



Tuesday, February 18, 2003

MBAG exhibits authentic African artifacts

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

To enhance awareness of African cultures among K-12 students, Catherine Blackwell, a former Detroit Public School teacher, often embellished her classes by displaying a wide variety of authentic African artifacts crafted by noted artists from 41 countries across the continent.

Treasures from Blackwell's vast collection, compiled over 65 visits since 1960, will be on display in its largest-ever public exhibit from Feb. 21 to March 30 when Oakland University's **Meadow Brook Art Gallery** presents "A Heritage of Teaching: The African Art Collection of Catherine C. Blackwell."

The exhibit is part of an ongoing effort to classify and catalogue the collection and to find permanent homes for selected pieces among local art and educational institutions.

"The exhibit will include 100 examples of unusual artifacts from all the major ethnic groups on the continent of Africa," said Meadow Brook Art Gallery Director Dick Goody. "The objects range from ritualistic pieces, such as masks and headpieces, to textiles and smaller toy-like objects. Many of the pieces are quite unusual. Others are very significant and valuable. All are very interesting. Two extreme examples are a royal necklace made of gold and a toy-like helicopter made from cereal boxes and wire."

A native of Detroit, Blackwell retired in 1994 from her position as instructional specialist of African/African-American Studies. She made her first trip to Africa in 1960 when Ghana gained its independence. She earned an M.A. degree in education from Wayne State, and from 1970-77 she attended universities in East and West Africa to study the culture and art history of the countries she visited. She traveled with the goal of bringing back African art and culture to Detroit as teaching tools in her classes and at various speaking engagements. During one of her visits, Emperor Haile Selasse accompanied her when she traveled to Ethiopia.

Meadow Brook Art Gallery is located in 208 Wilson Hall, across from Meadow Brook Theatre. Gallery hours are noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and 1 to 5:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The gallery also is open during Meadow Brook Theatre evening performances from 7 p.m. through the first intermission Wednesday through Friday, and 5:30 p.m. through the first intermission Saturday and Sunday. All exhibits are free and open to the public. For more information, visit the **Meadow Brook Art Gallery** Web site or call (248) 370-3005.

SUMMARY

To enhance awareness of African cultures among K-12 students, Catherine Blackwell, a former Detroit Public School teacher, often embellished her classes by displaying a variety of authentic African artifacts. Treasures from Blackwell's vast collection, compiled over 65 visits since 1960, will be on display in its largest-ever public exhibit at Meadow Brook Art Gallery during "A Heritage of Teaching: The African Art Collection of Catherine C. Blackwell."

Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, February 18, 2003
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Tuesday, February 18, 2003
Article Start Date: Wednesday, October 15, 2003