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9 Ways of Seeing, Ways of Buying; Images of Tourist Art and Culture Expression in Contemporary Beadwork

The major theme running through this chapter is that of 'seeing' and of different and changing ways of seeing. The 'buying' of the title refers to one of the possible results of seeing - that is the purchase of various kinds of tourist art - and to the effects which the growth and stimulation of an external market have had on what is often taken to be an example of a genuinely indigenous form of Southern African art¹. We refer mainly to the beadmaking traditions for which Zulu-speaking people of the post-colonial era have become famous.

Until a decade or so ago the more intricate forms of Zulu beadwork were made largely for internal and non-economic consumption². In contrast, much of what is produced today is the result of a radically new way of seeing, that is of recognising what sells on an external market and what, in particular, will sell readily to white tourists and holiday makers. Over the last few years, however, this new vision has come to include an appreciation of what will appeal to a small but enthusiastic art market and also, latterly, to black consumers, who esteem and propagate Zulu culture as a value in its own right.

The new type of 'seeing' which will be described here is undertaken increasingly by black producers and artists themselves. It was, however, the perception of white outsiders which originally stimulated, and continues to influence, fashion in both tourists and art markets, and, by extension, the developing black cultural market. The final product, as Jules-Rosette (1984) has pointed out in another but similar context, is the result of complex and changing interactions between producers, to whom she refers as 'image creators', and middlemen who mediate between them and their 'audience', influencing both what they make and

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what the consumer desires. In her study Jules-Rosette uses the term 'culture broker' for middlemen, who are as diverse as traders and art critics. She points out that they operate simultaneously as arbiters of style and taste and as the predominant medium through which commercial transactions take place. In KwaZulu similar culture brokers may be easily identified. They range from the managers of curio stores, out to make as much money as they can, through the directors of both private and public galleries who often combine commercial motives with the promotion of black art, to the idealistic and dedicated personnel of philanthropic organisations and development projects who view craft as a vehicle for promoting black economic opportunities. Culture brokers are clearly an extremely mixed bag and their motives and sales strategies contrast and often conflict. In addition, their influence differs both in terms of the number of producers they reach and also in terms of the items of craft they promote and the images or motifs incorporated in these items.

Ethnic images in selling and buying

We will argue that the motif which predominates in beadwork produced at present in KwaZulu, both for the tourist trade and for the art and cultural markets, is an ethnic one.³ Paradoxical-ly the ethnic image appeals both to white outsiders, seeking to capture the essence and mystery of Africa, and also to black insiders in search of a symbol with which to differentiate themselves from non-Africans and even from other categories of black South Africans. As a symbol the ethnic image is both powerful and multivocal (Turner 1967:50). It links black people in a tangible fashion with cultural traditions which are no longer negatively perceived as they were during the colonial period, but which are becoming the focus of both a local and a pan-African consciousness centred on change and liberation (Plate 24). For most whites, in contrast, the ethnic image which is encapsulated in media such as beadwork makes visible the stereotype of a timeless and undifferentiated African culture which is both exotic and strange but which, we submit, is essentially unthreatening because it is so far removed from reality.

In its most blatant form the image which is peddled in the beadwork sold in most curio stores or at indigenous African roadside markets is that of Africa as the mysterious 'Dark Continent'. It is an image which is not, of course, restricted to beadwork or other craft. It is manipulated in most tourist advertising and in popular books on 'tribal' art and 'culture'. Recently this ethnic image was exploited to the full in the television spectacular, *'Shaka Zulu'*. A more sophisticated version of the ethnic image suggests that there is something different, and intrinsically valuable, about the

African experience, something that derives, perhaps, from the uniqueness of what is often referred to as the 'African Psyche' and which is said to have much to offer to the jaded tastes of the West. Hence the long established popularity of African and other Third World arts and of the African motif in contemporary fashion and design.

While many black artists celebrate something of the same image in their work, they use it creatively and in complex and subtle ways to make statements about the present and the future and about the relationship between black and white, between Africa and the West. They are, in fact, intervening to change the essentially static and unidimensional ethnic image of the past and use it as a medium to comment on the dynamics of change. This is taking place in a wide range of artistic forms and media and has not gone unnoticed by local art historians and critics. In the second part of this chapter we draw attention to the somewhat unconventional field of Zulu representational beadwork in which, we will suggest, this type of personal artistic comment is also developing and in the flowering of which one of the authors has been intimately concerned as a 'culture broker'. We will refer to this type of art as *bead sculpture*.

Varieties of tourist art: Mementos of a sacred journey

Tourism the world over is accompanied by the sale of curios⁴ and an almost bewildering range of ethnic *objets d'art*. While the latter are usually handmade and individually crafted, the former are mass-produced in their thousands and even tens of thousands by the machines and lathes of a profusion of cottage industries and the production lines of small to middlesized factories. Although the source of production usually lies in the country of the supposed origin of the curio, in some cases these items are imported from other areas, today particularly from Taiwan, that universal source of the inexpensive 'look alike'. This should warn us that things are not always what they seem on the tourist front and that 'ways of buying' may depend, not on reality, but on 'ways of seeing'.

Curios, almost by universal agreement, have to be cheap, fairly small and robust and, above all, light. Holiday makers invariably have numerous people for whom they have to buy gifts *en route* and these have to be packed in already overladen cases and airline bags. Part of the fun of curio hunting lies in securing a 'good bargain' by 'beating down the price' but, of course, both seller and buyer know that the original price has usually been inflated in order to allow for this transaction. There are thus a number of complex levels and nuances of understanding involved in buying what is seen and tourists who make a practice of going

from shop to shop in order to compare prices for the same item tacitly acknowledge that these goods are not 'authentic' but are made specifically for sale to visitors such as themselves. In striking contrast, *objets d'art* have to be somewhat unusual, if not unique, and preferably they should also be 'used by the people'. By and large, their size and fragility does not matter as they are often 'sent on' by the seller and the more they cost the better. Even if the buyer persuades the producer or trader to lower its price, the object is invariably valued by the buyer at its original asking price because it is this which is taken as a 'true' indication of its rarity value or its intrinsic artistic merit.

At first sight it might be thought that there is little in common between both the objects and the contexts of the two kinds of holiday purchase described above. Certainly the buyers of *objets d'art* do not like to be spoken of in the same breath as 'mere souvenir hunters'. From the sociological point of view these objects are, however, of essentially the same order. Their appeal is to the tourist as the quintessential 'outsider', that is to the tourist as a person who visits another land (and in reality a world of unreality and temporary make-believe) only to taste briefly of its essence before returning to the mundane realities of everyday life. Graburn (in Smith 1978) has characterised tourism as a 'sacred journey' because it occurs during holidays (originally holy days) and thus breaks up the periods of normal and often dull workaday experience. It is the essence or the remembrance of these sacred journeys that is symbolised and fixed in memory by the mementos purchased on that journey and it matters little if they are cheap 'curio kitsch' or expensive ethnic art. As Jules-Rosette (1984) suggests, it is the *messages* which these objects hold, first for the producer, and later for the purchaser, that are important. They enclose maker and buyer together, first with middlemen and later with art critics, in what she calls the 'Tourist Art System'. This is best represented as a cycle of changing and interdependent acts of both individual and communal communication. To quote her:

The tourist art system is based on a process of double reflection between artist and the audience. The artists create images that are received and purchased by their audiences. Through this process, the artists present their perceptions of themselves and their works. These products are transmitted to the consumers via middlemen whose intervention interpreted and 'sells' the work of art. In turn middlemen transmit the consumer response back to the artists. The cycle is interrupted by the middlemen both on the local level and beyond. The artists may alter the format and context of their artworks based upon their perceptions of the audience

response by its mediation through middlemen and culture brokers (1984:16-17).

In essence what Jules-Rosette is suggesting is a semiotic approach to tourist art. Attention is focused on the messages which have, as it were, been encoded in the form and decoration of each item, be it curio kitsch or expensive ethnic art, and which give content to the communication between producer and buyer. It is these messages, in fact, which underline the 'seeing' and 'buying' in the title of this chapter. To quote Jules-Rosette again:

The tourist art object provides a vicarious experience of the foreign and the exotic. It has the properties of both a *sign*, which stands on behalf of something else, and a *symbol*, which codifies and condenses multiple levels of meaning (1984:17).⁵

Because the communication cycle which we are attempting to isolate and analyse is of a complex nature it may not be fully or consciously recognised by either producer or buyer. It is likely, however, that it is being both consciously and cleverly manipulated by middlemen, particularly those for whom the commercial motive predominates.

Zulu love-letters and other beadwork: an exercise in tourist semiotics

A semiotic approach is peculiarly appropriate to Zulu beadwork because if there is one feature for which this art is famous it is the supposed messages which the beads are said to carry. The romance of the ubiquitous Zulu love-letter (Plates 24 and 25) has spread far beyond the borders of KwaZulu and even Southern Africa. It is even possible to purchase such 'messages' in New York's Fifth Avenue and tourists to South Africa eagerly seek out examples of love-letters and enquire anxiously of producers and traders exactly what each colour means. Those who have not heard about what is referred to as 'the language of the beads', are quickly 'filled in' by curio sellers and those whose business it is to sell South African tourism. One enterprising Durban firm commissions hundreds of simple, highly coloured love-letters from local bead makers, packages each attractively and adds a card explaining its 'message'. We read thus that a red bead means love ... a white one purity ... and so on. Tourists respond to this type of simple message by buying with alacrity and enthusiasm, the more so because a single item may cost as little as R2 and can be slipped into a purse or handbag. It makes, to quote one holiday maker, 'an ideal and exotic gift'.

An intriguing twist to the semiotics of tourist art is produced by the contention that, far from being 'authentic', the so-called Zulu love-letter represents, on the one hand, the outsider's mis-

reading and, on the other, a commercial elaboration, of what was a very simple and by no means universal traditional form. Sub-stance is given to this view by the fact that, although beadwork is made in most Bantu-speaking groups, little evidence of 'bead messages' has been forthcoming from outside the Zulu cultural area. Even the relatively few sources which deal in any detail with the making and wearing of Zulu beadwork date from the last thirty years and refer to either regional or highly localized cases (T'wala 1951; Schoeman 1968 a and b, Levinsohn 1979; 1984). What is universal, and probably represents some continuity with the past, is the fact that a good deal of Zulu beadwork carries not so much specific but generalized symbolic meanings, and that social status and position are signalled in dress of which beaded items are

Plate 25: Contemporary Zulu "Love-letters" for "ethnic" and "fashion" markers. (Photograph: C. Wafer).

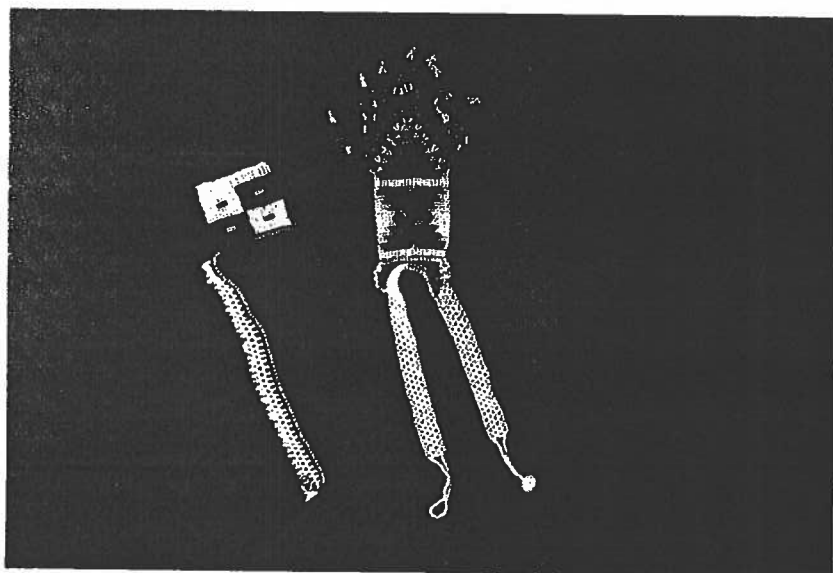
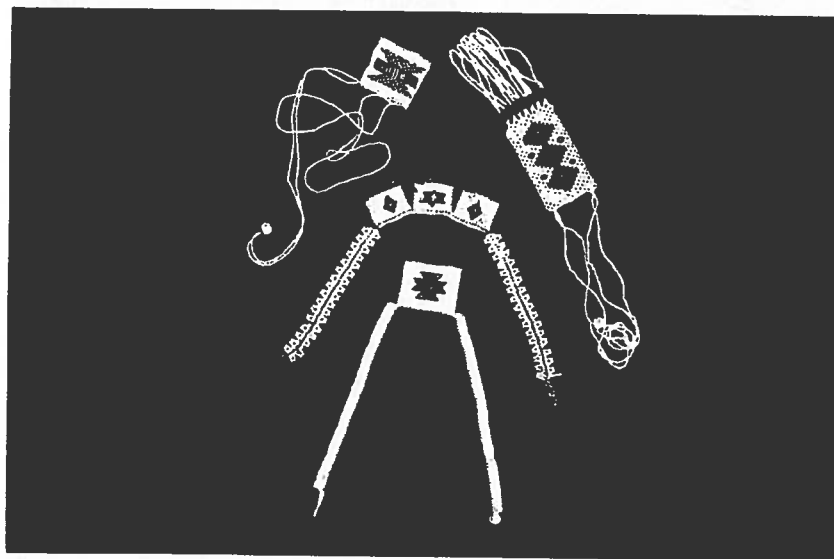


Plate 24: Zuluy "Love-letters" (two old and two new). Beads of fibre. (Photograph: C. Wafer).



an integral part (Krige 1936: Appendix 11; Levinsohn 1984). It is upon the foundation of this wider system of communication and classification that the modern elaboration of the tourist form has, we suggest, taken place. In moving from a purely endogenous usage to production for outsiders there occurred, however, a number of changes in both the form and design and, more importantly, in the intention behind the making of items which, like the love-letter, caught the fancy of white outsiders. Sifting through the available literature and talking to women who today produce beadwork both for their own use and for sale allows us to make an informed guess about the overall process which might have led to the development of the contemporary tourist love-letters.

Two issues are involved: form and colour. Regional differences occur in both, but it seems usual, wherever beadwork flourishes for endogenous use, for both married and unmarried women to make simple strings of different coloured beads called *ucu* (Grossert 1978:52, 53, 58; Levinsohn 1984:88). These they wear themselves on various parts of the body and unmarried girls often send them to their lovers as tokens of their affection. Men wear these gifts proudly and a married man may wear strings made by different wives and unmarried men may display the tokens of different girlfriends. The 'message' of these strings is read consecutively from the bead nearest the loop (Grossert 1978:53). The exact meaning of the colours and juxtaposition of different colours and sized beads differs from region to region and even from individual to individual, making a single, correct 'reading' impossible. In any local area, however, there is sufficient agreement on the symbolic meaning of colour and bead placement to make the communication of a general message feasible. What is not possible is the conveying of a complex and detailed message as can occur with the use of the written word and is, indeed, assumed in the Western notion of a 'letter'.

An *ucu* may be combined with other beaded items such as a small necklace or *umgexo* which often takes a rectangular form and is suspended from the neck by a beaded cord (Grossert 1978:56). It is this general form which is now recognised as a Zulu 'love-letter' and most Whites believe and are taught to believe that the 'message' is encoded in the colours of the rectangle. Capitalising on this belief one creative producer recently made love-letters with red beaded hearts decorating the rectangle (Plate 25). In these the symbolism of both colour and pattern are purely Western and the original or even the contemporary Zulu meanings of the colour red and the *umgexo* as a gift and recognition of a relationship between the maker and her lover, are irrelevant. We believe that this transformation in intention and message is demonstrated by the fact that beadmakers usually refer to love-

letters produced for the tourist trade not as *ucu* (or *umgexo*) but with a direct translation from the English - that is as *incwadi yokuthanda*, that is, a letter or book of love. How appropriate that the love-letter which a tourist may purchase as a gift for his or her loved one is decorated with red hearts and not with what are to him the more obscure triangles and primary colours of the Zulu 'original' (Plate 25).

The beaded Zulu love-letter is only the tip of the curio iceberg. More important, curios themselves represent but one facet of the range and potential of contemporary Zulu beadwork. We turn now to review this range briefly. Keeping in mind the basic distinction made above between curios and ethnic *objets d'art*, we use the criteria of mass versus individual production, expense, form and colour, to categorise the items concerned. Included also, as a basis for classification, will be the use value of each object and the messages encoded by the maker and read by the purchaser. Indeed it is the last criterion, based on Jules-Rosette's semiotic approach, which allows for a classification which goes beyond mere 'butterfly collecting' to some attempt at explanation and theorising. A semiotic approach allows us, moreover, to ask, not only what particular colours and colour-combinations mean, or might once have meant, but to bring together in one frame of reference the aims of different beadmakers who today produce for either or both the internal (or the endogenous) and the external (or the exogenous) markets.

The distinction between production for the local consumption of friends and neighbours and that designed to attract and satisfy buyers (and particularly culture brokers in the form of the middlemen and traders) is an important one. In the case of beadmaking for the external market money is the critical factor and the standards and intricacies of the beadwork itself may be lower than for internal consumption. It is, however, very often the same woman who at different times makes both items and uses much the same form and colours. In making a gift for her lover, a young woman using pink beads in a traditional *umgexo* may be encouraging him to save (Schoeman 1968a:68-69); in producing for sale she may make a similar item but she will be making a very different statement, this time aimed at attracting a potential buyer, either white or black. To a middleman and, eventually, a white tourist, the message which is read in the beads is that the item is typically 'Zulu' or that it is something 'of Africa's Past'. It is, indeed, the ethnic image in its most simple and blatant form which is being manipulated. On the other hand, if the potential buyer is a neighbour the message is a cultural one which will pinpoint the social identity of the wearer on some future ceremonial occasion. If, furthermore, the consumer is black, but does not nor-

mally wear beads, the purchase may indicate, as we will see, an identification with national values and identity and the wearing of the item may be aimed at making a clear political statement. If the consumer is white, the purchase may suggest a wish to identify with African culture and the heritage of a common multiracial South Africa (Nettleton 1976; Davison 1981).

In suggesting the usefulness of a semiotics approach to the analysis of Zulu beadwork it must not be forgotten that beadworking also expresses and communicates a lively appreciation of colour and design. The variety and exuberance of the dress worn on ceremonial occasions in KwaZulu are a clear indication that the makers and wearers enjoy their skill and that 'fashion' and the simple desire to attract attention lie behind much of the careful putting together of elaborate costumes and beaded decoration. This point, although made largely in relation to the intricate costumes of *amabinca*⁶, is relevant also to the growth of Western 'fashion jewellery' which will be discussed presently. The pleasures of the eye should not be lost sight of amid the intricacies of symbolic and semiotic analysis.

Production for the internal market

It is by no means easy to establish the amount of beadwork produced for personal use or for sale on a purely internal market. The use of beaded articles in everyday dress appears to be highly localised and, in rural areas of KwaZulu (Plate 26), it is confined largely to *amabinca* communities. A striking exception, however, exists in the case of the Nazarite Church followers of the famous Isaiah Shembe who incorporate beadwork in both their everyday and particularly in their ceremonial attire. Women who do not usually wear beadwork but who recognise its money-making potential have, of course, learnt the craft from neighbours and, due to the insistence of Jack Grossert who was for many years Inspector of Art for black schools in Natal and KwaZulu, beadwork was taught to many school children who as adults are now putting this skill to lucrative use.

Anthropological literature on the topic of both changing and contemporary Zulu dress and on the use of beadwork in dress is, as we have already seen, relatively sparse. Papers by Twala (1951) and Schoeman (1968 a and b), and also drawings by Tyrrell (1968), document the vibrancy of various local bead traditions through to the nineteen sixties and evidence of both continuity and change in many regions is to be found in private and museum collections all over Natal and KwaZulu. Recent research by Yvonne Winters of the Killie Campbell Africana Museum in Durban describes the use of elaborate and varied beadwork in the dress and social activities of contemporary Bhaca and Khuze

girls (personal communication). Comparing her work with that of Schoeman, which was carried out in the Mtunzini area, it is clear that beads are used today in southern Natal to mark life stages and specifically courtship experiences much as they were in northern Natal two decades ago. The exact patterning and elaboration of bead traditions have, as we have seen, both a regional specificity in detail and a tendency to change. One of the fascinating features of Winter's work is her evidence of how beadwork made for local use 'keeps up with the times' by incorporating new de-

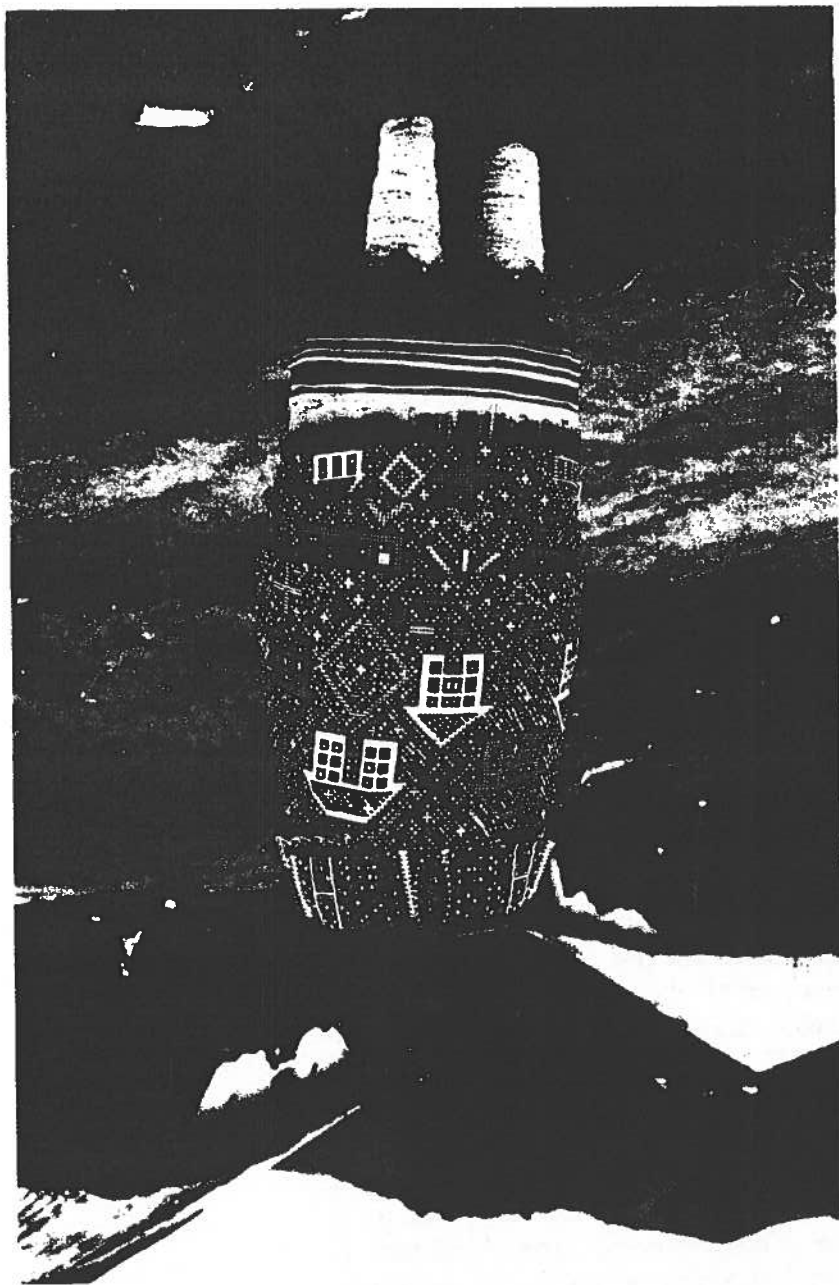


Plate 26: A Zulu woman wearing her beaded finery to a *Memula* ceremony in the Valley of a Thousand Hills. (Photograph: E. Preston-Whyte 1988).

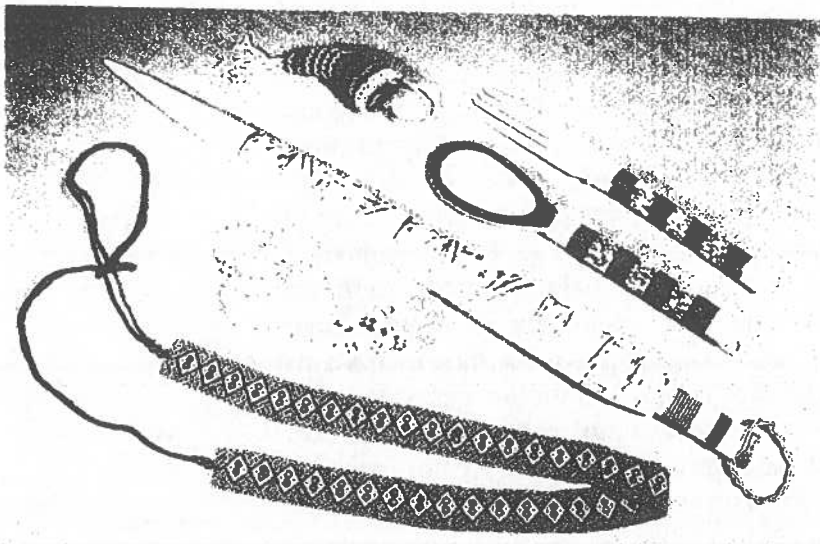


Plate 27: Typical "curio kitsch" offered for sale at Natal roadside markets and Durban beachfront.
Photograph: C. Wafer.

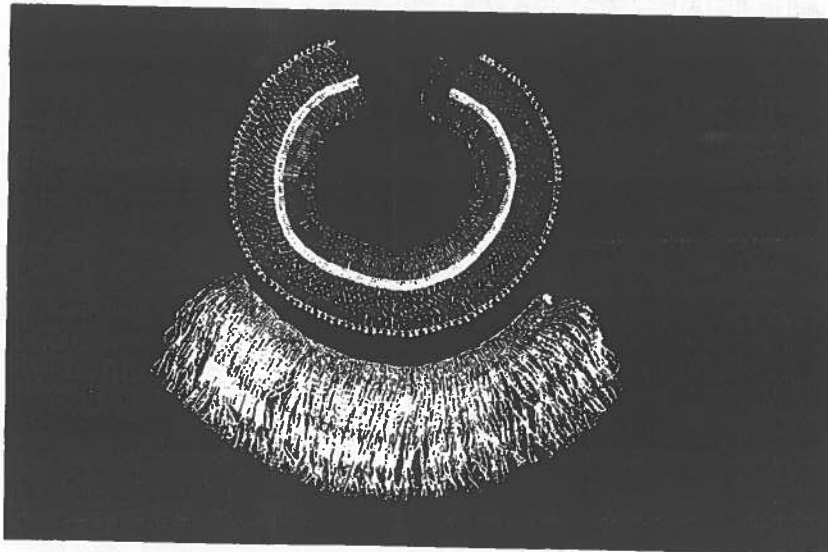


Plate 28: Fashion jewellery: two necklets from the Mdukutshani Centre made for the 1985-1986 fashion season.
Photograph: C. Wafer.

signs, patterns and above all non-bead features such as safety pins and bells. This echoes the valuable but more popular work of Levinsohn (1984:132) which focuses specifically on the situation at Msinga.

It is in the invention of new styles and the appropriation of both new and complementary materials that the vibrancy of any art or craft tradition lies. One has only to attend Zulu ceremonies such as weddings or the annual festivals of the Nazarite Church to see this feature demonstrated again and again. Many of the public ceremonials of the Zulu Royal calendar are, furthermore, celebrated in so called 'traditional dress' and in this beadwork has an increasingly striking and dramatic place (Plate 26). These events are being given greater coverage in the white and black

press and on all television networks. It is, we believe, both in the continued use of beadwork in costume, and in the current increase in the use of many 'traditional' symbols such as beadwork to highlight and draw attention to Zulu identity, that beadwork traditions are experiencing a creative impetus. In KwaZulu it is, in effect, what is worn and what is seen to be valued, not only by a limited and 'old fashioned' section of the population, but by the trendsetters at Nongoma and Ulundi, that is bringing beadwork into the public eye and imagination. In addition it is television spectacles such as *Shaka Zulu*, as well as the display and sale of Zulu beadwork, both in curio stores and, increasingly, in smart departmental stores, that are changing the attitude of many black people to beadwork and to the making and wearing of beadwork. In semiotic terms the message which is being given both to the beadmakers and to potential black consumers is today, therefore, self-consciously positive. No longer are beads a sign of backwardness and of belonging to the category of the non-educated: instead they are a sign of sophistication and national pride.

Despite what has been said above it is not on the internal black market that really large profits are to be made by beadworkers. The biannual Shembe festivals and life cycle ceremonies, together with the demand created by occasional television spectacles, may provide a temporary opportunity for money-making, but it is only in turning to production for the external market that the economic incentives for doing regular beadwork really begin to surface. It is here also that the input of outsiders, and particularly of culture brokers, must be seriously considered.

Production for the external market

Bead articles made for outside sale may be divided into (a) large numbers of simple ethnic curios directed at the local holiday and overseas tourist market, (b) bead jewellery made for consumption on both the local and overseas tourist and fashion markets, and (c) a small and unique school of representational bead sculpture which is aimed at and has been stimulated by a highly specialised market of art collectors. These sculptures fall into the category of ethnic *objets d'art* as defined above.

In all the categories to be discussed there are major differences in the skill and attention to detail applied by the makers in producing individual items. The tutored eye can easily distinguish fine from mediocre craftsmanship and producers make judgements both about their own work and that of others. In addition, items made for some sources are given greater care and attention than others. Work which will be offered direct to the public at the side of the road is often inferior to that which producers know will

be scrutinised by middlemen and traders, many of whom demand, not only good workmanship, but the use of thread known to last well. By and large skill and fineness of workmanship are related to earning potential. In Durban, for instance, some craft and curio stores, and in particular the African Art Centre, of which one of the authors is the manager, have built up a reputation for buying only high quality goods. Correspondingly higher prices are paid by these concerns than by other buyers.

Over the years, the managers of the more popular outlets have focused the range, colour and designs of articles brought to them along lines corresponding with their own perception of what will sell or what is 'good' art (or as some phrase it 'good craft'). The interplay of the perception of the middleman or middlewoman and the response of producers is subtle and hard to measure. It affects all beadwork production, from the simplest ethnic curio items through the fashion range to the flowering of sculptural forms and is one of the elements which Jules-Rosette's notions of the Tourist Art System and the culture broker captures so well.

a. Ethnic and curio beadwork (Plate 27)

i. Range and Description

Characteristically these items are small and inexpensive. Beadwork has the advantage of being light and easily packed in airline bags. It is colourful and makes attractive gifts for those whom the holiday maker and tourist have left at home. The range is from ethnic jewellery (bracelets, belts and necklaces, including the ubiquitous Zulu love-letter) to the more up-to-date daisy chains and 'cascades' (made of bead streamers hung from a necklet) to beaded assagais⁷, diviners' whisks, medicine bottles and wooden salad sets decorated with a few beads. The purely 'ethnic' items, that is those with a supposed traditional counterpart like the love-letter and assagai, have been joined by small birds and animals on safety pins which, together with salad sets, are probably the result of outside suggestion and internal experimentation. A recent addition to the gift line has been beaded coasters, rings and, probably in response to the popularity of *Shaka Zulu*, short (wooden) stabbing spears. These items come largely in what consumers learn to think of as 'traditional' Zulu colours - red, white, yellow and blue - and are made in simple geometric designs, said by producers, middlemen and traders to be 'typically Zulu'. In making these claims the middlemen and traders are often following popular literature on the topic such as Grossert's description of Zulu beadwork (1978).

ii. Characteristics in common

These items show an overall similarity, simplicity and tendency to standardisation. On the evidence of old photographs and

museum collections, and of what is produced for internal consumption, it is clear that what was once a fairly wide range of local styles has been consolidated into a relatively uniform range which the makers, middlemen and the managers of curio stores believe to be what customers want. In this they all combine as culture brokers although the message directed at the consumer is essentially that of primitive Africa with an emphasis on mystery (medicine bottles), savagery (assagais) and romance (love-letters). Because these items must sell cheaply and in large numbers they should not take many beads¹⁸ to make and nor can they take too long or demand any very great skill to produce. They are the 'pot boilers' of the beadwork trade and their uniformity derives from mass production on a small scale. Individual women can make tens and even twenties of them fairly quickly and both wholesalers and the managers of some curio shops engage women specifically to supply these standardised and uniform items, paying the producer either a piece rate or daily wage.

iii. Messages sent and messages received: from ethnic images to political semantics

The predominant image of most relatively cheap beaded curios is that of ethnic difference and of the mystery and romance of a primitive and timeless Africa. The message which is aimed at tourists and which, for the most part, they embrace only too eagerly, is summed up in and confirms the notion that the 'Dark Continent' or 'Darkest Africa' still exists and is within their reach. Hence the popularity, not only of ethnic curios, but of visits to a 'Zulu Kraal' where tourists are entertained by Zulu dancing, possibly a divination session and a plethora of beaded and bare-breasted maidens. So much the better if the maidens can be observed doing beadwork, the older women making pots and weaving and the men woodcarving. These are all activities which entrenched the idea that black people have not changed and they enable the tourist (and especially, perhaps, the white South African holiday maker) to ignore the realities of a changing, modernising and imminently violent Africa. To cap it all the products of the traditional skills and activities which have been demonstrated are for sale in the 'gift shop' on the way out. The sacred journey to the primitive and exotic is thus ended appropriately with the opportunity to purchase a timeless and enduring memento, a final rite of passage which, when they return home, will attest to the travellers having 'been to' and experienced a slice of that other world which is so dramatically different to the mundane concerns of their everyday working life. For white South Africans the message, furthermore, is the comforting one that radical change is not really upon them. In contrast, for a particular type of overseas tourist the ethnic image is seductive because it speaks strongly

of the 'primitive' which they value as a counterbalance to what they perceive as the oversophistication and effete manners of Western civilisation. These buyers consciously or unconsciously espouse 'The Primitive' as did Gauguin when he spoke the famous words, 'Civilisation is what makes you sick' (Gardner 1975:705). The mystique of Africa is that of the simple and unsophisticated. A slight variation on this theme is the currently fashionable claim that there is something different and intrinsically valuable about what is referred to as the 'African Psyche' and that it is this which is symbolised and given form in the ethnic images incorporated in African art and craft.

It must be noted that, while the images and messages sketched above are actively propagated by middlemen and traders and are enthusiastically accepted by most tourists, they also consciously guide the thinking of many black producers. The latter have come to expect white people in general, and holiday makers in particular, to react to their cultural traditions in this ingenuous and superficial manner. In instances where they come face to face with more informed buyers, producers are often amazed and even disconcerted. Some producers try to force upon all white buyers the simple stereotype of an unchanging Africa which they themselves know to be incorrect but which has proven a money spinner in the past. This may lead to confusion in communication and to dissatisfaction on both sides. The problem is, of course, that not all tourists are the same and some do not embrace the ethnic message as happily and uncritically as others. For some it has another meaning altogether, upon which we will now elaborate.

While the majority of ethnic curios may well end up gathering dust at the back of dark cupboards (Jules-Rosette 1984:16), ethnic jewellery is invariably worn, at least for a while, and may even be kept for years to complement particular outfits. This jewellery is, therefore, rather different and more useful than simulated ethnic artifacts like beaded assagais or non-bead curios like shields and masks. For a particular category of buyers, furthermore, the message which ethnic jewellery carries is not necessarily that of the primitive or exotic. Davison (1987), amongst others, has commented that much of the current interest in African art may derive from a desire on the part of some white South Africans to identify with and share in an integrated South African culture and future which they believe is, or they would like to see, developing. In the same vein some whites consciously choose to wear ethnic jewellery and in so doing they are transmitting and reading into the items concerned a very different message to that which characterises most tourist "seeing" and "buying". For them wearing ethnic jewellery (and even giving it as gifts) is a political statement and a limited and vicarious association with the world

and concerns of black South Africans. Extending this line of argument, it may be conjectured that the increasing use of ethnic jewellery by a wide range of black South Africans is an expression of a cultural and political identity which goes way beyond the merely decorative.

If beadwork can indicate social status and cultural affiliation in the rural and neighbourhood context, in other situations (and even at the same time) it can be used to make wider socio-political statements. Ethnic beadwork incorporates not only highly attractive and memorable colours and designs, but, in form and impact, it is completely different from anything Western. It is seen by both black and white people as being unique to black culture. Zulu beadwork has, it is suggested, the potential to be both an appropriate and timely symbol of, on the local level, Zulu national identity and could possibly become one of the symbols of an even more encompassing national identity. It must not be forgotten, of course, that it is not only Zulu-speaking people who are expert beadmakers and it is clear that the use of and trade in beadwork are as lively among the Ndebele and some other Nguni groups as they are in KwaZulu.

Use value has many and, for different people, different meanings at different times. If there is one lesson to be learnt from attempting to read the "message" of contemporary Zulu ethnic beadwork, it is that the items, once made, take on a life and meaning, not so much of their own, but in the eye of the beholder. "Seeing" is, therefore, a matter of what one wishes to see, and "buying" and wearing may be part of the manner in which individuals present themselves and their cause to the world.

b. Fashion jewellery (Plate 28)

i. Range and Description

Ethnic bead jewellery shades into fashion jewellery as bead colours and styles change and are designed to complement world fashion trends. This change was initiated by yet another category of cultural broker, the personnel of development projects, most of which had strong religious links and whose managers were seeking a source of local income for black women. Those which met with success later attempted to expand their economic opportunities by capturing the overseas fashion market. Some projects, and notably the pioneer, Mdukuishani at Tugela Ferry and latterly KwaZamokuhle at Escourt, have developed into highly successful businesses with international links and expert marketing. Future production is based on information on overseas fashion trends and the beads which are used are often distinctive and do not come from the same sources as the beads used in ethnic items. The Mdukuishani lead has been copied by vari-

ous local white commercial interests and, more importantly, by individual black producers who have begun diversifying their output to include, besides standard 'ethnic' items in 'Zulu colours', a range of both original and derivative styles in the few muted colours which can be bought in this country. It is in this field that wide and intricately beaded 'modern' belts and collars, rings and earrings had their origin, as well as purses and handbags. Since these items take many beads, production tends to be limited by the risk to the individual producer in committing expensive resources to items for which there is no certain sale.

ii. *Characteristics in common*

Fashion jewellery is highly saleable because it can be worn on far more occasions than can 'ethnic' items. Styles which do not move rapidly are not repeated. On the other hand, large numbers of similar fashion goods are not produced either, and there is a premium on variety, at least in colour and in the type of bead used. Prices paid to producers are higher than for ethnic items but many producers seem to regard fashion as a chancy area to work in and only some enter it. Those who make fashion jewellery usually also produce ethnic items as the 'staples' of their repertoire. It is in fashion jewellery, however, that real evidence of initiative and creativity is to be found. Some women adapt and carry over the exuberance of the patterns in their own dress to the 'costume' jewellery they produce for whites. Acute observation of white standards is necessary, but in some cases this input is provided by a culture broker in the form of a bulk buyer or the person who has commissioned the beadwork and to whom the women go to sell it. The interaction here is between two cultural forms and what is developing is an amalgam of western taste and Zulu skill and adaptability.

iii. *The message of 'fashion' jewellery: semiotic neutrality?*

Following from the above it is possible to suggest that, if there is a message encoded in beaded fashion jewellery of the type we are discussing here, it is that of a common cultural universe in which both producer and consumer attempt to reach each other in an area appreciated and elaborated in both western and Zulu culture traditions and epitomised for westerners in the (now rather old fashioned) concept of 'costume jewellery'.

It may be speculated that, in contrast to the ethnic jewellery described previously, the field of fashion jewellery can be treated as an essentially neutral area and one which can be kept largely separate from the highly charged political environment in which, increasingly, even the least sensitive white South Africans meet black South Africans and black culture today. If, as Davison, quoting Powell (*The Weekly Mail* 9th January 1987), suggests, the current interest in what is labelled 'transitional' art has

Plate 31: Sizakhele Mchunu
Miniature Coffin, 1985.
 (Preston-Whyte collection).
 Beads and Fabric.
 Photograph: C. Wafer.

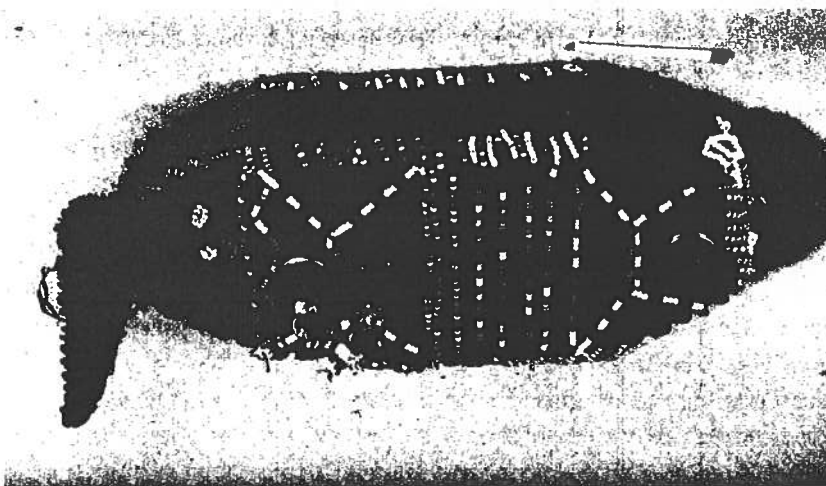


Plate 30: Sizakhele Mchunu
Tennis Match (Thorpe
 collection). Beads and Fabric.
 Photograph: C. Wafer.



Plate 29b: "Tekwane", Artist
 Unknown. (Preston-Whyte
 collection). Beads and Fabric.
 Photograph: C. Wafer.

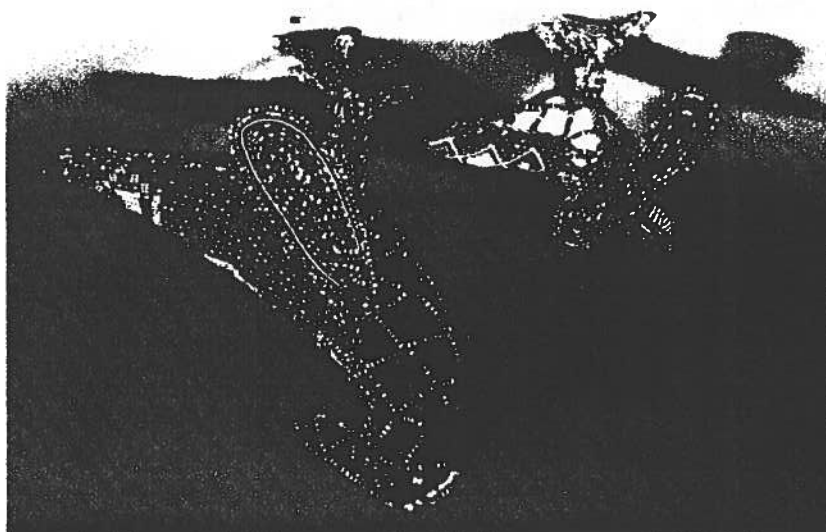


Plate 29a: Bird sculptures
 An original bird by
 Khulumelaphi Mlaba. Beads
 and fabric. (Thorpe
 collection).



Plate 32: Contemporary Ndebele dolls purchased outside the University of the Witwatersrand. 1987.
Photograph: C. Wafer

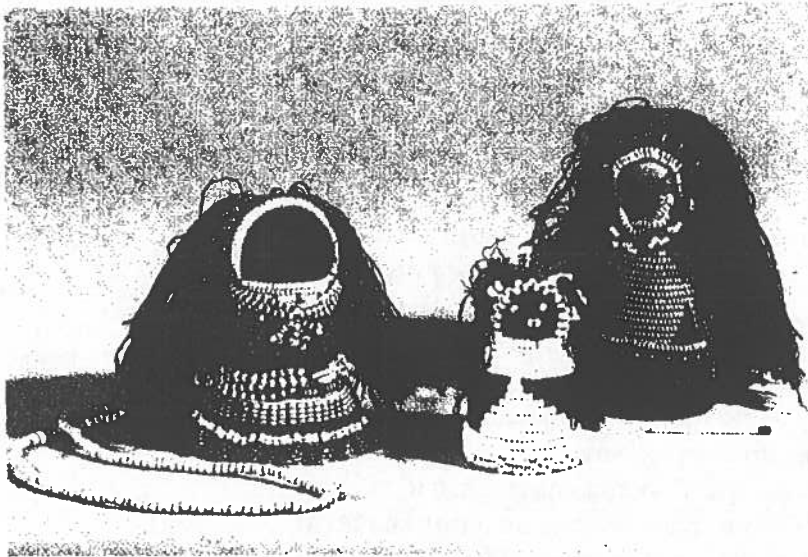


Plate 33: Contemporary Msinga dolls purchased 1988. (Preston-Whyte collection).
Photograph: C. Wafer

as much to do with fear as with a wish for positive identification with black people, it would certainly not be surprising to find that a bead *genre* which neither glorifies nor brings ethnic difference openly to the fore could be extremely popular. It is, however, as much on overseas markets as on the South African market that beaded fashion jewellery flourishes. Although there is no doubt a residue of romantic association with Africa as the 'Dark Continent', it is colour, design and novelty which carry the day and win high prices overseas. But this could be regarded as another form of neutrality, this time one predetermined by the economic imperatives lying behind all production for a market. In the field of fashion jewellery it is above all the saleability, and the clever manipulation of this by a variety of culture brokers, which counts.

The fact that the development of fashion jewellery arose from the desire to increase the earning power of rural women adds another quirk to an already complex situation of 'seeing' and 'buying'.

c. Representational Bead and Cloth Sculpture¹⁰

(Plates 29-33, Illustrations 25-27)

We turn now to a field of beadwork which, like fashion jewellery, is even more original and creative. A group of women from the Valley of a Thousand Hills near Durban produce what we propose to describe as 'bead sculptures'. These are free-standing representations of human figures, birds, animals and even material objects made from cloth and decorated with beads (Plates 29, 31 and Ill. 25). In some cases more than one figure appears, while in others the figures stand against features of the natural and cultural environment such as trees, a bed or bicycle, possibly a cat-the byre or shackshop or an elegantly furnished room. What strikes the observer is that many of these figures and tableaux are more than careful representations of reality. They are vignettes of the life, world and social experience of their makers. Some, furthermore, appear to offer a subtle, if possibly unconscious, comment on their social condition.

i. *How bead sculptures developed*

The last decade has seen the flowering of sculpture and sculptural forms among black artists. Carving in wood by men has predominated although both women and men have experimented in modelling with clay. More striking, perhaps, has been the use of unusual media such as tin cans (Davison 1987), wire and even unhewn stone and cement blocks. Into the same highly imaginative and innovative category falls the bead sculpture we are discussing. Usually built up and around a framework of wire and wood, these figures and sets of figures appear, at first sight, to have their parallel in the beaded 'dolls' (Plates 32 and 33) and the clay animals and birds made by black rural children all over southern Africa. Classifying them as toys rather than as art forms is tempting, especially in the case of the single human figures which are invariably referred to by their makers and buyers as 'dolls'. As we will argue later, however, this would be a mistake; Zulu bead sculptures are not, and never were, made as 'dolls', either for play or as nebulous fertility symbols. They are the result, on the one hand, of experimentation by experienced beadworkers with new forms designed to catch the fancy of the consumer and, on the other hand, the nurturing of this creativity by one of the authors who is the manager of a retail store-cum-development project specialising in upmarket African art. Implicit in the argument advanced here is the importance of

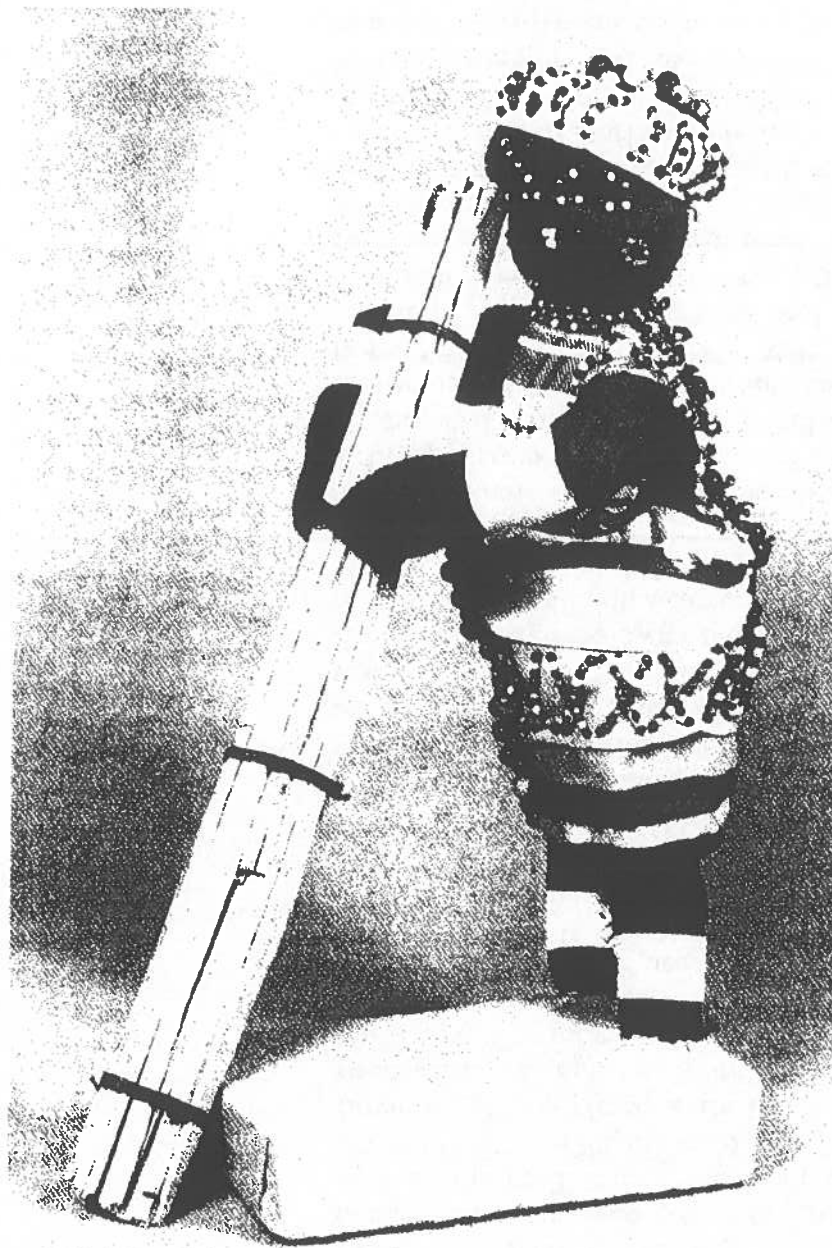


Illustration 25: Mchunu, Thandi. *Scene of Rural life: Woman Collecting wood*. South African Museum, Cape Town. 1987. Cloth and fibre, beads. Photograph: The South African Museum.

the commercial motives of all the participants in what Jules-Rosette has called the Tourist Art System. The financial incentive was, indeed, also a feature of her original model, and, like her, we would stress that a financial motive need not necessarily be inimical to 'good art'. While the desire (or need) to earn money can lead to the production of 'potboilers' and may easily result in both a drop in the standards of workmanship and in excessive uniformity of production, it can also, as in this case, stimulate originality and creativity. We are, in fact, certain that it was above all the recognition by the makers that there is a growing market

for unusual beaded items which gave rise to the original production and subsequent elaboration of bead sculptures. We believe, furthermore, that it is the financial security of regular sales which allowed a few pioneers to diversify from producing jewellery and simple decorative sculptures into those sculptural forms which, to our eyes, appear to have the elements of social commentary about them.

Our use of the term 'sculpture' for these beaded figures may require some comment and justification. The makers do not think of themselves as 'sculptors', nor of their medium as sculpture in the western sense. The term seems, however, appropriate because these figures and groups of figures are both free-standing and decorative. The term 'soft sculpture' has been suggested in order to highlight the nature of their predominant medium. We, however, prefer to focus on the fact that these figures build upon the traditions of Zulu beadwork rather than that of contemporary 'soft toys'. For these reasons we adopt the term bead and cloth sculptures, or shortened versions thereof. Before describing bead sculptures in detail we need to know something of their history and the context in which they are both produced and sold.

Writing in 1978 Grossert noted that Zulu women made small stylized 'dolls' which they decorated with beads. As a foundation they used 'maize cobs, or for larger dolls, pieces of wood cut directly from a branch, six or seven centimetres in diameter' (1978:56,61). Comparing them to the very similar dolls made elsewhere in the country, he gives the impression that the Zulu form was neither universal nor particularly typical of Zulu bead production. In fact most known examples, as well as detailed reports of traditional Zulu dolls, come from the Masinga area (Nettleton 1986:167; Levinsohn 1984:130) and this is one of the few places where it is possible to buy them from individual craftswomen today. We know virtually nothing about their endogenous use, although they are usually referred to by both makers and by mid-dlemen and commentators as 'fertility' dolls (Levinsohn 1984:Nettleton 1986). Short and dumpy, with only the head differentiated from the trunk (Plate 33), Masinga dolls are highly stylized and totally different to the bead sculptures described here and it should not be assumed that the latter are derived directly or even indirectly from this traditional form. Bead sculptures are, we reiterate, a product of the contemporary scene; they are not only made for sale but are the result of efforts made by the African Art Centre in Durban both to promote new craft forms and to provide local black women with a source of income. A short résumé of the work and role of the Art Centre needs to be given in order to clarify this issue.

Originating in 1960, as a project initiated by the South African

Institute of Race Relations, the African Art Centre is now an independent non-profit making company directed to the promotion and sale of black art. During the twenty-seven years of its existence it has encouraged and nurtured black artistic talent by buying items from a wide range of individual producers as well as from art and craft projects situated throughout KwaZulu and Natal. The best of this work has been exhibited by the Art Centre on national and international exhibitions and smaller exhibitions of the work of particular artists and projects have been hosted at the Centre itself. Over the years a buying public has been built up which consists of local art connoisseurs, public art galleries, notably the Durban Art Gallery, members of the general public interested in African Art, both local and overseas tourists and, increasingly, commercial buyers from America and Europe. The Art Centre has thus provided a focus, market and shop window for local black artistic talent. Beadwork has grown to be one of the most popular of all the lines carried by the Centre and the staff expect between ten and thirty beadworkers from around Durban and from as far afield as Greytown to come in approximately once a week to sell the work which they make in their own homes. Overall there are about 150 beadmakers on the Centre's books, although individual women may come in only once a month or less often.

Until about 1979 the major bead items brought to the Centre for sale were ethnic or fashion jewellery. Some small stylized beaded 'fertility' dolls were bought on buying trips to Msinga (Plate 33). A new departure was initiated by Thembi Mchunu, one of the Centre's most regular beadmakers. She tentatively offered a small and realistic figure made of cloth and dressed in contemporary *amabinca* clothing to one of the authors for her approval. Liking this, the latter encouraged her to make more figures and eventually a variety of forms appeared as other women followed suit. This has resulted in a feast of original creations. These range from human figures in different outfits (and particularly in varieties of *amabinca* dress), birds, animals, even aeroplanes, helicopters, to those items of western manufacture such as sewing machines and radios which might make rural life easier and pleasanter. Recently more complex pieces have become usual such as a woman collecting wood (Ill. 25), a mother bathing her baby, a ploughing team or a tennis match (Plate 30). The sculptures now reflect the world as it exists around the makers and some, indeed, introduce a subtle, and possibly as yet largely unconscious, form of social comment into their work. A small and beautifully decorated coffin opens to reveal the face of a dead baby (Plate 31), while the elegantly appointed lounge of a rich person's house stands side by side with the ubiquitous rural shackshop.

The interaction of the traditional and modern is well portrayed in the sculpture of a nurse delivering the baby of a beaded *amabinca* woman on the operating table of a clinic. In many of these pieces, furthermore, the makers introduce, besides representation and characterisation, both dynamics and a feeling of movement despite the constraints of their medium (Ill. 26 and 27). In looking back at the development of these sculptures it seems likely that they represent an amalgamation of the lively bead tradition characteristic of the Valley of a Thousand Hills, the spread of sewing machines, and the effects of a number of sewing classes run by local development and welfare projects in the area. Some of the earliest makers of sculptures are known to have attended sewing classes, and the sculptures show a skill, not only with beads, but with needle and thread. Each is clearly well designed and thought out. Some are built up around sticks or pieces of wood, some fixed to a base, and others strengthened by a wire frame. The artists make use of scraps of material and a wide range of original decorative items besides beads. Thus some sculptures have bottle-tops, lace, pins, and one even has a suspender, as part of their decoration. The style of particular women, or of groups of women, notably of sisters or co-wives, is clearly recognisable to the authors and increasingly to the devotees of this developing art form. Although these sculptures are not signed, the methods of construction, common themes and decoration identify the artists as clearly as do brushstrokes, line and colour combinations in another medium.

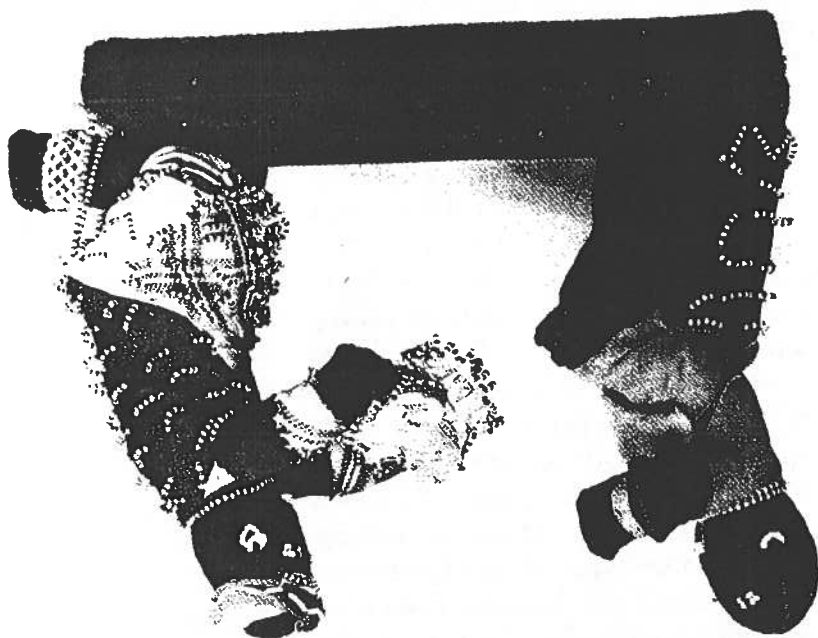


Illustration 26: Mchunu, Mavis. Zulu bride and groom in umavvo ceremony. South African Museum, Cape Town. 1987. Photograph: The South African Museum.

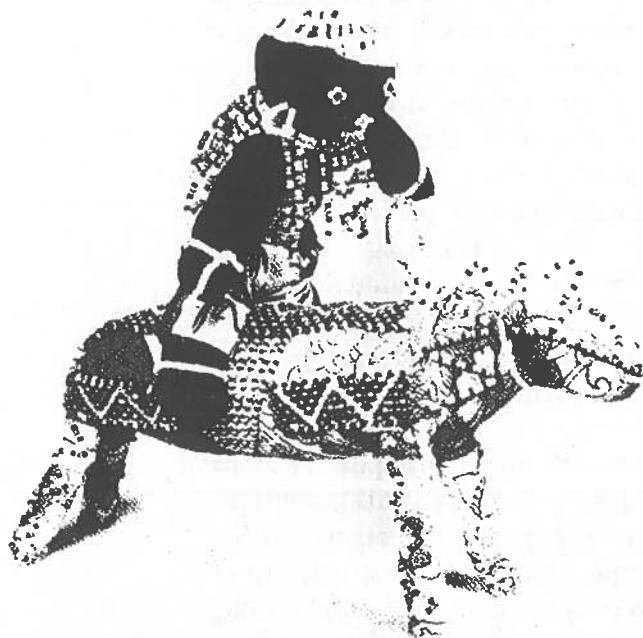


Illustration 27: Mchunu, Katherine. *Jockey*. South African Museum, Cape Town. 1987. Cloth and fibre, beads. Photograph: The South African Museum.

In attempting to sum up bead sculptures in artistic terms it should be noted that they exist for and in themselves. They serve no useful purpose - other than to please the eye, both that of the maker and the potential buyer. In this they approach more nearly, perhaps, than any other form of beadwork, the usual definition of 'art' as opposed to 'craft'. The fact that they are designed for the market should not detract from the assessment of their artistic merit and, indeed, they are beginning to take pride of place in art galleries around the country. For their makers they provide the opportunity, not only to reproduce, but to reflect upon their surroundings, to put their skills in design and colour to use, and make money at the same time. This is a winning combination with women earning three and four times as much from the sale of sculptures as from selling numerous smaller pieces of jewellery. Each sculpture sells at between R15 and R40 in contrast to jewellery which may fetch between R5 and R10 per item. While it is true that sculptures take a fair time to construct and decorate, they are probably no more time consuming to make than are many standard bead items.

ii. Range and form

The emphasis of the staff at the African Art Centre has always been upon individuality and creativity and this has resulted in the development of not only a wide variety of sculptural forms but also in a tendency for the overall repertoire to change over the years. What follows is a preliminary attempt at classifying what has been produced to date.

i. *Human Forms*. These range from solid standing figures in intricate and authentic contemporary Zulu costume to idealised portraits of particular 'types' of people - an *isangoma* (diviner), a jockey on his horse (Ill. 26), or a canoeist battling the flood waters of the Umgeni. In the case of the latter, dynamics and movement have been introduced in order to catch the spirit of action. The diver is depicted at the moment when she waves her whisk, the busy woman as she leans over the grindstone and the canoeist as he lifts his paddle in an effort to keep his canoe upright. These vibrant canoes merge into:

ii. *Tableaux* consisting of more than one beaded figure which together tell a single story. Thus a mother lifts her baby into a bath and a preacher raises his hand in blessing over a kneeling woman in church uniform. More ambitious pieces depict a football match complete with beaded ball and umpire, four girls playing tennis in matching outfits (Plate 30) or a number of herdboys encouraging a ploughing team. It is the latter which, in their turn, shade almost imperceptibly from mere observation and depiction of the artists' surroundings into a naive and possibly undconscious form of

iii. *Social Commentary*. In these sculptures white and black people are clearly differentiated in the use of black or pink material for skin tones (the canoeist mentioned above is made of pink panthose), and while the soccer players are black, the girls playing tennis are white (Plate 30). The latter wear short white tunics and, although their belts and collars are beaded, they are not covered with the profusion of beadwork found on most *amabinca* female figures. Many of these pieces shock more than they entertain as is the case with the mother rolling in grief next to a decorated coffin, the lid of which lifts up to reveal her dead child. Indeed, both the sorrows and joys of everyday life and the round of birth, marriage and death come across vividly to the viewer. The latter draws her own conclusions and, perhaps, reads more into the piece than the maker intended.

iv. *Material objects, birds and animals*. Some of the earliest bead and cloth sculptures were of birds (Plate 29a) and these remain extremely popular with both makers and buyers. Acute observation of the characteristic stance of a *lekwane* (hammerkop) (Plate 29b) is combined with experimentation and initiative in depicting wings by using a 'see-through' wire frame covered with tiny beads. Animal depictions tend to be highly imaginative and the value attached to cattle is clear from the detailed and loving use of beading to decorate cows and oxen. The miniature aeroplanes and helicopters match the birds for exuberance in colour and design while transistor radios, a Singer sewing machine and fully furnished rooms attest to acute observation and an interest in the

material and mechanical, as well as the natural, order.

Looking back over the eight years during which these items have been appearing, it is clear that change has taken place and some of the typical sculptures of the earlier period are no longer coming into the African Art Centre for sale. One of the elements in production is undeniably consumer demand mediated largely by one of the authors who examines each piece of sculpture which comes in, decides whether or not to purchase it from the maker and what to pay for it. At times, when she feels that too many of one kind of sculpture are on the shop floor, she asks the producers not to bring anymore for a time. On other (and more frequent occasions) she encourages popular lines or, by her admiration for original forms, stimulates a new trend. There is no doubt that she plays a critical and influencing role in the development and course of this type of artistic expression. She has moreover been instrumental also in popularising these sculptures with the people who come to the African Art Centre in search of both superior 'craft' and, predominantly, examples of African art. She, therefore, fits perfectly the role of Jules-Rosette's culture broker both in respect to producers and to buyers. In relation to both 'seeing' and 'buying', furthermore, the case of contemporary Zulu bead sculptures illustrates very well the complex interaction of creativity and stimulation in production and the corresponding development of consumer taste which occurs within the tourist art system.

iii. Sculptural messages: beyond the ethnic image

In semiotic terms the message which Zulu bead and cloth sculptures carry is that of originality and the 'something different' for which the more discerning (and wealthy) tourists seek. The same characteristics commend these sculptures to art collectors and to the buyers for both South African and overseas galleries and museums. The latter, however, see in these works, in addition, signs of artistic merit and, perhaps, a unique form of African artistic expression.

In reviewing the range of these sculptures as they exist at present, it is clear that they divide into two distinct types: the purely representational, focused largely on simple human figures and on bird and animal subjects, and the more thought-provoking and complex scenes of everyday human experience. It is the latter which speak so clearly of the social conditions of their makers and because of this they are more challenging to the observer and potential consumer. Many tourists do, in fact, prefer the first type of sculpture. Certainly the single human, bird and animal forms appear to be more easily accessible to western eyes than are the more complex human tableaux and the purely African subjects (Ill. 27) which the latter often represent. Although one might

have expected the fact that many of the human figures are represented in traditional dress to appeal to the ethnic image and carry the same message as the typical ethnic curio, this is not the case. These sculptures are too complex, too lively and their statement far too dramatic to please the standard tourist who seeks the simple and superficial message of a primitive and timeless Africa. Bead sculptures such as these speak forcibly of the present and they illustrate a living and changing tradition and a world in which their makers will take their place, not as the quintessential and unchanging 'primitive', but as the artists and creators of the future. It is in this respect that Zulu bead sculptures should be seen as a *genre* distinct from the increasingly popular ethnic 'dolls' which are now to be found in most curio and tourist shops around the country.

Ethnic dolls and bead sculpture

Ethnic dolls, although bought mainly by and for adults, are conceived of by both consumers and producers as 'toys' (Plate 33). Some romantic buyers may, in addition, view them as having connections with fertility rituals. Their toy status is attested to by the examples recently reported of two dolls of western manufacture which had been dressed by an Ndebele woman in bead necklaces and coils (Becker 1987). By no means all ethnic dolls produced for the tourist market are, however, decorated with beads; witness the tradition of Herero dolls in Victorian cloth finery (Levinsohn 1984:107) and the male Ndebele doll shown in Plate 32 which is clad in a leather hunting costume.

The most popular and numerous ethnic dolls are without doubt the intricately beaded female Ndebele dolls (Levinsohn 1984:123). They range from simplified and stylized human forms, hardly to be seen beneath huge coils of beadwork, to far lighter forms with floating skirts, beaded brassiere, and rudimentary arms. An outstanding example of a modern Ndebele doll appears as the cover picture on Levinsohn's recent book on Southern African art and craft (1984) while two other contemporary examples are illustrated along with the hunter in Plate 32. These Ndebele dolls were bought recently (Dec. 1987) in Johannesburg, outside the University of the Witwatersrand, from itinerant women, one of whom was also selling a beaded bird and (appropriately enough, since they sat outside the old Bernard Price Institute for Palaeological Research) what looked like a beaded dinosaur.

Although reminiscent of the Zulu bead sculpture described above, and possibly moving in the same direction, Ndebele dolls (and even the two birds) appear to the authors to be still largely 'ethnic' in conception and form. The dolls are stiff and, like their 'traditional' counterparts, they stand ramrod straight. Although

in some cases their legs are differentiated and others have arms, none bend or turn like the Zulu figures described above and in none of the examples we have seen is a tableau built up with more than one interacting figure. There is little attempt to give a realistic form to the fact of an Ndebele doll or to portray emotion as in the case of the mourning mother lying next to the coffin of her child. The Ndebele examples seem to be rooted in the 'traditional' form, as the Zulu equivalent never was. The first Zulu sculpture was a free and realistic portrayal of a human figure and not a stylized representation following on an accepted and customary model. Even the few Ndebele birds and the dinosaur figure are static, their wings suggested by beads, but not portrayed as in the Zulu examples with projecting wire frames which can be bent to suggest flight and movement. Although it is true that many of the bead sculptures made in KwaZulu incorporate something of a broadly ethnic image because they are clearly of black people and are dressed in *amabinca* clothing, their makers have, we suggest, moved beyond an ethnic image to make a clear statement about contemporary life.

