

Discovery & African Art!

MEET THE MUSEUM
Theater

African Visions Gallery

Directions

- Come out of the lecture hall and face the circular railing. Go to your **right** around the railing and out through the short corridor. Before reaching the elevators, go **left**, then **left** again up the stairs.
- At the top of the stairs, go **left** a few steps and enter the large, blue-carpeted space.
- Go between the pillars at the **right** to enter the African Vision gallery. Head **right** into the room with orange walls. Go **straight** past the long white central showcase.
- A little to your **left**, find the reddish terracotta figure in the case against the white wall.

Discussion

All around the world, when something is important to a community, people show that fact through their stories, their songs, and their art.

- **Who** is depicted in this sculpture? (*A man.*) What is the sculpture made of? (*Pottery.*) What is pottery? (*Clay that is baked at a very high temperature until it becomes hard and usually waterproof.*) Have you ever sculpted things out of clay?
- What is the man wearing? (*Necklaces of beads, a sash over his shoulder, a feathered headdress.*) The special beads and sash show that this man is an **elder** of the Yoruba peoples, in Nigeria, and that he belongs to a group of the **oldest and wisest men and women** in the community. These special people settle arguments and help balance the power of the king.
- **Is it good** to have wise people who can give advice to a leader? Why? (*To give him/her more information so he/she can make good decisions; to keep the leader from becoming too powerful and hurting ordinary people.*) Does our president have advisors like this? (*He has many experts and advisors to help him. We also have judges and courts to help settle arguments.*) **Are older people wiser?** Why or why not?
- Who makes the decisions in **your** family? Who gives advice? When you have a question, who do you ask? The last time you had an argument with someone, how did it get settled? **Do you have wise elders in your family or neighborhood?**



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Smithsonian
National Museum of African Art



The Smithsonian Associates

Directions

Just around the corner from the pottery figure is a colorful crown.

Discussion

- This object is a **crown**. Does it look like other crowns you've seen?
- This crown was worn by the king. **How did he wear it?** (*He put it on over his head and looked out through the netting.*) How would it feel to wear this crown? What would you see right in front of your eyes? Why do you think the crown has netting in front of the eyes? (*The king was thought to be so powerful that he might harm ordinary people if he looked at them without the netting!*) Are there other reasons why a crown might have netting?
- **What is the crown made of?** (*Thousands of tiny glass beads.*) What are beads? Have you ever seen tiny beads like this? Where? Even the animals and people are made of beads! Have you ever made a bead necklace or bracelet? **What if you were the artist who created this special crown for the king?** How long would it take? Artists must have been special people too!
- What **animals** do you see on this crown? (*Chameleon, snake, birds, etc.*) Why do you think they are there? (*They are there because they stand for **special powers** that the king is said to have.*)
- **Look closely at the chameleon**, right in the front. Have you ever seen a live chameleon? What makes it special? (*A chameleon is a kind of lizard with very unusual eyes. Each eye can move by itself, so a chameleon can look at two things at once!*) The chameleon is on the crown to show that the king has the power to see everything, everywhere. Sounds like Superman! Would seeing everything, everywhere, be a useful power for a king to have? Would it be useful for **you**? What could you do if you had that power?
- What special powers might the **birds** stand for?
- How many **people** are on this crown? Why do you think they might be there? What do they seem to be doing? **What do you think they might say to the king?**

