

NEWS RELEASE

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**Penn Museum Highlights African Traditions with
*CultureFest! Fêtes des Masques***



Image: Korbogo cloth from Burkina Faso is painted with dancing figures in masks and costumes. Object 69-15-32.

PHILADELPHIA — The Penn Museum highlights the most important symbol from the Dogon culture of West Africa—masks—with [CultureFest! Fêtes des Masques](#) (Festivals of Masks), a virtual monthlong celebration inviting everyone to learn about African traditions.

A key part of the Dogon (an ethnic group indigenous to the central plateau region of Mali) culture, Fêtes des Masques (pronounced *Fet de Mask*) honors those who have passed away and celebrates the harvest. Elaborate masks serve different purposes—some are designed to pass on knowledge to younger generations, while others protect people against vengeance. It takes place in Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Burkina Faso, and other nearby countries during the winter.

CultureFest! Fêtes des Masques offers live programs and activities for all ages, such as:

February 2 at 11:00 am ET | Global Voyagers: Expedition to Africa

In an interactive virtual tour, attendees explore Africa's extraordinary cultures, while uncovering the central role African civilizations have always played in world history. Presented in partnership with the [Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration](#). [Register here](#). **FREE**.

February 8 at 6:00 pm ET | Fêtes des Masques: The Dances Seen

The founder and director of Dunya Performing Arts Company, **Jeannine Osayande**, a choreographer of West African dance (Mali Empire), along with the founder of Malidelphia Performing Arts, **Baba Ira L. Bond**, an African Masquerade professional and cultural enrichment specialist, discuss the Dogon people's use of ceremonial masks. **\$10**.

February 9 at 1:00 pm ET | At-Home Anthro LIVE: Adinkra Symbols and Proverbs

The Akan people and Asante people of Ghana use adinkra symbols to decorate fabric, pottery, and more. Attendees learn how symbols represent objects associated with shared traditions, draw a symbol, and write out its meaning. [Register here](#). **FREE**.

February 11 at 5:30 pm ET | Black Dance and the Politics of Movement

In an informal online happy hour, [Jasmine Johnson](#), Ph.D., an assistant professor of Africana Studies at Penn, talks about the politics of Black movement, including dance, diasporic travel, and gentrification. **FREE**. Livestream on Facebook.

February 26 at 1:00 pm ET | At-Home Anthro LIVE: Kanga: Message Carriers of East Africa

Worn in East African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, kangas are rectangular pieces of cotton with bold designs that feature a Swahili proverb. Attendees learn more about these vibrant textiles, while creating their own kanga design with a proverb that means something special to them. [Register here](#). **FREE**.

In addition to the live programs, other resources inspired by **Fêtes des Masques** are available on the Museum's website—with **Digital Daily Digs** (three-minute videos that talk about one object in the collection), [printable coloring sheets](#) and DIY projects, including a [make-your-own-mask](#) activity. The Museum invites families who complete projects to tag [@PennMuseum](#) on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Other crafts and recipes can be found on the Museum's [Pinterest](#).

The entire [CultureFest! Fêtes des Masques](#) lineup can be found [here](#).

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About the Penn Museum

Since 1887, the Museum has been transforming our understanding of the human experience. Dedicated to building connections between cultures, the Museum welcomes everyone to uncover the past, gain an understanding of our shared humanity, and find one's own place in the arc of human history.

The Penn Museum is open Tuesday–Sunday, 10:00 AM–5:00 PM with safety guidelines. For more information, visit www.penn.museum, call 215.898.4000 or follow [@PennMuseum](#) on social media.