

# African Heritage – Libra House

A spectacular new setting for one of Nairobi's most famous rendezvous is just now opening its doors on Mombasa Road, opposite Firestone Company.

African Heritage known around the world for its unique collections of Pan African art and crafts and for its vibrant Cultural Festivals, will now offer afternoon and evening shopping until 11.00 p.m. at its new premises, housed in a mediterranean style building with huge arched windows, known as Libra House.

At the moment, only the African Heritage Showroom is open, but there are several more openings scheduled within the next few weeks and months. Besides the large gallery which showcases artists works and the ever expanding range of original designs in jewellery, crafts and clothing, there is also a branch of Spinners Web offering hand-woven articles such as tapestries, carpets, shawls, sweaters, table mats, table clothes, toys, handbags and knitted wear from all parts of Kenya. In addition, there is jewellery and clothing from Bombolulu, Malaika (NCKK), Kazuri and Hardcore.

There is a small garden where crafts people may be seen at work every day and where coffee and tea is served to visitors. Next on the list of openings is a deli-style restaurant which promises New York style Pastrami sandwiches, Italian salads and lasagna, fruit and vegetable salads, soups, cheeses, yoghurts, milk shakes, fruit juices and coffee. The restaurant is situated on the mezzanine and it will even occupy part of the gallery which it overlooks, thereby giving guests an ever changing gallery scene.

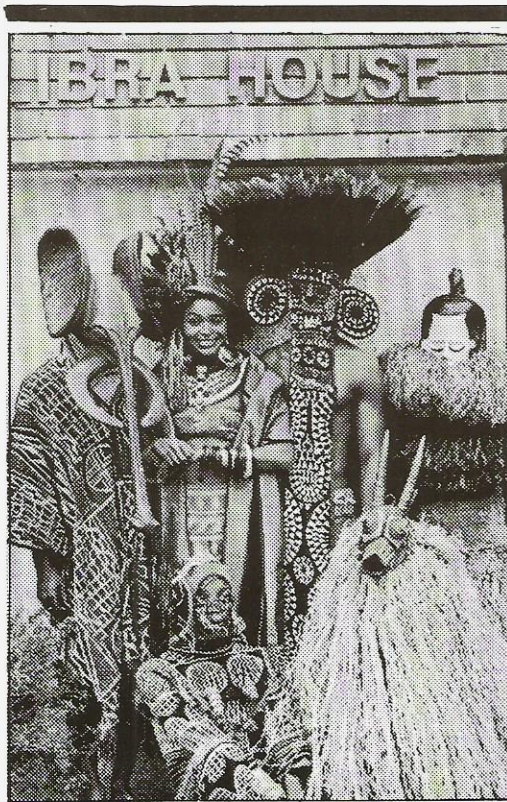
A boutique of clothing – from African Heritage and other local designers and producers – is also now progressing and will be open by the end of the month.

Next to open is a vast new showroom which is a unique concept in Kenya. A group of interior designers and furniture manufacturers from all over the country are producing new designs for a veritable department store of all things locally produced for the Home. Tentatively the new showroom is called Spacescapes referring to the intent of the occupants to transfer any personal living space with furniture for every room from beds and tables to lamps, bath linens, curtains and even tableware.

Last on the list is the portion that will interest music lovers and perhaps attract the most people to this new rendezvous – the African Heritage Garden – which is now only in the planning stages. To be housed under a giant Makuti-thatched roof, the performing arts centre will offer

a place for leading musicians, dancers and actors to show off to a much larger audience than is presently available at the old African Heritage Garden, which has outgrown itself for the over-capacity crowds on Saturdays and Sundays.

African Heritage plans its opening exhibition by well-known East African artist Noel Gateja Sanaa on October 25th. Sanaa opened one of the most important galleries in East Africa in Mombasa Old



Katherine Karl, the star of the African Heritage Night in feather headdress and giant gold earrings from Mali accompanied by African Heritage staff in permanent costume collection.

Town some twenty two years ago. Presently living in Uganda, Sanaa has journeyed throughout the world in his quest to perfect his art, before returning to Africa where he is now at work painting and weaving and stitching on huge barkcloth panels to be exhibited by African Heritage for the first time.

The exhibition will be followed by an official Gala Opening at the complex sponsored and produced by the Hotel Inter-Continental. The hotel has been the site of many of the African Heritage Nights in the past, and the Nineteenth African Heritage Night at Libra House promises to be the most spectacular with a complete new collection of fashions collected from throughout the continent of

Africa with African Heritage's permanent costume collection replete with authentic costumes from more than a score of African countries. Music will be provided by Musikly Speaking and Dajo Dancers.

There will be several other exhibitions following the exhibition by Sanaa, including new works by Niki Seven Seven and other Nigerian artists, and a book signing event for the new book by Robert Vavra, *Tent With A View*, about his personal experiences in Maasai Mara.

African Heritage, Africa's largest Pan African gallery was opened nearly two decades ago as a centre of African art and it has showcased the works of many artists from all over the continent as well as having brought troupes of artists, musicians, dancers and other cultural events from such countries as Madagascar, Liberia and Nigeria. The jewellery workshops of African Heritage and its associates were started even before that. Malaika Crafts – part of the NCKK – was started in about 1969 in Mathare Valley. Alan Donovan, Managing Director of the present African Heritage, shared the Malaika workshop in Mathare Valley then where he introduced the African Heritage Jewellery, created from components and beads collected from all parts of Africa and which has been shown in galleries and boutiques throughout the world. Bombolulu Jewellery – a workshop which drew its craftspeople from people severely traumatized by accidents as a means of rehabilitation – was also started at about the same time and it still displays jewellery from copper, banana fibre and other local materials at African Heritage. Nala Jewellery, started by Alan Donovan in Mathare Valley in 1969 drew its inspiration from two sources: the leaf-shaped earring of the Turkana women called "Aparaparar" and the round-coiled "Surutia" worn by Maasai women. Variations of these two designs are now produced throughout Kenya. The Jungle Safari jewellery, based on animal patterns and themes was started in 1980 and is still one of the most popular lines at African Heritage.

Angela Fisher jewellery, collected and produced by Angela Fisher, the photographer of the magnificent source book on African jewellery, *Africa Adorned*, was also first shown at African Heritage. Ms Fisher has been connected with gallery since 1973 and continues to showcase her work there.

African Heritage plans more exhibitions from throughout Africa as a centre for the arts of the continent.