

Module 10 Overview

Module 10



For this last module, we move squarely into the realm of African contemporary art. Before reading your first three chapters for this week, skim through the chapters and start to get a sense of what artists inspire you.

In the first chapter, "Situating Contemporary African Art," the authors lay the groundwork for their analysis and selection of artists in the book. They remind us of the deep complexity that must be considered when talking about African contemporary art — one that is non-essentialist, with multiple influences and impacts. The globalized world we live in has produced massive migrations of people, but even more, it has built into it tremendous exchange of ideas, experiences, and information. Most of the contemporary African artists we are talking about from here on out are much more connected to the rest of the world. Most have traveled to the U.S. and Europe. Many have even been based here in the States. They have ties not only to the place and community into which they were born, but also to this dynamic art world, which for all its problems, is a fascinating microcosm of contemporary reality.

Here, the authors suggest that an African identity can be understood as part of a broad repertoire of practices, strategies, and subjectivities that link cultural traditions and cultural archives, that subtend geo-cultural and geopolitical spaces, transnational and diasporic experiences. In this way, it's impossible to generalize, but rather much more useful to get into the specificity of ideas with which African contemporary artists are creating.

I must stress this to you: that all contemporary art doesn't just deal with form. It deals mostly in ideas. As such, you are less likely than ever before in history to find a beautiful painting or sculpture that is not tied to some larger idea, concept, or theory. Aesthetics, or the way art looks, is important here, but ideas give art its meaning. In the context of Africa, this is especially important because history and cultural memory are often referenced in the work of African contemporary artists, which is why it is so important to have a big-picture view.

By now, many of the topics that the authors are dealing with should start to sound familiar: the role of ethnographic museums, the place of tradition with respect to art that's being made today, the effects of social and political movements on artwork, and the deskilling of art practices, as in modernism, for example.

In Chapter Two, the authors break down the terrible effects that the structural adjustment policies imposed by the World Bank and backed by the U.S. and Europe had on African countries. They also discuss these longstanding tensions between modern art in Europe and modern art in Africa, as well as the debates on authenticity in African art. These first two chapters should start to really synthesize what we have been learning this semester. Take the time to read them carefully.

In Chapter Three, we start to deal with networks of practice, globalization, geopolitics, and geopoetics. Issues of migration, both forced and voluntary, have played a huge role in the history of Africa and now, also in African artwork. They walk through two forms of migration: both the physical movement of art and artists and the transmission of ideas and concepts. Here, the authors bring postmodernism into the discussion, highlighting the affinities between postmodernist theory and reality in postcolonial Africa. Curatorial authority was called into question in the 1980s and 1990s, and a new crop of African-born U.S. curators and scholars, including those who wrote this book, began to challenge fixed notions about Africa that had been built up by the landmark African art exhibitions of the 1990s. They challenged the limited constructions of African identity and opted for ideas of cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and continentalism to explain their multiple positions as African artists in and out of Africa. When you finish reading, have a

look again at the artworks in the book. What pieces are beginning to stand out to you? What ideas are you most interested in? Start thinking about your final research paper's direction and I will be here to help.



Learning Objectives

Course Learning Objectives Targeted

- Identify critical historical moments and art movements in African art by exploring key periods, such as ancient civilizations, colonialism, and contemporary movements, and their influence on artistic expression across the continent.
- Evaluate the historical and global significance of African art by examining its role in shaping cultural identities, resisting colonialism, and influencing international art movements, while considering its socio-political, economic, and cultural implications.

Module Learning Objectives

- Understand the evolution and diversity of African contemporary art since 1980
- Analyze the non-essentialist nature of African contemporary art.
- Explore debates on authenticity and identity in African contemporary art.



Activities and Assignments

Review the following:

1. Read Contemporary African Artists
 - [Chapter 1 \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587164/download?wrap=1\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587164/download?wrap=1)
 - [Chapter 2 \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587167/download?wrap=1\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587167/download?wrap=1)
 - [Chapter 3 \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587165/download?wrap=1\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587165/download?wrap=1)
2. Complete **Module 10 Discussion**
3. Select topic for **Final Research Paper on African Artist (Final Global Learning Essay)**

The instructional material listed above will help you understand expectations related to this module's topics, achieve the learning objectives and complete the assignment(s).