

african arts

• WINTER 2016 • Volume 49 • Number 4 •

AFRICAN ARTS CONSORTIUM

UCLA
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
AT CHAPEL HILL



University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill editorial board
Carol Magee
David G. Pier
Victoria L. Rovine
Lisa Homann

STEAMed Up: Or, A Defense of the Humanities through African Art History

Victoria L. Rovine

"More welders and less philosophers."¹

Thus spoke former presidential candidate Marco Rubio in a 2015 Republican debate, describing his approach to improving the economy and reforming higher education. His strategy: increased investment in vocational training and (implicitly) decreased support for liberal arts education, epitomized by the study of philosophy. Many other US politicians and policy makers share his approach, each holding up a different liberal arts field to make their point. There's anthropology: Florida governor Rick Scott declared in 2011 that the state "doesn't need a lot more anthropologists," as he advocated for science, technology, math, and engineering degrees. More programmers, fewer anthropologists. Languages and literature, too, have been the exemplars of financially fruitless majors: Kentucky governor Matt Bevin described his approach to reform: "There will be more incentives to electrical engineers than French literature majors. There just will."² More engineers, fewer comp lit professors. And we can reach over to the other side of the aisle and right into our disciplinary home for another example of the political discourse on liberal arts. In 2014, President Obama used art history as his example in an off-the-cuff remark about earnings potential: "Folks can make a lot more potentially with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art history degree."³ More technicians, fewer art historians. Fortunately, he wasn't advocating for differential tuition or decreased funding for the humanities, but the president's comment struck a nerve. We're on the defensive. And, as I'll describe, while my vantage point is the United States, this pressure on the humanities is not limited to the US.

Humanistic disciplines defend their relevance through assertions of their applicability to non-humanistic careers: the English major who becomes a CEO, the Classics major who goes on to med school. Champions of these fields also emphasize the usefulness of the skills they instill, including critical thinking, writing, research, and analysis of texts in many

forms (and refer to them as skill sets, a less-humanities-inflected label). It's the same old story, as illustrated by a 1939 *New York Times* article that quotes an NYU dean's defense of the humanities: "I would not belittle ability and training in the sciences but I deplore most heartily the lessening emphasis on the humanities as sound fundamental training for doctors and lawyers."⁴

One wonders just how long the "impractical" humanities have been on the defensive in the United States. As one indication of the longevity of similar debates, in 1828, an influential report was issued by a committee composed of Yale faculty charged with addressing the mounting call to deemphasize the "dead languages" in favor of subjects deemed more relevant—a debate analogous though not identical to the one we are engaged in now.⁵ Their report defended these core courses in language that remains relevant to the discourse around the liberal arts and humanities: "Our object is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the professions; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all." The report also notes that these ostensibly impractical courses of study "teach the art of fixing the attention, directing the train of thought"—what could be more important in the cellphone-filled classroom of the twenty-first century?

While debates concerning the merits of purely enriching versus practical studies have a long history, the current state of higher education in the United States throws these debates into high relief. Colleges and universities are facing what can be characterized as a perfect storm of tribulations: rising tuition costs and attendant student debt, explosive growth of administrative bureaucracy, and in the larger public, economic disparity, fear of the unfamiliar and the "foreign," and rhetorical excess (it's always election time somewhere ...). These circumstances have led to a drive to transform higher education from both the left and the right, much of which centers on greater "accountability" for colleges and universities. We live in an audit culture, with departments competing for students—or, more accurately, for Student Credit Hours—and analysis of their graduates' incomes serving as a measure of value.⁶ Little wonder that STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) disciplines are valued over the arts and humanities in this environment. Higher earning potential, speedier time to degree for graduate students,⁷ and the general popular interest in and high regard for things technological make the study of engineering, mathematics, and computer sciences an easier "sell" for colleges and universities in search of funding, high rankings, and top students.

The acronym STEAM, with an A for art, registers as an anxious "me too!" rather than a useful intervention. The notion that the arts

and humanities are a necessary handmaiden to the sciences, a route to creativity aimed at "practical" tasks rather than in themselves solutions or ways of understanding the world, is not a new one in the public discourse surrounding higher education. Defending the value of humanistic disciplines as a life-enhancing public good, a pursuit that makes society more humane and just, is unlikely to gain purchase in many quarters. Immediate practicality, not investment in enrichment, is the measure of value in this system. And none of this, I am certain, is news to most readers of *African Arts*.

What may be news, however, is the concern that this generalized devaluing of the humanities in American discourse is also evident in African institutions of higher education. A report presented at the 2015 African Higher Education Summit in Dakar, entitled "Recommendations for Reinvigorating the Humanities in Africa," makes clear the profound implications of the state of higher education in many African institutions. In its opening pages, the authors stress the special contribution of the humanistic disciplines in African contexts:

It is clear that the marginalization of the humanities must be remedied, because no knowledge-led development strategy can succeed without a solid core of humanistic understanding and humane values ... Reinvigorating the humanities, then, is a necessary first step for inspiring innovation in all fields of endeavor critical to development, such as the prudent, ethical management of natural resources and civic dialogue in the public sphere.⁸

Among the recommendations made by the participants in the forum that produced this report are many that draw attention to challenges associated with African academic culture, such as a dearth of access to disciplinary journals, a culture of consultancy that pulls professors away from their institutions, and a tendency not to publish in African journals because they are not frequently cited; in turn, the report calls on African academics to cite those journals to help raise their profiles.⁹

Another recent assessment of the state of the humanities in African institutions of higher education appeared in the journal *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*. A special issue in 2016, entitled "State of Urgency: The Humanities in South Africa," addressed the key roles of the humanistic disciplines in the nation's ongoing transformation and in comprehending the very nature of South African academe itself: "The Humanities have a key role to play both in the academy's evaluation of itself as a colonial project and in its remaking."¹⁰ From a range of perspectives, contributors including Achille Mbembe and JM. Coetzee explore the centrality of the

(continued on p. 4)

African Arts presents original research and critical discourse on traditional, contemporary, and popular African arts and expressive cultures. Since 1967, the journal has reflected the dynamism and diversity of several fields of humanistic study, publishing richly illustrated articles in full color, incorporating the most current theory, practice, and intercultural dialogue. The journal offers readers peer-reviewed scholarly articles concerning a striking range of art forms and visual cultures of the world's second-largest continent and its diasporas, as well as special thematic issues, book and exhibition reviews, features on museum collections, exhibition previews, artist portfolios, photo essays, edgy dialogues, and editorials. African Arts promotes investigation of the interdisciplinary connections among the arts, anthropology, history, language, politics, religion, performance, and cultural and global studies.

All articles have been reviewed by members of the editorial board.

Published by The James S. Coleman
African Studies Center
UCLA International Institute
<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/afar>

African Arts (ISSN 0014-1801 online, 0017-2101 print) is published quarterly by the University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1718, in spring, summer, autumn, and winter. For editorial information and advertising rates, see African Arts, The J.S. Coleman African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1718. Phone: 310-825-2131; Fax: 310-206-4146; Email: afar@ucla.edu or afar@ucla.edu. Website: www.africanartsjournal.org. The opinions of contributors and advertisers are not necessarily those of African Arts.

Subscription Information: African Arts is distributed by MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 02142. Subscriptions and address changes should be addressed to MIT Press Journals, One Rogers Street, Cambridge, MA 02142-7099. Phone: 617-252-3889, United States; 800-251-8344, Fax: 617-257-1315. Email: journals-orders@mit.edu. For fastest service and more information, subscribe online using our secure server at <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/afar>. **Subscription rates:** print and electronic, individuals \$59.00, Student/retiree \$54.00, institutions \$216.00, electronic only, individuals \$47.50, Student/retiree \$43.00, institutions \$187.00. Canada and Mexico add \$6.00. Outside the U.S. and Canada add \$23.00 for postage and handling for print edition. Individual JSTOR Access Fee: \$35 for volumes 1–43 online from JSTOR. Prices subject to change without notice.

Single Issues: Individuals \$23.00, institutions \$41.00. Canada and Mexico add \$6.00. Outside the U.S. and Canada add \$23.00 per issue for postage and handling. Prices subject to change without notice.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to African Arts, MIT Press Journals, One Rogers Street, Cambridge, MA 02142-7099. Periodicals postage paid at Boston, MA, and at additional post offices.

Permission to photocopy articles for internal or personal use is granted by the copyright owner for users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) Transactional Reporting Service, provided that the per copy fee of \$10 per article is paid directly to the CCC, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923. The code 0014-1801/2016 \$10.00. Address all other requests to the Subscriptions Rights Manager, MIT Press Journals, One Rogers Street, Cambridge, MA 02142-7099. Phone: 617-252-2864; Fax: 617-252-5009; Email: journals-rights@mit.edu.

African Arts is abstracted and/or indexed in: ISI International Bibliography of Periodical Literature; SCOPUS; MLA International Bibliography.

© 2016 by the Regents of the University of California. African Arts Journal Consortium. Printed in Hong Kong.

african arts

winter 2016 • vol. 49 • no. 4

8 *New Meanings and Historical Messages in the Larabanga Mosque*

MICHELLE MOÏRE APOISSO

24 *Internal Meanings*

Computed Tomography Scanning of Koma Figurines from Ghana

TIMOTHY INSOLL, BENJAMIN KANKPEYENG, AND SHARON FRASER

34 *Drums, Dance, Dreams, and Remittance*

Transnational Interconnections in Ivorian Immigrant-Mask Performance in the USA

DANIEL B. REED

48 *Dress Politics and Framing Self in Ghana*

The Studio Photographs of Felicia Abban

LAURIAN R. BOWLES

58 *"This House Is not for Sale"*

Nollywood's Spatial Politics and Concepts of "Home" in Zina Saro-Wiwa's Art

NOMUSA MAKHUBU

research note

70 *Rim's Unrest*

Issues of Secrecy and the Multivalent Use of a Nalú Traditional Shrine Piece

BRANDON D. LUNDY

cover Zina Saro-Wiwa
The Mourning Class (2010)
Archival print

Photo: courtesy of Zina Saro-Wiwa

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
editorial board

Carol Magee
David G. Pier
Victoria L. Rovine
Lisa Homann

african arts consortium
• UCLA
• University of Florida
• University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

DEPARTMENTS

first word

- 1 **STEAMed Up: Or, A Defense of the Humanities
Through African Art History**

VICTORIA L. ROVINE

- 4 **Erratum**

exhibition reviews

- 80 **Kongo: Power and Majesty
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York**

REVIEWED BY CARLEE S. FORBES

- 83 **Hunting and Collecting—Sammy Baloji
Mu.ZEE, Ostend**

REVIEWED BY CAROLINE JACOBS AND TRISTAN MERTENS

- 85 **Beauté Congo—1926–2015—Congo Kitoko
Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris**

REVIEWED BY ELAINE SULLIVAN AND NICOLAS DEWALQUE

- 90 **Shaping Power: Luba Masterpieces from the
Royal Museum for Central Africa
Los Angeles County Museum of Art**

REVIEWED BY JULIET MOSS

book reviews

- 91 **Vincent Forestier Sow: A Pioneer Malian Painter
edited by Pascal James Imperato and Austin C. Imperato**

REVIEWED BY BLAISE GUNDU GBADEN

- 92 **In Step with the Times: Mapiko Masquerades of Mozambique
by Paolo Israel**

REVIEWED BY ANITRA NETTLETON

- 94 **Biko's Ghost: The Iconography of Black Consciousness
by Shannen Hill**

REVIEWED BY CIRAJ RASSOOL

- 95 **Djenné-jeno: 1,000 Years of Terracotta Statuary in Mali
by Bernard de Grunne**

REVIEWED BY PASCAL JAMES IMPERATO

CONSORTIUM EDITORS

UCLA

Marlo C. Berns
Patrick A. Polk
Allen F. Roberts
Mary Noctor Roberts

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Susan Cooksey
Rebecca M. Nagy
Flora Mc Laughlin
Robin Payson
MacKenzie Moon Ryan

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHAPEL HILL

Carol Magee
David G. Pier
Victoria L. Rovine
Lisa Homann

DEPARTMENTAL EDITORS

Shannen Hill

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

Sidney Littlefield Kaefer

DIALOGUE EDITOR

Elizabeth Perrill

EXHIBITION REVIEW EDITOR, NORTH AMERICA

Dunja Hrusak

EXHIBITION REVIEW EDITOR, GLOBAL

Robert Cancill

TEAM WORKS EDITOR

Christraud M. Geary

PHOTO ESSAY EDITOR

CONSULTING EDITORS

Rowland Abiodun

Mary Jo Arnoldi

Kathleen Rickford Berzock

Suzanna Preston Blier

Elizabeth L. Cameron

Christa Clarke

Henry John Drewal

William Hart

Bennetta Jules-Rosette

Christine Mullen Kreamer

Alise LaGama

Constantine Petridis

John Picton

Doran H. Ross

Dana Rush

Raymond A. Silverman

Robert Farris Thompson

Kenji Yoshida

EXECUTIVE EDITOR AND ART DIRECTOR

Leslie Ellen Jones

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Eva P. Howard

(continued from p. 1)

study of languages, media, philosophy, cultural studies, and the visual arts to an understanding of the South African experience in all of its complexity. Renowned artist William Kentridge succinctly describes these disciplines' capacity to describe and even to make sense of the unruly and the impossible: "No one in this country is satisfied with their positions. We are aware that everything feels awry ... But the advantages you have coming through the humanities is to understand that these contradictions are not aberrations, but the only way of understanding the world. You are blessed with this."⁹

We are, indeed, fortunate to participate in and contribute to a field that exemplifies what the humanities offer. Indeed, we can push back against the STEM tide through African art history, reminding our students that their classes with us teach them not only to write and conduct research, but also to read the visual world, to analyze creative acts, to reach across and into cultures to gain understanding of diverse ways of viewing and knowing the world, adapting to its challenges, and celebrating its beauty and power. Of course, African art does much more than this, but I'm just building up a head of steam ... We should remind our students of what they gain through the study of a seemingly obscure (to many) subject, laying claim to the life-enhancing qualities of our discipline.

VICTORIA L. ROYVINE is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her most recent book is *African Fashion, Global Style: Histories, Innovations, and Ideas You Can Wear* (Indiana University Press 2015). She is a member of the UNC Chapel Hill editorial board of the African Arts consortium. vroyvine@email.unc.edu

Erratum

Due to a last-minute copy-editing error, Jonathan Fine's article, "Selling Authenticity in the Bamun Kingdom, 1920–1930," in *African Arts* vol. 49, no. 2 went to press with the ethnonym "Bamun" spelled (inconsistently) "Bamun." Fine's preferred spelling is "Bamun," and we have changed all electronic versions of that issue of the journal to reflect that.

Notes

1. The full statement was "Welders make more money than philosophers. We need more welders and less philosophers." Republican debate in Milwaukee, November 10, 2015. While Senator Rubio's facts have been challenged (in fact, philosophers make more than welders), his grammatical error has not. *Fewer philosophers.*
2. Rick Scott made the statement on October 10, 2011, during an interview on a Daytona Beach radio station.
3. Chris Acree, "Bustin Shows No Love to A&S Students," *The Louisville Cardinal*, February 4, 2016. <http://www.louisvillecardinal.com/2016/02/gov-matt-bustin-shows-no-love-to-as-students/>
4. The President made the statement on January 30, 2014, during a visit to a GE plant in Wisconsin.
5. "Warns of Sacrifice of the Liberal Arts: Dean Berg, at N.Y.U., Sees Classics, Philosophy Needed," *The New York Times*, July 30, 1999, p. 55.
6. *Reports on the Course of Instruction in Yale College by a Committee of the Corporation and the Academic Faculty* (New Haven, 1948).
7. The US Dept of Education's College Scorecard, which was initiated in 2015, enables prospective students (and policy makers) to sort institutions according to their cost, graduate rate, and salary of graduates. More worrying are the uses of data to rank fields of study: *Forbes* and the *Wall Street Journal* have each published lists of majors and their average earning potential.
8. According to the US Department of Education's report on time to doctoral degrees between 1978–2003, in 2003 the time to PhD in the Humanities was 11.3 years, in the Social Sciences 10.0 years, and in the physical Sciences 7.9 years (Thomas B. Hofer and Vincent Welch, Jr., "Time to Degree of U.S. Research Doctorate Recipients," *Hydra*, National Science Foundation, 2006, http://www.umces.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/uf_jamesao_10%20degree%20phd.pdf).
9. The Forum on the Humanities in Africa of the African Humanities Program, "Recommendations for Reinvigorating the Humanities in Africa" (African Humanities Program, 2014, p. 3; https://www.aahp.org/uploads/Files/Publications/Programs/Reinvigorating_the_Humanities_in_Africa.pdf). I hasten to add that the need for development is just as dire in many parts of the "developed" world—the call for ethical management of natural resources and humane civic dialogue applies to the United States as well as to Tanzania, Mali, or any other African nation.
10. The forty participants were African academics based at Africa institutions. Many countries were represented, all Anglophone.
11. Estelle H. Prinsloo, "The Role of the Humanities in Decolonising the Academy," *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 64–68, 65.
12. William Kentridge, "Hope as a Political Category," *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 11–14, 12–14.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)
1. Publication Title: African Arts
2. Publication No.: 0001-9930
3. Filing Date: 10/01/2016
4. Issue Frequency: quarterly, spring, summer, autumn, winter
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: four
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$94/ind, \$216/inst
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: The MIT Press Journals, 1 Rogers St, Cambridge, Middlesex, MA 02142-1209, Contact Person: Abbie Hicock, Tel.: 617 452 3765
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: UCLA James S. Coleman African Studies Center, 10363 Bunche Hall, Box 951310, University California Los Angeles, Los Angeles CA 90095-1310
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor:
Publisher: same as item 8
Editor: Marla C. Berns, Allen F. Roberts, Mary Nooter Roberts, Patrick A. Polk, UCLA James S. Coleman African Studies Center, 10363 Bunche Hall, Box 951310, University California Los Angeles, Los Angeles CA 90095-1310
Managing Editor: none
10. Owner: Regents of the University of California, 1111 Franklin Street 12th Floor, Oakland CA 94607
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None
12. The purpose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.
13. Publication Title: African Arts
14. Issue date for circulation data: Summer 2016, 49:2
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:
Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months/No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date:
A. Total number of copies – 1508 / 1508
B. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail):
(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 – 491 / 465
(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 – 0 / 0
(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS – 230 / 227
(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS – 0 / 0
C. Total Paid Distribution – 721 / 692
D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail):
(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541 – 34 / 39
(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541 – 0 / 0
(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes through the USPS – 0 / 0
(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail – 225 / 255
E. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution – 259 / 294
F. Total Distribution – 980 / 986
G. Copies Not Distributed – 528 / 522
H. Total – 1508 / 1508
I. Percent Paid – 74% / 70%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation – not claiming
A. Paid Electronic Copies: n/a
B. Total Paid Print Copies + Paid Electronic Copies: n/a
C. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies: n/a
D. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies): n/a
17. Publication of Statement of Ownership: If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the Winter 2016, 49:4 issue of the publication.
18. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties). Signed: Abbie Hicock, Journals & Digital Products Customer Service Manager, Date: 10/01/2016



3. Bowl-bearing figure
Luba-Hemba peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century
Wood (*Ricinus dendron* nutmenh); 46.5 cm x 22 cm x 26.4 cm
Collection RMCA Tervuren



4. Female figure; nkisi
Luba peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19th century
Wood (*Lannea discolor*), beads, and fiber; 29 cm
Collection RMCA Tervuren

her body, knees, elbows, and fingers all suggest a somewhat older woman, whose beauty has evolved over time.

Some of the objects, such as the *nkisi* (Fig. 4), exuded oils because they have, over time, been anointed and given libations, and sweated under the hot lights. This was a reminder that these objects were meant to be touched, held, and used, making them active and almost alive.

Also included was Congo, *Shadow of the Past*, a contemporary installation by Congolese artist Aimé Mpane, made of 4,562 matchsticks glued together in the form of a human figure. It is a statement to the taking of the Democratic Republic of Congo by Belgium as well as the colonization of the whole of Africa by European powers as decided during the Berlin Conference of 1885. As stated by Mpane, when a village is attacked by rebels "sometimes all that is left are their shoes," and is a powerful reminder of the legacies of colonization and decolonization, the tragedies of which are still being felt today.

This installation was situated to the left or right of the *lukasa*, depending upon which direction the visitor entered, and initially appeared to be disconnected from the rest of the exhibit. However, by placing the *lukasa* near the installation, it reinforced the fact that the past is constantly being reimagined

through the eyes of the present, as one does when "reading" the *lukasa*.

The concept behind the *lukasa* is fascinating, using history and memory actively as a performance. Coupled with the auditory narrative, music, and singing, the *lukasa* made one think about how history is related to the present. Ideally the inclusion of this permanent gallery at LACMA will provide the venue needed to uncover meaning and, finally, understanding and acceptance, for the art of Africa.

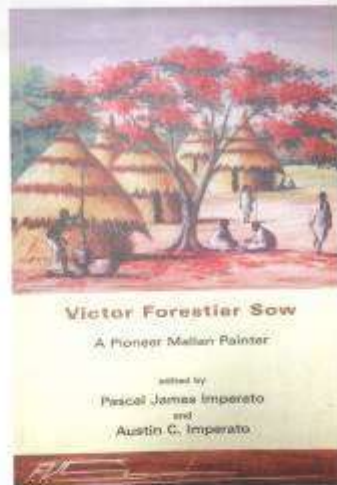
Juliet Moss is a lecturer in the Art Department at California State University, Northridge, where she teaches non-Western art history. Her research and writing focuses on contemporary African art and the effects of globalization as expressed by artists living in the diaspora. juliet.moss@csun.edu

References cited

- Roberts, Mary Nooter. 2001. "The King is a Woman: Shaping Power in Luba Royal Arts." *African Arts* 46 (3):66-84.



book review



Victor Forestier Sow: A Pioneer Malian Painter

edited by Pascal James Imperato and Austin C. Imperato
Bayside, NY: Queensboro College Art Gallery and City University of New York, 2014. 72 pages, 35 color and 13 b/w illustrations, notes, bibliography. Price not stated, paper

reviewed by Blaise Gundu Gbadeu

The 72-page slim book, a catalogue accompanying an exhibition of paintings, is divided into the 72-page main book, a catalogue accompanying an exhibition of paintings, is divided into four major sections preceded by a foreword by Faustino Quintanilla, the Executive Director of the Queensboro College Art Gallery of the City University of New York, host of the exhibition. It highlights the sociohistorical significance of Victor Forestier Sow's paintings in the context of postcolonial Mali of the 1960s.

The book begins with Austin C. Imperato, Pascal James Imperato's son, reflecting on his personal childhood encounter with Sow's paintings, which he says filled all the rooms in his family house, including his own bedroom. Those paintings, he says, "provided me with a window into a faraway place and time that enriched my father's life and the life of our family . . . paintings were visual reference points that offered me solace and comfort. They also revealed to me, at an early age, the power of art" (p. 1). As Austin became an art

historian, one can see Sow as an early mentor, though far removed, and this is of particular relevance since it is an inverse one emanating from an African idealist who impacted a Western scholar. This counters the usual stereotype that Western values impact African world views.

Pascal James Imperato, the American physician who is responsible for collecting the largest number of paintings by Sow, provides "A Personal Remembrance of Victor Forestier Sow." Imperato demonstrates his depth of knowledge as he historicizes the life, art, and aspirations of Sow the Malian painter. His simple chronicle may be considered representative of the economic and sociohistorical realities with which most Malian artists in the 1960s likely grappled.

Imperato went to Mali in late 1966 as a physician with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) of the United States Public Health Service. He was there to help eradicate smallpox, measles, and other infectious diseases through immunization. He lived in the stone-built Quarter du Fleuve, a colonial legacy of the French meant to house French officials of that era, and this meant that merchants, middlemen, and artists often visited in the hope of selling wooks to him and others nearby.

It is in this milieu that, in early 1967, barely a year after his arrival in Mali, Victor Forestier Sow met Pascal James Imperato, offering his "very impressive" paintings for sale. Pascal describes Sow as having a striking physical appearance, standing about five feet ten inches tall. He was "extremely thin, had deep-set and large penetrating eyes, and shiny, straight black hair combed back on his head." He spoke flawless French and Bambara-km, Mali's indigenous lingua franca. His skin tone and physical characteristics matched that of his Peul (Fulani) mother from Mali and his French father, once a colonial official (pp. 4-5).

The healthy, cordial relationship that ensued resulted in Imperato collecting about seventeen of Sow's paintings, ranging from landscapes of Mali countryside, architectural structures and monuments, and nude figures. Imperato also commissioned portrait paintings, family banners and coat of arms.

In the chapter "A Short History of Painting in Bamako," the art historian Paul Ramsey Davies concisely illustrates how Malian painters generally operated, presenting the context under which Sow may have worked. He was involved in patriotic ventures (e.g., painting the Malian countryside and exotic landscapes of Malian monuments and historical sites or cultural activities) much like the other painters of his generation who had to grapple with a dearth of materials and reliance on improvisations, such as mud, wood glue, sand, and local pigments. Where possible they painted with Indian ink, oils, acrylics, watercolor, and

gouache on paper surfaces, canvas, or hard boards. Many of Sow's paintings were done on Dutch wax fabrics and recycled banners, a method also adapted by other Malian painters of his generation.

The catalogue of paintings, illustrated in full color, runs thirty-one pages. A bibliography of roughly thirty-two citations is also useful. A vast majority of the paintings in this collection were done in the 1960s and 1970s, probably because those were the years Imperato worked in Mali and had direct contact with Sow. The oldest paintings are dated 1968, others 1969, 1970 and the most recent are dated 1971. There is an earlier painting by Victor Forestier Sow which dates as early as 1965 but does not form the Imperato collection; this is *A Young African Girl* in the collection of Amadou Seydou Traore (p. 19).

Sow employed grid lines on his painting surfaces to ensure accuracy in resemblance since he relied a lot on copying images from post cards, stamps, currency, and magazines. This explains why the compositions look stiff, a feature characteristic of his paintings. This system also meant he could repeat themes he had earlier painted to satisfy his clients' taste.

A most remarkable painting is entitled *Dr. Pascal James Imperato Vaccinating a Maure Numad Against Smallpox in Timbuctoo (1968)*, where the fine arts is seen to be in the service of science. In light of how several infectious diseases have ravaged the continent, and continue to do so, considering the preponderance of malaria, Ebola, and Lassa fevers, the potency of the painting is not merely archival but effectively contemporaneous.

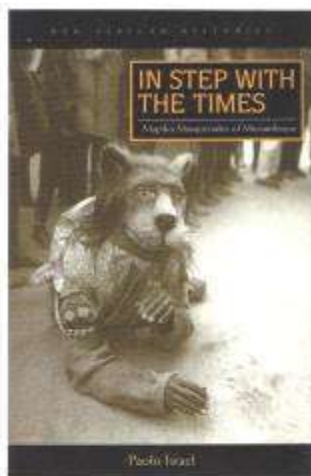
This book is crucial to understanding West African visual arts. Its relevance to twentieth-century African painting is great, especially because its time period is characterized by massive sociocultural change and political dynamics that resulted in self-determination and independence from colonial strictures.

The artist's relationship to the patron is clearly defined in this book. Imperato decided the subject matter of several of Forestier Sow's paintings, and in many instances Sow himself read his patron's expectations. So there was continuous, healthy dialogue between the two, be it loudly pronounced or covertly implied.

What remains a mystery, however, is the fact that the Imperatos were unable to unravel the true personality of the artist. Who he was deep inside is not conveyed. Documents recording salient aspects of his life may yet surface to add to our understanding of such an important, modernist of Mali.

BLAISE GUNDU GRADEN is Senior Lecturer of Painting and Drawing in the Department of Visual and Creative Arts at Federal University Lafia, Nigeria. mbblaisegraden@gmail.com

book review



In Step with the Times: Mapiko Masquerades of Mozambique

by Paolo Israel
Athens: Ohio University Press,
294 pages, 21 b/w illustrations,
glossary, list of Mapiko and
other dance genres, 2 maps,
bibliography, index. \$32.95,
paper

reviewed by Anitra Nettleton

This book is not for the faint-hearted, and possibly not for the person wanting to know about the visual history of mapiko masks because there are so few illustrations, and all are black and white. It is, however, a study in great depth of the historiography of older mapiko masquerading in Mozambique, and an intricately woven social history of twentieth-century Makonde masking forms. In combining extensive archival and field research, Israel brings to light a wealth of detail on the ways in which masking has changed over time and in a variety of social and historical circumstances. One of the features of the book, possibly in an attempt to guide the reader through complex territory, is the (possibly thesis-remnant) preface to each section that maps out the trajectory of his exploration.

In Part 1, Israel considers the colonial archive and the ways in which the anthropological lit-