Part of what makes us human is the ability to manipulate our environment and create objects from natural and artificial materials.

Celebrating 20 years of democracy and getting to know significant South African heritage objects.
SAHRA is a short name for the South African Heritage Resources Agency. It coordinates the identification and management of the national estate.

SAHRA is governed by the National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999 (NHRA).

The national estate is made up of all those heritage resources of South Africa which have a special cultural value to us today and for future generations.

What is the national estate?

TWO SAHRA OFFICIALS WERE INVITED TO SPEAK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF HERITAGE DAY AT HECTOR PETERSON HIGH SCHOOL IN WALLACEDENE, CAPE TOWN. THE TEACHER, MR TWALA, WELCOMES LYNN AND AZOLA.
What are heritage resources?

Where people have stayed and left, many traces are left behind which tell us how they lived, who they were, and how life's events influenced them.

Such traces can be found in buildings, landscapes and objects including those found under the ground, graves, burial grounds and under water. We call these heritage resources.

Heritage resources have lasting value and provide evidence of the origins of our society. They are valuable, non-renewable and irreplaceable. They should be carefully managed to ensure their survival.

For example, Mapungubwe is located where the Shashe and Limpopo Rivers join together. The story of Mapungubwe traces back to the existence of a pre-colonial African civilisation which flourished for 80 years before the settlement of Europeans a few centuries later. The rock paintings found at Mapungubwe evidence the Khoi-san communities that lived there. The site is declared a national and World Heritage Site.
But why are they important to us?

Heritage resources can promote reconciliation, understanding, respect and contribute to the development of a unifying South African identity.

Heritage resources are a bridge to our past. By understanding the past and the way others lived and experienced life, makes us know where we come from and where we’re going as a nation.

How?

This creates an understanding of what citizenship means and how it can bring about tolerance and respect for diversity. This has the possibility to heal and unite our nation.

That’s why the management and preservation of heritage resources is very important and must be available to future generations!

How do we know which heritage resources form part of the national estate?

There are many ways to decide whether a heritage resource is of cultural significance to the nation or not. It is usually due to their aesthetic, architectural, historical, scientific, social, spiritual, linguistic or technological significance.
Let's look at examples of heritage objects and how they inform us of the past.

**HERITAGE OBJECTS** ARE ANY MOVEABLE OBJECTS FROM OUR PAST WHICH ARE OF CULTURAL OR HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OR HAVE A SPECIAL VALUE TO OUR NATION. THEY RANGE FROM FURNITURE, BOOKS, PHOTOGRAPHS, ARTWORKS AND FIREARMS TO CARS, ETC. THEY MAY BE FOUND IN HOMES, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, MUSEUMS AND IN OTHER PLACES. ANYONE WHO WANTS TO EXPORT THEM, MUST APPLY FOR A PERMIT FROM SAHRA.

What are heritage objects?

SAHRA must find out whether the object is of significance by looking at its close association with the South African history or culture, its aesthetic qualities, or its value in the study of the arts or sciences. It must be of such a degree of national importance that its loss to South Africa would significantly diminish the national estate.

How does SAHRA deal with permit applications?

THERE ARE OBJECTS THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY DECLARED SUCH AS THE MAPUNGUBWE COLLECTION. THESE OBJECTS INCLUDE THE GOLDEN RHINO, THE GOLDEN BOWL AND THE GOLDEN SCEPTRE. NO PERSON MAY CARRY OUT ANY WORK OF RESTORATION OR REPAIR, OR DESTROY, DAMAGE, DISFIGURE, ALTER, DISPERSE OR EXPORT ANY OF THE OBJECTS THAT IS SPECIFICALLY DECLARED WITHOUT A PERMIT FROM SAHRA.

So, what story do these objects tell?

These objects tell a story about a great African civilisation that existed long before the arrival and settlement of Europeans in the area.
IN 2002 A PERMIT APPLICATION WAS MADE TO SAHRA TO TEMPORARILY EXPORT THREE KITAABS (ARABIC WORD FOR BOOK) TO THE NETHERLANDS FOR AN EXHIBITION. AN EXPORT PERMIT WAS GRANTED ON CONDITION THESE BOOKS ARE RETURNED TO SOUTH AFRICA. THESE KITAABS BELONGED TO IMAM ISMAIL OF SUMBOWA WHO WAS JAILED AT THE SLAVE DUNGEON IN SIMONS TOWN (NOW THE SIMONS TOWN MUSEUM) IN 1753. IN 1755 HE ESCAPED.

But do you know SAHRA can refuse to give out a permanent export permit?

Yes, SAHRA refused to give out a permit to the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) to permanently export Irma Stern’s artwork, ‘Arab Priest’.

The Arab Priest 1945 by Irma Stern

Why was the permit application refused?

It was refused because it has a cultural significance and value to the nation in terms of our different cultures and religions.

The Qatar Museum Authority appealed against SAHRA’s decision. The two organisations had a discussion. Then the Qatar Museum Authority applied for a temporary export permit.

A TEMPORARY EXPORT PERMIT WAS GRANTED FOR A PERIOD OF 20 YEARS ON CONDITION IT IS RETURNED TO SOUTH AFRICA EVERY 5 YEARS FOR A PERIOD OF 12 MONTHS. IN ADDITION, THE QATAR MUSEUM AUTHORITY HAD TO ADHERE TO OTHER CONDITIONS RELATED TO STORAGE, TRANSPORT, PACKAGING AND CONSERVATION EVEN THOUGH IT BELONGS TO THE QATAR MUSEUM AUTHORITY.
Since 2000, SAHRA had made many efforts to protect and preserve objects that are representative of the nation. The Freedom Charter is one good example.

Before democracy came, heritage conservation focused only on objects, buildings, and monuments which were related to European material culture.

But after 1994 heritage laws made sure that heritage conservation is inclusive of all the people of South Africa.

Since 2000, SAHRA had made many efforts to protect and preserve objects that are representative of the nation. The Freedom Charter is one good example.

This copy of The Freedom Charter is associated with South African history and it is also the only known signed copy that existed in the country at the time.

What is The Freedom Charter?

But after 1994 heritage laws made sure that heritage conservation is inclusive of all the people of South Africa.

Why did SAHRA refuse?

In 2010 an application was made to export a copy of The Freedom Charter. SAHRA refused to issue an export permit.

It’s an important historical document that contained demands for a free and democratic South Africa. It was drawn up in 1955 at Kliptown in Johannesburg.

THE FREEDOM CHARTER WAS ONE FORM OF RESISTANCE AGAINST APARTHEID. PEOPLE VOICED THEIR RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID IN VARIOUS WAYS, FOR EXAMPLE, THROUGH T-SHIRTS, PAMPHLETS, BOOKS, DEMONSTRATIONS, BOYCOTTS, ART, POETRY, DANCE, SONGS, ETC.
For example, art became a powerful form of expression against apartheid. An example of such an artwork is that of the "The Black Christ".

The 1961 Sharpeville Massacre and the banning of Chief Albert Luthuli inspired this artwork. Ronald Harrison completed the painting in 1962. Through this artwork, Harrison challenged the apartheid system and the notion of Christ as a white man.

There are also those heritage objects owned by state institutions and government departments which are protected and should not be destroyed, disposed of, altered or exported without consulting SAHRA.

"Blackie" is the first railway engine train to run in South Africa in 1859.

In 1936 "Blackie" was proclaimed a movable national monument and today it's known as a heritage object because of its significance in industrial development in South Africa.

Yeah, an example of such an object is "Blackie".

Wow! This is very interesting.
Heritage Day is a day when we, as a nation, celebrate our cultural heritage.

It is also the day when the Minister of Arts and Culture informs the country of a heritage resource that has been declared as important.

For example, SAHRA has declared the Broster Beadwork Collection at Walter Sisulu University as a Specifically Declared Collection of national importance.

This Collection dates back to 1932 and provides knowledge about the cultural heritage of the Eastern Cape Nguni people.

Because there are not many similar collections, this collection must be preserved for future generations for the purpose of research and enjoyment. You see, these objects tell a story!

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MR TWALA THANKS THE OFFICIALS AND ASKS THE LEARNERS TO DO THE ACTIVITY IN THE BOX BELOW.

ACTIVITY
DO YOU KNOW OF ANY HERITAGE OBJECT OR ANY OTHER HERITAGE RESOURCE IN YOUR FAMILY, COMMUNITY OR PROVINCE THAT COULD BE SIGNIFICANT TO THE NATION? IF SO, PLEASE WRITE AND TELL US ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HERITAGE OBJECT. WRITE TO: SAHRA, 111 HARRINGTON STREET, CAPE TOWN, 8001, SOUTH AFRICA.
PREAMBLE

“Our heritage is unique and precious and it cannot be renewed. It helps us to define our cultural identity and therefore lies at the heart of our spiritual well-being and has the power to build our nation. It has the potential to affirm our diverse cultures, and in so doing shape our national character.

Our heritage celebrates our achievements and contributes to redressing past inequalities. It educates, it deepens our understanding of society and encourages us to empathise with the experiences of others. It facilitates healing and material and symbolic restitution and it promotes new and previously neglected research into our rich oral traditions and customs.”

– Preamble of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act No. 25 of 1999)

WHAT ARE PROTECTED HERITAGE OBJECTS?

SAHRA declared through Government Gazette Notice 24116 of 2002 a list of types of heritage objects that are deemed to be protected and should not be exported without a permit from SAHRA.

a) Objects recovered from the soil or waters of South Africa, including archaeological and palaeontological objects, meteorites and rare geological specimens;

b) Visual art objects;

c) Military objects;

d) Numismatic objects;

e) Objects of cultural and historical significance;

f) Objects to which oral traditions are attached and which are associated with living heritage;

g) Objects of scientific or technological interests;

h) Books, records, documents, photographic positives and negatives, graphic material, film or video or sound recordings, excluding those that are public records as defined in section 1 (14) of the National Archives of South Africa Act (Act No. 43 of 1996), or in a provincial law pertain to records or archives; and

i) Any other prescribed category.

To view a list of all Specifically Declared Collections, please go to www.sahra.org.za

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Project Manager: Lynn Abrahams (Heritage Objects Unit) • info@sahra.org.za

Produced by Umyli Communication cc
Creative Director: Sivuyile Mazantsi
Graphic Designer: Robin Yule
Illustrator: Carole Howes
sivuyile26@yahoo.com