

AFRIKEA (2009)

ADEJOKE TUGBIYELE



Medium: Recycled IKEA Stools, West African fabric, basswood, and twine.



By reconfiguring two IKEA stools, I critique mass-standardization and conformity in Western culture - an affordable, one-size fits all approach to design. I also play with fabric taken from African print, which became part of Nigerian attire as a result of the evolution in aesthetics and style that began with African inclusion in international production chains that came with increased trade with Europe, and European mass production of fabric that copied African and Asian indigenous patterns in Java and other

arena of European imperialism from the 16th century. By the 19th and 20th centuries, some of the production was done in European textile millsⁱ. The imperatives of competitiveness and profit later caused relocation of some of the production to Asia, (including India and China), and by the early 20th century, to Africa. They also compelled European producers to be highly sensitive to African tastes and preferencesⁱⁱ. Africans who purchase European and Asian-origin fabric did so sometimes because it was less expensive, because it was color-fast, as compared with African fabric's tendency to "bleed" and color the bodies of wearers with the dyes; and also because of the allure and prestige of owning something exotic and foreignⁱⁱⁱ. In the 20th Century, the Lome Convention gave preferential access to the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries' exports to European countries, while discriminating against non-ACP exports, and allowed the ACP to impose tariffs on European exports^{iv}. During the Uruguay Round negotiations, under the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) regime, The Multifibre Agreements, made it more profitable to produce in Africa, because textiles exported from Africa to Europe and the United States were not subjected to tariffs while very high tariffs were imposed on textiles from

Asia. Consequently, more production moved to Africa^v that departed once the Multifibre Agreement expired in January 2005.

This piece organizes shapes in ways that resemble traditional African thrones. A new story is thus formed about the importance of sitting through what is now a conceptual piece of sculpture. As described in the publication "The Global Africa Project," co-authored by Sims and King-Hammond, AFRIKEA is a "reconstruction and customization of prefabricated furniture from the furnishing and lifestyle giant IKEA."



Images are courtesy of the artist taken at the exhibition, The Global Africa Project at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York, NY.

AFRIKEA is on loan from the private collection of Patricia Bell. It will be on exhibit next at the Reginald Lewis Museum in Baltimore, Maryland in January 2012, as part of the traveling exhibition The Global Africa Project.

For reviews of this work when exhibited, see:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lia-petridis/global-africa-project-in-_b_786167.html

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/03/arts/design/03mad.html>

BIOGRAPHY

Adejoke Tugbiyele is a Brooklyn-born artist of Nigerian (Yoruba) parents. She was raised in Lagos, Nigeria during seven of her formative years. In 2002, Tugbiyele received a Bachelor of Science in Architecture at the New Jersey School of Architecture at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. She ceased PhD study in Urban Systems at the same institution in order to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture at Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), Reinhart School of Sculpture. Her work has been exhibited at The Museum of Arts and Design, Centre for Contemporary Art (CCALagos), and the United Nations Public Gallery. Recent awards include a Maryland Institute College of Art Merit Award in 2011 and first place in the Newark Arts Council, Art & the City, Sculptural Fine Art Competition in 2006.

ⁱ Christopher B. Steiner "Another Image of Africa: Toward an Ethnohistory of European Cloth Marketed in WestAfrica, 1873-1960" *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Spring, 1985), pp. 91-110

ⁱⁱ Tunde M. Akinwumi "The "African Print" Hoax: Machine Produced Textiles Jeopardize African Print Authenticity" *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.2, no.5, July 2008; Tunde M. Akinwumi The European ""African print" and the direction of authentic African print design efforts in Nigeria" *Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol 8, No 2 2010;

Boatema Boateng "Symposium: Walking the Tradition-Modernity Tightrope: Gender Contradictions in Textile Production and Intellectual Property Law in Ghana" *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* Volume 15 Issue 2 2007

ⁱⁱⁱ Elisha P. Renne "Aso Ipo, Red Cloth from Bunu" *African Arts*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Special Issue: West African Textiles (Jul., 1992), pp. 64-69+102

^{iv} Richard Gibb "Post-Lomé: The European Union and the South" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Jun., 2000), pp. 457-481

^v Peter Gibbon "Present-Day Capitalism, the New International Trade Regime & Africa" *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 29, No. 91, Sovereignty, Democracy & Zimbabwe's Tragedy (Mar., 2002), pp. 95-112