

HEADRESTS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Headrests from Southern Africa - The architecture of sleep presents the subject of southern African headrests in a fascinating new light. The book, richly illustrated – often with in situ photographs, offers unique historical and personal information collected from many of the original owners and carvers of the headrests. So, for the first time African headrests are brought to life with detailed information and the stories of their creation, ownership, use and significance.

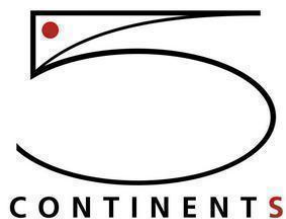
The 438 headrests from the collections of Bruce Goodall from Cape Town and Frédéric Zimer from Paris are presented according to 3 geographical areas: KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo (where the Ntwane people live) and Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland).

Since 2003, Goodall has made numerous field trips collecting, as well as interviewing and photographing the owners and carvers of headrests. In 2017, Goodall's collection grew substantially with the purchase of a comprehensive collection of headrests from the Msinga area of KwaZulu-Natal. This collection had been assembled and meticulously documented by the late Anglican priest Clive Newman and his friend and assistant, Mavis Duma, between the late 1980s and the mid-2000s. The Zimer collection has been built up since the 1990s through his many travels in Africa, and his acquisitions from collectors and African art dealers around the world.

This publication not only offers insight into the personal and historical dimensions of this important southern African tradition through the text written about the headrests and their owners by Bruce Goodall, but includes essays by Newman, Nel and Leibhammer and a text about collecting by Duma. Together these facilitate a penetrating understanding of these valued items as well as a respectful appreciation of the cultures and individuals who made and used them.

Bruce Goodall is a collector, researcher, and dealer in southern African art. He studied Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town, but it was only 25 years later that his interest in the cultures of Africa was finally combined with his penchant for collecting. In 2003, on a road trip to northern Namibia and southern Angola with his wife Jeanne, he began his first field collecting, purchasing, amongst other items, his first headrests. He since has been a dedicated African art collector with a specific focus on headrests and research-intensive field collecting.

Frédéric Zimer was a building construction engineer, working for 20 years in the Telecoms sector in France. He fell in love with Africa thanks to his participation in major projects in French-speaking Africa and his travels to more than 20 African countries. His African art collection has focused on headrests from KwaZulu-Natal, Eswatini, Nigeria (Calabar) and Ethiopia. His deep interest in these forms is predicated on the fact that for him these objects of daily life represent the cultural richness of the regions and peoples of Africa.



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Nessa Leibhammer graduated with a degree in Fine Art and an MA in Precolonial studies from the University of the Witwatersrand. She is currently an independent consultant who writes, researches, edits, publishes and curates. Her specialist area is the traditionalist material culture of southern Africa. For 12 years she was the curator of southern African art at the Johannesburg Art Gallery and in 2012 was an invited Research Fellow of the African Studies Research Centre at Cambridge University, UK. She is currently a research associate of the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative at the University of Cape Town involved in the multi-disciplinary study of African heritage and material culture.

Karel Nel studied Fine Art at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, St Martin's School of Art, London and the University of California, Berkeley. Until 2017, Nel was Associate Professor at the School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand. In 2018, he took up the post of Senior Adjunct Curator at the newly opened Norval Foundation in Cape Town. Here he curated three major retrospective exhibitions of the work of Sydney Kumalo, Ezrom Legae and Eduardo Villa, accompanied by a scholarly catalogue, produced by Elizabeth Burroughs and Nel himself, with other contributions. Nel has edited and contributed to a number of publications dealing with African Art.

Clive Newman completed a BA degree at Natal University and entered the Anglican Church as a priest in 2007. He was well known for his compassionate work in prisons, old age homes and hospitals. From an early age he showed an interest in diverse social, cultural and spiritual histories. African art, however, was his great passion – in particular the headrests of the KwaZulu-Natal region. Working together with Mavis Duma, he assembled a remarkable collection that was accompanied by detailed information and photographs.

Mavis Duma grew up in Emachunwini, the area of Msinga in KwaZulu-Natal under Chief Mchunu of the Mchunu clan. While growing up she was immersed in two worlds as her father's side of the family were Christians (AmaKholwa), while her mother's side believed in the ancestors (AmaBhica). Having met Clive Newman in Durban, Duma expressed her love and passion for the Zulu culture of the region. They worked together for almost 20 years, collecting a broad range of objects, especially headrests.