

## Conservation of the Gold Collection

Mapungubwe's gold was first examined in the 1930s by Roger Pearson from the Royal Mint in Pretoria who confirmed its purity. As a precious metal, gold is soft, malleable and ductile, therefore making it easier to work, emboss, engrave and fabricate into a multitude of shapes. The Mapungubwe Gold Collection has always been fragmentary and ongoing conservation is crucial, as different forms of deterioration become evident over time. In 1983, the first conservator, Dr Andrew Oddy from the British Museum, technically examined the gold and later, in 1999, Marilyn Hockey also from the British Museum conserved the gold rhino and sceptre in South Africa, whereas the gold bowl went to London in 2001 for further conservation treatment. From 2007 to 2011, the museum initiated a major gold conservation project that was generously funded by Adam Fleming, where the South African Institute for Objects Conservation in the Eastern Cape conserved the remainder of the gold collection, reconstructing new animal figurines and stabilised the very fragile fragments you see today and to ensure the Mapungubwe Gold Collection's longevity.

## Research Access

The University of Pretoria Museum collections and associated documentation, such as the archival collections, are available for research, teaching, training, exhibition and educational purposes. The nature and conditions of use and access must be consistent with the Museum's endeavours to safeguard and preserve its collections. Access for research purposes is provided upon written request as a registered researcher. To schedule appointments, allow at least two weeks advance notice and submit your requests by contacting [museums@up.ac.za](mailto:museums@up.ac.za).

## Photography and Filming Permissions

Visitors may not take photographs in the galleries using hand-held cameras, video cameras or cell phones. Flash photography or using a tri-pod are not permitted in any of the museum galleries. Formal, commercial and professional requests for filming access, curator interviews or photographs of individual objects or collections must be motivated in writing for permissions and copyright purposes to [museums@up.ac.za](mailto:museums@up.ac.za) for further information.



### Hours and Admission

Open Daily Weekdays: Monday to Friday 08:00am -16:00pm

Closed: Weekends, Public Holidays & December

Entrance is free of charge

Wheelchair and disabled friendly

WiFi friendly zone

ICT friendly with LED TV screens

Nearby coffee shop, ATMS and other facilities

Eating and drinking in galleries is not permitted

### Contact Details

General Information: (012) 420 2178 or 420 5450

Email: [museums@up.ac.za](mailto:museums@up.ac.za)

Website: <http://www.up.ac.za/up-arts>

UP Campus Tours: (012) 420 5155

Group Bookings & Schools: [hcstours@up.ac.za](mailto:hcstours@up.ac.za)

### Location

University of Pretoria Hatfield Campus Hatfield

Old Arts Building & Old Merensky Building

GPS Coordinates: 25°45'14.9"S 28°13'48.7"E

Safe parking on campus in Engineering 3 paid parking from University Road entrance

Public transport is encouraged with the nearby Hatfield Gautrain



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# UNIVERSITY of PRETORIA MUSEUMS

Department of UP Arts

## NATIONAL TREASURES *of the* Mapungubwe Gold Collection

at the University of Pretoria



## Introduction

The archaeological site of Mapungubwe is located on the borders of Zimbabwe and Botswana in the Limpopo Province, and is situated near the confluence of the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers in southern Africa. It is along these major rivers that the rise of complex Iron Age societies first began at the site of Schroda, a Zhizo/Leokwe community (AD 900 - AD 1000). Thereafter, a shift in regional economic and socio-political changes gave rise to the nearby settlement of K2 (AD 1030 - AD 1220). A ruling class emerged and thus the first southern African State came into being at Mapungubwe Hill (AD 1220 - AD 1290). By AD 1300, Mapungubwe was abandoned until its re-discovery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

These sites collectively form the core area of a World Heritage Site, recognised by UNESCO for both its natural and cultural landscape that is considered to be of outstanding universal value.



## Brief History

The discovery of gold artefacts on Mapungubwe Hill in 1932 is attributed to the van Graan family. This chance discovery served as a catalyst for detailed academic research early in 1933 after the University of Pretoria had secured research rights from the government. Large-scale excavations were undertaken between 1933 and 1940 until research was disrupted by the outbreak of World War II. Intermittent excavations followed in the 1950s, which were then continued by more thorough stratigraphic excavations throughout the 1960s up to the late 1990s. The Mapungubwe Collection was acquired over decades as a direct result of excavations.

The University of Pretoria established a permanent museum in June 2000, thereby making the archaeological collection more widely available for public access and interest beyond the confines of academia. Since the museum has opened to the public, so have opportunities for multi-disciplinary research, making the Mapungubwe Collection much more accessible to all. Mapungubwe has also become a major symbol of South African national pride and consciousness. The University of Pretoria bears its stewardship with great responsibility as this nationally significant collection (now renowned to the world) will require continued specialist curation and active conservation for posterity.



## The Mapungubwe Gold Collection

The Mapungubwe Gold Collection comprises of 117 bracelets and 139 beaded necklaces consisting of more than 12 000 gold beads. In addition, it includes 133 coiled anklets and hundreds of bangles, and over forty gold foil forms. The most iconic artefacts are the gold animal figurines of a rhino, a leopard and a bovine figurine, as well as a gold bowl and sceptre. The remainder of the archaeological collection consists of ceramics, metals, such as copper, iron and bronze artefacts, trade glass beads, indigenous beads, clay figurines, bone tools and ivory artefacts. Included is an extensive research collection of potsherds, animal (faunal) remains and other fragmentary material retained mainly for research purposes. An extension of the Mapungubwe Collection is also its vast documentary and photographic records which form the Mapungubwe Archive at the University of Pretoria.

