

Anthropology of Art 070:153 (1.5 credits)

Tuesday 5:35–8:35pm. HICK 207 *new room*

Fall 2019 **Starts 10/22**

Pilar K. Rau – pilar.rau@rutgers.edu

Office: RAB 308 Floor

Office hours: Tues/Wed 1:00-2:00pm or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is art? Who are artists? Do all societies have “art”? Why is the visual and expressive culture of some groups characterized as artifact, craft, primitive art, ethnic art, kitsch, or commodity? What is at stake in applying the word “art” to a people for whom such a concept is foreign? Or in excluding an object from the category of “art”? This introduction to the *Anthropology of Art* looks at anthropological issues of cultural relativism, emic/etic description, ethnocentrism, symbolism, ritual, and the politics of representing “Other” people, through the lens of “art” and it considers the visual and material culture of diverse societies (including Western fine art) through anthropological frameworks. It tackles the historical legacies of Primitivism and teleological thinking as well as how the categories of “art” and “culture” are currently deployed to objectify group identity in service of nationalisms, local culturalisms, and social movements.

DEPARTMENT LEARNING GOALS <http://anthro.rutgers.edu/undergrad-program/departments-learning-goals>

CA1) Students gain knowledge that will allow them to identify, explain and historically contextualize the primary objectives, fundamental concepts, modes of analysis, central questions in their major field and demonstrate proficiency in their use of this knowledge

CA2) Students are able to demonstrate proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills

CA3) Students are able to demonstrate proficiency using current methods in their major fields, including library research skills

CA4) Students are able to express themselves knowledgably and proficiently in writing about central issues in their major field

CA5) Students are able to express themselves knowledgably and proficiently in speaking about central issues in their major field

COURSE SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOME GOALS

- To become familiar with the key debates in the anthropology of art [CA1]
- To examine the changing ways anthropologists have studied art and material culture [CA1]
- To introduce student to several non-Western artistic traditions
- To stimulate critical thinking on the role of art and cultural expression in society [CA2]
- To critically analyze the politics of representation and display of cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, and class difference [CA2]
- To conduct independent research, and communicate ideas effectively both orally and in writing. [CA4,5]

TEXTBOOKS AND REQUIRED READINGS - All required readings are available on Sakai.

ASSIGNMENTS

Reading Responses [CA 1,4] 30% Due: Weekly – Post a response to the weekly reading assignments in **forums**. Summarize their main points, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and ask one or two questions. The objective is to process the readings before lecture. This enables me to tailor my lecture to fit your needs, therefore **no late responses will be accepted**.

Class Participation & Attendance [CA 5] 35% Due: Weekly – Students are expected to attend class. **Absences will adversely affect your grade**. Absences due to religious holiday, serious illness, death in the immediate family, or required participation in a university-sponsored event are, with appropriate documentation, excused. Please see “ABSENCES” below.

Lead Discussion 15% [CA5] – A pair of students will be responsible for leading the weekly discussion.

Final paper [CA 2,5] 10% - Due 12/19 Write a paper on the Met Trip that applies what you learned from class. You may use your reading responses in your final paper, but if you draw on classmates’ writing, be sure to cite them. Upload to **Dropbox**

Art Exhibit [CA 2, 3, 4,5] 10% Due: 12/7 Select an object, supply a catalog essay and wall text. See Sakai for rubric

***This course includes a mandatory field trip to see a current exhibit in the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City on Saturday 12/7.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY- You are responsible for adhering to these policies: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>

SAKAI & EMAIL- I will contact you about class via the scarletmail account linked to your sakai account

ABSENCES – Please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. It will email me and let me know to look for your documentation. Please post an image of your note in your **Dropbox** in Sakai. If a serious illness or other condition causes you to miss many classes, you may wish to obtain a letter from your dean.

READING SCHEDULE

Week 1 (10/22): Collecting Art and Culture

The intertwined histories of anthropology, folklore, and art history have used ideas such as “art,” “culture,” and “aesthetics” to identify the boundaries of groups, as well as to explain what distinguishes elites within a group. Ironically, these essentializing ideas themselves have very recent histories and continue to undergo criticism.

Anthropology and Art

(recommended) GUEST, K. What is Unique about How Anthropologists Study Art? *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age*. 667-75

Film: Sam Cullman. 2014. *Art and Craft* 1:30



Mask Tусуан Upper Volta, Musee Barbier-Muller, Geneva

Max Ernst, *Bird-Head*, 1934-35, Galerie Beyeler, Basel

Week 2 (10/29): Universals and Hierarchies

Does extending the category of “art” to societies which did not have such an explicit category ennoble them or is it an ethnocentric imposition? What consequences might framing a society as one which “lacks” art have? Does saying that a society has no fine art tradition adequately theorize their level of aesthetic accomplishment? Why does this even matter?

(The following articles are in Sakai. Read them before class)

The short, modern history of 3 universalizing concepts: Culture, Art, Aesthetics

CLIFFORD, J. 1988a. On Collecting Art and Culture. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Harvard.

Do all societies have “art”? Are there stages of “cultural development”?

ANDERSON, R L. 1992. Do Other Cultures Have "Art"? *American Anthropologist* 94:926-9.

MYERS, F. R. 2002. The Aesthetic Function. *Painting Culture*

Two cases

ANDERSON, R. San Aesthetics (esp Do the San Have Art?) *Calliope's Sisters: A Comparative Study of Philosophies of Art*

COOTE, J. Anthropology of Aesthetics and the Cattle-keeping Nilotes. *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*. Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton eds. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 245–73.

(Recommended)

SVASEK, M., 2007. From Evolutionism to Ethnoaesthetics. *Anthropology, Art, and Cultural Production*. Pluto

SAHLINS, M. The Original Affluent Society. *Stone Age Economics*.

DISSANAYAKE, E. 1980. Art as a Human Behavior: Toward an Ethological View of Art. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 38:4. (Summer,), pp. 397-406.

Week 3 (11/5): What does the anthropological study of artists tell us about the categories of race, class, nation, and gender?

If genius and taste are universal qualities, why do most professional artists happen to be middle class white North American and European men? How are similar objects produced by others—e.g. women, people of color, working class people, non-Westerners, etc. regarded? Why are images of members of these groups more likely to be found in a fine museum than their artwork? What does it mean for an “outsider” to be included as an artist? Who gets to make this determination? Could cultural biases affect an anthropologist’s perception of whose labor qualifies as “art”?

Who is an artist?

DRUCKER, J. 1994. Models of the Artist as Producing Subject. *Theorizing Modernism*. Columbia

PRICE, S. 2001. From Signature to Pedigree. *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*

Pick **one** from: *The Traditional Artist in African Societies*.

BASCOM, T. 1973. A Yoruba Master Carver.

THOMPSON, R. F. 1973. Yoruba Artistic Criticism.

MESSENGER, J. 1973. The Role of the Carver in Anang Society.

D’AZEVEDO, W. 1973. Sources of Gola Artistry.

Who isn’t an artist?

DUNCAN, C. 1989. The MoMA’s Hot Mamas. *Art Journal* 48:171-8

NOCHLIN, L. 1988. Why Have there Been No Great Women Artists? *Women Art & Power*.

JACOBS, J. 2019. Female Artists Made Little Progress in Museums Since 2008. *New York Times*.

https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/arts/design/female-art-agency-partners-sothebys-artists-auction.html?fbclid=IwAR0-pLSTPyMP077Kzaad_kzCTby4K7rLG8Fmbrnn_CkEQD2ssEunfmkykl

YAU, J. 1992. Please Wait by the Coatroom, *Out There: Marginalization in Contemporary Culture*.



(selection). 1998. *The Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion to the History of Western Art*

SOLOMON-GODEAU, A. Mistaken Identities catalog essay.

<http://lemagazine.jeudepaume.org/2013/08/abigail-solomon-godeau-mistaken-identities-en-2>

How do the consumption of art and the ideology of “taste” reinforce social inequalities?

BOURDIEU, P. 1993. The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Columbia.

PRICE, S. 2001. The Mystique of Connoisseurship. *Primitive Art in Civilized Places*.

BEARD, EVAN. 2018. The Four Social Classes of the Art World. *ArtSy*. 18 Nov.

https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-four-social-classes-art?fbclid=IwAR1t0ejx9D8-oCS2ah_ANJgMulE2VMbfKRWjdJNwroYdSg6DLsel0VJyXTY

(recommended)

BECKER, H. *Art Worlds*.

DANTO, A. *The Art World*.

ANDERSON, R. L. The Artist’s Life and Work. (*esp Sexual Division of Labor) *Art in Small-scale Societies*.

ORTNER, S. Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture? *Woman, culture, and society*. 68-87

VAN VEBELN, T. Conspicuous Consumption. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.

Slides: Identity Politics, Mistaken Identities

Week 4 (11/12): Collecting and Displaying Non-Western Art

Primitive art connoisseurs identify the aesthetic qualities of exotic objects the producers and intended consumers of which do not think of as art; however, so-called the artists that created these objects do not receive the same status and treatment as Western fine artists. Rather than individual creative geniuses, they are commonly depicted as the anonymous representatives of their “culture.” What is at stake in recontextualizing these objects as art works rather than ethnographic artifacts? Is it preferable to confer universalizing aesthetic value on the decontextualized objects or to understand them in terms of their ethnographic context and local meanings? Is it possible to “decolonize” museums which display the material culture of indigenous peoples?

What’s the difference between “cultural relativism” and “Primitivism”?

PRICE, 2001. The Night Side of Man (37-55) Anonymity & Timelessness (56-67) *Primitive Art Civilized Places*

ERRINGTON, S. 1994. What Became Authentic Primitive Art? *Cultural Anthropology* 9:201-26

Case: Primitivism in 20th Century Art Exhibition.

CLIFFORD, J. Histories of the Tribal and the Modern

RUBIN, W. Primitivism in 20th Century Art

Slideshow: Primitive art and Modernist Primitivism

Film: Steven Landess. 2007. *Paradise Found*. (97 min)

Decolonizing Museums

Interview James Luna www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/q-and-a-james-luna-74252076/

GEISMAR, H. 2015. The Art of Anthropology Questioning Contemporary Art in Ethnographic Display. *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*

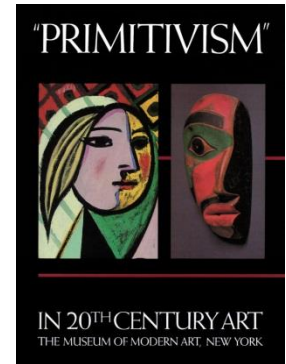
LONETREE, A. 2012. (select) *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*

DAFOE, T. 2019. The Met Is Expanding Its Definition of American Culture by Hiring a Curator of Indigenous Art for Its Famed American Wing. *ArtNet News*. 4 Sep. <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/met-native-american-art-diker-collection-american-wing-1362274?fbclid=IwAR25PRrj-AtfF1woBHKTA-po9ZDcxYRk0NUCzwmzmasIVPDo710Ivubofil>

RONAN, K. 2014. Native Empowerment, the New Museology, and the National Museum of the American Indian. *Museum & Society*, Jul. 12:1. 132-147

View: James Luna. *Artifact Piece* (1987) and *Take a Picture with a Real Indian* (1995)

FILM: Guillermo Gómez-Peña & Coco Fusco. 1993. *The couple in the cage: A Guatinaui odyssey*. (32 min)



(recommended)

AMES, M. (selection) *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*.

BLOCKER, G. 1994. Is Primitive Art “Art”? *The Aesthetics of Primitive Art*.

FOSTER, H. 2001. Blinded Insights: On the Modernist Reception of the Art of the Mentally Ill. *October*. 97. Pp. 3-30

GROSSMAN, W. 2011. Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens. *International Arts and Artists*.

PIETZ, W. 1987. The problem of the Fetish II: The Origin of the Fetish. *Res* 13.

MORPHY, H. 2001. Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery. *Humanities Research* 8:1

MYERS, F. 2006. Primitivism, anthropology and the category of Primitive art. *Handbook of Material Culture*. Sage.

VAN TILBORGH, I. 2018. Van Gogh and Japan. Mercatorfonds.

See Additional Readings in the “Primitivism” Folder

Week 4 (11/19): Week 5 (11/19): Art and Ritual

The visual and material culture of many societies is not separated into a category that is distinct from other domains of life as it is in the modern West. In particular, objects valued in the West as “primitive” or “tribal” art were commonly employed in rituals. Western fine art has also been analyzed through the anthropological framework of ritual and liminality. An interesting case for the Anthropology of Art are the Western and Central desert Aboriginal Australian groups who have recently begun painting the ancestral designs, once produced in other media for ritual occasions, on canvas for fine art markets. While they may have different understandings about the authority and the efficacy their artworks will have in the world, they coincidentally do have some strong resonances with their Western consumers –some fetching millions of dollars at auction.

What is ritual?

DUNCAN, C. 1995. The Art Museum as Ritual. *Civilizing Rituals*
BELL, C. 1997. (part) *Ritual: Perspectives and dimensions*. Oxford
TURNER, V. (selection) *The Ritual Process*.

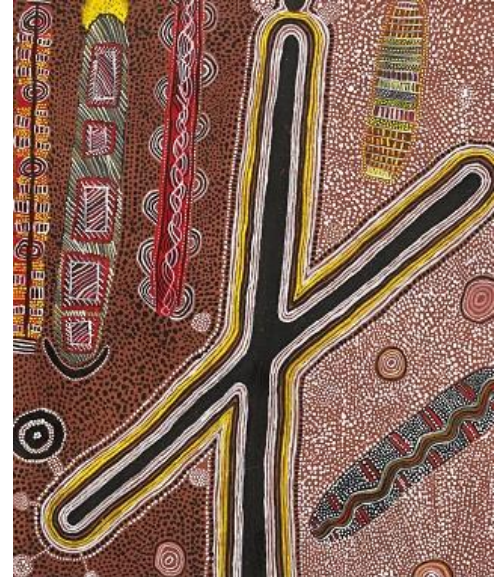
Case: Aboriginal Australia

BELL, TBA. On Aboriginal Women’s Art
BIDDEL, J. 2001. Inscribing Identity: Skin as Country in the Central Desert. *Thinking through the skin*. Routledge.
MORPHY, H. 1992. From Dull to Brilliant: The Aesthetics of Spiritual Power. *Anthropology of Art*
MYERS, F.R. 2002. Representing Culture. *Painting Culture*
WATSON, C. 1999. Touching the Land. *Art from the Land*. UVA.
GEARIN, M. 2015. Aboriginal art collection sells for more than \$2 million in historic Sotheby's London auction. *The Guardian*.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-06-11/aboriginal-art-collection-sells-for-2-million-in-auction/6537992>
BIBBY, P. 2007. Aboriginal painting breaks \$1 million barrier
www.theage.com.au/news/national/aboriginal-painting-breaks-1m-barrier/2007/05/23/1179601487395.html

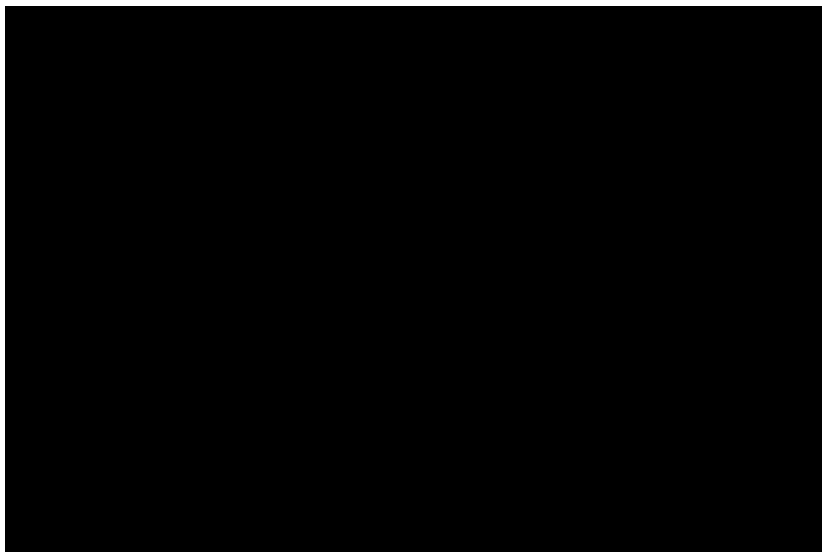
(Recommended)

LAYTON, ROBERT. 1994. Traditional and Contemporary Art of Aboriginal Australia J. Coote & Shelton. Oxford

Film: Mr. Patterns. 2003. Dir. Catriona McKenzie. DER. <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/embed/mr-patterns>



Uta Uta Tjangala
Pintupi c.1926–1990
Yumari 1972 (detail)
synthetic polymer paint on composition board
83.8 x 63.6 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of Mrs Douglas Carnegie OAM, 1989



For other streaming options, log into the library website with your Rutgers ID and search for “Mr. Patterns”

Dreamings: The art of aboriginal Australia. 1988. Dir. M. Riley. First Run/Icarus Films.

*(optional): Ray Mears Goes Walkabout Programme 4 Rock Art. 2008. BBC (50min) streams via library

Thanksgiving /change of designation day – no class 11/26

Week 6 (12/3): Can commodities be “authentic” culture?

In the Western art world, art works are, in theory, strictly segregated from objects that are produced out of economic interest rather than purely creative or aesthetic motives. However, recent anthropological and sociological critiques emphasize that Western art objects themselves are commodities and that exchange (including commodity exchange) is an important way of negotiating relationships and identities within local societies as well as in a globally inter-connected world

What is Tourist Art?

PHILLIPS, R. 1994. Why Not Tourist Art? Significant Silences in Native American Museum Representations. *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*. Ed G. Prakash, Princeton.

APPADURAI, A.1986. Commodities and the Politics of Value. *The Social Life of Things*. Cambridge.



A fine Senufo mask

Kpelie, mask with slit eyes and three rows of eyebrows joining together over a long and straight T-shaped nose, the mouth is finely carved with two lines extending from either corner and leading to two pairs of carved appendages which frame the oval and rounded face. This mask is outstanding for its expression of serenity resulting from the combination of rigorous composition and the softness of its facial features. Fine honey patina, traces of blue and white pigments.

Wood and pigments - 29 cm

Estimate: € 6000 - 8000

Result: € 6700

(selection) *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*. Edited by F. R. Myers. SAR

(recommended)

BLOCH, M. and PARRY, J. 1989. Introduction. *Money and the morality of exchange*. Cambridge.

(selection) JULES-ROSETTE, B. 1984. *The Messages of Tourist Art*. Plenum Press.

SHINER, I. 1994. Primitive Fakes, Tourist Art," and the Ideology of Authenticity. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52:2. (Spring), pp. 225-234.

Case study: The Inter-ethnic African Art Trade

O'RILEY, M. Africa. *Art Beyond the West*.

STEINER, C. 2006. The Art of the Trade. *The Anthropology of Art*.

STOLLER, P. 2003. Circuits of African Art/Paths of Wood. *Anthropological Quarterly* 76:207-34

Slideshow: African Master Pieces From the Musée de L'Homme, Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections, and Perspectives: Angles on African Art. Center for African Art, NY

Film: Susan Vogel. Fang: An Epic Journey (7 min)

Film: Ilisa Barbash & Lucien Taylor. 1993. In and Out of Africa. (59 min)

****Saturday 12/7 Fieldtrip: The Met. Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas****

Week 7 (12/10): Art and Power

How do contemporary social movements use art? Why would groups use “art” to make political claims on nation states rather than another strategy? What is at stake in controversies where indigenous groups attempt to regain control over “their” material culture?



PBS. 2019. A groundbreaking exhibition finally tells the stories of Native women artists.

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/a-groundbreaking-exhibition-finally-tells-the-stories-of-native-women-artists>

KOSHY, y. 2019. Hey, that's our stuff: Maasai tribespeople tackle Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum. *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/dec/04/pitt-rivers-museum-oxford-maasai-colonial-artefacts?fbclid=IwAR345YBZ0d86TpekALrLwpFuffT2fledB9Wacm-yI4Tb6NluPbCwr38c9a4>

GELL, A. 1998. (selection) *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford

GLASS, A. 2004. Return to Sender: On the Politics of Cultural Property and the Proper Address of Art. *Journal of Material Culture*. 9: 115-139.

TBA about the Yirrkala bark petitions (1963)

MYERS, F. 2013. Emplacement and Displacement. *Ethnos*, 78:4, pp. 435–463

Pick **one** case:

Case 1: North American Graves Protection and Repatriation

(selected) FINE-DARE, K. 2002. Grave Injustice: The American Indian Repatriation Movement and NAGPRA.

BOYER, P. 1991. Who owns the past? New law on the return of Indian remains challenges both scientists and tribal communities. *Tribal College*. 3:6.

KRAMER, J. 2004. Figurative Repatriation: First Nations ‘Artist-Warriors’ Recover, Reclaim, and Return Cultural Property through Self-Definition. *Journal of Material Culture*. 9: 115-139

Case 2: Vigango of Kenya

GILES, L. et al 2014. “The Long Journey Home: The Theft and Repatriation of Giriama Memorial Statues (Vigango).” *Contesting Identities: The Mijikenda and Their neighbors in Kenyan Coastal Society*. Africa World Press.

NEVADOMSKY, J. 2018. “The Vigango Affair: The Enterprise of Repatriating Mijikenda Memorial Figures to Kenya.” *African Arts* 51:2. 58–69.

UDVARDY, M. et al. 2003. “The Transatlantic Trade in African Ancestors: Mijikenda Memorial Statues (Vigango) and the Ethics of Collecting and Curating Non-Western Cultural Property.” *American Anthropologist* 105:3. 566–80.

Further Reading:

Mashberg, T. 2014. “Sending Artworks Home, but to Whom? (The Arts/Cultural Desk).” *The New York Times*.

---. 2014 “Kenya regains artifacts from Denver Museum. *NYT*. 19 Feb.

“Kenya Seeks to Recover, Protect Memorial Statues. (1900-2000)(Audio file).” *All Things Considered*. NPR.

<http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA159721227&v=2.1&u=new67449&it=r&p=LitRC&sw=w>

(selection). 2012. *No Deal! Indigenous Arts and the Politics of Possession*, edited by Tressa Berman

HAFNER, D. 2013. Objects, agency and context: Australian Aboriginal expressions of connection in relation to museum artefacts. *Journal of Material Culture*. 18: 347-366

GRABURN, N. 2004. Authentic Inuit Art: Creation and Exclusion in the Canadian North. *Journal of Material Culture* 9: 141-59

TOWNSEND-GAULT, C. 2004. Circulating Aboriginality. *Journal of Material Culture*. 9: 115-139

****Art Exhibition today****

****Final paper is due by: 12/19 11:59pm****

