

# SPECTACULAR DISPLAY

## The Art of Nkanu Initiation Rituals

DAVID A. BINKLEY

In 1999 the National Museum of African Art acquired an important set of Nkanu wall panels that provided the impetus for "Spectacular Display: The Art of Nkanu Initiation Rituals," which opened at the museum on December 16, 2001, and will run through March 3, 2002. This is the first exhibition devoted to the complex visual arts created during men's initiation rituals by the Nkanu peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. It is organized by the National Museum of African Art (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.) and curated by David Binkley, who selected works from the Royal Museum for Central Africa (also known as the Africa Museum, Tervuren, Belgium), the Institut für Ethnologie der Universität Göttingen, Abteilung Völkerkundliche Sammlung (Germany), and several private collections in Belgium and the United States.

"Spectacular Display" is accompanied by a catalogue written by Annemieke Van Damme and with an introduction by Binkley (96 pp., approx. 78 color photos, 2 maps; \$29.95 softcover), published by the National Museum of African Art in association with Philip Wilson Publishers.

Nkanu art is relatively rare in Western collections,<sup>1</sup> and during much of the twentieth century it was often erroneously attributed to the neighboring Yaka. As a consequence it has been little discussed in the literature on African art. The Belgian art historian Annemieke Van Damme conducted research among the Nkanu in 1990–91. She interviewed men and women who had participated in men's initiation rituals called *nkanda*, asking them to interpret photographs of all initiation objects extant in Western museum collections. Dr. Van Damme also filmed two ritual specialists as they created a mask and a wall panel. Through her research we have gained a better understanding of the creative intentions and symbolic content of art traditions associated with *nkanda* in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise cited, the information provided here has been distilled from Dr. Van Damme's research presented in "Spectacular Display."

Men's initiation rituals of the Nkanu are similar to those practiced by other peoples in eastern Angola, the southwestern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and western Zambia.<sup>3</sup> *Nkanda* (known as *mukanda* by other peoples in the area) is accompanied by an artistic complex that includes a variety of sculpture, masquerades of fiber and wood, elaborate costuming, special dances, and musical accompaniment. Nevertheless, *nkanda* initiation varies across this region in form, aesthetic content, and frequency owing to historical circumstances and cultural preferences.

Following the structure of rites of passage described by the French anthropologist and folklorist Arnold van Gennep,<sup>4</sup> *nkanda* is organized into distinct phases: separation, transition, and reintegration. A dominant theme is the symbolic death and rebirth of the individual, who enters *nkanda* as a child and at its conclusion re-enters society as an adult. For boys and young men, the period of separation in the initiation camp also marks a major social reorientation away from the world of women and toward that of men.

*Nkanda* candidates are secluded for several months in a compound outside the community, where they are circumcised, acquire specialized knowledge, and learn the skills necessary for adult life. During this time of physical and psychological transformation, sculptors, who are also ritual specialists well versed in the esoteric knowledge and symbolic visual language of *nkanda*, create polychrome wall panels, figural sculpture, and masks. By observing—and perhaps by helping carvers in small tasks—initiates learn about the images and meanings of initiation arts.

Most of the works created in the *nkanda* are destined for public display at the conclusion of the initiation cycle, when an elaborate celebration is held to reintroduce the initiates to the community as adults. To promote recognition of their new status, a spectacular array of the ritual sculpture is presented in a *kikaku*—a three-sided roofed

structure placed at a crossroads outside the initiation compound. The youths wear distinctive costumes and perform *nkanda* dances, accompanied by masked figures representing ancestral spirits, whose presence is required to protect them and to sanction the activities. The celebration is also a time of recognition for the guardians, instructors, and artists who have brought *nkanda* to a successful conclusion. Afterwards, some masks are kept so the newly initiated can perform with them during the subsequent one- to two-year reintegration period, when they circulate among neighboring communities to demonstrate their *nkanda* training and to receive gifts of food and money.

### Wall Panels and Figures

Nkanu initiation arts combine human and animal images with two-dimensional floral and geometric patterns that convey meaning through color and symbolic imagery. These elements work together in one or more narratives that reflect the activities and teachings of *nkanda* as well as events that occur within the community during the initiation cycle.

Two important photographs taken at the beginning of the twentieth century, from the photographic archive of the Africa Museum in Tervuren, Belgium, illustrate the arrangement of sculpture in the *kikaku* (Figs. 2, 3). They show how as many as six or eight panels—carved, painted, and lashed together to form a single composition—were installed

1. Set of initiation wall panels showing a colonial administrator flanked by Congolese soldiers. Nkanu peoples, Democratic Republic of the Congo, early 20th century. Wood, pigment; height 84.8cm (33.4"). National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, museum purchase 99-2-1.

Panels like these, with figures carved in high sculptural relief against boldly patterned backgrounds, were publicly displayed at the conclusion of *nkanda*, or men's initiation. Their imagery is symbolic, reflecting *nkanda* teachings and activities. "Spectacular Display" reassembles this and two other sets of panels as they would have been configured in the initiation enclosure.







*Opposite page:*

*Top:* 2. Nkanu wall panels and sculpture displayed inside the enclosure called the *kikaku*. Photograph by A. Mahieu, 1905. Photographic Archive, Africa Museum, Tervuren (Belgium), 4005.

The *kikaku* and its contents—wall panels, floor sculptures, guardian figures, head posts—formed the backdrop for the public celebration marking the end of the initiation cycle.

*Bottom:* 3. *Kikaku* with *nkanda* wall panels and sculpture. Photograph by L. Michel, Tumba, 1903. Photographic Archive, Africa Museum, Tervuren, 49.1.3275.

While each figural character tells its own story through clothing, posture, and gesture, the assemblage of panels and sculptures relates a broader narrative that can be read by those educated within *nkanda*.

*This page:*

4. Wall panel showing a Gaboon viper with an antelope in its mouth. Early 20th century. Wood, pigment; 94.2cm (37.1"). Collection of the Jesuit Fathers, Heverlee, on permanent loan to the Africa Museum, Tervuren, 48.8.1.

This page:

5. Set of wall panels, with a bird in flight represented at left. Wood, pigment; height 112.5cm (44.3"). Africa Museum, Tervuren, RG26.3178/1-RG26.3178/8.

Opposite page:

6. Leopard figure. Wood, pigment; height 43.5cm (17.1"). Africa Museum, Tervuren, RG48.27.43. Animal sculptures as well as anthropomorphic figures were set on the floor of the *kikaku* in front of the wall panels.

against the walls of the roofed structure. In some examples, figures are carved in such high relief that they seem about to step out from the background (Fig. 1). Freestanding figural sculptures appear in front of the wall panels.

Among the distinctive elements of *nkanda* art are its bright earthen pigments, whose adherence to the wood is ensured by the application of a gesso-like undercoating. Through polychrome decoration the artist delineated facial tattoos, clothing, jewelry, and symbolic designs. In these vibrant works, the painted patterns serve as the landscape from which emerge the human and animal figures of *nkanda* lore. Together the wall panels and figural sculpture function as a visual language that can be read by those educated within *nkanda*. These images speak of rebirth, emotional and sexual maturity, death and the spirit world, and community values.

A study of the extant panels and freestanding figures reveals several repeated themes. In Nkanu initiation arts, carved representations of domesticated and wild animals teach cooperation, friendship, mutual respect, and regard for the authority of the traditional chief and the ancestral spirits. When two or more animals are depicted together, the message often concerns conflict and resolution. For example, one of the wall panels in the exhibition shows a Gaboon viper that has captured a small antelope





FRANÇOIS KHOURY

(Fig. 4). In Nkanu folktales the latter is a cunning and rather cheeky character that usually manages to outsmart larger animals. In the context of *nkanda*, this animal often symbolizes the initiates. For Annemieke Van Damme, this panel is a warning, speaking not only of the initiates' abilities to use their wits to avoid the dangers encountered during initiation but also of their reliance on the protection of the traditional chief.

Another panel, part of a complete set, has a bird in flight carved in relief (Fig. 5). Van Damme suggests that it is the purple heron, a bird known to lead flocks of black storks. *Nkanda* initiates are often referred to as black storks; they darken their bodies and imitate the bird's behavior at certain stages of the rite. The *nkanda* leader, identified with the purple heron, leads his "flock" outside the compound to wash in the river or to farm, and the group returns to the enclosure in the same way.

Designs on the panels reinforce the symbolic power of birds within the context of *nkanda*. Van Damme interprets the concentric circles on the back of the heron as the sun. Rectangles enclosing half circles may represent the moon; dots may be stars or descen-



FRANK KHOURY



FRANK KHOURY

dants. The bird flies over linked diamond designs that suggest the earth or the skin of the Gaboon viper. Triangles that touch at the tip or base refer to sexual intercourse.

Two other panels in the composition depict an Nkanu man and woman, both carved in high relief. The man's squatting posture is like that of an initiate about to be circumcised. The woman's gesture of hands on belly suggests that she is pregnant and, in the words of an informant, "speaking with the child" in her womb.

Animal sculptures are also displayed in front of the wall panels in the *kikaku*. Leopards, genets, civets, and other spotted cats symbolize traditional leaders who have the right to wear the hides of these feline predators. The floor sculpture in Figure 6 would have reminded initiates and the community at large to respect those in authority.

Another animal sculpture in the exhibition portrays a coiled Gaboon viper threatening a growling dog; a spotted civet or genet looks on (Fig. 7). According to Van Damme, the dog represents the uncircumcised boy, the feline is the circumcised individual, and the coiled snake is the male organ. Two chickens and a rooster drawn on top of the tray-like base flanking the viper recall an Nkanu proverb: "You don't want a cock; you don't want a guinea fowl; then who's going to warn you at the break of day?" This can be put another way: "You don't want to listen to good advice, but who, then, is going to lead you?" As with much of initiation art, this sculpture instructs the

*Opposite page:*

*Top:* 7. Floor sculpture portraying a snake flanked by a dog and a civet or genet. Wood, pigment; length 117.7cm (46.3"). Africa Museum, Tervuren, RG200 6/6.

*Bottom:* 8. Set of wall panels in which figures of musicians alternate with a panel showing a snake and another panel with two birds, their heads now broken off. Wood, fiber, pigment; 120.7cm (47.5"). Africa Museum, Tervuren, RG37.325-RG37.331.

*This page:*

*Left:* 9. Wall panel with a female figure. Early 20th century. Wood, pigment; 99.2cm (39.1"). Collection of the Jesuit Fathers, Heverlee, on permanent loan to the Africa Museum, Tervuren, 1340.

*Right:* 10. Wall panel with a figure of a European, a companion to the panel in Figure 9. Early 20th century. Wood, fiber, hair, pigment; 95.4cm (37.6"). Collection of the Jesuit Fathers, Heverlee, on permanent loan to the Africa Museum, Tervuren, 1346.



FRANÇO KHOURY



FRANÇO KHOURY





FRANKO KHOURY

*This page:*

11. Wall panels showing a woman giving birth and a European man. Wood, fiber, pigment; 89.5cm (35.3"). Africa Museum, Tervuren, RG44.430.

*Opposite page:*

12, 13. Male and female guardians (*biteki zi makanda*). Wood, fiber, resin, hair, pigment; male 99.1cm (39"), female 101.4cm (39.9"). Africa Museum, Tervuren, RG200 6/1, RG200 6/2.

These large figures would have flanked the entrance to the *kikaku*.

initiates and the community in matters of dispute resolution, sexual maturity, and good judgment.

Musicians are an important subject in *nkanda* art. One set of wall panels shows a drummer and two men playing side-blown elephant-tusk horns (Fig. 8). The musicians' buttoned vests, trousers, and caps attest to the popularity of Western attire. Two additional panels in this set feature animals: the checkered body of a snake holding its prey is said to symbolize emptiness and death; the birds refer to the group of initiates who leave the enclosure to bathe and work and return together in the evening. Various painted patterns that fill the background symbolize the male and female principles and sexual intercourse, and allude to the crossroads as an intersection of different worlds.

In keeping with the idea of the initiates' symbolic rebirth as adults, fertility is a dominant theme in these artworks. Panels depicting an Nkanu woman and an Nkanu or a European man are often placed next to each other, with the woman usually to the man's



FRANÇO KHOURY



FRANÇO KHOURY

right. Van Damme's research allows a more complete interpretation of these images. In one panel in the exhibition, the figure is shown in a provocative dance pose that conveys a woman's pride, vitality, and sexual maturity (Fig. 9). Her body has been adorned with a mixture of palm oil and red pigment. Her beaded bodice and skirt indicate that she has been promised in marriage, or as the Nkanu say, "The fence has been closed." Within the context of male initiation, this image reminds young men of their future roles as husbands.

A companion panel, probably created by the same artist, portrays a European man with light yellow skin, a mustache made from tufts of animal hair, and a Western-style hat, waistcoat, trousers, and shoes (Fig. 10). The figure squats and claps his hands—a gesture of greeting or acceptance. In this case, Van Damme was told, it probably indicates that he acknowledges his fatherhood of a child. Sexual references fill the patterned background. The subject and juxtaposition of the two panels may have meant to be satirical or perhaps to reflect problems associated with European-African relationships.

*This page:*

Top: 14. Mother-and-child figure. Wood, pigment; 48.5cm (19.1"). Collection of the Jesuit Fathers, Heverlee, on permanent loan to the Africa Museum, Tervuren, 2748.

Smaller figures like this example might have been used outside the context of *nkanda*, perhaps to help a woman conceive.

Bottom: 15. Nkanu initiates wearing *nkanda* masks. Back row, left to right: elephant mask, Kakungu mask, goat mask. Front row: two Kisokolo masks. Photograph by Father Pauwels. Photographic Archive, Africa Museum, Tervuren, E.P.H. 13036.

*Opposite page:*

16. Initiation mask named Makemba, representing a sorrowful woman. Wood, fiber, cloth, pigment; 41.4cm (16.3"). Africa Museum, Tervuren, RG205 11/11.



FRANÇO KHOURY





FRANK KHOUFY

Other representations of fertility are more direct. One panel depicts a woman giving birth; the child's head is emerging from the womb (Fig. 11). The mother sits on a mat, legs spread and knees bent, clenching her teeth as she bears the pain of labor. In the next panel, a European man in colonial attire, probably the father, claps his hands.

*Nkanda* artists distinguish European subjects through skin tone, dress, and posture. Representations of these regional administrators, tradesmen, and missionaries are generally painted with pink, yellow ochre, or orange pigment. Whitened faces, however, suggest a distinctive facial decoration (*n'ganzi*) that was worn by many Nkanu men and women. While Western attire—colonial helmets, vests with buttons, trousers, shoes—typically identifies European characters, it is also seen in the depictions of Nkanu who served in the military or with Europeans in some other capacity.

The exhibition includes a five-part sequence of wall panels that is full of power references (Fig. 1). The central figure, sporting a white suit, colonial helmet, and boots, is a European colonial administrator. His authoritative presence is emphasized by the two flanking Congolese soldiers (*La Force Publique*) who present arms; they are identified by their uniforms consisting of a red beret, a short buttoned vest, and trousers. One soldier's upraised leg suggests the pose of circumcised initiates, who must find

their balance by standing on one leg. Another interpretation of this stance relates to sexual potency and virility.

Figural sculpture was not relegated solely to display within the *kikaku*. Judging from their large size, a male-female pair probably functioned as guardian figures (*biteki zi makanda*) flanking the entrance gate to the initiation enclosure (Figs. 12, 13). The male figure holds one hand to his mouth and raises the other. Van Damme suggests that this gesture refers to the secrecy surrounding the initiation process and to the initiates' promise not to reveal what they have learned in *nkanda*.

The female figure places her right hand on her stomach and in her left hand holds a bundle of twigs that may refer to that part of the initiation rite in which the young men are chastised with twigs. Linear patterns in white and tan pigment depict bracelets, a skirt with strings of beads, and a beaded bodice that was fashionable among the Nkanu during the early twentieth century.

Both figures wear raffia skirts, which are meant to hide their detailed genitals until they are suddenly revealed, to the great amusement of the initiates. While such behavior would ordinarily be considered offensive, these reservations are set aside during *nkanda*, which, after all, revolves around the concept of fertility.

Smaller figures perhaps were included within the *kikaku* display, but they were used in other situations as well. The image of a mother carrying a child on her hip (Fig. 14),



FIGURE 14

for example, might have been prescribed by a ritual healer to be placed in the home of a person with fertility problems.

### **Nkanda Masks**

Masks worn by *nkanda* initiates are distinctive for their large size and elaborate surface decoration (Fig. 15). The masks educate the youths in aspects of human behavior, both desirable and undesirable, as a way to prepare them for their roles as responsible, productive adults in Nkanu society. The most important ones also represent ancestral spirit forces that sanction the initiation process and protect the initiates during the rite. Like other *nkanda* art, masks are made from the lightweight wood of the umbrella tree. They consist of a human or animal face attached to a large, bulging superstructure or headdress that is painted with elaborate patterns. A raffia collar, suspended from the lower edge of the mask, hides the dancer's face. Among the variety of human and animal masks that are made, several are mandatory. These include the masquerade figures Nkoso, Kakungu, Kisokolo, and Makemba.

Makemba represents a sorrowful pregnant woman or a mother of one child or twins (Fig. 16). Van Damme notes that songs that accompany the performance ask Makemba to rejoice in motherhood. She interprets three vertical lines under each eye as a mother's



HARRY HAASE

#### *Opposite page:*

17. Initiation mask named Kisokolo and costume. Wood, fiber, cloth, pigment; 98cm (38.6"). Institut für Ethnologie der Universität Göttingen, Abteilung Völkerkundliche Sammlung, AF2237.

#### *This page:*

18. Head posts representing the Kisokolo mask, collected in 1934. Wood, fiber, pigment; 41cm (16.1"), 45cm (17.7"). Institut für Ethnologie der Universität Göttingen, Abteilung Völkerkundliche Sammlung, AF2238, AF2239.

tears. The sadness may relate to the symbolic death of the initiates in *nkanda* or to the pain of circumcision. Makemba's white face links her to the world of the ancestral spirits. This mask and several other objects in the exhibition were made by the same artist who carved the famous drummer figure in the collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RG 200 6/5).

The masquerade figure Kisokolo (Fig. 17) represents the dandy or the womanizer. This joyous male character is identified by his white face, rectangular ears, and heavy-lidded, half-closed eyes. His prominent upturned nose suggests an elephant's trunk but is also a phallic symbol. Kisokolo's fiber headdress, made of twigs and woven cloth, includes a raised raffia crest and horns tipped with fiber tassels. A costume consisting of a thick raffia collar and skirt, a coarsely woven jacket, and two braided fiber strands ending in raffia pompoms completes the ensemble. Kisokolo dances with Makemba in a performance accompanied by sensual movements and erotic songs. Kisokolo's exuberant performance contrasts with that of Makemba, who is embraced by onlookers who wish to share in her sorrow.

*Nkanda* head posts have the same facial characteristics as important initiation masks. Two examples in "Spectacular Display" represent the head of the Kisokolo mask (Fig. 18). The posts serve a protective function, ensuring the initiates' fertility and combating the evil intentions of others. An Nkanu healer might also erect smaller head posts inside the home of a male or female patient.

Animal masks entertain and instruct the *nkanda* initiates. Among the few known Nkanu examples are the leopard, antelope, hippopotamus, wild boar, domestic pig, elephant, and buffalo. Each animal has a particular significance. The leopard is a metaphor for leadership and the authority of the traditional chief; like the animal's representation on wall panels, the mask reminds the initiates to respect the authority of elders, local leaders, and ancestors. The hippo alludes to someone looking for an extramarital relationship; the hippo mask thus serves to admonish initiates and the general public about inappropriate behavior. The pig mask symbolizes the impurity of a man who has not been circumcised (Fig. 19), and it is also associated with sexual promiscuity, an undesirable trait in a responsible adult. Sexual references are encoded in the triangular and cowrie-shell designs that embellish the headdress—cowrie shells, for example, indicate good fortune and fertility. As with much *nkanda* art, the masks address both the positive and negative aspects of human sexuality in order to educate initiates in the norms of appropriate adult behavior.

The goal of *nkanda* and its spectacular display of masks, wall panels, and sculpture is to instruct the Nkanu youth who take part in the rite. The art also has a protective function: to ward off malevolent forces that might harm the initiates in their ritual rebirth. The context in which these objects function lost a great deal of its impact during the twentieth century. Certainly the long history of colonialism and its oppression of traditional cultural institutions affected the Nkanu, as it did many other African peoples. Western education, health, and religious practices have also tempered the vitality of local practices. Van Damme observes that until recently, participation in *nkanda* was required for any pubescent Nkanu boy. Today it occurs only sporadically among the Nkanu living in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, though *nkanda* rituals still take place in the northern Angolan Nkanu territory. Congolese Nkanu parents often send their boys to be initiated in Angola, but sometimes they prefer to have their sons circumcised when they are just a few months old, in a short ritual known as the *mukanda mu gata*, "*nkanda* in the village."

The exhibition "Spectacular Display" includes a section that addresses the influence of African rites of passage on African American churches and organizations in the Washington, D.C., area. Such rites increasingly resonate with families and communities in the United States who are looking to African cultures for educational models. Churches, volunteer associations, and other civic organizations are creating programs that help adolescents of both sexes prepare to be productive and responsible adults. Web sites and community cultural centers are additional sources of information about African-inspired rites of passage. This development demonstrates how very relevant African arts and rituals remain in our contemporary world. They also underscore the enduring richness of the continent's cultural heritage, which serves as a wellspring of creativity worldwide. □

19. Pig initiation mask. Wood, fiber, cloth, pigment; 53cm (20.9"). Africa Museum, Tervuren, RG67.63.50 (acquired 1967).





## CLASSIFIED ADS

\$1.20 per word, minimum \$30. African Arts box number \$15.  
Classified ads must be prepaid.

### BOOKS

African, ethnographic, and ancient art. Important, rare, and out-of-print titles bought and sold. Catalogues available upon request. Further details from: Michael Graves-Johnston, 54, Stockwell Park Road, P.O. Box 532, London SW9 0DR. Tel. 0171-274-2069, fax 0171-738-3747.

### COLLECTION FOR SALE

Astute collector of African art is selling his large collection. Superb examples of primitive art in the styles of well-known and obscure peoples. Low prices (from \$5 to \$150) on wood carvings, bronzes and old ivory. Also, some New Guinea pieces. Write to: Louis, POB 630296, Riverdale, New York City, NY 10463-9992.

### CURATORIAL POSITION AVAILABLE

African Art Curator or Intern for 1,000-object collection of traditional sculpture, textiles, beadworks. Perfect situation for academic specialist seeking hands-on experience. Open-ended growth opportunity for permanent curatorship including development of travelling exhibition. Editorial, computer skills essential for catalogue work. Must relocate Washington, D.C. Could begin immediately. Fax resume soonest: 202/544-9352.

### COLLECTION FOR SALE

Private African art collection for sale. Please check my website: [www.smmartcollection.com](http://www.smmartcollection.com). We are located in Los Angeles, California.

Benin: Procure de L'Archidiocèse.  
Sinou, Alain. 1995. *Le compositeur de Ouidah: Une ville africaine singulière*. Paris: Editions Karthala.  
Soglo, Gilles. 1994. "Notes sur la Traite des Esclaves à Gbécoé (Ouidah)." In *Le Bénin et la Route de l'Esclavage*. Cotonou: Comité National pour le Bénin de l'Unesco "La Route de l'Esclavage."  
Thompson, Robert Farris. 1983. *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*. New York: Random House.  
Thompson, Robert Farris. 1993. *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas*. Munich: Prestel for The Museum for African Art, New York.  
Verger, Pierre Fozzambi. 1957. *Notes sur le culte des oris et vodun à Béthlé, La Baie de tous les Saints, au Bénin et l'ensemble Côte des Esclaves en Afrique*. Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, no. 51.

### BINKLEY: Notes, from page 61

1. Nkanu works may be seen in the collections of the Africa Museum, Tervuren (Belgium); the Jesuit Fathers of Heverlee, Belgium (none on permanent loan to the Africa Museum); the Breeders van Lourdes (Oostakker, Belgium); the Sociedade de Geographia, Lisbon; the Musée de l'Homme, Paris; the Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal (Netherlands); and the Institut für Ethnologie der Universität Göttingen, Abteilung Völkerkunde Sammlung (Göttingen, Germany).  
2. Van Damme conducted this field research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for her doctoral dissertation, "Beelden, maskers en initiëtiëpendelen bij de Nkanu en hun buren, de Mbeko en Lulu. Socio-culturele context en stilistische analyse (Zone Kimvula, Congo)." Universiteit Gent, Belgium, 1998. Also see the catalogue accompanying the exhibition: *Spectacular Display: The Art of Nkanu Initiation Rituals*.  
3. The Nkanu reside in the eastern part of the Lower Kongo district of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Angola. Approximately half of the Nkanu population lives in the Madiaba and Kimvula zones of the Lower Kongo district, and the other half lives in Angola's Uige province. Their neighbors include the Lulu and Dikidiki peoples to the north, the Mbeko peoples to the northwest, the Ntandu peoples to the west, the Yaka peoples to the east and southeast, the Zombo peoples to the southwest, and the Sosso peoples to the south.  
2. Van Genep (1873-1957) first used the term "rites of passage" (*Les rites de passage*, Paris: Noury, 1909; English ed., University of Chicago Press, 1960).

### HASSAN & OGUIBE: Notes, from page 75

[This article was accepted for publication in September 2001.]

1. The Venice Biennale was initiated at a time when most African

countries were under European colonial rule. Since the 1960s, the acquisition of a pavilion in Venice has become too expensive for most African countries to pursue. Egypt is an exception because of the close relations between the Egyptian monarchy and Italy prior to the revolution led by Jamal Abdul Nasser in 1953, especially during the reign of King Fouad and King Farouk, who died in exile in Rome. Nasser's regime paid attention to the importance of culture in the international arena and continued its support for Egyptian representation in Venice through its Department of Culture, a policy upheld by the regimes of Sadat and Mubarak.  
2. The Forum presently includes among its members: El Anatsui, Ghanaian artist and professor at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Ibrahim El Solahi, Sudanese artist; Koyo Kouoh, independent art consultant and cultural activist, Geste Institute, Senegal; Marilyn Martin, Director of the South African National Gallery; Tumele Mosaaka, South African curator; Florence Alexis, Director of Visual Arts, Afrique en Créations in Paris; Obiora Udechukwu, Nigerian artist and Distinguished Professor at St. Lawrence University, Canton; Okwui Enwezor, Nigerian art critic, curator, and Director of Documenta XI; Gilane Tawadros, Director of the Institute for International Visual Art, London; as well as the present authors.

3. In his *One and Three Chair* (1965), American artist Joseph Kosuth combined many of these elements, integrating a "real chair" in the manner of Duchamp's madymades, and employing text and language through which the work was made to reflect not only on the question of the nature and meaning of art but also on the indeterminacy of the "real" within its own components.  
4. In this regard the recent anthology edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (1999) provides a glimpse of these diverse positions.  
5. For more discussion of Shaddad's work see Musa 1989: 770-49.  
6. In Sadat: Hassan Musa, Muhammad Shaddad, Hashim Muhammad Salih, Abdalla Bola, Usama Abdul Rahim. In Nigeria: Olu Oguibe, Greg Odo, and Olu Odo.  
7. In the early 1970s, several students at Khartoum's College of Fine and Applied Art established "Cultural Caravans," which traveled to rural areas and poor neighborhoods bringing art exhibitions, mobile cinema, and theatrical performance to the "people." In 1988 at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka, an outdoor exhibition was staged on the main thoroughfare of the university, but was ultimately vandalized (see Oguibe & Odo 1988).  
8. *Aesthetic/Ex-Centric* includes twelve essays by prominent authors, eight of which were commissioned specifically for the book. They offer a fresh look at conceptualism from an African standpoint, and at issues of cross-cultural and transnational aesthetics. All the essays emphasize the importance of examining the reciprocal traffic of influences between Africa and the rest of the world.

### References cited

Alberro, Alexander. 1999. "Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1997," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.  
Alberro, Alexander, and Blake Stimson (eds.). 1999. *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.  
Galant, Germaine. 1997. "Future, Past and Present," in *The Catalogue of the 47th Venice Biennale*, 1.  
Duchamp, Marcel. 1969. *Notes and Projects for the Large Glass*. Selected, ordered, and with an introduction by Arturo Schwarz.

London: Thames & Hudson.  
Duchamp, Marcel. 1997. *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*. London: Thames & Hudson.  
Farver, Jane (ed.). 1999. *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s*. Queens, NY: Queens Museum of Art.  
Godfrey, Tony. 1998. *Conceptual Art*. London: Phaidon.  
Grassekamp, Walter. 1996. "For Example, Documents, or, How Is Art History Produced?" in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg et al., pp. 67-78. New York: Routledge.  
Greenberg, Reesa et al. (eds.). *Thinking about Exhibitions*. New York: Routledge.  
Lippard, Lucy (ed.). 1973. *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object, 1966-72*. New York: Praeger.  
Musa, Hassan. 1989. "La Mutation des références culturelles chez les citains du Soudan septentrional: Le Cas des arts plastiques." Doctoral thesis, Université de Montpellier III.  
Oguibe, Olu. 1995. *African Art: An Introduction*. Online publication: <http://www.camwood.org/africa.htm>.  
Oguibe, Olu, and Greg Odo. 1988. *Art on the Street*. Exhibition brochure.  
Stimson, Blake. 1999. "The Promise of Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson. Cambridge: MIT Press.

### BRINCARD: Notes, from page 78

1. Alisa LaGamma, "New Direction for the Arts of Equatorial Africa," in *East of the Atlantic, West of the Congo: Art from Equatorial Africa: The Dwight and Blossom Strong Collection* by Leon Sirota, ed. Kathleen Berrin (The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 1995), p. 54.  
2. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 20; cited by Wastiau in the catalogue, p. 80.  
3. Toma Mateba Luntumbue was the first Congolese artist to have been asked by the Tervuren museum not only to participate but also to take on an active role as a guest curator for the contemporary section. In *Le Musée de Gilberte*, Luntumbue asked Gilberte, a museum guard who had just retired, to choose the contents. Tellingly, none of the selected pieces were related to her experience of discovering the objects and history of the Congo.

### ALLARA: Notes, from page 82

I thank Elisabeth Court at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London for reading this essay and providing helpful suggestions.  
1. This struggle was charted in a monumental exhibition organized for the Museum Villa Stuck in Munich: "The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994." Like "Africas," it demonstrated the internationalism of modern African art.  
2. In *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994*, ed. Okwui Enwezor (Munich: Prestel, 2000), p. 24.  
3. In *Art in South Africa: The Future Present*, eds. Sue Williamson and Ashraf Jamal (Cape Town: David Phillip, 1996), p. 136.

## ADVERTISER INDEX

Aboriginals, Art of the First Person,  
Sanibel Island, FL 89  
David A. Ackley, Baltimore, MD inside back cover  
Art and Life in Africa Project, The University of Iowa,  
Iowa City, IA 5  
Axis Gallery New York, NY 86  
Joan Barist Primitive Art, Short Hills, NJ 11  
Sharon Caulder, Mark of Woodoo 12  
Contemporary African Art, New York, NY 8  
Coyote's Paw Gallery, St. Louis, MO 12  
Cultural Expressions, Clawson, MI 89  
Diamondstein Tribal Arts, Los Angeles, CA 9  
Ethnix, New York, NY 90  
Gallery Congo, Brussels, Belgium 13  
Gallery DeRoche, San Francisco, CA 12  
Gallery Walu, Zurich, Switzerland 3  
The Goldstein Collection, Houston, TX 4  
Charles S. Greco 87  
Philippe Guimot, Brussels, Belgium  
outside back cover  
Hamil Gallery of African Art, Boston, MA 88

Hemingway African Gallery, New York, NY 87  
Indigo, Minneapolis, MN 87  
International Warri Society, New York, NY 86  
Jembelat Gallery, Rochester, NY 7  
Charles Jones African Art, Wilmington, NC 88  
Susan Leer, Images of Culture, Los Angeles, CA 6  
Charles D. Miller III, St. James, NY 10  
Paolo Morigi Gallery, Lugano, Switzerland 8  
OAN, Oceanie-Afrique Noire, New York, NY 12  
Pace Primitive, New York, NY inside front cover  
Peters Valley Craft Center, Layton NJ 13  
Merton D. Simpson Gallery, New York, NY 1  
Skinner Inc, Bolton MA 13  
Tawa, New York, NY 90  
Totem Meneghelli Galleries, Johannesburg,  
South Africa 6  
Tribal Reality, New York, NY 90  
UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History,  
Los Angeles, CA 10  
Kathy Vanderpas • Steven Vanderaadt, Rotterdam,  
Holland 13