



## VIEWING GUIDE

Presented by  
the Intellectual  
Property Issues in  
Cultural Heritage  
Project

# STRADDLING THE PAST AND THE FUTURE: Traditional Art, Contemporary Artists And Pan-African Cultural Policy



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Video URL: <http://bit.ly/1vgzWA8>

## SUMMARY

This presentation is an initial exploration into the question of how pan-African cultural policies, which have adopted international discourses of heritage protection and cultural diversity, have been implemented in ways that have led to the commodification of “traditional” African art forms.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Reciprocity, authenticity, misappropriation, trademarking, commodification, heritage.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Nicole’s talk focuses on the notion of pan-African policy concerning cultural commodification. What is the benefit of having a pan-African policy, and what are the drawbacks to this?
2. What are some of the features of a “heritage” economy such as Nicole describes for Africa? Which aspects of heritage are highlighted, and which are downplayed?
3. What are the key features of the “creative economy?” What is commodified in this economy?
4. What has been the role of what Nicole calls “civil society groups” in implementing this pan-African policy?
5. Nicole discusses the concept of “fetishizing the past.” What does she mean by this?
6. In Nicole’s presentation, the two approaches to cultural commodification are frequently described in terms of “the past” and “the future.” Explain some of the ways that these two concepts are used to promote African culture.



## ACTIVITY / ASSIGNMENT

### A. Cultural Heritage Appropriation/Commodification Case Study

1. Identify an example of where African cultural heritage has been appropriated or commodified, and provide a short summary.
2. Outline the perspectives of at least three different groups on this example.
3. Identify any relevant professional heritage association Codes of Ethics concerning this issue. How could these be used to resolve conflicts?
4. What is the current situation of the case study? Was any conflict resolved?
5. Drawing on the points raised in Nicole's presentation, what is your opinion on the use of cultural heritage in this example? Would you have done anything differently? Why or why not?

### B. Indigenous Cultural Heritage and Professional Codes of Ethics

1. Identify five heritage/archaeological/anthropological organizations with Codes of Ethics (local, national and international).
2. Provide a summary of how each code addresses the responsibilities of professionals to:  
a) heritage sites and objects, b) intangible heritage, c) Indigenous communities, and d) the public.
3. Do these codes address the issue of cultural commodification? If so, how?
4. How would you improve these codes to accommodate issues of appropriation and commodification? Use the issues and examples discussed by Nicole to craft an additional statement addressing these concerns.

## RESOURCES

AfriHeritage Website. [www.afriheritage.org](http://www.afriheritage.org)

African Heritage Foundation Website.  
[www.africaheritagefoundation.org/blog](http://www.africaheritagefoundation.org/blog)

Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006). <http://bit.ly/1tFMvBD>

Journal of Pan African Studies Website.  
<http://bit.ly/1o6OvTE>

PanAfrican Archaeological Association Website. <http://bit.ly/1o6Oy1V>

Pan African Cultural Heritage Institute Website. [www.panafricanchi.org](http://www.panafricanchi.org)

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2006). *Cultural heritage & local development: A guide for African local governments*.  
<http://whc.unesco.org/document/6856>

This Viewing Guide was created by Marina La Salle & the IPinCH Commodifications of Cultural Heritage Working Group, May 2014.