
The equestrian figure takes many forms and meanings in African art, which are well-documented in The Horse Rider in African Art, edited by George Chemeche, an artist, author, and curator of tribal art. His introduction examining how the horse and rider have been used in both Western art and African art serves as a jumping off point for the book, while the following four essays focus on how African cultures use the motif and provide context for ideologies and meaning.

The essays are written by leaders in the field of African studies and art history. Each expert examines the horse rider device in different select cultures including Yoruba, Senufo, and Soninke. The authors use the motif to examine symbolism and meaning between different cultures or how it is used to convey power and status. For instance, John Pemberton examines how the horse and rider express a vital ideology about the power of women and men in Yoruba societies through Epa masquerades. Bernard de Grunne examines the history and iconography of the horse and rider and compares and contrasts symbolism and meaning between Soninke and Dogon cultures. Kate Ezra provides a historical context for the horse and rider and looks at how the motif is used in Senufo art to convey power and status while Mary Jo Arnoldi provides a cultural and historical context for the use of the horse and rider through puppetry in Sogobó masquerade in Mali. Taken together, all of the essays provide a powerful contribution to the literature on the horse and rider because they point out the depth of cultural experiences, ideologies, histories, and range of mediums used to create this iconic and multivalent theme in African art.

In addition to the essays, this book contains over three hundred high quality illustrations from museums, galleries, private collections, and auction houses. The images are divided into sections based on medium and include wood, metals, terra cotta, stone, ivory, and beads. The monograph has a table of contents, acknowledgements, and also features a list of the collectors and a list of the museums, galleries, and auction houses whose works illustrate the book. Written for an academic audience, this book is a recommended addition to art libraries and academic libraries with African art history collections, African studies collections, and world art collections. The book builds and expands the scholarship covering this central motif in African art and culture and serves as an authoritative contribution to the field.

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