For the Pacific Islanders, the ocean was not empty, but full of signs to help them get their bearings and locate invisible lands. The ocean was not an obstacle, but a path linking the islands to one another.

In recent decades, there has been a strong upsurge of interest in the art of navigation, now seen as a way of reasserting identity and shared ancestral heritage.

#### **Vitrine 60**

##### **SECTION**

##### **The 'ahu'ula feather cloak**

Considered by the MEG's founder, Eugène Pittard, as the museum's most precious work, this feather cloak from the Hawaii islands is one of fifty-four known specimens. Made of thousands of feathers from the passerines that used to live on these islands, these cloaks were worn by chiefs during ceremonies and in dangerous situations such as battle, when they were supposed to provide protection. A close-meshed net of *olonā* fibres was made by high-ranking men using "fisherman's knots". Little tufts of red feathers were attached to the net and motifs were added using yellow, black or green feathers.

During the nineteenth century, the build up of trade with Europeans boosted production of feather cloaks and other prestige objects, which were used as trade goods and played a crucial role in forging alliances.

#### **Vitrine 61**

##### **SECTION**

##### **French Polynesia**

French Polynesia, an overseas collectivity of the French Republic, is composed of about 118 volcanic or coral islands, grouped in five archipelagos: the Society Islands, the Marquesas Islands, the Austral Islands, the Gambier Islands and the Tuamotu Islands.

Despite their political ties to France, the people of these archipelagos have and express a strong sense of their Polynesian identity.

##### ***Signs of rank, power and prestige***

Works from this part of the world give us the opportunity to address the issues of power and prestige and show the communicative capacity of art. Ornamental objects such as jewellery and accessories, as well as weapons, can become status symbols and reveal the codes that distinguish human beings, signalling the gender, age group and rank of the wearer.

#### **Vitrine 62**

##### **SECTION**

##### **Western Polynesia**

About 1000 BC, experienced and intrepid mariners travelled 700 marine miles from the main Melanesian islands to colonise Western Polynesia, a cultural area made up of several archipelagos: Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa, American Samoa, Niue, Wallis and Futuna. Intense cultural exchange followed, particularly between Fiji, Tonga and Samoa, which led to certain cultural similarities.



### **Men's arts and women's arts**

Many weapons from this region are now in collections all over the world. They could be used for attack or defence, but they also incarnated the prestige of the warriors they belonged to. They were used as emblems of power for the chiefs whose reputation depended entirely on prowess in battle and territorial conquests.

But creativity is not a male preserve. In the same region, the women made two types of objects for everyday use and for exchange: pottery, solely in Fiji, and *tapa*, a marvellous bark cloth.

### **Pottery from the Fiji Islands**

For the last 3,000 years, women from the *kai wai* (sea people) communities of the Fiji Islands have been making pots for cooking, storage and exchange. Their technique consists in holding a stone against the inside of the pot while flattening the outside with a wooden paddle (*tata*). The vessels are decorated with a shell and left to dry in the sun before being baked in an open fire, and then rubbed with resin from the *dakua* tree to make them watertight.

This practice declined after the Second World War, until it served only the tourist market. Since the 1980s there has been a revival of the tradition.

### **Vitrine 63**

#### **Tapa: the cosmic cloth of Oceania**

The word "*tapa*" refers to a malleable nonwoven cloth once used in Oceania to make clothing, sails or masks, and for trade. Imported fabrics have now supplanted *tapa* which nonetheless continues to play an important role in establishing kinship bonds, in rituals and in ceremonial exchanges.

Making *tapa* cloth is women's work. They begin by stripping the bark from the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) then they remove the outer bark. The strips are macerated, beaten flat and assembled with vegetable glue. The *tapa* cloth is decorated with stencils or stamps, or painted freehand with a brush.

### **Vitrine 64**

#### **SECTION**

#### **The Māori**

The Māori tell that their ancestors left the mythical island of Hawaiki in seven canoes (*waka*).

When they reached the archipelago, each canoe gave rise to a tribe. Now, when they introduce themselves formally, the Māori often state the name of the *waka* they are descended from through their genealogy.

Aotearoa, "The Land of the Long White Cloud," was adopted by the Māori in the twentieth century to name New Zealand.

### **Māori treasures and their mana**

The Māori call *taonga*, treasures, a wide range of tangible and intangible things, such as elements of the environment, people and objects. Passed on from generation to generation, they gain value over time, accumulating history, stories and *mana*. This term refers to a spiritual force which dwells in living beings, animals and objects. *Mana* confers authority, power and prestige on any beings and objects that possess it.

For the Māori today, these treasures – including works in museums – link them to their past and help them to connect the world of the living to the world of their ancestors.

### **Vitrine 65**

#### **SECTION**

#### **Australian Aborigines: from prejudice to acknowledgement**

In the nineteenth century, the Aborigines were classed as the most primitive people on Earth. Not practising agriculture, animal husbandry, metallurgy or weaving, these hunters-gatherers were considered to have no artistic sensibility. Later, anthropological field work showed that this was not the case and revealed refined, sophisticated cultures.

### **"Painting tells us who we are"**

The Aborigines tell that long ago, in the Dreamtime, mythical beings rose out of the depths of the land, which was still undifferentiated. As they travelled, they left their traces behind them and their actions shaped the landscape and the sky. They named places and animals, separated animals from humans and instituted the laws governing their society.

In Arnhem Land, painting – whether it is on rock walls, carved objects, bark or the bodies of people taking part in rituals – is evidence of the close link between the Aborigines and the ancestral beings. It expresses their attachment to the land, their world view and their identity.



### ***Honouring the dead***

The Tiwi from Bathurst and Melville Islands honour their dead through rituals called *pukumani* which put an end to the sexual, food and behavioural taboos imposed during the period of mourning. During *pukumani* ceremonies, the Tiwi wear bracelets and other ceremonial objects as a sign of mourning. Their dancing and singing ensure that the spirit of the dead will find its way to the spirit world where it will live forever. A few months after death, *tutini* grave posts are erected on the tomb and left until they fall apart in the weather. Nowadays, these rituals include many Christian elements.

### ***Vitrine 67***

#### ***The Grand Hut, personification the Kanak culture***

The Grand Hut is one of the most powerful symbols in Kanak society. In each village, it stands on a hummock at the end of an avenue lined with New Caledonia pines and coconut palms. The most important events take place in the central avenue: the announcement of deaths, marriages, mourning, presentation of the harvests, dances and exchanges.

The Grand Hut is circular in shape representing the society organised around a pre-eminent figure considered to be the intercessor between the living and the ancestors. It is an architectural structure, but also a place for meetings and discussions, and the evocation of the chief's authority. The Grand Hut symbolises the relationship that the Kanak maintain with their land and their history.

### ***Vitrine 68***

#### **SECTION**

#### **The Kanak, the first inhabitants of New Caledonia**

One morning in September 1774, the explorer James Cook sighted islands on the horizon which he called New Caledonia, because the landscape reminded him of Caledonia, the old name for Scotland, his country of origin.

And yet the island had been inhabited by the Kanak for over 3,000 years. Despite variations in their social systems and art styles, they all share a close relationship to the land and ancestors.

### ***Engraving memory***

Engraved bamboos are among the most original works in Kanak art. With their geometrical and figurative motifs, they illustrate with great accuracy and skill the multiple aspects of the life of the Kanak people, including the arrival of Europeans in the nineteenth century. For their owners, these objects were visual memory aids, helping them recall an important event, record their impressions and share them with others.

Although production was stopped around 1917, several contemporary artists have revived a traditional medium and techniques to express present-day concerns and reality.

### ***Vitrine 70***

#### **SECTION**

#### **The Sepik, an art workshop**

The Sepik River winds for more than 1,100 km along a wide swampy valley in the north of Papua New Guinea. The people who live along its banks and tributaries present an extraordinary diversity of language, culture and art. This region is characterised by the profusion of styles and great richness of its art work.

### ***Ancestor worship***

Ancestor worship is inspired by the idea that the link with the dead continues after death for several generations and can even go back to the origin of the clan. In exchange for the offerings made to the ancestor spirits, the living expect to receive protection, wealth and prosperity.

In the Sepik region, despite evangelisation, the ancestors still play an important role for the living and they are a constant presence in their lives.

However, to make their presence felt they need a physical support to dwell in. The masks and sculptures then become the ancestor himself and the music a manifestation of his presence and voice.

### ***Vitrine 71***

#### **SECTION**

#### **The men's house**

When the first explorers penetrated into this region at the end of twentieth century, they were astonished to find impressively large buildings, the men's houses. Despite their architectural diversity, they all represent the centre of political and ritual power in the village, gathering the adult males organised by age- and initiation groups, who meet to solve problems and make



decisions, particularly for the practice of initiation rites. Sacred objects are also stored there, out of sight of the uninitiated and the women.

A strictly male domain, this house is symbolically the image of the clan's first female ancestor: the façade is her face, the body of the house her belly and the men are her children.

#### **Vitrine 72**

##### ***Vanuatu, "The country that stands up"***

Formerly called New Hebrides, this Melanesian archipelago became an independent state in 1980 under the name of Vanuatu, "the country that stands up."

Its new flag has two red and green horizontal strips separated from a black triangle by a Y-shaped yellow strip which reflects the geographical position of the islands. The red stands for the blood of men and pigs, the green, richness, the black, the people and the yellow the light of the gospel. In the centre of the triangle are a pig's tusk and two crossed fern fronds.

##### ***The grade system***

In Vanuatu, a complex grade system enables men to increase their power in the world of the living and their influence in the world of the dead. Moving up a grade is regulated by a codified set of rules, ceremonies and rites. The candidate must produce wealth and sacrifice pigs and then stand before his elders in the course of several ceremonies. Only then will he be authorised to wear the paraphernalia corresponding to his grade: combs, hair ornaments, masks, *tapa* belts, face paint, necklaces and bracelets made from curved pig's tusks.

A rise in grade is complemented by the erection of commemorative monuments around the dance area such as tree fern statues.

#### **Vitrine 73**

##### ***The ritual importance of the pig***

In Vanuatu, the pig is at the centre of religious, ritual, economic and social life. It is used during customary ceremonies to make peace, pay for wives or permit a rise in grade. On the latter occasion, a man must gather and sacrifice pigs, preferably with long, curved tusks, to increase his prestige. With this aim in sight, he operates on the jaw of a one-year-old piglet, removing both upper canines and filling the cavities with earth and leaves. The lower tusks therefore have room to grow and curve in a ring. They may make a full circle, and sometimes two, in the space of seven or eight years.

#### **Vitrine 74**

##### **SECTION**

##### ***The Malagan of New Ireland***

In the northern half of New Ireland and the nearby islands, the death of an important member of the community sets off a cycle of funerary rites called *malagan*, which finishes some years after his death. The final ceremony with dances and gift distribution culminates in the exhibition of sculptures made for the occasion. Once they have been viewed, the sculptures are destroyed or left to rot.

##### ***Malagan: celebrating death to celebrate life***

The word *malagan* refers to the class of objects and the rituals of the second funerals in which they are used. Their function is to erase the deceased from the world of the living by sending his soul into the spirit kingdom and so ending the clan's mourning.

*Malagan* rites touch on every aspect of the people's lives, by giving an occasion for initiating the youngsters, boosting economic activity, providing a framework for settling conflicts, and playing a crucial role in maintaining and consolidating social bonds. They take part in a cyclic renewal of fertility by transferring the vital force of the dead to the living.

#### **Vitrine 75**

##### ***From the field to the collections***

At the end of the nineteenth century, an astonishing number of *malagan* appeared in collections. Once the ceremonies were finished, the sculptures lost their efficacy and instead of being destroyed or left to rot, they were sold to Europeans. Famous for their intricate, interlocking structures, *malagan* exhibit a wide range of styles. They intrigued not only the explorers and scientists but also the artists of the early twentieth century, especially the German Expressionists and French Surrealists, who found inspiration in these art forms.

There are now estimated to be over 25,000 works from New Ireland in public and private collections.



**Vitrine 76**  
**SECTION**

**The Asmat of New Guinea**

The Asmat live in the southwest part of the island of New Guinea, which is politically attached to Indonesia. Their name means "the true people;" They are semi-nomadic, living from gathering, hunting and fishing in the swamps, on the coasts and in the floodable forests along the rivers. The Asmat consider themselves to be tree-people, the chest corresponding to the trunk, the head to the fruit, the arms to the branches and the feet to the roots.

***Perpetuating life through death***

The Asmat did not consider death to be natural; they thought it was caused by evil spells. In their cosmogony, there were three kingdoms, which were not separate but communicated with one another: the world of the living, the world of the dead and the world of the ancestors or Safan. The wandering soul of a dead person caused misfortune, fights and divisions. Before reaching the kingdom of the ancestors, it had to cross an intermediate world which was dangerous as long as his death had not been avenged by a headhunting expedition. Only then could he enter Safan and be reincarnated, starting the eternal cycle of life over again.

**Vitrine 77**

***The duty of vengeance***

*Bisj* poles were erected in front of the ceremonial house (*yeu*) to remind the living of their sacred duty of vengeance. The people would cut mangroves and remove all the roots except one for the *cemen* (literally penis), and then take them to the village, where the best sculptors finished the work. The subsequent feasts were the prelude for headhunting expeditions. The warriors threw themselves against the posts to break them up then left them in the forest where they soon rotted. These days, the *bisj* poles are still carved to celebrate and commemorate the dead, but they are no longer associated with headhunting, which was outlawed in 1956.



## ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

### Introduction

There are two complementary parts to the MEG's music collections: on the one hand, a collection of 2,500 musical instruments and, on the other, the sound recordings in the Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP). The latter boasts more than 15,500 phonograms and represents the musical traditions of Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.

At a time when other society museums, in the process of being reorganized or recently inaugurated, have chosen to separate their sound archives from their collections of musical instruments, the desire of both the City of Geneva and the MEG, in January 2012, to officially combine these two collections in the same patrimonial unit, deserves to be underlined. The perpetuation of an outstanding musical heritage has thus been ensured and the development of ethnomusicological research consequently reinforced.

The themes proposed in the permanent exhibition space devoted to music aim at illustrating the specificity of each of the two collections and the artistic and scientific investigations resulting from their joint presence.

### The Permanent Exhibition

Inspired by the general theme chosen for the entire permanent exhibition, "The Archives of human diversity", the principle observed in selecting the musical instruments, displayed in two large showcases, and the sound recordings from the AIMP collection is twofold.

The first part of the exhibition is devoted to the theme of organological classification, an essential field of research in ethnomusicology which has been particularly developed in museographic institutions, as at the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève. The classification enterprise was a major step in the development of anthropological research and owes a great deal to museums' instrument collections. For musical instruments, more than any other kind of object, are especially suited to comparative studies with universal aims as they form a set of elements which share the same function, that of producing musical sound, while being extremely different in their shape, making and origin.

The instruments in this section of the exhibition are organized into four large categories : aerophones (instruments whose sound comes from the vibration of air, like flutes), chordophones (stretched strings made to vibrate by plucking, striking or rubbing : zithers...), membranophones (the drum category, whose sound comes from striking or sometimes rubbing one or two stretched membranes ), and idiophones (instruments which produce sound when the rigid material constituting the actual body of the instrument is made to vibrate by being struck, shaken, scraped, etc.). This classic museographical proposal makes it possible to display a large number of instruments from the five continents, which in addition present a remarkable diversity of forms, materials and making.

The second section is devoted to the theme of fieldwork and, more precisely, to sound recording and the creation of sets of musical instruments, collected in situ. The research missions conducted in Europe during the first half of the 20th century enabled the collection of particularly valuable sound recordings, in the sense that they bear witness to certain musical practices which have today been or are being abandoned. In 1930, the famous musician and musicologist Samuel Baud-Bovy focused his fieldwork research on the Dodecanese (Greece). During this, he undertook a vast programme of sound recordings. His meeting with the lira player Manólis Niotís from Olymbos was significant. This musician taught him to play his instrument, performed a large part of his repertoire for him — which could thus be recorded — and gave him his beloved lira, which can be found in the exhibition.

Between these two sections of the exhibition, visitors will discover a *Sound Chamber*, a creation proposed by the contemporary artist Ange Leccia with the participation of the composer Julien Perez. This is an installation specifically devoted to music. It explores the sound textures of instrumental music, textures directly linked to the constituent materials of the instruments and the playing techniques employed to make these materials vibrate. Inspired by archive recordings, the installation presents the eye and ear with a series of musical and visual compositions which enhance the tone and colours of certain instrumental sonorities.



## ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

### Room texts

#### **Ethnomusicology**

The MEG's ethnomusicology department curates two complementary collections: musical instruments and sound recordings, from the five continents.

Throughout the twentieth century, in parallel to major collecting campaigns, the description and analysis of these collections has occupied countless researchers trying to establish universal classification systems.

The two collections teach us a great deal about instrument making and the composition of musical repertoires.

The first section presents instruments which have inspired and nourished research work in classificatory organology (the study of musical instruments). The second part displays a selection of instruments related to recordings made for the MEG's Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP).

#### **Vitrine 18**

#### **SECTION**

#### **Instrument Collections**

In a study based on the MEG collection, published in 1919, the anthropologist Dr Georges Montandon attempted to trace the origins and descent of musical instruments throughout the world. He grouped the instruments in ensembles, presented as plates of photographs and drawings. The study ends with a geographical sketch map showing the distribution of different types of instruments across the world.

As the study was read in scientific circles, the MEG's instrument collection, classified in this manner, was widely quoted and used by researchers working on rational classification. The diffusionist approach was later abandoned to the benefit of comparative organology and contextual inventories.

#### **Aerophones**

The instruments in this class use the vibration of the air to produce sound. The colour of the sound (timbre) and degrees of intensity may differ widely from one type to another. The sound produced by wind instruments (aerophones) comes from a stream of air set vibrating by the lips (horns), air blown against a ridge (flutes and whistles) or reeds (clarinets, oboes, mouth organs). This class also includes free aerophones, which slice the air as they whirl round (bullroarers or rhombus).

Some cultures put taboos on the use of these instruments, either because they are held to the mouth from which the breath of life emanates, or because the vibrating "material", the air, is invisible.

#### **Chordophones**

The sound of stringed instruments depends on several factors, the main two being the material used for the strings (metal, plant fibres, leather, nylon, etc.) and the way they are played (plucked, bowed or struck). The greatest diversity of string instruments is found in Africa and some, such as the harp lute are specific to that continent. In various parts of Asia, the development of particularly rich musical repertoires is closely related to the development of instrument making. The *vielle*, a bowed stringed instrument, is emblematic of numerous musical traditions in Europe, where the instrument varies in shape and name.

#### **Membranophones**

Drums and idiophones, instruments whose sound comes from the vibration of the rigid material they are made of, were long grouped together in the "percussion" family. This term referred to an empirical classification inherited from antique symbolic thinking, which divided musical instruments into three categories: string, wind and percussion.

Research in this field since the nineteenth century has shown the inadequacy of this approach and developed a universally applicable classification system based solely on the instruments' acoustic functioning. Drums are now put in a separate class known as membranophones.

#### **Idiophones**

This group is harder to name than the others and was long defined by default as the class of instruments that did not belong with the wind or string instruments but were not drums either. More positively, instruments which produce sound when the rigid body of the instrument itself is made to vibrate (by knocking, striking, shaking, etc.) belong in this group.

The term "idiophone," from the Greek and Latin word *idios*, "by itself", has replaced the earlier term "autophone" for this family of musical instruments.



### **Vitrine 19**

#### **Sound chamber**

The *Sound Chamber* is an installation dedicated to music, particularly sound textures which are directly linked to the material from which instruments are made, and the ways in which they are played. Inspired by recordings held in the MEG archives, this installation presents a series of visual and musical compositions which illustrate the tones and colours of the sounds made by various instruments.

*Sound Chamber*, 2014

Video installation by the artist Ange Leccia

Music by Julien Pérez

HD video

Acquired by the MEG in 2014

MEG Inv. ETHMU 800000

### **Vitrine 20**

#### **SECTION**

#### **Sound Archives**

From 1944 to 1958, the Romanian musicologist Constantin Brăiloiu amassed sound recordings from the five continents, using the records he had made in Romania as the core of the Genevan archives, known as the Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP). His aim was to compare music from all over the world and publish its various expressions in the *Collection Universelle de Musique Populaire* (forty 78 records, 1951-1958). The folk music collection was republished in 1984 (box of six 33 rpm records), then in 2009 (four CDs). The archives now hold nearly 16,000 hours of recorded music. They let us hear the voices of the instruments and explore the history of the publication of world music.

#### **Fieldwork**

The history of the Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP) falls into two main periods, separated by an interval of twenty-five years (1958-1983) when the sound archives were forgotten.

The first period, when Constantin Brăiloiu (1944-1958) was in Geneva, was part of an important stream of musicological research on “folklore” in Eastern Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. The outstanding figures of this era are Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, who built up encyclopaedic collections of folk melodies, particularly from Hungary, recorded in the field or transcribed by ear. In the second period, Laurent Aubert revived the sound archives, publishing more than a hundred music CDs and acquiring over 10,000 phonograms.

#### **Romanian fieldwork**

Constantin Brăiloiu (Bucharest 1893-Geneva 1958) was a composer, professor of music history, author of academic studies, as well as a broadcaster, lecturer and chronicler. The discovery of rural folk music in Romania had a major influence on his career, which he directed towards the study of what was then known as “folklore.”

His major achievements include collecting folk music recordings and founding the Folklore Archives of the Romanian Composers Society.

Brăiloiu fled to Switzerland in 1943 with a large part of his field recordings and his documentation. Eugène Pittard offered him a post at the MEG in 1944 and together they founded the Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP).

#### **Record Publishing**

The first great record collections of non-Western musical traditions were created in the mid twentieth century. The forty volumes in the *Universal Collection of Recorded Popular Music*, published by Constantin Brăiloiu between 1951 and 1958, made up the first anthology of this type ever published. Others followed, such as the *International Library of African Music* founded by Hugh Tracey in South Africa, in 1954, which is still the biggest collection of recorded African music. In 1961, UNESCO launched a record series in collaboration with Alain Daniélou. Until 2003, about a hundred recordings were published in this collection.

The development of recording technology and the record industry in the second half of the twentieth century permitted a wide diffusion of musical traditions collected and studied throughout the world.



### ***Collecting and recording***

Because of the technical difficulty of recording music in the field and also because of the compartmentalisation of the institutions dedicated respectively to building up ethnographic collections and carrying out anthropological research, few musical instruments were collected before the 1950s, although recordings of their musical repertory were made at the time. The configuration of the collections of musical instruments and sound archives reflects this work method, in which the topics of observation were assigned to different people.

The establishment of museum laboratories in the 1960s radically transformed the museum collections, which have been enriched by multiple audiovisual documents.

### ***Missions to Nepal***

In 1952, a major Genevan scientific mission was sent to Nepal. Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach, then director of the MEG, took an active part in it, bringing many objects and major scientific documentation back to the museum, including several sets of musical instruments along with photographs and about fourteen hours of musical recordings. Some twenty years later, this collection was further enriched (fifteen instruments and over fifteen hours of music) by Laurent Aubert, then a student in ethnomusicology. So Nepal, and more particularly the Newar people of the Kathmandu valley, is a special field for the MEG. The music collection built up by its researchers over the years is one of the best documented in the museum.

### ***Missions to Kerala***

Laurent Aubert made numerous research trips (mainly in Europe, Africa and Asia). He brought the MEG over 630 objects from Kerala, in India, including a series of marionettes, shadow puppets and a full set of props used by a Kathakali dance theatre troupe. He published a PhD thesis in 2004 and presented the objects, sound recordings and audiovisual documents collected during his missions in an exhibition, *The Fires of the Goddess*, in 2005.

A third of the musical instruments now in the MEG were acquired during the twenty-eight years when Laurent Aubert was the curator of the Ethnomusicology department. One of his major achievements was to revive the AIMP in 1984 and make it one of Europe's reference collections of musical recordings.



## PUBLICATION

### **Catalogue of the Permanent Collection *Musée d'ethnographie de Genève. The Collections in Focus***

LECLAIR Madeleine, MORIN Floriane, TAMAROZZI Federica (dir.). 2014.

Geneva: MEG / Morges: Glénat. 256 pages.

N° ISBN 978-2-940446-46-9. Price: 45 CHF / 39 €.

German version. ***Musée d'ethnographie de Genève. Die Sammlungen im Überblick***

N° ISBN 978-2-940446-45-2. Price: 45 CHF / 39 €.

French version. ***Musée d'ethnographie de Genève. Regards sur les collections***

N° ISBN 978-2-940446-44-5. Price: 45 CHF / 39 €.

In this richly illustrated catalogue, the curators of the MEG wanted to give an unprecedented view of the collections in the museum's six departments: Africa, America, Asia, Ethnomusicology, Europe and Oceania, which make up the archives of human diversity.

Coordinated by Madeleine Leclair, Floriane Morin and Federica Tamarozzi, each department displays its complexity and diversity in three stages: firstly, a scientific essay, which outlines research in progress or to come ; then the presentation of the history of the department's collections and the decisions behind the arrangement of the vitrines in the new permanent collection ; and lastly a portfolio presenting a selection of the pieces shown in the galleries. These works, chosen for their originality, finesse or rarity, have seldom been so minutely described.

Designed as a handsome art book, the catalogue to the MEG's permanent collection is an invitation to travel through the five continents by exploring the many facets of human creativity.

At the crossroads of anthropology, history, archaeology and art history, it sheds particular light on the collections through research carried out by the curators of this great museum anchored in the history of the City of Geneva.

The works presented in the catalogue, photographed by Johnathan Watts, are the ambassadors of a major ethnographic collection. A selection of musical pieces from the Archives internationales de musique populaire is recorded on the CD accompanying the catalogue.

## Contents

Introduction

**The New MEG** Boris Wastiau

**History of Museums, History of the Gaze** Danielle Buysens

**Sea** Ange Leccia

**ASIA** Jérôme Ducor

Those Gods who Take us for a Ride : the Seven Divinities of Happiness and the Butsuzō zui

The Asian collections

**THE AMERICAS** Steve Bourget

Crow Spirit, Nature, Culture and Kinship Among the Amerindians of the Northwest Coast of North America

The Americas collections

**EUROPE** Federica Tamarozzi

"He Who Sows Shall Reap" : European Territories and Heritage at the MEG

The European collections

**ETHNOMUSICOLOGY** Madeleine Leclair

Music and Image, Vibratory Worlds

The Music Collections

**AFRICA** Floriane Morin

The MEG Collection of the "Precursors of African Pictorial Art"

The African collections



**OCEANIA** Roberta Colombo Dougoud  
On the Notion of “Change” in Collections of Oceania Objects  
The Oceania collections

**MUSIC CD** Madeleine Leclair  
Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP). A Musical Journey Across Five Continents

Bibliography

**CD musical**  
**Archives internationales de musique populaire (AIMP)**  
***A Musical Journey Across Five Continents. 2014***

German version. ***Eine musikalische Entdeckungsreise durch die fünf Kontinente***  
French version. ***Un parcours musical à travers les cinq continents***

The CD associated with the catalogue has twenty-five sound tracks from the five continents chosen for their artistic and patrimonial value. They take the listener on a musical journey, underlining the richness of the timbres of instruments and the variety of playing techniques throughout the world. Several pieces of vocal music are included, because in many places these two musical forms are considered to be complementary and therefore inseparable. Except for three pieces, the music comes from the hundred discs published under the auspices of the MEG, since 1984, in the AIMP/VDE-Gallo collection.

This CD collection aims to circulate musical traditions which are a major identity factor in the cultures producing them. Most of the recordings were made during recent fieldwork, while major documentation was gathered to shed light on the particular circumstances in which these forms of music exist.



## EDUCATIONAL AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

Visitors are at the heart of the new MEG in more ways than one. Firstly, its program, both highly specialised and widely accessible, is designed to arouse interest and stimulate questioning. Next, the new facilities permit the museum to offer a wide range of activities: the Auditorium can host shows, concerts, performances, films, conferences; the Workshop is an activity area which facilitates the organisation of events for specific audiences; lastly the galleries are used for activities focused on particular exhibits.

The 1000 objects in the permanent exhibition, carefully selected from the MEG's collection and representing over a hundred cultures, are the treasures of the Ethnomusicology, African, American, Asian, European and Oceania collections. The new installation is a formidable opportunity to broaden our audience, to reach out to visitors who for various reasons neglect culture. Drawing on academic, social, cultural and artistic networks at local, regional and international level, the MEG frees itself from the traditional categories and aims to intrigue society with the questioning and creations of the human mind, here and elsewhere. By approaching the subject from many angles – human sciences, arts, natural sciences – the MEG challenges received ideas and looks at the problems of the contemporary world in a new light, while thinking deeply about ethnology as it is practised today.

**Program** available on [www.meg-geneve.ch](http://www.meg-geneve.ch)



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**GENÈVE TOURISME**





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### PROLOGUE

01.

#### Coupe rituelle (*bei* 盃)



Chine  
18<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Corne de rhinocéros. H 28 cm  
Don de M. du Crest, de Cognoy, sergent aux Gardes suisses en France, à la Bibliothèque publique en 1758  
MEG Inv. ETHAS K000237

02.

#### Gobelet sur pied



Chine  
18<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Corne de rhinocéros, pied en ivoire. H 18 cm  
Don de M. Du Crest de Cognoy, sergent aux Gardes suisses en France, à la Bibliothèque publique en 1758  
MEG Inv. ETHAS 066132

03.

#### Flûte à encoche taillée dans un fémur humain



Suriname  
Milieu du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle?  
Os. L 35 cm  
Don d'Ami Butini, planteur genevois au Suriname, à la Bibliothèque publique en 1759  
MEG Inv. ETHMU K000134

04.

#### Globe terrestre lumineux avec tracé manuscrit des expéditions d'Alfred Bertrand



Allemagne, Berlin  
1920  
Bois, verre, métal, papier. H 86 cm  
Don d'Alice Bertrand en 1940; ancienne collection Alfred Bertrand  
MEG Inv. ETHEU 108685

05.

#### Cabinet



Japon  
Fin du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois laqué, ferrures. H 80 cm  
Offert par Guillaume François Franconis à la Bibliothèque du Collège en 1707  
MEG Inv. ETHAS 021380



06.

**Modèle réduit de traîneau**

Exécuté par Jean Mariekoff, paysan de la Couronne, en 1807?

Russie, Péninsule de Kola

Ivoire. L 27 cm

Don de M. Blain au Musée académique en 1820

MEG Inv. ETHEU K002363



07.

**Masque *sachihongo***

Zambie, Western Province

Mbunda. Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, kaolin, patine rougeâtre. H 34 cm

Acquis à Genève de la vente des Missions en 1942

MEG Inv. ETHAF 018740



08.

**Boussole de géomancie *luopan* 羅盤**

Chine

19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois laqué. Ø 42 cm

Don de Charles Piton, missionnaire en Chine méridionale, au Musée des Missions vers 1885

MEG Inv. ETHAS K005049



09.

**Autel bouddhique domestique *butsudān* 佛壇**

Japon

18<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois sculpté et doré, ferrures. H 172 cm

Don d'Edmond Rochette en 1938; acquis par lui à Kyōto en 1890

MEG Inv. ETHAS 015607



10.

**La divinité de la fertilité *Ugajin* 宇賀神**

Japon

16<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, carton, brocart. H 13 cm

Legs de Kikou Yamata en 1970

MEG Inv. ETHAS 036147



11.

**Arbre gravé**

Australie, Nouvelle-Galles du Sud

Wiradjuri ou Gamilaroi. Fin du 19<sup>e</sup> - début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois. H 204 cm

Don du Trustee du National Museum of Victoria à Melbourne en 1960

MEG Inv. ETHOC 028252



12.

**Arbre gravé**

Australie, Nouvelle-Galles du Sud, Euabalong

Wiradjuri ou Gamilaroi. Fin du 19<sup>e</sup> - début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois. H 164 cm

Échange avec l'Australian Museum de Sydney en 1959

MEG Inv. ETHOC 028210



- 13.**  
**Figure féminine**  
 RD Congo, nord Ituri  
 Zande-Mangbetu. Fin du 19<sup>e</sup> - début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois (*Uncaria sp.*). H 71 cm  
 Acquisée de Pierre et Suzanne Vérité à Paris en 1968  
 MEG Inv. ETHAF 033987



- 14.**  
**Cloche pour le culte taoïste**  
 Chine  
 Dynastie Ming (1368-1644)  
 Bronze. H 23 cm  
 Acquisée de l'antiquaire genevois Mincieux par le Musée archéologique en 1880  
 MEG Inv. ETHMU K000631

## ASIE



- 15.**  
**Bol rituel**  
 Chine, Shanxi, Houma 侯馬  
 Fin du 6<sup>e</sup> - début du 5<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-C.  
 Bronze. L 16 cm  
 Don de la collectionneuse Erna Reber en 1966  
 MEG Inv. ETHAS 033635-bis



- 16.**  
**Kāmadhenu, la Vache cosmique**  
 Népal  
 1881  
 Huile sur toile. H 156 cm  
 Don de la Société des Amis du MEG en 1971  
 MEG Inv. ETHAS 036673



- 17.**  
**La déesse Pārvatī, épouse de Śiva**  
 Inde, Tamil Nadu  
 16<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bronze. H 64 cm  
 Don Himavati en 1990  
 MEG Inv. ETHAS 049077



- 18.**  
**Statue monumentale de Guanyin**  
 Chine méridionale, Hunan  
 13<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois. H 190 cm  
 Don anonyme à la mémoire de Mélanie Stiasny en 1966  
 MEG Inv. ETHAS 033646



**19.**  
**Makaravaktrā, conductrice de la mule de Panden Lhamo**

Tibet  
18<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Cuivre doré. H 35 cm  
Ancienne collection Paul Bauer, acquis de sa veuve Hilda Bauer en 1954  
MEG Inv. ETHAS 024622



**20.**  
**Le Bouddha de médecine Bhaiṣajyaguru, Sangye Menla sous la forme d'un lama médecin**

Tibet  
18<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Laiton. H 16 cm  
Don d'Adélaïde Verneuil de Marval en 1975  
MEG Inv. ETHAS 038594



**21.**  
**Armure *bonji* 梵字 avec syllabes protectrices en sanscrit**

Japon  
18<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Acier, brocart. H assis 150 cm  
Don d'Alice Bertrand en 1940; ancienne collection Alfred Bertrand  
MEG Inv. ETHAS 017214



**22.**  
**Armure à l'effigie de Fudō Myōō 不動明王**

Japon  
15<sup>e</sup> – 17<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Acier, soie, cuir. H assis 150 cm  
Ancien fonds  
MEG Inv. ETHAS 022384 et 022385



**23.**  
**Sabre**

Japon  
Lame signée «Norimitsu», 17<sup>e</sup> – 18<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Monture signée «Teruhide», 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Acier, laque, bois, galuchat. L 59 cm  
Don d'Alice Bertrand en 1940; ancienne collection Alfred Bertrand  
MEG Inv. ETHAS 017508



**24.**  
**Pot à *pupuk***

Indonésie, Sumatra  
Batak. 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, céladon, cuivre, fibres végétales, dépôt humain. H 33 cm  
Acquis aux Berkeley Galleries de Londres en 1957; ancienne collection de l'ethnologue William Ohly (1883-1995)  
MEG Inv. ETHAS 026784



**25.**  
**Statuette d'ancêtre, *siraha salawa***

Indonésie, Nias  
19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois. H 73 cm  
Acquise par le Musée archéologique en 1891, ancienne collection Burkard Reber  
MEG Inv. ETHAS K001861



## AMÉRIQUES

26.

### Masque en bois

États-Unis, Alaska, Sitka

Tlingit. Fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, métal. H 23 cm

Don de la Smithsonian Institution au Musée archéologique en 1889; ancienne collection du D<sup>r</sup> John B. White

MEG Inv. ETHAM K001651



27.

### Cuillère rituelle

Canada, Colombie-Britannique

Tsimshian. 19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Corne. L 22 cm

Acquise de Madame Perrenoud par le Musée archéologique en 1885

MEG Inv. ETHAM K001286



28.

### Bol à huile de poisson

Canada, Colombie-Britannique

Tsimshian. 19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois. L 22 cm

Acquis auprès du marchand allemand Arthur Speyer

MEG Inv. ETHAM 020509



29.

### Siège porte-bonheur

États-Unis, Alaska, Deering

Iñupiat. Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, matière végétale, tendon. H 46 cm

Don de Georges Barbey en 1956

MEG Inv. ETHAM 025854



30.

### Porte-amulettes en forme de baleine

États-Unis, Alaska, Deering

Iñupiat. Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, cuir, perles de verre, tendon, métal. L 27 cm

Don de Georges Barbey en 1956

MEG Inv. ETHAM 025858



31.

### Seau cérémoniel

États-Unis, Alaska, Deering

Iñupiat. Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Os, ivoire, cuir, tendon, fibre végétale, bois? fanon de baleine? H 24 cm

Don de Georges Barbey en 1956

MEG Inv. ETHAM 025852





**32.**

**Veste**

États-Unis, plaines du nord  
Apsaalooké. Début du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Peau. H 65 cm

Don du naturaliste Moïse-Étienne dit Stephano Moricand au Musée académique en 1838  
MEG Inv. ETHAM K000207



**33.**

**Hochet de la Société des Faux Visages**

Canada, région des Grands Lacs  
Haudenosaunee. Début du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, roseau, dépouille de tortue serpentine. L 45 cm

Don de Jules Pictet au Musée académique en 1825  
MEG Inv. ETHAM K000121



**34.**

**Masque de la Société des Faux Visages**

Canada, région des Grands Lacs  
Haudenosaunee. Début du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, cheveux, métal, cuir. H 35 cm

Don de Jules Pictet au Musée académique en 1825  
MEG Inv. ETHAM K000130



**35.**

**Joug fermé**

Mexique, région de Veracruz  
Totonaque. 6<sup>e</sup> - 10<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Pierre. H 48 cm

Acquis en 1966  
MEG Inv. ETHAM 033047



**36.**

**Figurine anthropomorphe**

Mexique, Veracruz  
Nopiloa. 7<sup>e</sup> - 10<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Céramique. H 24 cm

Legs de Margareth Straschnov en 2000  
MEG Inv. ETHAM 054547



**37.**

**Statuette féminine**

Mexique, État de Jalisco  
Jalisco. 1<sup>er</sup> - 5<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Céramique. H 37 cm

Acquise en 1986  
MEG Inv. ETHAM 043927



**38.**

**Dieu Huehuetotl**

Mexique, plateau central  
Azèque. 13<sup>e</sup> - 16<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Pierre volcanique. H 31 cm

Legs de Ferdinand de Saussure en 1913; collecté par son père Henri en 1855  
MEG Inv. ETHAM 006557



**39.**  
**Natte à fourmis pour les rites d'initiation *kunana***  
 Brésil, État de Pará  
 Wayana. 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Plume, fibre de palmier, coton, fourmis. H 52 cm  
 Collectée par Daniel Schoepf en 1972  
 MEG Inv. ETHAM 036959



**40.**  
**Tête réduite *tsantsa***  
 Équateur, Province de Pastaza  
 Shuar. Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Peau humaine, cheveu, plume, fibre végétale, coton  
 H 12 cm, avec cheveux 56 cm  
 Acquisée en 1956  
 MEG Inv. ETHAM 057203



**41.**  
**Figurine anthropomorphe**  
 Pérou, vallée de Moché  
 Chimú. 9<sup>e</sup> -14<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois, coquillage. H 39 cm  
 Acquisée de M. Albrecht en 1958  
 MEG Inv. ETHAM 027420

## EUROPE



**42.**  
**Pipe courbe**  
 Suisse, Berne, Oberland, Interlaken  
 Milieu du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois, corne, os, argent. H 26 cm  
 Don de Maurice Bastian en 1957; achetée en 1920  
 MEG Inv. ETHEU 026402



**43.**  
**Marie-Madeleine ou Marie d'Égypte**  
 Suisse, Valais, Leytron  
 Seconde moitié du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois polychrome. H 131 cm  
 Collection Georges Amoudruz, acquise en 1976  
 MEG Inv. ETHEU 100046



**44.**  
**Jean le Baptiste**  
 France, Savoie, Tarentaise, Saint-Martin-de-Belleville  
 17<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois polychrome. H 79 cm  
 Collection Georges Amoudruz acquise en 1976; cédé en 1938 par le Procureur de la Chapelle-  
 du-Chatelard  
 MEG Inv. ETHEU 100000



**45.**  
**Buste de saint**  
 France, Haute-Savoie, St. Jean d'Aulps, La Moussière  
 18<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois. H 57 cm  
 Collection Georges Amoudruz, acquise en 1976  
 MEG Inv. ETHEU 100206



**46.**  
**Vierge à l'Enfant**  
 Suisse, Fribourg  
 16<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois polychrome. H 82 cm  
 Collection Georges Amoudruz, acquise en 1976  
 MEG Inv. ETHEU 106814



**47.**  
**Saint Maurice et ses compagnons**  
 Aquarelle de Charles-Frédéric Brun dit «Le Déserteur»  
 Suisse, Valais  
 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Encre, papier rehaussé d'aquarelle et gouache. H 29 cm  
 Collection Georges Amoudruz acquise en 1976  
 MEG Inv. ETHEU 100248



**48.**  
**Nacelle de traîneau**  
 Suisse, Grisons  
 18<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois, métal, toile cirée, corne, verre. L 146 cm  
 Don de Marie Marguerite Ormond au Musée d'art et d'histoire en 1908; transférée au MEG en 1918  
 MEG Inv. ETHEU 007761



**49.**  
**Double-fond de seillon décoré**  
 Suisse, Appenzell, Rhodes intérieures  
 1860  
 Boissellerie, bois polychrome. Ø 24 cm  
 Collection Georges Amoudruz, acquise en 1976  
 MEG Inv. ETHEU 101489



**50.**  
**Tambour sur cadre**  
 Fédération de Russie, Péninsule de Kola, Oumba  
 1769  
 Bois, peau, métal et corne. L 71 cm  
 Acheté par Jean-Louis Pictet-Mallet, offert à Horace-Bénédict de Saussure; légué par Nicolas-Théodore de Saussure au Musée académique en 1845



## AFRIQUE



51.

**Personnage talisman *ody***

Madagascar, centre nord

Sihanaka. Fin du 19<sup>e</sup> - début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Fibre végétale, étoffe. H 63 cm

Don du pasteur Henry Rusillon, missionnaire à Madagascar en 1930; collecté par lui en pays Sihanaka en 1907

MEG Inv. ETHAF 012212



52.

**Statuette d'ancêtre *buti***

Congo, Pool, Kaounga

Teke. 19<sup>e</sup> - début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, porcelaine, fer, étoffe, matières composites, fibre. H 76 cm

Don du professeur Henri Lagotala en 1929; récoltée par lui dans la grotte Michel de Renéville

MEG Inv. ETHAF 011985



53.

**Figure canine Janus *kozo***

Congo, RD Congo ou Angola, Bas-Congo, forêt du Mayombe

Yombe. Fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, fer, laiton, matières composites. L 73 cm

Acquise à Paris en 1930.

MEG Inv. ETHAF 012780



54.

**Sceptre céphalomorphe, insigne d'autorité**

Angola, Est

Chokwe. 19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois. H 60 cm

Don d'Adrian Conan Doyle en 1962

MEG Inv. ETHAF 031244



55.

**Figure de fécondité**

Lesotho ou Afrique du Sud

Sotho du Sud. 19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Calebasse, terre cuite, perles de verre, cuir, coton. H 28 cm

Don au Musée des missions vers 1880; ancienne collection de Théodore Vernet

MEG Inv. ETHAF 005178



56.

**Figure masculine *mu'po*, instrument de divination**

Cameroun, Grassfields, atelier de Batié ou Bangangté

Royaumes «bamileke». 19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois. H 22 cm

Acquise en 1921 du marchand allemand Arthur Speyer

MEG Inv. ETHAF 008859

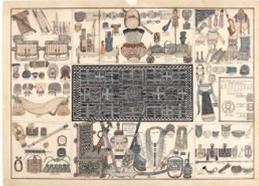


57.

**Fourneau de pipe**

Cameroun, Grassfields, Fouban ou région du Nord-Ouest  
Royaume bamum ou atelier de Bamessing. Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Terre cuite. H 30 cm

Don de Josette Debarge, médecin missionnaire à Bangwa, en 1933  
MEG Inv. ETHAF 013885



58.

**Planche des objets**

Dessin d'Ibrahim Njoya  
Cameroun, Grassfields, Fouban  
Royaume bamum. Vers 1930

Papier à dessin, encre de chine et crayons de couleur. L 75 cm  
Don du pasteur missionnaire Jean Rusillon en 1966  
MEG Inv. ETHAF 033554



59.

**Tête de reliquaire byeri**

Gabon, Moyen-Ogooué ou Woleu-Ntem  
Fang, sous-groupe Betsi. 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, laiton, fer, patine brillante. H 28 cm

Don du peintre Émile Chambon en 1981; ancienne collection François Coppier  
MEG Inv. ETHAF 044440



60.

**Masque heaume à quatre faces ñgontang**

Gabon, Moyen-Ogooué  
Fang, sous-groupe Betsi. 19<sup>e</sup> - début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, pigments, kaolin. H 39 cm

Acquis en 1944 auprès du pasteur Fernand Grébert, missionnaire au Gabon de 1913 à 1931  
MEG Inv. ETHAF 019642



61.

**Masque blanc mukudj' de la danse okuyi**

Gabon méridional, vallée de la Ngounié  
Bapunu, groupe linguistique Merye. 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, pigments. H 31 cm

Don du peintre Émile Chambon en 1981. Ancienne collection François Coppier  
MEG Inv. ETHAF 044277



62.

**Statuette féminine d'ancêtre**

Gabon méridional, vallée de la Ngounié  
Bapunu, groupe linguistique Merye. 19<sup>e</sup> - début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois. H 46 cm

Don du peintre Émile Chambon en 1981; achetée chez Pierre Vérité à Paris en 1937  
MEG Inv. ETHAF 044278



63.

**Conjoint mystique blolo bian**

Côte d'Ivoire  
Baule. Fin du 19<sup>e</sup> - début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, patine. H 31 cm

Don d'Edgar Aubert de la Rüe en 1977; récolté en 1926  
MEG Inv. ETHAF 039135



**64.**  
**Masque guro gyéla lu zahouli (fialî) ou baule ndoma**

Côte d'Ivoire  
Guro ou baule. 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois. H 51 cm  
Acquis de l'ethnologue allemand Hans Himmelheber en 1967; collecté par lui en 1963  
MEG Inv. ETHAF 033697

## OCÉANIE



**65.**  
**Ornement de proue de pirogue 'au'au ou pihao**

Polynésie française, îles Marquises  
Bois. H 23 cm  
Avant 1800  
Dépôt d'Eugène Pittard en 1921; donné par son fils Jean-Jacques en 1966  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 008937



**66.**  
**Maquette de pirogue à balancier**

Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, île Wuvulu  
Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, fibre végétale. L 25 cm  
Acquise vers 1930  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 054712



**67.**  
**Maquette de pirogue à balancier tepuke**

Îles Salomon, archipel de Santa Cruz  
Fin du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, feuille de palmier, fibre végétale. H 105 cm  
Acquise à Heidelberg en 1987  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 045906



**68.**  
**Cape en plume 'ahu'ula**

Îles Hawaïi  
Début du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Plumes et fibre d'*olonā* (*Touchardia latifolia*). H 146 cm  
Don de Vincent Rumpff au Musée académique en 1829  
MEG Inv. ETHOC K000206



**69.**  
**Boîte avec couvercle kotue ou 'otue**

Polynésie française, îles Marquises  
Fin du 18<sup>e</sup> - début du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois, fibre végétale. L 63 cm  
Ancienne collection du Musée archéologique; acquise avant 1864  
MEG Inv. ETHOC K000253



**70.**  
**Massue wahaika**

Nouvelle-Zélande (Aotearoa)  
Māori. Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Bois. H 46 cm  
Acquise à Paris en 1930  
MEG Inv. ETHOC 012776



- 71.**  
**Sculpture d'un échidné?**  
 Australie, nord-est de la Terre d'Arnhem, Yirrkala  
 Yolngu. Milieu du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois, pigments, cire. L 4,7 cm  
 Don de Maurice Bastian en 1956  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 025719



- 72.**  
**Masque**  
 Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, Moyen-Sepik, Angerman  
 latmul. Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Rotin, fibre végétale, terre, pigments. H 39 cm  
 Acquis auprès de l'ethnologue bâlois Felix Speiser en 1940  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 016779



- 73.**  
**Mannequin funéraire rambaramp**  
 Vanuatu, Aniwa  
 Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Crâne et dent humains, rotin, fibre végétale, pâte végétale, coquillage, pigments. H 166 cm  
 Acquis à Paris en 1931  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 013325



- 74.**  
**Statue d'ancêtre**  
 Vanuatu, Malakula  
 Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Bois, pigments. H 187 cm  
 Don de Maurice Lugeon en 1946; récoltée par son fils Robert en 1927-1928  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 020939



- 75.**  
**Atingting, tambour à fente dressé verticalement**  
 Vanuatu, Ambrym  
 Milieu du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Arbre à pain. H 260 cm  
 Acquis auprès d'Henri Barbier en 1969; récolté par lui en 1966  
 MEG Inv. ETHMU 034624



- 76.**  
**Masque de danse funéraire jipae**  
 Indonésie, province de Papouasie, sud du Mont Carstensz  
 Asmat. Première moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle  
 Fibres végétales, bois, plumes, osier, graines, pigments. H 200 cm  
 Don de Georges Barbey en 1959; acheté à un prospecteur de pétrole à Hollandia, actuelle  
 Jayapura  
 MEG Inv. ETHOC 028211



## ETHNOMUSICOLOGIE

77.

### **Sho, orgue à bouche**

Japon, Osaka

19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Roseau, bois laqué, nacre, os. H 42 cm

Don de Mme Appia en 1961; acheté par Edmond Appia auprès du maître luthier genevois Pierre Vidoudez

MEG Inv. ETHMU 030593



78.

### **Sarasvati vina, luth**

Inde, Tamil Nadu, Tanjore

Seconde moitié du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois de jacquier, papier mâché, métal, sept cordes métalliques, os. L 140 cm

Acquis à Genève en 1987

MEG Inv. ETHMU 045732



79.

### **Tambour sur cadre, de type senpô daiko, «tambour des ermites»**

Japon

Début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Peau, bois, fer, cordon en soie. Ø 38 cm

Don de Jean Romieux en 1937

MEG Inv. ETHMU 015522



80.

### **Wasamba, sistre de calebasse**

Mali

Bamana. Milieu du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, calebasse, corde. H 48 cm

Acquis auprès de Suzanne Vérité à Paris en 1953

MEG Inv. ETHMU 024561



81.

### **Tambour de bronze**

Thaïlande

Karen? s.d.

Bronze. H 70 cm

Don d'Aimé Martinet, antiquaire à Genève, en 1959

MEG Inv. ETHMU 027887



82.

### **Dranyen, luth à quatre cordes**

Népal, Bodnath

Sherpa. Première moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bois, peau. L 64 cm

Recueilli auprès du lama du sanctuaire de Bodnath par Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach en 1952

MEG Inv. ETHMU 023955



83.

### **Po ti kām'ur, trompe à embouchure latérale**

Brésil, État de Pará, Haut-Iriri, Rio Chiché

Kayapó-Mekrānoti. 20<sup>e</sup> siècle

Bambou, gaine de fibres végétales tressées, plumes, noix de tucum, perles, coton. L 46 cm

Mission Gustaaf Verswijver au Brésil en 1974-1977, acquise en 1981

MEG Inv. ETHMU 040838





84.

**Exposition de référence «Les archives de la diversité humaine»**

Scénographie Atelier Brückner GmbH, Stuttgart / Photo: MEG – Atelier Brückner, Daniel Stauch



85.

**Exposition de référence «Les archives de la diversité humaine»**

Scénographie Atelier Brückner GmbH, Stuttgart / Photo: MEG – Atelier Brückner, Daniel Stauch



86.

**Exposition de référence «Les archives de la diversité humaine»**

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87.

**Exposition de référence «Les archives de la diversité humaine»**

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88.

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89.

**Exposition de référence «Les archives de la diversité humaine»**

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90.

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91.

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92.

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93.

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