FAH 04
INTRODUCTION TO THE ARTS OF AFRICA

Fall 2012 / Monday & Wednesday / 1:30 – 2:45
Professor Peter Probst
This is an introduction to the study of the arts of various cultures and time periods in Africa ranging from ancient ceramics to contemporary painting and installations. It is intended to provide some insight into 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.

General **Learning Objectives:** In addition to learning about African art students will develop and practice the ability to analyze, interpret, contextualize and write on visual works of art. They will develop critical thinking skills in response to scholarly literature and be introduced to disciplinary theories and methods.

a. The ability to analyze, interpret, and write on visual works of art.
b. Ability to contextualize cultural and historical significance of artworks.
c. Knowledge of the history of art from pre-history to 1700.
d. Knowledge of the history of art from 1700 to the present.
e. Ability to conduct art historical research.
f. Oral presentation skills.
g. Critical thinking ability in response to scholarly literature.
h. Understanding of disciplinary history, theories, and methods.

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


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 the articles 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 / Blackboard Input (10%)
Paper 1 (20%)
Paper 2 (20%)

Papers / Audio Guide

The two papers – length 5 pages each, double space – are conceived as a text for an “audio guide,” i.e. a text written for a recorded spoken commentary through a handheld device to a museum visitor. Each paper 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. For a first overview check “google scholar” but you also need to make yourself familiar with the electronic resources at Tisch library. The librarians will be happy to help you.

First paper due 10/15
Second paper due 11/28
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 of expulsion from the university. If you are in doubt as to whether you are appropriately using research materials, please contact me.

COURSE SCHEDULE

### Introduction: The Fields of African Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 9/5</td>
<td>Welcome and Introduction to the Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 9/10</td>
<td>Perceptions and Receptions of African Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aminatta Forna, Through African Eyes, BBC 1995. 47 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Space: Trade Routes and Empires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 9/12</td>
<td>Mali (Perani &amp; Smith 1998; Visona 2008; Prussin 1974)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 9/17</td>
<td>Ife (Poyner 2008: 228-238; Blier 1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 9/19</td>
<td>Benin (Cole 1998: 272-283; Plankensteiner 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 9/24</td>
<td>Akan (Quarcoopome 1997)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Form: Transafrican Aesthetics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W 9/26</td>
<td>Sculpture and Pose (Thompson 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 10/1</td>
<td>Body and Control (Thompson 1973; Sprague 1978)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 10/3</td>
<td>Museum Visit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Practice: African Art as Performance

T 10/9 Producing Gender (Phillips 1978; Glaze 1986; McClusky 2002a)
W 10/10 Preserving Memories (Nooter 1998)
M 10/15 Healing Afflictions (McClusky 2002b)

First Paper Due

W 10/17 Determining Destiny (Lawal 1985, 2005)
M 10/22 Acquiring Sanctity (Gilbert 1992; Fortes 1967)
W 10/24 Revision
M 10/29 Exam

Migrations: Africa in the Americas

W 10/31 Reworking Saints in Cuba and the US (Brown 1993; Ramos 1996)
M 11/5 African Water Spirits in the Dominican Republic (Drewal 2002)
W 11/7 Ghanaian Kente Cloth: From West Africa to the US (McCluskey 2002c)
M 11/12 Veterans Day: No Classes

Modernism: From Urban Art to Studio Art

W 11/14 Photography and the Celebration of the Urban (Lamuniere 2001)
M 11/19 Popular Art and After (Kasfir 1999: 18-47; Magnin 2004: 10-34)
W 11/21 Spring Recess: No Classes

Contemporary: Beyond Identity

W 11/28 Yinka Shonibare (Enwezor 2004; Oguibe 2004: 10-17, 33-44)

Second Paper Due

M 12/3 El Anatsui (Harney 2011; Enwezor 2011)
W 12/5 Revision I
M 12/10 Revision II
M 12/14 Friday: Final Exam - 3:30-5:30
Bibliography


