

## AFRICA IN AMERICA



*The National Museum of African Art, top, is to the right of the Smithsonian castle, above, and a block away from the grassy expanse below the Capitol, right. Note violets in the gardens.*

### The National Museum of African Art

**My first trip to the National Museum of African Art was on 08 January 2008. I had made the 140-mile trip from my house in South Jersey to apply for a 6-month visa to visit Nigeria in January, and again in April.**

The beginning of January is the dead of the winter in the mid-Atlantic states of the United States, so it was cold, but not too cold for violets that were everywhere. I was enchanted by the respite from the abandonment of plants that is evident in South Jersey, and I took pictures of every plant that appealed to me. I walked across the huge park that is spread at the feet of the Capitol, and spent 3 delighted hours in the Museum.

What delights me about the Museum is its architecture, with its yellow walls, and its layout. And its



shop, with books by contemporary African writers. I bought books I had never heard of, that I later discovered were on school reading lists in Nigeria.

The art itself: a lot was stolen from graves by rich European-Americans. It includes pieces that were donated by rich collectors, and a lot of ancient wooden sculptures and metal pieces. Contemporary African artists are not the main focus.



This struck me in a return visit in December 2008. I was happily walking through the entrance hall, down the stairs to the lower galleries, and I remembered how excited I was the first time because the museum cares about all African art, as MJoTA cares about all humans in Africa. This still excites me, as does any museum that is devoted entirely to the toils of the sons and daughters of Africa.

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