

Module 8 Overview

Module 8



Our readings this week are pulled from a book called *Contemporary African Art* by Sydney Kasfir. This book has a great analysis and high-quality art reproductions so we can start to move from the heavy theory of last week back into the world of African art and artists. This reading this week also synthesizes many of the foundational issues of this course. It is important that you all understand what is meant by postcolonial and postmodern, so be sure to take the time to read up on these, especially postmodernism, which is a word that comes up often when talking about contemporary art.

Postmodernism challenges the idea of the grand narrative, much like what Aguibo challenged in last week's reading regarding the construction of Africa. Postmodernism fundamentally challenges the idea of objective truth and considers that reality is socially constructed. Hybrids and reappropriations are also major tenets of postmodernism, where new forms are created as a mashup of existing genres. Early hip-hop in the early 1980s is a good example of this.

Kasfir looks closely at the invention of African popular culture as fundamental to the development of art in the contemporary period post-1960. Street art plays an especially large role in the early manifestations of contemporary African art, as does photography, which we'll learn more about next week. Kasfir talks about urban sign painting, flour sack painting, and the historical paintings that depict moments in African history like the death of Lumumba. He also looks at the way painting plays into the collective social memory, whether it depicts historical moments or represents the idyllic nostalgic landscapes of Africa.

He talks about the difficulty African artists have, often creating for two publics: the international art market on one hand and the local market on the other. This week you will also have a slideshow of the amazing paintings by the now-famed African painter, Cheri Samba, whose artwork speaks to this tension.

In the second part of the reading, Kasfir investigates the shifting identities of African artists in a postcolonial world. He goes into detail describing the tensions that have been formed between formerly schooled artists and non-academically trained artists in Africa. Take some time to critically understand these tensions. He also talks about the importance of FESTAC, which was the Second International Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977. You all might recall that the first of these festivals was held in 1966 in Senegal under President Senghor who was one of the founders of the Negritude movement. Interestingly enough, the third of these festivals was held in December 2010 more than 30 years since the FESTAC that Kasfir refers to.

He also notes some fundamentally important watershed exhibitions like the *Magiciens de la Terre* show at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1989 as well as the *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London. It's extremely important to note that in the 1990s there were major African exhibitions in BNRs both in the US and Europe but also in Africa. Today, major BNRs occur in Dakar, Senegal; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Bamako, Mali, with more and more springing up across the continent. It is a particularly exciting time for African art as we will see in the next few weeks.



Learning Objectives

Course Learning Objectives Targeted

- Compare and contrast different styles and genres of African art by analyzing visual elements, techniques, materials, and cultural contexts, and discussing how they vary among regions, ethnic groups, and historical periods.
- Analyze the impact of globalization on African art and its integration into international art movements by exploring issues such as cultural appropriation, commodification, hybridization, and diasporic connections, and assessing how these factors shape contemporary artistic practices and reception.

Module Learning Objectives

- Describe the impact of postcolonial and postmodern perspectives on African art and artists.
- Analyze the role of hybridity and reappropriation in the development of contemporary African art.
- Compare and contrast the experiences of formally trained versus non-academically trained African artists, highlighting tensions and evolving identities in a postcolonial era.



Activities and Assignments

1. Read:

1. [Intro, Chapter 1 \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587182/download?wrap=1\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587182/download?wrap=1)
2. [Kasfir, Sidney. Contemporary African Art. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999. \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587182/download?wrap=1\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587182/download?wrap=1)
3. [Kasfir Chapter 5 \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587179/download?wrap=1\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587179/download?wrap=1)
4. [Digesting the West. Susan Vogel. \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587172/download?wrap=1\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587172/download?wrap=1)
5. [Slideshow: Cheri Samba \(https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587169/download?wrap=1\)](https://fiu.instructure.com/courses/200285/files/31587169/download?wrap=1)

2. Complete **Module 8 Discussion**

3. Complete **Module 8 Assignment**

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).