



NEH CARES GRANT FACT SHEET:

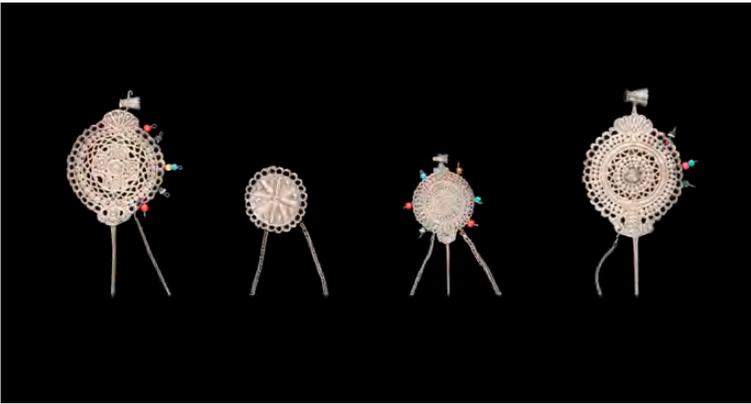
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- \$150,000 awarded to curate the South and Central American and African collections, partially offsetting salaries of 11 Science Division staff members (Dominique Alhambra, Erin Baxter, Melissa Bechhoefer, Michele Koons, Steve Nash, René O’Connell, Jeff Phegley, Kathryn Reusch, Courtney Scheskie, Sam Schiller, and Rick Wicker) from July 1st to December 31st, 2020.
- More than 3,000 objects were given new preservation mounts and moved from older storage spaces into the Avenir Collections Center. Each object was unwrapped and measured, noting any special attention needed. The team took 5,000 reference images that will be made available to researchers via the EMu database.
- Our professional photographer, Rick Wicker, produced stunning photographs of 275 objects. Those photos are now available for professional publication and other online resources.
- Conservation Technician Kathryn Reusch mended breaks, engaged in specialized cleaning, and proposed more extensive treatment options that will be performed in the future.
- Staff reorganized 500+ database terms in the culture-group names for these regions, updating out-of-date terms with more appropriate, culturally relevant terms.
- Updated thousands of catalog records in Emu, with more specific and accurate descriptive, raw material, and collection locality data. For some records, that meant diving into paper archives and migrating those data to electronic records. Notable examples include the re-discovery of an important Nigerian artist whose work is in the collection, as well as the re-discovery of locality data for Luba and Kuba objects from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

STORIES FROM THE COLLECTION



Did you know money can have a soul? West African kissi pennies do! Beginning in the 19th century, these rods of African-smelted iron were bundled together and traded in what is now Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. In addition to being used as currency, the kissi pennies were associated with spirits of the deceased. If broken, these rods need to be repaired by someone who has the ability to restore their souls before they could be traded again. Kissi pennies — “the coins with a soul” — were used until colonial powers abolished the practice, but continue to hold significance in religious ceremonies in some areas of Liberia.



This is a set of silver pins from Bolivia from ca. 1930 that are used to fasten women's garments. The two large pins in this set are known as *tupus* in Quechua. Typically, women wore two *tupus* to fasten a rectangular cloth that wraps around the body at the shoulder. The third, smaller pin, known as a *tipqui* secured a shoulder cloth, or mantle. Often the word *tupu* is used to refer to all three, and complete sets of these three pins are rare. *Tupus* date back to at least 300 BCE on the central coast of Peru, but they use throughout all of the Andean region (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina).



Staff re-discovered an important collection of Kuba masks, including beautiful examples of three royal Kuba masks, known as *mwaashmboy*, *ngaady a mwaash*, and *bwoom* masks. Often interpreted as representing three siblings, these masks tell the Kuba kingdom's creation in the central Democratic Republic of the Congo, and were usually performed during initiation ceremonies for young men. The *mwaashmboy* represents the son of the god who came to earth to start the kingdom; the *ngaady a mwaash* represents his sister (and wife), who is the epitome of femininity and motherhood. The lines curving down from the *ngaady a mwaash* eyes indicated she is crying tears of joy and pain that symbolize womanhood. Their brother, *bwoom*, creates conflict by trying to win his sister's love and overthrow his brother. These three Kuba masks are beautifully decorative, excellent examples of Central African artistry.



These are *nuchus* – Balsa wood statues made by the Guna (Kuna) people of Panama, and are used for healing. They are infused with a special power by shamans to ward off evil spirits and sickness. Only broken *nuchus* can be bought or sold, and only after their spirit has been released by a shaman.

*For more information about this grant visit our website: <https://www.dmns.org/science/anthropology/projects/neh-cares-grant/>