

Sewing Seeds

Glass Beads



The technology for **glass beadmaking** is among the oldest human arts, dating back 3,000 years. Perhaps the earliest glass-like beads were [Egyptian faience](#) beads, a form of clay bead with a self-forming vitreous coating. Glass beads are significant in archaeology because the presence of them often indicates that there was trade and that the beadmaking technology was being spread.

Phoenician pendant in the form of a bearded head decorated with beads (4th-3rd century BCE)

Mass-Production of Seed Beads

In the Middle Ages, glass seed beads were first mass-produced in Italy, and initially manufactured in Venice, beginning about 1290. Out of fear that the glass furnaces could destroy the city, the Venetian glass factories were moved to Murano. Highly secretive, the Venetian glass industry held a near monopoly on the bead industry for about 600 years and Venetian glassmakers played a pivotal role in developing techniques for mass-producing seed beads. Glassmaking methods were highly protected and glassmakers faced the death penalty if they shared the secrets.

Mass production was achieved with the drawn glass process: the glassmaker formed a cylinder of molten glass, which had a bubble inside it, and attached it to a rod. While the glass was hot, an assistant would take the end of the rod and run down a corridor with it, stretching it to as long as 120 meters before it cooled. The glass tube was cut into meter lengths and those were then cut into tiny glass beads which were turned and polished in a metal drum. The bubble stretched in the glass tube became the holes in the beads.

<https://www.firemountaingems.com/resources/jewelry-making-articles/f35f>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DIEKnx1_uY

Bohemia (Czech Republic)

The demand for Venetian glass beads had expanded so greatly, that Venetians started sending the uncut glass tubes to Bohemia to be cut and polished. Bohemia had been concurrently developing its own glass industry in Jablonec, where they had the natural resources needed to make glass--[quartz](#) deposits for the glass and forests for [wood](#) to run the furnaces.

Bohemian glass masters also traveled to Italy to work in Murano's glass factories. When they returned home, they brought back the knowledge of the drawn glass process. By the middle of the 19th century Bohemia was producing more glass seed beads than Murano.

At this time, the Czechs tried an experiment. They sent "sample men" around the world, asking customers what kind of beads they wanted. They returned to Bohemia with sketches and descriptions of those beads. The experiment was an astounding success and the demand for [Czech glass beads](#) skyrocketed. [Jablonec nad Nisou](#) became an international center for the production and sale of glass beads of all kinds, including seed beads.

Dissemination

Seed beads became a type of universal currency around the world. Traders brought strands and strands of them to every corner of the globe, exchanging them for goods and services. They were irresistible. Almost every culture in the world has incorporated them into their clothing and other crafts, replacing or complementing older forms of beads made from shells, porcupine quills, bones, clay and stone. Their small size allowed beadwork to become more intricate, fine, and elaborate. Seed beads have worked their way into the cultural fabric of our lives imbuing luxury, texture, and shimmer to jewelry, clothing, ceremonial pieces and art.

Native American



Porcupine quillwork



Sioux Sewing Bag
Circa: 1890





Blackfoot War Shirt
Circa: 1875







Kiowa Pipe Bag



Lakota

<https://www.matotope.com/period-embroidery-beads/>









<https://www.cowboysindians.com/2016/07/the-visual-language-of-beadwork/>





<http://www.ornamentmagazine.org/blog/beads-a-universe-of-meaning-volume-402>

Teri Greeves

<https://www.craftinamerica.org/short/teri-greeves-segment>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vS63o2oGfXY>





Lukasa Memory Board

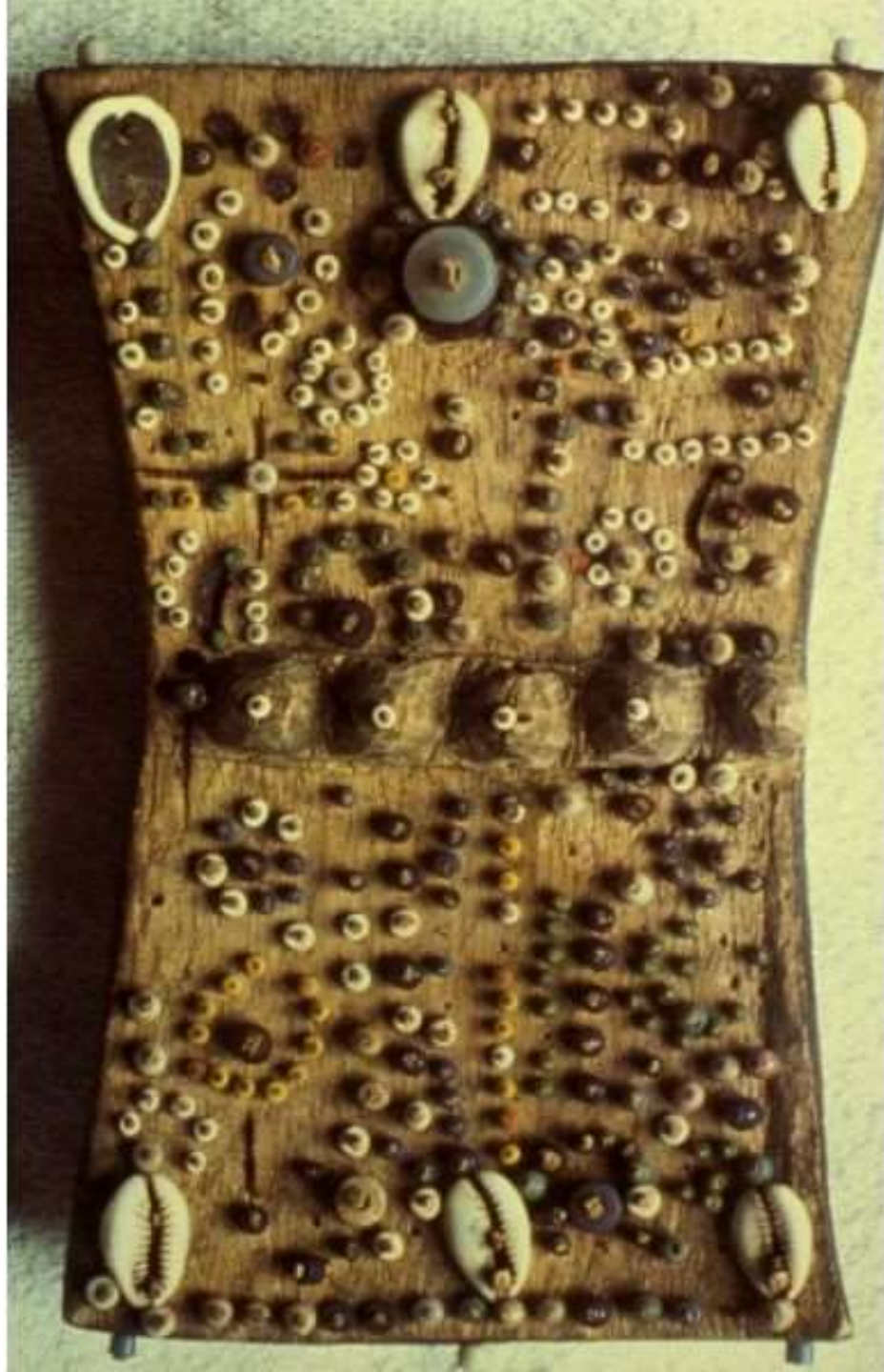
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yL40ebCDTlc>

In the Luba Kingdom of the Democratic Republic of Congo, history was traditionally performed—not read. In fact, Luba royal history is not chronological and static as Westerners learn it. Rather, it is a dynamic oral narrative which reinforces the foundations upon which Luba kingship is established and supports the current leadership. This history is also used to interpret and judge contemporary situations.



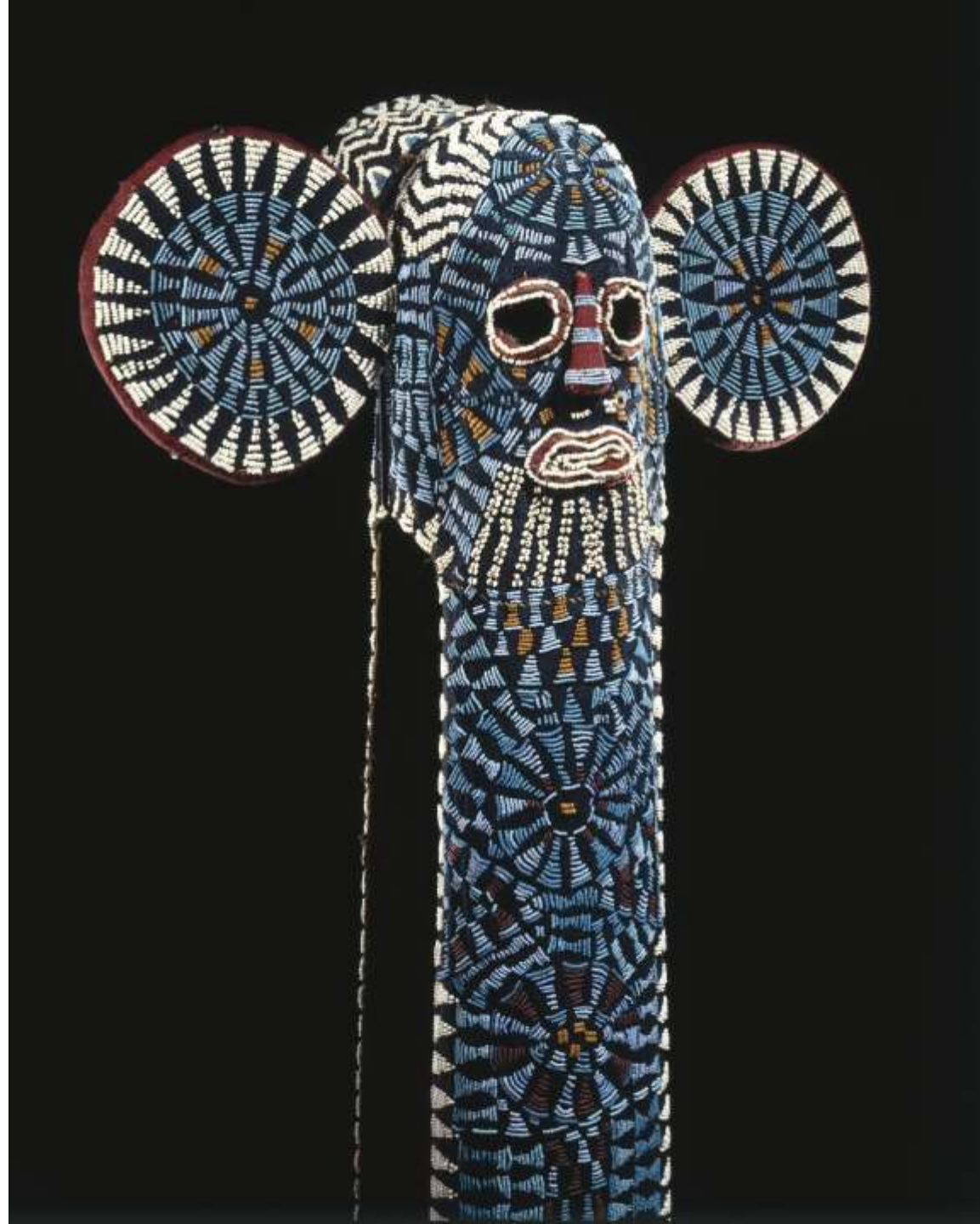






Bemelike Elephant Mask Cameroon

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/africa-apah/central-africa-apah/v/elephant-mask>

























Bead Paintings of South Africa

<https://youtu.be/vtOSYL2fDDU>

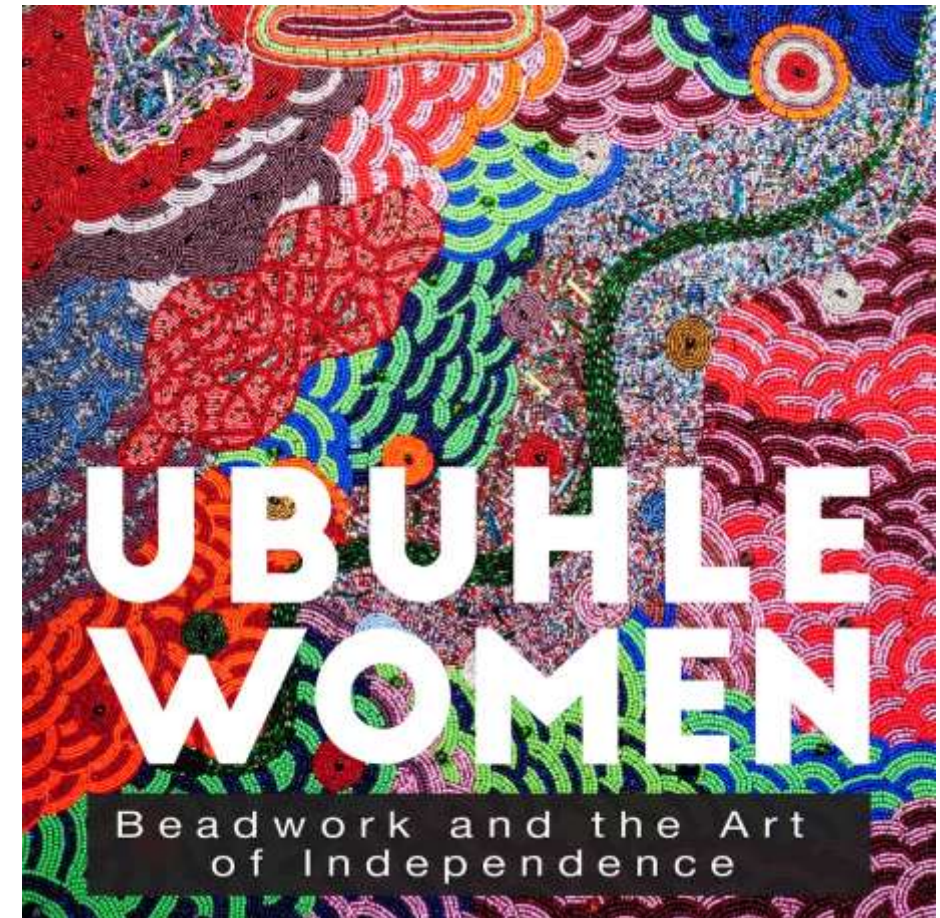
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/painting-beads-new-art-form-emerges-south-africa-180949365/>

<http://currier.org/ubuhle-women-beadwork-and-the-art-of-independence/>

<http://click360.me/tours/funk/ubuhle/UbuhleMovie.mp4>

<https://www.iowapublicradio.org/show/iowa-arts-showcase/2018-07-12/ubuhle-women-czech-beads>

<https://wovensouls.com/products/1239-antique-beaded-yoruba-tunic-africa-textile-costume>





























Beadwork by Indigenous Siberian People



<https://www.livemaster.com/topic/2612271-northern-style-the-world-of-indigenous-people>

Nenets and Khanty People

<https://valueofthemoment.com/traditions-culture-khanty-nenets-people/>





Dolgan Coat Detail



Yakuts (aka Sakha) live in far eastern Siberia







Sakha Girl. Sakha Republic, Siberia. Wearing traditional wedding mask. Sakha people are very proud of their unique culture. They live in the coldest area of the world. The absolute world record of -96 Fahrenheit was recorded in Oymyakon. Every winter, for at least 2 months the temperature is consistently below -40 Fahrenheit. The first snow comes in early October, while the last snowfall this year was in June. © Alexander Khimushin / The World In Faces

Evenki Little Girl. Sakha Republic. Siberia. This is a Yakutian Evenki little girl from Olenek region—one of the coldest and most remote areas of Yakutia. Evenki people living there among Sakha people, some speak only basic Russian. © Alexander Khimushin / The World In Faces





Traditional Yakut wedding dresses

A traditional Yakut wedding dress would have multiple layers and is as heavy as 30 kilograms.

'It was used to forecast what sort of wife she'd make - if she didn't pass out by the end of the wedding day, she'd be able to give birth to lots of children. An element of historical wedding costume is fur on shoulders. 'It's some sort of a symbol of wings cut off: a girl comes down to earth to continue the human race and with her wings cut off she can't make it back.'



Augustina Filippova

<https://siberiantimes.com/other/others/features/f0193-admire-the-stunning-siberian-collection-of-fashion-designer-avgustina-filippova/>

Augustina Nikolaevna Filippova is the leading fashion designer in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). Augustina finds her main source of inspiration in nature, people's communication with spirits, and the sensing nature as a living being. The artist's workshop is located outside of the center of a small the village in the Gorny district, surrounded by a magical winter forest.

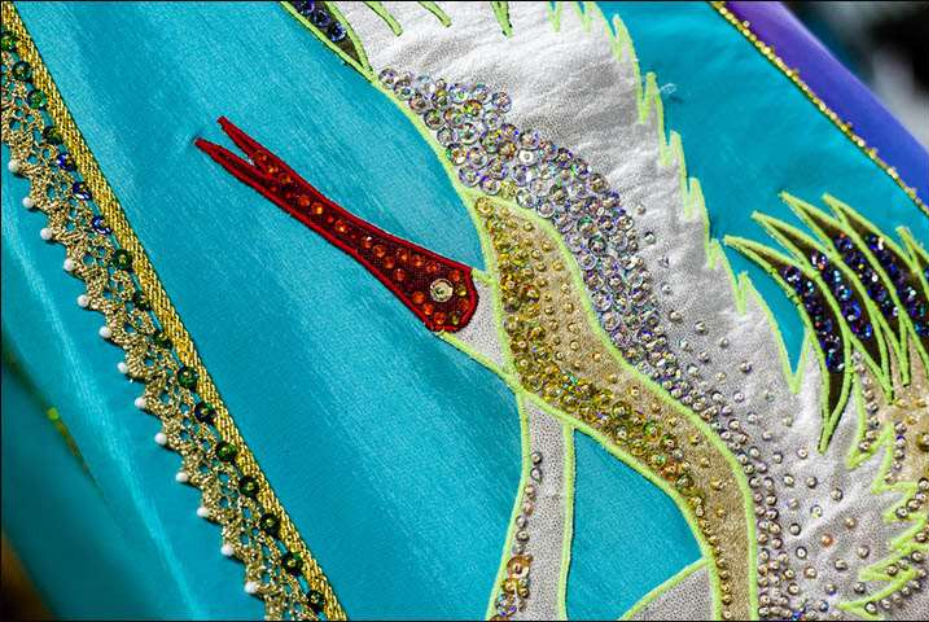
Augustina's costumes are a modern interpretation of the national ethnos. All patterns in Yakutian clothing are rigidly symmetrical, mimicking the symmetry of the human body. The left side, where the heart is, is considered to be female; the right side, which corresponds to the working arm, is male. Accessories are selected based on these considerations. The Yakutian pattern always consists of a continuous, branched line. This is how ancestors wanted to remind their descendants that their family line should not be broken. The more branches there are, the more children the person who wears this pattern has.

“Beauty saves everyone, I know it for sure. If there is enough beauty, there won't be any evil.”















Joyce J. Scott (1948-

Joyce J. Scott (born 1948) is an African-American artist, [sculptor](#), [quilter](#), [performance artist](#), [installation artist](#), print-maker, lecturer and educator. Named a [MacArthur Fellow](#) in 2016, and a Smithsonian Visionary Artist in 2019, Scott is best known for her figurative sculptures and jewelry using free form, [off-loom beadweaving](#) techniques, similar to a [peyote stitch](#).^[4] Each piece is often constructed using thousands of glass seed beads or [pony beads](#), and sometimes other found objects or materials such as glass, quilting and leather.

<https://www.craftinamerica.org/artist/joyce-j-scott>

<https://www.pbs.org/video/craft-america-dr-leslie-king-hammond-bead-artist-joyce-j-scott/>

<http://www.artnet.com/artists/joyce-j-scott/>

<https://www.mobilia-gallery.com/artists/joyce-j-scott/>

Assignment Suggestions

- Chances are that you own something with beads. Choose your favorite. What is its history? Why do you treasure it? When you run your fingers over it, what feelings does it evoke? Create an artwork based on the history, memories, or feelings associated with the beaded object.
- Explore the concept of glamor or elegance in your artwork.
- If you are a beader, try using beads in an unconventional way, creating a unique artwork. To eliminate the fear of “wasting precious beads”, photograph or paint a picture of your work and then disassemble it.
- Create a Memory Board—perhaps use an old computer circuit board as a base.