

3 June 1999 Review: Africa in the histories of Art and Architecture

Suggestion for a visit to the BM: Rooms 64 & 65 Egypt and Africa (Kerma ceramics, temple mural), Predynastic Egypt (burial site, assorted palettes) then through new Mummy Room to the Money Room 68 (Benin plaque, on right) to BP 'Creative Solutions' (ivory salt cellar; power figures: *nkishi*, *ibei* twins...). Horniman Museum, South London new exhibition 'African Worlds'

1. Review Course plan, themes, maps : how to revise?

1.1 Course plan

- What is African art? Western constructions of African art (Clarke)
- Case study of the Kingdom of Benin
- Antiquity - paleoarchaeology, rock art, the Nile Valley, Great Zimbabwe, Swahili
- Multiformity and making
- The visual arts, political and religious power
- Art and the production, representation and regulation of gender
- Contemporary and modern Art

1.2 Big ideas

- Relationship between art and society in production (maker, form) and content
- Longevity and diversity
- Processes of change - "Roots and Routes"
- Tensions between object and context, i.e. art and anthropology

1.3 Case studies beyond Benin: Akan: Asante & Baule, Fang, Ife, Kalabari, Kota, Kuba, -Maa: Maasai & Samburu, Nubia (Kerma, Naqada, Egyptian dynasties: 18, 25), San, Shona.....

2. The significance of African art in the World's Art History (from mainstream texts)

2.1 The weight of the oldest antiquity -- "We all ultimately belong to Africa" (R. Oliver) tools, rock art, craftsmanship, aesthetics

2.2 The "Greats": Zimbabwe & Benin

2.3 Sculpture -- Western art canon of African art "Modernist Primitivism" borrowing formal imagery, e.g., Kota & Fang figures, Kuba cloth, many masks

3. Art practices in Africa

3.1 Diversity of art forms in relation to cultural practices and environment, available local materials; importance of locality and longevity of traditions to form & imagery. "Africa's forms of life are too diverse to catch a single ideal." KA Appiah (1995).

3.2 Issue of art practices and and art works -- known or unknown artist?

3.3 Dynamic relationship between art and society :: "Art for society's sake"

- purpose: both aesthetic and social
e.g.

- regular use, for identity status, regulation of society such as gender and spirits
e.g.

•special occasions: social ceremonies - celebrations for annual or other commemoration, for fertility, initiations, age grades, naming, funerals
e.g.

4. African art in change

4.1. What is changing in art - the dynamics of change

intentional use of traditions - 'recycling' - transformation
professional makers
kind of education to formal art training, critical studies
medium/ kinds of materials, techniques -- recycled and commercial products
kind of imagery - visual form, representation, picture-making
purpose - less direct social purpose, more individualised
patronage -- cash, market and world economy

>>> African art is in the vanguard -- creating new identities, new cultures

4.2. Examples of African modernities (in sides)

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List of Slides in pairs

- 1 Rock Art: Inanke [giraffe]; Linton Panel South Africa [eland, shaman] (c.1000 or before, 26,000BP)
- 2 Great Zimbabwe: plan, totem Chapungu
- 3 Kota reliquaries in context (c1890) Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907)
- 4 African art in Modernism: Barnes Collection (1925/1981, Philadelphia); Royal Academy (London 1995)
- 5 early 16th c: curio - Afro-Portuguese salt cellar, Benin lost wax plaque: 3 kinds of power
- 6 Power figures: *nkishi* (Congo), *ibebi* twins (Nigeria) 19thc
[below - re EC's Ghana wooden fertility figure**: *akuaba*]
- 7 -Maa warriors adornment - hair styling (EA, 1991); M Lekadaa and painted water tank (1989)
- 8 Zim sculpture Nicholas M Corruption of Money (1989); Tapfuma Gutsa: Gadget of influence (1995)
- 9 Kerma ware 3000BC (Nile); Magdalene Odundo (Kenya-UK): Untitled Vessel (1997);
- 10 Kalabari: Hippo head mask (c19 50); Sokari D-C (Nigeria-UK) steel Hippo Masquerade (1995)
- 11 El Anatsui (West African) **Akua's Surviving children (1996); Well-informed ancestors (1998)
- 12 Chris Ofili [1998 Turner Prize] No Woman No Cry; Kuba history mask Woot's Sister (19thc)

