

# **Magdalene Odundo**

## **The Journey of Things**

**3 August – 15 December 2019**

Large Print Text

# GALLERY 1

## **Magdalene Odundo: The Journey of Things**

Magdalene Odundo OBE (b.1950, Kenya) is one of the world's most celebrated artists working in ceramics. Odundo reimagines the vessel in uniquely sculptural and architectural ways. Her hand-built forms are shaped by a desire to reflect the beauty and diversity of the human body. Her works are dynamic and intensified by their surfaces, which are highly burnished and range from vibrant oranges to iridescent blacks.

*Magdalene Odundo: The Journey of Things* includes over 50 works by Odundo spanning four decades, from the mid-1970s to new works completed for this exhibition. These are shown in dialogue with nearly 100 objects selected by the artist, representing the many cultures and traditions she has studied and drawn inspiration from. The artist embarked on this journey in 1971, when she moved from Kenya to the UK and immersed herself in the collections of many British museums. Subsequent travels across Europe, Africa, Asia and Central America allowed

her to examine, at first hand, vernacular objects and traditions of making. The exhibition reveals a synthesis of worldwide languages, forms and visual cultures that lend Odundo's works their timeless quality and universal appeal.

The exhibition is designed by Sir David Adjaye OBE who has responded to the transhistorical and global breadth of Odundo's work by evoking constellations of islands. These allow for a fluid relationship between works across time and place.

*Magdalene Odundo: The Journey of Things* has been conceived in collaboration with The Hepworth Wakefield, where it was presented in spring 2019.

# Sculpting in Clay

For Odundo, as for many potters, taking a material from the ground, shaping it and using the elements of water, air and fire to transform it into an object that can last for centuries is a process that verges on the magical.

Using a variation on the traditional Gbari method she learnt in Nigeria, Odundo starts each work with a ball of clay, which she gradually hollows out and pulls upwards in order to create the walls of the pot. Short lengths of flattened clay are added to build height, and gourd scrapers are used to smooth interior and exterior surfaces. Odundo often sketches the vessel forms before she begins, but she allows herself to be led by the movement of the material.

Odundo's love of clay is evident in the way she finishes and fires her works. She burnishes the surface using stones and polishing tools. Rather than using glazes that seal the clay form, Odundo uses a terra sigillata slip, an ancient technique made from clay dissolved in water. In essence, it is the materiality of the clay itself that Odundo harnesses to create the beauty of her finished vessels.

An oxygen-rich firing turns the ceramic bright orange, while subsequent firings with reduced oxygen levels and the introduction of wood chips to create smoke, results in iridescent blacks. The two colours often interplay to resemble cloud formations or interlocking land masses. Odundo fires works multiple times until she achieves the desired finish, however there is always an element of chance. She says, 'I'm relying on the fire to transform my works into something completely new. When it works, it is magical. All of a sudden they have their own lives.'

\* \* \*

Left plinth:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Asymmetric Series I*

2016

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Asymmetric Series III*

2015

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Asymmetric Series II*

2015

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

Central plinth:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1994

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection, courtesy of McClain Gallery

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Sketchbook*

Undated

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

Right plinth:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Dark Symmetrical Jar*

1989

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1990

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

Collection of Sydney Denton

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1990

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

# LINK BAY 1

## Setting Out

Odundo first came to Britain in 1971 to study graphic design at the Cambridge College of Art. There she explored the city's museums – the Fitzwilliam Museum, Kettle's Yard, and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology – discovering a passion for ceramics that soon became the focus of her studies. Two years later Odundo enrolled at the West Surrey College of Art & Design (now the University for the Creative Arts) in Farnham, where she was taught by leading British ceramicists including Henry Hammond and Walter Keeler.

An encounter with potter Michael Cardew in 1974 was a pivotal moment. Encouraging her to engage with African ceramic traditions to develop her own unique voice, Cardew arranged for Odundo to spend three months as an apprentice at the Pottery Training Centre he had founded in Abuja, Nigeria. There, she was taught the traditional Gbari method of pulling and smoothing clay into functional forms, a technique that was primarily employed by women potters at the Centre, including the internationally acclaimed Ladi Kwali.

The methods she learned at Abuja formed the basis of Odundo's mature technique.

\* \* \*

First plinth from right to left:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

About 1977–78

Terracotta with black slip and wood ash

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

**Ladi Kwali** (1925–84)

*Water pot*

1960s

Glazed stoneware

School of Art Museum and Galleries, Aberystwyth University. Purchased with contributions from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Art Fund

Ladi Kwali was the first woman potter to join the state-funded training centre for local potters set up by Michael Cardew in Abuja in 1951. Although in the rural communities of northern Nigeria potters were traditionally female, it was three years until Kwali joined the centre. She combined indigenous coil-based construction and incised decoration

with European glazing practices and stoneware clay introduced by Cardew. Kwali went on to teach Odundo at Abuja. She achieved international fame, and her face now appears on Nigerian currency. In 2015, Odundo curated an exhibition of Kwali's work at the Crafts Study Centre in Farnham.

\* \* \*

**Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915)**

*Bird Swallowing a Fish*

1914 (cast 1964)

Bronze

Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge

While studying in Cambridge in the 1970s, Odundo made frequent visits to the house-museum, Kettle's Yard. When she first encountered Gaudier-Brzeska's *Bird Swallowing a Fish*, Odundo assumed the sculptor was African, a perception that reflects the French artist's intense engagement with non-Western sources, including West African and Oceanic forms seen at the British Museum.

\* \* \*

**Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915)**

*Wrestlers*

1913 (cast 1965)

Plaster

Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge

Financially limited during his short life, French-born, London-based artist Gaudier-Brzeska carved the first version of *Wrestlers* out of plaster, an inexpensive material, on a reused canvas. He repeatedly visited a London wrestling gym to sketch the fighters, whose interlocked bodies have a graceful equilibrium.

\* \* \*

Second plinth from right to left:

**Michael Cardew** (1901–83)

*Little teapot*

1930s

Earthenware

Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts

After graduating with a Classics degree from Oxford University in 1923, Cardew studied with the acclaimed British potter Bernard Leach in St Ives. Cardew absorbed Leach's ideas about the moral value of simple, functional handmade pottery. During the war, he ran a pottery in Ghana, and in 1950 he was appointed Pottery Officer by the colonial Nigerian government. He set up a training

centre for local potters at Abuja where Odundo trained in 1974.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, China

*Teapot*

Date unknown

Pacific clay with silk cord

Collection of Magdalene Odundo

Odundo has a large personal collection of teapots from all over the world. She is fascinated by their complexity as a functional form and in their cultural role. Odundo was served tea from this teapot during a traditional tea ceremony while on a research trip in China. Though not for sale, Odundo convinced the owner to part with it.

\* \* \*

**Michael Cardew (1901–83)**

*Screw top bottle*

1960s

Stoneware

Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts

\* \* \*

**Ian Godfrey (1942–92)**

*Teapot*

About 1970s

Stoneware with cane handle

Collection of Magdalene Odundo

In the late 1950s Ian Godfrey was part of a group of artists who moved away from the wheel-thrown vessel towards sculptural, hand-built forms. Like Odundo, Godfrey spent many hours studying world collections, and was inspired by Greek, Cycladic, Persian and Mediterranean traditions. Odundo visited Godfrey's studio in the 1980s and acquired this teapot.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Nupe culture, Nigeria

*Pot*

1976–77

Earthenware

Leeds Museums and Galleries

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Peru

*Stirrup pot*

Date unknown

Terracotta and slip

Horniman Museum and Gardens, 3.4.48/3

Stirrup pots, so-called by archaeologists due to the stirrup-like shape of their spout, are a cross-cultural phenomenon and have been made in Peru since ancient times. Peruvian examples are painted with slip (diluted clay) as decoration, often bearing stylised animal forms. In other cases, the pot itself is shaped into a bird, animal or human face, often to endearing effect.

\* \* \*

**Christopher Dresser (1834–1904)**

*Linthorpe 'urchin' vessel*

About 1882

Ceramic

Collection of Ian Robinson

During her first year at the Royal College of Art, Odundo discovered the work of the British industrial designer Christopher Dresser at the British Museum. Dresser's belief in the importance of studying the past in order to create original work inspired Odundo to draw on her own research of ceramic traditions in order to establish her unique voice. Both Dresser and Odundo were inspired by the form of the Peruvian stirrup pot shown nearby.

\* \* \*

**Walter Keeler (b.1942)**

*Angular teapot*

1993

Salt-glazed stoneware

The Hepworth Wakefield (Wakefield Permanent Art Collection)

Keeler, who taught Odundo, primarily makes functional objects. He writes 'Pottery for use has been central to all settled human communities. Seldom merely functional, it has been a vehicle for expression and the fulfilment of a delight in the pleasure of handling a sensual and incredibly versatile material; the useful bound up with the intellect and the imagination.' His vessels are characterised by their disjointed silhouettes and his use of salt glaze inspired by early Staffordshire creamware.

\* \* \*

**Henry Hammond (1914–86)**

*Footed bowl*

1950s

Stoneware

Crafts Study Centre, University for the Creative Arts

One of the most important British potters of his generation, Hammond taught Odundo at the former West Surrey College of Art & Design (now the University for the Creative Arts). He was

Professor of Ceramics, a position Odundo later held. Unlike those who concentrated on creating innovative shapes, Hammond focused on decoration, using his stoneware pots as canvases for expressive brushwork.

## LINK BAY 2

From left to right:

**Henri Gaudier-Brzeska** (1891–1915)

*Woman with Cymbals*

About 1913

Ink on paper

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Athens, Greece

*Neck-amphora with black figure decoration  
depicting Ariadne between dancing satyrs*

550–540 BC

Clay

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of  
Cambridge.

Like Odundo, makers of ancient Greek pottery did not use glazes, but developed colours through the firing process. Their technique involved painting the surface of the pot with slip, (diluted clay) and controlling the oxygen levels during three successive firings in order to create the image.

The frolicking satyrs, gods of lust and intoxication, set a celebratory tone that may indicate the object's original function to hold wine.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Kuba kingdom (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

*Cloth*

20th century

Textile

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts. Gift to Lady Sainsbury from the King of Kuba, (nyim) Kok Mabiintsh III

The Kuba peoples surround themselves with pattern in their basketry, carving, body scarification and textiles. The textiles are woven from fibres of raffia palm leaves and coloured with vegetable dyes. Men, women and children would be involved in different aspects of the process from gathering the fibres, weaving and dyeing the cloth and adding embellishments such as embroidery, applique, patchwork and dye.

\* \* \*

**Zoë Ellison** (d.1987)

*Vase*

About 1959

Glazed earthenware

Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge

In the early 1970s, Odundo's path towards making objects was encouraged by her tutor, Zimbabwean-born potter Zoë Ellison, who ran the Cross Keys Pottery near Cambridge. Ellison experimented with functional designs as well as sculptural forms. Odundo would later employ Ellison's characteristic linear, graphic designs in her own work.

\* \* \*

**Zoë Ellison** (d.1987)

*Grey flattened vase*

About 1959

Glazed stoneware

Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Esinasulo* (water carrier)

About 1974–76

Terracotta

The Hepworth Wakefield (Wakefield Permanent Art Collection)

Made when she was an undergraduate student, with its round-bottomed form and delicate incised decoration, this work shows how Odundo engaged

with the traditional Nigerian techniques she had learnt in Abuja.

The rich unglazed terracotta of the exterior is highlighted by a pale blue interior glaze. This was the first work by Odundo to enter a public collection, when it was acquired by Wakefield in 1978.

\* \* \*

**Lucie Rie** (1902–95)

*Bottle with flared rim*

About 1974

Porcelain, brown glaze with sgraffito

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Rie is considered one of the UK's great post-war potters, having made her home here in 1938 after fleeing Nazi-occupied Austria. Rie decorated this bottle using scratched incisions into unfired clay, a simple technique known as sgraffito that has been used to decorate ceramics over millennia. For Odundo, it resonates with the pots of Ladi Kwali and other Gbari potters from Nigeria with whom she trained, but also with the practice of decorating the body with ornamental scars, traditional in her culture.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Cyprus

*Jug*

Middle Cypriot I (1900–1850 BC)

Earthenware

Lent by National Museums Liverpool, World Museum

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, San Ildefonso Pueblo, New Mexico

*Bowl*

About 1923

Pottery

Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, Exeter  
City Council

Odundo's signature luminous black surfaces are achieved through sophisticated processes of smoke firing, derived from traditional practices found all over the world. In the late 1970s, Odundo travelled to Sante Fe, USA, and witnessed a firing by the acclaimed potter María Martínez at San Ildefonso Pueblo. Although not attributed to Martínez, this small bowl shares many of the qualities she made famous, including the black-on-black abstract design.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Kuba kingdom, Democratic  
Republic of the Congo

*Cup*

19th to early 20th century

Wood

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Baskets and basketry techniques have a high status within Kuba art. The Kuba peoples live in highly decorated houses with basketry mats forming the walls and floors. They are particularly accomplished at applying the texture and designs from basketry to other materials, in this case to wood.

## LINK BAY 3

### Setting Out: Surfaces and Colour

When Odundo was discovering ceramics as a student, she was struck by many of the lustrous surfaces and rich colours of pots from across the globe. When she was doing research for her undergraduate dissertation, she encountered the deep black pottery achieved through a graphite-based slip in Uganda. She saw this ancient beaker from Kerma, present-day Sudan, at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (displayed nearby). The black rim that contrasts with the terracotta body was achieved by an early form of reduction firing, in which oxygen is reduced and smoke introduced to the process. Odundo uses a modern version of this technique today. As a student she experimented with incised decoration, but by the time she finished her MA at the Royal College of Art, in 1982, she had settled upon the burnished surfaces that she has used since.

\* \* \*

From left to right:

Unknown maker, Bakitara culture, Uganda  
*Water bottle*

Date unknown

Clay

Horniman Museum and Gardens, 24.354

Blackware pottery is celebrated in many parts of the world, including Uganda, where a distinctive, elegant form emerged for elite consumption. It involved a highly burnished surface, a graphite-based slip (diluted clay) and firing with reduced oxygen levels to produce a highly lustrous surface. A delicate cross-hatched design is often incised into the surface. This exceptionally fine example was gifted to the Horniman Museum by the Commissioner for Uganda in 1924, a symbol of cultural diplomacy.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Asante culture, Ghana

*Shot flask*

Date unknown

Gourd, wood and cloth

Horniman Museum and Gardens, 1968.645

When she graduated from the West Surrey College of Art & Design in 1976, Odundo travelled to Ghana, observing local ceramic production and sketching its plants, in which she found great inspiration. This gourd flask, with its nipped-in waist and navel-like indentation, is reminiscent of

Odundo's pots but was functional rather than sculptural.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Kerma culture,  
Nubia (Egypt)

*Beaker with black top decoration*

About 1773–1650 BC

Clay

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of  
Cambridge

Odundo combines a deep knowledge of western art with an equally strong interest in the material histories of her native Africa. As a student, she encountered this Kerma vessel at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Its characteristic tulip-like delicacy, narrow base and arresting colouration, evoking layers of sediment, remains a powerful inspiration.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

About 1983–84

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo (b.1950)**

*Untitled*

About 1983–84

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

# LINK BAY 4 - WINDOW

## Beauty and Danger

‘The rims of my pots take hours to get right and perfect’ writes Odundo. ‘The extreme edge is the first contact the viewer has of the work.’ Many of Odundo’s works have sharply angled rims, spines or spikes that imbue otherwise soft, sensual forms with a perversely weapon-like edge. She finds a similar combination of beauty and danger in the knife jewellery made and worn in the Turkana culture in her native Kenya. Bracelets and rings worn by dancers during rituals consist of metal blades sheathed in a removable strip of hide, mingling lethal and erotic potential.

Odundo first worked in bronze as the result of a residency at the Sloss Institute of Metal Arts, Alabama, in 1993, producing the two bowls displayed here. She worked in collaboration with the sculptor Brad Morton, a founder-member of the Sloss workshops.

\* \* \*

Plinth from left to right:

(centre)

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Bowl*

1993

Bronze

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

(front)

**Magdalene Odundo** (b. 1950)

*Bowl*

1993

Bronze

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

(back)

Unknown maker, United Kingdom

*Stays*

1580–99

Iron

On loan from York Museums Trust

This iron corset from the period of Elizabeth I is a rare survival. It is likely to have had a medical function, as corsets of this period (known as

‘stays’) were generally stiffened with bones, not metal. However, its structure echoes the theatrical silhouette of Elizabethan women’s fashion.

\* \* \*

(centre)

Unknown maker, Ganges Valley, India

*Anthropomorphic form (possibly axe)*

About 2500–1500 BC

Copper

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

The curve at the top of this axe suggests a head, with two arms curling outwards and two legs at the base of the form. They were likely made as idols or for religious purposes. However, they may also be weapons for throwing, so the form would be a functional rather than an intentional resemblance.

\* \* \*

(back)

Unknown maker, Oceania

Hook figure ‘Yipwon’

Date unknown

Wood and shell

Lent by National Museums Liverpool, World Museum

Odundo first encountered Papua New Guinean artefacts in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge in 1971. Yipwon figures are kept within men's ceremonial houses and are used to offer herbs, blood, meat and other materials to spirits. They are distinctive, one-legged humanoid carvings with extraordinary sinuous curves.

\* \* \*

(centre)

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

2006

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Collection of Adrian Sassoon

\* \* \*

(front)

Unknown maker, Pokot culture, Kenya

*Knife ring*

1960s

Steel and hide

Leeds Museums and Galleries

\* \* \*

(front)

Unknown maker, West Africa

*Knife wrist band*

1970s

Metal and hide

Collection of Magdalene Odundo

\* \* \*

(back)

**Bernard Meadows (1915–2005)**

*Crab*

1980

Bronze with black patina

The Hepworth Wakefield (Wakefield Permanent Art Collection.) Donated by Eric and Jean Cass through the Contemporary Art Society, 2012

Meadows' crab sculptures were inspired by his wartime service with the Royal Air Force on the Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean. This sculpture is based on the Fiddler crab, which runs along fast with both claws above its head. British sculpture in the early 1950s often adopted the forms of aggressive or wounded creatures in an attempt to convey the psychological state of a post-war generation.

\* \* \*

(centre)

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1987

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

(centre)

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Mixed-Colour Symmetrical with Double Rim*

1987

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

# GALLERY 2

## Encounters

Growing up in colonial Kenya, Odundo attended a Catholic school in which African visual culture was deemed 'primitive'. Odundo's full appreciation for indigenous art and craft traditions largely developed later, after visiting museums in England. Her encounter with her own African heritage was partly shaped by her discovery of works by early twentieth-century European artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Pablo Picasso. These artists found powerful inspiration and influences in African, Oceanic and South American carving.

At the same time, Odundo's growing exposure to postcolonial writers helped her articulate an identity as a woman artist working at the intersection of Africa and Europe. While modernist artists often turned to the universal subject of the female nude or the mother and child pairing, Odundo's work invokes the association between pots and female bodies in many traditional African societies, in which pottery was largely women's work and the vessel form was associated with childbearing. Many of her pots are as voluptuous as they are playfully abstract, their forms conjuring

exaggeratedly slender waists, swollen bellies and long necks.

\* \* \*

Wall-based plinth on right, from right to left:

**Henry Moore** (1898–1986)

*Ideas for Sculpture: Pregnant Woman*

About 1924

Pencil, chalk, ink and wash

Leeds Museums and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery).

Purchased with the aid of grants from MGC / V&A

Purchase Grant Fund and the Corporation Fund, 1957

Just as Moore found ‘ideas for sculpture’ in the pregnant body, so Odundo finds inspiration for her ceramics. She recalls how she ‘started looking at the body as a carrier of life – as a vessel... I think this is when it dawned on me how important the inside of a vessel was. My pieces had to breathe this life, breathe this void.’

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Jokwe culture, Angola or Democratic Republic of the Congo

*Sceptre*

Mid 19th to early 20th century

Wood  
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

This sceptre would have belonged to a chief as the headdress resembles one only they would have worn. Although the curves of the headdress have been broken off at the back, it remains striking from every angle. It is decorated with incised patterns on each side. At the top of the front panel are the scales of a tortoise shell, underneath are two eyes and at the bottom are wavy lines – all of which hold symbolic meaning for the Jokwe peoples.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

2000

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Eric Gill** (1882–1940)

*Torso-Woman*

1913

Bath stone on slate base

The Ingram Collection of Modern British Art

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Syria  
*Standing figure*  
Uruk period (about 3300–3000 BC)  
Stone  
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Dating from the fourth millennium BC when the city of Uruk was dominant in Mesopotamian culture, this figure seems timeless. The stone has been skillfully carved to suggest a soft, plump body. Although her head and one foot is missing, we can recognise a walking movement, which is an unusual feature of figures from this period.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, West Africa  
*Anthropomorphic pulley*  
Pre-1970s  
Wood and metal  
Collection of Magdalene Odundo

\* \* \*

**Pablo Picasso** (1881–1973)  
*Female Nude with Arms Raised*  
1907  
Gouache on paper

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

In 1906, Henri Matisse showed Picasso a small Congolese sculpture he had bought from a curio shop in Paris. Picasso went on to make many visits to the African collections at the former Musée du Trocadéro, fascinated by the carved sculpture on display. With its flat, mask-like face, this figure is an early study for the central figure in his iconic painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*, which launched the cubist movement with its representation of a brothel scene.

\* \* \*

Oval plinth opposite:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Angled Piece*

1987

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1999

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1988

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

Central plinth (single vessel):

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Symmetrical multi-fired terracotta vessel*

2017

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

Central plinth on left (3 vessels):

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1999

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

2000

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1987

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

Central plinth beyond, anti-clockwise:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Twins*

2013

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Barbara Hepworth** (1903–75)

*Mother and Child*

1934

Pink Ancaster stone

The Hepworth Wakefield (Wakefield Permanent Art Collection)

When she made this work, Hepworth was a mother, and pregnant again with triplets. Stripped of individuality, contemporary references, and even gender, the work expresses a timeless, primal human bond. The figures have been carved from the same stone.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Cyprus

*Juglet*

Middle Cypriot III (1750–1650 BC)

Earthenware with black slip

Lent by National Museums Liverpool, World Museum

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, northern Yoruba culture, Nigeria

*Divination cup with caryatid support (depicting mother and child)*

Late 19th to early 20th century

Wood

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

This cup was made for use during the Yoruba ritual of divination. It would be shaken to reveal

messages from the deity in the patterns of sixteen palm nuts. As it would have rested on the floor, the face, breasts and hands of the mother thrust outwards, making it legible from above. The kneeling posture expresses respect.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Dark round vessel with narrow top*

1984

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

Wall-based plinth, from right to left:

**Barbara Hepworth** (1903–75)

*Kneeling Figure*

1932

Rosewood

The Hepworth Wakefield (Wakefield Permanent Art Collection)

*Kneeling Figure* was carved directly in wood, rather than from a maquette, representing Hepworth's early concern with 'truth to materials'. The natural vertical form of the wood lent itself to a

kneeling figure, while the varied nature of the grain and sequence of knots dictated its outcome.

\* \* \*

**Amedeo Modigliani** (1884–1920)

*Caryatid*

About 1913

Crayon and pencil on paper

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

The curved head of this figure with its elongated features suggests Fang statuary from Central Africa. The artist was a frequent visitor to the influential Parisian art dealer Paul Guillaume, who sparked the interest in African art among European artists and collectors. Guillaume recalled that Modigliani planned to make a temple of humanity, which was to be ‘surrounded by hundreds of caryatids, columns of tenderness’. Modigliani’s caryatid drawings accordingly seem to be studies for sculpture.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Dark Vessel with Narrow Neck and Wide Rim*

1997

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Vase*

1991

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Henri Gaudier-Brzeska** (1891–1915)

*Mother and Child*

1914

Pen and Indian ink on paper

Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge

# Travels to the Past

‘Objects hold the knowledge of our history’ writes Odundo, who draws constant inspiration from other times and cultures. Travelling widely and studying objects in museums is crucial to her making process, and she is as receptive to the original contexts of her sources as she is to the possibility of drawing formal and thematic connections across period and place.

From the mid-1980s, Odundo’s works bear increasing reference to the human, and especially the female, body. She explores the ways that the body has been modified and abstracted through dress and adornment, expressing beauty or identity through practices as diverse as corseting and scarification. She first encountered the dramatic ruffs of Elizabethan costume while working as a museum educator at Kensington Palace. The silhouettes of this period are echoed in the cinched waists and flared forms of her vessels.

\* \* \*

Wall-based plinth, from left to right:

Unknown maker, Dakhini culture, India

*Sultan Abdullah Qutb Shah of Golconda*  
1650–75

Opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper  
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Odundo lived in Delhi, India, as a child and remains interested in the opulent textures and forms of Mughal-period miniature painting. Depicting the Sultan Abdullah, this portrait shows him as a young man, although it would have been painted towards the end of his reign or shortly after his death. The bold blue background and wide gold border reveal the growing Persian influence on Indian painting at this time.

\* \* \*

**Ralph Toft**

*Charger with a mermaid holding a mirror and a comb*

About 1676–83

Lead-glazed earthenware

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. Dr J. W. L. Glashier Bequest

**Thomas Toft**

*Charger with Charles II and Catherine of Braganza*

About 1682–85

Lead-glazed earthenware

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. Dr J. W. L. Glashier Bequest

As a student, Odundo filled sketchbooks with drawings of seventeenth-century Staffordshire slip-decorated pottery by Ralph and Thomas Toft at the Fitzwilliam Museum. As a newcomer to the UK, it seemed to Odundo that these works defined Englishness with their humorous expressivity and inventiveness. Starting to make her first ceramics that year, she created a number of works decorated with geometrical slip patterning, inspired by the lattice borders of the Toft pieces.

\* \* \*

**Yinka Shonibare** (b.1962)

*Jane Morris*

2015

Black fibreglass bodyform, Dutch wax printed cotton textile and steel baseplate

Courtesy Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and James Cohan Gallery, New York.

Shonibare uses fabrics that are often associated with Africa but in fact represent cultural exchange. The batik technique is Indonesian, but the fabrics are traditionally produced in Holland and sold in West Africa. Shonibare buys them from Brixton in London. This figure alludes to Jane Morris, wife

and model of the Arts and Crafts leader William Morris. The silhouette of the Victorian dress recalls Odundo's interests in cross-cultural practices of female dress.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Nupe culture, Nigeria

*Pot*

About 1900

Earthenware

Lent by David Queensberry

Odundo regularly cites pottery made by the Nupe peoples of Nigeria among her greatest inspirations. Typical of African ceramics, they are hand-built rather than wheel-thrown, unglazed, fired at low temperatures, and made by women. There is a strong connection between pottery and womanhood in many African cultures due, in part, to an association with the fertility of earth and with the female body's ability to serve as a vessel for a child. The traditional incised patterning is both decorative and functional, helping with grip.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Turkana culture, Kenya

*Gourd vessel*

Date unknown

Beaded and embellished gourd with wood, hide  
and metal zipper  
Collection of Magdalene Odundo

In Kenya, gourd vessels are used to carry liquids such as water or milk. This particularly impressive example, acquired by Odundo in Kenya, is bound with an animal skin harness that functions as a carrying handle. Zips have been used for decorative effect, and small coloured glass beads are embedded in its surface.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Sinú culture, Colombia  
*Finial or staff head*  
About AD 500–1600  
Gold alloy  
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

The Sinú region was famous for its goldwork in the sixteenth century, however, archaeological discoveries have shown that gold items were produced there from AD 500 or earlier. Staff heads topped with human or animal figures are one of the most widespread objects known from the region, and this is a particularly large and fine example. The positioning of the bird suggests that

the staff would have been held horizontally,  
although its precise use is not known.

\* \* \*

Mangbetu culture, Democratic Republic of the  
Congo

*Anthropomorphic pot*

About 1900–25

Terracotta

Felix Collection

Odundo has produced a series of works inspired by the skull elongation techniques traditionally practised by the Mangbetu people, in which heads are tightly wrapped from childhood to protect against the influence of witchcraft, leading to permanent reshaping. The distinctive silhouette that results is accentuated by dramatically flared headdresses and echoed in Mangbetu pottery. Odundo connects the practice of head binding with the layers of coils she uses to make her pots.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Ghana

*Kente cloth*

Pre-1970s

Silk and cotton

Collection of Magdalene Odundo

A great admirer of the Kente weavers in Ghana, Odundo recognises the fine cloth's sacred function and association with royalty among the Asante people, as well as its political power as an international symbol of pan-African pride. Kente cloths are largely woven by men, made from strips of woven material sewn together, and they are worn on the body. The colours and patterns chosen for different cloths have symbolic meaning.

\* \* \*

Wall-based plinth on right, from left to right:

**Karl Blossfeldt** (1865–1932)

*Urformen der Kunst (Archetypes of Art)*

1928

Photogravures

Jack Kirkland Collection, Nottingham

German artist Karl Blossfeldt became one of the pioneers of photography, using homemade cameras and magnifying lenses to capture extreme close-up views of plants. Near the end of his life, a set of 120 photogravures was published as *Archetypes of Art* in 1928, ranking among the most influential photobooks of the twentieth century.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Drinking vessel*

2000

Glass

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

Odundo is most celebrated for her contributions to the field of ceramics, but she has also explored other materials in her search for the perfect vessel form, such as glass. The artist first made drinking glasses in the late 1990s, bringing to this medium her characteristic delicacy and breadth of historical reference.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Cyprus

*Dipper bowl*

Middle Cypriot Period (1900–1650 BC)

Terracotta

The Hepworth Wakefield (Wakefield Permanent Art Collection). Presented by Barbara Hepworth's daughters, Rachel Kidd and Sarah Bowness, through the Trustees of the Barbara Hepworth Estate and the Art Fund

Like Odundo, Barbara Hepworth had a lifelong fascination with ancient objects and owned a collection ranging from tools to figurines and ceramics, such as this one. All are small enough to be held in the hand. Odundo is captivated by the grace and sense of movement captured in this tiny bowl.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Tall Burnished Bottle*

2009

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

School of Art Museum and Galleries, Aberystwyth University. Purchased with contributions from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Art Fund.

\* \* \*

**Jenny Tiramani** (b.1950)

*Reconstructed linen ruff*

2007

Linen

Jenny Tiramani, The School of Historical Dress, London

\* \* \*

**Auguste Rodin** (1840–1917)

*La Grande Danseuse (The Large Dancer)*

About 1911 (cast 1956)

Bronze

Leeds Museums and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery).

Purchased with the aid of grants from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Corporation Fund, 1957.

Rodin modelled expressively in clay, which was then cast in bronze. He captures movement and his sculptures of dancers often show the body in positions of extreme strain, evoking the intensity of human desire and aspiration.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Drawing*

Undated

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, England

*Queen Elizabeth I*

About 1590

Oil on panel

Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1989

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection, courtesy Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

Central plinth opposite:

Unknown maker, Asante culture, Ghana

*Akua'ba (fertility doll)*

1800 to early 1900s

Wood and beads

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Akua'ba were created to stimulate fertility after they had been consecrated by a priest. More specifically, the fertility dolls are thought to encourage the conception of girls who are valued within the Asante society. Women trying to conceive would carry the doll on her back, offer it food and honour it in a shrine. With its round head and ringed neck, indicating rolls of fat, the doll embodies the Asante ideal of beauty and prosperity. The doll's cheeks bear decorative marks of scarification.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo (b.1950)**

*Untitled*

1986

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, northern Honshu, Japan

*Figurine*

Final Jōmon Period (about 1000–400 BC)

Earthenware

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

The Jōmon people are named after the rope-like design on their pottery. The fluid decoration of this figure may represent costume or tattoo, and researchers think the characteristically oversized eyes may represent the importance of sight. These figurines are often found broken in specific places, suggesting they may have been intentionally damaged as part of rituals.

\* \* \*

Central plinth (2 vessels):

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1986

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1985

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

# Quest for Simplicity

Although almost all of Odundo's pots are conceived individually, she often works concurrently on pairs and trios of vessels, creating formal relationships based on a play of theme and variation. She admires the work of Australian ceramicist Gwyn Hanssen Pigott, whose exquisitely subtle groups have, she says, 'given me the licence to be repetitive in the quest for simplicity'. Similarly, she is inspired by German-British potter Hans Coper, who honed distinctive forms such as the 'bud' and the 'arrow' over long periods, and whose slip-glazed surfaces evoke the patina of archaeological finds. Like Coper, Hepworth and other modernist artists, Odundo is drawn to the stillness and purity of marble carvings made on the Cycladic islands during the Greek Bronze Age (about 3000–1050 BC). Cycladic art is mostly associated with its figurines, which transformed the body into stylised flattened geometries, often scaled for the hand but whose function and meaning remain mysterious.

\* \* \*

Oval plinth:

**Hans Coper** (1920–81)

*Cycladic winged 'bud' form on black squared base*  
1974–75

Stoneware (base burnished)  
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

\* \* \*

**Hans Coper** (1920–81)

*Cycladic winged 'bud' form on black squared base*  
1975

Stoneware (base burnished)  
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

\* \* \*

**Hans Coper** (1920–81)

*Cycladic 'bud' form on black squared base*  
1975–76

Stoneware (base burnished)  
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

2013

Burnished and carbonised terracotta  
Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Vessel Series 1, no. 5*

2005–06

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Collection of Edmund Burke

\* \* \*

Plinth near wall:

**Giorgio Morandi** (1890–1964)

*Still Life*

1954

Oil on canvas

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

Morandi painted both landscapes and still lifes but became known for his focused studies of simple objects. Here, the two tones of the background could be an expansive landscape but in fact represent the edge of a table. The viewpoint renders the three vessels almost monumental. Morandi selects a limited palette in muted browns and yellows to explore the subtle differentiations in light and mass.

\* \* \*

**Gwyn Hanssen Pigott** (1935–2013)

*Three Ashed Bottles*

2008

Porcelain

School of Art Museum and Galleries, Aberystwyth University. Purchased with contributions from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Art Fund.

\* \* \*

**Lucie Rie** (1902–95)

*Blue and white jasperware saucer and cups for Wedgwood*

1963

Jasperware

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

As early as 1954, Rie had stated her wish that a factory would produce some of her ceramics. Almost ten years later, Wedgwood invited her to produce a series in jasperware and she designed a set of cups and saucers in their iconic blue. Unfortunately Wedgwood did not believe they could put them into production. Instead of accepting the fee, Rie requested her samples back and kept them for the rest of her life.

\* \* \*

Attributed to the Goulandris Master  
*Female figure with folded arms*

Early Cycladic II period (2700–2400 BC)

Marble

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Greece

*Violin-shaped figure*

Early Cycladic I period (3200–2800 BC)

Marble

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

\* \* \*

Central plinth, anti-clockwise:

**Henry Moore** (1898–1986)

*Head of a Woman*

1926

Concrete

The Hepworth Wakefield (Wakefield Permanent Art Collection)

This is one of a number of masks, heads and figures that Moore cast from concrete in the 1920s, their surfaces retaining the bubbles and imperfections of the material. The ancient roots of Moore's sculptural forms are offset by his choice of an unconventional and very modern medium. At this time, concrete was a new material for

architecture and Moore was one of the first to exploit its artistic potential.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Dark Jar*

1983

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

About 1985

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

Jacobson Space, London

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Greece

*Head of a figure*

Early Cycladic II period (about 2700–2400 BC)

Marble

Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

This head comes from a figure that would have been over 100cm tall, one of only a few Cycladic figures known at this scale. Figures found in domestic settings may have been religious

offerings, images of deities or symbols of fertility. The smaller figures have been found in graves, intended for use in the afterlife.

\* \* \*

Unknown maker, Greece  
*Collared jar with foot*  
Early Cycladic I period (3200–2800 BC)  
Marble  
Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)  
*Untitled*  
About 1983  
Burnished and carbonised terracotta  
The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. Purchased with the J.R.V. Smyth Fund and a grant from the Eastern Arts Association.

\* \* \*

Corner, placed directly on the floor:

**El Anatsui** (b.1944)  
*AG+BA*  
2014  
Aluminium, copper wire and nylon string

Courtesy the artist and October Gallery

Ghanaian-born, Nigerian-based artist El Anatsui is one of the most celebrated figures in international contemporary art. Like Odundo, he draws on craft traditions, elevating everyday materials into exquisitely beautiful works of art. Anatsui uses discarded scrap materials, most famously the aluminium tops of liquor bottles, transforming them into monumental textile-like installations that are reconfigured each time they are shown. The artist is inspired in part by the iconic Ghanaian tradition of woven Kente cloths.

# Spiritual Vessels

Having considered a career in ethnography and studied objects made across global cultures, Odundo is highly attuned to the role objects play in the social and cultural lives of the people who made them. Often this role has a funerary purpose, and the history of the vessel is bound up with that of human burial, from those made to house the body or ashes of the deceased to vessels intended to accompany them into the afterlife. Many ancient ceramics survive today only through preservation in graves. In recent years, following a personal loss, Odundo has produced a series of very tall, columnar vessels titled *Kigango*, which refer to the elongated and elaborately carved wooden posts made by the Mijikenda peoples of Kenya to embody the spirits of their dead. Kigango effigies are highly sacred and may not be moved from their place of origin. While Odundo does not share Mijikenda beliefs, the austere linear forms of works from this series symbolise the possibility of spiritual release.

\* \* \*

Central plinth (3 vessels):

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Kiango I*

2010

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Kiango III*

2013

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Kiango II*

2013

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

Plinth beyond:

Unknown maker, Greece

*Lekythos*

About 470–440 BC

Ceramic

Lent by National Museums Liverpool, World Museum

In ancient Greece, a lekythos was a ceramic vessel used to store oil, typically with a long, narrow neck. Lekythoi, particularly those with a white ground like this one, were used in funerary rites to anoint the body, and are often found in graves. Vase painting is a major source of information about life in Greek antiquity. In this finely painted example, two mourners lay wreaths at a grave marker.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

2000

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Collection of Adrian Sassoon

\* \* \*

**William Staite Murray** (1881–1962)

*Very Tall Pot, Kwan Yin*

1937–39

Stoneware with white slip glaze

On loan from York Museums Trust

Along with other members of the London Seven and Five group, such as Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, Staite Murray developed a

modernist formal vocabulary that melded abstraction with allusions to the human body. In contrast to theories of ceramics that stressed their functionalism, Staite Murray emphasised his works' sculptural qualities and often gave them titles. Kwan Yin is the goddess of mercy and compassion in Buddhism.

\* \* \*

## Wall-based plinth:

Canopic jar and lid of Ahmose (jackal-headed)

Canopic jar and lid of Djehuty (baboon-headed)

Canopic jar and lid (human-headed)

Canopic jar and lid of Ahmose (falcon-headed)

Unknown maker, Egypt

664–332 BC

Egyptian alabaster

Lent by National Museums Liverpool, World Museum

Canopic jars were used by wealthy Egyptians as part of their mummification processes designed to preserve the body and ensure passage into the afterlife. Four organs were entrusted for safekeeping to a god whose identity is indicated by

the faces on the lids. The hieroglyphics on the front offer prayers. In a later period, when embalmed organs were returned to the body rather than stored in jars, 'dummy' canopic jars without internal cavities were placed in the tomb instead.

Please note, due to the original function of these jars, they may contain traces of human remains.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1983

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

Near wall on right:

**Julian Stair** (b.1955)

*Monumental Jar VIII*

2011

Reduced Etruria marl, coiled and thrown

Courtesy Julian Stair

Stair is one of the most important contemporary artists working with ceramics. His series of

Monumental Jars explores the connection between pots and funerary practices, with the artist producing life-size burial jars that defy expectations of scale in ceramics. Etruria marl is a local clay used for brickmaking in Stoke-on-Trent, a historic centre of the pottery industry in the UK.

\* \* \*

Film room:

Magdalene Odundo/In Conversation  
2017

Directed and produced by Anthony Slayter-Ralph  
Cinematography and editing by Sebastian Slayter  
© 2017 Anthony Slayter-Ralph

## GALLERY 3

### Transition and Migration

Although her primary medium remains clay, Odundo has also explored the artistic possibilities of printmaking and bronze casting, and over the last decade has developed a strong interest in glass. An encounter with a group of tiny swirled-glass objects from ancient Egypt, thought to be earrings, provided the inspiration for works produced in collaboration with master glass-blowers in the USA and UK. Responding to the themes of bodily adornment and material displacement, Odundo worked in a series of residencies to refine, magnify and multiply the shape of the original object into a number of monumental installations. *Transition II*, Odundo's largest work, is formed of 1,001 individually suspended glass pieces. It was made for a residency at the National Glass Centre, Sunderland in 2014 and is spatially reimaged each time it is shown. It has previously referenced flowing water, particularly the river Nile. For the Sainsbury Centre it has been displayed to suggest a murmuration of birds, responding to Odundo's interest in the migration of creatures, people and objects.

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Transition II*

2014

Hot blown glass

Courtesy the artist and the National Glass Centre

\* \* \*

This installation is very fragile. You are welcome to walk around it, but please do not touch.

# Fluid Gesture

Some of Odundo's most distinctive works are dramatically asymmetrical, charged with movement and energy. They vividly express the artist's love of dance. In 2004, she commented that she is 'attracted to something that is almost a kind of electricity in how pliable the body can be. Thus with plastic, malleable clay, which, while it is capable of being shaped to capture that mesmerising, hypnotic achievement, the fired pot ends up in a motionless state. That is what I try to capture.'

While Odundo's interest in dance is cross-cultural, she spent time as a student sketching rehearsals at the Royal Ballet School in London and remains captivated by classical ballet. Combining extreme discipline with apparently weightless, fluid gesture, the movements of the dancer on pointe find parallel in Odundo's forms, elevated upon narrow bases.

Unlike throwing on a wheel, in which the work is turned mechanically and formed by relatively static hands, Odundo's method of handbuilding sees her moving around the work to shape it, in a process akin to dancing.

First plinth:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1994

Burnished and oxidised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1983

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Private collection

\* \* \*

Central plinth, anti-clockwise:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1990

Burnished and carbonised terracotta

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Asymmetrical reduced black piece*

1992

Burnished and carbonised terracotta  
On loan from the Crafts Council

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Untitled*

1992

Burnished and carbonised terracotta  
Collection of Sydney Denton

\* \* \*

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Sketchbook*

Undated

Courtesy the artist and Anthony Slayter-Ralph

\* \* \*

Far plinth:

**Magdalene Odundo** (b.1950)

*Pair of untitled pots*

2013

Burnished and carbonised terracotta  
Private collection

# Public Programme

Magdelene Odundo in Conversation with Paul Greenhalgh

**Thursday 10th October**

6–7.30pm

Join Magdelene Odundo for this special evening event, reflecting on her influences – from ancient ceramic forms to contemporary sculpture – and offering insight into her own work and the objects and artworks on display in *The Journey of Things*. Magdelene Odundo will be in conversation with Sainsbury Centre Director, Professor Paul Greenhalgh.

\* \* \*

Hand-built Ceramics Course with Ali Hewson

**Sundays 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th**

**September**

11am–1pm

In the spirit of Magdalene Odundo, this four-week course will support you to draw inspiration from the Sainsbury Collection to design and make a hand-built ceramic vessel.

\* \* \*

Coloured Clay Workshop with Lydia Hardwick  
**Saturday 12th October**  
1–4.30pm

This experimental workshop will focus on making and using coloured clay. Taking inspiration from objects, textiles and patterns found in the Magdalene Odundo exhibition, you will be introduced to two techniques: sgraffito and inlaying. By the end of the workshop you will have made two pieces, a tile and a decorative plate, using these experimental techniques.

\* \* \*

Study day: Artists working with Collections  
**Friday 1st November**  
1–5pm  
Sainsbury Centre Studio  
£20, refreshments provided.  
Free for students.  
Booking essential

This autumn, the Sainsbury Centre presents two exhibitions of contemporary artists working with the Sainsbury Collections: *Magdalene Odundo: The Journey of Things* and Sonny Assu's artist residency at the Sainsbury Centre. These two displays engage with the collections in different

ways, informed by the artists' own practices and personal responses to the diverse objects and images. Together, they form the latest instalments in a long history of artists engaging with the Sainsbury Collection.

Drawing on historical and current practices, we will reflect on how changing and recurrent themes can inform new, practice-based research at the Sainsbury Centre.

For more information and to book, please email [scva@uea.ac.uk](mailto:scva@uea.ac.uk) or ask at gallery reception.

# Acknowledgements

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## Exhibition Curators

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Tania Moore

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Dr Hilary Floe

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