

FAH 04

INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTS OF AFRICA

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Spring 2010 / Tuesday & Thursday / 1:30 – 2:45

Professor Peter Probst

INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTS OF AFRICA

Department of Art and Art History

FAH 0004
Spring 2010

This is a survey of the arts of various cultures and time periods in Africa ranging from ancient ceramics to contemporary painting and installations. It is intended to be an introduction to the great diversity and richness of the arts of the African continent. The course is divided into different perspectives and themes. Besides formal approaches to African art we learn about the various ways the visual arts reflect and function with respect to larger cultural issues. Within this context, students learn about the relationship of art to religion, gender, identity, and political power, discover the extensions of African visual culture into the Americas, and gain knowledge about key issues in the emergence of modern and contemporary art. Last but not least the course is also an introduction to the methods and vocabulary of the study of African art history and considers the general problems of how scholars understand and write about African arts.

Tuesday & Thursday 1:30 - 2:45 pm
Prof. Peter Probst (email: peter.probst@tufts.edu)
Department of Art History / 11 Talbot Avenue
Office hours: Wednesday 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Course Readings

You will find all the course readings as pdf files on Blackboard. Since the readings give the background information necessary to initiate stimulating class discussions, assignments must be read prior to the date they will be discussed in class. You should read them with care, highlighting the main points in each chapter or article and making notes as you read. Be sure to write any questions or comments you have and we can discuss them in class.

Course Requirements:

Mid-term (25%)
Final (25%)
Discussion / Presentation (10%)
Paper 1 (20%)
Paper 2 (20%)

Papers / Audio Guide

The two papers are conceived as a text for an audio guide. Each paper first describes, discusses and explains one particular object and is organized in three parts. The first part will give a formal description of the object. The second part informs about the cultural and historical background while the third part focuses on issues of meaning. (It goes without saying that the part two and three will vary depending on the object and the knowledge available. Students will choose their own object and need to do research to gain proper information. Make yourself familiar with the electronic resources at Tisch library. The librarians will be happy to help you.

Exam Format

Exams consist of two parts. Part one consists of slide identification with questions pertaining to origin, date, material, form, and significance/meaning. Part two consists of essay questions.

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism is defined as representing the work of another as your own. This includes copying the answers of another student on an examination or restating the work of another person without citing the appropriate source in a written paper. I am required to report cases of suspected academic misconduct to the Dean's Office and penalties include suspension or expulsion from the university. If you are in doubt as to whether you are appropriately using research materials, please contact me.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- 1/21/10 Welcome and Introduction to the Course
1/26/10 Perceptions and Receptions of African Art
Aminatta Forna, *Through African Eyes*, BBC 1995. 47 mins

Space: Trade Routes and Empires

- 1/28/10 Igbo Ceramics and Ancient Egypt (Sutton 2001)
2/2/10 Courtly Busts in Ife and Benin (Willet 1967; Cole 1998: 272-283)
2/5/10 Sudanese Architecture (Prussin 1974)

Form: Transafrican Aesthetics

- 2/9/10 Sculpture and Pose (Thompson 2002)
2/11/10 Body and Control (Thompson 1973, Sprague 1978)
2/16/10 Symmetry and Beyond (Adams 1989)

Practice: African Art as Performance

- 2/18/10 Masks and Gender (Kasfir 1998, McClusky 2002a).
(Monday Schedule)
2/23/10 Painting and Worldview (Willis 1989)
2/25/10 Assemblage and Healing (McClusky 2002b)
3/2/10 Dots and Destiny (Lawal 1985; Drewal 1997)
3/4/10 Revision
3/9/10 Exam

Migrations: Africa in the Americas

- 3/11/10 Reworking Saints in Cuba and the US (Brown 1993; Ramos 1996)
3/16/10 African Water Spirits in the Dominican Republic (Drewal 2002)
3/18/10 Ghanaian Cloth in the USA. Film: *Wrapped in Pride*

3/23/10 Spring Recess
3/25/10 Spring Recess

Modernism: From Urban Art to Studio Art

- 3/30/10 Photography and the Celebration of the Urban (Lamuniere 2001)
4/1/10 Film: *Future Remembrance*
4/6/10 Popular Art and After (Kasfir 1999)
4/8/10 Modern African Art: The Case of Nigeria (King 1999)

Simultaneities: Mapping Contemporary African Art

4/13/10	El Anatsui (Binder 2008)
4/15/10	Yinka Shonibare (Enwezor 2004)
4/20/10	Adigun Ajani (Bell 2008)
4/22/10	Revision
4/27/10	Exam

References

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