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Art books from and about Africa

A selection of titles in the Nordic Africa Institute Library

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NAI library has selected art literature for its social science collection ever since the institute was founded in 1962. African visual art and performing arts reflect and offer critical perspectives on societies on the continent.

Art and artists interpret and influence societies and experiences. Art offers boundless ways of expressions outside of the written word and can serve as a bridge between societies. African art can challenge perceptions and foster critical thinking about how Africa has been represented and misrepresented, both by outsiders and from within. Looking back, art has been used as a tool and outlet for resistance and mobilization, in anti-apartheid movements, liberation struggles, and in more recent activism like the decolonization protest #Rhodesmustfall. It has also its place in shaping new national identities in post-colonial societies.

The art literature collection at Nordic Africa Institute library contains more than 1.300 titles covering visual arts, artists and photography from over 50 countries on the continent. Contact your local library to order interlibrary loan on titles that you are interested in.

Titles on African art books in the NAI Library:

This brochure is published in connection to the exhibition “When We See Us: A Century of Black Figuration in Painting” at Liljevalchs gallery, Stockholm 2025/2026.

CONTENTS

GENERAL

Africa remix: contemporary art of a continent / Simon Njami. (Hayward Gallery, 2005)

"Africa Remix is the first comprehensive publication on young contemporary art of the last decade in and from Africa. It features more than eighty artists from nearly thirty contries, thus representing the geographic diversity of Africa - from Egypt and Morocco to South Africa. Both well-known artists who are already established in the international scene as well as new emerging talents are included. In an attempt to di justice to the complexity of current artist production the survey focuses on film, documentary photography, fashion, music and literature, in addition to the fine arts. Experts in the field comment on the different artistic positions and their sources of inspiration. Instead of describing the using the traditional categories of postcolonial discourse, this publication concentrates on the "fact of the present" (Simon Njami): the works are seen as an expression of the direct influence of the present on the artist. A specially developed illustrated dictionary of important aspects of African art and culture completes this fascinating study."

African art now: fifty pioneers defining African art for the twenty-first century / Osei Bonsu. (Ilex, 2022)

"Over the past two decades contemporary African art has taken its rightful place on the world stage. Today, African artists work outside the confines of limiting categories and outdated perceptions; they produce art that is as much a reflection of Africa's tumultuous past as it is a vision of its boundless future. African Art Now is an expansive overview featuring some of the most interesting and innovative artists working today. Far-reaching in its scope, this book celebrates the diversity and dynamism of the contemporary African art scene across the continent today.Featuring the work of Njideka Akunyili Crosby, Michael Armitage, Amoako Boafo, Cassi Namoda, Cinga Samson, Zina Saro-Wiwa and many more."

African art now: masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection / André Magnin. (Merrell, 2005)

"A major, lavishly illustrated study of contemporary art being produced by the leading artists working in sub-Saharan Africa. Painters, photographers, sculptors and installation artists are represented from nineteen countries: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Republic of Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo. Artists include Frédéric Bruly Bouabre, Seydou Keita, Samuel Kane Kwei, Chéri Samba and Malik Sidibé, among many others. African Art Now offers a rare glimpse into the latest currents in contemporary African art, showing how artists

share an awareness of both local and global cultures, thereby acknowledging the complex heritage that African artists face today."

African artists: from 1882 [to] now / editor: Rebecca Morrill. (Phaidon Press, 2021)

"Features the work of more than 300 artists, including El Anatsui, Marlene Dumas, David Goldblatt, Lubaina Himid, William Kentridge, Julie Mehretu, Wangechi Mutu, and Robin Rhode, as well as lesser-known names from across Africa, with stunning and surprising examples of their art paired with insightful texts that demonstrate their contribution to the painting, sculpture, installation, photography, moving image, and performance art."

African modernism in America / edited by Perrin M. Lathrop. (Yale University Press, 2022)

"Between 1947 and 1967, institutions such as the Harmon Foundation, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and historically Black colleges and universities collected and exhibited works by many of the most important African artists of the mid-twentieth century, including Ben Enwonwu (Nigeria), Gerard Sekoto (South Africa), Ibrahim El-Salahi (Sudan), and Skunder Boghossian (Ethiopia). The inventive and irrefutably contemporary nature of these artists' paintings, sculptures, and works on paper defied typical Western narratives about African art being isolated in a "primitive" past. Providing an unprecedented examination of the complex connections between modern African artists and American patrons amid the interlocking histories of civil rights, decolonization, and the Cold War, this fascinating volume reveals a transcontinental network of artists, curators, and scholars that challenged assumptions about African art in the United States and encouraged American engagement with African artists as contemporaries."

Angaza Afrika: African art now / Chris Spring. (Laurence King, 2008)

"The mission of this book is to illustrate Africa's immensely fertile artistic landscape. Africa has emerged from its colonial past and is asserting its own identity. African art is not only confined to the continent itself, but has spread world-wide through the work of those descended from the enforced migrations of the slave trade and those who have more recently left their homes in Africa to take their place on an international stage. This book brings together more than 60 of Africa's most creative contemporary artists. Drawn from across the African continent as well as from Europe, North America, the Caribbean and South America, the book illustrates the diversity and vitality of these artists. Their art leaps off the page with more than 350 colour images (many especially commissioned). In addition to painters, sculptors and photographers, there are a number of artists whose work embraces performance and installation. Many of the materials they use are as unorthodox as their imagery, with ready-made and found objects."

An anthology of African art: the twentieth century / edited by N'Goné Fall and Jean Loup Pivin. (Distributed Art Publishers, 2002)

"The term "Modern African Art" is not an abuse of language. The 20th century has seen, but not properly documented, the birth, development, and maturation of contemporary art in sub-Saharan Africa, an art which was not simply imported in the 1950s but which finds its sources both in colonial realities and in local cultures and civilizations. Anthology of African Art: The Twentieth Century does not propose to document any one African art, but rather to open up this vast but underexplored field to include a diverse theoretical, historical, geographical, and critical map of this dense and ancient region. Contributions by more than 30 international authors recount the birth of art schools in the 1930s, the development of urban design and public art, and the importance of socially-concerned art during the Independence movements. From Ethiopia, Nigeria, and the Belgian Congo to Ghana, Senegal, and Angola, through the works of hundreds of artists working in every conceivable medium and context, this anthology manages the continental and unique feat of providing a thorough, expansive, diversified, and fully illustrated history of African art in the 20th century."

Cosmogonies: Zinsou, une collection africaine = Zinsou, an African collection / coordination éditoriale: Pauline Faure. (Silvana editoriale, 2021)

"Beginning in the early 1990s, a trend towards aesthetic globalization brought profound change to the art world - or at least to its geopolitics. African contemporary art gained acceptance as a living reality, although not unconditionally: intellectually a clotted perception of its traditional forms persisted, all the more so in that these forms were still closely implicated in the history of modern Western art. That a foundation like the one created by the Zinsou family should exist today as an umbrella for some of

Africa's leading artists is a tribute to hard work, patience and sheer stubbornness. It took a long time, however, before more hybrid artforms resonating with the Western context would gain recognition. With a selection of works by 37 African artists - characterized by a porosity between reality and the supernatural, between everyday life and legend - the Hôtel des collections of Montpellier celebrates the militant activity of the Zinsou Foundation, firmly anchored in its Beninese context while also addressing the whole world."

The global Africa project / edited by Martina D'Alton]. (N.Y. Museum of Arts and Design, 2010)

"This book provides a savvy survey of the latest work by designers, craftspeople, and architects of African descent from around the world. Artists and designers of African ancestry--many in Africa but also others throughout Europe, the Americas, and the Far East--are working in a wide array of mediums: fashion, architecture, non-traditional crafts, design, fine art, and photography. Authors Lowery Stokes Sims and Leslie King-Hammond, together with six contributors, challenge presumptions of what constitutes an "African" style or aesthetic, and demonstrate the power and expressive potential of materials, textures and forms. Work by well-known artists such as Yinka Shonibare, MBE and architects including David Adjaye appear alongside those of lesser-known but equally exciting designers whose garments, carpets, baskets, ceramics, furniture, body arts, wall painting, photographs and sculpture blur the distinction between art and craft. The result is an enormously diverse display of young and established talent, and a wide-ranging survey of contemporary African art and design."

Looking both ways: art of the contemporary African diaspora / edited by Laurie Ann Farrell. (Museum for African Art, 2003)

"Looking Both Ways: Art of the African contemporary Diaspora showcases artists from Northm South, East, and West Africa who ive and work in Western countries, including Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The title refers to the artists' practice of looking in the psychic terrain between Africa and the West, a terrain of shifting physical contexts, aesthetic ambitions and expressions."

Narrative wisdom and African arts / edited by Nichole N. Bridges. (Saint Louis Art Museum, 2024)

"How African visual arts intersect with oral traditions and memory. Narrative Wisdom and African Arts explores how historical and contemporary African arts make visible narratives rooted in collective and individual memory and knowledge. Historical works made by artists across sub-Saharan Africa during the thirteenth to twentieth centuries dialogue with contemporary works by African artists working around the globe. This is the first book to offer a comparative examination of intersections between African arts and narrative across expansive genres, cultures, periods, and contexts of patronage. More than two hundred color images explore an extensive array of media including sculpture in wood, ivory, metal, textiles, works on paper, photography, painting, and time-based media works. Acknowledging intersections between certain historical arts and oral traditions, Nichole N. Bridges surveys assorted visual modes and motives of arts that facilitate, document, reinforce, or critique narratives concerning the legitimacy of leaders, memory of place, prescriptions for healing and destiny, and enduring ancestral wisdom."

The new African portraiture: the Shariat collections: Kunsthalle Krems / editors, Ekow Eshun, Florian Steininger. (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, 2022)

"This catalog showcases over 20 figurative artists from the African continent and diaspora. While the artists assembled represent a diverse array of styles, they all explore complex questions of identity, aesthetics and art history. Amoako Boafo and Otis Quaicoe reveal richly layered hybrid identities; Souleimane Barry, Bouvy Enkobo and Christopher Myers conjure dreamlike scenes that merge the real and the imaginary, drawing from an endless trove of African myths. Together, the artists portraits invite the reader to interrogate how the Black figure has often been misrepresented or overlooked in the Western painting tradition."

Reading the contemporary: African art from theory to the marketplace / edited by Olu Oguibe and Okwui Enwezor. (InIVA, 1999)

"In the past decade, contemporary African art has been featured in major exhibitions in museums, galleries, international biennials, and other forums. African cinema has established itself on the stage

of world cinema, culminating in the Ouagadougou Film Festival. While African art and visual culture have become an integral part of the art history and cultural studies curricula in universities worldwide, critical readings and interpretations have remained difficult to obtain. This pioneering anthology collects twenty key essays in which major critical thinkers, scholars, and artists explore contemporary African visual culture, locating it within current cultural debates and within the context of the continent's history."

The short century: independence and liberation movements in Africa 1945-1994 / edited by Okwui Enwezor. (Prestel, 2001)

"For much of Africa the 20th century was overshadowed by the experience of colonial rule, with politcal independence arriving for most people only in the last 50 years. "The Short Century" is a broad survey of cultural life in Africa from the independence movements through the post-colonial era to the end of apartheid in 1994. Expansive, wide-ranging and illustrated, this book studies achievements in all areas of the performing and fine arts, photography, literature, theatre, architecture, music and film. "The Short Century" includes the works of over 50 artists from the paintings of Mancona and Sekoto during the '50s, through the drawings and theatre projects of William Kentridge up to the installations and video works of Kay Hassan and Oladele A. Bamgboye. The great writers of the continent - Soyinka, Senghor and Cesaire amongst others - Africa's filmmakers, architects and musicians, all of whom left their mark on the process of decolonization, are studied here in depth. Renowned historians and cultural philosophers discuss the background of developments and analyze the ideological strategies employed by Western colonial powers to preserve their grip on African countries and peoples. A chapter on photojournalism supplemented by a detailed chronology of events and political movements presents the main stages of Africa's political history. A comprehensive anthology in the appendix contains some 30 historical documents, such as essays, speeches and political manifestos, shedding light on the key issues of the period."

Transitions: Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe 1960-2004: an exhibition / curated by Barbara Murray; from the collection of Robert Loder of the Triangle Arts Trust. (The Africa Center, 2005)

"The exhibition comprises the diverse and exuberant creations of 61 artists who live and work in Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Mozambique. It presents a broad and suprising array of aesthetic concerns investigated by the region's artists between 1960 and 2004. It thus offers an insight into changes in artmaking in southern Africa during recent decades. Covering a wide range of imaged experience, the works illustrate contrasts, connections and interactions both across the region and internationally. The exhibition juxtaposes multifaceted interpretations of the human body, physical and cultural environments, political commentary and conceptual installations. Styles range from naïve figuration to expressionistic tone poems, from naturalism to soaring abstraction."

The wake, L´veil, Le sillage, Xàll wi: 15e biennale de l'art Africain contemporain: 7 novembre au 7 décembre 2024 / editorial director Salimata Diop. (Secrétariat général de la Biennale de l'Art africain contemporain, 2024)

"Catalog published to accompany the exhibition Dak'Art 15, November - December 2024. Includes artists Gina Ulysse, Sokari Douglas Camp, Abdou Ouologuem, Oumar Ball, Sika Da Silveira, and many others. This edition explored themes of awakening and transformation across ecological, political, and spiritual dimensions, featuring 58 artists from Africa and its diaspora alongside over 300 OFF exhibitions throughout Dakar."

What is African art?: a short history / Peter Probst. (The University of Chicago Press, 2022)

"What do we have in mind when we talk about African art? This book examines the shifting answers to that question. Fluidly written, it is the first book to explore the full historical arc of the invention and development of the category of "African art" and the academic field of African art history. It is meant to be an accessible guide through the history of the field, showing us how it started and has changed from its contested beginnings until today. Peter Probst helps the reader understand how Africanists have continuously filled the notion of African art with new meanings and why these shifts manifest wider societal transformations. The book covers three key stages in the field's history, starting with the late nineteenth through mid-twentieth century. Here Probst focuses on museums, processes of collecting, photography's role in disseminating visual culture, and how early anthropologists and art historians-and artists-imbued collected objects with values that spoke to scientific debates about the evolution and diffusion of culture prominent at the time. Probst then explores the rise of Black Atlantic

studies in the 1970s and 1980s, when African art history fell under the gaze of African American critique and saw an explosion of interest in contemporary African art. Finally, he examines the postcolonial reconfiguration of the field driven by questions of heritage, reparation, and the “crisis of representation.” Probst believes that if the study of African art is to move in productive new directions, we must look to how the field is evolving in Africa for new models of inquiry.”

When We See Us: a century of black figuration in painting / edited by Koyo Kouoh. (Thames & Hudson, 2022)

“When We See Us: a century of black figuration in painting is published to coincide with a landmark exhibition at Zeitz MOCAA (Museum of Contemporary Art Africa), Cape Town. Edited by Koyo Koyoh, this major new study of Global Black subjectivities and self-portraiture from Africa and the African diaspora features more than 200 paintings by 161 artists. These carefully selected works explore the many ways in which artists have imagined, positioned, remembered and asserted African and diasporic experiences from the early 20th century to now. In particular, they demonstrate how painters have contributed to the ongoing discussions around pan-Africanism, civil rights, African liberation and independence, the Anti-Apartheid and Black Consciousness movements, decolonization Black Lives Matter and more recently Afropolitanism. A series of thematic sections – on subjects such as sensuality, spirituality and emancipation -is interspersed with specially commissioned stories and poems by leading writers Ken Bugul, Maaza Mengiste, Bill Kouelany and Robin Coste Lewis and an essay by Tandazani Dhlakama.”

SELECTED COUNTRIES

CONGO DR

Congo as fiction: art worlds between past and present / edited by Nanina Guyer and Michaela Oberhofer. (Scheidegger und Spies, 2019)

“For the first time, this exhibition presents objects and photographs that the German art anthropologist Hans Himmelheber collected during his field trip to the Congo in 1938-39: coloured masks, imposing figures, and richly decorated everyday objects. These are contrasted with contemporary positions by renowned Congolese artists. Exhibition: Museum Rietberg, Zürich, Switzerland (22.11.2019 - 15.03.2020).”

Lumumba in the arts / edited by Matthias De Groof. (Leuven University Press, 2020)

“It is no coincidence that a historical figure such as Patrice Emery Lumumba, independent Congo's first prime minister, who was killed in 1961, has lived in the realm of the cultural imaginary and occupied an afterlife in the arts. After all, his project remained unfinished and his corpse unburied. The figure of Lumumba has been imagined through painting, photography, cinema, poetry, literature, theatre, music, sculpture, fashion, cartoons and stamps, and also through historiography and in public space. Reverting to either beatifying or diabolising his persona, no art form has been able to escape and remain indifferent to Lumumba. Artists observe the memory and the unresolved suffering that inscribed itself both upon Lumumba?s body and within the history of Congo. If Lumumba - as an icon - lives on today, it is because the need for decolonisation does as well.Rather than seeking to unravel the truth of actual events surrounding the historical Lumumba, this book engages with his representations. What is more, it considers every historiography as inherently embedded in iconography. Film scholars, art critics, historians, philosophers, and anthropologists discuss the rich iconographic heritage inspired by Lumumba. Furthermore, 'Lumumba's Iconography in the Arts' offers unique testimonies by a number of artists who have contributed to Lumumba's polymorphic iconography, such as Marlène Dumas, Luc Tuymans, Raoul Peck, and Tshibumba Matulu, and includes contributions by such highly acclaimed scholars as Gayatri Spivak, Johannes Fabian, Bogumil Jewsiewicky, and Elikia M'Bokolo.”

ETHIOPIA

Modernist art in Ethiopia / Elizabeth W. Giorgis (Ohio University Press, 2019)

"If modernism initially came to Africa through colonial contact, what does Ethiopia's inimitable historical condition—its independence save for five years under Italian occupation—mean for its own modernist tradition? In Modernist Art in Ethiopia—the first book-length study of the topic—Elizabeth W. Giorgis recognizes that her home country's supposed singularity, particularly as it pertains to its history from 1900 to the present, cannot be conceived outside the broader colonial legacy. She uses the evolution of modernist art in Ethiopia to open up the intellectual, cultural, and political histories of it in a pan-African context. Giorgis explores the varied precedents of the country's political and intellectual history to understand the ways in which the import and range of visual narratives were mediated across different moments, and to reveal the conditions that account for the extraordinary dynamism of the visual arts in Ethiopia. In locating its arguments at the intersection of visual culture and literary and performance studies, Modernist Art in Ethiopia details how innovations in visual art intersected with shifts in philosophical and ideological narratives of modernity. The result is profoundly innovative work—a bold intellectual, cultural, and political history of Ethiopia, with art as its centerpiece."

KENYA

Visual voices: the work of over 50 contemporary artists in Kenya / Susan Wakhungu-Githuku. (Footprints Press, 2017)

"In over 600 pages, Visual Voices presents over 400 pieces from 57 different contemporary artists in Kenya, showcasing a vibrant, edgy and growing art scene. The artists in the collection use various methods including paintings, sculptures, murals, photography, glassworks, and furniture, besides on-site installation projects."

GHANA

Kumasi realism, 1951-2007: an African modernism / Atta Kwami. (Hurst, 2013)

"Western approaches to Africa's visual culture have until recently separated 'traditional' from 'modern' as if the two categories had no common ground, and as if only the former was authentically African. Yet 'tradition' is also an active process of handing on, one subject to evolution, development and history. This book explores a burgeoning body of West African artistic production that draws upon photography, advertising, graphic design, European art history and Ghanaian history and culture. As such it constitutes an envisioning of a local modernity centred upon Kumasi, a vibrant trading city at the centre of local, national and international networks, whether historical, economic, political, educational, religious or aesthetic. The art described here, whatever its immediate purpose, reflects and interprets this intense and unique local context. Among the Ghanaian painters discussed are E.V. Asihene, Grace Kwami, E.K.J. Tetteh, Ablade Glover, Ato Delaquis, B. Offei Nyako, Atta Kwami, kari'kacha seid'ou, Bob Acheampong and many others whose practice was college based. Kwami also discusses the art and lives of Kumasi's leading sign painters – King Samino (King Samino Sign Art Services), Alex Amofa (Supreme Art Works), Kwame Akoto (Almighty God Art Works), Isaac Azey Otchere (Azey Alberto Art & Sign Service), and Isumaila Moro (Iss Hi-Tech Prints) – thereby exploring the interrelationship of two entwined traditions, two art worlds of modern painting centred at either the university and/or the signpainter's workshop."

Ghana freedom: Ghana Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia / editor, Nana Oforiatta Ayim. (König Books, 2019)

"Titled Ghana Freedom, after the song composed by E.T. Mensah on the eve of the birth of the new nation in 1957, the pavilion curated by Nana Oforiatta Ayim examines the legacies and trajectories of that freedom by six artists, across three generations, rooted both in Ghana and its Diasporas: through archives of objects in large-scale installations by El Anatsui and Ibrahim Mahama;

representation and portraiture, both in the studio work of Ghana's first known female photographer Felicia Abban and imagined by painter Lynette Yiadom-Boakye; the relativities of loss and restitution in a three- channel film by John Akomfrah; and, lastly, in a film sculpture by Selasi Awusi Sosu. The elliptically shaped design of the pavilion by Sir David Adjaye explores the intersection of ideas linking the works."

NIGERIA

Postcolonial modernism: art and decolonization in twentieth-century Nigeria / Chika Okeke-Agulu. (Duke University Press, 2015)

"Written by one of the foremost scholars of African art and featuring 129 color images, *Postcolonial Modernism* chronicles the emergence of artistic modernism in Nigeria in the heady years surrounding political independence in 1960, before the outbreak of civil war in 1967. Chika Okeke-Agulu traces the artistic, intellectual, and critical networks in several Nigerian cities. Zaria is particularly important, because it was there, at the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, that a group of students formed the Art Society and inaugurated postcolonial modernism in Nigeria. As Okeke-Agulu explains, their works show both a deep connection with local artistic traditions and the stylistic sophistication that we have come to associate with twentieth-century modernist practices. He explores how these young Nigerian artists were inspired by the rhetoric and ideologies of decolonization and nationalism in the early- and mid-twentieth century and, later, by advocates of negritude and pan-Africanism. They translated the experiences of decolonization into a distinctive "postcolonial modernism" that has continued to inform the work of major Nigerian artists."

SOUTH AFRICA

Art in South Africa: the future present / Sue Williamson, Ashraf Jamal. (David Philip, 1996).

"This work documents in 60 pages of full colour the most dynamic and exciting artists and their works that have emerged since South Africa s emancipation in 1990."

10 years 100 artists, art in a democratic South Africa / editor, Sophie Perryer (Bell Roberts, 2004)

"The book provides a multifaceted view of contemporary South African art in 2004 – 10 years after the country's first democratic elections. A beautiful and substantial coffee-table book, it showcases the work of 100 top artists, ranging from emerging talents to those who have already received international acclaim for their work, as chosen by 15 leading South African critics and curators. The book is rich in images of the artists' recent works, and includes texts on each artist. The book also features serious discussion by the 15 curators about the state of the art – today, as informed represented in a timeline of the most significant exhibitions of this period."

Visual century: South African art in context / [editor Mario Pissarra]. (Wits University Press, 2011)

"*Visual Century* is an ambitious four-volume publication that reappraises one hundred years of South African visual art from a post-apartheid perspective. It is the first wideranging survey of its contemporary art to incorporate multiple writers and perspectives. By contextualising South African art within broader historical currents, *Visual Century* makes a major contribution towards the construction of an inclusive national archive, as well as to the development of an inclusive international art history."

Impressions from South Africa, 1965 to now: prints from the museum of Modern Art / curated by Judith B. Hecker. (N.Y. Museum of Modern Art, 2011)

"Encompassing black-and-white linoleum cuts made at community art centers in the 1960s and 1970s, resistance posters and other political art of the 1980s and the wide variety of subjects and techniques explored by artists in printshops over the last two decades, printmaking has been a driving force in contemporary South African artistic and political expression. Impressions from South

Africa, 1965 to Now, published to accompany an exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, introduces the vital role of printmaking through works by more than 20 artists in the Museum's collection. The volume features prints by John Muafangejo and Dan Rakgoathe, whose vigorous, metaphoric linoleum cuts conveying social messages were cultivated at Rorke's Drift Art and Craft Centre in the 1960s and 1970s, posters produced for anti-apartheid coalitions in the 1980s, and political work by Sue Williamson, Norman Catherine and William Kentridge, representing periods of apartheid resistance. More recent projects, including traditional etchings by Diane Victor, comic books by Bitterkomix, lithographs by Joachim Schönfeldt and Claudette Schreuders and digital prints by Cameron Platter, address ongoing social issues and explore new subjects. New linoleum cut projects by a younger generation of artists--Paul Edmunds, Senzeni Marasela and Vuyile Voyiya--demonstrate the relevance of the medium in South Africa today."

Between dreams and realities: a history of the South African National Gallery, 1871-2017 / Marilyn Martin. (Print Matters Heritage, 2019)

"Written by Marilyn Martin, a former director of the South African National Gallery, Between Dreams and Realities is based on extensive research and experience. This book revisits important exhibitions, events and forgotten controversies; it highlights the achievements of directors, who often faced political agendas and strained relationships within and outside the institution. Between Dreams and Realities considers the aspirations and role of civil society in creating and maintaining a national institution for the common good. Concurrently, the book examines long-standing government disinterest and neglect for the museum, and the difficulties that confronted directors in acquiring a collection worthy of its status. It also tells the story of excellent public cooperation and support, and of boards of trustees, directors and staff together overcoming the realities of budget cuts, government interference and severe space constraints. Between Dreams and Realities is a celebration of South Africa's heritage and cultural wealth; it contributes to the fields of museum, heritage, cultural and curatorial studies, as well as visual and art history. It opens up the discourse and revives interest in public art museums in general and in the national art museum in particular, while offering perspectives on the future, and galvanising custodians and the public into action."

ARTISTS

Aboudia

Aboudia / Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, Gauz'. (Rizzoli, 2024)

“Aboudia draws inspiration from local street culture in his hometown of Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The artist is famous for his heavily layered, brutally energetic paintings that combine an innocence and spontaneity with the portrayal of a dark interior world. Since the Ivorian civil wars (2004-2011), his urban landscapes have been haunted by trauma: armed soldiers, ominous skulls, and a populace hemmed in by danger. His recent work continues to grapple with the hardships of daily life and the social inequalities within Ivorian society. In his imagery, Aboudia refers to characters from his direct neighborhood and contemporary "Nouchi" culture and language, illustrating the vitality and resilience of the inhabitants of Abidjan. With an immense variety of details coming in and out of focus, often only revealing themselves after several viewings, his paintings are a melting pot of references, paying homage to traditional arts and spirituality but also including images from contemporary West African culture.”

Akunyili Crosby, Njideka

“The beautiful ones” / Njideka Akunyili Crosby. (Victoria Miro, 2019)

“Begun in 2014, Njideka Akunyili Crosby's ongoing series, The Beautyful Ones is comprised of portraits of Nigerian children, including members of the artist's family, derived from personal photographs and, more recently, from images taken during her frequent visits to Nigeria, where Akunyili Crosby lived until the age of sixteen.Its title is taken from the 1968 novel by the Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Armah, The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born, a book whose influence endured during the artist's adolescence in the 1990s and is still felt today. In it, the author laments the lost idealism of a generation in the 1960s for a better Africa, post-independence.In, The Beautyful Ones the artist reinstates this optimism in her own and subsequent generations while offering a powerful perspective on the complexities of a contemporary diasporic experience.Crosby is one of the most

distinctive voices of her generation, and this book, only the second publication on the Los-Angeles based artist. It features extensive illustrations of works in the series and an essay by Siddhartha Mitter, who, reflecting on the work's complex history, weaves together the social, cultural, personal and political strands of its making.Published on the occasion of the exhibition, Njideka Akunyili Crosby: The Beautyful Ones at Victoria Miro, Venice (8 May - 13 July 2019).”

Baya

Seeing Baya: portrait of an Algerian artist in Paris / Alice Kaplan. (The University of Chicago Press, 2024)

“On November 22, 1947, a fifteen-year-old prodigy from colonial Algeria named Baya exhibited her paintings and clay sculptures at the Parisian gallery of the art dealer Aimé Maeght. Her opening attracted some of the most influential cultural figures of postwar Paris, including Albert Camus, André Breton, Henri Matisse, and Georges Braque. Alice Kaplan's biography begins on that November day, in that gallery, then moves from Baya's beginnings as a farmworker to her Parisian triumph, through her death in Algeria in 1998, by then a cultural icon of independent Algeria. Orphaned at age nine, Baya was working on a flower farm when she caught the eye of a French woman, Marguerite Caminat, whose interest in the girl changed her life. The relationship of support and affection between the indigenous Algerian artist and her French mentor was fraught with ambiguity. Baya worked as Caminat's maid but came to see herself as the woman's adoptive daughter; Caminat nurtured Baya's gift and saw the child as the artist she herself once aspired to be. The French press of 1947 celebrated the young artist with all the predictable clichés: the orphan rescued by the white fairy godmother, the wild child civilized, the ignorant genius on display. In Seeing Baya: Portrait of an Algerian Artist in Paris, Kaplan considers the differences that Baya makes to the stories we have told about modern art and postwar culture in France. She unravels the human sentiments at play in this history, from the noble to the venal to the obscure, and probes the motivations of the characters surrounding Baya, scrutinizing them from different angles as they respond to the singular itinerary of the young artist. Seeing Baya reveals a fascinating and significant life, one of survival, resistance, and irrepressible talent”

Bruly Bouabré, Frédéric

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré - world unbound / Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi. (The Museum of Modern Art, 2022)

“The Ivorian artist Frédéric Bruly Bouabré created an unmistakable and entirely unique body of work, first as a writer and linguist, and then in a dazzling series of colorful drawings on a multitude of subjects, from his native Bété culture to the urban milieu of Abidjan to the all-encompassing themes of fraternity, equality and global understanding. All but unknown even in his home country of Côte d’Ivoire, Bouabré found international recognition in 1989 when he participated in the landmark Paris exhibition Magiciens de la terre, and his work has since been the subject of solo and group exhibitions around the world.?Published to accompany the first museum survey of Bouabré’s work in North America, this catalog offers a vivid account of the artist’s long and multifaceted career, including a detailed chronology of his life and reproductions of more than six hundred of his drawings. An essay by curator Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi introduces Bouabré to a new audience, illuminating his significance as both an important African creator and one of the most intriguing artists of the 20th century.”

Clarke, Peter

More than brothers: Peter Clarke and James Matthews / edited by Hein Willemse. (Kwela Books, 2000)

”Peter Clarke and James Matthews were born within days of each other. Clarke on 2 June 1929 in a stone cottage overlooking False Bay. Matthews eight days earlier, across Table Mountain, in a Bo-Kaap tenement building facing the city bowl. These two boys, from similar backgrounds, grew into young men before they met and formed friendship that would last a lifetime. The became ‘almost more than brothers’. Yet they are complete opposites: Clarke is characterized by his dignified reserve and meticulous order, Matthews by his forthrightness and bohemian disorder. Over a period of more than forty years both became well known in their respective disciplines – Clarke became a poet, short-story writer and primarily a painter; Matthews started out writing short stories and novels before establishing himself as the dispatcher of raging Black Consciousness poetry. This book is a tribute to

two fiercely independent artists. It is liberally illustrated with the work of both artists in b/w and color photographs."

El-Salai, Ibrahim

Ibrahim El-Salahi: a visionary modernist / edited by Salah M. Hassan. (Tate, 2013)

"Ibrahim El-Salahi: A Visionary Modernist, published as a companion to a traveling retrospective by the same name, chronicles the evolution of Sudanese artist Ibrahim El-Salahi's work over more than fifty years of sustained artistic productivity and intellectual engagement. El-Salahi's accomplishments offer profound possibilities for understanding African modernism in the context of modernity as a universal idea, one in which African art history is part and parcel of a global art history. The essays in A Visionary Modernist reconstruct the remarkable journey of El-Salahi, and, through a critical look at his artistic contributions, expand the narrative of modernism in the visual arts from comparative and international perspectives. Edited, and featuring a historical overview, by Salah M. Hassan, the book includes essays and interviews by well-known art historians and critics Sarah Adams, Ulli Beier, Iftikhar Dadi, Hassan Musa, and Chika Okeke-Agulu, as well as special texts by El-Salahi himself."

Kentridge, William

William Kentridge: in praise of shadows / organized by Ed Schad, (The Broad, 2022)

"Surveying 35 years of the South African artist's practice, this exhibition includes all 18 works from the Broad collection with loans from across the United States and South Africa. Curated by Ed Schad, the exhibition is organized both thematically and chronologically throughout the museum's first-floor galleries. A highlight of the exhibition is The Broad collection's 30-minute five-channel video and multimedia installation The Refusal of Time (2012). In addition to drawings, sculptures, prints, and tapestries featured at The Broad, the artist's 11 Drawings for Projection films will be on view, as well as a series of films that reflect on early cinema, including 7 Fragments for Georges Méliés, Day for Night, and Journey to the Moon (all 2003), a suite of nine short films that feature the artist himself and celebrate the artist's studio as a site of experimentation and associative play. Many recent drawings will be shown that were created for his performance project The Head & the Load (2018), which unearths the neglected histories of Africans and Africa in World War I. Important early works rarely or never before seen in the United States--such as Domestic Scenes (1980) (54 etchings tied to Kentridge's work in theater) the Art in a State of Grace, Art in a State of Hope, Art in a State of Siege (all 1988)--show Kentridge's political engagement."

Lawrence, Jacob

Black Orpheus: Jacob Lawrence and the Mbari Club / edited by Kimberli Gant and Ndubuisi Ezeluomba, (Yale University Press, 2022)

"This revelatory book shines a light on the understudied but important influence of African Modernism on the work of Black American artist Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000). In 1965, a New York gallery displayed Lawrence's Nigeria series: eight tempera paintings of Lagos and Ibadan marketplaces that were the culmination of an eight-month stay in Nigeria. Lawrence's residency in Nigeria put him in touch with the Mbari Artists and Writers Club, an international consortium of artists and writers in post-independence Nigeria that published the arts journal Black Orpheus. The book and accompanying exhibition place the Nigeria series alongside issues of Black Orpheus and artwork created by Mbari Club artists, including Uche Okeke, Jacob Afolabi, Susanne Wenger, and Naoko Matsubara. Diverse essays explore the influence of Africa's post-colonial movement on American modernists and developing African artists; the women of the Mbari group; and the importance of art publications in circulating knowledge globally.Exhibition: Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA, USA (07.10.2022 - 08.01.2023)."

Malangata

Malangata Valente Ngwenya / edited by Júlio Navarro. ((Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2003)

"Malangatana is Mozambique's best known artist. He began making art in the late 1950s without benefit of formal training, but with the encouragement and patronage of a few foreigners, notably Amâncio "Pancho" Guedes. Guedes offers recollections of those early years in Maputo, which is valuable since he himself is a critical player in this history. Malangatana's painting style and narrative compositions seem to have sprung full blown into a distinctive artistic vision. Even his early works show a maturity and confidence that might take others years to achieve. Thematically, too,

Malangatana has a lot to say. His paintings narrate social and political themes (e.g. forced labor, prisons), morality tales (e.g., forbidden sex, sin), folk tales, horrific phantasmagoria (e.g., bleeding, dismemberment, suffering), and Biblical homilies. His lines are bold; his colors primary: red, blue, yellow. Malangatana has also executed murals and outdoor sculpture. This *catalogue raisonné* covers works from 1959 to 1998 with most coming from the artist's own vast collection."

Mokgosi, Meleko

Meleko Mokgosi: Bread, butter, and power / Erica P. Jones. (Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2019)

"Bread, Butter, and Power is a new large-scale painting cycle that explores the overarching theme of feminism and gendered divisions of labor throughout southern Africa. Mokgosi's emphasis on narrative storytelling inspires the viewer to think deeply about the politics, power structures, and the role of history in the creation of the current nations of southern Africa."

Morsi, Ahmed

Ahmed Morsi: a dialogic imagination / edited by Hoor Al Qasimi and Salah M. Hassan. (Sharjah Art Foundatio 2021)

"After coming of age in the 1940s as part of the Alexandria School, a movement led by free thinkers and artists that marked the city's emergence as a postwar Mediterranean cultural entrepot, Ahmed Morsi spent time in Baghdad before moving to Cairo in the 1960s and eventually immigrating to York in the 1970s. A painter, poet, printmaker, and critic, Morsi has created a diverse body of work abundant in mythic beauty. The Cairo journal he helped lead in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Galerie 68, became the voice of the Egyptian avant-garde, and he has also experimented with theatrical set design and artist's books. This volume highlights the rich interplay between Morsi's poetry and paintings and emphasises the way his multivalent practice conducts a dialogue with the wider world. Newly commissioned scholarly essays, commentaries from his contemporaries, selections from the artist's own writings, an interview with the artist, and numerous photographs and reproductions capture the vibrancy and impact of Morsi's prolific career."

Muriu, Thandiwe

Camo / Thandiwe Muriu. (Chronicle Chroma, 2024)

"Camo, by photographer Thandiwe Muriu, is the first publication to chronicle the work of this international artist, celebrating the vibrant portraits she creates that combine cultural textiles and beauty ideologies. Muriu takes us on a colorful, reflective journey through her world as a woman living in modern Kenya as she reinterprets contemporary African portraiture."

Mzuguno, David

David Mzuguno: the last days of the master / Pascal Bogaert. (Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2013)

"Even during his lifetime, David Mzuguno was widely regarded as one of the leading Tanzanian Tingatinga painters of his generation. He was on the verge of an international breakthrough when he lost his battle to lung cancer at age 59. His final and most successful exhibitions was held in Uganda."

Odutola, Toyin Ojih

The UmuEze Amara Clan and the house of Obafemi / Toyin Odutola. (Rizzola Electa, 2021)

"This extraordinary illustrated story--Toyin Ojih Odutola's best-known body of work--chronicles the private lives of two fictional aristocratic Nigerian families, the UmuEze Amara Clan and the House of Obafemi, if colonialist and slave-trade interventions had never disrupted the country. Rendered life-size in charcoal, pastel, and pencil, Ojih Odutola's figures appear enigmatic and mysterious, set against the artist's larger conceived narrative, highlighting the malleability of identity and assumptions about race, wealth, and class. The UmuEze Amara Clan and the House of Obafemi presents the story of these families in four chapters illustrated and authored by Ojih Odutola, accompanied by the artist's sketches and notes. Also included are several insightful essays on the artist herself by noted writers and critics Zadie Smith, Leigh Raiford, and others. An introduction to the artist's vivid fictionalized world, as well as a reflection on the role of this body of work within her broader practice, this remarkable volume serves as the essential guide to Ojih Odutola's unique form of storytelling."

Pemba, George Milwa Mnyaluza

George Milwa Mnyaluza Pemba / editors, Hayden Proud, Barry Feinberg. (South African National Gallery, 1996)

“This catalogue and exhibition represent part of a recent effort to assess and pay tribute to George Milwa Mnyaluza Pemba. Born in 1912, he is today regarded as one of South Africa’s important artists. Domiciled in Port Elizabeth, his work has, until now, remained unappreciated by our nation as a whole. Pemba’s life and prodigious output tell a tale of personal struggle and artistic ambition amid all the complexities and ironies of the South African context. A contemporary and acquaintance of the exiled Gerard Sekoto, his was yet another talent hampered, obscured and shaped under the exigencies of racism in South Africa.”

Sekoto, Gerard

Gerard Sekoto 'I am an African': a biography / N. Chabani Mananyi. (Wits University Press, 2004)

“Gerard Sekoto is without doubt one of South Africa's major painters of the twentieth century. Considered increasingly as one of the earliest South African modernists and social realists, he completed his most memorable work during the early and middle years of the 1940s. When he left for Paris in 1947, he was at the height of his creative powers. He spent forty-five years as an exile in France, and during these often difficult times his talent, dedication, belief in the equality of all people and, most of all, his identity as an African sustained him. Chabani Manganyi's biography is informed by the discovery, after Sekoto's death, of a 'suitcase of treasures', which contained previously unknown musical compositions, letters and a large quantity of notes, writings and private documents. Photographs and full colour plates of previously unpublished and significant paintings are included.”

Stern, Irma

Irma Stern: African in Europe, European in Africa / Sean O'Toole. (Prestel, [2020)

“The vivid and powerful expressionist paintings of Irma Stern were a key factor in the modernization of early 20th-century South African art. Although she was widely recognized during her lifetime, Stern's posthumous fame has dwindled outside her home country, and this beautifully produced monograph serves to correct that injustice. A master of color and composition, Stern is best known for her portraits and still lifes that reflected her passion for travel and devotion to home. Drawing from letters, journals, the artist's own illustrated travelogues as well as the latest scholarship, this volume traces Stern's childhood in South Africa and her family's flight to Germany in the wake of the South African War (1899-1902). Readers will learn of her artistic development at the center of Weimar, Germany's expressionist avant-garde, her return to her homeland and the derisive reaction to her early work, and finally her productive travels throughout the African continent and the acclaim she achieved. The book also focuses on the political and cultural forces that shaped Stern's work, including the unification of South Africa, the rise of expressionism in Germany, the interplay between indigenous and colonial art in the African continent, and Stern's continued influence on contemporary South African artists.”

Wangechi Mutu

Wangechi Mutu: I am speaking, are you listening? / Claudia Schmuckli. (DelMonico Books, 2021)

“Between Afrofuturism, fantasy and postcolonialism: the most comprehensive monograph to date on the fantastical worlds of Wangechi Mutu. Wangechi Mutu takes viewers on journeys of material, psychological and sociopolitical transformation; this volume explores her most recent groundbreaking work. Over the past two decades, Mutu has created chimerical constellations of powerful female characters, hybrid beings and fantastical landscapes. With a rare understanding of the need for powerful new mythologies beyond simple binaries and stereotypes, Mutu breaches common distinctions between human, animal, plant and machine. An artist who calls both Nairobi and New York City home, Mutu moves voraciously between cultural traditions to challenge colonialist, racist and sexist worldviews with her visionary projection of an alternate universe informed by Afrofuturism, posthumanism and feminism.”

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The Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) conducts independent, policyrelevant research, provides analysis and informs decisionmaking, with the aim of advancing research-based knowledge of contemporary Africa. The institute is jointly financed by the governments of Finland, Iceland and Sweden.

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