

African Art

Africa is well known for its individual art.

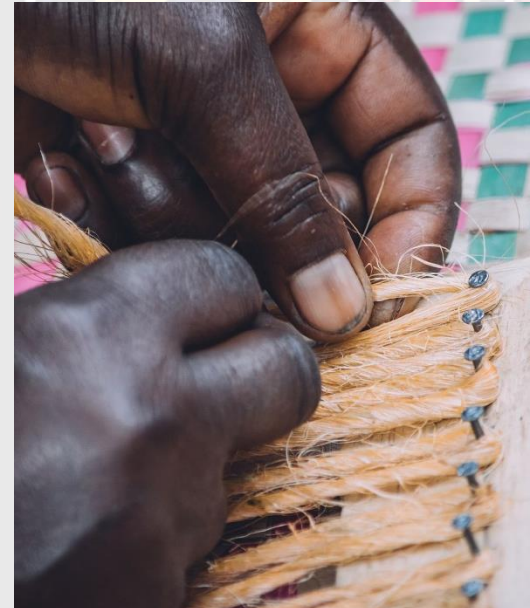
For hundreds of years, African art has been strongly influenced by the environment and natural surroundings.

The vast richness and variety in the environment are ideal for encouraging creativity.



Handmade Patterns

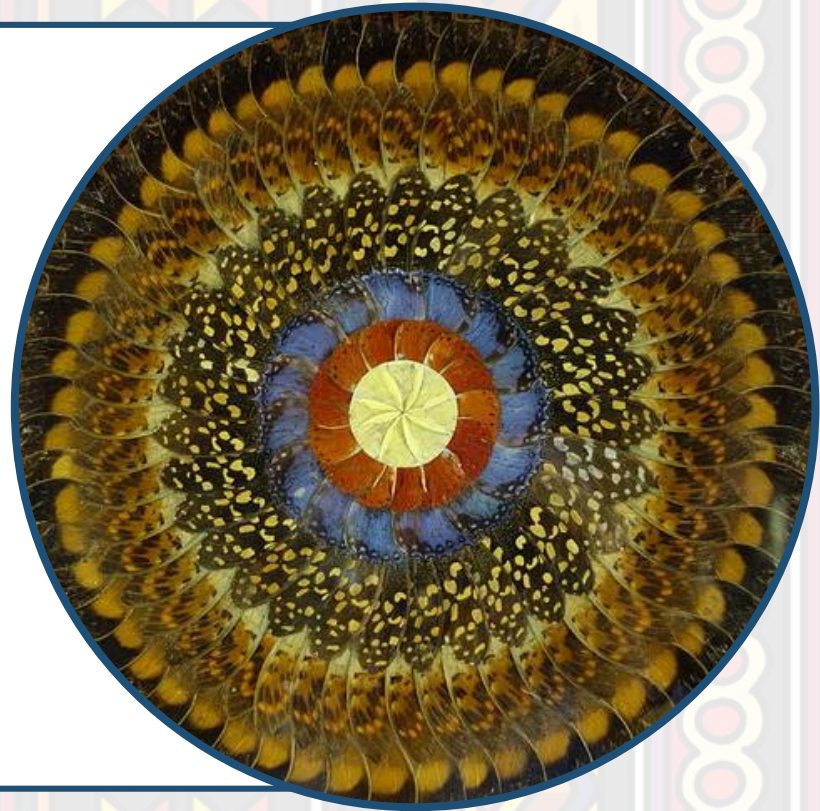
African mats, rugs and baskets, like those made in countries such as Rwanda and Burundi by the Tutsis, are made by hand using weaving and sewing techniques.



Types of Pattern

Patterns used in African art fall into two groups:

- Geometric – patterns that use zigzags, chequerboard, curved lines, spirals and circles.
- Symbolic – patterns that use images which have some symbolic meaning for the artist and the person using the art, whether it be on a piece of clothing or a building. These images can include crescents, stars, flowers, seeds, trees and pods.



The Meaning of Patterns

The symbolic patterns represent the culture's beliefs and history. There is a lot of meaning in the way the patterns are arranged and they often represent the wisdom of a tribe. They also act as a record of the events and daily activities of that tribe.

Common patterns include parallel zigzags which are used to remind the artist and the user that the path in life is never straightforward but instead, is often difficult to travel.

In Ghana, the Ashanti tribes apply motifs to fabric, pottery and paper that have symbolic significance and tell a story.



Inspiration All Day

It's easy to see where the inspiration for art comes from in Africa.



Patterns Everywhere

Repeating, colourful patterns are everywhere from baskets and rugs to jewellery and clothing.



Patterns in Architecture

The Ndebele women of Zululand in the north west of South Africa have long been decorating the walls of their houses. This is a tradition called 'ukugwala'. They use their fingers to create undulating or straight lines in geometric patterns with paint or wet clay.

