

Intro to Sub-Saharan African Art

Rhodes College

Spring 2006

ART 265

T/TH 11:00-12:15

Gena Hill-Thomas

Course Description

This course will explore the art of Sub-Saharan Africa from ancient sculpture to modern textile techniques. It will emphasize late 19th and early 20th century arts from four main regions: West Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa, and South Africa. We will spend more time in West and Central Africa because this is where the majority of research on African art has been done. By the end of this course, you will have a solid base of the art of several renown peoples, a working knowledge of the context in which the objects were used, and an overall idea of the current issues and theories within the field.

Format and Requirements

This course will consist of lectures, readings assignments, class discussions, and two small writing assignments. Students will be expected to attend all classes and abide by the Rhodes Honor Code. We will meet twice a week, from 11:00 until 12:15. Special meetings may be scheduled for study sessions, in which case attendance is not required. We will also arrange special meeting for an outing to the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art to view the collection of African Art; attendance is HIGHLY ENCOURAGED. If you cannot attend a class due to extenuating circumstances, please contact me in advance by e-mail (gena_hill@yahoo.com) or by phone (216-225-5137).

There will be four exams throughout the course, the first and third being rather small, the second counting as a midterm, and the fourth counting as a final. Your grades will be weighted as follows:

Written Assignment 1	– 5 %
Exam 1	- 10 %
Exam 2, Midterm	- 20%
Written Assignment 2	- 15%
Exam 3	- 10%
Exam 4, Final	- 30%
Participation	- 10%

I have a ZERO TOLERANCE policy for plagiarism. Not only is it a violation of the Rhodes Honor code, but it is also a crime. Plagiarism includes – but is not limited to – quoting sources without citing them, paraphrasing sources without citing them, cutting and pasting from the internet, and claiming someone’s original ideas as your own. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask me. For all written assignments, you may only use the journal of *African Arts* for research unless you obtain permission from me. This publication is available online through the Rhodes library website. Your bibliography should follow the format of cited works in *African Arts*.

Texts

There is only one required text for this course:

VISONA, Monica Blackmun et al. 2001. *A History of Art in Africa*. New York: Abrams.

I suggest that you purchase this text, as it is a wonderful resource and will most likely be of use to you in the future whenever you have a question about African art. Copies are available at the campus bookstore. Other required and optional readings will be placed on reserve in the library. Please bring the book and any pertinent required readings to class every day.

Office Hours/ Contact Information

Office hours will be held directly after class on Tuesdays in 410. Feel free to e-mail me or call me with ANY questions or comments pertaining to the course or the topic of the course. E-mail me at gena_hill@yahoo.com or call at 216-225-5137. This is my personal cell phone, so please do not call this number past 10 PM!

Tentative Schedule of Classes

Week 1

1/12 – Course Introduction, Important Concepts in West African Art

Required Reading: VISONA, p.14-23

KOLOSS, Hans-Joachim. “Tradition of African Art: Ethnological Research and Aesthetic Judgments.” In *Africa: Art and Culture*. Berlin: Prestel Verlag, p.8-30.

Week 2 – West Africa: Nigeria

1/17 – Ancient Cultures: NOK, IFE-IFE, and OWO

Required Reading: VISONA, p.228-238

1/19 – BENIN

Required Reading: VISONA, p.310-327

BASSANI, Ezio. “Afro-Portuguese Ivories and Ivories from Ancient Owo.” in *Africa: Art and Culture*. Berlin: Prestel Verlag. Pp. 66-67.

Week 3 – West Africa: Nigeria, Mali

1/24 – YORUBA

Writing Assignment #1 – Explanation of the assignment.

Required Reading: VISONA, p.239-259

1/26 – DJENNE-DJENO, BAMANA, and the TAUREG

Required Reading: VISONA, p.106-124

BRENT, MICHEL. 1994. "The Rape of Mali." In *Archaeology* (May/June), p. 26-35.

Week 4 – West Africa: Mali, Burkina Faso

1/31 – TELLEM, DOGON, and the SENUFO

Required Reading: VISONA, p.130-152

GLAZE, Anita J., 1986. "Dialectics of Gender in Senuso Masquerades." In *African Arts*, v.19, no.3, p.30-39, 82.

2/2 – BWA, MOSSI

Required Reading: VISONA, p.155-162

ROY, Christopher D., "Mossi Cheifs' Figures." In *African Arts*, v.15, no.4, p.52-59, 90-91.

Week 5 – West Africa: Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire

2/7 - BAGA, MENDE, and the DAN

Writing Assignment #1 due

Required Reading: VISONA, p. 176- 189

LAMP, Frederick. "The Art of the Baga: A Preliminary Inquiry," in *African Arts*, v.19, no. 2, p.64-67, 92.

2/9 – BAULE and the AKAN

Writing Assignment #2 – Explanation of the assignment.

Required Reading: VISONA, p. 194-216, 218-220

GILBERT, Michelle. "Akan Terracotta Heads: Gods or Ancestors?" in *African Arts*, v.22, no.4, 34-43, 85-86.

Week 6 – East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania

2/14 – **Exam 1**, Concepts of East African Art

2/16 – MAASAI

Required Reading: VISONA, p. 456-469

Week 7 – East Africa and beyond: Mozambique, Madagascar

2/21 – MAKONDE

Required Reading: DIAS, Jorge, and Margot DIAS. 1997. “The Ritual Dance of the Maconde People” in *Makonde – “Mapiko.”* Ed. Kristian Fenzl. Linz: Institut für EthnoDesign, p. 173-179

Optional Reading: DUCHÂTEAU, Armand. 1997. “The Maconde people and their art.” In *Makonde – “Mapiko.”* Ed. Kristian Fenzl. Linz: Institut für EthnoDesign, p.21-31

2/23 - MALAGASY

Required Reading: KOUWENHOVEN, Arlette. 1998. “Funerary Art of Madagascar” in *World of Tribal Arts*, v.5, no.2. p.72-82.

Week 8 – West Africa and East Africa

2/28 – REVIEW for Midterm Exam

3/2 – **Exam 2 - MIDTERM**

Week 9 – Southern Africa: Zimbabwe, South Africa

3/7 – GREAT ZIMBABWE and the SHONA

Required Reading: VISONA, p.478-487

DEWEY, William J., 1986. “Shona Male and Female Artistry” in *African Arts*, v.19 (May 1986), p.64-7.

3/9 – NDBELE and the ZULU

Required Reading: VISONA, p.487-493

PRIEBATSCH, Suzanne, and Natalie KNIGHT. 1978. “Traditional Ndebele Beadwork.” In *African Arts*, v. 11 (January 1978). p.24-27.

SPRING BREAK WEEK

3/14 – NO CLASS!

3/16 – NO CLASS!

Week 10 – Central Africa: Cameroon, Gabon

3/21 – CAMEROON GRASSLANDS

Bibliography for Writing Assignment #2 due

Required Reading: VISONA, p.336-352

KOLOSS, Hans-Joachim. “The Cameroon Grasslands.” In *Africa: Art and Culture*. Berlin: Prestel Verlag. p.95-98.

3/23 – FANG and the KOTA

Required Reading: VISONA, p.355-364

Week 11 – Central Africa: Congo Basin

3/28 – **Exam 3**

3/30 – KONGO and the YOMBE

Required Reading: VISONA, p.366-378

THOMPSON, Robert Farris. 1978. “The Grand Detroit *N’Kondi*.” *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, v.56, no.4, p.206-221.

Week 12 – Central Africa: Congo Basin

4/4 – CHOKWE

Required Reading: VISONA, p.379-385

CAMERON, Elisabeth L. 1998. “Women = Masks: Initiation Arts in North-Western Province, Zambia.” *African Arts*, v.31, no. 2, p.50-61, 93-94.

4/6 – YAKA, SUKU and the PENDE

Required Reading: VISONA, p.385-394

BOURGEOIS, Arthur P. 1993. "Masks and Masking Among the Yaka, Suku and Related Peoples." in *Face of the Spirits*, eds. F. Herreman & C. Petridis. Ghent: Snoeck & Martial. Pp.49-60

Week 13 – Central Africa: Congo Basin

4/11 – KUBA

Required Reading: VISONA, p.396-406

Optional Reading: BINKLEY, David A. & Patricia J. DARISH. 1998.

“‘Enlightened but in Darkness’: Interpretations of Kuba Art and Culture at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” in *The Scramble for Art in Central Africa*, eds. E. Schildkrout & C. A. Keim, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 37-62.

4/13 – NO CLASS – EASTER!

Week 14 – Central Africa: Congo Basin

4/18 – LUBA, HEMBA, and the TABWA

Writing Assignment #2 due

Required Reading: VISONA, p.412-422

ROBERTS, Mary Nooter. 1998. “The Naming Game: Ideologies of Luba Artistic Identity.” *African Arts*, v.31, no.4, p.56-73, 90-92.

4/20 – SONGYE, LEGA, BEMBE and the MBOLE

Required Reading: VISONA, p.422-429

HERSAK, Dunja. 1990. “Powers and Perceptions of the Bifwebe.” *Iowa Studies in African Art*, no.3, p.39-54.

Week 15 – Art of the Diaspora

4/25 – The United States

Required Reading: VISONA, 500-518

4/27 – The Caribbean

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 2nd, 5:30 pm