

DIGITAL AGNES

Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University
agnes.queensu.ca

Collection Count + Care

Count + Care seeks relationships within and conversations across the collection.

What stories does the collection tell?

2022

SPEAKERS

Qanita Lilla, Associate Curator, Arts of Africa and Suzanne van de Meerendonk, Bader Curator of European Art

FEATURED WORKS

Unknown Maker, *Mask*, Liberia, unknown date, wood, fibre, cloth and string. Gift of Justin and Elisabeth Lang, 1984

Unknown Maker, *Locket*, Inscribed M.M. June 21st 1885, brass, enamel, glass and hair. Gift of Elizabeth and Alastair Walker, 1996

Unknown Maker, *Portrait*, unknown date, oil on ivory, with metal, glass and hair. Gift of Elizabeth and Alastair Walker, 1996

Unknown Maker (follower of Cornelis Ketel), *Miniature Portrait*, around 1580, oil on copper. Gift of Dr and Mrs Alfred Bader, 1969

KEYWORDS

Miniature Portrait, African Art, Art Collection

TRANSCRIPT

Suzanne van de Meerendonk: These used to be really lively objects, so it's strange to think of them now sitting in our vaults.

We've brought these objects together in a Victorian hatbox. And they recall a number of things. The journeys they took to Agnes, their intimate nature. So each one was actually carried close to the wearer's heart and also they're changing roles. But each of these objects do carry very different meanings.

Qanita Lilla: Like the small wooden Dan mask from Liberia was sometimes called a passport mask. And we're not sure who started using this term, because the term "passport" was an imperial invention used to control the borders of Africa. That makes us realize that the term is linked to home and to belonging, but it also shows how entangled our knowledge about Africa is with colonial ideas of mastery and control.

Suzanne van de Meerendonk: Placing the mask alongside these also very personal objects from the global north, it really opens up different kinds of conversation about kinship and the way in which we can perceive or understand lived presences as they exist in our collections. For instance, the hair work on the miniature [inaudible] expresses this immortal love for a person that was once known. And the likeness of that person, which we then see on the other side, is painted on ivory. Ivory as a

material similarly sits between the living and the un-living, but it also links immediately to colonial processes of extraction.

Qanita Lilla: We brought these objects all together because we wanted to show how they can forge new bonds of kinship and that people who love Agnes wanted to share these objects with us.

Suzanne van de Meerendonk: So now these are brought together in a spirit of sharing.

Qanita Lilla: Yes.