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Cover picture: *Heads with Drum* by Simon Okeke  
 (see item 176).

The contemporary art of Africa eludes generalized description. Artists have utilized various mediums, from oils to silk screening, and methods varying from brass casting by the ancient lost wax process to welding tin cans and other metals into sculpture. Traditionalists like Yemi Bisiri and Lamidi Fakeye produce sculpture and wood carvings based on classical African designs. A larger group works in the modern styles of cubism, expressionism, and surrealism, while others seek a purely personal style. Many African artists are trained at European and American schools; others feel that they can achieve truly African expression only in their native surroundings. In Nigeria, for example, the national artistic tradition is strong and pervasive, even though obscured by the effects of European colonialism and Christian and Moslem religious zeal. In many other countries, traditional art very nearly succumbed under these forces. Thus a contemporary artwork is classified as African purely on the basis of the artist's nationality, rather than according to a peculiar style, subject, purpose, or medium.

Nearly all African artists are affected by a few common factors. The tremendous influx of new ideas and technology, the replacement of colonial rule with independence, and the accompanying lack of stability contribute heavily to the climate in which contemporary art is being produced and necessarily affect the scope and mode of artistic expression. The lack of broad-based support for art among the African populace leads to some practical problems. Opportunities for formal training are limited. In Nigeria, neither art technique nor appreciation is taught in many of the primary and secondary schools. University programs leading to a degree in Fine Arts have been in existence only since 1955, when one program was established at Ahmadu Bello University at Zaria, Nigeria. The public offers little financial support to these young, often unknown artists struggling to earn a living and a reputation. Many turn to producing "airport art," a lucrative but creatively unrewarding business in handcrafted pottery, figurines, bookends, ashtrays, and related paraphernalia for homeward-bound tourists. The more fortunate receive commissions for work in new government buildings and public institutions or from private sources. Here again the patron's desires often influence the artist's expression.

The African artist finds himself handicapped by limited educational opportunities and financial resources, and a public which is often unreceptive to his contemporary artistic expression. Yet the outlook is promising. Frank Willett, an authority on African art,



comments in his book, *African Art: An Introduction*, "It seems likely that posterity will judge the second half of the twentieth century to have been a period of artistic renaissance for Africa as a whole." One organization which fostered this renaissance was the Harmon Foundation, a nonprofit, private foundation active from 1922 to 1967.

Although its initial projects were funding parks and playgrounds and providing student loans, the foundation's flexible structure lent itself to support for a wide range of activities, including art. The foundation's interest in contemporary African art grew rather spontaneously. Its initial contact with Africa came through three series of motion pictures commissioned by the foundation in the 1930's on native life and tribal customs and the work of Christian missions in Africa. Although art was not selected as a focal point, the films depicted a culture built around folkcrafts; houses, furnishings, cooking utensils, and clothing were all handcrafted from local materials. Art, in a broad sense, had been an integral part of African life. By the mid-1940's a few artists, aware of the films and the foundation's work with black American artists and anxious to create a market for their artworks in the United States, began sending their work to the New York offices. General interest was slow to develop. Connoisseurs of art seemed to see the African work not as serious, creative effort, but as sociological commentary on modern Africa. This view became particularly apparent in 1950, when the foundation had difficulty finding an established gallery for an exhibit by Ben Enwonwu, a leading Nigerian artist whose work had been successfully shown in England.

As a result of these early experiences, a strong relationship developed between the African artists, the foundation, and the American art community. More and more artists became aware of the foundation as a contact point and more frequently shipped artworks to the United States for exhibit and sale. The foundation became conscious of the substantial lack of appreciation for contemporary African art and of its own potential role in promoting intercultural understanding. By 1967 it was well established as a liaison between the artists and interested groups. With the cooperation of the Merton Simpson Gallery in New York and a few university galleries, it arranged several one-man shows and numerous general exhibits. After 6 years of research, it published *Africa's Contemporary Art and Artists*, a descriptive compilation of artists in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the staff collected black and white prints and color slides of nearly 2,500 artworks. The

Harmon Foundation's role had mushroomed from a latent, remote interest to leadership in the field of contemporary African art.

When the foundation ended its activities in 1967, it donated to the National Archives its entire collection of motion pictures, filmstrips, color slides, and black and white prints and negatives on a variety of subjects. The following selection, arranged alphabetically by name of artist, from the "Artworks by African Artists" series, is a representative sample of the work of some of the artists in the collection. An inclusive list of artists in this series is available upon request.

An order form is attached. The italicized number following an entry should be placed in the "Picture Number" column. Photographs of artworks not listed can be ordered by giving the name of the artist and title of the work in the "Picture Number" column. Asterisks following artwork titles indicate which are available in color as well as black and white.

The list and introductory remarks were prepared by Nancy E. Malan, Audiovisual Archives Division.

*Suggested reading:* Ulli Beier, *Contemporary Art in Africa* (London, 1968); Evelyn S. Brown, *Africa's Contemporary Art and Artists* (New York, 1966); Frank Willett, *African Art: An Introduction* (New York, 1971); and *African Arts*, published quarterly by the African Studies Center, University of California at Los Angeles.

**Abossolo, Martin (Cameroon)**

1. *Dancer No. 1*, \* oil (1965). 200S-HN-AA-1B-2
2. *Pensive*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-1B-1
3. *Tom-Tom Player No. 1*, \* oil (1965). 200S-HN-AA-1B-6

**Abubakar, Fatma Abdullah (Tanzania)**

4. *Egrets*, oil. 200S-HN-AA-1C-2
5. *Feeding Monkeys*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-1C-1

**Addo-Osafo, Emmanuel (Ghana)**

6. *The Coming of the Ashanti Golden Stool*, linocut? 200S-HN-AA-1D-15
7. *The Great Whip*, print. 200S-HN-AA-1D-12
8. *The Orange Seller*, linocut or woodcut. 200S-HN-AA-1D-8

**Afolabi, Jacob (Nigeria)**

9. *The Flash-Eyed Mother*, linocut. 200S-HN-AA-1E-5
10. *Igbo and His People*, linocut. 200S-HN-AA-1E-7
11. *Latanga with His Guard*, linocut. 200S-HN-AA-1E-2

**Ahmed, Taj S. M. (Sudan)**

12. *Interior with Sarcophagus*, \* lithograph (1962). 200S-HN-AA-1G-8
13. *Ottoman Khedive*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-1G-5
14. *Suzannah and the Elders*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-1G-2 \*



119. *Fighting Cocks*, engraving (1962). 200S-HN-AA-7A-10
120. *Hoola Hoop*, woodcut (1962). 200S-HN-AA-7A-7
121. *Man with Beef*, lithograph (1963). 200S-HN-AA-7A-6
- Lumu, Henry Michael (Uganda)
122. *Wandegeya Suburb*, \* tempera on paper (1960). 200S-HN-AA-7E-1
- Luvwezo, Jean (Zaire)
123. *Dance Masks*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-7F-9
124. *L'Avenir*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-7F-10
- Malangatana, Valente G. (Mozambique)
125. *Nude with Crucifix*, oil (1960). 200S-HN-AA-7J-3
126. *Rape*, oil (1961). 200S-HN-AA-7J-5
127. *The Voyage*, oil (1960). 200S-HN-AA-7J-2
- Manyolo, Betty (Uganda)
128. *African Fable*, linocut. 200S-HN-AA-7M-3
129. *Cattle People*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-7M-4
130. *Death in the Forest*, linocut. 200S-HN-AA-7M-1
- Mitchell, James (South Africa)
131. *Excitement*, linocut (1962). 200S-HN-AA-7P-3
132. *Friday Night*, linocut (1961). 200S-HN-AA-7P-2
133. *"Socker's" Alley*, linocut (1962). 200S-HN-AA-7P-5
- Mlahlwa, Mercy (South Africa)
134. *Sisters*, soapstone sculpture. 200S-HN-AA-7Q-2
- Mulongoya, Pili Pili (Zaire)
135. *Crocodile and Snake Fighting*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-7T-3
136. *Snake Amid Flowers*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-7T-1
- Musango, Francis (Brother Francis) (Uganda)
137. *Christ in the Manger*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-7U-14
138. *Kikuyu Women*, \* watercolor? 200S-HN-AA-7U-16
139. *The Flower*, \* watercolor? 200S-HN-AA-7U-15
- Mvusi, Selby (South Africa)
140. *Retreat*, charcoal. 200S-HN-AA-7W-6
141. *The Funeral*, charcoal (1961). 200S-HN-AA-7W-1
142. *The Patriots*, pencil or charcoal drawing. 200S-HN-AA-7W-7
- Ngu, Clara Ugbodaga (Nigeria)
143. *Beggars*, \* oil (1963). 200S-HN-AA-8C-9
144. *Man and Bird*, \* oil (1963). 200S-HN-AA-8C-8
145. *Market Women*, \* oil (1961). 200S-HN-AA-8C-6
- Njau, Elimo P. (Tanzania)
146. *Head of Christ*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-8E-2
- Murals at Fort Hall Memorial Chapel, Kenya:
147. *The Birth of Christ*. 200S-HN-AA-8E-7
148. *The Last Supper*. 200S-HN-AA-8E-3

149. *The Load and the ...* AA-8E-1
- Nour, Amir Ibrahim Mohed (Sudan)
150. *Building in Black and White*, lithograph. 200S-HN-AA-8G-1
151. *Chaos*, lithograph (1961). 200S-HN-AA-8G-2
152. *Lines and Shapes*, \* lithograph (1961). 200S-HN-AA-8G-4
- Ntiro, Sam J. (Tanzania)
153. *Chagga Beermaking*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-8J-21
154. *Conversion of Saint Paul*, cartoon for a mural, oil. 200S-HN-AA-8J-28
155. *In the Banana Grove*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-8J-25
156. *Kakindo Crucifixion*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-8J-29
157. *Making Chagga Hut*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-8J-38
158. *Mango Tree*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-8J-65
159. *Round Huts*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-8J-58
- Nwoko, Demas N. (Nigeria)
160. *Beggar Boy*, watercolor. 200S-HN-AA-8K-2
161. *Children on Cycles*, oil on panel. 200S-HN-AA-8K-1
- Odita, Emmanuel Okechukwu (Nigeria)
162. *Sheep Grazing*, oil. 200S-HN-AA-9A-23
163. *The Market Stall*, \* oil. 200S-HN-AA-9A-3
164. *Yam Festival Dancers*, \* oil (1963). 200S-HN-AA-9A-4
- Ogundele, Rufus (Nigeria)
165. *Bird*, linocut. 200S-HN-AA-9B-6
166. *Figures*, linocut. 200S-HN-AA-9B-5
167. *Scene from "Oba Moro"*, linocut. 200S-HN-AA-9B-4
- Okeke, C. Uche (Nigeria)
168. *Christ on the Cross*, ink and brush on paper. 200S-HN-AA-9E-17
169. *Frog, Ibo Legendary Figure*, pen and ink (1959). 200S-HN-AA-9E-7
170. *Odede F. Omarudo*, pen and ink (1959). 200S-HN-AA-9E-26
- Okeke, Simon Obiekezie (Nigeria)
171. *Composition with Torsos*, \* oil on paper (1961). 200S-HN-AA-9F-26
172. *Crouched Figure*, \* print (1960). 200S-HN-AA-9F-19
173. *Head No. 3*, sculpture. 200S-HN-AA-9F-15
174. *Heads with Drum*, \* oil on paper (1960). 200S-HN-AA-9F-25
- Okiki, Godfrey A. (Nigeria)
175. *African Mother and Child*, \* woodcut (1963). 200S-HN-AA-9G-21
176. *Casting the Net*, \* oil (1964). 200S-HN-AA-9G-31