

Fall 1994

# A Multicultural Survey

La Salle University Art Museum

Caroline Wistar

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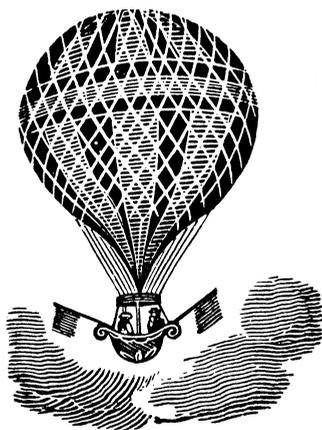
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# **A Multicultural Survey**



**A Multicultural  
Survey**

**La Salle University Art Museum**

**Fall Semester 1994**

## Introduction

Most people would agree that, in our increasingly global society, we should recognize and appreciate cultures other than our own. What may be glossed over in such general agreement, however, is the difficulty of achieving such appreciation, given the extent and depth of earlier prejudice, suppression, and exploitation of many cultures, especially by the colonial powers. Whether in Africa, Latin America, or the Far East, in America with native Indians and African-Americans, or with women in general, subjugated cultures did not gain recognition or independence until recently. Many, in fact, are still in the midst of struggle.

As the philosopher Charles Taylor has pointed out in his recent book *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition"* (Princeton, 1992), there are new difficulties on the path to acceptance. In "developed" cultures, there are enthusiasts anxious to accept foreign art, but they accept it simply in terms of resemblance to the traditional styles and standards of their own culture. Without knowledge of the new culture, their acceptance is as patronizing and demeaning as were earlier judgements of the same art as primitive or odd.

On the other hand, that earlier narrowness may linger in those reluctant to open inherited canons of art or literature to anything new or different. And there are "ethno-centrists" who refuse to deal with either the thoughtless acceptors or rejectors of other cultures, who want to deal with others

only within their own group. What Taylor rightly urges is a broadening of cultural horizons on all sides by serious study and deeper understanding--and a respect for the potential of all human beings to achieve art of the highest quality.

We hope that this small exhibition will introduce you to our collection of non-Western art objects as well as to spark the multicultural dialogue, even a debate, on campus. We certainly hope that it might serve as a step in the realization that though the expressions of a culture are different, indeed, we are one in terms of our basic values, desires, and needs for survival.

Br. Daniel Burke, Director  
Caroline Wistar, Curator

## INDIAN MINIATURES

Most of La Salle's collection of 111 Indian miniature paintings were donated to the museum by Dr. Alvin Bellak. Dr. Bellak has one of the finest private collections of Indian miniature painting in the area. The miniatures he gave to us are from the 17th-19th centuries--the period when the Mughal and then the British Empire held sway over most of the princely, feudal states that made up India. The geographical diversity of these Indian states accounted for the growth of distinct schools of native painting (referred to as Rajput painting). However, the Mughal conquerors also brought with them their own style and developed in India a synthesis of Persian miniature painting and Rajput painting. Themes common to both of these detailed and delicate miniature styles were portraits of rulers and courtesans and the every day pleasures and adventures of the court: ceremonies, hunts, battles, love making and musical entertainment--works of art for the contemplation and enjoyment of the nobility. The predominant themes in Indian Rajput painting were related to Hindu culture: love poetry, musical modes and the imaginative and exotic exploits of the gods (especially Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva) and their numerous incarnations. Artists were anonymous craftsmen working in the court workshops of their chief patrons--the Indian princes (Rajas) and imperial rulers of the Mughal Empire.

The medium here is gouache (watercolor mixed with gum arabic to make the mineral pigments opaque). For origins, the principal area of India is listed first followed by the provincial school within the area.

- 1 Rajasthan, Jaipur School, late 18th century  
*A Lady Converses with Two Princes as They Eat a Meal, Seated on a Palace Terrace*
- 2 Rajasthan, Mewar School, late 17th century  
*Krishna and Two Ladies in a Palace Interior*
- 3 Punjab Hills, Knagra, early 19th century  
"Visit to a Holy Man"  
Scene from the Hindu epic, *The Ramayana*
- 4 Rajasthan, Bikaner School, c. 1750-75  
*The Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (ruled 1627-1658) Seated on a Throne While Three Ladies of the Court Pay Their Respects*
- 5 Mughal, probably painted at Delhi, c. 1740  
*The Persian Emperor Nadir Shah Holding a Sword, Seated on a Carpet on a Garden Terrace*

## JAPANESE PRINT COLLECTION

The tradition of graphic arts in Japan (especially the color woodcut, which makes up the majority of La Salle's collection) is a long, rich and distinctive one. We are fortunate to have a collection of 120 classical color woodcuts, referred to as "Ukiyo-e" (floating world) prints from the last quarter of the 19th century. They were generously donated by La Salle's major patron of 20th century art, Benjamin D. Bernstein. They reveal bold flat decorative patterns, exquisite design, subtle gradation of color harmonies, and refined but complex method of execution and printing. All of these qualities later influenced Western Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists. The subject matter was confined to Japanese figurative scenes of everyday life--essentially the actors in the popular Kabuki Theater and the courtesans (lovers) and geisha girls who patronized and serviced the city pleasure districts.

La Salle is also fortunate to have a small collection of modern and contemporary Japanese prints to compare with the classical style. Japanese artists of these prints were clearly influenced by the West as well as the East and their works may be considered international in style and content, whether of an abstract or representational nature. The abstract images which appear to dominate the Japanese contemporary print, embody a contemplative, serene, poetic but controlled expression--the very essence of the traditional Japanese spirit of Zen.

These Japanese prints are a valuable resource for the Asian Studies program, including the Japanese Tea Ceremony courses at La Salle and for all students seeking an introduction to Japanese cultural arts of the past and the present.

All of the prints are color woodcuts. The 19th century pieces list the artist only.

6 Utagawa Kunisada [Toyokuni III] (1796-1864)

7 Toyohara Kunichika (1835-1900)

8 Utagawa Kunitera (1808-1876)

9 Matsumoto Akira (Contemporary)

*Gogai ga Deta* 1964

10 Hideo Higiwara (b. 1913- )

*Germination #5* 1965

## AFRICAN TRIBAL ART

Our small collection of African tribal art, consisting primarily of masks and implements, was the bequest of Margaret Webster Plass in 1989. Mrs. Plass was one of the first Americans seriously to research and collect African art. She began while living in Zaire (the former Belgium Congo), where her husband was employed during the 1940s. She donated her major collection to the British Museum in 1952, but the African art she kept in her home she willed to La Salle University and to her alma mater, Bryn Mawr College.

The objects in the collection were made by skilled and trained craftsmen from sub-Saharan, West and Central Africa. They embody an art which is highly sophisticated, and expressive, conceptual and subjective. The expressive potential and unified structure of this tribal art, its bold patterns, and simplified geometric shapes inspired Western Post-impressionist and Modern artists, especially the Cubist painters. As most African tribes have no written language, their intuitive art, along with their oral tradition, was the chief means through which they expressed and supported the spiritual values needed to sustain their communities.

The ancestor, cult and fetish figures and masks of African tribal sculpture in this collection were produced to ward off evil and to invoke or honor the spirit and power of a particular deity or ancestor. They were used in village rituals and reflected the pantheon of gods belonging to the various cults and societies of each tribe. In general this collection provides us with an invaluable window into the mystery,

magic and rich complexity of African tribal society and our African-American heritage.

All of the objects are carved in wood unless otherwise mentioned. Where known, the tribe and the country from which the object comes is listed. Most of the pieces probably date from the late nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century and come from sub-Saharan West and Central Africa, areas dominated by the Negro and Bantu speaking tribes (see map).

- 11     Spoon  
       Guro, Ivory Coast
  
- 12     Mask  
       Yoruba, Nigeria
  
- 13     Mask  
       Baule, Ivory Coast
  
- 14     Bone Horn  
       Congo, Angola
  
- 15     Mask  
       Igbo, Nigeria

16 Ladle  
Guro, Ivory Coast ?

17 Mask  
Pende, Zaire

18 Mask  
Dan-Ngere, Ivory Coast

19 Ladle  
Guro, Ivory Coast

20 Akuba Fertility Doll  
Ashanti, Ghana

Worn in the waistband of women and girls to insure fertility and beautiful children.

21 Mask  
Ogboni ?

22 Whistle  
Origin unknown

## LATIN-AMERICAN ART

- 23    **Francesco Toledo (1940- )**, Mexican  
      ***Cat With Small Figure***  
      Gouache
- 24    ***Face With Raised Hand***  
      Watercolor  
      Given by Joseph N. Gennett

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN ART

- 25    **Jacob Lawrence (1917- )**, African-American  
      ***Builders No. 3*** 1974  
      Silkscreen  
      Given by Edward Bernstein
- 26    **Romare Bearden (1914-1988)**, African-American  
      ***Louisiana Serenade***  
      Color lithograph

- 27 John F. Dowell (1941- ), African-American  
*Les Termes* 1984  
Color lithograph  
Given by Rachel Bok Goldman
- 28 Doris Turner (Contemporary), African-American  
Untitled 1991  
Monoprint

#### HALL CASES

- 29 Robert J. Watson (1946- ), African-American  
*Misty Morning, North Carolina* 1994  
Oil on panel
- 30 *Midnight Serenade* 1992  
Acrylic and watercolor  
Purchased with funds donated by The Art Angels
- 31 John T. Harris (1908-1983), African-American  
*Boy at Work in Recreation Center* 1941  
Pen and ink drawing

- 32 *Checker Player at Marian Anderson Playground* 1950  
Carbon pencil drawing  
Purchased from the artist with La Salle Art Museum  
annual budget funds
- 33 Jeffrey Casey (1979- ), African-American  
Untitled 1993  
Color silkscreen  
Purchased with funds donated by The Art Angels
- 34 Ida May Sydnor (1922- ), African-American  
Untitled 1991  
Styrofoam print
- 35 *Miniature Passport Masks*  
Dan-Ngere, Ivory Coast
- 36 Anthony Benezet  
*Observations on the Inslaving, Importing and  
Purchasing of Negroes*  
Second edition  
(Germantown: Christopher Sower, 1760)  
[See the Curator for a transcript of this essay]

- 37 *Da Njoe Testament Va Wi Masra En Helpman Jesus Christus*  
Translated in the Negro-English language by the Missionaries of the Unitas Fratrum, or, United Brethren (London: The British and Foreign Bible Society, 1829)
- 38 Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942), American  
*Portrait of Leslie Buswell ?*  
Oil on canvas
- 39 Jacob Lawrence (1917- ), African-American  
*The First Book of Moses Called Genesis*  
Illustrated with silkscreens  
(New York: The Limited Editions Club, 1989)
- 40 Alma W. Thomas (1892-1978), African-American  
*Still Life* 1956  
Oil on canvas  
Given by Joseph N. Gennett

Other multi-cultural works of art on permanent exhibition are indicated by a round green sticker on the label.