
This catalog is based on the groundbreaking exhibition held at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York. Unique in its interdisciplinary exploration of contemporary African fashion, design, art and craftsmanship, The Global Africa Project surveys regions of the world that have been particularly affected by African culture, namely Africa, Asia, Europe, the United States and the Caribbean. In this ambitious work one witnesses the “interrelatedness” among a broad and diverse range of artistic media as well as the intersection and fusion of “traditional craft” and “contemporary art practice.” The Global Africa Project challenges assumptions about the normal differentiation between “professional” and “artisan” in the art market and provides an excellent introduction to a worldwide array of creators that trace their roots to Africa. Media represented in the work include ceramics, basketry, textiles, jewelry, furniture and other decorative and design objects, as well as architecture, fashion and selective and complementary examples of photographs, painting and sculpture.

The distinguished editors and exhibition curators are Lowery Stokes Sims, Charles Bronfman International Curator at the Museum of Arts and Design and former director of the Studio Museum in Harlem, and Dr. Leslie King-Hammond, founding director of the Center for Race and Culture at the Maryland Institute College of Art and scholar of transatlantic and traditional African Art. The Global Africa Project is organized around six themes that relate to the conception and production of art, design and craft in today’s “diasporic” world of African art: branding content, intersecting cultures, competing globally, sourcing locally, transforming traditions, and building communities. Each section includes numerous color reproductions of works from the exhibition which reveal the artists’ “shared characteristics of creativity.” These include an emphasis on surface, pattern and color, as well as experimentation with different and unusual materials, including recycled and repurposed items. Also included in the catalog are essays relating to African art by noted scholars, curators and artists which examine the work of creators and design collectives who are looking to address local needs in their communities and acting as driving forces of economic change.

What further differentiates this work and makes it a worthy addition to library collections supporting programs in art history and African studies is the inclusion of useful supplementary material. Profiles of approximately 100 artists and design collectives included in the exhibition are provided and are comprised of biographical information, a photo, bibliography, list of websites and videos, and an artist’s statement. Also included are a bibliography relating to African art and an exhibition history for “Art from Africa and the African Diaspora, 1989-2010.” The sole shortcoming is the lack of an index which would facilitate locating information relating to artists (particularly those not included in the exhibition), topics, and reproductions.

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