# SMA (Society of African Missions)

The SMA (from the Latin name Societas Missionum ad Afros) was founded in 1856 in Lyon, France by Bishop Melchior de Marion Bresillac, who along with his four companions, died of yellow fever five weeks after their arrival in Sierra Leone in 1859.

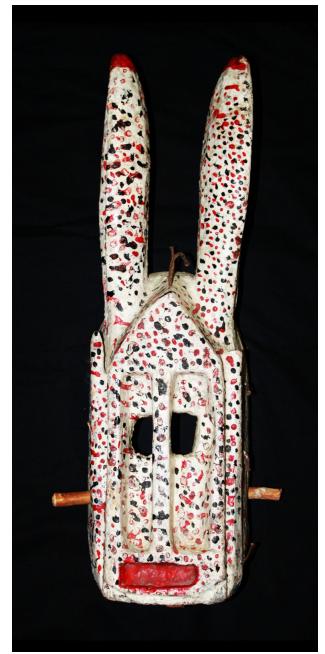
The SMA (Society of African Missions), is now an international Roman Catholic missionary organization with 1,100 priests, brothers and women missionaries from ten countries around the world. These missionaries staff churches, seminaries, hospitals, clinics and schools in the most desolate and oppressed corners of Africa. Countries in which they serve include Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Angola, Zambia, South Africa, Morocco and Egypt.



# SMA African Art Museum

Avenue, Tenafly, NJ 07670

# School Programs 2010 — 2011



RABBIT MASK DYOMMO, DOGON, MALI Gift of Leonard and Judy Kahan, 1996

Photo- Peter H Cade

### Masks and Figure Sculptures



Photo-Peter Cade

### SHRINE FIGURE ESU, AREOGUN, YORUBA, NIGERIA, 1952

Collection SMA African Art Museum, Gift of Fr. Sean O'Mahoney, 1999

Close examination of an African work of art from the point of view of art history and criticism can lead us in many interesting directions: philosophy and religion, social studies, economics, literature. This is a wooden shrine figure of Esu, the trickster god of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. He is one of a pantheon of gods and goddesses (orisa) which includes Ifa, god of divinations and healing, Ogun, god of iron and war and Sango, god of thunder and lightning. These and other Yoruba deities were brought to the New World by African immigrants, beginning with the slave trade.

Esu waits for the unwary at the crossroads of life – puberty, a new career, marriage, building a new house or moving from one place to another. If you err, you must make a sacrifice to the gods, who live on such offerings. Esu is not God, he is a pathway to God. Africans never represent God, who is all pervasive, male and female, and unknowable. The bird on Esu's head is the messenger to heaven. The double gourds are a reference to Ifa and herbal medicine, an ancient and still current practice in Africa. The wide open eyes are a reference to cultic trance and communication with the world of spirit. The elaborately accoutered horse is a symbol of prestige. The club with an axe protruding from the human head is a reference to Ogun.

## Textiles, Pottery, and Metalwork



Photo-Peter Cade

### KENTE CLOTH ADANUDO, EWE, GHANA

Collection SMA African Art Museum, Purchase from Eric D. Robertson African Arts, 2002.

The Asanti of Ghana are famous for their colorful and elaborate kente cloth. Their neighbors, the Ewe, produce even more intricate cloths. Kente cloth is woven in strips a few inches wide. The strips are then sewn together to make a wrapper for a man or a woman. Kente cloths are very expensive and are worn by their owners only on special occasions as symbols of rank and prestige. This adanudo is over one hundred years old. It's original owner, probably a chief, did not purchase it in the marketplace; he commissioned it from a master weaver. The designs in the center of the panels are inserted in the body of the weaving by hand, using supplementary weft threads. There are over two hundred such designs on this breathtaking old wrapper. It is one of the treasures in the Tenafly collections.



Photo-Peter Cade

# To Make an Appointment

The SMA African Art Museum (African Art Museum of the SMA Fathers) <a href="www.smafathers.org">www.smafathers.org</a> is located at 23 Bliss Avenue, Tenafly, New Jersey 07670 (201) 894-8611, Email museum@smafathers.org. It is open seven days a week, from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M., and is easily accessible from the Garden State Parkway, Route 80 and Route 4. The museum is located at the intersection of Engle Street and Bliss Avenue, one block north of East Hudson Avenue.



Bob Koenig and Kensho Takemoto (4). Lindgren School, Closter Photo-Katie Mauksch

A visit to the SMA African Art Museum includes a tour of the current exhibition as well as a hands-on examination of African masks, figure sculptures, costumes, jewelry, musical instruments, weapons, currency and a lot more from our permanent collections. The experience can be custom-designed for you and your students. It can take from 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours, depending on age level and may include preparation and follow up.

All school tours are with Robert J. Koenig, Director of the SMA African Art Museum. Mr. Koenig has taught for over forty years in public schools, universities, and museums. He has lectured widely on African art. The museum welcomes groups of all ages: pre-school, elementary, secondary, university, undergraduate and graduate, adult education and senior citizen. Children and adults with physical, emotional and intellectual disabilities are welcome.

Call Bob at (201) 894-8611 to make an appointment. The museum does not charge a fee; contributions are welcome.