CSA244x-ARTS OF AFRICA - Preliminary Syllabus

Professor: Jean Borgatti
Email: jborgatti@gmail.com, phone 508-615-4593
Office hours:
Class Time: M-W 2-5
Website: www.clarku.edu/~jborgatt
Powerpoint slides will be posted on this website, not on WebCT

The purpose of this class is to stimulate thought and challenge your imagination with extraordinary images from Africa, from the distant past to the post-modern present, from North to South and West to East, in short, a survey of the rich and diverse artistic heritage of this vast continent. We will take a thematic approach with case studies of art in context. Slides that you will be responsible for will be posted for the final. A thematic approach allows for an exploration of ideas that cut across many cultural zones. Case studies provide a more complex view of artworks, their aesthetic as well as their communicative and symbolic functions within specific societies at a particular point in time.

Texts: (Required) 1) Visona et. al. *A History of Art in Africa*, New York: Prentice Hall Organized geographically, this is your “encyclopedia.” Use it for locating the cultural context of works discussed as well as for assigned reading. (This is an expensive text. The most cost-effective way to acquire it may be through locating it ‘used’ via Amazon.com. The new edition does a better job of covering modern and contemporary art, so that if you buy the old edition, be prepared to supplement your reading in the new one that will be on reserve in the library.  


Texts: (Suggested): 3) Kasfir, Sydney, *Contemporary African Art*, Thames and Hudson will give you an overview of contemporary art that is both more complete and more theoretical than either of the other texts.

All texts will be on reserve at the library. You are required to do the reading, not to buy the texts.

Requirements
1) Attendance. Please be on time.
2) Check your Email. This is how I communicate with you.
3) This may seem obvious, but… Complete all the assigned readings - before the class associated with the assignment.
4) Reaction papers and class participation
5) Again, this may seem obvious, but… Be present for the scheduled exams (final and your presentation).
6) Paper (combination style-analysis/research on an object in the MFA or some other local collection (The Fantasy Coffins at UMass Boston, something from the Hamill Gallery in south Boston, an African work from the DuBois Center at Harvard, for example).
7) 5-10 minute powerpoint presentation summarizing your paper (to be posted: peer evaluated). Conceptual template to be posted.
8) A creative work based on your selected object to be presented when your paper is presented to the class (to be posted - peer evaluated).
10) Final: Create a Virtual Exhibit that provides an overview of African art linked to a theme – cleared with professor -- to be presented/posted/peer evaluated.

**Paper**
1) Research paper (3-5 pages typed) a style analysis paper that involves recontextualizing a decontextualized museum work. Topic and/or object choice must be cleared with the instructor. More detailed instructions will be posted on my website.

**Grading [approx.]**
- Class attendance/participation 10%
- 3 short Reaction Papers 15%
- Do something extra – as in extra credit 5%
- Research Paper 20%
- Presentation (powerpoint & delivery) 10%
- Creative Work 15%
- Virtual Exhibit (Final) 25%

**Extra:** Extras may take the form of: a) critical review of an exhibition on some aspect of African Expressive Culture – a visit to the Fantasy Coffins at Umass Boston or the Tim Hamill Gallery—or elsewhere if you have the time, energy and a car! b) a thoughtful and incisive report or reflection on news/current affairs on Africa which you consider pertinent to the content of the course, or an exhibition review, c) a critical review of a website that features African art (but is not associated with a major museum or educational institution); d) attending an appropriate lecture – a little more difficult in summer when there is not as much going on around town.

**June 2 (Sign up for meetings with Professor Borgatti)**
- **Overview of the Syllabus: Introduction to Africa and Addressing stereotypes**
- **Reading:** Bohannon - Shakespeare in the Bush (website post & on reserve)
- Monica Visona, et al., *A History of Art in Africa*, pp. 10-23
- Willett: pp. 9-25
- **Film:** African Art in Transit (reaction paper due June 4)
- **Question(s) to consider in reaction paper:** What preconceived ideas did you have about Africa? African Art? How did this film surprise you?

**June 4 - 1st Reaction Paper Due**
- **From Curiosity Cabinet to Art Museum -Changing Perceptions of African Art**
- **Video** Fang: An Epic Journey (8 minutes)
- **Forms and Materials**
- **Reading:** Visona et al., *A History of Art in Africa*, pp.168-172
- **Reading:** Arnold Rubin: “Accumulation: Power and Display in African Sculpture” in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 4-21.
- **Suggested for Illustrations:** Fagg & Bassani - African Art and the Renaissance
- Rubin: Primitivism in Modern Art

**June 9 Museum of Fine Arts**
**Materials/form/meaning scavenger hunt in the African collection -- select object to write about**
- **Reading:** Willett: pp. 130-219
  - Selected articles on the structuring of knowledge through the museum experience to be assigned to individual students – to discuss at museum.
June 11: Working Bibliography Due
- The African Artist or Anonymous Doesn’t Live Here Anymore
**Reading:** Roslyn Walker, “Anonymous has a Name: Olowe of Ise” in Abiodun, Drewal & Pemberton, pp. 91-106
**Suggested for an alternative view:** D’Azevedo, “Maskmakers and Myth in Western Liberia” in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 111-132.

**Symbolic vs. Naturalistic**
- Portraiture Or The Case of Portraiture in Canonical African Art

June 16 Revised Bibliography Due
- Six Sketches of Mali (DVD) – reaction paper due June 18
**The Mande Culture Complex**
**Reading:** Rachel Hoffman, “Seduction, Surrender and Portable Paradise: Dogon Art in Modern Mali” in Nooter (ed) *Secrecy: Art that Conceals; Art that Reveals*, pp. 223-233.
- Social Contexts of Masquerades: Examples from West Africa
**Community Organization (Bamana, Senufo, Dan); Honoring the Dead (the Dogon); Harnessing the power of the Wild (the Bwa of Burkina Faso); the Ijo/Ijaw of the Niger Delta**
**Reading:** Visona, et al., pp.116 (Ntomo & Tyi Wara); 121 (Komo & Kono); 122 (Kore, Secular Masquerades, Puppetry); 130-144 (Western Sudan & Dogon), 144 (The Senufo); 145 (Poror); 149 (Masks and Masquerades); 158 (Bwa Masquerades); 180 (Women’s & Men’s Societies); 184 (Masks & Sacred Authority); 306-309 (Ijaw Festivals & Masks).

June 18 2nd Reaction Paper Due
- Masks as symbolic structures: Mende & Yaka
**Reading:** Visona, et al., pp. 180-184 (Mende); pp. 385-390 (The Yaka and the Suku).
**Suggested:** Ruth B. Phillips, "Masking in Mende Sande Society Initiation Rituals," in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 231-244.
- Art, Memory and Politics: Ashanti and Lega
**Reading:** Visona, et al., pp.194-227, 423-426
**Suggested:** Cole, "The Art of the Festival in Ghana," in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 201-216.

June 23 Paper-part1 due: Description of Object
- African 2-D design: Textiles, Bodies and Walls
**Reading:** Textiles: Visona, et al., pp.206-208 (Akan); 396-405 (Kuba) See also illustrations (Chapter & illustration #) 1-1, 1-20, 3-24, 3-30, 3-35, 3-36; 4-19, 4-25, 4-26; 7-14, 7-15, 7-22, 7-40; 8-18, 8-25, 8-41, 8-42, 8-45, 8-52, 8-64, 8-65; 9-9, 9-25, 9-29, 9-39, 9-44, 9-50; 10-18, 10-25, 10-28; 11-3, 11-13, 11-29, 11-52, 11-58, 11-59, 11-60; 12-38; 13-44, 15-29.
Body Arts: Visona et al., pp. 100-105 (Fulani); 466-469 (Nuba/Masaii et al.)
Architecture: Visona et al., pp. 162-165 (Nankani), 492-494 (Nguni)
**Suggested:** Adams, “Kuba Embroidered Cloth” in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 133-152

June 25
- Ancient Arts of Nigeria: Nok, Igbo Ukwu, Ife and Benin
**Reading:** Visona, et al., pp. 228-238, 274-278, 310-327.
**Suggested:** Paula Ben-Amos, "Humans and Animals in Benin Art," in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 152-164.
- Yoruba Art & Aesthetics
**Reading:** Visona, et al., pp. 239-259, 268-273.
**Suggested:** Robert F. Thompson, "An Aesthetic of the Cool," in Berlo & Wilson, pp. 22-35.
June 30 Paper - part 2: contextualization of object due
- Central African Kingdoms - Kongo, Kuba, Luba, Chokwe
Reading: Visona, et al., pp. 366-378 (Kongo); pp. 379-385 (Lunda-Chokwe); pp. 396-408 (Kuba); pp. 412-420 (Luba).

July 2 Modern Art
- Colonial and Post Independence periods: Workshop Traditions & Art Movements
- DVD: Nigerian Artists: Kindred Spirits
Reading: Willett: pp. 220-255
Visona et al. pp. 125-126 (Arts of the Home); 191-192 (Cross-Currents and Hybrid Forms); 225-226 (Lives Well Lived: Contemporary Funeral Arts); 268-273 (Movements in Oshogbo); 278-282 (Recent and Contemporary Igbo Arts); 408-411 (Congo: Contemporary Urban and International Art); 435-437 (Congo: Contemporary Arts); 460-461 (Makonde Export Art); 469-471 (Contemporary Artists of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya); 494-495 (Art and Contemporary Issues in South Africa); 500-527 (The Diaspora)
Suggested: Kasfir, pp. 9-17 (Intro) 18-47 (Inventing Popular Culture); 48-63 (Transforming the Workshop); 64-101 (Patrons and Mediators); 102-123 (Art and Commodity); 166-189 (The Idea of a National Culture: Decolonizing African Art).

July 7 Student Presentations – powerpoints and creative work

July 9 (to be confirmed) Class will meet at National Center for African American Artists – Roxbury www.ncaaa.org
Reading: Kasfir: pp. 124-165 (The African Artist: Shifting Identities in the Postcolonial World); 190-213 (Migration and Displacement).
Review: www.nmafa.si.edu Any of the virtual exhibitions from the Contemporary Galleries 1 & 2, but particularly African Art Now and The Transatlantic Dialogue.

July 14 - reaction paper to NCAAA exhibit due
- Contemporary Art (African Artists in the Global Marketplace)
- Video: William Kentridge
Reading: Visona et al. pp. 46-47 (Contemporary Art of North Africa); 76-77 (Contemporary Artists of Sudan and Ethiopia); 126-128 (Art for the International Market); 192-193 (Contemporary International Art); 225-227 (International Art); 364-365 (Contemporary International Arts); 495-497 (Art under Apartheid)
Suggested: Oguibe: “Art, Identity, Boundaries: Postmodernism & Contemporary African Art”, in Reading the Contemporary, pp. 16-29 or “Finding a Place: Nigerian Artists in the Contemporary Art World,” in ART JOURNAL 58(2) 1999:30-41

July 16
Presentation/discussion of Virtual Exhibitions – Themes drawing on art from different time periods (ancient, 'medieval', colonial period (traditional), colonial & post-colonial modern and contemporary, and the full continent – North, South, East and West.