

## Celebrating Nigerian bronze in London

One of our most cherished dreams came to fruition when we were invited to London for a two-week training programme at the British Museum. We came with the aim of exchanging skills and supporting the installation of the *Bronze* exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts. The exhibition was part of the London Cultural Olympiad. The National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria (NCMM) lent eight important bronze artefacts to the exhibition including a crowned head from Ife, a pair of leopards from Benin and an elaborate 9th-century Igbo-Ukwu snail shell. We assisted in the preparation of mounts and the installation of bronzes from both the NCMM and the British Museum, working with a colleague from the British Museum and a host of dedicated staff from the Royal Academy.

We observed the attention to detail and the care taken in mounting the objects in the exhibition and feel confident that we can use our own local materials to make similar mounts. On 11 September 2012 we accompanied our Director General, Dr Abdullah Yusuf Usman, to the opening of the exhibition. We felt highly honoured and proud to see the Nigerian bronzes exhibited so favourably alongside bronzes from other parts of the world.

Following the opening we resumed our training at the British Museum where staff from the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas taught us some of the mount-making techniques used in the Africa galleries. We learnt different methods for making mounts in brass, steel and perspex and were taught how to handle a range of workshop tools and machinery. Various other training sessions were organised for us during our stay, among which was a visit to see the Orsman Road storage facility. Here we were shown various types of storage and we discussed the methods used to control temperature, humidity and pests for the protection of the objects. We were also introduced to the collections database and to standard documentation procedures. At Blythe House we viewed the textile storage and learnt about preservation, display and special mount-making techniques for textiles and costumes from across Africa.

We also visited other institutions in London including the Geffrye Museum, the Horniman Museum, the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology and the Grant Museum of Zoology. We discovered the use of multi-media guides and audio-visuels which all help to make the exhibition experience more educative and entertaining for visitors.

Our experiences and training will improve our creative ability to design and mount exhibitions in our home institutions. It will also increase capacity building within the NCMM and through collaboration will help other cultural organisations achieve internationally-accepted standards in exhibition



design. We were impressed by the positive attitude of the British Museum staff in their various roles, trying to give us the best they could at every point in time.

We would like to thank the NCMM's Director General for allowing us time to participate in this placement and to the British Museum for their unending support during our stay.

**Babatunde E. Oyinloye**, Ilorin Museum  
**Abdurrahshid Ahmad**, Kano Museum

Celebrating the success of Team GB following the Olympics and Paralympics in September 2012.

Adburrashid and Babatunde with a pair of 16th-century leopards from the Kingdom of Benin.

## Caring for collections in Uganda



Following the Getty East Africa Programme's (GEAP) Collection Care I workshop in Kisumu (22 February–9 March 2012), the participants from Uganda National Museum organised a capacity-building workshop for all staff upon their return. The GEAP-trained team included: Jatho Peace, Conservator of Ethnography; Mugume Amon, Assistant Conservator of Natural History; Busingye Jovia, Site Attendant; and Nanyombi Alice, Museum Guide. The Uganda Museum workshop was held in April 2012 and was officially opened by the Principal Conservator, Mr Kizalwa Samuel, who stood in for the Commissioner of Museums and Monuments, Ms Rose Nkale Mwanje.

The objective was to share skills acquired during the GEAP Collections Care workshop in Kisumu and all the participants played active roles in leading different sessions. The first session was led by Nanyombi Alice who provided an introduction to storage techniques. Busingye Jovia showed the workshop participants appropriate ways of handling and moving museum objects. Jatho Peace then gave an overview of integrated pest management and finally, Mugume Amon led a session on cleaning museum objects. He helped other members of staff to practise the different techniques by cleaning objects from the museum's cultural and natural history collections. The session on cleaning was very popular with participants and it was amazing how the use of simple tools, such as soft brushes, and swab-cleaning transformed the physical appearance of objects. A vacuum cleaner, provided by the GEAP, was used in cleaning display cases. The participants enjoyed this interactive and very practical workshop, and especially those working directly with objects felt more empowered to take good care of their collections while also enjoying their work.



brought much-needed collection care skills back home and used the very objects participants handle on a day-to-day basis. By sharing their skills, the GEAP team from Uganda Museum have turned themselves into advocates of good practice in collections care in their museum. The Commissioner is hoping that all the Uganda Museum staff participating in GEAP's various modules – collections care, education and exhibitions – will emulate the excellent example set by the first team. The GEAP participants from Uganda Museum wish to take this opportunity to convey their sincere gratitude to the GEAP team for training them in collections care. We also appreciate the additional support in the form of practical and relevant collection care hand-outs, materials and equipment, all of which have been of immense benefit to our institution. The follow-up visits by the Nairobi-based GEAP staff are equally of great benefit for it helps participants further refine their skills by giving them the opportunity to practise and share their knowledge with their colleagues and interns. Many thanks GEAP team, and keep it up!

**Jatho Peace**, Uganda Museum  
**Juma Ondeng**, GEAP

Manual-cleaning one of the natural history specimens, May 2012.

Staff from the National Museum using their new skills in cleaning basketry objects, May 2012.

In conclusion, this in-house training was a success. The GEAP team from Uganda Museum shared their skills in collections care with their colleagues who hadn't been able to attend the workshop in Kisumu. The GEAP workshop

## Overcoming challenges in the central highlands of Kenya

Located in the central highlands of Kenya, Meru Museum is housed in the former District Commissioner's residence which is also the oldest stone building in the town. Meru Museum comes under the National Museums of Kenya's Directorate of Museums, Sites and Monuments (DMSM). DMSM is divided into four distinct regions – Nairobi region (three stations), Coastal region (ten stations), Western region (eleven stations) and Central region (thirteen stations), in which Meru Museum falls. It is one of the stations that has derived significant benefits as a direct result of the ongoing Getty East Africa Programme (GEAP) training.

Collections Attendant Peter Koinange Mayienda was very excited when he was selected to participate in the Collections Care I workshop in Kisumu earlier this year. Visiting him at his station, this is what he had to say:

'I am very happy that after being in the museum for five years, I have gotten this chance to get museum-related training. I came in as security personnel and had many challenges when I was re-deployed last year to manage the collection. I had no prior experience and only relied on the few tips that I had gotten through other staff. After the two-weeks training in Kisumu in February this year I have gained skills in object-handling. I now feel more confident and have started to clean the objects on display in the gallery. Before the training, our collection here at Meru was in a very bad shape. The objects were on the floor since there were no shelves in the store room.

I came back [from the workshop] and asked the curator to set aside some money which we used to construct the current shelves. I cleaned the objects and placed them on their new shelves. GEAP facilitated this process by giving the station a toolkit with assorted brushes, a dial hygrometer, a thermometer and materials to make insect traps and soft pads for the objects. When the Director of Museums, Sites and Monuments came over, he was impressed with the improvements I had made and facilitated my travel to the Cultural Heritage Store in Nairobi where I spent two weeks



working with Mr Ray Balongo (another GEAP participant). While there, I learnt more about store management and documentation. I am very grateful to the GEAP for helping me to become a museum professional. I look forward to the next training.'

Meru Museum has recorded a remarkable change since Peter received the Collections Care I training. I was personally amazed by the transformation. It was greatly impressive that within two months, he had not only totally changed the face of the store, but had also monitored the environmental conditions, taking recordings of relative humidity twice a day. The softly-spoken Collections Attendant went ahead to point out areas within his collection that held the most vulnerable materials. His enthusiasm for his work was evident as we went on to make the soft padding for some of his shelves. Peter is positive about the future of the collections at Meru Museum and has already prepared a plan which he believes will help in overcoming the challenges of limited space.

**Peter Koinange Mayienda**, Meru Museum  
**Njeri Gachihi**, GEAP

Peter Koinange making cotton-covered padded cushions to line new shelves in the collections store, May 2012.

The entrance to Meru Museum, 2011.



## My unforgettable London experience

I had the opportunity to travel to London for two weeks in July 2012 under the kind sponsorship of the Africa Programme. I have been working with the Programme in Ghana since 2009. I was invited to visit the British Museum to exchange skills with colleagues in the UK and to help me learn more about different types of museums.

My journey began in the British Museum's Wellcome Trust Gallery where my colleagues from Kumasi had installed a display case on Ghanaian funerals during a work placement in 2009. I was very happy to see the great job they had done. Early in my visit I was asked to attend a reception for patrons that was organised for the International Training Programme and had an opportunity to present and interpret the Ghanaian displays during the evening. It was a great honour for me.

At the Museum's Textile Centre I was able to refresh my knowledge by assisting visiting colleagues to sew on labels and to fold and roll textiles for storage. I was also able to tour the main ethnography store where I was shown the freezing and quarantine process for new objects coming into the Museum. The store contains objects from 50 African countries. It was an amazing experience for me to see how the Museum cares for its collections.



During my time in London I was taken to visit the Churchill War Rooms and the Guards Museum. At the Churchill War Rooms I used an audio guide for the very first time. The guide was very useful and informative and gave detailed commentaries on key objects. It helped me to access the collections independently and at my own pace, without the need for a tour guide. On the way to the Guards Museum, I witnessed the Changing of the Guard. This involves a new guard taking over duty from the old guard. It was a beautiful display.

I also travelled outside London to visit a number of museums including the Ashmolean Museum and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and the Museum of East Anglian Life at Stowmarket in Suffolk.

The visit was not only about museum tours but also had a social and entertainment element which made my stay exciting and an unforgettable lifetime experience. I was taken to the London Eye which is a big wheel with pods which you enter to get a panoramic view of London.

On a weekend trip to the site of Stonehenge (which literally means 'hanging stones') the experience was no different. I had heard and read about these ancient stone circle sites which had survived from a prehistoric culture and seeing them was a wonderful experience for me. I also visited the nearby city of Salisbury, a religious site, whose cathedral has the second tallest spire in the world.

I cannot apply everything I learnt immediately but hope to incorporate some of the new techniques and ideas in my work. Even though there are numerous challenges in my museum, I hope to overcome them. After my visit to London, my focus will be to document all the collections on display and then to tackle those in storage.

I'm also planning to embark on an outreach programme to local schools using my handling collection. Finally, as a proud member of the Africa Programme in Ghana, I hope to share my experiences and new skills with other colleagues.

### **Gideon Agyare**

Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies  
University of Ghana at Legon



Gideon teaching a colleague from Tanzania to sew labels onto textiles, July 2012.

Gideon and colleague Patricia Amo at the Museum of East Anglian Life, Stowmarket, July 2012.

## Remembering the 1998 Nairobi terror attack

I work as an Assistant Director in the Directorate of Museums, Sites and Monuments at the National Museums of Kenya with direct responsibility for the Nairobi National Museum. I enrolled as a part-time PhD student in Art History at the Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia in 2009 with generous support from the FitzGerald African Scholarship Fund. My PhD research deals with collective memory with a specific focus on remembering the Nairobi terror attack.

In 1998 the US embassy in downtown Nairobi was bombed by al-Qaeda-linked terrorists. The attack ripped down the embassy building and partially demolished the adjacent buildings, resulting in the death of 218 people, while leaving over 6,000 others injured. Kenyan victims – who were not the prime targets, but ordinary citizens going about their daily business – were particularly affected. The perpetrators of the attack were external and their primary target was not Kenya, but the US. Kenyans, therefore, saw this as a tragedy visited upon them collectively as a nation.

The pain and trauma engendered by this attack has continued to be felt, not only by those who either lost relatives and friends, but by many others whose lives were affected. To help people work through the collective trauma, a number of initiatives were mooted by the government, donor agencies, trusts and artists' communities in Nairobi.

One such initiative was the erection of a monument at the exact point where the embassy once stood. A plaque in the Memorial Park is inscribed as follows: 'A memorial to all the innocent people who lost their lives, a garden of solace, offering comfort, strength and hope in an environment of relative peace, a tribute to the courage of those who have coped with the injuries sustained or the loss of a loved one and the condemnation of terrorism.'

My research documents memories of the bomb blast and the meaning ascribed to the August Seventh Memorial Park by the survivors and the Kenyan public. The bitterness immediately after the blast and in the ensuing years was difficult to handle. Many Kenyans directed their anger at both the Muslim perpetrators for engaging in such an act of wanton terrorism and the American government for their



perceived insensitivity in assisting victims and survivors in the aftermath. Over the years, however, the site has become a garden of solace offering comfort, strength and hope to the survivors, alleviating the bitterness and enabling them to reconcile themselves to the devastating results of the attack. My research examines how memories of the terror attack are constructed, mediated through visual and performance art and utilised in the management of trauma and the promotion of reconciliation in a post-terrorism environment.

I will be returning to UEA in January 2013 for a third semester where I will aim to complete another chapter of my thesis. The opportunity to travel to the UK each year has been intellectually enriching and the interchange of ideas and sharing of knowledge with my supervisors and my peers has contributed positively in advancing my work.

**Kiprop Lagat**  
National Museums of Kenya



The memorial wall bears the names of all the victims of the 1998 attack. © Kiprop Lagat, 2010.

The memorial fountain in the August Seventh Memorial Park. © Kiprop Lagat, 2012.



The newsletter authors, left-right from top: Abdurrashid Ahmad, Babatunde Oyinloye, Gideon Agyare, Jatho Peace, Juma Ondeng, Kiprop Lagat, Njeri Gachihi, Peter Koinange Mayienda.

**The British Museum**

Great Russell Street,  
London WC1B 3DG

📍 Tottenham Court Road,  
Holborn, Russell Square

+44 (0)20 7323 8000

[africaprogramme@britishmuseum.org](mailto:africaprogramme@britishmuseum.org)

[britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)

[blog.britishmuseum.org](http://blog.britishmuseum.org)

© The Trustees of the British Museum 11/2012