

Paa Joe

Born Joseph Tetteh-Ashong, Paa Joe is a second-generation fantasy coffin maker, an artistic tradition important around Ghana's capital Accra. Known as *abeduu adeka*, or "proverb boxes," these end-of-life vessels illustrate Ghanaian beliefs on life and death. Working since the mid-1970s, the artist has carved and painted figurative coffins to resemble living and inanimate objects, symbolic to the deceased (a carrot for a farmer, an eagle for a community leader, a fish for a fisherman, etc.). After receiving acclaim from the global art community following an exhibition at Centre Pompidou (Paris, France) in 1989, Paa Joe's practice has evolved, with smaller-scale sculptural boxes added to his oeuvre as well as new symbols keeping with changing times, such as mobile phone and Air Jordan-shaped coffins. His work is included in numerous institutional collections including The British Museum (London, England), The Brooklyn Museum (Brooklyn, New York), The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Massachusetts), and more. Paa Joe lives and works in Kpobiman, Greater Accra, Ghana.

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