



RESTORING THE SPIRIT

CELEBRATING HAITIAN ART

TOURED BY CURATORIAL ASSISTANCE TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS

Curated by Rima Girinus, Ph.D.

Restoring the Spirit: Celebrating Haitian Art is a landmark survey of Haiti's complex visual traditions from 1940 to the present, a portrait of its artists' devotion to creative endeavors in the face of national adversity.

Recent generations of self-taught Haitian artists have invented a distinct style of art-making that reveals traditional values and belief systems. Ranging from vibrant paintings and sequin-covered textiles to sculpture created from reused oil drums and aluminum pans and other found materials, the works put vodou beliefs and practices into a contemporary context, document historical and political events and individuals, and provide details from small town or rural life, gatherings, and celebrations that are essential to Haitian culture. Perhaps most interesting is the critical function that many of these works played for the collective imagination: fantastic paintings of hallucinatory landscapes populated by exotic animals and vibrant culture serve as an escape from the reality of Haiti's environmental and political woes. Image-making acts as both a removal from reality and a proposal for utopia.

This exhibition, an important survey of Haitian art, demonstrates that, despite Haiti's turbulent and often bloody political history, the country has developed a flourishing artistic tradition that speaks to the vitality of Haitian culture and the indomitable spirit of its people.



Above: Préfète Duffaut, *Ville Imaginaire (Imaginary Town)*, Oil on canvas, 18 1/8" x 49 3/4" x 1 1/2," 1966

Cover: Paul Claude Gardere, *Madonna (Madame Duvalier)*, Oil on fiberboard, 54 5/8" x 40 1/2" x 1 5/8," 1983

NUMBER OF WORKS

33 paintings
5 sculptures
2 ceremonial flags

FRAME SIZES

Various

SPACE REQUIREMENTS

234 linear feet (72 linear meters)

ARTISTS

Hector Hyppolite
Philomé Obin
Wilson Biguad
Paul Claude Gardere
Jacques-Enguerrand Gorgue
Georges Liautaud
Serge Jolimeau
Stivenson Magloire,
Pierre Joseph-Valcin
Bien-Aimé Sylvain
Yves Michel
Damien Paul
Riguad Benoit
Gerard Valcin

Wilson Biguad
Laurent Casimir
Sénèque Obin
Préfète Duffaut
Sisson Blanchard
Jasmin Joseph
Joseph LouisJuste
Sérésier LouisJuste
Lionel St. Eloi
Daniel Orelus
Pierre Edugene
Denis Smith
Edouard Duval-Carrie
Frantz Zephirin



Installation at the Figge Art Museum

VODOU AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

An integral part of Haitian culture since the early 16th century, vodou developed from traditional West and Central African religions brought to the island by slaves. Vodou provided solace and a sense of community that enabled the enslaved African population to sustain the brutality of the plantation system. Over time, these beliefs absorbed aspects of Roman Catholicism to form what is now known as Haitian vodou.



Stivenson Magloire
Divined Spirit
Acrylic on canvas
31 13/16" x 41 7/8" x 2 1/4"
ca. 1989



Damien Paul
Danbala Wèdo
Oil on fiberboard
39 7/8" x 31 7/8" x 1 1/2"
n.d.



Damien Paul
Danbala Wédo
Iron
39 7/8" x 31 7/8" x 1 1/2"
n.d.



Unidentified Artist
Ezili (ceremonial vodou flag)
Sequins on cotton fabric
35 3/4" x 31 3/4" x 2"
n.d.



Jasmin Joseph
Adam et Eve (Adam and Eve)
 Oil on fiberboard
 45 1/2" x 35 1/4" x 1 3/8"
 1967



Paul Claude Gardere
The Throne and the Kingdom
Oil on fiberboard
37 5/8" x 34 5/8" x 2 3/8"
1982

HISTORY AND POLITICS

In 1804 Haiti earned the distinction of becoming the first black republic to gain independence, but a series of despotic rulers plunged the nation into constant political upheaval, and corrupt and exploitative regimes repeatedly left the once luscious and prosperous nation destitute and vulnerable to environmental disasters. Many of these artists reflect on this racial discord, political instability, and violent oppression in their work.



Philomé Obin
U.S. Marines Versus Guerrillas
Oil on canvas
32 3/4" x 41 5/8" x 2 1/4"
1949



Edouard Duval-Carrié
Toussaint Louverture
Mixed media on canvas
31 1/2" x 38 1/2" x 2 1/4"
2006



Denis Smith
Dessalines
Oil on fiberboard
29" x 22 5/8" x 1 1/4"
1983



Philomé Obin
Fête de l'Armée d'Haiti (Haitian Army Holiday)
Oil on fiberboard
33 3/8" x 39 5/16" x 2 1/8"
1948

SCENES OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Life as it appears in the vibrant and patterned surfaces of Haitian paintings reveals little of the struggles and hardships of living in a destitute island nation. Artists represent details from small town or rural life and record events such as social gatherings or communal festivities. The market and the carnival in particular are popular topics that allow artists to celebrate the vitality of Haitian culture.



Damien Paul
Danbala Wédo
Oil on fiberboard
39 7/8" x 31 7/8" x 1 1/2"
n.d.



Laurent Casimir
Market Place
Oil on canvas
24 7/8" x 17 x 1 3/8"
1972



Sisson Blanchard
Volailles (Chickens)
Oil on fiberboard
25 1/2" x 49 1/2" x 1 1/4"
1965



Sérésier Louis Juste
Children with Birds
Iron
60" diameter
n.d.



Daniel Orelus
Crocodiles
Oil on fiberboard
35 1/4" x 49 1/4" x 1 7/16"
n.d.

Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions (CATE) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating opportunities for access, outreach, and education in the visual arts through the origination and circulation of diverse and innovative exhibitions for museums and art organizations worldwide. CATE fosters collaborations between public and private resources by developing traveling exhibitions that expand public opportunities to view and experience significant works of art. Formed in 2000, CATE has toured more than 400 exhibitions to over 850 art venues worldwide.

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