

Metaphysical context

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4.1
Metaphysical context

Craft of southern Africa

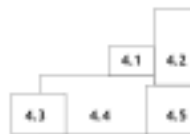


Figure 4.1: Glass bead and wire Aloe
 Figure 4.2: Men making wire ornaments
 Figure 4.3: Glass bead bowl
 Figure 4.4: Wire Protea candle holder
 Figure 4.5: Wire and bead Baobab



The Ndebele people of southern Africa live mainly in Pretoria and Mpumalanga. Only a few of the Ndzundza group of Ndebele group still practice the decorative art of painting and beadwork (African Home 2007).

Further out from Pretoria, in KwaZulu-Natal, the Zulu people still wear outfits decorated with feathers, beads and skin for traditional functions. The colours and symbols created from beads have specific meanings, indicating the person's social status and where they are from. Originally, these messages were illustrated with dyed seeds, but were replaced with glass and plastic beads once trade with India began. Unfortunately, the style of storytelling is being lost with each generation (African Home 2007).

Beads are now frequently combined with wire to make hand crafted items (Figures 4.1 - 4.5), but the creativity of the craftsmen has compelled them to find new materials to work with in innovative ways.

4.2
Metaphysical context

Contemporary craft



Figure 4.6: Wire table
 Figure 4.7: Buck skin Handbag
 Figure 4.8: Scoobi and bead bracelet
 Figure 4.9: Handbag made from record and scoobi wire

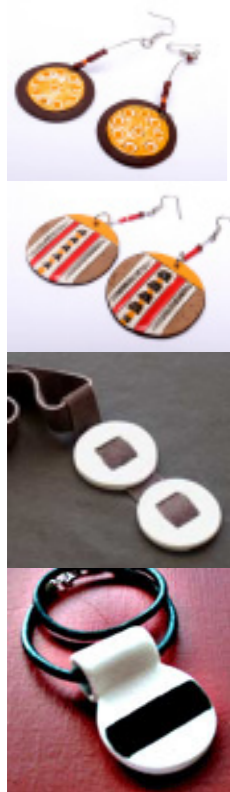
Craft has become somewhat of a fashion item in modern society (Figures 4.6 - 4.8). From accessories to home decor, people are drawn to the colour and the informality that still maintains a strong sense of style.

Wire is no longer used in the traditional sense when designing a wire table like the one below (Figure 4.6). The standard of construction was raised by welding the frame, spot welding the infill wire into place and then powder coating the entire table red (Pingmag 2007 : African crafts).

Buckskin was previously worn by the Zulu people of South Africa for traditional occasions (Fisher 1992). Now, dyed bright pink and purple, the buckskin of the handbag given as an example hardly resembles the traditional outfits (Figure 4.7).

4.3
Metaphysical context

Craft jewellery



6.10 Figure 4.10: Imiso ceramics: earring 1
6.11 Figure 4.11: Imiso ceramics: earring 2
6.12 Figure 4.12: NHD jewellery: Twin round on chocolate suede choker
6.13 Figure 4.13: NHD jewellery: Round/one

The function of what we today consider traditional craft was to adorn the people for ceremonies and war, and display their social and marital status (Fisher 1992:13-17). The materials used were originally found in their immediate environment and later incorporated imported objects such as beads. Today, with globalisation and the availability of information, almost any material can be used to continue the tradition of adornment. Figures 4.10 to 4.13 convey ceramic jewellery. Various tools are used to assist the craftsmen in order to maintain a certain standard during production such as the bead board used for the design of bead jewellery (Figure 4.14).



Figure 4.14: Bead board

4.4
Metaphysical context

Ceramics

Ceramic art seems to take the role of functional art and alters it until it reaches a high level of artistic value. Vases, piggy banks and soap dishes are only a few examples of functional objects which have surpassed their function and entered the realm of high art.

Many different aesthetic qualities can be achieved with ceramics by using different pigments and glazing techniques, making it quite a versatile medium to work in.

Ceramics SA is an association that promotes community awareness and appreciation for ceramic artists and their work. This kind of formalised gathering of related crafts is important for establishing and backing up a class of craftsmen that have reached a certain standard of manufacture and guarantee customers quality.



Figure 4.15 - 4.18: Various functional ceramic objects
Figure 4.19 - 4.21: NHD ceramic jewellery
Figure 4.22 - 4.25: Various ceramic vases



4.5
Metaphysical context

New materials



Figure 4.26: Umgexo (Medicine necklace) of glass beads and test-tubes 9cm x 66 cm



Figure 4.27: Tsonga-Shangana, South Africa Nceka (shoulder wrap-over cloth) Textile and safety pins

“Many African people have found modern equivalents for traditional objects in, what Western consumer-oriented communities might consider, ‘trash’.” (Nettleton 2003:52). However, many new materials are not recycled, but are simply used in a new way (Figure 4.27 - 4.31).

As with traditional objects, new materials usually carry symbolic meanings. Traditional healers may now incorporate test-tubes into their jewellery design, replacing horns which were once used to store medicines (Figure 4.26).

In the case of mother-of-pearl buttons, the new material closely resembles the original material, shells. In this case the buttons are easier to work with as they are already made with holes. First used simply to replace shell patterns on fabrics (Figure 4.31), buttons are now used to create three dimensional objects like wall lights (Figure 4.28).

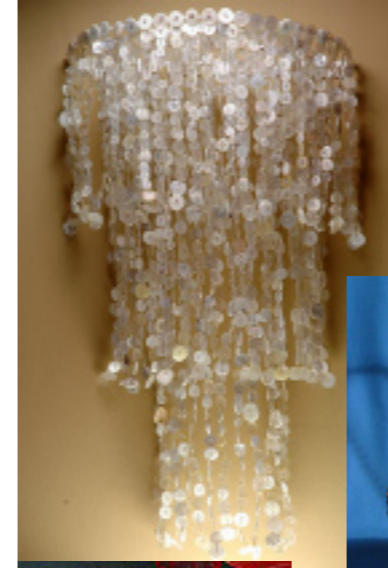


Figure 4.28: *Button wall light*
 Figure 4.29: *African craft09: hand bag*
 Figure 4.30: *African craft07: Recycled plastic bag ottoman.*
 Figure 4.31: *Xhosa (Fringo), South Africa, Textile with beads, buttons and embroidery.*