



## Global African Connections in Art & Design

Teachers' Resource

Supporting KS3 – 5 Art & Design and Design & Technology curricula and exam specifications

## V&A Teachers' Resource for Key Stages 3 – 5

The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) is the world's leading museum of art, design and performance. Its collection of 2.7 million objects spans over 5,000 years of human creativity. Each object in the museum has a different story to tell and can spark different questions about our connection to art and design.

The V&A holds a diverse range of material from the continent of Africa. The collections include important historic artefacts from Egypt, Ghana and Ethiopia, as well as ceramics, textiles and glassware from northern Africa, and prints and photographs from southern Africa.

The objects in this resource have been chosen not only to highlight the incredible breadth and range of the collection but also to showcase leading artists, designers, makers and thinkers from Africa or of African heritage. The objects cover a range of different disciplines such as fashion, textiles, ceramics, photography, product design, graphic design, jewellery and glassware.

There is a companion resource to this one, *Caribbean Connections in Art and Design*, focussing on designers and makers from the Caribbean or of Caribbean heritage. Available at: [vam.ac.uk/info/teachers-resources-for-secondary-schools-and-colleges](http://vam.ac.uk/info/teachers-resources-for-secondary-schools-and-colleges)

Each Object Discussion Card encourages object-based learning and allows students to develop critical, creative and collaborative thinking skills with the support of teachers and educators. The aim of the resource is to open up the Global Africa Collection at the V&A to a wider audience and allow students to develop their knowledge of leading figures of African heritage in the art and design world. We hope that the resource inspires you and your students to delve deeper into the collections and find out more.

### Resource Co-Author

The resource has been developed in collaboration with a member of the V&A's Visitor Experience team, Esther Agbetteor. Esther has worked at the V&A for 15 years and over that time has developed an in-depth knowledge of the objects relating to Africa within the collections. Esther has carefully selected the objects in the resource to demonstrate the wealth of the collections relating to Africa and to recognise leading makers from Africa or of African heritage.

Esther says 'I carry a passion to support the V&A in its endeavour to transition and become a museum known and recognised for Africa and Diaspora art, design, performance and history. It has been a journey of discovery through the galleries and study rooms to highlight the wonderful and substantial collections of Africa and Diaspora objects here in the museum. Our mission has been to inform, engage and share this rich Africa and Diaspora heritage within the V&A collections to new audiences and embrace them into the museum. My role continues to help enable new experiences and personal encounters for our audience.'



Esther Agbetteor © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



### Guidance for teachers

The resource can be used while visiting the V&A or to support object-based learning in the classroom. You can use the cards as posters in your classroom after the activity. The resource has been written for Key Stage 3 – 5 students and teachers should tailor the content to their students' level.

Each card includes an object image, short object description and discussion questions. Encourage your students to take time looking at or drawing the object before starting the activities. We suggest giving students about 10 – 15 minutes to work through the questions on each card.

Before starting, please read through the full resource and check the suitability of the content of the cards and questions for your students. Some of the object descriptions include sensitive language and/or topics and may require a more tailored approach.

The Object Discussion Card 'Kaba and slit ensemble' designed by Gisella Boutique refers to the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence. The Object Discussion Card '*Britons Through Negro Spectacles*' contains subject matter and language relating to racial prejudice and discrimination. The Object Discussion Card '*Day of Solidarity with the Congo*' refers to the execution of Patrice Lumumba. Please use your judgment and knowledge of your students to assess whether the content is appropriate for them.

### Managing student discussion

This resource has been devised to highlight the important contribution to art and design made by artists and designers from Africa or of African heritage. Some of the objects selected for the resource include works by artists and designers which highlight the prejudice and discrimination faced by Black communities.

Some of the discussion points and activities will help facilitate discussion around racism and the lived experiences of Black communities. If there are any African students or students of African heritage

in your group, we would recommend letting them know in advance that some of the discussion may focus on racial discrimination and allow them to decide whether they would like to participate. Students should not feel pressurised to contribute if it makes them uncomfortable. Acknowledging the lived experiences of African and African heritage people is vital.

We recommend students refer to the student discussion cards in small groups to encourage peer-to-peer discussion. Think carefully about group dynamics before splitting the class into smaller groups. In some cases, it may be more appropriate for the teacher to facilitate the discussion. Allow space and time for meaningful discussion and room for students to take time out if they need to.

We recommend voicing the following discussion guidelines before students start:

- Allow everyone in the group to voice their opinion. Be kind, patient and respectful of other people's views and ideas.
- Don't worry if you don't know what your opinion is yet. Ask further questions to your group or do more research to help you decide.
- Remember that everyone's opinion is valid. If someone has a different opinion to you, listen to them and ask them to explain their reasoning – it might change your own viewpoint.

### Further questions

As well as the discussion points on the cards, use the questions below to encourage further object-based discussion with your students. Not all of them will apply to every object.

<i>Aesthetic</i>	What are its stylistic features?
<i>Technical</i>	What is it made from? How does it work?
<i>Industrial</i>	How and in what volume is it manufactured?
<i>Cultural</i>	What or who is it responding to?
<i>Behavioural</i>	How do you interact with it?
<i>Economic</i>	How does it financially impact the consumer and/or manufacturer?
<i>Environmental</i>	Is it sustainable? What is its lifespan?

### Find Out More

Each Object Discussion Card also includes a 'find out more' section with other objects of interest, links to articles and digital content.

### Student booklet

A student booklet has been provided at the end of the resource to be used in conjunction with the object discussion cards as a place for students to note down and sketch their responses to the objects and the discussion points. The booklet is designed to be printed out and can be included in sketchbooks or portfolios. It can be used on a visit or for work in the classroom. The booklet includes shorter object descriptions and replicates the discussion points from the object discussion cards. It is suitable for Key Stage 3 – 5 students.

Find out more:

Encourage your students to find out more about the objects by visiting: [vam.ac.uk/collections](http://vam.ac.uk/collections)

### Visiting the museum

V&A displays and galleries change regularly. Please check before you visit to make sure the works you would like to see are on display. Find out more: [vam.ac.uk/collections](http://vam.ac.uk/collections)

### Prints & Drawings Study Room

Several of the works in this resource are available to view on request in the Prints & Drawings Study Room. Go to: [vam.ac.uk/info/study-rooms](http://vam.ac.uk/info/study-rooms) to find out more about booking a visit.

### National Art Library

One of the objects in the resource links to a diary that is held in the National Art Library at V&A South Kensington. Find out more about booking an appointment to visit the library at: [vam.ac.uk/info/national-art-library](http://vam.ac.uk/info/national-art-library)

### Critical friends

The content for this resource has been devised in consultation with colleagues across the V&A. We are grateful to them all for contributing their expertise and knowledge in the development of the resource. Special thanks to Esther Agbettor for her work on selecting the objects for this resource and developing the content.

## “SCULPTURE” bag, Virgil Abloh for IKEA, 2019

The “SCULPTURE” bag is a reinterpretation of furniture and home accessories retailer IKEA’s iconic blue bag plastic ‘FRAKTA’ shopping bag, that has been part of the IKEA shopping experience since the 1990s and is its most popular product. In 2019, IKEA released ‘MARKERAD’ (Swedish for ‘labelled’), a special edition of homeware items in collaboration with fashion designer Virgil Abloh.

Virgil Abloh was an American fashion designer and entrepreneur of Ghanaian heritage. Born in Illinois, Abloh first established his career as a designer during his stint as art director for Kanye West and Jay-Z’s joint album, *Watch the Throne* (2011). In 2012 he launched his own luxury streetwear clothing brand, Pyrex Vision, and a year later founded the Milan-based fashion label Off-White. In 2018 he was the first African American to be Artistic Director of Louis Vuitton’s menswear collection. He also collaborated with Nike to create a streetwear collection, including trainers, under the Off-White brand. He reached a level of global fame unusual for a designer and was one of the most respected fashion designers of his generation. In 2018, Abloh was named by *Time* magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world that year.

The release of the Abloh IKEA collection transformed the IKEA shopping experience into something much more like a streetwear drop. This new sales strategy, which consists of releasing limited-edition products in small quantities at selected retail locations, creates a sense of urgency and the illusion of scarcity, especially amongst the younger consumers. The “SCULPTURE” bag was the cheapest product in the collection, the 33 litres version for around £8.50, and 79 litres version for around £11.

### Discuss

- How would you describe the style of the “SCULPTURE” bag?
- Do you agree with the following statement by Creative Leader of IKEA? If so, why?  
*‘Virgil takes modern design into a contemporary context. By interpreting history and tradition in his own unique way, he creates design which very much appeals to our time.’*  
Henrik Most, Creative Leader at IKEA
- Compared to the IKEA’s iconic blue plastic bag, which retails for £0.75, is the “SCULPTURE” bag value for money?
- What do you think about IKEA’s sales strategy to collaborate with such a high-profile designer as Abloh?

### Find out more

Follow these links to find out more about Abloh’s designs in the V&A’s collection:

[bit.ly/sculpturebag](https://bit.ly/sculpturebag)

[bit.ly/puffyfannypack](https://bit.ly/puffyfannypack)

Find out more about other fashion designers of African heritage featured at the V&A:

[bit.ly/TMagugu](https://bit.ly/TMagugu)

[bit.ly/InsideAfricaFashion](https://bit.ly/InsideAfricaFashion)





## Slippers, designed by Hassan Hajjaj, made in Marrakesh, 2020

This pair of babouches, Moroccan slippers, are made in faux Louis Vuitton white and coloured PVC fabric with Adidas branding in red. The slippers were designed by artist Hassan Hajjaj. Hajjaj was born in Morocco and lives and works between London and Marrakesh. His practice spans myriad disciplines including sculpture, video, fashion, photography and performance. In 2009, Hajjaj was shortlisted for the V&A's Jameel Prize, an international award for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic tradition.

The striking contrast of colours and pattern used in the design of the slippers creates a vibrant and eye-catching design. Juxtaposing the branding of two recognisable fashion labels, Louis Vuitton and Adidas, with the traditional shape of the babouches poses interesting questions about the multiplicity of contemporary life in Morocco. By using the branding of two multi-national fashion brands, Hajjaj's work highlights the power of image and branding but also shows how this power can be subverted.

### Explore further

Follow this link to find out more about the slippers:  
[collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1635698](https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1635698)

Follow this link to read more about the 2009 Jameel Prize shortlist, including Hassan Hajjaj:  
[vam.ac.uk/articles/jameel-prize-2009](https://vam.ac.uk/articles/jameel-prize-2009)

### Discuss

- Think about how the artist has contrasted recognisable branding with a traditional Moroccan slipper design. Why do you think he has chosen to do this? What effect does this have?
- How does the design of these slippers make you reflect on large fashion brands and their dominance in different cultures around the globe?
- Do you think it is significant that the artist has chosen to use faux Louis Vuitton fabric to make the slippers as opposed to official Louis Vuitton fabric?



## ***Symmetrical ribbed pot*, made by Magdalene Odundo, 1983**

*Symmetrical ribbed pot* was made in Surrey, England, by the Kenyan-born ceramicist Dame Magdalene Odundo. It is a hand-built earthenware pot with an unglazed and burnished surface. Burnishing is a technique in which clay is polished to a sheen using a pebble or similar tool, without the use of glaze.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, Odundo came to Britain in 1971 to train as a graphic artist, but changed direction when she discovered pottery. She studied ceramics at Farnham, Surrey, and went to the Pottery Training Centre at Abuja in Nigeria, where she worked with Ladi Kwali OON NNOM, MBE, an acclaimed potter of the Gbari people, and studied traditional hand-building techniques.

The pieces Odundo makes are burnished, covered with fine clay slip and then burnished again. They either develop a red-orange colour during firing or turn black, depending on the atmosphere in the kiln and the combustible materials used. The way she adds decoration with fine slip is similar to ancient Greek and Roman techniques, and her work also takes inspiration from pre-Columbian pottery. The vessels she creates resemble aspects of the human form.

Odundo has developed a highly individual style, from which she produces exceptionally fine ceramics underpinned by her conscious use of traditional African techniques and forms. Odundo's work has achieved record-breaking prices at auction.

Odundo, who in 2008 was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to Art, was made a Dame (DBE) in the Queen's 2020 New Year's Honours.

### **Discuss**

- Odundo's approach to clay has been described as 'transcending time and space'. Looking at this vessel, what do you think that means?
- Why do you think it is important for the artist to represent her African heritage in her work?
- Odundo's work is often described as having human-like features. Can you identify the elements of this pot which could be called 'belly', 'neck' and 'lip'?

### **Find out more**

Follow these links below to find out more about the work of Odundo and Kwali:

[bit.ly/symmetricalribbedpot](https://bit.ly/symmetricalribbedpot)

[bit.ly/odundopot](https://bit.ly/odundopot)

[bit.ly/workbykwali](https://bit.ly/workbykwali)





## Kaba and slit designed by Gisella Boutique, 2008, and worn by Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, OBE

### CONTENT WARNING

The content on this card contains difficult subject matter, including racial discrimination, violence and murder.

This kaba and slit ensemble consists of a fitted top (kaba) and skirt (slit) in printed kente cloth, traditionally a popular style of outfit worn by Ghanaian women, but now worn by both African and African Caribbean heritage women.

The ensemble, styled with a plain cummerbund, was designed by Gisella Boutique of Peckham, London. Gisella Boutique was set up by Gisella B in 1991, at a time when Pan-Africanism was on the rise inspired by a new Black consciousness that had migrated from the USA to the UK via hip-hop culture. Born in Tanzania, Gisella B moved to London in 1982, studying fashion at the University of Westminster, London, in 1988. Few, if any, designer/makers were producing luxury made-to-order garments for African heritage women at that time. Gisella B chose to set up her business on Peckham Hight Street in a former TSB Bank building because her initial clientele base was located there.

This ensemble was created for Baroness Doreen Lawrence of Clarendon to wear to the memorial service commemorating the 15th anniversary of her son Stephen Lawrence's racially motivated murder. Since her son's death, Baroness Lawrence has been a dedicated campaigner for racial justice and equality. Baroness Lawrence was born in Clarendon, Jamaica in 1952 and moved to England at the age of 9.

### Discuss

- What message do you think Baroness Lawrence was trying to convey when she wore this outfit.
- How do you think it made her feel when she was wearing it?
- Can you think of other types of outfits or clothes which are worn to represent a heritage or tradition?

### Find out more

Follow these links to find out more about the Kaba and Slit ensemble and Gisella Boutique:

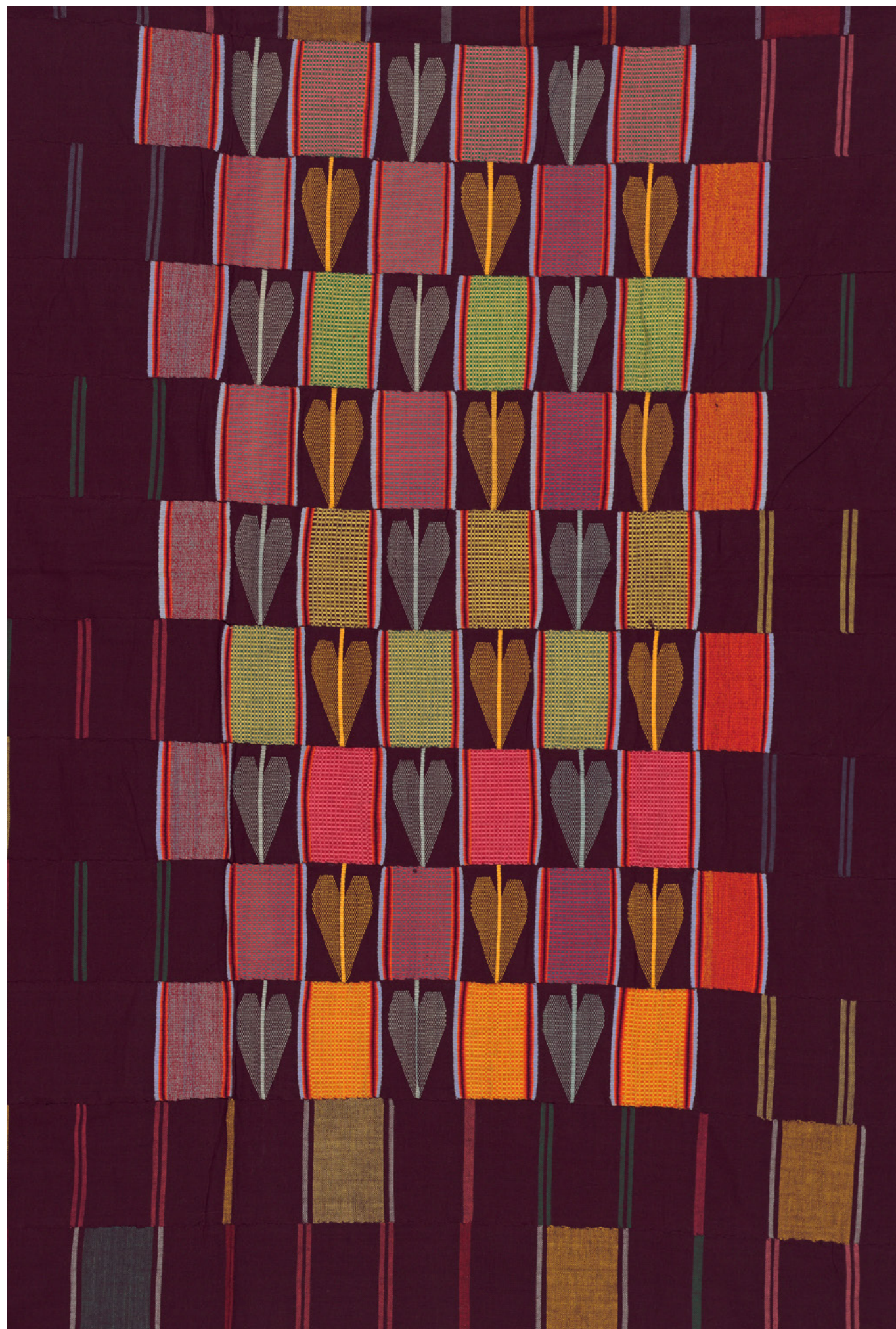
[bit.ly/kabaandslit](https://bit.ly/kabaandslit)

[bit.ly/gisellaboutique](https://bit.ly/gisellaboutique)

### Connecting Object

The V&A acquired a screenprint by artist, Chris Ofili, which commemorates the murder of Stephen Lawrence. It is entitled *R.I.P. Stephen Lawrence 1974–1993* and was made in 2013, on the 20th anniversary of his murder. To find out more about this artwork follow this link: [bit.ly/chrisofiliscreenprint](https://bit.ly/chrisofiliscreenprint)





## Kente, maker unknown, Ghana, mid 20th century

Kente is the name of a Ghanaian textile made of narrow strips of handwoven silk and cotton cloth. The word originates from the Ghanaian word for basket, *Kenten*, due to the resemblance of the pattern to a woven basket. Asante folklore includes a story where weavers invented kente while seeking to replicate the spiderweb patterns of Anansi the spider.

Kente is the name of a Ghanaian textile made of narrow strips of handwoven silk and cotton cloth. The word originates from the Ghanaian word for basket, *Kenten*, due to the resemblance of the pattern to a woven basket. Asante folklore includes a story where weavers invented kente while seeking to replicate the spiderweb patterns of Anansi the spider.

Historically the fabric was made and worn by royalty. There are two types of kente: Asante and Ewe. Asante kente has a geometric pattern woven along the length of the strip. Ewe kente often incorporates pictorial symbols into the design. In modern-day Ghana, the wearing of kente cloth has become widespread to celebrate special occasions, with highly sought-after kente brands led by master weavers.

Kente is more than a fabric, it has become a symbol of African and Black pride. Mass produced kente prints, like the one used for the Gisella Boutique ensemble on the previous Object Discussion Card, have become popular internationally. For example, printed versions of the kente cloth are used around the world in the design for stoles and sashes used in graduation ceremonies, by members of the clergy, and by people in the legal professions like judges. Kente has become a symbol of dignity for the African Diaspora.

### Discuss

- Kente is woven by two groups in Ghana – Asante and Ewe. This kente cloth is from the Ewe tradition. The cloth used for the Baroness Lawrence ensemble on the previous card is from the Asante tradition. Have a close look. Can you spot any differences between the two patterns?
- If you had the opportunity to have your own bespoke kente made, what patterns, colours and symbols would you choose and what would you like it to say about you?

### Find out more

Follow these links to find more information about African weaving and textiles and the V&A's past exhibition, *Africa Fashion*:

[bit.ly/ewekentecloth](https://bit.ly/ewekentecloth)  
[bit.ly/stateoftheweave](https://bit.ly/stateoftheweave)  
[bit.ly/fourstargeneralsuit](https://bit.ly/fourstargeneralsuit)  
[bit.ly/clothofacontinent](https://bit.ly/clothofacontinent)  
[bit.ly/InsideAfricaFashion](https://bit.ly/InsideAfricaFashion)  
[bit.ly/africafashiontrail](https://bit.ly/africafashiontrail)  
[bit.ly/jamesbarnorphoto](https://bit.ly/jamesbarnorphoto)





## ***Kepi I*, from the series *Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder*, photographed by Nontsikelelo Veleko, 2003–07**

Nontsikelelo Veleko is a South African photographer known for her depiction of Black identity and urbanisation in post-apartheid South Africa. Born in Bodibe, South Africa, she trained at the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg, an institution set up by fellow South African photographer David Goldblatt in 1989 to support Black photographers during apartheid.

This photograph is from ‘*Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder*’ (2003–07), a portrait series that captures the vibrant fashion culture of Johannesburg. The series is marked by Veleko’s use of colour and the gestures of her subjects: all carry themselves in poses that confront the viewer and confidently return our gaze with their own.

Self-expressive and daring, Veleko’s work presents a strong statement for a younger generation of South Africans. As well as capturing street style and self-fashioned individuals across South Africa’s major cities, her other projects have included “*The ones on top won’t make it stop!*”, a series documenting graffiti throughout Cape Town and Johannesburg.

*‘To me, it is more than merely a visual message... it is poetry...’*

– Nontsikelelo ‘Lolo’ Veleko, *These Words Are Like Swords...*

### **Discuss**

- Does anything strike you as eye-catching about this photograph?
- What statement do you think the young man is making through his clothing on the streets of Johannesburg?
- The photographer describes her work to be more than merely a visual message. What do you think Veleko is trying to do with this image? What message is she trying to convey about young people and Johannesburg?

### **Find out more**

Follow the link below to explore more photography in the V&A’s collection by Nontsikelelo Veleko:

[bit.ly/velekolo](https://bit.ly/velekolo)

Explore the work of a South African fashion designer featured at the V&A, Zanele Muholi and their important contribution to photography:

[bit.ly/zanelemuholiphotos](https://bit.ly/zanelemuholiphotos)





## ***A London Pauper and Beggar*, illustration from *Britons through Negro Spectacles* (original title), 1909**

### **CONTENT WARNING**

The content on this card contains difficult subject matter, including racial discrimination and racist language.

*Britons through Negro Spectacles* was written by Sierra Leonean barrister and writer Augustus Boyle Chamberlayne Merriman-Labor. Born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in 1877, he arrived in London in 1904 to study law and aspired to be the 'Mark Twain of West Africa'. He entered the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, one of the four Inns of Court in London to which barristers of England and Wales belong and where they are called to the Bar.

*Britons Through Negro Spectacles*, published in 1909, follows the narrator as he spends a day accompanying a newly arrived African friend around London. In this setting Merriman-Labor writes of his own disappointing experiences of racism, hypocrisy, inequality and injustice.

The book also has six illustrations, including this one which is called *A London Pauper and Beggar*. They add to the satirical and humorous tone of the book, containing characters with exaggerated features and comical expressions.

Despite some positive reviews, the book failed to find an audience and attracted condemnation leading to the commercial failure of the book and bankruptcy of the author.

This book was bought by the V&A to be shown in the display *Laughing Matters: The State of a Nation* which can be seen in the British Galleries, Room 44.

### **Discuss**

- Consider this quote from the book:  
'No doubt the English eat frogs as well.  
If not, why should they call the dish you

*are now swallowing with the vengeance and greed of a hungry wolf "toad in the hole"? Has a toad got into the hole of your stomach?' A.B.C. Merriman-Labor, *Britons Through Negro Spectacles*, 1909*  
Merriman-Labor used humour to speak about very sensitive subject matter. What do you think Merriman-Labor was trying to achieve by publishing a book like this? Do you think the book still has an impact and relevance today?

- What kind of person do you think Merriman-Labor was? Consider the period, the early 1900s, and the fact that he wrote *Britons Through Negro Spectacles*...

### **Find out more**

[bit.ly/laughingmattersdisplay](https://bit.ly/laughingmattersdisplay)  
[bit.ly/aforgottenafricansatirist](https://bit.ly/aforgottenafricansatirist)

### **Explore Further**

Follow this link to find out about two other men from Africa, Job Ben Solomon and William Ansah, who lived in Britain in the 18th century, and made a difference to society.  
[bit.ly/gentlemansmagazine](https://bit.ly/gentlemansmagazine)





## ***MwangaBora* lamp, designed by Evans Wadongo, Kenya, 2012**

Evans Wadongo, an engineer from Kenya, designed this solar-charging lamp for Kenyan communities without electricity. He developed it to replace widely used kerosene lanterns, which are costly to run and give off toxic fumes that cause health problems. Made from locally sourced scrap metal and off-the-shelf electronic parts, Wadongo kept the design simple to encourage people to use it every day, rather than to save it for special occasions. *MwangaBora* means 'good light' in Swahili.

### **Discuss**

- Wadongo was inspired by his experience growing up in a village near Nairobi with no electricity infrastructure. Imagine being at home, school or in your local area without electricity. Discuss with others what you think it would be like.
- The lamp is powered by solar energy. How could you redesign objects you use every day to reduce your carbon footprint?
- Wadongo worked with rural communities in Kenya to manufacture the lamps to support small businesses, encourage education and reduce poverty. How would you like to help people in your community and how could you use design to make that happen?

### **Watch**

Watch designer Evans Wadongo and V&A curator Corinna Gardner talking about the MwangaBora lamp on the V&A's YouTube channel: [bit.ly/objectinfocusmwangabora](https://bit.ly/objectinfocusmwangabora)

### **Find out more**

Find more info online at: [vam.ac.uk/collections](https://vam.ac.uk/collections)





## Ring, *Vulcan* series, designed and made by Emefa Cole, 2012

This highly sculptural ring comes from Emefa Cole's *Vulcan* series. Inspired by volcanoes, it celebrates the wonders of volcanic activity, its products, colours, textures and tones created in the landscape. It was first modelled in wax in one piece then cast into silver using the lost wax technique. In this method of metal casting, a molten metal is poured into a mould that has been created by means of a wax model. Once the mould is made, the wax model is melted and drained away to make way for the molten metal.

The dark coating of the ring's smooth polished exterior contrasts with the rich softness of the gold leaf within. It was made in 2012 and shown at Ghana Fashion and Design Week, Accra, the following year. It has also been featured on the BBC series *Secrets of the Museum*.

Ghanaian born and London based, Cole is an independent experimental jewellery artist and designer-maker, envisioning and bringing to life wearable art. Cole uses 100% recycled metals and stones sourced directly from African gem cutters to create unique and distinctive jewellery. The works she creates are sculptural yet flowing, tactile yet intangible, luxurious, natural and quiet in their boldness. Cole had the special privilege to study with the Asantehene's (the King of Asante) personal goldsmiths, giving her access to explore the lost-wax casting method perfected by the Asantes. Cole is a keeper of this tradition, having the ability to teach it to a new generation of metalsmiths.

### Discuss

- What are your first impressions of the Vulcan ring? Can you think of any descriptive words for it?
- The artist draws a lot of her design inspiration from nature. Can you think about how nature connects us globally and why do you think that is significant?
- Have you ever used nature as inspiration for an artwork or to design something? Describe how you were inspired and what meaning it brought to your piece.
- Cole uses 100% recycled metals and stones for her creations. Can you think of any recycled materials you could use to create a piece of jewellery? Have a go at sketching some of your ideas.

### Find out more

Follow this link to find out more about this object: [bit.ly/ringvulcanseries](https://bit.ly/ringvulcanseries)

Find out more about the Asante Goldweights in the V&A collection: [bit.ly/asantegoldweightsarticle](https://bit.ly/asantegoldweightsarticle)





## ***Sparkle Vase*, designed and made by Ndidì Ekubia, 2012**

*Sparkle Vase* was made from a flat sheet of silver which was raised into a three-dimensional form using repetitive rounds of hammer work. This method of making is known as hand-raising and chasing, a traditional method of silversmithing. The vase combines a distinctive style with a strong sense of functionality.

Ekubia uses careful hammering to create flowing textures across the surface of the silver, giving her work has a great sense of fluidity and movement. The marks catch the light, so that the surface of the silver glistens and sparkles. This has allowed the artist to apply decoration to the front and back of the metal surface to highlight the fluid form of the vase.

Born in Manchester to Nigerian parents, Ekubia trained at Wolverhampton Polytechnic (Wolverhampton University) in 3D Design, continuing at Bishopsland Educational Trust in a post graduate training programme and then completing her MA in silversmithing and jewellery at the Royal College of Art. Her inspiration stems from patterns found in the British urban landscape and her African cultural heritage.

### **Discuss**

- Is there anything surprising or unusual about the design of this vase?
- Can you think of some descriptive words for the vase?
- Do you think the object looks functional or is it just for decorative purposes?

- Consider this quote below by the maker, Ekubia, speaking about what inspires and motivates her. How does this statement help you to understand her work?

*'My inspirations stem from the patterns of everyday life, from the cityscape of London through to organic natural forms. My artistic landscape has also been determined by the bold African shapes, textiles, and passionate family conversations of my childhood... The process of creating my rich sensual forms is a rhythmical, mesmerising scenario of tools pushing the metal to its limit. Every piece exposes an emotional response to the material, each one a unique blend of order and chaos.'*

### **Find out more**

Follow this link to find out more about *Sparkle Vase*: [bit.ly/sparklevase](https://bit.ly/sparklevase)

### **Explore further**

Discover the work of Sokari Douglas Camp, also on display in the Silver gallery, Figure group, *Wrestling Oil BP*, Sokari Douglas Camp, 2018: [bit.ly/wrestlingoilbp](https://bit.ly/wrestlingoilbp)





## Flask, artist unknown, Egypt, 1401–1336 BC

This flask was made over 2000 years ago in Ancient Egypt. The artisan shaped the cobalt blue glass around a core of clay and animal dung and decorated it with white and yellow wavy lines. It is likely that the colours used in the flask were deliberately chosen for their symbolic meaning. For example, yellow might symbolise the sun and eternity, blue could represent rebirth and life or water and white stand for purity and cleanliness. The colours were created from elements found in nature.

The flask comes from Malqata, the site of an Ancient Egyptian palace complex built during the New Kingdom by the 18th Dynasty Pharaoh Amenhotep III. The area is located on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes, Upper Egypt.

Glass held great value at the courts of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs. Glass flasks were used for cosmetics and fragrant essences dissolved in plant-based oils, confirming their status as objects of luxury. It is quite a small object standing at 6.4cm high and 5.5cm wide.

### Discuss

- Consider how old this object is. How do you think an object like this might have survived intact over all those years?
- Think about the symbolism of the colours used in the flask. Discuss with your group what those colours mean to you. Can you think of a new colour scheme for the flask? What colours would you choose and what meanings would you like them to represent?
- Look carefully at the object. The maker is unknown, imagine yourself as the maker. Think about its original purpose – it was designed to contain a fragrant essence or perfume. Could you repurpose it to be used differently? Think about the properties of glass or about other materials you could use to redesign the flask.

### Find out more

Find out more about this object by following this link: [bit.ly/ancientegyptianflask](https://bit.ly/ancientegyptianflask)

The V&A hosts a significant collection of Ancient Egyptian pieces. Several of the galleries, for example, Jewellery, Ceramics, Medieval Renaissance and Jameel display objects from Egypt. Discover more in our galleries or on Explore the Collections.



## Day of Solidarity with the Congo poster by Alfredo Rostgaard, 1972

### CONTENT WARNING

The content on this card contains difficult subject matter, including the mention of revolutionary conflict and political execution.

This poster depicts Patrice Lumumba (1925–61), the first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He is shown in profile and his head is in the shape of the continent of Africa. Seeking to appeal to an international audience, 'Day of Solidarity with the Congo' is written in blue across the bottom of the page in Spanish, English, French and Arabic.

The poster highlights the important work of the Organisation of Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL). OSPAAAL was formed following a gathering of leaders from continents across the world. This poster was designed in 1972 by the then OSPAAAL Creative Director, Alfredo Rostgaard. The group was set up with the stated purpose of fighting globalisation, imperialism, neoliberalism, and defending human rights. Though based in Cuba, the organisation had a global outlook and readership as they promoted collective solidarity.

Patrice Lumumba was the leader of the Congolese National Movement (MNC) from 1958 to 1961. Ideologically an African nationalist and Pan-Africanist, he played a significant role in the transformation of the Congo from a colony of Belgium into an independent republic. 13 February 1961 marked the day that Patrice Lumumba's death, following his political execution, was announced internationally. This news led to protests in cities across the world, such as Cairo, London and New York.

### Discuss

- Consider the design of the poster and think about the quote below from the designer: *'We wanted to establish a clear, direct or indirect, but original communication, and did not scorn any initiative that would allow us to be effective and contemporary.'*
- Do you think it is an impactful design? If so, why?
- Lumumba was the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country in central Africa. Why do you think the designer has chosen to represent his face as the continent of Africa?
- Since the invention of the world wide web, smart phones and social media, posters have remained one of the most effective ways of spreading a message or campaign. Discuss with your group why this might be.

### Find out more

To find out more about this poster please follow this link:  
[bit.ly/OSPAAALsolidarityposter](https://bit.ly/OSPAAALsolidarityposter)





## Sketch & notes



### “SCULPTURE” bag, 2019

The “SCULPTURE” bag is a reinterpretation of furniture and home accessories retailer IKEA’s iconic blue plastic bag ‘FRAKTA’ shopping bag, that has been part of the IKEA shopping experience since the 1990s and is its most popular product. In 2019, IKEA released ‘MARKERAD’ (Swedish for ‘labelled’), a special edition of homeware items in collaboration with fashion designer Virgil Abloh.

#### Discuss

- How would you describe the style of the “SCULPTURE” bag?
- Do you agree with the following statement by Creative Leader of IKEA? If so, why?  
*‘Virgil takes modern design into a contemporary context. By interpreting history and tradition in his own unique way, he creates design which very much appeals to our time.’*  
Henrik Most, Creative Leader at IKEA
- Compared to the IKEA’s iconic blue plastic bag, is the “SCULPTURE” bag value for money?
- What do you think about IKEA’s sales strategy to collaborate with such a high-profile designer as Abloh?





## Sketch & notes

### Slippers, 2020

This pair of babouches, Moroccan slippers, are made in faux Louis Vuitton white and coloured PVC fabric with Adidas branding in red. The slippers were designed by the artist, Hassan Hajjaj. Hajjaj was born in Morocco and lives and works between London and Marrakesh.

The striking contrast of colours and pattern used in the design of the slippers creates a vibrant and eye-catching design. Juxtaposing the branding of two recognisable fashion labels, Louis Vuitton and Adidas, with the traditional shape of the babouches poses interesting questions about the multiplicity of contemporary life in Morocco. By using the branding of multi-national fashion brands, Hajjaj's work highlights the power of image and branding but also shows how this power can be subverted.

#### Discuss

- Think about how the artist has contrasted recognisable branding with a traditional Moroccan slipper design. Why do you think he has chosen to do this? What effect does this have?
- How does the design of these slippers make you reflect on large fashion brands and their dominance in different cultures around the globe?
- Do you think it is significant that the artist has chosen to use faux Louis Vuitton fabric to make the slippers as opposed to official Louis Vuitton fabric?



## Sketch & notes



### *Symmetrical ribbed pot, 1983*

*Symmetrical ribbed pot* was made in Surrey, England, by the Kenyan-born ceramicist Dame Magdalene Odundo. It is a hand-built earthenware pot with an unglazed and burnished surface. Burnishing is a technique in which clay is polished to a sheen using a pebble or similar tool, without the use of glaze. The vessels she creates resemble aspects of the human form. Odundo has developed a highly individual style, from which she produces exceptionally fine ceramics underpinned by her conscious use of traditional African techniques and forms.

#### **Discuss**

- Odundo's approach to clay has been described as 'transcending time and space'. Looking at this vessel, what do you think that means?
- Why do you think it is important for the artist to represent her African heritage in her work?
- Odundo's work is often described as having human-like features. Can you identify the elements of this pot which could be called 'belly', 'neck' and 'lip'?



## Sketch & notes



## Kaba and slit, 2008

### CONTENT WARNING

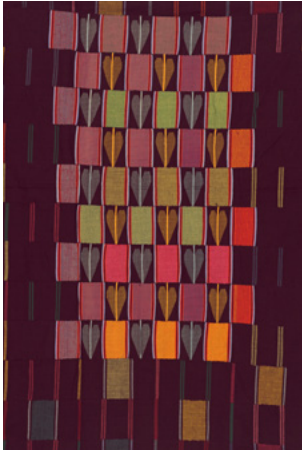
The content on this card contains difficult subject matter, including racial discrimination, violence and murder.

This kaba and slit ensemble consists of a fitted top (kaba) and skirt (slit) in printed kente cloth, traditionally a popular style of outfit worn by Ghanaian women, but now worn by both African and African Caribbean heritage women. The ensemble, styled with a plain cummerbund, was designed by Gisella Boutique of Peckham, London. The ensemble was created for Baroness Doreen Lawrence of Clarendon to wear to the memorial service commemorating the 15th anniversary of her son Stephen Lawrence's racially motivated murder.

### Discuss

- What message do you think Baroness Lawrence was trying to convey when she wore this outfit?
- How do you think it made her feel when she was wearing it?





## Sketch & notes

### Kente cloth, mid 20th century

Kente is the name of a Ghanaian textile made of narrow strips of handwoven silk and cotton cloth. The word originates from the Ghanaian word for basket, *Kenten*, due to the resemblance of the pattern to a woven basket. Asante folklore includes a story where weavers invented kente while seeking to replicate the spiderweb patterns of Anansi the spider.

#### Discuss

- Kente is woven by two groups in Ghana – Asante and Ewe. This kente cloth is from the Ewe tradition. The cloth used for the Baroness Lawrence ensemble on the previous card is from the Asante tradition. Have a close look. Can you spot any differences between the two patterns? You can view images of this Ewe cloth on the V&A website [bit.ly/ewekentecloth](https://bit.ly/ewekentecloth)
- If you had the opportunity to have your own bespoke kente made, what patterns, colours and symbols would you choose and what would you like it to say about you?





## Sketch & notes

### *Kepi I*, 2003–07

Nontsikelelo Veleko is a South African photographer known for her depiction of Black identity and urbanisation in post-apartheid South Africa. This photograph is from *'Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder'* (2003–07), a portrait series that captures the vibrant fashion culture of Johannesburg. The series is marked by Veleko's use of colour and the gestures of her subjects: all carry themselves in poses that confront the viewer and confidently return our gaze with their own.

Self-expressive and daring, Veleko's work presents a strong statement for a younger generation of South Africans. As well as capturing street style and self-fashioned individuals across South Africa's major cities, her other projects have included *"The ones on top won't make it stop!"*, a series documenting graffiti throughout Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Veleko has said of her work:

*'To me, it is more than merely a visual message...it is poetry...'*  
Nontsikelelo 'Lolo' Veleko,  
*These Words Are Like Swords...*

#### Discuss

- Does anything strike you as eye-catching about this photograph?
- What statement do you think the young man is making through his clothing on the streets of Johannesburg?
- The photographer describes her work to be more than merely a visual message. What do you think Veleko is trying to do with this image? What message is she trying to convey about young people and Johannesburg?



## Sketch & notes



### **A London Pauper and Beggar, illustration from *Britons through Negro Spectacles*, (original title) 1909**

#### **CONTENT WARNING**

The content on this card contains difficult subject matter, including racial discrimination and racist language.

*Britons through Negro Spectacles* was written by Sierra Leonean barrister and writer Augustus Boyle Chamberlayne Merriman-Labor. Published in 1909, it follows the narrator as he spends a day accompanying a newly arrived African friend around London. Merriman-Labor writes of his own disappointing experiences of racism, hypocrisy, inequality and injustice. The book also has six illustrations. They add to the satirical and humorous tone of the book, containing characters with exaggerated features and comical expressions.

#### **Discuss**

- Consider this illustration and this quote from the book:  
*'No doubt the English eat frogs as well. If not, why should they call the dish you are now swallowing with the vengeance and greed of a hungry wolf "toad in the hole"? Has a toad got into the hole of your stomach?'*  
A.B.C. Merriman-Labor, *Britons Through Negro Spectacles* 1909
- Merriman-Labor used humour to speak about very sensitive subject matter. What do you think Merriman-Labor was trying to achieve by publishing a book like this?
- What kind of person do you think Merriman-Labor was? Consider the period, the early 1900s and the fact that he wrote *Britons Through Negro Spectacles*...

*A London Pauper and Beggar*, illustration from *Britons through Negro Spectacles* (original title), by A.B.C. Merriman-Labor, 1909, ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London



## Sketch & notes



### MwangaBora lamp, 2012

Evans Wadongo, an engineer from Kenya, designed this solar-charging lamp for Kenyan communities without electricity. He developed it to replace widely used kerosene lanterns, which are costly to run and give off toxic fumes that cause health problems. Made from locally sourced scrap metal and off-the-shelf electronic parts, Wadongo kept the design simple to encourage people to use it every day, rather than to save it for special occasions. *MwangBora* means 'good light' in Swahili.

#### Discuss

- Wadongo was inspired by his experience growing up in a village near Nairobi with no electricity infrastructure. Imagine being at home, school or in your local area without electricity. Discuss with others what you think it would be like.
- The lamp is powered by solar energy. How could you redesign objects you use every day to reduce your carbon footprint?
- Wadongo worked with rural communities in Kenya to manufacture the lamps to support small businesses, encourage education and reduce poverty. How would you like to help people in your community and how could you use design to make that happen?



## Sketch & notes



### Ring, *Vulcan* series, 2012

This highly sculptural ring comes from Emefa Cole's *Vulcan* series. Inspired by volcanoes, it celebrates the wonders of volcanic activity, its products, colours, textures and tones created in the landscape. Ghanaian born and London based, Cole is an independent experimental jewellery artist and designer-maker, envisioning and bringing to life wearable art. Cole uses 100% recycled metals and stones sourced directly from African gem cutters to create unique and distinctive jewellery.

#### Discuss

- What are your first impressions of the Vulcan ring? Can you think of any descriptive words for it?
- The artist draws a lot of her design inspiration from nature. Can you think about how nature connects us globally and why do you think that is significant?
- Have you ever used nature to inspire an artwork or to design something? Describe how you were inspired and what meaning it brought to your piece.
- Cole uses 100% recycled metals and stones for her creations. Can you think of any recycled materials you could use to create a piece of jewellery? Have a go at sketching some of your ideas.





## Sketch & notes

### Sparkle Vase, 2012

The Sparkle Vase was made from a flat sheet of silver which was raised into a three-dimensional form using repetitive rounds of hammer work. This method of making is known as hand-raising and chasing, a traditional method of silversmithing. The vase combines a distinctive style with a strong sense of functionality. Ekubia uses careful hammering to create flowing textures across the surface of the silver, giving her work has a great sense of fluidity and movement. The marks catch the light, so that the surface of the silver glistens and sparkles.

#### Discuss

- Is there anything surprising or unusual about the design of this vase?
- Can you think of some descriptive words for the vase?
- Do you think the object looks functional or is it just for decorative purposes?
- Consider this quote below by the maker, Ekubia, speaking about what inspires and motivates her. How does this statement help you to understand her work?  
*'My inspirations stem from the patterns of everyday life, from the cityscape of London through to organic natural forms. My artistic landscape has also been determined by the bold African shapes, textiles, and passionate family conversations of my childhood... The process of creating my rich sensual forms is a rhythmical, mesmerising scenario of tools pushing the metal to its limit. Every piece exposes an emotional response to the material, each one a unique blend of order and chaos.'*





## Sketch & notes

### Flask, 1401–1336 BC

This flask was made over 2000 years ago in Ancient Egypt. The artisan shaped the cobalt blue glass around a core of clay and animal dung and decorated it with white and yellow wavy lines. It is likely that the colours used in the flask were deliberately chosen for their symbolic meaning. For example, yellow might symbolise the sun and eternity, blue could represent rebirth and life or water and white stand for purity and cleanliness. The colours were created from elements found in nature.

Glass held great value at the courts of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs. Glass flasks were used for cosmetics and fragrant essences dissolved in plant-based oils, confirming their status as objects of luxury. It is quite a small object standing at 6.4cm high and 5.5cm wide.

#### Discuss

- Consider how old this object is. How do you think an object like this might have survived intact over all those years?
- Think about the symbolism of the colours used in the flask. Discuss with your group what those colours mean to you. Can you think of a new colour scheme for the flask? What colours would you choose and what meanings would you like them to represent?
- Look carefully at the object. The maker is unknown, imagine yourself as the maker. Think about its original purpose – it was designed to contain a fragrant essence or perfume. Could you repurpose it to be used differently? Think about the properties of glass or about other materials you could use to redesign the flask.

## Sketch & notes



### Day of Solidarity with the Congo poster, 1972

#### CONTENT WARNING

The content on this card contains difficult subject matter, including the mention of revolutionary conflict and political execution.

This poster depicts Patrice Lumumba (1925-1961), the first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He is shown in profile and his head is in the shape of the continent of Africa.

Patrice Lumumba was the leader of the Congolese National Movement (MNC) from 1958 to 1961. Ideologically an African nationalist and pan-Africanist, he played a significant role in the transformation of the Congo from a colony of Belgium into an independent republic. The 13 February 1961 marked the day that Patrice Lumumba's death, following his political execution, was announced internationally. This news led to protests in cities across the world, such as Cairo, London and New York.

#### Discuss

- Consider the design of the poster and think about the quote below from the designer:  
*'We wanted to establish a clear, direct or indirect, but original communication, and did not scorn any initiative that*

*would allow us to be effective and contemporary.'*

- Do you think it is an impactful design? If so, why?
- Lumumba was the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country in central Africa. Why do you think the designer has chosen to represent his face as the continent of Africa?
- Since the invention of the world wide web, smart phones and social media, posters have remained one of the most effective ways of spreading a message or campaign. Discuss with your group why this might be.