

Free essay about eastern and southern africa

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Introduction:

Research has shown that African art and architecture has duly developed from the ancient traditions. History has it that generations before the United States of America and the European nations became some of the greatest powers. The rise and fall of many great kingdoms were at the fingertips of Africa. The laws, religions, discipline and organization of most ancient kingdoms indicate that Africa has its civilization for many years say thousands of years to be precise. The humankind's beginnings and origins based on cultural expressions may be traced back to Africa. The recent discoveries that made in the southern tip of Africa provide a remarkable confirmation of the initial stirrings of the human being inventiveness. The other works with engraved designs possibly made some 70, 000 years ago, represent some of the humankind initial attempts at visual expression. Globally, art is exclusively meant to be for religious reasons. The African art is of no exception to that. African art represents magic, spirits, ancestor worship and the religion of the African people in general. Art in the African context made for honoring the leaders, for funeral services, for the marriage services and for celebrations whenever they were called for. It is thus clear that nearly all the African art has a function. For instance, the statues were made to honor the kings, ancestors and gods, rituals surrounding girls' and boys' coming-of-age-ceremonies, during entertainment and funeral services where masks were used as a function of art. African jewelry, hairstyles, body painting and clothing at times signify social status, power and wealth. Again, African carved figures currently used to protect containers were used to fill sacred relics made for ancestors. Stools, bowls, combs, and other vital items

become elaborately decorated and carved. The objects for are made with skill and taste whatsoever reasons (Rosyln 14).

The African art has always been anonymous, with most African artists not been recognized by their names. Most of the African artists worked alone in a working place composed of one or more working tools. They had been subdued with the responsibility of replacing worn out or deteriorating objects with new and appealing ones. Most of the artists actually were obliged to conform to the ancient artistic laws. Moreover, despite these kinds of restrictions most of the artistes managed to express their art work and demonstrate new techniques and materials while carrying out their activities. Hence, analysts suggest that if these kinds of innovations proved to make the African art more effective, they are categorized then as a part of an ever-growing African tradition. Traditional African artists are skilled professionals not only in Africa but also all over the globe.

Although in history, most of the artifacts that created by African artists were said to be unsigned, the authors names were not anonymous but were often known and recognized by the creator of the artifact and most members of the society from where he hailed from. For instance among the Yoruba most of the respected artists are celebrated and recognized by the recitation of a praise poetry as a sign of honoring their work altogether. As time went by during the second half of the twentieth century, the responsibility of collecting such information becomes more dormant, making it hard for the museums to identify and document an artifact aligning it with the artist behind it. However, most of the African objects began their identification process with regard to their region or ethnic origin. Studies show that most

of the African art has associated ethnicity with style (The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

The early development:

During the prehistoric times, the nomadic people of southern Africa left behind many engravings in caves and rock faces with inclusion of paintings. Most of these works of art portrayed animals, legendary symbols and human figures. They mostly show women and men gathering food, hunting, fishing, performing ritual activities and dancing. Research shows that some of the most amazing and dramatic stone architecture artifacts in eastern and southern Africa were shaped during the first half of the second millennium. Actually, two of these artifacts include the Lalibela currently in the Great Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, and subsequently been marked for conservation by the UNESCO'S World Heritage List. Analysts suggest that the stone-cut churches of Lalibela may be the only oldest architectural artifact in the world and has continued to remain a site of study, worship and work for a community believed to be very active religiously and who believe and term Lalibela as the new Jerusalem (Nasson 45).

The African churches are so popular among many different kinds of personalities. They are termed to be pilgrimage sites for lay worshippers and Coptic priests. In Southern Africa, the stone ruins are indicators used to mark and identify the location of several capital cities. For instance, the Great Enclosure in Great Zimbabwe has the largest ancient artifact in Eastern and Southern Africa. Most of the cities in Eastern and Southern Africa are greatly recognized for their stone structures. They are also responsible for the production of distinctive poetry, ivory work, carving and established large

copper and gold mining industries.

The cultural region of Eastern and Central Africa extends down south along the south of Atlantic coast and around South Africa to Ethiopia. The ancient rock paintings are attributed to the San people of the Kalahari Desert and they are usually found in Namibia and Botswana. It should be noted that there are rare figure carvings around these regions and instead they participate in the art of personal adornment that includes the body paintings and is highly developed. Hence, they are experts in the creations of decorated and appealing important objects such as the stools, spoons and mostly headrests. Research shows that in Ethiopia the art of the highlands there is largely associated with Christianity and its influence (Nasson 42).

Works of art:

The Double-Sided Gospel Leaf:

In the fourth century, the Tigray region of Ethiopia converted into Christianity around 300 AD and become a great ally of the Byzantine Empire. This empire was controlled and ruled from what we call today the Istanbul and was seeing to control the trade routes to India. These group of people were also known through the way they used maintain contacts with other Christians located in the eastern Mediterranean, including the people of Egypt and Syria. Hence, found on the double-sided gospel leaf are images from a specific group of the early fourteenth-century Gospel that feature with it a restoration of decorations that were seen to have found their way inside Ethiopia from the eastern Mediterranean, probably during the seventh century. Both sides of the leaf are predominatly written in the ancient language of Ethiopia known as Ge'ez. On the front of the leaf found is a

dramatic octagonal Fountain of Life flanked by peacocks, identified in the inscriptions as the “ ostriches” considered as loyal birds of Ethiopia and the “ babul” which look like gazelles. The arrangements of the Eusebian Canon Tables or the index to the proclaimed Gospels are marked by the text found on the doomed space preceded by the image found on the original manuscript. Contrarily, the crucifixion that is shown by a monumental jeweled cross is topped by a Lamb of God, a symbol that represents the Christ sacrifice. At the sides of this leaf are the two thieves presumed to have been crucified together with Christ, and are bound on their crosses. Other leafs representing this Gospel are to be found in the National museum in the state of Stockholm (The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

Page from an illuminated gospel

During the late fourteenth to early fifteenth Century at an Ethiopian monastic center, the illuminated manuscript of the four gospels was established. The full painting of the illuminated gospel depicts the life of Christ and portraits of the evangelists as shown in the New Testament. Most of the texts are in Ge’ez, which is the classical Ethiopian language. Again, typical of the very Ethiopian artifact the structure is linear and two-dimensional. The heads are perfectly positioned in a manner that they can have a front view while the bodies are often placed in profile. In this painting, the artist shortened the facial appearance and depicted the human form as a columnar mass expressed in bold black and red lines (RosylN).

Research has shown that the four Gospels are the fundamental nature of the Ethiopian Christianity. This piece of manuscript was highly respected and at times displayed mostly during processions, and on altars to mark specific

important events on the church calendar. These events included the holy days or feasts. A current research has shown that a high-ranking member of the Ethiopia ruling elite may have duly commissioned this piece of manuscript for the purposes of representation in the monastery or church favored by the member. History has it that in the fourth century A. D., an Ethiopian king by the name Ezana converted to Christianity. This made Christianity to become the official religion of the state under which its legacy endured various forms until the beginning of the twentieth century.

Ethiopia's Christian kingdom expanded significantly after the creation of the manuscript expanding the Christian influence largely. The monastic centers were important tools that represented the state power. They also become the chief sites where Christian art production was evidenced and created. Unfortunately, during the early sixteenth century, most of the Christian Ethiopian art creations would be destroyed by the Islamic incursions and this led to the rare survival of the illuminated gospel (Nasson 14).

The modern-day trends:

Research again has shown that the ancient art of the Eastern and Southern Africa had a great effect on the modern art systems and structures. During the 1900's most of the Europeans in large numbers came into heightened contact with the African art. Moreover, specific and world re-known artist, namely, Henri Matisse and Picasso Pablo integrated most of the African art works into their own artifacts. Analysts suggest that contemporary Africans are recognized by various styles they use while creating art works. In some communities, social practices and ancient religion have prevailed with relation to modern modifications. For most sculptors there is an absolute

need then for most of them to establish masks for sculptures for shrines and initiations, much more as their predecessors did. This again, does not deter them from using modern innovations and technologies such as sign painters, imported paints, graphic artists, textile and fashion designers and photographers as a larger part of modern-day visual art scene.

Conclusion:

African artists are, more importantly like their America and European artists. Some have acquired their skills through self-thought while most of them have been trained at various higher education institutions and art schools. Currently, they have duly exploited every chance they can, concerning display of their work both internationally and locally. Other artists have good managerial systems that have seen them acquire international and local patrons. The content of these various artists may be African or not. Their works may be non-representational and or else realistic. The choice for every work related to art and architecture is based on the artist as an individual. Hence, the African art that was a revelation for the Western art back then in the 1900's has continued to inspire many artists internationally, with no exception to those born in Africa.

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