

PIROGUES TODJIVU

Dugout canoes in west-African vodou cult

Travelling exhibition



château
musée
vodou
strasbourg



CHÂTEAU MUSÉE VODOU

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INTRODUCTION
THE CHÂTEAU VODOU
IN STRASBOURG



For the first time in its history, the Château Vodou in Strasbourg offers one of its signatures temporary exhibitions to hire. Consisting of about twenty objects in its original form, this exhibition will easily adapt to your own venue.

Offer to your visitors a unique and poetic exhibition of west-African cult objects, organised around the theme of water.

LE CHÂTEAU VODOU

The Château Vodou is a privately-owned and charity-run museum boasting the largest collection of western-African vodou objects in the world. To add to the visitor's delight, the museum's permanent collection is on display in a gloriously original water tower dating back to 1878.

WHAT DOES "VODOU" MEAN?

Born in West-Africa, vodou spirituality results from the encounter of Yoruba, Fon, and Ewe cults. This religion took its actual form around the 17th century A.D.

The vodou religion, embracing a large spectrum of practices and beliefs, counts millions of adepts around the world. It is nowadays still particularly practised in West-Africa, but also, in other forms, in Northern and Southern America, in the Caribbeans, as well as in Europe.

Far from the clichés and the Hollywood preconceptions, “vodoun” (the vernacular term for this religion) is the expression of a world view, a practical philosophy with tangible efficiency for humans.

It provides a framework for key moments in life (birth, sickness, marriages, death) and seeks to answer personal questions. Its aim is to maintain harmony between the visible world – the terrestrial world of nature – and the invisible world, inhabited by the gods and the ancestors.

Communication with this invisible world occurs through divination, rituals, music, dances, and trance states, but also thanks to cult objects. The vodou pantheon consists of more than 400 deities, each possessing its own specific features: a distinctive role to play, typical rituals and symbols. But this rich and complex culture still carries a lot of secrets.

THE COLLECTION

The Château Vodou collection is a private collection of more than 1400 artefacts, belonging to Marc and Marie-Luce Arbogast. 220 exhibits are displayed in the frame of the permanent exhibition “Vodou, the art of seeing differently”.

The Arbogast collection and the theme of vodou are linked to numerous subjects in our cultural programs and guided tours: slave trade, colonisation, duty of remembrance, people history, history of arts, herbal medicine, beliefs, faith, personal and philosophical questioning, magic, creativity... The museum is a wonderful tool to address the ideas of opening up to others, sharing, and tolerance.

Learn more: [The Charter of the Château Vodou](#)

THE EXHIBITION **PIROGUES - TODJIVU**

The dug-out canoes of the Voodoo tradition from the Arbogast collection engage our imagination. They are objects of spiritual contemplation of a unique physical nature. Invoking the spirits of the world, they bear witness to the creativity of the people guided by Voodoo beliefs.

Each pirogue features animals and divinities, men with firm expressions, busy women, smiling or stern, free or chained children, food, and spirits from the invisible world heading for unknown destinations. All of them embark on the waters of devotion, gratitude, revolt, and sometimes even resentment. They make you think...

These materialized prayers combine spirituality and mortality. Their designs express the desire of humans to resolve the difficulties of their life on earth, the pains of the flesh, and the sorrows of the spirit, by invoking the powers of nature and the strength of their ancestors.

You might think that they sail endlessly towards the land of the gods.
Come sail away!

The spirits set sail, tasked with their divine missions on behalf of mankind.

*(Pirogues in Ewe language)

COLLECTOR'S **EDITORIAL**

Marc Arbogast

Voodoo is mainly practiced in Benin, Togo, and to a lesser extent in Ghana and Nigeria. It is essentially practiced by the Adja, Fon, Yoruba, Ewé, Kabyé, Ouatchi, and Mina peoples, which are all coastal populations in the south of these countries.

Some Voodoo beliefs originate from the elements of nature, others are associated with certain animals, and yet others with ancestors.

For the temporary exhibition "Pirogues - Todjivu" we wanted to focus on these Voodoo religions that have deeply marked the slave populations living in close proximity to water. From these boats, we can recognize the symbolism of the vessels that transported the slaves, as well as the symbolism of the journey to the afterlife.

The Voodoo spirit Adjakpa, protector of aquatic life but also devourer of humans, symbolizes its presence incarnated by the figure of the crocodile. Tohossou and Abikou partly ensure the cycle of reincarnation of the dead. The symbolism of idols always translates the duality, protection/punishment of their power.

Ultimately, these idols are, without a doubt, among those that best express the artistic and emotional quality of the art of Voodoo practitioners. They are exceptionally rare.

*(Pirogues in Ewe language)

LES DÉTAILS TECHNIQUES

Consisting of 3 sections, the exhibition emphasises these fascinating boats' aesthetics. The visitor is invited to look carefully at every detail of each displayed object, brimming with symbols. Thus, the exhibit truly lies in the centre of the exhibition.

THE EXHIBITION CONSISTS OF:

- Three big labels, each presenting a different section: *The pirogues*, *The crocodile pirogues*, and *The crocodiles*
- Labels for each exhibited object.
- Twenty-two medium sized artefacts (about 100 x 35 cm) in the exhibition's original form at the Château Vodou.
- A podcast that can be displayed within the exhibition (sound only available in French).
- An exhibition catalogue that can be provided for sale (96 pages – French, German, English).

The digital version of the catalogue is available for viewing on request.

SURFACE AREA:

The exhibition spreads over 70 m² in our exhibition room in Strasbourg, but this surface area can be adjusted.

LANGUAGES:

- French
- German
- English

SET-UP:

About four days.

AUDIENCE:

From 6 years old.

PRICES

THE EXHIBITION HIRE INCLUDES:

- The cession of the rights to use the museographic and scientific concept.
- The provision of content in the form of digital files (texts in French, German and English and podcast in French).
- The museographic objects from the annexed list
- Museographic support for the adaptation and coordination of the project.
- Mediation tools for the exhibition: educational sheets and files.

PRICES:

- Basic package for one month of exhibition with all the objects, 5 photographs, the podcast: 10 000€.
- If extension of more than one month: €1,000 per additional month.

The rental price is calculated according to the number of pieces selected. The price indicated above is for the entire exhibition (22 pieces).

TO BE ADDED FOR THE HOSTING STRUCTURE:

- The scenography,
- Transport of the objects,
- Insurance,
- Travel expenses for one person to follow up the installation (3 days on site).
- If required, in addition: travel expenses for a mediator to train the team on site (2 days on site)
- Translation costs (if the language is not French, German or English)

PIROGUES TODJIVU*

* Pirogues in Ewe language

Curator : Jean-Yves Anézo et Marc Arbogast.

General coordination: Adeline Beck.

Set design and graphics: Ana Carolina Gonzalez Palacios.

Translations: Max Thomé, Michaël Mailfert, Katia-Myriam Borth and Larry Ramirez.

Photographs: Julien Gérard (exhibition), Pascal Beck (catalogue).

Technical team: Quentin Beck, Sébastien Furderer, Clément Levieux, Katia-Myriam Borth, Elena Beck, Pascal Beck and Loïc Anézo.

Chair: Dominique Baudendistel.

Acknowledgements:

Firmin Hoto for his scientific advice, Régis Goudou for proofreading, Michel Meyer for designing the animations and Kawati Studios for "Carnets Vodou".

EXHIBITION'S PICTURES



"Siamese-crocodile" Pirogue

Togo, Benin.

Wood, cord, metal, sacrificial residues

L 92, W 25, H 45 cm

Coll. Arbogast no. 1283



Two-headed Crocodile

Togo, Benin

Wood, metal, straw, cowrie shells, white powder, rope, padlock, incense, sacrificial materials.

L 93, W 39, H 44 cm

Coll. Arbogast no. 1284



Pirogue with a chained woman

Togo, Benin

Wood, metal, cowrie shells, glass, clay, fabric, stones, rope, sacrificial materials.

L 123, W 34, H 42 cm

Coll. Arbogast no. 1285



Asen

Benin

Tinplate and brass

W 24 x H 23.5 x D 23.5 cm

Coll. Arbogast no. 1266



Spirit Pirogue

Togo, Benin

Wood, rope, straw, metal, pigments, bone, feathers, sacrificial materials, clay.

L 93, W 27, H 59 cm

Coll. Arbogast no. 1289



Mami Wata

Togo, Benin

Wood, pigment, sacrificial materials.

L 94, W 29, H 23 cm

Coll. Arbogast no. 1415



Twin Pirogue (detail)

Southern Benin

Wood, plants, gourds, bone, blue pigment, string, metal, cowrie shells

L 89, W 24.5, H 24 cm

Coll. Arbogast no. 1471

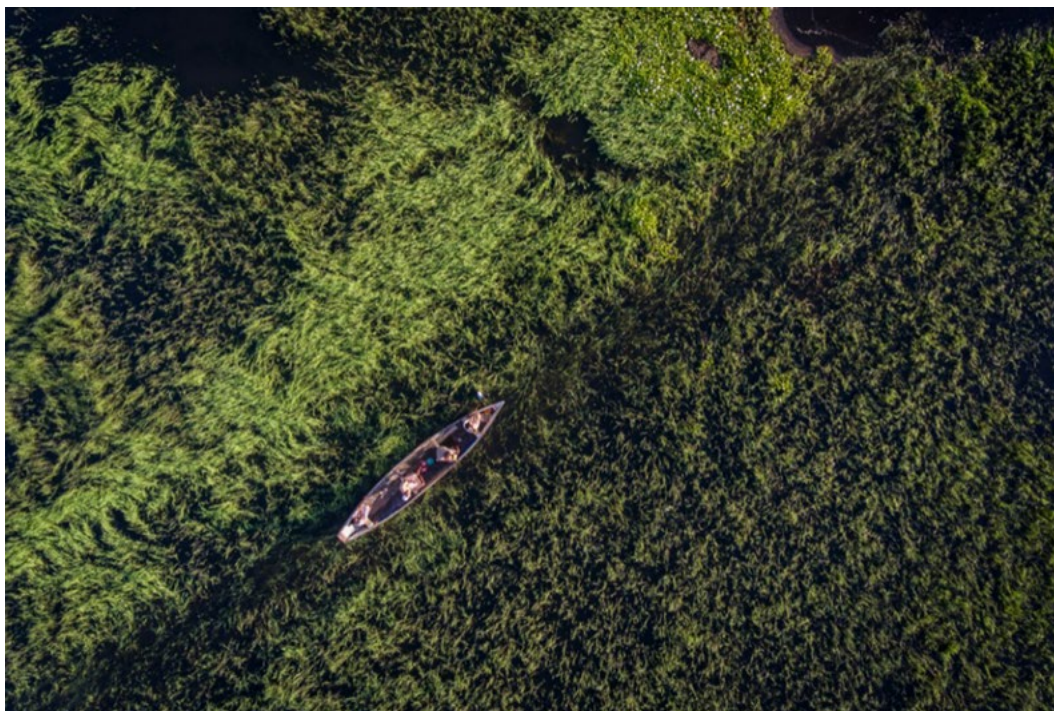


Photo 1

Julien Gerard

Sur le chemin de l'école

Bénin, Possotomé, 2021

Photographie numérique

Dans le village lacustre de Ganvié la pirogue est le moyen de transport quotidien. Les enfants l'utilisent pour aller à l'école et doivent parfois se frayer un chemin parmi les plantes aquatiques. Photographie réalisée au drone, issue du livre « SOUFFLE, le Bénin vu du ciel ».



Photo 2

Julien Gerard

Sans titre

Bénin, Possotomé, 2021

Photographie numérique

Pêcheur sur le lac Ahémé.

Photographie réalisée au drone, issue du livre « SOUFFLE, le Bénin vu du ciel ».



General views



© Pascal Beck (unless otherwise indicated)

Objet no.	Title	Inventory no.	Insurance values
1	<i>Longue pirogue à la femme joyeuse</i>	1147	5 000 €
2	<i>Pirogue à la femme enchainée</i>	1285	5 000 €
3	<i>Pirogue aux esprits</i>	1289	5 000 €
4	<i>Pirogue au pigment bleu</i>	1470	5 000 €
5	<i>Pirogue aux jumeaux</i>	1471	5 000 €
6	<i>Grosse pirogue de la femme à la hache</i>	1472	5 000 €
7	<i>Longue Pirogue aux sonneurs</i>	1490	5 000 €
8	<i>Pirogue ventrue</i>	504c	5 000 €
9	<i>Pirogue ventrue en bois clair</i>	0505	5 000 €
10	<i>Pirogue des crocodiles siamois</i>	1283	5 000 €
11	<i>Pirogue crocodile</i>	1287	5 000 €
12	<i>Barque crocodile</i>	1305	5 000 €
13	<i>Pirogue sur un crocodile</i>	1462	5 000 €
14	<i>Pirogue sur un crocodile</i>	1463	5 000 €
15	<i>Crocodile et l'œuf</i>	1469	5 000 €
16	<i>Crocodile bicéphale</i>	1284	5 000 €
17	<i>Crocodile Janus</i>	1302	5 000 €
18	<i>Mami Wata</i>	1415	3 000 €
19	<i>Asen</i>	1266	2 000 €
20	<i>Tohossou</i>	1468	6 000 €
21	<i>Bla bocio</i>	0409	1 000 €

Objet no.	Title	Inventory no.	Insurance values
Photo 1	<i>Sans titre, Bénin, Possotomé 2021</i>	<i>Julien Gérard</i>	200 €
Photo 2	<i>Blanc Harmattan, Bénin, Possotomé 2021</i>	<i>Julien Gérard</i>	200 €
Photo 3	<i>Il est 5h, Ganvié s'éveille, Bénin, Possotomé 2021</i>	<i>Julien Gérard</i>	200 €
Photo 4	<i>Sur le chemin de l'école, Bénin, Possotomé 2021</i>	<i>Julien Gérard</i>	200 €
Photo 5	<i>Sans titre, Bénin, Possotomé 2021</i>	<i>Julien Gérard</i>	200 €
27 objets			

A podcast currently exists in French, the text can be transmitted for recording in another language. However, the French version is online and can be found here:

[Les crocodiles sacrés de Ganvié](#)

Photographs: expect to pay for the printing of the 5 photographs if you intend to include them.

A Catalogue is available in French, German and English.

Purchase price: 16€.

Retail price: 18€

PRACTICAL INFORMATIONS

Château Vodou

4 rue de Koenigshoffen
67000 STRASBOURG
+33(0)3 88 36 15 03
contact@chateau-vodou.com

Opening times

Everyday from 2 pm to 6 pm
Groups (+ de 8 pers.) : booking required.

Admission fees

Adults : 14 €
Reduced & groups* : 11 €
Children (6-10 years) : 8 €

* -Students, 11-25 y.o., jobseekers, large families,
people with disabilities.

Groups

From 9 am to 9 pm, booking required.
contact@chateau-vodou.com
+33 (0)3 88 36 15 03
www.chateau-vodou.com

Getting to the museum

From Strasbourg train station : 10 min. walk
Bus : 10, 4 et 2 // Tram : F - stop Porte Blanche-
Musée Vodou.

Park & Ride «Parc des Romains» located directly at
the motorway exit, 5 min. walk to the museum.



Contact

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