



**NATIONAL GALLERY
OF ZIMBABWE**

**The Frank McEwen Collection of Shona Sculpture
in the British Museum**

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Abstract

The British Museum has a small but significant collection of Shona sculpture bequeathed to it by Frank McEwen (1908-1994). McEwen was the first Director of the Rhodes National Gallery (now the National Gallery of Zimbabwe) from 1957-1973. While there he created the Workshop School to stimulate local African talent and it was from within this context that these works emerged. These specimens are of special historical significance to African art history as they are works which he, as the leading proponent of the tradition, considered to be of particular aesthetic and symbolic merit. Moreover, they are of particular academic interest as they will provide a base line for future art historians interested in studying form and variation in the early history of Zimbabwean stone sculpture.

Introduction

The entire collection, except for two pieces, was collected during the formative years of Shona sculpture, sometimes known of as Zimbabwean stone sculpture (see Arnold 1981/86, Guthrie 2001, Mor 1987, Mount 1973, Kasfir 1999, Picton 2005, Sibanda 2004, Sultan 1992/94, Winter-Irving 1992, Zilberg 1996). There are only two specimens from the post-independence era, and these were gifts.¹ Of the 44 objects, 37 are stone sculptures and 1 is wood. In addition, there are six unusual clay sculptures. Of the stone sculptures, ten are animals, ten are heads, eleven are figures and four are human-animal forms. In addition, there is one fist, one stele, one milk jug and one abstract. The bulk of the sculptures appear to have been collected prior to 1968 though there are no details available as to exactly when he bought each work, nor is there any accompanying documentation referring to the particular artists or the significance of these particular pieces. Two of the works were presented to McEwen as gifts towards the end of his life after he had retired to Ilfracombe in Devon.

The stone animal figures are titled as follows: Flying Eagle, Animal Presence, Skeletal Baboon Head, Animal Interlace, Eagle Bull, Skeletal Baboon Spirit, Small Bird, Chongololo (Millipede), Baboon Babies in a Grave and Baboon Ancestor. The heads are titled as follows:

Horned Heads (two), Helmet Head, Skull, Male Head, Five Eyes, Early Head, Small Head, Head and Cyclopic Head. The stone human figures are: Man, Ancestor, Wise Ancestor, Foetus Figure, Protector, Semi-Recumbent Form, Totemic Protection, Inverted Child, Family, Moon-Faced Man, and lastly, Tall Foetal Figure with Wings. The stone animal forms are titled: Composite Eagle Woman, Winged Baboon Woman, Human Skeleton with Baboon Skull and Head-Beak. In addition there are six clay sculptures, five of them being by a single woman artist, Locadia Ndandarika and one by R. Dynamira. These are titled: Familiar Spirit, Family, Mother and Child, Uneasy Head, Baboon Ancestor and lastly, Ancestor Shave (alien spirit). Finally, there is a single wooden sculpture by Kingsley Sambo which is titled Nude. None of the oil paintings McEwen collected are included.

Six of the stone sculptures are by Sylvester Mubayi and five are by an artist only identified as Amani. This use of the first name was normal practice for most of the artists from the Tengenenge community in contrast to the Shona artists gathered under the umbrella of the Workshop School at the National Gallery. There are three sculptures each by Joram Mariga, Nicholas Mukomberanwa and John Takawira, and two each by Canisius Guri, Clever Machisa, Henry Munyaradzi (usually known of as Henry of Tenegenenge) and Eripas Ngoro. There are single works by Baudeni, Britisoni, Paul Gwichiri, Bottom Mpayi, D. Nemitambwe, Conrad Nyagwande, Claude Nyanhongo, Lemon Moses, Rashidi, Rayitoni and Zuzi. In addition, the British Museum's collection contains two loans from H.R.H Queen Elizabeth II, Silence by Chiwaridzo and The Family by Boira Mteki. These specimens were acquired during the Royal visit to Zimbabwe in 1991 and deposited in the British Museum's remote storage facility in 1992. Another sculpture by Joram Mariga was also given to the Queen on that visit though it is currently still kept in the Royal Collection.

Notes on the Specimens

These sculptures are of particular historical interest in terms of symbolism and aesthetics as they reveal something of the range of forms produced in the early years of Shona sculpture. Moreover, they are by artists which McEwen presumably considered to be particularly important members of the Workshop School. Though the sculptures themselves convey important information about form and content in the larger tradition, they also reveal something of McEwen's aesthetic predilections (see Muncke 1997) and provide us with invaluable evidence of the types of forms which he believed were significant forms which would stand the test of time.ⁱⁱ

The range of forms is somewhat typical of the type of works subsequently documented in exhibition catalogs over the decades as those familiar with the tradition will know. Usually these exhibits are dominated by semi-abstract heads, and biomorphic and zoomorphic non-naturalistic forms. There are also the usual though small number of human-animal forms and spirit figures which classically achieve disproportionate attention as regards Shona symbolism. For instance, it has become de-rigueur to contextualize the human-animal forms as conveying the Shona belief in metamorphosis and possession and the semi-abstract heads are more often than not titled ancestor, chief, spirit medium or spirit head. The British Museum collection is in this regard representative of all that has followed. Though the titles of these works refer to the basic cultural information that may have been conveyed through such works, it is interesting that McEwen did not leave any more substantial explanations of these works other than providing their titles.

The three sculptures by Joram Mariga are of particular historical importance as regards the said origins of the movement.ⁱⁱⁱ As Frank McEwen related in the film *Talking Stones* produced by Granada television and released in 1992, Joram Mariga, accompanied by Pat Pearce,^{iv} brought him a stone milk jug and a "terrible tourist head." For sentimental reasons McEwen was impressed with the milk jug but exhorted the artist to "make what he would make for his ancestors" instead.

Despite the fact that the Shona do not carve reliquary figures of any sort, Mariga understood what the Director was looking for, assumedly having seen at the gallery specimens by Boira Mteki and the early sculptors working with Canon Edward Paterson. He returned from Nyanga soon thereafter with Male Head (specimen Af 1996, 18.17, EAF 62514). McEwen was delighted and bought it for a princely sum. He described it as a spirit image akin to those of Easter Island – staring into eternity (see McEwen 1994:4). Years later, impelled by McEwen to work in a harder stone so as to distance himself from the tourist trade, Mariga carved specimen (Af 1996, 18.19) which is in lapidolite. This “possibly human” semi-recumbent form is typical of his later work. As a prototypical example of biomorphic and zoomorphic abstraction it is iconic of what became known of as Shona sculpture in the 1970s (see Zilberg 2001).^v

The collection is particularly interesting viz a viz the historical diversity within Zimbabwean stone sculpture in that it can be separated into two main groups, that is, excluding the clay and wooden sculptures. This division is based in the stark formal differences in the sculptures by the artists from the Tengenenge community, those from Harare (then Salisbury) and those from the Eastern highland communities, either from Nyanga itself or from McEwen’s rival community Vukutu near Nyanga.

In this regard, the sometimes unbalanced skeletal and other specimens by John Takawira and the other Nyanga artists stand somewhat apart from the far more finely balanced and free ranging exploration of form and abstraction evidenced in the highly individualized works of the Tengenenge sculptors. This distinction is marked except for the case of Sylvester Mubayi who was the first sculptor to begin working at the Vukutu Nyanga community soon after leaving Tengenenge. Other stark stylistic outliers are to be found in the case of Nicholas Mukomberanwa who achieved his Romanesque and angular style while training at Serima Mission under Father Groeber’s guidance (see Planger 1974, Sultan 1992) and Kingsley Sambo - “Cyrene’s Rebel” (see Hava 1984, Huggins 2001, Morton 2003, Zilberg n.d.a).^{vi}

Thirteen of the sculptures in the collection were made at Tengenenge prior to 1968. The names of the artists are given in the museum records as follows: Amani, Baudeni, Cleri or Britisoni, Henry Munyaradzi, Eriphas Ngoro, Lemon Moses, Bottom Mpayi and Rayitoni. Again, it was typical in the early days to refer to Tengenenge artists by their first names. For example, the late Henry Munyaradzi was usually known as Henry and after he became an internationally acclaimed celebrity, as Henry of Tengenenge. All of his specimens, and in fact all of the Tengenenge specimens in the British Museum, Af 1996, 18.14 and Horned Head (Af 1996, 18.12) are stylistically significant in that they show the way in which these artists instinctively reduced form to smooth and harmonious basic geometric shapes from the start of their careers. Munyaradzi was the most successful of all and such works have led to Shona sculpture’s natural recognition as intuitively modern because this sometimes calls forth in the patron’s mind images of Moore, the surfaces of Rodin bronzes and especially images of modern European sculpture by Laurens, Brancusi and Epstein. Indeed, references to the likes of Miro and Matisse, Picasso and Klee abound in the Shona literature, especially in the more commercial sphere.^{vii}

These specimens are of particular historical importance as they are examples of Munyaradzi’s early work before he had arrived at his signature identity. These two sculptures, as well as the stele (Af 1996,18.6), show how Munyaradzi variously carved facial features prior to his adoption of his signature t-shaped face. Though the collection does not contain specimens which demonstrate this latter treatment, Munyaradzi drew on these two particular devices, that is the T-shaped face and the form of the stele itself, from non-Shona artists, namely artists of Cewa and Mbunda descent (see Blomefield 1988, Zilberg 1988, 1996, Winter-Irving 1992).

Most of the Tengenenge specimens in the McEwen collection are excellent examples of the type of powerful biomorphic abstraction which characterized the best works produced in that period in that community. Consequently it is important to turn to Sylvester Mubayi, who was also originally from Tengenenge and who was McEwen’s most favored artist. Until the end of his life, McEwen championed Mubayi as the greatest sculptor of all time, claiming that Henry Moore

“was not a patch” on him and that his works such as *Magic Stallion* (see Sultan 1994:10) were far superior to any sculptures produced by the other leading British artist of that time - Edouardo Paolozzi. It seems that *Eagle Bull: Spirit and Matter* (specimen Af 1996, 18.24) was quite possibly McEwen’s favorite work. We can see this in the film *Talking Stones* in which we see him lovingly holding and caressing this piece. Again, Mubayi is a particularly important figure for Shona sculpture as he is the sole surviving major member of the first generation, was the first sculptor to move to live at Vukutu in 1968, though not for long. Moreover, of all the artists it is Mubayi who has provided the most passionate articulation of the relevance of his cultural beliefs to his artistic expression (see Zilberg 2001a). *Eagle Bull: Spirit and Matter* is particularly useful as a reference point for understanding the enormous differences which exist between works produced during McEwen’s tenure and after. Nevertheless, occasionally at Tengenenge, forty years later, works still occasionally emerge which have all the force and originality of the creative explosion dating from 1966 and lasting into the mid 1970’s (see Leyten 1994, Zilberg 2001b).

The Skeleton Theme, Possession and Blood Sacrifice: The Key Symbols in the Shona Sculpture Discourse

There are three examples of the famed Shona skeleton theme in the British Museum’s collection. These are Skeletal Baboon Head, Skeletal Baboon Spirit and He Has Life: Human Skeleton with Baboon Skull as will be considered further below. They are particularly important, as for McEwen, such sculptures were key symbols in the Shona corpus (see Zilberg 1994, 2002). It seems that it was Mubayi who invented the skeleton theme, Antelope-Man Skeleton being the most famous carved in 1968 (see Cook n.d.).^{viii} Subsequently, the skeleton theme was taken up to considerable effect by John Takawira also then working at Vukutu and it was sculptures such as these (see Figures 13 and 14) which created a sensation at the exhibition at the Musee Rodin in Paris in 1971 (see McEwen 1971). Nevertheless, despite its aesthetic force and symbolic interest, this theme did not survive the 1970’s - except for Moses Masaya’s few, distinctly different and singularly potent renditions created in the 1980’s (see Cook 1992).

It is important to clarify the significance of Mubayi in McEwen’s attempts to strengthen the Rhodes National Gallery’s Workshop School after Blomefield broke off relations with it in 1968. The large skeleton sculptures which emerged at Vukutu near Nyanga were historically speaking a direct creative outgrowth of the originality and monumentality of forms emerging at Tengenenge. In fact, the facility and potency with which John Takawira took up the skeleton theme was a testament to his power as an artist in which one is inspired by other’s forms and techniques and then uses them to one’s own ends, a process T.S. Eliot understood to be the essence of talent, tradition and creativity (1920).

In short, the presence of the Tengenenge specimens in the Frank McEwen collection serves as a testament to the historical process which unfolded as the tradition took hold underwent various transformations and crises. For example, after 1968 when Tengenenge broke away from McEwen’s attempts to control production, McEwen moved the Workshop School away from the National Gallery and into the “bush” at Vukutu near Nyanga to get into closer touch with the artists’ imagined source of creativity in the spirit world. His wife, now Mary McFadden of New York fashion fame, bought the huge and haunting piece of land and McEwen began the experiment with two Tengenenge artists while encouraging the artists who lived nearby in Nyanga to work there. It was a short lived experiment and represented McEwen’s desperate last attempts to salvage his dream and build upon the success of the show at the Musee Rodin. Nevertheless, the Vukutu project failed and McEwen resigned in 1973. To some important extent this was the consequence of the way in which Tengenenge artists had again been used without credit and in fact explicitly misrepresented in the Rodin show as had previously been the case in New York at the Museum of Modern Art in 1968 (see Leyten 2004).

The sculptures in the British Museum which fall within this sub-genre of the skeleton theme are as follows: Skull by Clever Machisa (Af 1996, 18.15), Skeletal Baboon Head (Af 1996, 18.22) and Skeletal Baboon Spirit (Af 1996, 18.27) both by Sylvester Mubayi, and He Has Life (Af 1996 18, 43) by John Takawira. McEwen's lectures, writings and films invariably and evocatively focused on how such Shona sculptures served as vehicles for the incarnation of ancestral spirits through blood sacrifice (Zilberg 2001). Indeed, his lecture notes now kept in the Department of Anthropology in the British Museum reveal this to us across the space of time. They are remarkable historical records of how he would begin his lectures in darkness and open with slides of the skeleton sculptures while describing how the Shona practice blood sacrifice to appease the ancestors and become possessed by those spirits. It was an elaborate presentation of the myth and magic informing the sculpture – as he saw it.

Fortunately for African art history, the two films McEwen made about Shona culture and how it under-girds Shona sculpture have now surfaced into the public domain - being also kept in the McEwen archives in the Department of Anthropology in the British Museum. They are titled: *Myth and Magic in Shona Art* and *Dombatsoko, Secret Initiation Center of Shona Faith*.^{ix} After their first viewing at the exhibition of Shona sculpture held at the Musee Rodin in Paris in 1971-72, they have never been seen again. They are surely remarkable historical records which will fascinate future generations of Africanists - if the British Museum ever decides to protect them by copying and digitizing them and depositing them in the Royal Anthropological Institutes' film archives.

Revelations: The Strange Case of the Clay Sculptures and the Lone Wooden Specimen

The clay sculptures (specimens Af 1996 18.7, 32, 33, 34 and 35) are extremely unusual as is the Nude in wood by the late Kingsley Sambo.^x These fired clay sculptures mainly by Locadio Ndandarika and R. Dynamira are interesting ethnographically speaking for as far as I know no such clay figures have yet been described in the literature on Shona material culture though Joseph Ndandarika once exhibited an assemblage of similar clay busts and stone and wood sculptures titled *Witchcraft* in the exhibition *New Art from Rhodesia* (1968).

Indeed, the only extant reference to such a phenomenon is McEwen's claim that the Shona produce ceramic vessels to honor the *shave* spirits (1991) and these specimens in the British Museum are remarkable in that they are identified as *shave* sculptures, *shave* being the wandering spirits of aliens. As unknown entities in the ethnographic record, these are ethnographically of particular interest and will require further research as currently there is no relevant information at hand, to the best of my knowledge, outside of this comment by McEwen: "A terrace-cotta ancestor figure, known as a "shade," is made for a wise member of the community. Contact is made with him through mediums in trance to obtain his advice" (ibid.:5). In short, these specimens in the British Museum are purported to be religious objects used in ancestor veneration rites.

The wooden sculpture is equally fascinating but on a very different level. The wooden sculpture is altogether revealing for it is very much akin to a Zairean Bayaka "fetish figure" and thus represents both the artist's knowledge of central African art and his turn to catering to McEwen's preferences for "magic" over modernity. This single choice from his larger oeuvre of a crudely carved "fetish" figure, which McEwen described as "beautiful," speaks volumes to the representation of Shona sculptors as tribal mystics rather than contemporary artists keenly responding to McEwen's predilections.

The Sambo specimen is therefore particularly significant as he was an extremely accomplished painter who was well versed in modern European art and wooden sculpture was by no means his forte. Indeed, Jarmila Hava has noted that the carving period in Sambo's career was limited to the late 1960's only after oil paints had become unavailable. Moreover, at that time his

professional career as a cartoonist had come to an end after the government banned the African Daily News in 1962. It was in this context that he moved from creating entirely cosmopolitan oil paintings, which McEwen termed Afro-German Expressionism, to “traditional” wood carvings. As Hava wrote:

The subject matter of his carvings was traditional. In the *Annual Exhibitions* of 1966, 1967 and 1968 he showed carved masks and figures of ancestral and other spirits (Tokolosh) that reflect the influence of West African and Makonde art – Kingsley could easily have seen such work in the Gallery. The last documented work in wood is his small sculpture *Ancestor*, which was shown in the exhibition of Rhodesian sculpture held at the Rodin Museum in Paris in 1971 (1984:14).

After oil paints finally began to be produced locally, Sambo abandoned carving again and became increasingly interested in landscapes and self-portraits. In short, the Sambo carving in the McEwen collection is best understood within the context of the artists’ career and McEwen’s influence on the artists. It should especially be understood for what it conceals - the artists’ intimacy with modern European art.

Indeed, as I understand it, the entire collection of Shona sculpture in the British Museum should be seen in the context of modern art rather than as ethnic curiosity in the sense that McEwen systematically argued that Shona sculpture was aesthetically superior to any modern Western art produced since World War II, particularly American art. In this regard, he would have surely preferred that his collection had rather had found its way into the Tate National Gallery. Regardless, the collection is now permanently enshrined as ethnographica rather than modern art.

Entirely against Frank McEwen’s repeated and express reflections, it is by now a well established fact that the first “Shona” sculptors, those belonging to the National Gallery’s Workshop School in Harare (but definitely not those at Tengenenge), had direct and inspirational exposure to Henry Moore and Pablo Picasso’s work amongst others such as Laurens, Zadkine and Gaudier-Brzeska (see Kasfir 1999, Zilberg 1996). Major shows of modern European art were displayed at the Rhodes National Gallery to great effect. Yet McEwen always denied such influences one would assume as they radically undermined the credibility of the claims for the authenticity of Shona sculpture as a tribal art revival with no relation to modern art. This is especially revealing when one considers the fact that the Workshop artists physically helped set up these exhibitions and spent their days as attendants guarding them and observing peoples’ reactions to them. In addition, McEwen walked the artists through these exhibitions and lectured them on the qualities of what made each specimen on display a great work of art (see Kasfir 1999:71). The question then for the future is this. In light of the above information, how does one re-assess the symbolic content, the aesthetics and the relevance of the specimens in the British Museum to modern art history and anthropology?

The Significance of the Frank McEwen Collection to Our Understanding of Form and History in Shona Sculpture

The British Museum’s collection is a particularly valuable resource in terms of what it offers to future debates over aesthetics and the evolution of form and meaning in Shona sculpture. It is interesting that the Nyanga sculptures, in contrast to those from Tengenenge, are in my estimation unbalanced and far less powerful works of art. They evidence a fascination for Sally Price’s “dark side” in “civilized places,” for the obviously “primitive” and for imagined occult symbolism. For example, in the case of the all important skeleton myth and blood sacrifice, there is as of yet no evidence for this in the ethnographic record. Yet McEwen’s ethnographic films were made to do just so and his lectures at the Rodin Museum, and as a Danforth lecturer in New

York state in 1968, always began in darkness with his immortal words on Shona blood sacrifice for the ancestors - and then in half-light – the revelation of the Skeleton God.

The Nyanga sculptors, particularly John Takawira -inspired by Sylvester Mubayi, took up the Skeleton God theme to great effect. These works are, in my view, the best evidence for the profound influence McEwen had on the compass artists followed in terms of the emergence of the full diversity of style and symbolism in Shona sculpture. Yet McEwen repeatedly stated that he had never influenced the artists in any way.^{xi} Certainly Sylvester Mubayi came upon this theme as a natural part of the creative process and with the enormous praise it drew from McEwen, others quickly followed in his footsteps. Thus McEwen always maintained that he had only drawn out the artists' creativity just as Gustave Moreau had done - as explained to him by his elderly friend Matisse who had been a student of Moreau's. Nevertheless, the material record preserved in the British Museum would appear to demonstrate that McEwen's preferences played a significant role in the subjects the artists chose as well as in the way they approached form (see Zilberg 1996).

It is worth perhaps briefly recapitulating the essence of this history. When Pat Pearce brought Joram Mariga to him with that first "terrible tourist head" and the stone milk jug, now in the British Museum, McEwen thanked him politely but then said to him: "Make me what you would make for your ancestors." Technically, Mariga should have brought back a stone head-rest (see Dewey 1993). Fortunately for Mariga, there were already numerous models available though for many observers this was the first "true" Shona sculpture and the "real" beginning of the movement (Kasfir 1999, contra Zilberg 2001, in review).

The fact that McEwen had direct and sustained control over the production and sale of the Nyanga artists' works, in stark contrast to those emerging from Tengenenge, where all and any form of suggestion or judgment was disallowed, lends further credibility to this argument of influences. Again, to belabor the point, it is still debatable as to whether McEwen had simply drawn out the artists' latent "genetic" talents and imposed nothing upon them, as he represented it or whether he had strategically influenced the artists. Yet the sculptors themselves recounted that McEwen's expectations had a profound impact on what they produced and how. For example, Bernard Takawira once declaimed in a symposium at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in 1988 that "We are still making what McEwen wanted us to make!"

Conclusion

In any event, McEwen's critical appraisal and decisions as to what to accept and what to reject could not have had anything but a profound affect on the directions artists could move in. The analysis of the British Museum's collection presented here attempts to introduce this issue in a more sustained manner than has been previously possible. This complication of influences and origins aside, McEwen believed that these works would stand the test of time as great works of modern art and as evidence of universal genius. Indeed, depending on one's aesthetic predilections, one might well find, as he argued, that some of them will hold their own against the likes of Moore and Paolozzi, or Laurens, Epstein and Brancusi.^{xii} Only time and a greater awareness of the collection will tell.

Towards closure, and on a more empirical level, it is safer to conclude by further focusing on the less speculative issue of style rather than content, specifically in terms of the basic contrast which exists between the Tengenenge and non-Tengenenge works. If one studies the Tengenenge sculptures in the Museum's collection, one will notice that they are stylistically distinct even though they do not belong to a stylistic unity and are as a group extremely diverse. Additionally, it should be emphasized yet again that the majority of the Tengenenge artists prior to the late 1980's were not Shona but drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds across central Africa (Zilberg 1988, 2001a). In this regard, the Tengenenge works are in fact markedly

interesting for the individuality of approaches taken by each artist, for the range within their production and particularly for their sculptural confidence and three dimensional qualities.

There has been a concerted effort in Zimbabwe to create more original works and none of this evolution is represented in this early collection, except for two specimens. These are Abstract by Nicholas Mukomberanwa (Af 1996, 18.30) and Head by Claude Nyanhongo (Af 1996, 18.36). Nyanhongo is one of the many "second generation" artists who emerged well after independence as best portrayed in Ferdinand Mor's book *Shona Sculpture* published in 1985. The sculpture by Nyanhongo was apparently presented to McEwen as a gift by Roy Cook who was doing his utmost in the late 1980's and early 1990's to work with McEwen and the late John Povey to protect the international reputation of Shona sculpture (see Zilberg 1995).^{xiii} These two sculptures thus speak to the final efforts of Frank McEwen to protect the integrity and reality of Shona sculpture as he saw it. Lastly, as Muncke writes this is not a representative collection and reveals the influence McEwen had over the artists and that "What is interesting to note is how McEwen has developed a mythology and folklore of his own" (1997:9).

In conclusion, when we reflect upon these important specimens of Shona sculpture in the British Museum, we see something of the range of work created by the Shona artists over the years. When one compares this collection to the Permanent Collection in the National Gallery of Zimbabwe and the larger collections of sculpture representative of subsequent developments, we find ourselves in a far better position than ever before to assess where the Zimbabwean stone sculptors have been, where the artists are now and where they may be going tomorrow.

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Notes

ⁱ The single post-independence work by Mukomberanwa in the collection is distinctly modernist in contrast to the early naïve Serima work. It shows considerable evolution in the artists' development. It is also important to note that the only sculpture in the British Museum's collection by a second or third generation Shona sculptor is a gift of a sculpture by Claude Nyanhongo. It was assumedly presented to McEwen by Roy Cook as an honorary form of tribute after their collaboration in the show at The Cleveland Museum of Natural History in 1991.

ⁱⁱ Lisa Muncke, in her article "The McEwen Collection at the Museum of Mankind, London" detailed the context in which the McEwen collection found its way into the Museum of Mankind and the plans then underway for combining the collections from the Museum of Mankind with the British Museum. It is an important article as it is lucid critique of the aesthetic value of the collection and of McEwen's predilections. Interestingly enough, none of the plans for displaying even a single specimen from the collection in the new Africa gallery in the basement of the British Museum or publishing a book on McEwen's copious materials ever saw the light of day.

ⁱⁱⁱ The mission or alternative origins in terms of artistic training of many of the earliest sculptors, particularly in the cases of Nicholas Mukomberanwa, Joseph Ndandarika, Thomas Mukarobgwa, Boira Mteki, Denson Dube and Tubayi Dube reveal that there is a far more complex history at hand than that presented by McEwen in his presentation of the tradition as a tribal art revival (see Morton 2003, Kasfir 1999, Stanislaus 1990, Zilberg 1996). Ethnic diversity is another compromising complexity which McEwen brushed aside by claiming that only the Shona sculptors had survived, that those from the others "tribes" had either "given up" or "gone airport". Muncke makes this particularly clear in her article when she writes: "It is totally erroneous to define Zimbabwean sculpture as the cultural expression of a single ethnic group- the spurious 'Shona sculpture' label, a legacy of the McEwen days, has proved impossible to eradicate" (1989: 10).

^{iv} Pat Pearce was a crucial early patron of Shona sculpture (see Leyten 2004).

^v Despite this tendency known as a reductive Platonic approach, the tradition does indeed in general have a marked diversity of stylistic approaches to stone as indicated by the rest of the specimens in the collection

(see Kasfir 1999, contra Zilberg 1996:186-192, 222-230). The range of this diversity between artists' work is clearly evident in the specimens in the British Museum. For example, the early Romanesque type specimens by Nicholas Mukoberanwa reveal the stylistic trajectory of Father Groeber's influence at Serima mission (see Morton 2003, Zilberg 2001c).

^{vi} For the most detailed discussion of Sambo's life and work, see Jarmila Hava's article "Kingsley Sambo: A retrospective view" in *Insight* 84(1):12-15. Therein, Hava provides the most sustained published evidence as to the degree to which some of the Workshop School artists were familiar with modern art. As she demonstrates, the connection between Sambo and Van Gogh was clearly not a matter of affinity but inspiration.

^{vii} In the case of the Tengenenge artists there is no evidence that they were ever influenced by European modernism. However in the case of the Workshop School artists who trained at and visited the Rhodes National Gallery, they were fundamentally informed by modern European art and to some degree this accounts for the Moore and Rodin like qualities of their works outside of the fact that it is also in part a simple matter of the artists engaging the natural properties of the material and thus producing works which have potent affinities to such modern artists (see Kasfir 1999, Winter Irving 1988, 1992, Zilberg 1996).

^{viii} Though this does seem to be the case, there is one remarkable sculpture in Arnold's 1980 book of two skeletons lying together in stony death which will prove critical to resting the case of the Skeleton theme as Mubayi's invention. Future art historians will need to know who was the unidentified artist sitting by the sculpture and where and when was the work produced. For another widely known skeleton sculpture, see *African Arts* 1972 vol. V, no. 3, pp. x.

^{ix} In addition, there is a third film about the rock gong complex which includes footage of the Shona musician Ephant Mujuru playing the rock gongs.

^x For superior clay sculptures by Joseph Ndandarika, see *New African Art from Rhodesia*, p.XX. These clay sculptures in the British Museum are extremely unusual. It is possible that there is such a thing as a *shave* sculpture though I have never seen a reference to this in the literature. If not, then the clay busts do not have any ethnographic or symbolic relevance in the purist sense of the word. They do however have a distinctly unsettling quality to them. In my mind, they are examples of naturalistic ethnographic surrealism in which the tradition of the European bust has been acutely fetishized and now sanctified by their presence in this high temple of ethnographica.

^{xi} Lisa Muncke corroborates this and makes the important observation that the repetitive nature of his choices revealed the trace of his influence on the artists. This is nowhere more evident or more powerful than in the case of the Nyanga skeleton-ancestor sculptures in the collection. Though Muncke does not consider any of the sculptures to be of any special aesthetic value, which is an interesting observation in itself, the sculpture Skeletal Baboon Spirit by Sylvester Mubayi (see the figure on pg. 10) is an extraordinary example of Shona ethnographic surrealism and in my estimation is a potent aesthetic formulation.

^{xiii} John Povey was the single most important advocate for Shona sculpture amongst American African art historians. Indeed, Shona sculpture figured at the forefront of the promotion of contemporary African art in the journal *African Arts*. For instance, in the article in the *Christian Science Monitor* in 1968 which described the journal's inception and John Povey's plans for it, three photographs accompanied the article. These were photographs of two sculptures, one titled 'United Family' by Lemon Moses and the other titled Praying Man by Kumberai Mapanda. There was also a photograph of Charles Fernando besides a painting of his and a description of how his paintings were inspired by jazz (see Hendrick 1968).