



When Objects Move and The Art of El Anatsui

When Objects Move

- Why have they moved?
- What did they mean in their place of origin?
- What new meanings have they acquired?
- What was their relationship to their previous space?
- What is their relationship to people in the current location?
- What is the path of their movement?
- How are they transformed?
- How have they transformed the space of spaces into which they have moved?

- Movement of objects through West African trade involving Europe and the construction of aspects of Ghanaian heritage.
- Drawing on insights from that notion of the movement of object and Ghanaian heritage to view the art of El Anatsui

The Movement of Objects and Decorative Heritage in Ghana

- Kente



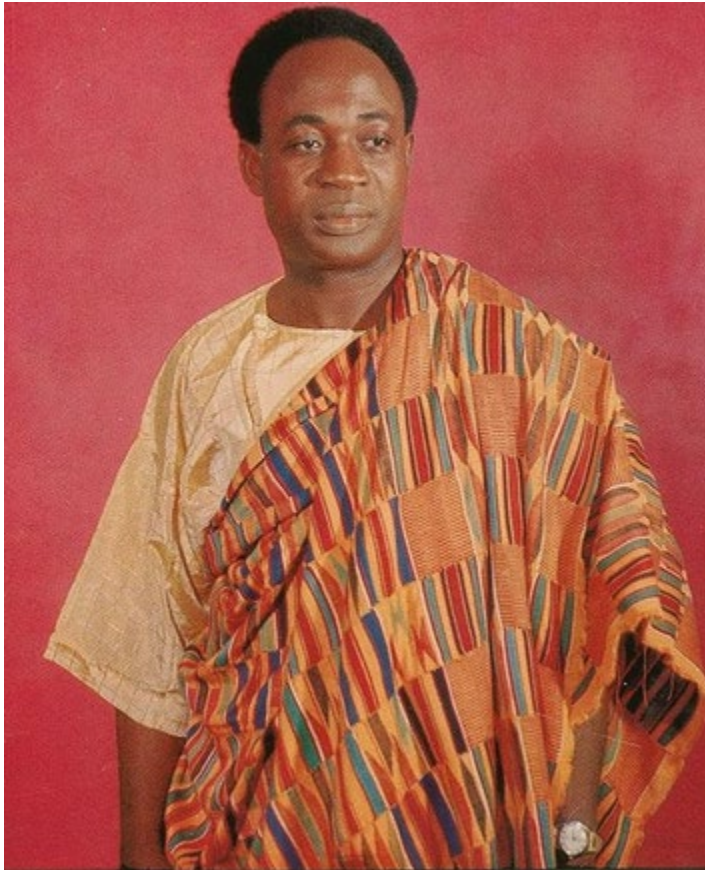
- African Print Fabrics



- Glass Beads



Kente Cloth



Otumfuo Osei Tutu II and his wife
Attend UK's King Charles Coronation

- Origins in Ashanti Kingdom.
- Woven
- Traditionally worn by royalty
- Has become widespread in use
- Worn on formal occasions
- Has become an icon of African heritage.

Kente and Asian Silk via Europe

- Expensive silk threads from Asia
- Originally available in small amounts from Asia through the Trans-Saharan trade
- Became more available via Europeans, mainly Portuguese, traders who traded them into West Africa.
 - Silk threads from fabrics
 - Whole skeins of silk threads imported into Africa.
- “And so with our Kente cloth: the silk was always imported, traded by Europeans, produced in Asia”
- (Kwame Anthony Appiah)

African Print Fabrics

- Also known as
 - Ankara
 - Dutch wax
 - African wax print
 - Java print

African Print Fabrics



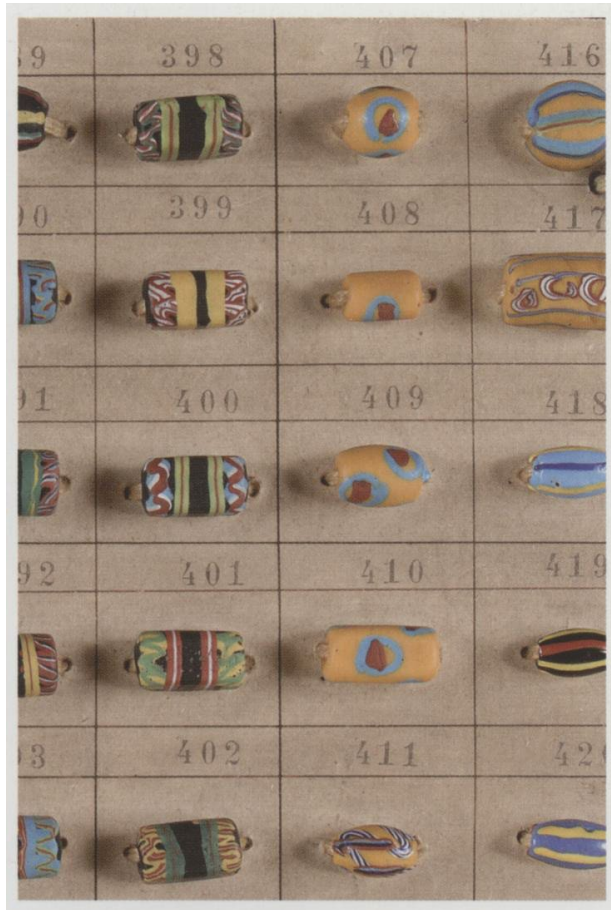
African Print Fabrics

- Introduced to West Africa by Dutch Merchants during 19th Century
- Dutch manufacturers inspired by batik fabric prints in Indonesia
 - Batik: a dyeing technique done by stamping or drawing wax on a cloth.
- Dutch became familiar with the technique and fabric during Dutch colonization of Indonesia (late 16th century to 1949).
- Dutch manufacturers industrialised the batik making process and made imitations of the Indonesian fabric.
- Dutch fabrics found a market in West Africa
- The trade was also picked up by Swiss, Scottish and English Manufactures.

Trade Beads



Trade Beads



Trade Beads



Trade Beads



El Anatsui (1944-)



El Anatsui



- Born and raised in Ghana (1944)
- Lived and worked in Nsukka Nigeria for many years.
- Currently has a studio in Tema, Ghana.
- Taught at the Fine Arts Department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka for several years.







- “ All this time, I’ve been thinking about the history or function of the object, and that affects how I handle it. With the bottle caps, the story I’ve been telling is about transatlantic trade and the goods – including human goods – which were sent from Africa to America to produce rum and other things, which came back to Europe and then finally to Africa. So the drink represented here by bottle caps links all three continents.”
 - El Anatsui (<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/jun/21>)

- Dusasa II (2007



El Anatsui's artwork in my opinion:

Symbols of the connection between the movement of objects and heritage

Statements about the diverse roots and routes of heritage

The dynamism/fluidity of heritage despite semblance of fixity

