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***Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa* Now On View**

Cleveland Museum of Art organizes the most comprehensive exhibition of masks, figures, and decorative arts by Senufo artists presented in the United States in the last 50 years.

CLEVELAND (February 2015) – The Cleveland Museum of Art presents ***Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa***, a rare selection of one of the most popular and studied forms of African art from three countries in West Africa: Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Burkina Faso. ***Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa*** is the first presentation of Senufo art in the United States in the last 50 years and includes more than 160 works borrowed from nearly 60 public and private collections in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America, many of which have never before been publically displayed. ***Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa*** is on view to May 31, 2015 in the Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation Exhibition Hall. Organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art, ***Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa*** will subsequently travel to the Saint Louis Art Museum and the Musée Fabre in Montpellier, France.

Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa offers an expanded view of the region’s dynamic arts and questions the application since the late 1880s of the term Senufo to peoples, languages, places, and objects. Through this selection of masks, figures and decorative arts in diverse styles and mediums, the exhibition introduces visitors to the poro and sandogo societies, the primary settings for the production and use of works of art in the Senufo-speaking region of northern Côte d’Ivoire. Drawing on recent research in Mali and Burkina Faso, the exhibition also includes sculptures not usually attributed to Senufo-speaking artists or patrons, thus shattering the boundaries of the arts typically identified as Senufo.

“Original scholarship has always been a defining aspect of the work of the Cleveland Museum of Art, and this important exhibition offers a new approach to the understanding, and presentation of African art” said William M. Griswold, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art. “While emphasizing the unique nature of every work of art, ***Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa*** demonstrates there are often common formal and functional threads as culture groups influence each other’s arts.”

Highlights in the exhibition include a male and female figure pair from a private collection. Celebrating ideal beauty and gender complementarity, the pair would have been prominently used by a poro initiation association that prepares its members for leadership roles. Another highlight includes a mother-and-child figure from the Cleveland Museum of Art’s permanent collection. In some areas, maternity figures are related to the Tyekpa association, the female counterpart of male poro associations, and are carried on Tyekpa members’ heads during funerary ceremonies. Elsewhere, such sculptures function as stationary display figures for poro. A third highlight in this exhibition is a composite anthropomorphic figure. In this composite piece, a carved wooden figure hidden under a cloth costume, imitates a fiber mask with a

triangular head covering. Like the masquerader, the *kafigelejo* figure carries a club or a whip used as an otherworldly policing instrument.

"Aside from showing a large number of stunning objects that demonstrate the striking diversity within the corpus labeled as Senufo," stated Constantine Petridis, curator of African art at the Cleveland Museum of Art, "the exhibition also includes a variety of works in styles that present-day art scholars, connoisseurs and collectors typically do not attribute to Senufo-speaking artists, patrons or audiences." "In doing so," Petridis continues, "the exhibition illustrates the fluidity and fuzziness of cultural and ethnic borders while also revealing the constraints of labels and simple attributions."

Also included in the exhibition are a handful of historical photographs and books as well as 14 gelatin silver prints made by French photographer Agnès Pataux in Burkina Faso and Mali in 2006–8.

To complement ***Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa***, the Cleveland Museum of Art has developed its first special exhibition mobile application, "CMA Senufo." Immediately available on "CMA Senufo" is an exhibition preview video with the museum's curator of African art, Constantine Petridis, and information for planning a museum visit. When a visitor arrives to the museum to tour ***Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa***, and joins the museum's "Art Lens" wifi, the app will unlock unique and exclusive content on a selection of artworks from the CMA's own collection, and on loan from other museums and private collections. Through exhibition labels, the visitor will be able to identify objects with contextual, interpretive content, and through the presentation of insightful commentary, high-resolution imagery and video, "CMA Senufo" encourages a closer look at some of the exhibition's individual objects and the story behind Senufo-speaking artists and patrons. The app also provides an interactive list of related events, gallery tours and information about the Cleveland Museum of Art including: parking, dining, membership opportunities and more. The app is free and now available for iPhones through the Apple iTunes App Store.

Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa is accompanied by a 272-page full-color book titled *Senufo Unbound*. Authored by Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi, assistant professor at Emory University in Atlanta, who received her PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles. Gagliardi conducted more than 20 months of fieldwork among Senufo communities in Burkina Faso between 2004 and 2012 and has held prestigious fellowships from the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts in Washington, D.C., and from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Additional authors: William Griswold (Director's Foreword), Constantine Petridis (Preface), and Tiona Ferdinand Ouattara (Afterword).

Hardcover, 272 pages, 281 illustrations. The catalogue is available for purchase in the Cleveland Museum of Art store.

Tickets

Adult tickets for ***Senugo: Art and Identity in West Africa*** are \$8; Seniors: \$6; Students (with valid ID): \$6; CMA members: Free; Member guests: \$4. Free admission for children. Children 14 and under require adult supervision while inside the exhibition. For tickets and information, please visit clevelandart.org/senugo

Related Programming

Senugo: Art and Identity in West Africa is accompanied by a robust schedule of related programming. For more information and updates, please refer to www.clevelandart.org.

Lectures and Talks

Peering Beyond the Frame: A Refreshed Look at Arts of Senugo-Speaking Communities

Sunday, February 22, 2:00 p.m. Recital Hall

A mid-twentieth-century photo may suggest an origin for a group of sculptures. But how much can a photograph really say about how, why, or by whom the sculptures it depicts were made? Peering beyond the picture frame reveals how little we know about the exact circumstances surrounding the photo's making or the people who originally created, used, or circulated the sculptures shown in it. Marking the opening of ***Senugo: Art and Identity in West Africa***, Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi (Emory University, Atlanta) delivers a deeper look into historical dynamism, localized contexts, individual agency, and aesthetic concerns contributing to and shaped by arts' production and reception.

Free, no reservations required.

Lecture in Honor of Robert P. Madison

Visualizing a Blues Aesthetic: De-Racializing African American Art

Friday, April 10, 7:00 p.m., Recital Hall

African American art is typically understood in terms of race, meaning that a work of art is defined as such simply because it is created by a black person. Michael D. Harris (Emory University, Atlanta) argues that, like blues, jazz, gospel, and hip-hop, African American art should be discussed as a cultural idiom that can embrace both black and nonblack practitioners. In this talk, Harris discusses the creation of and challenges presented by this new mode of thinking about African American art.

Free, no reservations required.

A Colloquium "What's in a Label?"

Friday, April 10, 2015, 3:30 – 5:00 p.m., and Saturday, April 11, 2015, 10:15 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Recital Hall and The Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation Exhibition Hall

Join a group of distinguished scholars and museum staff for a series of lively conversations inspired by ***Senugo: Art and Identity in West Africa***. Through group discussions in the exhibition gallery and dialogues

and lectures in the Recital Hall, this two-day gathering will discuss the ambiguity surrounding the application of the name *Senufo* to the arts. Who applies certain labels to art in order to identify or circumscribe it? When, where, why, how, on what basis, and for what ends do they do so?

Invited guest speakers include Nichole N. Bridges, Saint Louis Art Museum; Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi, Emory University, Atlanta; Barbara G. Hoffman, Cleveland State University; Mary Nooter Roberts and Allen F. Roberts, University of California, Los Angeles; Nii O. Quarcoopome, The Detroit Institute of Arts; and Raymond A. Silverman, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Free; exhibition ticket required for select sessions. A full schedule of events will be posted to www.clevelandart.org.

My Senufo Neighbors' Children: Coming of Age in Divided Côte d'Ivoire

Wednesday, April 22, 7:00 p.m., Recital Hall

Writer Carol Spindel lived in an isolated rural Senufo/Jula community in northern Côte d'Ivoire in 1981-82. She described that stay in her book *In the Shadow of the Sacred Grove*, a classic memoir of a young American in Africa. She and her family continue to maintain close ties with her neighbors in this community, to which she gives the pseudonym Kalikaha. Her forthcoming book tells the story of five young Senufo people who were children or teenagers when she first met them. They came of age as an armed rebellion divided their country into North and South, as Northerners faced discrimination, as the AIDS epidemic raged, and electoral violence turned deadly. Their stories illuminate what it means to grow up Senufo in contemporary Ivory Coast.

Free, no reservations required.

Art and Fiction Book Club

Three Wednesdays, April 15, 22, and 29; 1:30 - 2:45 p.m.

The Art and Fiction Book Club explores art through historical fiction and narrative nonfiction. Sessions include a lecture, gallery visit, and a discussion group led by educators, curators, and museum staff. In conjunction with the exhibition *Senufo: Art and Identity in West Africa*, April's selection is *In the Shadow of the Sacred Grove* by Carol Spindel. By describing her difficult and gradual acceptance into the daily life of a rural West African community – a world of herders, potters, subsistence farmers, and initiates – Carol Spindel renders a foreign culture with exceptional immediacy and emotional depth. Spindel will join the Club's discussion on April 22.

\$40 non-members / \$30 CMA members. Participants purchase the book on their own (available in the museum store). Register at (216) 421-7350 or online at tickets.clevelandart.org.

Events

MIX: Identity

Friday, April 3, 5:00-9:00 p.m., Atrium

What makes us who we are? Explore identity in art with two special exhibitions: ***Senoufo: Art and Identity in West Africa*** and *Constructed Identities*. MIX is an 18+ event. \$8 in advance, \$10 at the door (includes admission to exhibition). CMA members free.

FILM

African Cinema Central: Burkina Faso & Mali

Burkina Faso and Mali are two of the major film-producing nations on the African continent. In fact, a strong case could be made that Burkina Faso is actually the center of African film culture, for the oldest and most important Pan-African film festival, FESPACO, has been held in its capital city of Ouagadougou since 1969. This series consists of a new documentary about FESPACO (which stands for Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou), as well as four celebrated classics from these two nations. Each film \$9; CMA members, seniors 65 & over, and students \$7; or one CMA Film Series voucher. Tickets available in-person, by phone at 216-421-7350 or online at clevelandart.org/film.

AfriqueCannes

Wednesday, April 1, 7:00 p.m.

Directed by Don Boyd and Jonathan Bloom. With Souleymane Cissé, Gaston Kaboré, et al.

For 45 years Ouagadougou's Pan-African film festival FESPACO has been the chief meeting place for African filmmakers. Every two years they come to Burkina Faso to showcase their new works and discuss the state of cinema on the continent. This new documentary profiles the festival and its guests during its 2011 edition. Cleveland premiere. (UK, 2013, subtitles, color, Blu-ray?, 82 min.)

Yeelen (Brightness)

Friday, April 3, 7:00 p.m.; Wednesday, April 8, 7:00 p.m.

Directed by Souleymane Cissé.

Sometimes cited as the greatest African film ever made, this strange, gorgeous fable follows a Bambara boy who flees his murderous father, grows to maturity in the wilderness, and returns to confront his paternal nemesis. Suffused with myth and ritual, this fantasy has been likened by some to Star Wars. (Mali, 1987, subtitles, color, 35mm, 105 min.)

Skirt Power

Wednesday, April 15, 7:00 p.m.

Directed by Adama Drabo. A powerful mask fomenta a reversal of gender roles in an 18th-century African village in this entertaining comedy that is informed by Dogon mythology and condemns patriarchy. Winner of the Jury Prize at FESPACO 1997. (France/Germany/Mali, 1997, subtitles, color, 35mm, 102 min.)

Guimba, the Tyrant

Friday, April 24, 7:00 p.m.

Directed by Cheick Oumar Sissoko.

Winner of the top prize at FESPACO 1995, this colorful comedy-drama chronicles the downfall of a cruel, lustful, and despotic village chief. (Mali/Burkina Faso/Germany, 1995, subtitles, color, 35mm, 93 min.)

Delwende

Wednesday, April 29, 7:00 p.m.

Directed by S. Pierre Yameogo.

A daughter tries to redeem the reputation of her mother, who has been accused of witchcraft and expelled from her village by her husband. (Switzerland/France/Burkina Faso, 2005, subtitles, color, 35mm, 90 min.)

Senfo: Art and Identity in West Africa is organized by the Cleveland Museum of Art. This exhibition is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Art Works. Exhibition programming is supported in part by PNC Bank.



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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes almost 45,000 objects and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship, performing arts and art education and recently completed an ambitious, multi-phase renovation and expansion project across its campus. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the dynamic University Circle neighborhood.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is supported by a broad range of individuals, foundations and businesses in Cleveland and Northeast Ohio. The museum is generously funded by Cuyahoga County residents through Cuyahoga Arts and Culture. Additional support comes from the Ohio Arts Council, which helps fund the museum with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. In 2014, the museum was awarded a top four-star rating by Charity Navigator, the nation's most-utilized independent evaluator of charities and nonprofits. For more information about the museum, its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit www.ClevelandArt.org.