



## Good as Gold:

### Fashioning Senegalese Women

An exhibition and catalogue organized by the National Museum of African Art

The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art is presenting a major exhibition and catalogue entitled *Good as Gold: Fashioning Senegalese Women*. Focusing on the history of Senegal's gold, from past to present, and the beauty and complexity of the way Senegalese women use ornament and fashion to present themselves, *Good as Gold* is the first major exhibition of Senegalese gold jewelry to date. The exhibition opened in Washington, D.C. on October 24, 2018 and has been curated by guest curator Dr. Amanda Maples, overseen by Dr. Kevin Dumouchelle. It is the first in a series of exhibitions developed as part of the museum's African Women's Initiative, which seeks to increase the representation and understanding of women's roles as artists and scholars of Africa's arts throughout history.



*Good as Gold* brings together approximately one-hundred and twenty exceptional works of art, primarily from a major collection of West African jewelry donated to the National Museum by art historian Marian Ashby Johnson. Johnson pursued research over several decades in Senegal, engaging a broad number of jewelers, or *teugues*, in interviews and extended observation. The Johnson collection is further supplemented with almost 2,000 study images, and thus provides a singular opportunity to understand the range and complexity of gold in the West African nation. The exhibition is supplemented with a selection of photographs, reverse-glass paintings, and



related jewelry items from a small number of private U.S. lenders, as well as a selection of additional West African gold objects and a contemporary *haute couture* fashion ensemble from the National Museum's collection.

The exhibition looks to uncover the underappreciated agency of Senegalese women in jewelry and fashion design. While most of the objects in the exhibition were made by men, the designs, styles, and names of these works are women-authored. *Good as Gold* reveals the ways in



which Senegalese women have historically used jewelry as a means of fashioning a cosmopolitan identity of power and prestige. A key theme of the exhibition is the Senegalese concept of *sañse* (Wolof for “dressing up,” or looking and feeling good). *Good as Gold* explores how a woman in a city like Dakar might use a piece of gold jewelry to build a carefully tailored, elegant fashion ensemble. In examining this concept, the exhibition also looks at the interconnectedness of local and global expressions and understanding of fashion. *Sañse*, which includes the ensemble of clothes, gold jewelry, and elaborate coiffures, is not only a performance of an extraordinary and elegant self, but also an enactment of community identity, constructed notions of beauty, respectability and reputations, history, and knowledge.



**Contents:**

Approximately 120 works, mainly gold jewelry but also costume, photos, sculpture

**Availability:**

**NMAfA:** October 24 2018—Feb. 23 2020

**Venue 1:** April 4—July 7 2020

*Available: September—December 2020*

*Available: March—June 2021*

**Fee:**

\$40,000 + prorated costs

\*for U.S. venues; international venues, please inquire.

**Space requirements:**

Approximately 2000-2400 square feet

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The National Museum of African Art commissioned Oumou Sy—Senegal’s “Queen of Couture” and its most celebrated fashion designer—to create a new *haute couture* ensemble inspired by the strength and savoir-faire of the Senegalese women who originally wore such gold jewelry, for the museum’s collection. This work is unveiled in the exhibition. Sy’s work has been sold in boutiques in New York, Paris, Geneva, and Dakar, and has been featured in significant West African films and music videos. Among her many international accolades, Oumou Sy is a recipient of the Prince Claus Award.

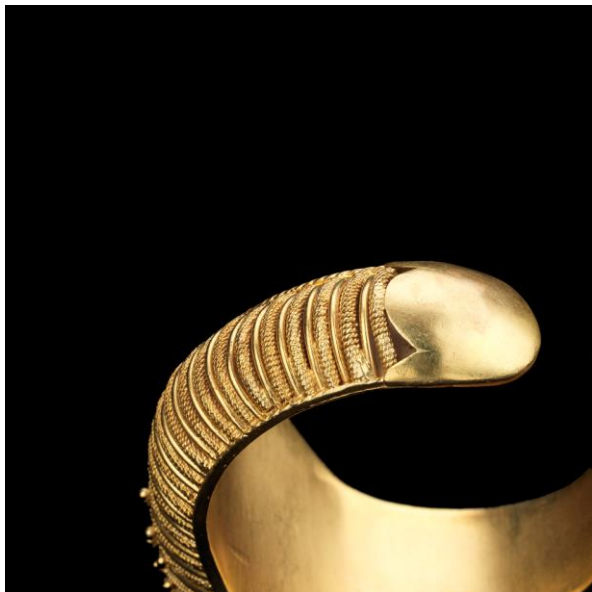
An exhibition catalogue features stunning new photography of key works in the collection and exhibition, the publication traces the history of gold in Senegal, documenting the techniques, materials, and practices of goldsmiths and will reveal the inspirational and economic roles of women in commissioning, trading, and fashioning Senegalese

jewelry. Conservation scientists in the National Museum of African Art’s lab have undertaken a survey of the gold jewelry from the Johnson gift in anticipation of the exhibition, leading to greater insights into the techniques, materials, and composition underlying these collection works. The results of these investigations are also detailed in the catalogue.

1. Fabrice Monteiro  
b. 1972, Namur, Belgium; works in Dakar, Senegal  
*Signare #1*  
2011  
Exhibition print  
Courtesy Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

2. Wolof artist  
Dakar, Senegal  
Necklace (*bount u sindoné*)  
Mid-20th century  
Gold-plated silver alloy  
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-19

3. Model wearing Oumou Sy’s *Signare Ensemble*  
Oumou Sy  
b. 1952, Podor, Senegal; works in Dakar Senegal  
*Signare Ensemble*  
Natural and synthetic fabrics, gold, beads, leather,  
National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, museum purchase



<p>1. Wolof artist Dakar, Senegal Necklace Mid-20th century Gold-plated silver alloy Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-4</p> <p>2. Tukolor artist Dakar, Senegal Bracelets (<i>bat u qanare</i> or <i>lamou batou nqanar</i>) Early to mid-20th century Gold-plated silver alloy Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-151</p> <p>3. Wolof or Tukolor artist Dakar, Senegal Bracelet (<i>la loi de Lamine Gueye</i>) Mid- to late 20th century Gold-plated silver alloy Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-170</p> <p>4. Unidentified artist Dakar, Senegal Necklace with heart-shaped pendant (<i>tchor</i>) Early to mid-20th century Gold alloy Gift of Dr. Marian Ashby Johnson, 2012-18-25</p>	<p>5. Ibrahima Sall b. 1939, Senegal <i>Portrait of a Woman</i> After 1967 Paint on glass Gift of the Wil and Irene Petty Collection, 2008-5-6</p>
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