married to politics. Happy marriage or not, the two have never finalized a divorce.

A single criticism emerges in this book, one that was also present in the 2017 symposium in Paris: while the work of emerging scholars is presented in both (Cohen, Paoletti, Desportes), the work of emerging artists is not. Further, while the work of female scholars was well represented at both, the work of female artists was hardly present (Harney’s essay being an exception), and no female Senegalese artists were mentioned in any essays or included as artist presenters/interviewees. As women artists in Senegal have practiced alongside the male artists featured in this volume, especially since the 1990s, they are appropriate interlocutors for a volume that sets out to surpass the (patriarchal) legacy of Négritude. The inclusion of more emerging artists—male and female—who have inherited not just the École de Dakar style, but also the Laboratoire Agit-Art, Set-Setal, récupération, retromodern, hip-hop, and street styles along with their experiences in a myriad of international schools, travels and exhibitions would have made this book all the more perfect.

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Notes
1 Note that El Hadji Sy’s name is misspelled in the table of contents listing for Diouf’s chapter as “El Hadj Sy.” The artist’s name appears correctly in Diouf’s essay and throughout the rest of the book.

References cited

book review

Beyond Aesthetics: Use, Abuse, and Dissonance in African Traditions by Wole Soyinka
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press in association with the Hutchins Center for African & African American Art, Harvard University. 160 pp., 11 b/w illus., $25, hardcover
reviewed by Jenny S. Martel

In his most recent book, Nobel laureate, poet, essayist, and political activist Wole Soyinka offers a personal and poetic look at the politics and aesthetics of collecting. As a longtime art collector, Soyinka argues—usually passionately—so—for the power of collecting as a vehicle for reclamation of Yoruba tradition and against dogmatic colonial and religious cultural cleansing. Beyond Aesthetics was developed and expanded from a three-part series of Richard D. Cohen Lectures delivered by the author at Harvard University in 2017. Of likely interest to art historians, the lectures were delivered concurrently with an exhibition at the Cooper Gallery of African and African American Art, which included objects from author’s personal collection as well as the contemporary work of Nigerian artists Peju Alatise and Moyo Okejede, among others. Following the lecture format, the book is split into three chapters: “Oga, Na Original Fake, I Swear!”, “Procreative Deities: The Orisä’s Triumphal March”, and last, “From Aso-Ebi to N*****wood.” Like an unprintable profanity, Soyinka obscures “Nollywood,” the common sobriquet identifying commercial Nigerian film and industry. The meaning of this gesture, not immediately explained, but derived eventually through the chapter’s jaunty personal narrative, is representative of Soyinka’s literary method of delivering meaning in Beyond Aesthetics. The discussion is achieved through highly personal narrative rather than organized chronologically, geographically, or by medium—this is not to say that Beyond Aesthetics is illogical, quite the contrary. However, much of the meaning and thematic application is discovered after reading and rereading, allowing the weaving storylines to permeate the consciousness in an organic way. Appropriately to the author’s background, the text is best considered in the way one might process a well-written play—language, story, and characterization may not obviously express underlying sociopolitical ideology; rather, these elements allude to deeper insights of this nature.

In the first chapter, Soyinka explains the acquisition process of some of his favorite objects, replete with ample tangential and amusing commentary. True to his literary character, Soyinka’s first object—an entire domestic Sango shrine—is not exactly an object and was never actually acquired, much to Soyinka’s chagrin. The sacred objects comprising the ancestral shrine were retrieved in their entirety by a mystery curator before Soyinka was able to do so himself. In addition to the shrine, Soyinka discusses the acquisition of a bracelet from the Sungho Eredo and a Korean Silla dynasty clay mug. The second chapter continues with a discussion of an overtly sexualized “unmatched pair” of objects from the author’s collection: a male monkey and a caryatid. This much admired (or reviled, depending on the audience), nearly life-sized duo graced the entry of his home study, creating what he calls a “Field of Force,” until they were stolen—never to reappear despite earnest attempts at recovery. Of the monkey-caryatid couple, Soyinka states: “My immediate purpose, of course, was to insist that we do not have to be solemn over antiquities or their substitutes, otherwise we present a distorted and prissy approach to the African art traditions” (pp. 80–81). The diversity of these objects and personal anecdotes serve to underscore two important aspects of Soyinka’s deliberately tenuous definition of “aesthetics”: first, that a collection and therefore the objects within are ultimately a private extension of the self; and second, that there is an inherent beauty and value in ancient objects. These aspects include a highly personal and broadly applicable definition of aesthetics, respectively, but in the context of Beyond Aesthetics, Soyinka most enthusiastically maintains that admiring, collecting, and conserving the material embodiment of Yoruba culture is a weapon of good against cultural annihilation at the hands of religious zealots: “as long as one Santeria, bembé, or candomblé remains, and is placed at the service of its adoptive community—even as a reference point, or warren of options—humanity is enlarged and its total benefits” (p. 127).

Throughout the text, Soyinka champions the march of the Orisa against iconoclastic destruction—most notably through abiku, the Yoruba child who is born, dies, and is born again. Soyinka argues that the Orisa religion has “never indulged in other-demonization, yet it has survived the assault of centuries, and is destined to survive into the same eternity that other religions consider their own special preserve” (p. 101). In past publications Soyinka has explored cultural syncretism with some delicacy and interest, but here the author
Throughout the lively, conversational text, one concurrent exhibition at the Cooper Gallery. Considering objects and content from the ion to more theoretical work—especially when or specifically African aesthetics as a compan- textual manner. This book could also be uti-

Beyond Aesthetics’ potential usefulness as a tool to facilitate classroom discussion. Soyinka’s unabashed forays into personal narrative and kaleidoscopic approach to aesthetics invite the reader to consider the topic in a similarly con-
textual manner. This book could also be uti-

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book review

Modernist Art in Ethiopia
by Elizabeth W. Giorgis
360 pp., 53 color illus., bibliography, index. $39.95, paper

reviewed by Fiona Siegenthaler

African modernism has been the subject of numerous key publications in the last two decades. Besides surveys such as A Companion to Modern African Art edited by Gitti Salami and Monica Blackmun Visoná (2013), leading journals published special issues such as “Art Historical Perspectives on African Modernism” (African Arts 39 [1], 2006) or “African Modernism” (The South Atlantic Quarterly 109 [3], 2010) edited by Chiaka Okeke-Agulu and Salah M. Hassan respectively. In addition, Okeke-Agulu’s Postcolonial Modernism in Nigeria (2015), Atta Kwamí’s Kamasi Real-

ism in Ghana (2013), Elizabeth Harney’s In Senghor’s Shadow (2004), or monographs on modern artists like Ben Enwonwu by Sylvester Ogbchie (2008)–to name just a few—rep-
resent fundamental contributions to modern African art scholarship. They variously build on earlier publications since the 1990s (most notably Seven Stories of Modern Art in Africa, ed. Clementine Deliss [1995] and Elza Miles’s monograph on Ernest Mancoba [1994]) to shift notions of modernity and modernisms away from Eurocentric assumptions toward a transcultural and globally entangled conception that is inclusive of Africacentric and diasporic perspectives. Several doctoral dissertations on modernist art in East Africa complement this research, such as Sunanda Sanyal’s Imaging Art, Making History (2000) or George Kyeyune’s Art in Uganda in the 20th Century (2013). However, East Africa remains underrepresented in the research of African modernism. With Modernist Art in Ethiopia, Elizabeth E. Giorgis offers the first monograph on modernist Ethiopian art, situating it in a complex cultural history of modern experience centered in the capital of Addis Ababa. Her interdisciplinary analysis of the sociopolitical, intellectual, and aesthetic practices and discourses in twentieth and early twenty-first century Ethiopia involves perspectives on urban

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