

# Intrinsic Perspectives

Inspiring Aspects of Anthropology



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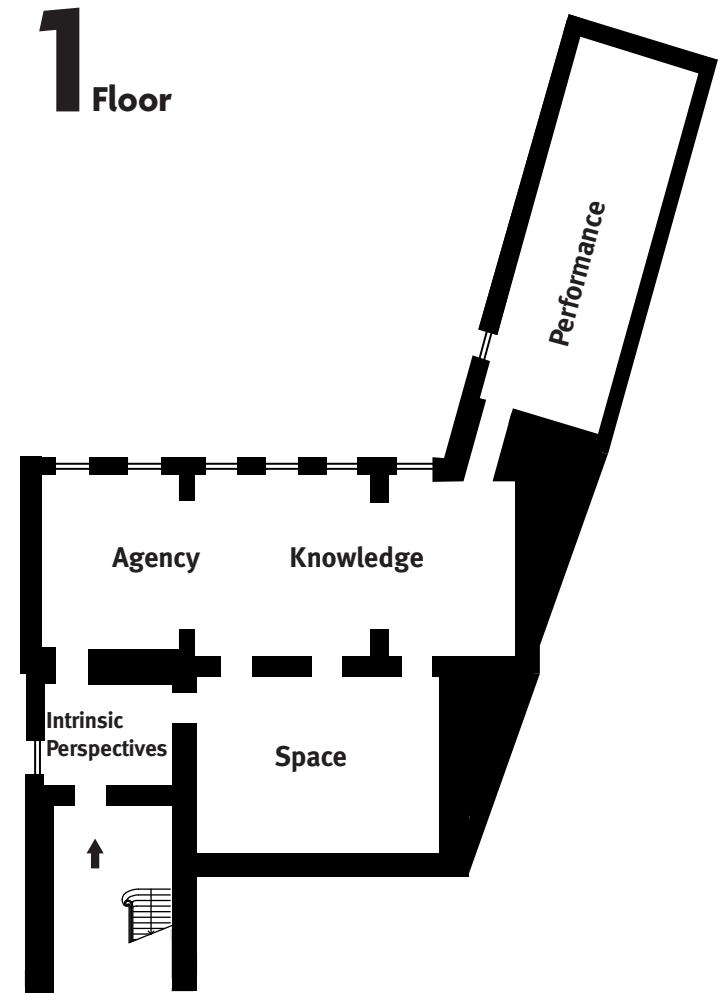
Inspiring Aspects of Anthropology  
from 7 september 2011

What are the foundations on which a society functions? How do basic conditions and interdependencies create commonalities and differences in human societies? What makes us special as individuals and as communities?

The exhibition «Intrinsic Perspectives – Inspiring Aspects of Anthropology» stands for the Museum der Kulturen's new programmatic approach, focusing on the key concepts agency, knowledge, performance, and space. The selection turns our attention to the principles and opportunities that humans possess in shaping their way of life within existing systems and structures.

Objects have intrinsic meaning informed by the conditions of their production and the contexts of their use. Objects play a key role in the way we shape and experience our mode of life. They are the product of human agency and a token of social relationships.

Exploring the diverse aspects of objects allows us to forge links between intrinsic meaning and interpretation, between history and current situations, and between the seemingly known and the unknown. Viewing the Other always implicates reflecting on the Self. Understanding the cultural background provides a key to decoding everyday actions and behaviour and the means to exert influence on the way we handle differences and commonalities.



## *Farafin a ni Toubabou*

("the black and the white")

Unequal exchange relationships raise questions with regard to ethics, human rights, and political representation.

*Farafin a ni Toubabou* belongs to a series of short films that deal with inequality between the countries of the North and the South. It shows two pairs of hands exchanging items back and forth across a boundary. After a few seconds already we are no longer able to discern who is rejecting whom, who is the exploiter and who the exploited, and who is white and who is black.

Mali/France

Artists: Adrien Sina and Mamary Diallo

DVD, short film 4:58

Inv.-no. III 27664

2005–2007

Purchase, Adrien Sina, 2010

# Agency

## how can you act?

In acting people draw on established practices, perceptions, and reasoning to assess how they can best achieve an aim. Agency refers to an individual's ability to act within existing structures.

All societies are equipped with a set of rules, which their members are expected to follow. However, people are not puppets of their society's rule set. They command a scope of action, however marginal it may be. The range reaches from blind obedience to critical or subversive activities, to open resistance, either by peaceful or by violent means. Issues of power, such as the distribution of power and, concomitantly, the access to economic and other resources, always play a decisive role.

## *Fasnacht* lantern

In Basel, *Fasnacht* (carnival) provides an occasion to criticise or ridicule the ruling class. At the same time it operates as a seismograph for politicians to measure their popularity and judge their chances of being re-elected.

One of the main attractions of the Basel *Fasnacht* are the large lanterns that are carried through the streets during the traditional parade. The lanterns feature satirical and caricatural paintings that address local, national, and even international issues. The lantern of the *Rätz* clique of 1929 under the title *d'Affäre z'gnagge* (cracking the affair) deals with the lawsuit filed by the Catholic-conservative national councillor Max Z'Graggen against his social-democratic opponent Friedrich Schneider concerning the charge of embezzlement. The lantern was created by the sculptor and artist Paul Wilde (1893–1936).

Basel, Switzerland

Artist: Paul Wilde

Wood, metal, textile, acrylic paint

Inv.-no. VI 11885

Purchase, Paul Wilde, 1929

# 3

## Mask Alfred Bühler

Masks provide protection and disguise, allowing the masker to cross the boundary of socially valid norms.

The mask shows Alfred Bühler, director of the Museum of Ethnography from 1959 to 1970 and first full professor of anthropology at the University of Basel. The mask was created in 1959/60 by Thomas Keller, an artist and Alfred Bühler's son-in-law, and painted by Faustina Iselin, a famous painter of Basel *Fasnacht* masks. It was probably made for the occasion of Bühler's sixtieth birthday and to welcome him home on his return from an expedition to Papua New Guinea in 1960. The habit of commissioning busts to honour great men has a long tradition. The founders of the Museum, for instance, are cast in bronze busts. Honouring Alfred Bühler with an expressive artist's mask probably also had to do with his role as a border-crosser. Bühler was an unorthodox character who liked to flout the conventional rules of society.

His expeditions probably made him view his own world from a different perspective and led him to effect changes within and outside the museum, to debunk established role patterns, and to set new standards.

Basel, Switzerland

Artists: Thomas Keller and Faustina Iselin

Papier mâché, acrylic paint, vegetable fibres, metal, string

Inv.-no. VI 71116

1959/1960

Donation, Christian Kaufmann, 2011

# 4

## Scarf *keffiyeh*

The significances of objects change according to the contexts they feature in. Next to being a key symbol of Palestine, the *keffiyeh* is also a fashionable accessory.

This male headdress originally came from the town of Kufa in Iraq. Between 1936 and 1939 Arab insurgents forced the members of the Palestinian upper class to wear the *keffiyeh* as a token of solidarity with the Arab cause. Yasser Arafat (1929–2004) made the scarf his trademark. In leftist circles and

among youth in the West in the 1970s and 1980s, the *keffiyeh* was worn to mark solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom, or simply as an anti-establishment token. Over the last few years, the scarf has experienced a renaissance, thanks to promotion by the fashion industry. While for some people it is simply an oriental-tinted fashion accessory, for others it stands as a token of anti-Semitism.

Palestine  
Cotton

Inv.-no. IIe 3159

Collection Basel Mission, Deposit 1981

## 5

### Glasses

Glasses were invented as a sight aid at the end of the thirteenth century in Italy. But who, and where and when, created lens-less glasses as a fashion gimmick?

The Akan-speaking groups of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are famous for their elaborate gold jewellery. Many decades ago they began

to incorporate European objects into the African repertoire of gold forms, changing their symbolic significance. Using glasses as a fashion item seems to be a more recent development.

Ghana or Côte d'Ivoire

Sheet brass, brass wire

Inv.-no. III 25497

c. 1980

Coll. Bernhard Gardi, 19888

## 6

### Snow goggles

The Inuit counter the extreme conditions of the Arctic with ingenuity.

The indigenous population groups in Canada and Alaska developed a form of material culture in response to the specific challenges the environment posed. An important item in this respect were snow goggles made of bone, ivory, or wood, above all as a protection against snow blindness. They were made as close-fitting as possible in order to prevent ultra-violet light from damaging the

eyes. The very narrow vision slit that diffracted the spectrum of light increased the intended effect.

Inuit, Yukon or Northwest Territory, Canada  
Wood  
Inv.-no. IVa 2298  
First half of 20th century  
Donation, CIBA, 1950

# 7

## Shutter shades

The history of a seemingly useless innovation, or "how form prevails."

The human eye is often considered to be the mirror of the soul. From time immemorial people have tried to conceal their emotions. Sunglasses became a new means of concealment. Designers, fashion creators, and artists picked up on the opportunities sunglasses offered, modifying their status from medical aid to fashion item. Shutter shades are usually only worn as a trendy gimmick in discos, nightclubs, and at soccer tournaments. In Europe and the U.S. they emerged

in the course of the 1960s and still rank as futuristic. Pop stars and Hollywood rendered them cult status in the 1980s. Later, the artist Kanye West triggered a fashion hype, markedly adding to the popularisation of shutter shades.

Basel, Switzerland  
Plastic, rhinestones  
Inv.-no. VI 71115  
2009  
Donation, Franziska Jenni, 2009

# 8

## Figure *nkisi nkondi*

The sculpture belongs to a complex legal and ritual system.

The task of these "nail" figures was to detect and punish wrongdoers, such as thieves, sorcerers, adulterers, and cheats. For this purpose the aggrieved party would pay a sum to the owner of the figure, who was also a ritual expert, to hammer into the figure a nail as a means to reveal the assailant. If, subsequently, a villager was beset with pain it was

assumed that the culprit had been found and received his punishment. To stop the pain, the culprit had to pay the ritual expert a substantial sum. At the turn of the twentieth century the colonial authorities saw in the "nail" figures a symbol of indigenous resistance. For the missionaries they were "idols" from which the Africans needed "liberating." In spite of the missionaries' and colonial authorities' efforts to destroy the belief in the *minkisi*, the practice is still common today in the shape of discrete little plastic boxes or special lenses on sunglasses.

Yombe, Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Wood, glass, iron, textile, resin, rubber, pig tusk  
Inv.-no. III 2807  
Before 1908  
Donation, Leopold Rütimeyer, 1909

## 9-11

### Spinning wheel *charkha* / Men's loin cloths, *khadi* cloths

Already in lifetime Mahatma Gandhi became an icon of civil disobedience and non-violent

resistance. His campaigns decisively contributed to the independence of India in 1947. "No self-government without the spinning wheel" – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) propagated economic self-sufficiency and demanded a boycott of goods produced outside India. In 1919 he called on the people of India to produce and wear local cloths made from plain, hand-spun cotton, so-called *khadi*. His intention was to create jobs and promote economic self-reliance, uniting the nation across all divides and thus ending the era of British colonial rule. Gandhi is said to have worked at the *charkha* at least half an hour a day; the spinning wheel was his routine companion. Later it was incorporated as a symbol in the Indian national flag.

Kochi, Kerala, India  
Cotton  
Inv.-nos. IIa 11489 – 11490  
2010  
Purchase, Ursula Klingelfuss-Schneider, 2011

India  
Wood, metal, cotton, leather  
Inv.-no. IIa 4348  
Purchase, G. Rotzler, 1973

# 12

## Short sword *wakizashi*

The pacification of Japan brought for the warrior nobility an end to the old way of life characterised by ongoing warfare, and engendered a new life style shaped by a specific code of honour.

The relationship between the aristocratic landowners and their samurai, the members of the warrior class who made up their troops, was based on a feudal principle. In exchange for sustenance the samurai swore absolute allegiance to their masters, which included unwavering bravery and performing their duty till death. From 1603 on the warrior ideals developed into a rigorous code of honour, granting the samurai a role-model function in society. When the samurai were made redundant, their legendary prowess and earlier deeds became the subject of glorification, for example, in theatre plays. Until their use was banned, a samurai carried on him two swords. The short sword (*wakizashi*) was used for close combat and for commit-

ting ritual suicide (*seppuku*). In terms of quality and longevity the samurai sword ranks as the paragon in the art of weaponry and the most effective melee weapon ever manufactured.

Japan  
Steel, ray skin, wood, gold, silk  
Inv.-no. IId 1344  
Legacy, Hans Burckhardt-Burckhardt, 1923

# Knowledge

## what can you know?

Knowledge is built on generalisations derived from experience. It may refer to empirical knowledge or theoretical systems. Objects are knowledge containers and grow from practical as well as theoretical knowledge.

Division of labour is common to practically all societies, along with a specific distribution of knowledge and the responsibility of handling knowledge correctly. Specialists tend to possess exclusive knowledge. A case at hand is secret knowledge from which certain people or groups are excluded, and from which, occasionally, the community even needs protecting. However, exclusion is also often exploited with the intention of creating or consolidating positions of power. Literacy facilitates the spread of knowledge independent of individual agents of knowledge. Literacy is not antithetical to other forms of knowledge transmission. Strains of knowledge and changes engendered by the process of transmission through printed material,

oral tradition, and culture-specific forms of dealing with things are inscribed in objects.

## **Fine mat *te katau***

Fine mats served as mnemonic devices with regard to recent history and contained information on cosmological concepts and the people's identity.

The mats are produced by women. Although they are actually plaited one often speaks of women weavers. The design, consisting of traditional patterns as well as new creations, is property of the weaver. Mats are female status symbols, although men may also own them. They serve as exchange valuables in birth, marriage, and mortuary feasts.

Marshall Islands, Micronesia

Pandanus and hibiscus fibres, natural pigments

Inv.-no. Vc 289

Purchase, N. J. Hamann, 1912

## Knotted cord *khipu*

Knotted cords hold statistical information on diverse matters such as population structure, stocks, levies, force levels, as well as historical events.

A *khipu* consisted of a main cord and several ancillary cords of varying colours attached to it. The old Inca empire knew two types of *khipu*: cords that conveyed statistical data, and others that recorded historical events. They were produced and read by specialists. In modified form they were used well into the twentieth century in some areas. Herdsmen, for instance, kept record of their herds. In some places, ancient *khipu* serve important office holders as insignia of rank; they are of symbolic significance in terms of a community's social and political organisation.

Peru

Wool, cotton, vegetable fibres

Inv.-no. IVc 2821a

Purchase, Franz Xaver Weizinger, 1921

## Amulet

Goods and cultural concepts have been crossing the Alps for thousands of years. Well into the twentieth century this also referred to Kabbalistic knowledge.

This double-sided roll of parchment contains magical, Jewish, and Christian symbols. Following a row of magical, Kabbalistic symbols we find a set of miniatures displaying Christian imagery, followed again by a set of magical signs. The texts on the front side contain, among other items, formulas used in exorcism. The reverse side displays the "definite and true length of our Lord Jesus Christ as he walked on the face of the earth and died on the Holy Cross." Thus the roll is also a so-called Holy Length, a term used for narrow strips of cloth, parchment, or paper measuring the size of the body of Jesus Christ, or one of his limbs, or that of Mother Mary. The roll of parchment served as an amulet. It was confiscated from a woman by a priest during Easter confession.

Zizers, Grisons, Switzerland  
Parchment, hand-written, painted, mosaic gold  
Inv.-no. VI 25297  
18th century  
Purchase, Emanuel Grossmann, 1959

# 16

## *Tesseln* tallies

Deeds, often containing century-old knowledge concerning specific rights and duties, provide legal, social, and economic security, and help to ensure peaceful co-existence in a community.

These ancient wooden legal tokens were not only common in the Alpine region, but also in other parts of the country, not least in towns. The notches and signs on the wood provided, for those versed in the code, information on land ownership and concerning usage rights of the water supply which was often channelled straight from the glaciers. Water rights were inherited, but could also be sold or purchased. Authority and control lay in the hands of a specially appointed and sworn water reeve. Apart from their function

as deeds, as in the case of the “water tally,” *Tesseln* were also used to summon people to community work; these were called *Kehrtes-seln*.

Albinen, Valais, Switzerland  
Wood, string  
Inv.-no. VI 6570  
1818  
Purchase, Friedrich Gottlieb Stebler, 1915

# 17

## Model of a totem pole

Creating a totem pole required knowledge of the mythological significance of animal and human figures, of botanical features, and technical skill as a carver.

Totem poles record in imagery the hereditary privileges of individuals or specific kin groups. The depicted figures tell of the mythical origins of a family's privileges. Totem poles may recall the claims that a host asserted in the context of a *potlatch*, serve as a burial monument, or be placed in front of a house as a marker of property rights. To

successfully manufacture a totem pole the carver must be versed in the arboreal properties of the red cedar and must have precise knowledge concerning the mythological relationship between the figures he is depicting. Shown from bottom to top we recognise a bear, a frog-like creature, a raven, a beaver, and a human face.

Coast Tsimshian, Kitkatla village, British Columbia, Canada  
Wood, pigments  
Inv.-no. IVa 109  
Purchase, William O. Oldman, 1909

# 18

## Acupuncture figure

In the context of Chinese health politics, medical knowledge was continuously amended, brought up to date, and published in standard works. At the same time auxiliary devices were developed for medical training. The medical official Wang Weiyi (987–1067) produced a life-size bronze figure exactly for this purpose. He consulted the

medical textbooks of his time and defined a total of 354 acupuncture points. He charted the meridians on the bronze figure – that is, the channels through which energy (*qi*) flows – indicating the acupuncture points with the help of golden ideographs. In addition, Wang Weiyi wrote a text that was distributed across the provinces. The text is considered the first illustrated handbook of acupuncture. The bronze figure shown is based on a historical model produced for a government health campaign in the eighteenth century, either during the age of the Qing emperor Yongzheng (reign 1723–1735) or that of his successor Qianlong (reign 1735–1796).

China  
Bronze, wood, cardboard, silk  
Inv.-no. IId 7165  
Qing dynasty (1644–1911), first half of 18th century  
Legacy, Reinhard J. C. Hoeppli, 1978

# 19

## Fold-out book *pustaka*

Cultures across the world have developed myriad ways and means of passing on knowledge. The "magical books" are a culture- and era-specific form of recording knowledge.

The Batak peoples number more than six million, divided into six ethnic sub-groups, each with its own language. Five of them have their own alphabet, each adapted to its specific phonetic system. Batak literature consists of religious and non-religious texts. The bark-cloth books called *pustaka* exclusively contain religious texts. They were written and used by healers and magicians, *datu*, for consulting oracles, preparing recipes for medicines, as a source for magic formula, and as guidelines for performing rituals.

Batak, Sumatra, Indonesia  
Bark cloth (*Agarwood Aquilaria malaccensis*), wood  
Inv.-no. IIC 22177  
19th or early 20th century

Coll. Gustav Forrer; purchased from Gustav Bratteler, 2004

# 20

## Mortuary figure *malagan*

The deceased are venerated as ancestors and often consulted in critical situations. *Malagan* carvings were produced for mortuary ceremonies. They served to remember deceased members of the community and to embed knowledge in the collective memory, passed down through the generations, often being amended and modified in the process. The colour scheme of the carving reflects the hierarchy of knowledge in the world of the living, which retains validity in the ancestral realm. The higher a person stood in this hierarchy, the more white is applied to the effigy.

New Ireland, Bismarck Archipelago,  
Papua New Guinea  
Wood, natural pigments, mollusc shell  
Inv.-no. Vb 10576  
Coll. Alfred Bühler, 1931

# 21

## Gold weights

Gold weights from Ghana are encyclopaedias of traditional knowledge. For centuries the Akan peoples of modern Ghana and eastern Côte d'Ivoire were strong partners in the West African long distance trade system. Until European coins were introduced in 1896, gold dust was the common currency. The Akan people are famous for their gold weights made of brass; their units of measurement are similar to, but not quite compatible with the decimal system. There are five gold weight categories: geometrical forms, plant- and animal shapes, objects of everyday use, and human figures. Gold dust was weighed with the aid of the geometrical forms. The figurative weights were called proverb stones. In the Akan languages, metaphors play a key role, which is reflected in the widespread and popular use of idioms, proverbs, and allusions.

Choice of proverbs and symbols:

Tortoise: Tortoise, you are also suffering in your shell (however secure a person seems he has hidden troubles).

Two crossed crocodiles: Why should we fight over a prey, when everything we eat or drink with different mouths goes into the same stomach (one family, one clan).

Game of Awari: To play Awari you have to know the rules.

Groundnut: If you're planning to grow something for me, plant groundnuts, not maize (indicates a wish for a permanent relationship: groundnuts always remain in the soil once planted whereas corn is easily uprooted and destroyed).

Hoe: You have to work to live.

Drummer: Primordial speech is a speech of reason.

Ghana

Brass

Inv.-Nos. III 4158, III 10977, III 22312, III 22315, III 22338, III 22342, III 22347, III 22364, III 22445, III 22475, III 22477, III 22480, III 22499, III 22500, III 22509, III 22517, III 22527, III 22530, III 22557, III 22580, III 22661, III 22674, III 22688, III 22695, III 22707, III 22726, III 22784, III 22792, III 26637, III 26643

Many before 1914

The majority are from the collection of the Basel Mission, deposit 1981; further: purchase, Rudolf Fisch, 1913; Coll. Paul Hinderling, 1950; Legacy, Ernst und Annemarie Vischer-Wadler, 1995

IIa 8195, IIa 8196, IIa 8197, IIa 8201, IIa 8203, IIa 8211, IIa 8219, IIa 8245, IIa 8246, IIa 8251, IIa 8278, IIa 8290, IIa 8308, IIa 10600  
19th/20th century  
Collection Basel Mission, Deposit 1981

# 22

## Indian model figures

The Indian model figures were part of a colonial inventory project, they were also shown at world exhibitions, and they served missionaries as material for teaching purposes. Many of these model figures were produced in what is today the state of West Bengal. Up to this day the city of Krishnanagar is famous for the manufacture of especially true-to-life looking figures. The model figures represent different Indian population groups and distinguish between gender, profession, such as washers or musicians, cast, for example, Brahmin, religious affiliation such as Hindu, Moslem, or Parsee, and provenance.

India

Wood, clay, gypsum, textiles, pigments

Inv.-Nos. IIa 1052, IIa 1152, IIa 1157, IIa 1958, IIa 1964, IIa 1965; IIa 8177, IIa 8181, IIa 8183, IIa 8192,

# Performance

## how do you perform?

Performances are expressive acts through which cultural meanings and values are created, endorsed, and/or mediated.

Performances comprise both presentation and implementation. They refer to extraordinary enactments in the form of rituals, ceremonies, feasts, theatre productions, contests, and games. Performances are rule-governed and implemented with the intention of putting specific things, events, or actions on display. Audiences vary as far as composition and participation are concerned. Sometimes the audience is a silent spectator, on other occasions it is actively involved. Performances of this kind are encountered in all cultures. They can be linked to life cycle events, seasonal ceremonies, religious practices, political acts, even the repertoire of a theatre. Apart from that, they fulfil different functions. A life cycle ritual underpins the transition from one social status to the next – for example, from puberty to adult-

hood – whereas in a political ceremony that follows a strict protocol great value is placed on meticulously correct procedure in order to achieve the aims intended.

Performances have to do with the successful outcome of a process. They are carried out for the purpose of accompanying, coming to terms with, or effecting change. Performances address the intellect and the emotions at the same time. They can alter identities and, at times, competencies.

# 23

## Speakers' Corner

From time to time a person finds himself in a situation where he feels the need to express himself and address an issue in public. Some people are better at this than others. Many cultures have special meeting places where people discuss important matters and hold speeches, often using specific furnishings such as a lectern, a rostrum, or a ceremonial stool for the purpose.

The Museum der Kulturen has set up a Speakers' Corner where visitors can test and develop their skills as public speaker.

The floor is yours!

Wood, pigments  
Commissioned work, 2011

# 24

**Mask showing a European with a hooked nose, a moustache, and a uniform cap**

One way of coming to terms with the threatening or seemingly superior power of the "Other" is by integrating it into one's own worldview.

Communities across the world creatively dealt with the presence of Europeans in their midst by incorporating them into their cosmological and mythological universe. In Borneo masked figures play an important role in mortuary feasts and agricultural (rice) ceremonies. They represent supernatural as well as real beings. Masks embodying Europeans serve different functions. The Tumon-Dayak mask represents the spirit of a European, whose task it is to accompany the spirit of the deceased from the house of mourning to its final resting place.

Tumon-Dayak, Borneo, Indonesia  
Wood, painted  
Inv.-no. IIc 2991  
First half of 20th century  
Coll. Mattheus Vischer-Mylius, 1934

## Mask

African images of Europeans have existed ever since the first encounter. They represent cultural and artistic means of expression developed by African societies to deal with the presence of the "Other."

Artistic representations of Europeans reflect the relationships that African people had with the whites, more than being true-to-life images of the colonial intruders. The pointed nose, the small mouth, and the glasses indicate that the mask belongs to a mask category known as colon, which depicts Europeans.

Dan, Man, Côte d'Ivoire  
Wood  
Inv.-no. III 7547  
Coll. Paul Wirz, 1933

## *Fasnacht* mask with basilisk

For the Malian performance artist Maoua

Koné, a puppet theatre specialist, the *Fasnacht* was a highlight of her stay in Basel. It was through the famous basilisk fountains that Maoua Koné discovered what significance the mythical creature holds for Basel. Her African puppet plays feature beings with similar characteristics. In Basel Maoua Koné regularly visited Roger and Esther Magne at their mask studio and learnt to make Basel *Fasnacht* masks from papier mâché. One of them is the mask with the basilisk shown here.

Basel, Switzerland

Artist: Maoua Koné

Papier mâché, acrylic colours, cotton, plastic

Inv.-no. III 27550

2003

Purchase, Maoua Koné, 2009

# 27

## Mask of a European

In this mask from Indonesia, the rosy-cheeked European is the exotic stranger, in the double sense of the term, because it appears that the artist relied on a *Fasnacht*

mask from Central Switzerland for his model.

In the *Fasnacht* troupe from Schwyz called the Nüssler (nut-men), the so-called Blätz is the central figure. Not least, its significance is borne out by the fact that, on the occasion of an official visit to Basel in 1988, the government of Canton Schwyz presented the Basel authorities with a wooden Blätz mask as a gift of state. The Blätz is of Italian origin and is based on the harlequin figure (*arlecchino*) of the *commedia dell'arte*. The figure is wearing a flesh-coloured mask from Bergamo. The fir-sprig broom it holds in its hands is always in motion, and the figure dances, skips, and leaps very much like the original harlequin. In the *Fasnacht* play *Dr Blätz* by Paul Kamer (Schwyz, 1970), the author saw in the Blätz figure not only the historical harlequin, but also a representation of the mythical "wild man" figure.

Celuk, Bali, Indonesia

Artist: Wayan Tedun

Wood, polychrome colours, rubber, animal skin

Inv.-no. VI 62803

20th century

Purchase, Max Weber, 1989

# 28

## Speeches and public addresses are performative acts

Verbal utterances not only describe situations; they also have the capacity to impact on reality.

In January 1999 the Swiss Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi told his staff that the next New Year's speech marking the millennium change would have to be the best speech ever given. In October he announced that his planned speech was not intended for diplomats, professors, and journalists but aimed at mothers with their children, aspiring athletes, young students, the jobless, foreigners, and refugees. From a linguistic point of view Ogi's speech was a stroke of genius: he spoke very slowly and clearly, using simple terms and expressive gestures to get his message across to his audience, and leaving nothing untried to build bridges between generations, social classes, genders, and language areas. History proved him right: although communication specialists ridiculed his speech as

amateurish, embarrassing, even as kitsch, the wider audience appreciated it and rated it a great success.

New year's speech by Adolf Ogi, President of the Swiss Federal Council, aired on 1 January 2000

Recording by Schweizer Fernsehen and Télévision Suisse Romande

Video, c. 7:15 min.

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# 29

## Mask of the *kolam* theatre, representing the King of England

Viewing and representing the "Other": in the Sinhalese *kolam* theatre the English king is shown as a ruthless exploiter.

The *kolam* mask theatre is a tradition common to the south-western coastal area of Sri Lanka. The performances merge entertainment with social criticism, religious instruction, and political satire. *Kolam* plays consist of two main parts. In the first part members of different professional groups and

castes gather to prepare for the visit by the mythical king Mahasammata and his wife, while the second part focuses on scenes from everyday life. Apart from male hedonism and the discrimination of women, greed, vanity, exploitation and suppression of the poor are popular topics. The former colonial masters also feature prominently: the Portuguese are depicted as uneducated but cunning, the British as ruthless and exploitive.

Sri Lanka, south-west coast  
Wood, polychrome painted  
Inv.-no. IIa 155  
19th century  
Coll. Fritz and Paul Sarasin, 1890

# 30

## Tea ceremony bowl *chawan*

The Japanese tea ceremony – developed in the course of many centuries – is a work of art and a path of instruction at the same time. The procedure is fixed to the last detail. Buddhist monks introduced tea to Japan from China in the seventh century. Zen

Buddhism emphasises the practice of concentration on the path to enlightenment. The Way of Tea provides trainees with the means to cultivate the mind. These include formalised acts, social practices, and aesthetic and spiritual values, which are associated with special objects and spaces. The four basic principles framed by the tea master Sen-no-Rikyu still apply today: harmony, respect, purity, and tranquillity. The tea ceremony represents a dialogue between host and guest in which the tea bowl plays a principal role. How valuable teal bowls are is borne out by the fact that, in the case of damage, they are meticulously and elaborately restored, but with the fault lines left visible.

Japan  
Clay, gold  
Inv.-no. II d 10766  
17th / 18th century  
Collection of the Gewerbemuseum Basel, Deposit 1989

# Space

## where can you go?

For a long time space has been regarded as a type of container within which things occurred; a more recent view assumes that space is made and thus socially constructed: human beings impact on space, exploit it, change it, and appropriate it.

The conception of space has changed dramatically owing to the globalised network created by modern information technologies and transport systems. Space is a product of social and cultural practices. Spaces become categorised and placed in relationship to each other, for example, in villages when land belonging to the community is set off from private property, or in cities where modern infrastructure channels the flow of people and goods. The segmentation of space and the allocation of individual sections in terms of usage or function are frequently found in graphic depictions. The development of cartographic methods and technologies – the geometrisation of the world – represents both

the starting point and the result of a process of global appropriation.

## Mapa de Tecamachalco (Lienzo de Tecamachalco / Lienzo Vischer I)

This document dating from the sixteenth century unites European and indigenous knowledge with regard to territory, property claims, and kinship relations. The document comprises items from pre-Hispanic, Mesoamerican manuscripts, which were entered into a European map. The focus is on the genealogy and migration history of the ruling dynasty of Tecamachalco in the Mexican state of Puebla, recorded in the sixteenth century. Further information was added around 1717 when a conflict broke out between indigenous inhabitants and the Spanish conquistadores over land and water rights in the neighbouring community of Aljojuca. In the early colonial days *lienzos* served powerful individuals and aristocratic lineages to lay claim to rule, while, today, village collectives rely on them to underpin land rights against claims by individuals or

other communities.

Tecamachalco, Puebla, Mexico  
Leather, lime, cornstarch, pigments  
Inv.-no. IVb 754  
Probably 16th – 18th century  
Coll. Lukas Vischer, 1844

## 32

### Buffalo robe

Three crosses representing cardinal points of the universe often feature on the robes of the North-American Indian nations from the Great Plains and Prairie.

Hide painting was a longstanding and important tradition among the different groups in this vast region. Buffalo hides were used for making clothes, shields, and containers. This robe was painted by women. It features stylised feathers and a large cross, symbol for the cardinal directions, projects upwards from the main theme. The central motif is a rosette, which is flanked by two further cardinal crosses. Feather motifs are usually found on robes worn by men.

Central Plains, USA  
Leather  
Inv.-no. IVa 164  
c. 1800  
Purchase, Mittelschweizerische Geographisch-Commercielle Gesellschaft Aarau, 1918

## 33

### Clay pot *chomo*

In Peru ceramic vessels are closely associated with spatial and cosmological concepts. Among the Shipibo-Conibo pottery is women's work. When making a new pot they are symbolically echoing the creation of the universe: the coils of clay represent the cosmic serpent gradually forming and encompassing the universe. The bottom, undecorated section shows the underworld, the realm of water, and the spirits that cause sickness. The bulbous middle section depicts a marginal area, the lower part of which represents reality and the inhabited world where the humans live in villages. The upper part of this section stands for the heavenly bridge that leads over into the upper world.

The tapering neck of the vessel embodies the highest spheres of the universe, while the patterns constitute links between the different worlds.

Shipibo-Conibo, Peru  
Clay  
Inv.-no. IVc 13589  
Coll. Gerhard Baer, 1968/69

## 34

### Bark Painting

Paintings from Arnhem Land often are map-like representations of landscapes, sacred sites, and camps.

The bark painting shows an arid landscape at Buckingham Bay in northern Australia. Colours and patterns depict different land formations, water holes, and fertile areas. The paintings rank as everyday objects, but are also used for ceremonial purposes and mortuary rituals. Bark paintings were often found near funeral sites, which suggests they were intended as a kind of guide for the deceased to find their way to special sites.

Milingimbi, Arnhem Land, Australia  
Artist: Jirigulu (Lyagalawumir)  
Bark of eucalyptus tree, natural pigments  
Inv.-no. Va 893  
1956  
Purchase, Karel Kupka, 1956

## 35

### Salt plate

Salt is an old and valuable trade goods. The development of the widely linked Saharan trade route system traces back to this resource that neither humans nor animals can do without.

The growth of this trade network across political, economic, and cultural boundaries depended on a number of factors: 1) The introduction of the dromedary facilitated the transport of large quantities of goods across the Sahara. 2) The growth of political stability in the three large empires Ghana, Mali, and Songhay proved conducive to the trans-Saharan trade. 3) The spread of Islam from the seventh century onwards helped to promote collaboration between different

groups involved in the trade. Salt, the most important resource in the desert, was mined at different locations. In the southern regions of West Africa it was in short supply and traders were prepared to pay for it with gold. Since the early days of colonialism, people have predicted the end of the trans-Saharan salt trade. But even at the beginning of the twenty-first century one sees camel trains carrying salt from the north to the south.

Salt plate  
Taoudenni, Mali  
Salt, strips of fur, washing blue  
Inv.-no. III 24998  
Coll. Bernhard Gardi, 1987

## 36

### *Thangka*

The painting is a mixture of panorama and map, emphasising the close relationship between event and place.

The *thangka* shows a view of the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, during the New Year feast, including some of the most important sites in

Tibetan Buddhism. These include the sacred complex with the Jokhang temple, the Potala Palace, the stupas (reliquary shrines) of the Dalai Lamas, various other temples, cloisters, and schools. The picture was designed to help pilgrims get their bearings. For pilgrims a site is not merely a spot in the landscape, but a place charged with specific properties that grant it its quality.

Tibet  
Gouache on linen, damask silk, bronze, wood  
Inv.-no. IId 13863  
c. 1900  
Coll. Gerd-Wolfgang Essen, 1998

## 37

### **Touch screen: please touch!**

Touch screen: please touch!

The representation of complex data and correlations carried over to nation states and continents: the Global Ecological Footprint and other surprising worldviews.

The Global Ecological Footprint world map,

developed by William Rees and the Basel scientist Mathis Wackernagel in the 1990s, brings together graphically the total capacity of the world's natural resources and how much of it different populations expend per year. The map depicts the countries of the world expressed in the size of their ecological footprint (menu *Map Categories*, category *Depletion*, map 322 *Ecological Footprint*).

The website [www.worldmapper.org](http://www.worldmapper.org) comprises a collection of maps that offer a large range of statistical data and complex correlations with regard to the size of countries, rendering a new, and often surprising, view of our world. A special gadget are the animated maps that show changes occurring over a certain period of time.

Real time access to [www.worldmapper.org](http://www.worldmapper.org)  
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## 38

### Slit gong *garamut*

Sounds and noises define space. In many

Oceanic societies slit gongs are used to convey signals and messages.

Slit gongs are ritual objects and instruments of everyday use at the same time. They serve as means to send messages over long distances, but also to warn people of impending dangers. Raids by enemies, floods, fires, as well as births and deaths used to be communicated through specified rhythm sequences. Today, slit gongs often also serve as substitutes for school or church bells.

The slit gong was chosen for the acoustic room on the strength of its sound volume. The purpose of the installation is to graphically represent sound. The colour scales represent reproductions of sound intensity, rhythms, intervals and transitions. The installation is an attempt to approximate the phenomenon called synaesthesia, that is, the coupling of different sensory fields; here colour and sound.

Bun, Yuat River, Papua New Guinea

Wood

Inv.-no. Vb 19604

First half of 20th century

Purchase, Franz Panzenböck, 1962



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