Traditional Work
Benin Altar Tusk
Overview

-Ivory
-Royal Court of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria
-Igbesanmwan Carvers Guild
-Currently located at the Davis Museum, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gustave Schindler
-Approximately 5 feet tall
The Benin kingdom was located beside a great many other cultures allowing many of their ideas and techniques to be shared.
Decontexualization

The tusk at the Davis Museum stands alone where as it would typically be seated with other tusks and items. These items include brass memorial heads which the tusks sit in, figures, and ceremonial staffs and swords.

Oba's Altar Tusk. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.
Nigeria, Benin Kingdom, *Oba’s Altar Tusk*, c. 1850/1888.
Why is the meaning obscure even if we know the iconography?

Even though the Benin altar is meant to be publicly viewed, the tusks’ motifs are only known within the Iwebo. Ivory carvers were part of this group as well as people who were to take a position in Benin court.
Bibliography


Nigeria, Benin people, Ruler’s Ancestor Altar, c. 1914.

Oba's Altar Tusk. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.