

The African Wheel: Traditional African Arts and Crafts

African Art has something very special about it. African art has not changed dramatically from the Stone Age till today and this shows in the traditional designs of every type of art, be it African masks, African fabrics, African musical instruments, African ladies Handbags, African carvings and in fact all manner of African art and crafts.

It is not that symbolic African arts and crafts are only desirable in Africa; this art form has a following worldwide. Art appreciators understand that the creation of African masks and African musical instruments have a specific legacy. Methods for the creation of these items of an artistic nature have been passed down by word of mouth from father to son and mother to daughter for eons. The principle for the creation of these pieces has been for spiritual as well as practical purposes.

Traditional [African fabrics](#) are generally created using the batik method; this essentially means that the fabrics have been printed with designs using a hand dying method. Making the fabrics unique as well as individual, much more in the line of African arts and crafts than the machine woven or dyed cloth that is prevalent in western societies.

The creation of African Masks dates way back into history and some have been known to have been created further back in time than the Paleolithic era. Generally created from wood, African masks are also manufactured using leather, metal and fabric. They are highly prized and sought after today as art pieces but the original intention for them was for ceremonial purposes. The African mask traditionally represents a god or spirit and the wearer was believed to be possessed by the spirit represented by the mask.

While African ladies handbags might be believed by some to be a more contemporary art form, they have in fact a very rich history. Although more traditionally worn by males. Generally worn hidden under clothing to contain the proceeds of an unattainable task in order to win the heart of their beloved. A Mossi (Burkina Fasso) proverb even says "What is left in the bag is superior to what has been taken away"

Interestingly [African musical instruments](#) are also much sought after by art collectors and musicians alike. Even the banjo, thought to be a western instrument is of African historical origin and hand drumming is very specific throughout the entire continent of Africa as a means to support ritual dance. Many African cultures have used African musical instruments to ward off evil spirits. African music is seen as being dynamic and very functional, unlike western music that is designed to merely dance or listen to.

African Carvings are very pertinent to African culture and takes the form of many varieties of them, the most common themes in African carving of people are a couple, a woman and child, males with a weapon or animal and a stranger or outsider. African Carving also takes the shape of common household utensils. Bowls may be carved from stone or wood. The traditional Zulu meat or "nyama" bowl is carved from wood.

Essentially [African arts and crafts](#) have a rich cultural history and are widely sought after by collectors and art appreciators throughout the world.