CHAPTER

# Chapter 2: Afro-Modernism's Musée Imaginaire

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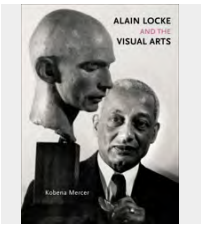


FROM THE BOOK

Alain Locke and the Visual Arts

DESCRIPTION

In 1940 Locke published The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art. The first section, "The Negro as Artist," sets the achievements of African American artists in world-historical context...

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# Chapter 2: Afro-Modernism's Musée Imaginaire

In 1940 Locke published *The Negro in Art: A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art*. The first section, "The Negro as Artist," sets the achievements of African American artists in world-historical context as its 223 images are followed, in the book's second section, "The Negro in Art," by 118 images of blacks depicted in Western art from the fifteenth century onward. Published by the Associates in Negro Folk Education, an enterprise Locke himself established, its very form as a picture book sets out to make its visual narrative broadly accessible, yet Locke's story is not just art historical—it is civilizational in its panoramic scope.

Under Locke's editorial hand, his selection and sequencing of hundreds of photographic reproductions reveals globe-crossing patterns in which blackness is addressed in different art historical traditions. But a closer look at the book's editorial architecture reveals some idiosyncrasies. "The Ancestral Arts," the book's third section, consists of forty-four plates that conclude the story by grouping Bambara carvings, Benin bronzes, and other African art with modernist works by Jacques Lipchitz and Pablo Picasso, among others. Yet if Africa is the origin of the story, why is it not at the beginning? Why is Africa placed at the end, in the same spot as European modernism? In view of the book's three-part structure, we might be tempted to see a dialectic, but if the first sections relate as thesis and antithesis, have we ended with synthesis? The Howard philosophy professor was no dialectician in the top-down mold of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel—Locke gladly left that role to W. E. B. Du Bois. But if *The Negro in Art*'s editorial design is not exactly dialectical, can we say the relationships Locke put forward among African, European, and African American art histories were dialogical?

Such questions have not been raised up to now for reasons that, on a moment's reflection, are hardly surprising. A logocentric universe that values the spoken or written word, and distrusts images for fear their illusory qualities are obstacles to truth, would readily dismiss a picture book whose argument is conducted in the medium of photo reproductions. More prosaically, Locke's 1940 book—the culmination of his visual arts writing begun in the 1920s—has been overlooked because it was eclipsed by the first art historical survey that established African American art as a specialist field of study—James Porter's *Modern Negro Art* (1943). Porter taught painting in Howard's Art

Department, and his book was based on his art history master's thesis, completed at New York University in 1937. Disputing Locke's ancestralist view, Porter argued that instead of tribal art, African American art was a distinctive tradition because of its origins in the material culture that skilled artisans produced under conditions of slavery in colonial America. With wooden carvings from Missouri, textiles from North Carolina, and "slave pottery" in the form of anthropomorphic "grotesque jugs" in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection, Porter's all-important intervention legitimated a new subfield in the historiography of American art. But in reviewing *Negro Art: Past and Present* (1936)—the second in Locke's Bronze Booklet series—Porter adopted a vituperative tone. Chafing at the idea that black artists should choose only black subject matter, itself a misreading of the stylistic distinctions Locke discerned among twentieth-century black artists, Porter claimed, "This little pamphlet . . . is one of the greatest dangers to the Negro artist." Porter's misguided view was that "Dr. Locke supports the defeatist philosophy of the 'Segregationist.' . . . Weakly, he has yielded to the insistence of the white segregationist that there are inescapable internal differences between white and black, so general that they cannot be defined, so particular that they cannot be reduced through rational investigation."[1][1]

Publishing these opinions in *Art Front*, a short-lived journal associated with the Artists Union, Porter shared a position that Marxist scholar Meyer Schapiro also spoke from when he wrote, "There are Negro liberals who teach that the American Negro artist should cultivate the old African styles . . . and that he must give up his effort to paint and carve like a white man. This view is acceptable to white reactionaries, who desire . . . to keep the Negro from assimilating the highest forms of culture of Europe and America. . . . But observed more closely, it terminates in the segregation of the Negro from modern culture."[2][2] Tendentious language such as this reveals the conflictual context in which post-Harlem artists negotiated the 1930s and 1940s. The racializing terms of "segregation" and "assimilation" delimited the discursive terrain that Locke sought to open up for cross-cultural investigation. Within this setting, *The Negro in Art* offers far more than antiquarian interest. Porter's survey text prompts an entry in the contemporary reference work *Art since 1900* (2004), as one of its few mentions of African American art (but only in its second edition in 2011).[3][3] In this light, we need to

**1.** James Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943; repr., New York: Arno, 1969); and James Porter, "The Negro Artist and Racial Bias," *Art Front* (June–July 1937): 8–9.
**2.** Meyer Schapiro, "Race, Nationality, and Art," *Art Front* (March 1936): 10.

understand that perceptions of African American art history as a marginal subfield do not mimetically "reflect" statistical majorities and minorities in the number of objects we inherit from history. Rather, marginalized areas of study are the product of cumulative acts of valuation that decide which traditions get to be elevated into universality and which must therefore be demoted into particularity.

Today, the study of modern and contemporary art in the Black Atlantic world is well served by surveys such as Richard J. Powell's *Black Art: A Cultural History* (2003), his second edition of *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century* (1997), and Sharon F. Patton's *African-American Art* (1998). But prior to surveys written by artists, namely Romare Bearden in 1993 and Samella Lewis in 1978, the field of black visual arts was mapped only by Elsa Honig Fine's *The Afro-American Artist: A Search for Identity* (1973) and Cedric Dover's *American Negro Art* (1960), two surveys that followed Porter's 1943 book.[4][4] Whether text or lecture, the survey genre is foundational to art history because, in covering broad stretches of time, we begin to see the form-giving activity that endows art with a life of its own, granting art a degree of autonomy that outlives the moment in which an object was made, even as the object's materiality enables art to endure through time in ways mortal humans cannot. Black art history is not an intrinsically minority affair. Rather, it has been doubly "minoritized" by Western-centric norms, on the one hand, and, on the other, by "the problem of the visual," as critic Michele Wallace aptly put it, whereby music and literature tend to receive higher valuation than art in African American cultural criticism.[5][5] What Locke's 1940 picture book offers—if we care to read it closely—is an exit route from these longstanding predicaments.

To grasp Locke's thinking as he curated the pages, *The Negro in Art* must be situated alongside two of his concurrent projects that indicate how far black cultural terrain had shifted from the 1920s. *Contemporary Negro Art*, a large-scale survey exhibition held at the newly opened Baltimore Museum of Art in 1939, marked a turning point. With the

**3.** Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, and David Joselit, eds., *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 334–39.
**4.** Cedric Dover, *American Negro Art* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1960); Elsa Honig Fine, *The Afro-American Artist: A Search for Identity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973); Samella Lewis, *Art: African American* (New York: Harcourt College, 1978); Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists, 1792 to the Present* (New York: Pantheon, 1993); Richard J. Powell, *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997); Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
**5.** Michele Wallace, "Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Problem of the Visual in Afro-American Culture," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 39–50.

Harmon Foundation coordinating loans, Locke collaborated with Mary Beattie Brady, and both joined the museum's Charles Ross Rogers to select 116 works by twenty-nine living artists. While it marked the end of Locke's involvement with Harmon's art patronage, the show signaled the rise of a post-Harlem cohort whose aesthetic and political concerns seemed to diverge from what many saw as Locke's high-mindedness. In the same moment, in 1942 Locke published a vast anthology, *When Peoples Meet: A Study in Race and Culture Contacts*, whose social science content may not immediately seem related to his arts activities, but which critically informs the comparative method pursued in *The Negro in Art*.

*When Peoples Meet* began as a book aimed at college educators who wanted to tackle race relations. It followed up Locke's Bronze Booklets that the Associates in Negro Folk Education produced as part of a mid-1930s initiative in adult education. As Locke allied himself with the Progressive Education Association, chaired by anthropologist Ruth Benedict, he enlisted as his coeditor Bernhard J. Stern, a Columbia and New School university lecturer, to create a framework in which voices from anthropology, sociology, and international affairs formed ninety-six chapters arranged into fifteen sections headed by Locke's interchapters. Insisting that race was always co-articulated with ethnicity and nationality in conflicts over collective identity, *When Peoples Meet* was radical in its critical ambition. As Jeffrey Stewart explained, its core argument was that "while race had been dethroned as a legitimate scientific concept, it remained a powerful public discourse," in relation to which the book's interdisciplinary breadth "also documented how racialized minorities answered by developing practices . . . of resistance."[6] A glance at a few section headings—"Culture Contact and the Growth of Civilization," "Varieties of Culture Conflict," "The Ways of Dominant Peoples," "The Ways of Submerged Peoples," "The Contemporary Scene in Inter-cultural Relations"—reveals the political concerns that motivated Locke to respond to the mid-century crisis of democracy. But such topics also show the continuity of Locke's career-spanning interest in the generative friction of *contact* that he first addressed in *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations* in 1916.

Locke's 1940s investment in all things "intercultural" is mostly ignored when he is narrowly framed as the "godfather" of the 1920s New Negro. When his words and his actions get split between a history of ideas approach and biographical interpretation,

**6.** Stewart, *Life of Alain Locke*, 788.

Locke's lifelong interest in inter-cultural contact is underplayed by the widespread view that he was an aesthete who avoided racism's brutal realities because of his high-minded devotion to beauty. That Locke's "world-minded" cosmopolitanism was predicated, in part, on his disdain for all that he saw as "ghetto-minded" makes his elitism as unappealing to us today as it was for his detractors in the 1930s and 1940s.[7] But the continuum between his 1916 "culture-citizenship" concept and his "intercultural reciprocity" idea in 1942 cannot be overlooked. What if we took the concept of *contact* as the interdisciplinary bridging point between the cross-cultural image flow surveyed in *The Negro in Art* and the globe-crossing purview put forward in *When Peoples Meet*? Might we arrive at a place from which to break through the walls of the recalcitrant assumption that Euro-American art automatically enjoys universality, whereas art from everywhere else is imprisoned in ethnic particularity? In the realm of the musée imaginaire—the "museum without walls" that André Malraux thought photoreproduction would provide on the printed page—can Locke's sprawling thoughts on interculturality help unlock the margin/center divisions that institutional modernism set up in the 1940s, that were called into question in the 1980s, but that have yet to be fully dismantled in our contemporary moment?

## POST-HARLEM TURNING POINTS

A photograph of sculptor Richmond Barthé and painter Jacob Lawrence entrusting their work to a Harmon clerk, before it was shipped to Baltimore, documents an era-defining shift (fig. 53). In the 1920s, Barthé was obliged to negotiate the expectations of his white benefactors, whereas twenty-three-year-old Lawrence was taught by African American instructors, namely Augusta Savage, who ran art classes in Harlem, and Charles Alston, the first black artist to be appointed supervisor of a Federal Art Project (FAP) division. In the New Deal era, when the Works Progress Administration, active between 1935 and 1943, salaried artists to teach, create murals, and engage in civic projects, the federal state became an arts patron. This was a momentous development for black artists. Past dependence on Harmon's paternalist philanthropy gave way to the relative autonomy Alston created in a studio at 306 West 141st Street. Alston's FAP unit became a hub not just for artists such as Lawrence, Gwendolyn Knight, Romare Bearden, and others, but

**7.** Locke, "Stretching Our Social Mind," commencement speech, Hampton Institute, VA, August 18, 1944, ALP, 164–127/30, n.p.

for actors such as Rex Ingram, dancers such as Asadata Dafora, and writers such as Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, the last of whom briefly studied with Barthé.[8]8

Fig. 53. Richmond Barthé (left) and Jacob Lawrence (right) registering at *Contemporary Negro Art*, Baltimore Museum of Art, 1939. Harmon Foundation Collection, National Archives, College Park, Md.

Locke found himself outpaced. With growing self-empowerment, black artists formed the Harlem Artists Guild (HAG) to campaign for the fair distribution of FAP opportunities. The HAG secured Alston's appointment and also boycotted an exhibit Brady organized for the 1936 Texas Centennial. The HAG did not mince words. Its boycott flyer said: "We feel that the Harmon Foundation's past efforts to advance Negro art have served the opposite purpose by virtue of their coddling rather than professional attitude toward the Negro as artist."[9]9 In May 1936, Locke wrote to Brady, saying, "I would wager that three months after the government stopped its gratuities, most of them would be knocking on your door again." Despite being so irked, he got to the nub of things when he added, "To me, the main motive seems to be new-found independence because of the WPA's support."[10]10 If it was paradoxical that black artists gained greater autonomy with state patronage, it was only in the 1940s that they gained access to the art market via gallery representation. Lawrence showed at Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery in 1941, Romare

**8.** See Bearden and Henderson, *History of African-American Artists*, 234–41.
**9.** Harlem Artists Guild memorandum, 1936, ALP, 164–15/32.
**10.** Alain Locke to Mary Beattie Brady, May 27, 1936, ALP, 164–15/32.

Bearden started showing at Samuel Kootz's gallery in 1945, and Norman Lewis showed at Marian Willard's gallery in 1946. However, under such changing conditions, one would be gravely mistaken to think everything Locke stood for had simply been abandoned.

Lawrence contributed *The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1938) to the 1939 Baltimore exhibition, an epic series narrating the 1791 slave revolt in Saint-Domingue, now known as Haiti. In forty-one tempera panels, Lawrence mobilized angular figures on flat blocks of color, as he acted on Arthur Schomburg's call to recover histories of resistance omitted from official narratives. Such Afro-modern interest in recovering black history's hidden depths also inflected Ronald Moody's *Midonz* (1937), a solidly three-dimensional head carved in elm and placed atop a vertical plinth (fig. 54). Jamaica-born Moody was represented by twelve sculptures in *Contemporary Negro Art*. *Midonz* was one of several self-invented mythological figures—*Wohin* (1934) and *Tacet* (1937) were others—in which Moody hybridized cross-cultural sources in monumental sculptural busts contoured to whorls in the wood. In each sculpture, Afro, Indo, and Euro physiognomies fused to embody the Caribbean's intercultural history. Moody's journey from the colonial West Indies to London and then to Paris, where he resided from 1938 to 1941 before returning to Britain, speaks not just to one artist's globe-crossing travels. It was also indicative of the broader post-Harlem development whereby the Caribbean cultures of Haiti and Jamaica exerted a gravitational pull for painters such as Aaron Douglas and James Porter, dancers such as Katherine Dunham, and writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, all of whom visited the Caribbean in the 1930s and 1940s.[11]11

**11.** Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse* (New York: Lippincott and Crowell, 1938); and Katherine Dunham, *Journey to Accompong* (New York: Henry Holt, 1946). On Ronald Moody, see Cynthia Moody, "Midonz," *Transition*, no. 77 (1988): 10–18.

Fig. 54. Children viewing Ronald Moody's *Midonz* (1937) at the *Contemporary Negro Art* exhibition, Baltimore Museum of Art, 1939. Photograph Collection, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, Baltimore Museum of Art. AN6.4.

Post-Harlem artists distanced themselves from the ancestralist paradigm. Douglas struck a wry note at the 1936 American Artists' Congress when, looking back on the 1920s, he said, "Harlem was sifted. Neither streets, homes, nor public institutions escaped. When unsuspecting Negroes were found with a brush in their hand they were immediately hauled away and held for interpretation."[12]12 Yet even as Locke's earlier aesthetic program was pushed out of the picture, 1930s African American art had fully absorbed the lessons of Africanism that Locke had advocated. One example is the raw solidity of the Africanized features that Alston carved in *Head* (1937). Another is William Henry Johnson's fusion of folk art and expressionism in paintings such as *Chain Gang* (ca. 1939) and *Going to Church* (ca. 1940–41). Even as post-Harlem practices moved on from l'art nègre's version of "Africa," their practices did not negate Locke's ideas so much as they had already "digested" them. Just as the proletarian labor glorified in Barthé's *Stevedore* (1937) picked up on the era's leftward turn, so his *Blackberry Woman* (1932), in which he sculpted a black woman walking with a basket on her head, resonated with

**12.** Aaron Douglas, "The Negro in American Culture" (1936), in *Artists against War and Fascism: Papers of the First American Artists' Congress*, ed. Matthew Baigel and Julia Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 15.

ethnographic fieldwork that discussed such comportment as one among numerous Africanisms retained as cultural survivals in African American "folkways."[13]13

"To try and carry on in America where African sculpture left off would be to start on a false basis," wrote Bearden to fellow painter Walter Quirt in 1942. "The gap of the years, the environment, and ideology is too great."[14]14 Before interpreting this as antipathy to Locke's ancestralism, we would do well to notice what Bearden practiced in his paintings. *The Family* (ca. 1941) highlights the way Africanisms were already "incorporated" into his stylistic palette (fig. 55). The work's political realism foregrounds one of the man's enlarged hands pointing to meager provisions on the table, as his other hand is upraised in a protective gesture, as if to prevent a bailiff from entering his home. But in the angular stylization of his post-cubist vocabulary, Bearden's blue pigment is highly significant. As Helen Shannon observed, "The blue paint that runs from the area under the mother's eyebrows down her nose to the trapezoidal shape above her mouth" follows the pattern of Bakuba masks "in which these same parts of the face are covered in blue beads." Adding that "this same mask type is illustrated in black and white in Alain Locke's 1940 book, *The Negro in Art*," where its caption identifies it in the collection of the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library (which housed items from the Blondiau-Theatre Arts Collection), Shannon made the decisive point that "since it was rare to find color photographs of African art in books produced in this period, Bearden must have seen the actual mask on exhibition."[15]15

**13.** Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941).
**14.** Romare Bearden to Walter Quirt, January 20, 1942, quoted in Myron Schwartzman, *Romare Bearden: His Life and Art* (New York: Abrams, 1990), 121.
**15.** Helen Shannon, "African Art and Cubism, Proto-Collage, and Collage in the Work of Romare Bearden," in *Romare Bearden in the Modernist Tradition*, ed. Ellie Tweedy (New York: Romare Bearden Foundation, 2008), 28.

Fig. 55. Romare Bearden, *The Family*, ca. 1941. Gouache with ink and graphite on brown paper, 29 1/8 × 41 1/4 in. (74 × 104.8 cm). Collection of Earle Hyman.

Bearden's choices were influenced by sociopolitical tensions of the 1930s. Structural conflict between "segregation" and "assimilation" only came to resolution when "integration" became the basis of consensus established by mainstream liberalism after 1945. The fact that Bearden's 1934 "The Negro Artist and Modern Art" article was unflinchingly critical of Harmon's "coddling and patronizing" all-black exhibitions (the very language the HAG used) might lead some to think he was Locke's antagonist.[16]16 Yet Bearden's insistence that the Mexican muralist Gabriel Orozco and European modernist George Grosz were as influential as African art in shaping his pluralist outlook put him pretty much on the same page as Locke—both saw art world-historically as a composite whole made of multiple cultural traditions. As the terrain shifted in the 1930s, Locke redirected his interest in cross-cultural contact away from the Atlantic triangle of Africa, Europe, and America to focus on the internally pluralistic U.S. culture. In articles such as "The American Negro as Artist" of 1931, and "The Negro Takes His Place in American Art," a Harmon catalogue essay of 1933, Locke addressed the "contribution" African American folk culture made to modern America. With reference to music and literature as well as art in "The Contribution of Race to Culture" (1930) and "The Negro's Contribution to American Culture" (1939), Locke wrote as a cultural theorist more so than a cultural critic when he weighed up the "contributions" that the "part" (race) made to the "whole" (nation).[17]17 Tracking these shifts, Mary Ann Calo observed the distance that grew in the

**16.** Romare Bearden, "The Negro Artist and Modern Art," *Opportunity* 12, no. 12 (December 1934): 371.
**17.** Alain Locke, "The Contribution of Race to Culture," *Student World*, no. 23 (1930): 349–53; Locke, "The American Negro as Artist," *American Magazine of Art* 23 (September 1931): 211–20; Locke, "The Negro Takes His Place in American Art," in

1940s between Locke and artists such as Bearden, and she raised the question of whether Locke's commitment to the hierarchy of high and low culture was a factor in the divergence between his aesthetic views and that of the post-Harlem cohort.

Calo's observation that "the artists [Locke] admired and held out as exemplars for African Americans were not particularly modernist in style" seems confirmed by the fact that Locke twice wrote in praise of minor Belgian painter Auguste Mambour. Apropos of such a work as *Congolese Woman* (ca. 1920), Locke enthused in formalist terms to highlight "a modeling of masses that is truly sculptural and particularly suited to . . . the African countenance" (fig. 56).[18][18] Mambour's pneumatic modeling seems a bit kitschy to our eyes. We might well be inclined to agree with Calo that Locke's middle-brow choices came about "in part because the formal distortions adopted by modernists who appropriated African tribal conventions tended to work against the priority of restoring dignity to a black body ravaged by centuries of grotesque caricature."[19][19] But was it just a matter of personal taste? Touching on the mismatch between what Locke wanted to see and what artists themselves actually wanted to do, Shannon rephrased the matter, saying: "The challenge that Locke presented to race artists was to create an image of blacks that invoked modernity while being neither naturalistic and conservative nor anti-mimetic and radical."[20][20] Such fourfold pressures remind us that, unlike the individual freedom of expression accessed by Euro-American modernists, black artists made their choices under conditions that were structurally overdetermined by racialized asymmetry.

**18.** Calo, *Distinction and Denial*, 200; Alain Locke, "The Art of Auguste Mambour," *Opportunity* 3, no. 32 (August 1925), *CTAL*, 165.
**19.** Calo, *Distinction and Denial*, 200.
**20.** Shannon, "From 'African Savages' to 'Ancestral Legacy,'" 279.

Fig. 56. Auguste Mambour, *Congolese Woman*, ca. 1920. Oil on plywood, 23 3/5 × 23 3/5 in. (60 × 60 cm). Private collection.

More concerning are Calo's questions about Locke's inconsistencies as a cultural historian. In his two 1936 Bronze Booklets on art and music, Locke divided African American cultural history into two broad periods: under slavery and since emancipation. His implicit claim was that self-representation begins with self-determination—that aesthetic freedom arises with the political conditions of modernity and black demands for equal citizenship. Yet only three phases feature in *Negro Art: Past and Present*, as painters and sculptors move from "apprentice" (1865–90) through "journeyman" (1890–1914) to "master" (1914 onward). By contrast, seven periods are narrated in *The Negro and His Music* (1936), giving a far more nuanced account of cross-cultural entanglement. For instance, Locke shows how African call-and-response in "The Age of Plantation Shout and 'Breakdown'" (before 1830) intermingled with English Methodist hymns in the genesis of "Sorrow Songs" (1830–50). Locke's loyalty to the value-laden hierarchy that set "formal" (high) art against "folk" (low) culture seems to be the source of the disparity whereby Locke said little on vernacular sources in the visual arts. Locke's view that "folk" elements must first undergo refinement in order to be "formal" is illuminated by music scholar Paul Allen Anderson. Anderson pointed to the rhetorical work the metaphor of "ore" performs when, in *The Negro and His Music*, Locke wrote, "Only when pure and in the form originally used by the people for themselves, do [folk elements] yield us true

folk music. This is why real folk music is rare; but it is the most precious musical ore we have."[21]21

Locke was committed to the high/low distinction, Anderson argued, because he valued vernacular "folk" elements in their pure form, and at the other end of the scale he admired formal European symphony traditions, but what he objected to was the commercial adulteration perpetrated by Tin Pan Alley.[22]22 Reading Locke's "contribution" essays through a similar lens, Calo reiterated Porter's 1943 argument that because Locke lacked knowledge of artisanal crafts under slavery, he could not guide post-Harlem artists as to what was distinctively black in the visual realm of African American "folk" culture. Hence, Calo argued, "In the absence of a demonstrable organic evolution from folk to modern fine art, he left many professional African American visual artists suspended between these two paradigms."[23]23 But is "organic evolution" applicable to the story Locke tells in *The Negro in Art*? Locke adhered to high/low distinctions, undeniably, but does that necessarily mean he thought in developmentalist terms—that art moves through diachronic progression in linear time? Or was the "folk" to "formal" process of "refinement" affected by each period's synchronic interactions between "dominant peoples," to use the language of *When Peoples Meet*, and "submerged peoples"? Fresh light is cast on these sticking points once we attend to why Locke placed so much emphasis on style—or better yet, differentiations of style—in his 1930s and 1940s visual arts writings.

## STYLE: DIFFERENTIATING IMAGES OF BLACKNESS

Joshua Johnston, the Baltimore portraitist active between 1790 and 1825, is among the first artists discussed in *The Negro in Art*. Johnston's status as the first recorded African American artist was established by research published in 1939.[24]24 But when Locke stated, "Johnston's early start before 1800 is overshadowed by the symbolic fact of this art career within the shadow of slavery taking its origin in society portraiture rather than

**21.** Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Washington, DC: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), 12, cited and discussed in Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Memory and Music in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 145.
**22.** Anderson, *Deep River*, 145.
**23.** Mary Ann Calo, "Alain Locke and American Art Criticism," *American Art* 18, no. 2 (2004): 95.
**24.** See Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, "The Question of Joshua Johnston," in *History of African-American Artists*, 3–17.

race portrayal," it is clear that Locke's narrative is not merely chronological but qualitative (*TNA*, 9). Given the fact that only one portrait of a black subject, the Reverend Daniel Coker, appears in Johnston's oeuvre, as white Marylanders were the customers from whom Johnston made his living, Locke is concerned at the outset to stress the *scarcity* of black subject matter in art produced by black artists prior to the twentieth century. As he addressed the paucity of "race portrayal" in Robert Scott Duncanson's landscapes, Edmonia Lewis's neoclassical sculpture, and Henry Ossawa Tanner's religious scenes, Locke's point that "it has taken three or four generations to break these taboos of race disparagement" pivots on his twofold periodization that set the Old Negro era apart from the new forms of black subjectivity in the post-emancipation era (*TNA*, 9). Hence when he discussed Duncanson's portrait of a black bishop named Daniel Payne and Lewis's sculpture of an emancipated slave couple, *Forever Free*, and said that "these, as distinguished from the beginnings of the Negro artist, mark the advent of Negro art," it is crucial to grasp that what defines "Negro art" for Locke is not an artist's identity alone, but a black artist's chosen commitment to black subject matter (*TNA*, 9). It is when artists self-identify as black, and make black content their subject of choice, that the basis is laid for the study of "Negro art" in aesthetic terms of style and form. As his picture book proceeds to do this, Locke deployed a trio of stylistic differentiations —"Traditionalist," "Africanist," "Modernist"—first set forth in "The American Negro as Artist" of 1933 that informed his approach in both *Negro Art: Past and Present* in 1936 and *The Negro in Art* in 1940. We need to take careful note of the analytical work these formal distinctions are doing across Locke's art writing of the 1930s and 1940s.

Laura Wheeler Waring, William Edouard Scott, and May Howard Jackson, active from the 1920s onward, are grouped as "Traditionalist" because their black subject matter sets them apart from precursors who avoided race portrayal, even as their academic naturalism marks them off as "the conservative wing of our Negro artists" (*TNA*, 9). A judgment of taste is involved in Locke's comment, but the finality of judgment was not the goal of his stylistic approach. Taking Waring's 1927 portrait of Anna Washington Derry as an example of Traditionalism, we can see how the painting imbues Derry's face with warmth by placing her against rear-ground color shadows of white and pale gold (fig. 57). The portrait's homely ambience invites empathic viewing as Derry gazes off into the middle distance. Waring's naturalistic brushwork highlights wrinkles indicative of hardship—Derry was a laundress whom Waring met while teaching in rural Pennsylvania —but the portrait's strongest feature is its intimacy. Like domestic settings in naturalistic

works by Allan Crite and Loïs Mailou Jones, Waring's Traditionalist style implicitly refutes the public drama of the street in stereotypical representations of race in American art.

Fig. 57. Laura Wheeler Waring, *Anna Washington Derry*, 1927. Oil on canvas, 20 × 16 in. (50.8 × 40.5 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Harmon Foundation, 1967.91.1.

But as *The Negro in Art* follows 1920s artists, with Locke saying that "by the mid-Thirties a vigorous, intimate and original documentation of Negro life was definitely underway," it becomes clear that his stylistic categories do not aim to fix artists into classificatory pigeonholes, but to draw out the broader implications of stylistic variations that have flourished since the New Negro "Renaissance" (*TNA*, 9). In this regard, the way Locke employed the concept of style may take us by surprise. Contrary to contemporary habits that see style as self-expression, Locke anchored the term within his overall view that cultural forms express a "temperament" not on the part of individual artists, but on the part of an entire social group. "Traditionalist," "Africanist," and "Modernist" are thus manifestations of aesthetic will—what nineteenth-century art historian Alois Riegl called "*Kunstwollen*"—on the part of African Americans as a social group. As such, stylistic differentiation is an index of the epochal transition from bondage to freedom.[25]25

**25.** Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of the Ornament*, trans. Evelyn Kain (1893; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). See also Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).

Under conditions of freedom, black identity is far from monolithic, Locke implied, for his threefold stylistic distinctions reveal the *diversification of blackness in modernity*. Carved in wood, the magisterial countenance of *Negro Head* (ca. 1927), by Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, embodies forthright black pride (fig. 58). Prophet's figure looks ahead with the heroic bearing of a visionary leader. Like Meta Warrick Fuller's earlier sculptural allegories, one single figure embodies a collectively held group ideal, but *Negro Head* is "Africanist" not just on account of its content, but by virtue of the rough-hewn style in which Prophet handles a material that is also a mainstay of traditional African carving. Locke's Africanists are all sculptors—Richmond Barthé, Sargent Johnson, Augusta Savage, and Prophet—yet he groups them not on the basis of medium, but because their style manifests a sensibility we would call today "Afrocentric." On this view, one might observe many overlaps between Locke's definitions of "Africanist" and "Modernist" and argue that Aaron Douglas's *Into Bondage* (1936) qualifies as both (fig. 59). Depicting enslaved Africans about to embark on a ship, as seen from the hinterland, Douglas's subject matter is unequivocally black. In stylistic terms, the flatness Douglas emphasizes by layering planes of pastel color is what makes his work "Modernist." *Into Bondage* has little in common with Archibald Motley, Jr.'s nightlife scenes or folk art–inspired paintings by William Henry Johnson, all of whom Locke saw as "Modernists." But this is because "style" is not at the service of a formalist analysis of each work's internal composition. Rather, Locke used "style" in relational terms to draw out how pluralistic "Negro art" had become since its eighteenth-century beginnings "within the shadow of slavery."

Fig. 58. Nancy Elizabeth Prophet, *Negro Head*, ca. 1927. Wood, 20 1/2 × 11 × 14 in. (52.1 × 27.9 × 35.6 cm). Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, Providence, R.I. Gift of Miss Eleanor B. Green.

Fig. 59. Aaron Douglas, *Into Bondage*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 66 5/8 × 66 5/8 × 2 3/4 in. (169.2 × 169.2 × 7 cm). Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase and partial gift from Thurlow Evans Tibbs, Jr., The Evans-Tibbs Collection). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2014.79.17.

When we come to *The Negro in Art*'s second section on black images in European and American art, there is another aspect to Locke's definition of "Negro art" that is also sure

to take us by surprise—namely, that it includes art by white artists. But before we move toward the cross-cultural dimension of Locke's comparative method, we would do well to pause, for we have arrived at one of the idiosyncratic junction points upon which the conceptual architecture of *The Negro in Art* is built. For a philosopher with no art historical training, Locke nonetheless shared much common ground with the late nineteenth-century founding figures who established art history as an academic discipline. "Style" was central to Heinrich Wölfflin as well as to Alois Riegl as a concept with which to mediate art's formal autonomy, which gives artworks a life of their own, and its sociohistorical grounding in the period-specific context in which it was produced. The common philosophical source here is German idealism. Locke derived "temperament" as a concept that addressed aesthetic form as the expression not of individuals but of nations, whose national character was said to be represented in art, from the ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder. "Our writers have renewed the race temperament . . . by finding a new pride in it," stated Locke in "Beauty Instead of Ashes," the 1928 article in which he asserted that African American literature "stands today, one would say, in the position of the German temperament in Herder's day" (*WAL*, 218).

The *Völkish* connotations of Herder's vocabulary are highly concerning. It would seem to put black cultural criticism at risk of replaying nineteenth-century nationalisms that saw British, French, German, or Italian art as each manifesting unchangeable group identities. If we recall how, in his 1925 "Legacy of the Ancestral Arts" essay, "temperament" served as the basis on which Locke made far-reaching generalizations about differences between African and African American culture, we should heed what one scholar went so far as to say: "Locke was misled . . . as he relied too heavily on nineteenth-century thinking and theories of racial and ethnic personalities."[26][26] Knowing that Wölfflin also made such generalizations does not provide Locke with an excuse. Nonetheless, to note, as Hal Foster pointed out, that "Wölfflin collapses formal autonomy and sociohistorical imbrication through a racialist invocation of a folkish mind-body," is to see how Meyer Schapiro jumped to entirely wrong conclusions about Locke's ancestralism.[27][27] Far from interpreting style as expressing fully formed nationhood, Locke stressed the solidarity-creating role of cultural production in transforming a subaltern people's self-perception. At the start of his career, "culture-citizenship" was

**26.** James Barnes, "Alain Locke and the Sense of the African Legacy," in *Reflections on a Renaissance Man*, ed. R. J. Linnemann (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 107.
**27.** Hal Foster, "Antinomies in Art History," in *Design and Crime* (*and Other Diatribes*) (London: Verso, 2002), 88. Schapiro, "Race, Nationality, and Art."

formulated on a collectivist basis not to play one group against another, as nationalism does, but to advance a model of cultural pluralism that made African American contributions vital to a "joint civilization" that would fulfill America's democratic ideals. Invoking Herder in 1928 to envision "folk temperament raised to the levels of conscious art," Locke upheld the idea of folk-to-fine art refinement we saw as an aspect of his attachment to high/low cultural hierarchies (*WAL*, 218). But the bigger question to arise from the tangled roots of Locke's style-based methodology is to ask: How does he prevent "Traditionalist," "Africanist," and "Modernist" from congealing into essentialist character traits of modern black subjectivity?

Offset against problems that stem from reading style as symptomatic of group life is the countervailing thrust of "theme/idiom." Present in *The Negro in Art*'s subtitle—*A Pictorial Record of the Negro Artist and of the Negro Theme in Art*—these terms were also at work in the "Ancestral Arts" essay, as we previously saw. The "theme/idiom" couplet played an anchoring role in Locke's 1930s "contribution" essays when he distanced himself from the deterministic view that an artist's race or ethnicity guarantees a work's aesthetic value. Against exclusively identity-based analyses of cultural texts, the questions Locke asked in "The Negro's Contribution to American Culture"—"What makes a work of art Negro, its theme or its idiom? What constitutes a 'Negro contribution to culture,' its authorship or its cultural base?"—date from 1939, but are still with us today when an author's cultural identity is recognized as a constitutive, but not determining, factor in artistic production (*WAL*, 240). Distancing himself from "cultural partisanships and chauvinisms," Locke's cultural pluralism sought to describe changing relations between part and whole—how black folk-culture contributions in music, literature, and theater were transforming the nation's hitherto monocultural self-conception. He rejected exclusively identity-driven analyses on the grounds that "tracing an arbitrary strand of Negro authorship and narrowly construed race productivity not only does not do the Negro group cultural justice, but . . . it does not disclose the cultural exchanges and interactions that are vital to the process" (*WAL*, 243). He added: "An increasing number of critical studies and analyses are taking this more modern and more scientific point of view," which approaches "the analysis of the Negro idiom and the Negro theme in the various art fields as a gradually widening field of collaboration and interaction between the white and the Negro creative artists" (*WAL*, 243). We need to dwell on the sources of this "more modern and more scientific point of view," for these anthropological and sociolinguistic sources not only explain the inclusion of white artists

in "Negro art," but also pull Locke's stylistic analysis away from the traps of Völkish thinking by grounding *The Negro in Art* in a comparative method whose emphasis on "style" serves to resist sociological determinism.

When Franz Boas de-biologized race, language became his model for understanding culture not as genetically inherited but as a symbolic system acquired through learning, through which a people interpret the world. Summing up what is at stake not just in ethnographic studies of other cultures but in studying culture per se, Stuart Hall stated, "Boas . . . always insisted that if you are going to study a particular people . . . you have to understand their language because their language is the primary symbolic system they use to give their social reality an intelligible form. . . . Language, in this sense, is the imposition of intelligibility on a world. The world has to be made meaningful, and this can only be accomplished by breaking it up, giving names to the various bits, and establishing relationships among them."[28]28

The view that language is not a neutral communication medium but a symbolic system expressive of a people's entire worldview—put forward by Edward Sapir in the 1920s—also informed Boas's thinking.[29]29 As Locke cast aside what he saw as the "chauvinist" view that tethered cultural production to the race or ethnicity of an author's identity, his "theme/idiom" emphasis moved toward thinking of art as a language in which multiple voices seek to make the world intelligible within the idiom of every group's symbolic system. When artistic expression is no longer under the exclusive ownership of each ethnic or racial group, the focus of study shifts. Instead of innate national character, art is examined for the various idioms through which one group distinguishes itself from others while sharing themes and subject matter in common. Inviting us to compare and contrast the various stylistic idioms through which African American artists, in the book's first section, and Euro-American artists, in the second section, produced differential images of blackness as a common theme of shared historical interest, *The Negro in Art* thus offers an art historical narrative that is not only fully inclusive, but that also does away with disciplinary boundaries that axiomatically separate minority and majority traditions.

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**28.** Stuart Hall, "Structuralism," in *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 59.

**29.** Edward Sapir, *Language: Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1921). See also Mark Helbling, "Feeling Universality and Thinking Particularistically: Alain Locke, Franz Boas, Melville Herskovits, and the Harlem Renaissance," *Prospects*, no. 19 (1994): 289–314.

Giving black artists priority, Locke's conceptual design implies that idiom takes precedence over theme. While the black image is subject matter of common interest to artists from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds in various historical contexts, his initial intragroup distinction of "Traditionalist," "Africanist," and "Modernist" styles makes the point that "Negro art" is not about black content alone. Understanding art historically means giving attention to the formal dimension through which stylistic differentiations of idiom and accent impose "intelligibility on the world," thereby making blackness meaningful from multiple points of view. While Locke never fully resolved the methodological tensions between the "temperament" emphasis derived from Herder and the countervailing "theme/idiom" concept derived from Boas—a tension that may ultimately be irreconcilable—it is crucial for us to see that for Locke, style was never a superfluous flourish, but the conceptual lynchpin of his critical commitment to cross-culturality. With language as the model, art, music, and literature alike could each be examined in relational terms, examining how black and white authors sought to give blackness "intelligible form," with style as the principal investigative tool for exploring the multiple idioms in which blackness is made meaningful in aesthetic production. While past and present surveys were comprehensive, Locke's thinking in 1940 was rigorously anti-monolithic in its approach to black visual arts.

*The Negro in Art*'s textual component—the condensed artist biographies at the back of parts one and two, as well as Locke's introductions to the three sections—is, of course, indispensable to its argumentation, but Locke's thinking in pictures lies at the heart of its intellectual originality. As he selected and sequenced photoreproductions, thoughtfully curating the layout of each page, Locke made the most out of the picture book's potential as a medium in which to create border-crossing connections through creative articulations of image and text. As we turn to the loose, even playful, variety of layout formats that articulate Locke's visual thinking, we revisit issues scholars such as Brent Hayes Edwards and Jeremy Braddock have raised regarding the anthology genre in African American cultural history.[30] Locke's 1925 *New Negro* anthology exemplified an edited collection that laid the foundations for a new field of study, and in light of this we might ask of the images Locke collected in *The Negro in Art:* Did he aim to create a "Negro art" canon, or does his 1940 picture book head off in a different direction entirely?

**30.** Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice*.

Some layouts group pieces by the same artist—Sargent Johnson's five works, four by Palmer Hayden, and ten by Hale Woodruff, for instance—while medium informs the organization of sculptures by Teodoro Ramos Blanco, Alston, Moody, and Francisco Lord on pages 76 to 77. Genre is the criteria for Samuel J. Brown's portraits of children on pages 92 to 93. A much more avowedly art historical basis informs the double-page spread on pages 114 to 115 showing how black artists inflect Christian iconography (fig. 60). Elizabeth Catlett's *Mother and Child* (1940) sculpture accentuates Madonna and child in an African American idiom. It is placed below the Annunciation scene in John Carlis's painting *Two Women* (1940), and both face, on the opposite page, Fred Flemister's *Man with Brush* (1940). Flemister's self-portrait quotes the Quattrocento device of showing a landscape in the rear through a parted curtain. That these three works engage European art traditions with idiomatic African American stylistic accentuations is as significant as the choice of Flemister's picture about picture-making for the cover of *The Negro in Art*'s 1971 reprint. What such layouts reveal, even if it is not spelled out in the text, are intercultural entanglements of Afro-Diaspora and Euro-American art histories. "Negro art" is less a closed subfield and more an arena of open dialogue as cross-cultural differentiations inflect thematically shared iconographies.

Fig. 60. Alain Locke, *The Negro in Art* (1940), pages 114 and 115, featuring (clockwise from left): Fred Flemister, *Man with Brush*, 1940; John Carlis, *Two Women*, 1940; Elizabeth Catlett, *Mother and Child*, 1940; and Elizabeth Catlett, *Negro Girl*, 1939.

Like his decision to conclude the first section with eight works from Lawrence's *Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture* series, Locke made a highly evaluative decision to showcase Woodruff's *Amistad* (1938) murals in a full-color spread in the book's initial edition. That

Barthé had many more images than Bearden, for instance, likewise indicates value-laden editorial choices on Locke's part. But far from canonizing some at the expense of others, the pluralistic variation of layouts across the book's first 223 images suggests Locke's choices were invested "not in confirming a canon, not in a backward-looking survey of the high points in a trajectory," as Edwards has said, "but instead in founding and enabling the very tradition it documents."[31] Setting forth the sweeping arc by which black self-representation took shape from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, Locke's curation defers the finality of narrative closure to indicate that the story of black visual arts was not complete, but was very much ongoing at mid-twentieth century.

When he switched to blackness as a theme viewed through Euro-American eyes, Locke introduced his second section, saying, "The art portrayal of the Negro reveals . . . quite more sensitively than formal history the changes from one generation to another in the social and cultural attitudes toward the Negro" (*TNA*, 138). A full page given to Thomas Eakins's 1900 portrait of Henry Ossawa Tanner underlines the sympathetic realism by which Eakins went against the grain of racialized conventions in American art (fig. 61). But far from the simplistic binary of "positive/negative" images—a term conspicuous by its absence in Locke's thinking—his layout encourages us to situate Eakins in an historical context. Eastman Johnson's works on the facing page similarly have a closely observed quality, yet the realism in which blacks were depicted in Johnson's well-known paintings, such as *Old Kentucky Home* (1859), served antebellum nostalgia. Turning to previous pages that show blacks in early modern European art reveals the insights Locke produced when he brought stylistic analysis to bear on period-specific context. Regarding *Adoration of the Magi* (1517) by Quentin Massys, on the right on page 144, Locke discussed "the legendary blackamoor king among the Three Wise Men" as a "romantic Christian myth" (*TNA*, 139; fig. 62). The black figure in such nativity scenes was far from being unproblematically "positive," for the black Magi was understood to be a Moor converted from Islam. The image of the blackamoor king thus upheld Europe's evangelical view that nonwhites would be saved by Christianity. Hence, Locke said of Massys's painting that "its legendary character overlaid any trend toward realism." He then made a critical contrast by placing to the left on this page Albrecht Dürer's *The Negress of Brandon* (1521), describing this drawing as a work of "deep curiosity and seriousness." Writing that "Dürer records in the journal of his visit to Antwerp in 1521 the encounter with Katharina of the household of the Portuguese trade

**31.** Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 44.

commissioner," Locke used the contrast on this page between realism and "legend" to lay bare divergent perceptions of blackness within the same era of European history (*TNA*, 139).

Fig. 61. Alain Locke, *The Negro in Art* (1940), pages 164 and 165, featuring (clockwise from left): Thomas Eakins, *Portrait of Henry Ossawa Tanner*, 1900; Eastman Johnson, *Negro Boy*, 1859; and Eastman Johnson, *Negro Boy with Flute*, 1863.

Fig. 62. Alain Locke, *The Negro in Art* (1940), page 144, featuring Albrecht Dürer, *The Negress of Brandon*, 1521 (left), and Quentin Massys, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1517 (right).

Enlarging the image of one of the figures in Rembrandt van Rijn's *The Two Negroes* (1661) so that it commands a full page, Locke singled out a work that one black historian has praised for its "immortal, realistic portraits" of individuals observed firsthand (fig.

63).[32][32] But since none of us are in a position to verify whether Rembrandt produced a true likeness, we would do well to acknowledge that the potent affect we experience in the face of such a painting is, first and foremost, a result of semiotic differencing between one set of representational codes, such as those inscribed in Rembrandt's realism, and others, such as racial caricature and grotesquerie. It is not one-to-one mimesis between oil paint on canvas and the actual world that "gives social reality an intelligible form," but, as Hall stated, it is rather the codes of the symbolic order that social actors share in "establishing relationships" among the "various bits"—the signifying elements—that gives meaning to marks on canvas and to shapes sculpted in wood or bronze. As we zoom out to take stock of what *The Negro in Art* achieves by driving stylistic interpretation through multiple historical contexts, Locke's critical insights must be weighed up against the problem of whether "theme/idiom" is compatible with the manifestation of "temperament."

Fig. 63. Alain Locke, *The Negro in Art* (1940), pages 146 and 147, featuring (clockwise from left): Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Two Negroes* (detail), 1661; Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Two Negroes*, 1661; and Diego Velázquez, *The Maid Servant*, ca. 1620–22.

Moving back in time, Locke's comparativism also crosses spatial boundaries to show the idioms through which seventeenth-century Dutch, eighteenth-century English, and nineteenth-century American artists approached blackness as a theme. In a sense, this complements the range of stylistic variations seen in the first section, as Locke highlights differentiations that fall both *between* Euro-American and African American artists and

**32.** Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 119.

*within* groups defined by race and ethnicity. As we flip through its pages, it should become clear that *The Negro in Art* is not telling a developmentalist story of "organic evolution" that proceeds in a straight line. Rather than dictate how readers engage with the images, the picture book's very medium invites us to turn its pages back and forth, to pause and ponder as we return to it each time. As such, picture books elicit digressive reading. Hence, my second point is that such border-crossing digressions open avenues for investigation that get closed down when Locke's cultural historiography is read, as Calo has done, in terms of a linear progression from "folk" to "formal." Third, by moving back and forth across diverse sociohistorical contexts, Locke's picture book not only offers an alternative to Western-centric narratives that begin in ancient Greece and advance through the Quattrocento and Enlightenment in ways that keep the story of art under Euro-American ownership. His method, interweaving stylistic variation and sociohistorical context, also departs from formalist narratives by mapping art's worldly history as evidence of ever-changeable cultural mentalities.

In the digressive reading encouraged by a picture book that is itself "a book one thumbs," to cite Countee Cullen's "Heritage" once more, *The Negro in Art* staked out research terrain that, many years later, was mapped out in the multivolume series *The Image of the Black in Western Art* (1976–2014). "All have been cast in roles they did not choose," wrote collector Dominique de Menil, introducing the first volume. De Menil began collecting images in response to the 1960s Civil Rights movement (building a slide library to facilitate research), and her insight into Western art's portrayal of subjects of African descent—"They are actors in plays written by whites"—redoubles in significance when set alongside Locke's 1940 picture book.[33] In today's language, we would say that where Euro-American art history reveals images of blackness as other to white Western selves, the more recent twentieth-century history of black self-representation has always dialogically engaged with the visual archive of Western culture.

When we observe that the sheer number of artworks by white Western artists studied in volumes one to five of *The Image of the Black in Western Art* far outweighs the smaller and more recent amount of black-authored art examined in part two of volume five, we arrive at another key insight. The "otherness" ascribed to the black image in the West's symbolic order was foundational to the construction of whiteness. Blackness mattered to

**33.** Dominique de Menil, "Acknowledgments and Perspectives to the First Edition (1976)," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. 1, *From the Pharaohs to the Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), Appendix.

the West as a "theme" of immense identity-defining importance, for the black image served as the symbolic ground upon which an entire civilization formed its worldview. *The Negro in Art* has been overlooked (and is omitted from Calo's study), yet Locke's editorial architecture makes the profound historical point that only in the early twentieth century was the Western edifice of representational othering contested by black artists, whose differential idioms contributed to epochal transvaluations in perceptions of blackness.[34][34] With insights as rich as these, surely we may forgive Locke for not fully tying up loose ends between "temperament" and "theme/idiom"?

We have yet to explain why Locke placed Africa at the end of his book, not the beginning. Insofar as the title of *The Negro in Art*'s third section—"The Ancestral Arts"—was a reprise of Locke's 1925 essay, the pairing of African art and European modernism was clearly intended to demonstrate the former's influence on the latter. But to do justice to the visual thinking through which Locke addressed such cross-cultural interaction in his 1940s arts writings, we must find the interdisciplinary bridging point that connects *The Negro in Art* to the editorial architecture in which Locke addressed intercultural concerns in *When Peoples Meet*.

## CULTURAL CROSSINGS: INSIGHTS FROM IN-BETWEEN SPACES

The years leading up to World War II were Europe's darkest hours. In this crisis moment, several "big books" made a staunch defense of liberal humanist values, many seeking to make their arguments broadly accessible through photoreproduction and its potential to reach a mass readership. Siegfried Giedion's *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948), a cultural history of the Machine Age, was one example. André Malraux's *Psychologie de l'Art* (1947–50), whose first volume was translated into English as *Museum without Walls* (1949), was another.[35][35] When set within this context, we see that Locke's "world-mindedness" placed his 1940s writings in such company, for whereas cross-cultural contact was the source of conflict in *When Peoples Meet*, in *The Negro in Art* it was a source of creativity. In this regard, the questions opened up by Locke's use of photoreproduction not only intersect with Malraux's concerns, but point to avenues down which the historiography of Afro-Diaspora art has yet to travel.

**34.** Calo, *Distinction and Denial*.
**35.** André Malraux, *The Psychology of Art*, vol. 1, *Museum without Walls*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (1947; repr., New York: Pantheon, 1949). Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948).

Initially formulated in 1947–50, Malraux's "imaginary museum" idea was actualized in a luxurious two-volume art book, *Le Musée Imaginaire de la Sculpture Mondiale* of 1952–54.[36] As artistic director at Gallimard, the prestigious French publisher, Malraux had resources at his disposal of which the Associates in Negro Folk Education could only dream. With page proofs from volume two spread on the floor, Maurice Jarnoux took photographs for a 1954 *Paris Match* story celebrating Malraux as a liberal humanist public intellectual (fig. 64). Malraux—who later served as President Charles de Gaulle's minister of cultural affairs and voiced the discourse of officialdom—is seen in these photographs in his apartment, surrounded by the teeming conceptual possibilities opened up when art from every corner of the world, every period of time, can be brought into a single place of viewing thanks to photographic reproduction.

Fig. 64. Maurice Jarnoux, *André Malraux Standing in His Salon*, 1954. *Paris Match* Archive, Getty Images.

Since the medium's inception, photographs of artworks were devalued as ersatz copies, substitutes for "the real thing," but with his notion of a "museum without walls," Malraux undermined the hierarchy between the original and the copy. "Thanks to the rather specious unity imposed by photographic reproduction on a multiplicity of objects," he wrote in 1953, "ranging from the statue to the bas-relief, from the bas-reliefs to seal

**36.** André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire de la Sculpture Mondiale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1952–54).

impressions, and from these to the plaques of the nomads, a 'Babylonian style' seems to emerge as a real unity, not a mere classification."[37] Over and above this example, Rosalind Krauss has drawn out the radical consequences of the position Malraux arrived at via his engagement with photoreproduction. Krauss acknowledged the decontextualization whereby photoreproduction removes the artwork from its intended site of exhibition and also removes us, as viewers, from the sensory presence of the object's materiality. But this is only one side of the equation. Even as we lose the art object's "thingliness" and its original, site-specific context, we gain the ability to make comparisons that decenter the fixed ordering principles of the classical nineteenth-century museum. As Krauss explained, Malraux's musée imaginaire instigated a paradigm shift, as "this establishment of meaning as a function of comparison—Classical v. Baroque; south v. north; line v. colour—organized the understanding of art within the model of language. . . . Each artistic form had something to say and its own language/dialect/idiom with which to say it. Within art-historical practice, these linguistic branches then became what is known as style."[38]

Krauss summed up this shift as moving from valuations of "beauty" to "meaning": "With meaning now the master-model—having supplanted beauty . . .—all the arts, high and low, east and west, court and folk, begin to find a place in the museum."[39] Since modern art museums have mostly *not yet* found a place for Afro-Diaspora arts, we may say the quest to include "all the arts" is still ongoing. Nonetheless, Krauss's insight helps us situate Locke's style-led approach as one in which he had one foot planted in the older paradigm of "beauty," even as his "theme/idiom" pairing stepped toward the future paradigm of "meaning."

Previously we saw Locke "straddling" categories of "blood" (race) and "kinship" (ethnicity) in his 1925 ancestralist text. In conceptualizing style in the 1940s, unresolved tensions between his sources in German idealism and the "more modern and more scientific point of view" of anthropology and sociolinguistics may also be regarded by some as a deficit. But in light of Krauss's account of the turning point Malraux instigated, we ought to notice that Locke drew on formalist and contextualist approaches alike,

**37.** André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (1953; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 44.
**38.** Rosalind E. Krauss, "Postmodernism's Museum without Walls," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 243.
**39.** Krauss, "Postmodernism's Museum without Walls," 243.

even though many art historians continue to see these as either/or choices. In *Negro Art: Past and Present* he acknowledged, "The common denominator between African art and modernist art is the cult of form for form's sake. That is to say form as a satisfaction in itself" (*NAPP*, 112–13). We saw how dissatisfied Locke was with purely formalist interpretation in his defense of the 1927 Blondiau-Theatre Arts exhibition. In 1936 he also criticized artists who were "still beating the thin air of art for art's sake long after the art of our time has passed to a creed of social analysis and criticism. Negro art, more logically, falls in with an art of social interpretation and criticism" (*NAPP*, 65). This indicates the contextualist counter-emphasis with which Locke sought to balance his approach to formal matters of style. In view of the formalist universalism that rose to prominence in art museums and art history textbooks after 1945—in large part, a reaction to the political turmoil of the 1930s—Locke's approach to style as mediating contextual and formal concerns may provide a means for breaking through minority/majority partitions whereby form is treated as art history's principal object of study, while subfields are assumed to study content alone. Darby English is rightly critical of black art history's self-minoritizing tendencies that undervalue attention to form, yet when we read Locke only for his 1920s writings, as English does, we ignore the conceptual resources available in Locke's mature arts writings.[40] Whether straddling paradigms of "beauty" and "meaning," or navigating a path through formalism and contextualism, the benefit of occupying an "in-between" space is no abstract matter. Such interstitial spaces illuminate the very method by which Locke assembled *The Negro in Art*'s photoreproductions from heterogeneous sources.

Let's look carefully at the last layout in the book. After thirteen pages of sumptuous images showing art from Gabon, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Sudan, and other regions, we find a page featuring modernist art by Modigliani, Picasso, and Max Weber (fig. 65). To notice the collage-like flourish in the upper part of the layout that juxtaposes Picasso's *Dancer* (1907) with a Kota reliquary figure is to pause over the subversive epistemological move Locke enacts sotto voce. Tribal "Africa" and the modern "West" could not have been brought together on a purely formal basis, because the hundreds of images preceding this last page have created a thoroughly historicized context for viewing the two artifacts that have similar shapes but that come from entirely different symbolic worlds. Placing the rhomboid shape of the Gabon carving side by side with a proto-cubist figure whose angular legs anticipate Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), Locke foregrounded the

**40.** English, *How to See a Work of Art*, 55–66, 59–60.

contingency—the accident of history—that brought these two elements into cross-cultural contact.

Fig. 65. Alain Locke, *The Negro in Art* (1940), page 223, featuring (clockwise from top left): Pablo Picasso, *Dancer*, 1907; African Ogoue (Ogowe) fetish figure; Max Weber, *Invocation*, 1919; and Amedeo Modigliani, *Girl Seated*, 1917.

Instead of a story of "organic evolution," with an ending predetermined by its origin, Locke's cross-cultural pairing speaks to creative potentials that have arisen from the disruptive breaks brought about by history's twists and turns. If "Africa" were the name of an all-determining origin, it should certainly be at the start of the story. But its interaction with European modernism on the book's concluding pages leaves the story open-ended. We might ask of the Kota/Picasso juxtaposition: Are we seeing only one of multiple possible combinations that may yet come into existence as a result of cross-cultural contact? The light touch with which Locke's editorial hand activates a cross-cultural pas de deux on his book's final page has a collage-like quality to it. Collage is a uniquely twentieth-century art form. The cutting and mixing that brings two unalike elements together to create something new in a "third" space of hyphenated meaning was never under the exclusive ownership of the European avant-garde, for collage methods also apply to the means by which Locke assembled his photographic materials.

How exactly did Locke get hold of his book's 386 images in the first place? The 1939 Baltimore exhibition catalogue, featuring many works photographed by the Harmon

Foundation, provided one source for the first section. But Locke's archive also contains the source material from which the "Ancestral Arts" section was composed. In addition to "Commercial Illustrations Reproduced in The Negro in Art in 1940," in Box 222 of the Alain Locke Papers, I could not help noticing Box 223's official wording—"Illustrations Removed from Magazines and Catalogues." To "remove" is a polite way of saying the images were literally "ripped" out of the print sources in which Locke found them. The photograph of the Kota figure on page 211 was torn out of a French catalogue, its original caption now edited out of the frame (fig. 66). The tabletop setting of the Kasai cup, box, and ceremonial drinking cup on page 220 was likewise taken out of a German catalogue, with Locke's mark-up notes indicating where he wanted the image placed on the page (fig. 67).

Fig. 66. Illustrations removed from magazines and catalogues, featuring an Ogoue fetish figure, n.d. Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 67. Illustrations removed from magazines and catalogues, featuring a Kasai cup, box, and ceremonial drinking cup, n.d. Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

For his part, Albert C. Barnes rigidly adhered to the original versus copy dichotomy. His foundation forbade photoreproductions of his modernist art; Matisse was turned away when he requested a reference image of one of his own paintings. Barnes made an exception for the African art photographed by Charles Sheeler, as Alison Boyd pointed out in her study of the racial double standard that underpinned the Barnes Foundation policy.[41] But if Barnes's concern was that the ersatz copy could never give the viewer the authentic experience of an artwork's originality, it was precisely photo-reproduction's capacity to undermine the "aura" bestowed upon canonical masterpieces that led German critic Walter Benjamin to argue for photography's democratizing potential.[42] In this light, Locke's quasi-collagist move not only points to a space of Afro-Diasporic epistemology in which new knowledge may arise from contingent encounters. The hint of a collagist "temperament," dare one say it, also builds an interdisciplinary bridge between the cross-cultural concerns of Locke's 1930s and 1940s visual arts writings and his more sociological writings on culture during this same period, to which we should now turn.

**41.** Alison Boyd, "The Visible and Invisible: Circulating Images of the Barnes Foundation Collection," in *Images of the Art Museum: Connecting Gaze and Discourse in the History of Museology*, ed. Eva-Maria Troelenberg and Melania Savino (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 133–54.
**42.** Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility" (1936), in *The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund F. N. Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008), 19–55.

Our received image of Locke as the effete Afro-Edwardian aesthete takes a bit of a knock when we hear the tone in which he introduced one of his interchapters in *When Peoples Meet*. "Modern imperialism," he stated, "has bred, in addition to its half-castes, its hybrid and borderline cultures. A number of complex cultural creations have resulted, according to the variations in modern cultural contacts and the divergent degrees of cultural level and resistance encountered. But, despite its historic uniqueness, Europeanization and its moving force of economic imperialism are best understood as an interesting and complex variant of the process which has basically underlain all historic culture contacts, a process which has been the primary cause of the growth of what we know as 'civilization'" (*WPM*, 346).

The analysis of imperialism was a through line in Locke's early account of "social race," but equally important is the consistency of his Boas-ian emphasis on contact as the driver of civilization. "Reciprocity" is the keyword conveying this emphasis for Locke in the 1930s and 1940s. In "The Contribution of Race to Culture" of 1930, he approached "reciprocity" by stating: "There is and always has been an almost limitless natural reciprocity between cultures. Civilization, for all its claims of distinctiveness, is a vast amalgam of cultures. The difficulties of our social creeds and practices have arisen in great measure from our refusal to recognize this fact. . . . It has been the sense and practice of the vested ownership of culture goods which has been responsible for the tragedies of history" (*WAL*, 293–94). Arguing against author-centered interpretation as "chauvinistic" was the basis on which Locke's 1936 Bronze Booklets mobilized "theme/idiom" to examine white and black interaction in art and music. But "reciprocity" also carried anti-proprietorial implications that serve to cast Locke's cultural politics in a new light. "Do away with the idea of proprietorship and vested interest," he urged in 1930, "and face the natural fact of the limitless inter-changeableness of culture goods." He went on to say that, as a result, "Culture-goods, once evolved, are no longer the exclusive property of the race or people who originated them. They belong to all who can use them; and belong most to those who can use them best" (*WAL*, 294, 296).

Has this strand of Locke's cultural criticism been understudied because of its breezy tone? It may be that his free-trade rhetoric—"To summarize, the progress of the modern world demands what may be styled 'free trade in culture,' and a complete recognition of the principle of cultural reciprocity"—does not really fit with the communitarian upshot

of his anti-proprietorial view that "culture goods" are not under the exclusive ownership of any one group (*WAL*, 296). Yet here we must ask: Why do Locke's "contribution" essays insistently distinguish the *products* of culture from the *processes* of culture? Far from being incidental, this distinction undergirds his mature cultural criticism en bloc. Culture's products are individuated, author-named texts—paintings, novels, or symphonies, for instance—while culture's processes concern the ways in which such goods are appropriated into each group's lifeworld as anchoring points of collective identification. So accustomed are we to reading Locke as an aesthetician that his more sociological voice is not clearly heard. What he was gesturing toward is not far removed from Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" thesis. When cultural objects such as flags, coins, or newspapers bind individuals into a sense of group belonging, culture's solidarity-creating role is distinguished from the ever-changing products that each group takes into the construction of their ethnic and national loyalties.[43] When we assume Locke saw culture only as a "box of beautiful things," a set of culture goods expressive of group identity, we actually invert his reasoning. For Locke, culture is not a secondary phenomenon that reflects an already fully formed identity, but comes first as the repertoire of raw materials from which identities are built. Culture acts as the very glue that aggregates individuals into loyalties of race and nation.

By the time we get to 1939, when Locke revisited these processes of group identity formation in "The Negro's Contribution to American Culture," he stressed the intercultural mixing that goes unseen when monoculturalism is the dominant "creed" governing the cultural formation of imagined community. The theme of "reciprocity" is implicit when he stated, "The subtle interpenetration of the 'national' and the 'racial' traits is interesting evidence of cultural cross-fertilization and the wide general vogue and often national representativeness of the 'racial contribution' is similar evidence of the effective charm and potency of certain cultural hybrids" (*WAL*, 242). The coy words "charm" and "vogue" throw us off the scent. In 1930 Locke argued that the "refusal to recognize" intercultural processes was "responsible for the tragedies of history." In 1939 he shifted emphasis from monoculturalism's disavowal of intercultural contact by pointing instead to popular culture's consumption of blackness: "Like rum in the punch . . . dominates the mixture, the Negro elements have . . . dominating flavors. . . . This contagious dominance seems . . . a characteristic trait of the Negro cultural product" (*WAL*, 243). Flashes of insight such as these remain frustratingly undeveloped, yet Locke's

**43.** Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

attention to the "in between" spaces of cross-cultural interaction was how he arrived, in the 1940s, at his conception of culture as a composite formation, one in which the imagined community of the American nation has been irrevocably pluralized by intercultural hybridizations.

Locke's 1939 view of African American identity as "compounded" of various cultural elements led him to generalize about American national identity as itself also a composite whole made up of multiple interacting parts. He wrote, "We end up by being able to ferret out no other reliable criterion for what we style typically or characteristically 'Negro,' culturally speaking, than the cultural compounding and variation which has produced what we style 'American' out of what was historically and basically English or Anglo-Saxon" (*WAL*, 242). The composite character of culture means interrelations between "part" (race) and "whole" (nation) are changeable. Locke does not offer a full-fledged theory, yet the "compounding and variation" he identifies as a process constitutive of American national identity also informs his understanding of African American identity formation. Seeking to de-homogenize the category "Negro," he thus argued in 1939 that the "Negro cultural product we find to be in every instance itself a composite, partaking often of the nationally typical and characteristic as well, and thus something which if styled Negro for short, is more accurately to be described as Afro-American" (*WAL*, 241).

Subsequently stating, "We should cite this composite character in our culture with hyphenated descriptions," Locke's keynote text of 1942, "Who and What Is 'Negro'?," delivered his definitive insight—that the "Afro- or Negro-American [is] a hybrid product of Negro reaction to American cultural forms and practices" (*CTAL*, 333). This reads to me as saying that, in its changeable character as a composite formation, black identity is something "collaged" into history by the creative and the conflictual forces of cross-culturality.

Ripped out of its original context (Africa) and transposed into another (America), black culture's collage-like formation is one implication of the "intercultural reciprocity" theme Locke pursued throughout the 1940s. "Inter-cultural reciprocity" formed the capstone of Locke's mature cultural criticism, as Leonard Harris and Charles Molesworth have underlined, yet it is frustratingly undeveloped.[44]44 Scattershot insights were never synthesized into an overall theory, despite the critical potential of Locke's distinction

**44.** Harris and Molesworth, *Biography of a Philosopher*, 290.

between the products and processes of culture. The verb "appropriation" appears in 1930 when Locke said, "America . . . appropriates as characteristically 'American' the cultural products of Negroes, while denying them civic and cultural equality" (*WAL*, 295). But with no framework to set the give-and-take of "intercultural reciprocity" within racialized inequalities of power, such insights lay dormant. Locke voiced a "critical black pluralism," in Jeffrey C. Stewart's apt phrase, that offered an alternative to essentialist conceptions of monolithic blackness that later became ascendant in the 1960s Black Arts movement.[45]45 In the face of such essentialism, the composite model of black identity informed cultural criticism by Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray.[46]46 But it was not until the 1980s that cultural studies came to provide an overarching framework for theorizing blackness as a cultural construction whose signifying elements are always open to *de*-construction and *re*-construction: a composite assemblage whose variable elements were susceptible, under changing historical conditions, to the give-and-take of *de*-composition and *re*-composition.

## AFRO-DIASPORA *DENKRAUM:* A LIBRARY OF QUESTIONS

Cut out of one context—like a photograph—and pasted into another, a collage-like cultural identity is intrinsically modern. Locke put it the following way, when he said of 1930s Afro-modernists: "This art mode, which has dominated younger American artists for over a decade, began, as we have seen, through European art being influenced by African art. It is, thus, an African influence at second remove upon our younger Negro modernistic painters and sculptors; *in being modernistic, they are indirectly being African*" (*NAPP*, 70; emphasis added). If it is important to know that Malraux is not cited in *The Negro in Art* for the simple reason that Locke's picture book preceded Malraux's musée imaginaire idea by seven years, then it is equally relevant to connect the germ of collage epistemology in Locke's use of photoreproduction to another art historical precursor, Aby Warburg.

In his private Hamburg library built in 1926 (his family were bankers), Warburg developed a research method in which he collaged thousands of photoreproductions

**45.** Stewart, *Life of Alain Locke*, 155.
**46.** Ralph Ellison's cultural criticism was collected in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage, 1964). Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans* (New York: Da Capo, 1970).

onto pinboards (fig. 68). His aim was to explore recurring trans-chronological patterns among motifs that carried potent emotive force, which he called "*Pathosformel*."[47] As Hal Foster explained, Warburg's "pathos formula" sought to mediate art's aesthetic autonomy and its socio-historical imbrication, like Riegl's Kunstwollen, Wölfflin's "double root" of style, and Erwin Panofsky's "symbolic form."[48] In Warburg's uncompleted *Mnemosyne Atlas* project (ca. 1924–29), his core interest lay in the transmigration of signifying elements, such as flowing drapery or whorls of hair, that seem to die in one epoch only to enjoy an afterlife in a later era as "survivals," or *Nachleben*. Like Malraux, Warburg was no avant-gardist, yet the collage component in his research method carries an unexpected resonance with Locke's 1940 picture book.

Fig. 68. Aby Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, Panel 8, October 1929.

A Dan mask from the Ivory Coast sits upper right on page 212 of *The Negro in Art* (fig. 69). Locke's archive reveals the image's source was a photographic print issued by Paul Guillaume's Paris gallery, as attested to by the handwritten inscription on its reverse (figs. 70, 71). Ripping the photograph of this orphaned artifact away from primitivism's predominant discourse in Euro-American modernism, Locke was also acknowledging the uprooted mask as Nachleben, a survivor of ruptures and discontinuities in a world built on the violent histories of slavery and colonialism. The photographic print is today

**47.** Aby Warburg, "The Emergence of the Antique as a Stylistic Ideal in Early Renaissance Painting" (1914), in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1999), 271–73.
**48.** Foster, "Antimonies in Art History," 83–103.

partially translucent. As well as creases and tears, the paper on which the black-and-white image was printed has yellowed over time. The cursive inscription on the back is thus legible, in gray lettering now reversed on the front side of the jet-black print. These gray marks impart a spectral quality to the mask. It is as if there is a ghost in the machine of photomechanical reproducibility; as if *ancestral ghosts are present in the machine of print technology to enable diasporic rebirth*.

Fig. 69. Alain Locke, *The Negro in Art* (1940), page 212, featuring (clockwise from top left): mask, Ivory Coast; Dan mask, Ivory Coast; Baoulé mask; Pahouin statuette, Ivory Coast; mask.

Fig. 70. Dan mask, Ivory Coast, Guillaume Collection (recto). Photographic print. Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.


Fig. 71. Dan mask, Ivory Coast, Guillaume Collection (verso). Photographic print. Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Far from disparaging photography as a copyist's medium, the material assemblage of Locke's picture book speaks to photoreproduction as a medium in which elements that survived a catastrophic past may undergo metamorphosis and be granted an afterlife as

Nachleben. "*It is always at the call of living forms that dead forms return to life*," wrote Malraux.[49][49] Too rarely do we reflect on the temporal ambiguity of "renaissance" when we delve into the Harlem Renaissance. Standing apart from the evolutionist timeline presupposed by the classical art museum, the musée imaginaire built on photoreproduction accommodated Malraux's view of art's history as one of metamorphosis rather than teleological progress.[50][50] Warburg's interest in the deep temporal rhythms by which Nachleben survive time led him to think of art history from an *anachronic* point of view, able to look backward and forward, Janus-like, at multiple historical periods. Where Warburg and Malraux alike stand apart from the normative formalism that dominated art history after 1945, their embrace of temporal "impurities" is highly relevant to the historiography of Afro-Diaspora art. An anachronic position implies "renaissance" cannot be identical to "revival." Whereas revivals are self-consciously human-willed, "renaissance" or "rebirth" implies that images have a life of their own, a form of life that survives death—a paradox Georges Didi-Huberman has explored at length, but that is made fully tangible by the ancestral ghost in the machine of Guillaume's spectral photograph.[51][51]

Reflecting on the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, Fritz Saxl said of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek in Hamburg: "It is a library of questions, and its specific character consists precisely in the fact that its classification obliges one to enter into its problems."[52][52] Where Saxl invoked the term "*Denkraum*" to describe Warburg's library as a "thinking space," might we not likewise read Locke's virtual museum in *The Negro in Art* as an Afro-Diaspora Denkraum, where connections hitherto blocked by institutional divisions may be reopened for fresh investigation? When Locke appealed for subscriptions for his Harlem Museum of African Art, urging African Americans to demonstrate "our racial interest and loyalty to the idea of rescuing and revaluing our own past," his verbs "rescue" and "revalue" resonated with "redeem" and "revise," which in 1916 had led him to say the category of race should be resignified in struggles for culture-citizenship. What if we rhyme this with the verb "to rip" when we consider the collagist episteme implied by

**49.** Malraux, *Voices of Silence*, 66 (emphasis added).
**50.** Walter Grasskamp, *The Book on the Floor: André Malraux and the Imaginary Museum* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2016).
**51.** Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms, Aby Warburg's History of Art*, trans. Harvey L. Mendelsohn (2002; repr., University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017).
**52.** Fritz Saxl, "Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Ziel," in Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg (Nendeln: Kraus, 1930), 1:1–9, cited in Didi-Huberman, *Surviving Image*, 21.

an Afro-Diaspora Denkraum? Can Locke's composite model lead us to a "thinking space" freed from the walls of majority/minority partitions?

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) exhibition *African Negro Art* (1935) consolidated the formalist paradigm by installing the white cube as a means of abstracting style from the flow of historical time (fig. 72). Locke praised curator James Johnson Sweeney for confirming "the existence of a 'grand style,'" even though his alternative vision for a Harlem Museum of African Art did not win out.[53] In Locke's "Values and Imperatives" essay of the same year, the pragmatist commitment that set him apart from transcendentalist quests for timeless truths led Locke to say, "All philosophies, it seems to me, are in ultimate derivation philosophies of life and not of abstract, disembodied 'objective' reality; products of time, place, and situation, and thus systems of timed history rather than timeless eternity" (*WAL*, 452). Indeed, history had a twist when it came to African art.

Fig. 72. Installation view, *African Negro Art* exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1935. Photographic Archive, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Photograph: Soichi Sunami.

Bringing hundreds of objects together from diverse collections, MoMA's director, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., fortified his museum's authority by bringing Walker Evans on board to photograph each object in *African Negro Art*. While the exhibit itself toured various U.S. art museums, photographic enlargements mounted on movable frames were shown in a separate exhibit, *Photographs of African Negro Art by Walker Evans*, that traveled to

**53.** Alain Locke, "African Art: Classic Style," *American Magazine of Art*, no. 28 (1935), *WAL*, 194–97.

sixteen historically black colleges in 1936, including Atlanta, Hampton, Howard, Lincoln, and Tuskegee.[54] Evans's photographs of African art, as displayed on movable frames, were later shown at MoMA's 1952 exhibition *Understanding Negro Sculpture* (fig. 73). While the museum generously donated Evans's portfolio to historically black colleges, MoMA's two-tiered dissemination of the 1930s exhibitions was predicated not just on racially segregated social conditions; it was also based on the view that photographs were ersatz copies that served as surrogates for the real thing. It is also hard not to see the 1936 exhibit that toured black colleges as mimicking the "Travelling Collection" of the Blondiau-Theatre Arts material that Locke had organized in 1929.

Fig. 73. Installation view, *Understanding Negro Sculpture* exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1952. Photographic Archive, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Photograph: Soichi Sunami.

The African artifacts were photographed as they were displayed for customs inspection prior to installation in MoMA's white cube (fig. 74). Evans's "straight" photography upheld formalist values, but the matter-of-fact quality of this one documentary image—showing uprooted material prior to the moment of its codification in the white cube—seems to mimic forensic evidence laid out in police photographs. We see the modern art museum preserving expropriated objects for posterity, yet the photograph also reveals foreign bodies that are captive to someone else's semiotic system. Like conscripts in a chain gang, it is as if Africa's living icons are being prepared for burial in the art mausoleum of Western modernism.

**54.** See Virginia Lee-Webb, *Perfect Documents: Walker Evans and African Art, 1935* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), esp. "The Traveling Exhibition of Photographs," 40–42.

Fig. 74. An assemblage of objects included in the exhibition *African Negro Art*, 1935, displayed for customs inspection. Photographic Archive, Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Photograph: Soichi Sunami.

Photographs in Locke's archive show Blondiau-Theatre Arts items displayed in his R Street apartment in Washington, D.C. Most likely taken with a Brownie snap-shooter, the images are overexposed. But they nonetheless reveal a collage-like touch as Locke placed African art side by side with reproductions of European art in his domestic environs. The Kota figure atop the bookshelf, its angular legs enlivening the alcove, sits next to Bushongo axes, but a Rembrandt self-portrait, in reproduction, also hangs on the left wall (fig. 75). In one snapshot, Barthé's carved bust, *West Indian Girl* (1935), which Locke loaned to the *Contemporary Negro Art* exhibition, sits across from a decorated Congolese cup. In another photograph we see that beneath a framed reproduction of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (ca. 1485) on the rear wall, the piano supports a bust that resembles portraits produced by May Howard Jackson. Also on the piano is a hardback edition of Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology* (1934), on top of which is the very same Bakuba cup that James Lesesne Wells had held in his hands (fig. 76).

Fig. 75. Alain Locke's R Street apartment interior, showing Kota reliquary figure and Bushongo axes, n.d. Alain Locke Papers and Manuscripts, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 76. Alain Locke's R Street Apartment interior, showing a portion of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* (ca. 1485) (top rear wall) and a Bakuba cup on top of Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology* (1934) on the piano (right). Alain Locke Papers and Manuscripts, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

In contrast to the fixity of formalist narratives in which decontextualized artifacts were given purely aesthetic valuation, photography's properties of circulatory mobility allow a deeper understanding of the transmigrations of the black image as mapped out in *The Negro in Art*. The journey of the Dan mask that traveled from unknown African origins, via Guillaume's gallery, to Locke's 1940 picture book is indeed emblematic—in its powers of survival as Afro-Diasporic Nachleben—of the world-crossing twists and turns that

illuminate the "thinking space" that Afro-modern artists created in their critical cross-cultural dialogues with the Western art canon.

## COUNTER-DISCOURSES OF GIVE-AND-TAKE

Writing in his 1969 book *The Painter's Mind*, Bearden and his coauthor, fellow painter Carl Holty, argued, "Art . . . must be understood not in terms of the world in which we live—rather, within the world of the work itself." Summing up modernism's Copernican revolution, that art is not an act of mimesis that reflects a given world but a cultural act of production that creates a world of its own, Bearden and Holty said, "When we think of an artist's earliest days . . . André Malraux's comments seem to come the closest to the truth: the young artist, he said, is attracted to art through art—that is, he is inspired by seeing pictures, good or bad. It is doubtful that he is inspired at first by some attractive aspect in nature—the ubiquitous sunset, for example—until he has seen a painted picture of it by some artist." Adding that "at no time in history has the art of all the world been so available . . . at least through such information as reproductions can furnish, in what Malraux refers to as 'the museum without walls,'" Bearden and Holty's position—"We are convinced that Malraux's principle, of 'art through art,' remains of paramount importance"—was not a minoritarian plea for inclusion in someone else's story, but took its cues from Locke's critical black pluralism, as Afro-modernists did repeatedly in questioning canons of Euro-American art.[55]55

Hale Woodruff's six-part mural *Art of the Negro* (1950–52), sited on the mezzanine of Trevor Arnett Hall at Clark Atlanta University, encompasses far more than its title suggests (fig. 77). San cave paintings are among the many African art practices depicted in *Native Forms*. The double-headed ax of the Yoruba deity Shango fuses with a Bembe figurine Woodruff acquired in 1927 when, as a result of a chance encounter in Paris, Locke "took him to a flea market where, for two dollars Woodruff bought a small but beautiful Bembe ancestral fetish figure from the Congo."[56]56 In panel two, *Interchange*, cross-cultural diffusion is shown when we see that "the artists of Africa were long ago in contact with the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians of antiquity," as Woodruff explained in

**55.** Romare Bearden and Carl Holty, *The Painter's Mind: A Study of the Relations of Structure and Space in Painting* (New York: Crown, 1969), 12.
**56.** Bearden and Henderson, *History of African-American Artists*, 204.

an accompanying pamphlet.[57] The world-mindedness Woodruff shared with Locke extends to *Parallels*, panel four, where Native American, Oceanic, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Australian, and Mexican art are brought together. Woodruff's blend of abstract and figurative modes of painting in panel five, *Influences*, quotes twentieth-century works by Joan Miró, Henry Moore, and Wifredo Lam, alongside Haitian Vévé inscriptions, all revealing the far-flung impact of African aesthetics.

Fig. 77. Hale Woodruff, (from left to right) *Influences*, *Muses*, and *Native Forms*, from the *Art of the Negro* series, 1952. Oil on canvas, 12 × 12 ft. (365.8 × 365.8 cm) each. Clark Atlanta University Art Collection, Atlanta.

The third panel, *Dissipation*, underscores Woodruff's Afro-modern contestation of the formalist universalism that came to prevail after 1945, when modern art museums acknowledged diverse tribal arts but reduced them to mere shapes detached from historical context. Devoting an entire panel to the 1897 "Burning of the Great Capital of Benin," to cite the artist's pamphlet again, Woodruff highlighted acts of iconoclasm wrought by colonial violence (fig. 78). Such emphasis not only resonated with Locke's acknowledgment of the loot that led to Felix von Luschan's revaluation of Benin art, but also positioned Woodruff against the grain of midcentury exhibitions that institutionalized primitivist narratives, such as *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* (1948–49) at MoMA and *40,000 Years of Modern Art: A Comparison of Primitive and Modern* (1948–49) at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts. As art historian John Ott stated in his meticulous analysis of Woodruff's mural, "Each work in the series diagrams the relation

**57.** Hale Woodruff, *The Art of the Negro* (Atlanta: Trevor Arnett Library, Atlanta University, n.d.), cited in John Ott, "Hale Woodruff's Antiprimitivist History of Abstract Art," *Art Bulletin* 100, no. 1 (March 2018): 127.

between African and Western arts differently, as variously independent, parallel, collaborative, and conflicting."[58] In this way *Art of the Negro* articulates counter-universalism, showing changeable modes of intercultural give-and-take that involved conflict as well as creativity.

Fig. 78. Hale Woodruff, *Dissipation*, from the *Art of the Negro* series, 1952. Oil on canvas, 12 × 12 ft. (365.8 × 365.8 cm). Clark Atlanta University Art Collection, Atlanta.

*Muses*, the final panel, speaks to this latter aspect of "intercultural reciprocity" (fig. 79). Two gods, emblematic of Africa and Europe, preside over a global convocation of black visual artists. With Henry Ossawa Tanner, Jacob Lawrence, and Edward Bannister in back at left, we see Haitian painter Hector Hyppolite seated next to Charles Alston in front. Standing just off-center behind "South African cave painter" Nada Kane, seated in a loincloth at the front, is Juan de Pareja, the seventeenth-century Afro-Spanish painter recognizable by the lace collar he wore in his portrait by Diego Velázquez. On the right, figures include Robert Scott Duncanson, who holds a surveyor's chart, and Richmond Barthé seated in the foreground with his *Blackberry Woman* sculpture by his feet. Afro-Diaspora tradition is not envisioned as a unitary monolith but as an epoch-spanning lineage irrevocably hybridized by multiple forms of cross-cultural contact. Just as Locke spoke of hybridization and hyphenation as he moved to his composite model of culture, Woodruff thought along similar lines. He coined the neologism "hydroid" when he stated,

**58.** Ott, "Antiprimitivist History of Abstract Art," 137.

"There is a three-fold or hydra-headed thing that masquerades under the name of American Art. The American Indian, the whites, and the Negro make up this hydroid."[59]59

Fig. 79. Hale Woodruff, *Muses*, from the *Art of the Negro* series, 1952. Oil on canvas, 144 × 144 in. (365.8 × 365.8 cm). Clark Atlanta University Art Collection, Atlanta.

"Hydroid" multiplicity counteracts the one-note presumption that black artists critique the Western canon only because they seek admission into it. Romare Bearden's *Profile/Part II, The Thirties: Artist with Painting and Model* (1981; fig. 80) acquires added significance once we realize it retraces the Benin flute player, circa 1550, from *The Negro in Art*, whose image Locke ripped out of a British catalogue of African art (with his instructions to the photoreprographic team written on the reverse) (fig. 81). In this self-portrait set in the artist's studio, Bearden stands with his arm on the easel that shows his 1941 gouache *The Visitation*. A partially nude black female model stands to the right, her outline sketched on a sheet of paper now fallen on the ground. And as the detail of this work reveals, the sketch pad on the floor of Bearden's studio amounts to a "memory atlas," since it traces images of Benin bronzes on page 214 of Locke's picture book, underlining Bearden and Holty's point that art itself inspires the production of art (fig. 82).

**59.** Hale Woodruff, "The Negro and Art," *Spelman Messenger* 50, no. 2 (February 1934): 1, cited in Ott, "Antiprimitivist History of Abstract Art," 126.

Fig. 80. Romare Bearden, *Profile/Part II, The Thirties: Artist with Painting and Model*, 1981. Collage on fiberboard, 44 1/16 × 56 1/16 in. (112 × 142.5 cm). High Museum of Art, Atlanta. Purchase with funds from Alfred Austell Thornton in memory of Leila Austell Thornton and Albert Edward Thornton, Sr., and Sarah Miller Venable and William Hoyt Venable, Margaret and Terry Stent Endowment for the Acquisition of American Art, David C. Driskell African American Art Acquisition Fund, Anonymous Donors, Sarah and Jim Kennedy, The Spray Foundation, Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell, Charlotte Garson, The Morgens West Foundation, Lauren Amos, Margaret and Scotty Greene, Harriet and Edus Warren, The European Fine Art Foundation, Billye and Hank Aaron, Veronica and Franklin Biggins, Helen and Howard Elkins, Drs. Sivan and Jeff Hines, Brenda and Larry Thompson, and a gift to honor Howard Elkins from the Docents of the High Museum of Art, 2014.66.

Fig. 81. Illustrations removed from magazines and catalogues, featuring a Benin flute player, ca. 1550, n.d. Alain Locke Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Fig. 82. Romare Bearden, *Profile/Part II, The Thirties: Artist with Painting and Model* (detail; see fig. 80).

Curator Sarah Kennel has insightfully discussed "Bearden's Musée Imaginaire." She showed that Bearden used photoreproduction to work on study copies during his transitional year of 1949–50. Kennel cited Bearden, who said, "Not wanting to work in museums, I again used Photostats, enlarging works by Giotto, Duccio, Veronese, Grunwald [*sic*], Rembrandt, De Hooch, Manet, and Matisse."[60]60 Photostat technology, a

**60.** Romare Bearden cited in Sarah Kennel, "Bearden's Musée Imaginaire," in *The Art of Romare Bearden*, ed. Ruth Fine (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art/Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 143.

precursor to the photocopier, was also the medium in which Bearden arrived at the signature idiom of his *Photomontage Projections* (1964), in which he assembled composite wholes out of photo fragments ripped from magazine sources.[61]61

With numerous examples, Kennel elucidated the cross-cultural matrix Bearden drew from in his collage practice, which the artist himself addressed in *Profile/Part II, The Thirties* (see fig. 80). When asked, circa 1967, how he related to his sources, Bearden invoked a plurality of cultural traditions: "Not through any one particular incident," he said, "but through Art: Zurburan, African Sculpture, Bosch, Jan Steen, Chinese Calligraphy, Mondrian."[62]62 Yet Kennel examined Bearden's collages *only* with reference to Western sources. Her conclusion, that Bearden's aim was "a bid to position himself in relation to that tradition, or more specifically, as the legitimate legatee of that tradition," is thus one-sided.[63]63 It focuses exclusively on Euro-American traditions at the expense of Bearden's emphatically intercultural embrace of multiplicity. In the remaining part of his 1967 statement—"As Malraux says, 'art is made from art.' . . . I cannot deny there is something transactional in these works"—it is hard not to hear Bearden's word choice of "*transactional*" as homonymically evoking the *transcultural* nature of his collage practice.[64]64 When photoreproduction is interpreted as "copying," the "A: non-A" logic of the original/copy binary too easily gets reductively elided with the Western/non-Western dichotomy. What results is a failure to recognize "A: B" alternatives in which African sculpture is not "other" to a Dutch painter such as Jan Steen, but one among multiple influences that may also combine Chinese calligraphy and Piet Mondrian as well. It is this space of interculturality, so generative for Bearden's artistic production, that Locke sought to theorize with his attention to the dynamics of reciprocity.

Bearden's self-presentation in *Profile/Part II, The Thirties* quotes his 1941 gouache, but his picture about picture-making also quotes Gustave Courbet's *The Painter's Studio: An Allegory* (1854–55; fig. 83). To the left of Courbet at his easel are peasant folk, while the well-dressed city dwellers on the right include, at the far end, Charles Baudelaire, a friend of the artist. Look closely and you will notice spectral traces just above

**61.** Romare Bearden discussed his use of photo-mechanical technology in Henri Ghent, interview, June 29, 1968, Romare Bearden Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, unpublished transcript, 3.
**62.** Bearden, undated and unpublished manuscript, circa 1967, Library of Museum of Modern Art, New York, cited in Kennel, "Bearden's Musée Imaginaire," 145.
**63.** Kennel, "Bearden's Musée Imaginaire," 144.
**64.** Bearden, undated manuscript, circa 1967, cited in Kennel, "Bearden's Musée Imaginaire," 145.

Baudelaire's bowed head as he reads from a book. At the poet's request, Courbet erased from *The Painter's Studio* the presence of Jeanne Duval, the Creole actress who was Baudelaire's mistress in the 1850s (fig. 84). Probing this act of erasure, Griselda Pollock said of Duval, "We have no way of knowing what she was like."[65] Duval was not only literally wiped out from Courbet's scene, but she is hidden whenever Baudelaire evoked his "black swan," a trope that tells us more about his fantasies than it does about Duval's life as a Caribbean woman in nineteenth-century France.[66] Duval thus functions as a "blank Venus" in the archive of European modernism. Evoked as an exotic, only to be effaced as a person in her own right, the representational othering of Duval in numerous poems, paintings, and novels testifies to the control over the apparatus of image-making exerted under colonialist and masculinist regimes of representation. Unlike the classical museum's floor plan driven toward narrative closure, the virtue of the "museum without walls" is that it invites us back to explore modernism's archive in depth. Rather than seek a restorative or corrective goal that is still driven by the narrative aim of finality, the ambivalent entanglements of Duval, Baudelaire, and Courbet call for a more open-ended approach that concepts of interculturality are equipped to provide.

Fig. 83. Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio: An Allegory*, 1854–55. Oil on canvas, 142 1/8 × 235 3/8 in. (361 × 598 cm). Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

**65.** Griselda Pollock, "A Tale of Three Women," in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London: Rout-ledge, 1999), 269.

**66.** Angela Carter, *Black Venus* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985), was an early attempt at fabulating Duval's story. On the problems and potential of fabulation, see Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

Fig. 84. Gustave Courbet, *The Painter's Studio* (detail of Charles Baudelaire reading with Jeanne Duval painted out at his left; see fig. 83).

*Homage to Nina Simone* (1965) by Bob Thompson is neither a copy of its source—Nicolas Poussin's *Bacchanal with Lute Player* (ca. 1630)—nor a satirical parody (fig. 85). The upright female nude to the left of the blue guitarist may well evoke Nina Simone, as there are no female nudes in the original painting. So how exactly was Thompson paying homage to Simone's music as a dissenting voice in 1960s America? With close attention to the jarring effect created by Thompson's color combinations, art historian Judith Wilson underscored the artist's ambiguous relationship to his canonical sources. As an "appropriator of Old Master compositions," Wilson argued, Thompson's "freewheeling improvisations . . . suggest a startling blend of awe and irreverence toward his sources."[67] In keeping with Bearden's multilayered take on modernism's archive, and Woodruff's insights into cross-cultural interaction as a constant in art's worldly history, Thompson's "irreverence" speaks not of an excluded outsider asking for entry into a Western-owned story, but of a dialogic interlocutor who disputes the way art's story has been told, while his critical dialogism creates an Afro-modernist tradition in its own right.

**67.** Judith Wilson, "Garden of Music: The Art and Life of Bob Thompson," in *Bob Thompson*, ed. Thelma Golden and Judith Wilson (Berkeley: University of California/Whitney Museum of American Art, 1998), 68–69.

Fig. 85. Bob Thompson, *Homage to Nina Simone*, 1965. Oil on canvas, 48 × 72 1/8 in. (121.9 × 183.2 cm). Minneapolis Institute of Art. The John R. Van Derlip Fund.

Jean-Michel Basquiat positioned himself in a fraught relation to museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which he visited frequently as a teenager in the 1970s. His positioning was further conflicted by exclusionary norms among the 1980s New York galleries, whose prestige Basquiat nonetheless bought into. Iconoclastic transgression emanates from the handmade stretchers and neo-expressionist figuration in which Basquiat rendered *Untitled* (*Maid from Olympia*) (1982; fig. 86) and *Three Quarters of Olympia Minus the Servant* (1982) in fragmented form. What we behold, however, is not a black artist's outpouring of inner rage so much as a stylistic assault upon the rote canonization of Manet's *Olympia* (1863) in formalist discourse. Prior to Pollock's 1990s feminist scholarship, none of the studies that placed Manet's painting at the heart of the Euro-American modernist canon had eyes with which to actually *see* the blackness of Laure, the West Indian maidservant who hands a bouquet to the reclining Victorine Meurent.


Fig. 86. Jean-Michel Basquiat, *Untitled* (*Maid from Olympia*), 1982. Acrylic and crayon on canvas and paper, 48 1/5 × 29 9/10 in. (122.5 × 76 cm). Private collection.

Many free blacks, often Antillean, lived and worked in 1850s Paris, as scholar-curator Denise Murrell has revealed in her pathbreaking research.[68]68 Black women in nineteenth-century photographs by Félix Nadar or paintings by Edgar Degas, like the twentieth-century black women present in Matisse's *Creole Dancer* collage (1951), index the continuous copresence of Afro-Diaspora lives in the making of modernism. One-sided stories that depict black artists as only enraged at their exclusion from the Euro-American master narrative do not do justice to the intellectual curiosity motivating Afro-Diaspora artists' boundary crossing. What black artists uncover, from Woodruff in the 1950s to Basquiat in the 1980s, is not a simplistic story of inclusion or exclusion. Rather, their art about art-making delivers insight into a densely compacted contradiction. Western-centrism built a global order dependent on others for its wealth and power, yet even as it controlled the codes of representation that made the world actionable, the West's symbolic system worked to deny and disavow structural interdependencies that had bound "submerged" and "dominant" peoples together since modernity took shape in the 1400s.

**68.** Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).

Black circus performers appeared in photographs August Sander took for his *People of the Twentieth Century* project between 1926 and 1932. This was the starting point for the *Syrcas* collage series by black British artist Maud Sulter. *Duval et Dumas: Dumas* (1993) quotes Nadar's *Jeune Modèle* (1855–59) photograph, which Sulter splices with a red Gelede mask whose raffia spills into an Alpine postcard scene (fig. 87). But finding Duval's true likeness was never the issue. Nadar's "young model" may or may not be Jeanne; Sulter chose the image because it embodies the enigma of the "blank Venus." The dialogic acts by which artists as stylistically diverse as Sulter, Basquiat, and Thompson produce pictures that quote other pictures confirm Bearden's point when he paraphrased Malraux to say all "art comes from art." In the knowledge produced by cut-and-mix practices that subject received art historical narratives to a practice of *de*-composition and *re*-composition, we also see confirmation of the epistemological path Locke began to map out in the 1940s. Taking pleasure in the sheer multifariousness of art's worldly history, Locke points the way—because of his project's unfinishedness, not despite it—to future investigation of what we might find when dialogical alternatives to formalist narratives come into play.

Fig. 87. Maud Sulter, *Duval et Dumas: Dumas*, from the *Syrcas* series, 1993. Original photomontages, 5 7/8 × 7 5/8 in. (15.2 × 19.3 cm). Private collection.

**1** James Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943; repr., New York: Arno, 1969); and James Porter, "The Negro Artist and Racial Bias," *Art Front* (June–July 1937): 8–9. **»**

**2** Meyer Schapiro, "Race, Nationality, and Art," *Art Front* (March 1936): 10. **»**

**3** Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, and David Joselit, eds., *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2011), 334–39. **»**

**4** Cedric Dover, *American Negro Art* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1960); Elsa Honig Fine, *The Afro-American Artist: A Search for Identity* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973); Samella Lewis, *Art: African American* (New York: Harcourt College, 1978); Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists, 1792 to the Present* (New York: Pantheon, 1993); Richard J. Powell, *Black Art and Culture in the 20th Century* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997); Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). **»**

**5** Michele Wallace, "Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Problem of the Visual in Afro-American Culture," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 39–50. **»**

**6** Stewart, *Life of Alain Locke*, 788. **»**

**7** Locke, "Stretching Our Social Mind," commencement speech, Hampton Institute, VA, August 18, 1944, ALP, 164–127/30, n.p. **»**

**8** See Bearden and Henderson, *History of African-American Artists*, 234–41. **»**

**9** Harlem Artists Guild memorandum, 1936, ALP, 164–15/32. **»**

**10** Alain Locke to Mary Beattie Brady, May 27, 1936, ALP, 164–15/32. **»**

**11** Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse* (New York: Lippincott and Crowell, 1938); and Katherine Dunham, *Journey to Accompong* (New York: Henry Holt, 1946). On Ronald Moody, see Cynthia Moody, "Midonz," *Transition*, no. 77 (1988): 10–18. **»**

**12** Aaron Douglas, "The Negro in American Culture" (1936), in *Artists against War and Fascism: Papers of the First American Artists' Congress*, ed. Matthew Baigel and Julia Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 15. **»**

**13** Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941). **»**

**14** Romare Bearden to Walter Quirt, January 20, 1942, quoted in Myron Schwartzman, *Romare Bearden: His Life and Art* (New York: Abrams, 1990), 121. **»**

**15** Helen Shannon, "African Art and Cubism, Proto-Collage, and Collage in the Work of Romare Bearden," in *Romare Bearden in the Modernist Tradition*, ed. Ellie Tweedy (New York: Romare Bearden Foundation, 2008), 28. **»**

**17** Alain Locke, "The Contribution of Race to Culture," *Student World*, no. 23 (1930): 349–53; Locke, "The American Negro as Artist," *American Magazine of Art* 23 (September 1931): 211–20; Locke, "The Negro Takes His Place in American Art," in *Exhibition of Productions by Negro Artists* (New York: Harmon Foundation, 1933); Locke, "The Negro's Contribution to American Culture," *Journal of Negro Education*, no. 8 (1939): 521–29. **»**

**18** Calo, *Distinction and Denial*, 200; Alain Locke, "The Art of Auguste Mambour," *Opportunity* 3, no. 32 (August 1925), *CTAL*, 165. **»**

**19** Calo, *Distinction and Denial*, 200. **»**

**20** Shannon, "From 'African Savages' to 'Ancestral Legacy,'" 279. **»**

**21** Alain Locke, *The Negro and His Music* (Washington, DC: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), 12, cited and discussed in Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Memory and Music in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 145. **»**

**22** Anderson, *Deep River*, 145. **»**

**23** Mary Ann Calo, "Alain Locke and American Art Criticism," *American Art* 18, no. 2 (2004): 95. **»**

**24** See Romare Bearden and Harry Henderson, "The Question of Joshua Johnston," in *History of African-American Artists*, 3–17. **»**

**25** Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of the Ornament*, trans. Evelyn Kain (1893; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992). See also Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993). **»**

**26** James Barnes, "Alain Locke and the Sense of the African Legacy," in *Reflections on a Renaissance Man*, ed. R. J. Linnemann (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 107. **»**

**27** Hal Foster, "Antinomies in Art History," in *Design and Crime* (*and Other Diatribes*) (London: Verso, 2002), 88. Schapiro, "Race, Nationality, and Art." **»**

**28** Stuart Hall, "Structuralism," in *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Daryl Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 59. **»**

**32** Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 119. **»**

**33** Dominique de Menil, "Acknowledgments and Perspectives to the First Edition (1976)," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. 1, *From the Pharaohs to the Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), Appendix. **»**

**34** Calo, *Distinction and Denial*. **»**

**35** André Malraux, *The Psychology of Art*, vol. 1, *Museum without Walls*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (1947; repr., New York: Pantheon, 1949). Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948). **»**

**36** André Malraux, *Le Musée Imaginaire de la Sculpture Mondiale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1952–54). **»**

**37** André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (1953; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 44. **»**

**38** Rosalind E. Krauss, "Postmodernism's Museum without Walls," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), 243. **»**

**39** Krauss, "Postmodernism's Museum without Walls," 243. **»**

**40** English, *How to See a Work of Art*, 55–66, 59–60. **»**

**41** Alison Boyd, "The Visible and Invisible: Circulating Images of the Barnes Foundation Collection," in *Images of the Art Museum: Connecting Gaze and Discourse in the History of Museology*, ed. Eva-Maria Troelenberg and Melania Savino (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 133–54. **»**

**42** Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility" (1936), in *The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund F. N. Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008), 19–55. **»**

**43** Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). **»**

**44** Harris and Molesworth, *Biography of a Philosopher*, 290. **»**

**45** Stewart, *Life of Alain Locke*, 155. **»**

**47** Aby Warburg, "The Emergence of the Antique as a Stylistic Ideal in Early Renaissance Painting" (1914), in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1999), 271–73. **»**

**48** Foster, "Antimonies in Art History," 83–103. **»**

**49** Malraux, *Voices of Silence*, 66 (emphasis added). **»**

**50** Walter Grasskamp, *The Book on the Floor: André Malraux and the Imaginary Museum* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2016). **»**

**51** Georges Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms, Aby Warburg's History of Art*, trans. Harvey L. Mendelsohn (2002; repr., University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017). **»**

**52** Fritz Saxl, "Die Bibliothek Warburg und ihr Ziel," in Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg (Nendeln: Kraus, 1930), 1:1–9, cited in Didi-Huberman, *Surviving Image*, 21. **»**

**53** Alain Locke, "African Art: Classic Style," *American Magazine of Art*, no. 28 (1935), *WAL*, 194–97. **»**

**54** See Virginia Lee-Webb, *Perfect Documents: Walker Evans and African Art, 1935* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), esp. "The Traveling Exhibition of Photographs," 40–42. **»**

**55** Romare Bearden and Carl Holty, *The Painter's Mind: A Study of the Relations of Structure and Space in Painting* (New York: Crown, 1969), 12. **»**

**56** Bearden and Henderson, *History of African-American Artists*, 204. **»**

**57** Hale Woodruff, *The Art of the Negro* (Atlanta: Trevor Arnett Library, Atlanta University, n.d.), cited in John Ott, "Hale Woodruff's Antiprimitivist History of Abstract Art," *Art Bulletin* 100, no. 1 (March 2018): 127. **»**

**58** Ott, "Antiprimitivist History of Abstract Art," 137. **»**

**59** Hale Woodruff, "The Negro and Art," *Spelman Messenger* 50, no. 2 (February 1934): 1, cited in Ott, "Antiprimitivist History of Abstract Art," 126. **»**

**60** Romare Bearden cited in Sarah Kennel, "Bearden's Musée Imaginaire," in *The Art of Romare Bearden*, ed. Ruth Fine (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art/Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 143. **»**

**61** Romare Bearden discussed his use of photo-mechanical technology in Henri Ghent, interview, June 29, 1968, Romare Bearden Papers, Archives of American Art,

**63** Kennel, “Bearden’s Musée Imaginaire,” 144. **»**

**64** Bearden, undated manuscript, circa 1967, cited in Kennel, “Bearden’s Musée Imaginaire,” 145. **»**

**65** Griselda Pollock, “A Tale of Three Women,” in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (London: Rout-ledge, 1999), 269. **»**

**66** Angela Carter, *Black Venus* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1985), was an early attempt at fabulating Duval’s story. On the problems and potential of fabulation, see Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14. **»**

**67** Judith Wilson, “Garden of Music: The Art and Life of Bob Thompson,” in *Bob Thompson*, ed. Thelma Golden and Judith Wilson (Berkeley: University of California/Whitney Museum of American Art, 1998), 68–69. **»**

**68** Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019). **»**