

Module 7 Overview

Module 7



Introduction

For this module, you all have two readings by two of the most prominent scholars in African contemporary art- Ogui Enzowa and Olu Oguibe. You will also be watching Lumumba A film by Haitian filmmaker, Raoul Peck which deals with the history of this legendary figure in the fight for African independence.

Back to the readings. Ogui Enzowa is the most influential African art curator in the world right now having been the director of several arts BNLS and major exhibitions in Europe, the US, Africa, and Asia. His exhibition, *The Short Century: Independence liberation movements of Africa 1945 -1994* was a landmark in this field and it is an incredibly well-researched and well-written anthology of African independence. Olu Oguibe is an important visual artist turned cultural critic who wrote the highly influential book, *The Culture Game* which has become required reading in many art history courses. His thesis in that book is that by mounting huge blockbuster exhibitions of African art, institutions can clear their conscience about not regularly showing African artists. He says that for the most part, African artists are only made publicly visible one at a time meaning that their work carries a huge burden of representation to make artwork that speaks in an overarching way to the multiple issues faced by African artists. Another cultural theorist, Kobena Mercer, actually coined the phrase "burden of representation" which leaves many black artists in the difficult position of speaking for an entire race of people which, as we know, is an impossible task.

You will start this module with the introductory text from *The Short Century* which refers to the very short but radically transformative effects of colonialism that officially lasted from the Berlin conference until the 1960s decade of African independence. Enzowa explains that in the history of decolonization, it's one of the most significant events of the 20th century much as the abolition of slavery was in the 19th century. What makes this process of decolonization so important is the work to philosophically and ideologically bridge the history between Africa and Europe; its former colonizer. This process was psychologically important and involved several key movements like Pan-Africanism, Negritude, black consciousness, and African nationalism that the late 1950s saga and independence under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah that then ushered in the 1960s decade of African independence when more than 30 African countries declared independence from their former colonial rulers. As you can imagine, this was an era of great euphoria and excitement in African history. Politicians, intellectuals, and artists were forging new frameworks for post-independence African identities many of which were grounded in a strong African nationalism. This was a very complex ideological time as different thinkers had very different ideas as to what these new frameworks should be. This article does a great job of laying out some of these tensions so read it carefully to understand the complexity of post-colonialism in Africa. The second article you will be reading by Olu Oguibe investigates the concepts of pre-modernism, modernism, and postmodernism. Here he breaks down Africa as a historical construct and not as a tangible essence. He critiques most aspects of Africa's construction. And finds it more productive, to destroy this worldview about Africa that has been carefully and painstakingly fabricated over several centuries. This article is highly theoretical so read it carefully. As one of the major scholars and critics of African art today, his ideas affect the way African contemporary art is written about and exhibited so it's important to understand these positions.



Learning Objectives

Course Learning Objectives Targeted

- 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.
- Critically engage with art historical texts related to African art by analyzing scholarly interpretations, methodologies, and debates, and applying theoretical frameworks to develop informed perspectives.


Module Learning Objectives

- Examine Oguibe's argument for deconstructing Eurocentric views of African art and culture.
- Critically assess the theoretical perspectives presented in Oguibe's work, "The Culture Game."



Activities and Assignments

1. Read:

1. [Introduction to “The Short Century” by Okwui Enwezor](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587174/download?wrap=1)
(<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587174/download?wrap=1>)
2. [Olu Oguibe. “Into the Heart of Darkeness.”](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587166/download?wrap=1)
(<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587166/download?wrap=1>)
3. [SEGMENT: Yinka Shonibare MBE in "Transformation"](https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s5/transformation/)  (<https://art21.org/watch/art-in-the-twenty-first-century/s5/transformation/>)
4. [Okwui Enwezor Interviews Yinka Shobinare](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587178/download?wrap=1)
(<https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587178/download?wrap=1>)

2. Complete **Module 7 Discussion**

3. Complete **Module 7 Quiz**

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).