

# African Art Adds to Mystique and Splendor Of Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — Hundreds of pieces of authentic sculpted African art and a rare ceremonial mask towering 16 feet add to the cultural splendor and mystique of Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge.

The art not only adds to the beauty of the resort but also tells stories about the relationship between man and animal, enriching a theme ever-present throughout the resort, according to Mary Hannah and Charles Davis, art consultants for Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge.

"We want people to have just as much a learning and visual experience inside the resort as they do outside looking from their balcony," Davis said. "We want them to be so excited that they will want to wander through the resort and read and learn."

From most balconies and other areas throughout the resort, guests experience spectacular close-up views of animals on the savanna. Inside, sculptures and carvings tell stories of man as predator and prey, of companionship and interdependence between man and animal, and how the domestication of animals has made life easier and emotionally richer for man.

The art is accompanied by narrative to help guests understand the various relationships between man and animal.

The art collection helps familiarize guests with Africa the continent. Guests see the diversity of the countries and how the art varies by region.

"Photographs throughout the resort are designed to give life to the art on display," Hannah said. "Guests will learn the meaning of the pieces. They're more than art objects — they're made to be worn, to be danced, to be used in daily life."

"The idea is to show that Africa is a vast continent full of gifted and culturally diverse people," Davis added.

Some of the sculptures include:

- A man and woman representing the Lobi people, juxtaposed with a male and female antelope from Mali.
- A Guro mask from the Ivory Coast that is part of a series that represents man's interdependence with animals. The mask is part animal with horns yet it has the face of a human.
- A huge elephant mask with a chicken-feathered cape illustrates not only the power of animals but also the power of man.
- A head crest in the shape of a domestic chicken represents the domestication of animals by man.

## **Igbo Ijele Mask**

The breathtaking *Igbo Ijele* (pronounced e-bo e-gelay) mask, which is displayed in the lobby of the resort, is a stunning example of African art on a grand scale. The Ijele, created by the Igbo people of Nigeria, is a massive creation that stands about 16 feet tall and is eight feet wide.

The vivid colors and complex design represent all aspects of the Igbo life. The Ijele — the largest mask in sub-Saharan Africa — is "danced" by a single man hidden within. Appearances are rare. The Ijele is only danced every 10 to 25 years, at important events and celebrations. No other Ijele is known to exist outside of Igbo land.

The Ijele that graces the lobby was created and danced specifically for export. The Igbo people, Davis notes,

decided it was important for people to learn about their culture.

While the artwork is for viewing only, traditional textiles and basketry are available for purchase. Guests can also find intriguing books and unique arts and crafts.

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