

A formal analysis of history of art-africa



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Formal Analysis As described by Eldon (1997, Pg African art “ is a commingling of beliefs, styles, and influences stemming from contacts among diverse cultures”. This is certainly true for the object being analyzed since it appears to have many different shapes infused into one to create a work of art. Ovals and curved arcs are met with straight lines while the layers on which the artwork is built presents a uniquely three dimensional vantage point which is perhaps the best way to view and experience the artwork.

It is certainly a recognizable human form since there is a protrusion which can only be a nose and that is set close to two ovals that also contain indentations that could be interpreted as marks for the pupils of the eyes. It is difficult to be sure if the eyes make the nose more obvious or vice versa but the overall effect is clearly a human face. However, there is no discernable mouth which is perhaps the artistic license taken by the individual who created this object. Below the face, there are is an almost square hollow created which could represent the legs or the neck of the figure.

Going beyond what is obvious, the colors of the object give it the sheen of aged wood or leather. The top part of the object which appears to be dark brown and cracked in places gives the impression of leather while the bottom most part has chipped away in places to reveal a softer shade of brown and that gives the impression of wood being used in the construction. The bottom part is something which does not appear to fit in the shape since it contains a hollow within it while the rest of the object is quite solid. In essence, it seems that the bottom of the object is moving against it. On the other hand, the shapes behind the face and the curved top fit

together quite well since the graceful curves complement each other and accent the most prominent feature of the artwork i. e., the human face.

Since the object can also be split up into three distinct regions, of which the first is the curved shape at the top, the middle being the face and the bottom region containing the square hollow, it is easy to say that the object is made to be stood, presented and viewed vertically.

The overall shape of the object in terms of being oval or not is difficult to define. Without taking the square hollow into the picture, graceful curves and oval shapes would have dominated the object and it would have been easy to say that the object is circular. However, the violent presence of sharp angles that make the bottom most part of the object give it a pointed look. On reflection, perhaps they do compliment the curved tips that are present at the top of the shape itself but a higher level of vertical symmetry might have made the object more attractive to me. Nevertheless, it remains quite an interesting work and the shape of the cross on the face also raises some important questions regarding cultural influences.

Word Count: 548

Works Cited

Eldon, K. 1997. African Roots. School Arts. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/African+roots.-a019084116> (Accessed September 29, 2008).