

■ **ARHS 535: African Art in Transition**

Heather Shirey

Mondays, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

The African experience with imperialism and modernization have fundamentally shaken the roots of traditional culture and the arts. At the same time, traditional forms flourish in both rural and urban contexts. Kente cloth, for example, was once used exclusively by Asante leaders. Today this cloth continues to convey messages about leadership, while also serving new roles in popular culture. What is meant by 'traditional' in the shifting social, cultural and political landscape of the last century? What distinguishes 'traditional' art from 'contemporary' art in Africa today?

Through an examination of a variety of art forms from Africa and the African Diaspora, this course seeks to explore notions of 'traditional' and 'contemporary' in relation to works produced for both local and international art markets in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa. In these dynamic contexts, we will examine the changing forms and meanings of masquerade, sculpture, architecture and textiles, as well as painting, photography, mixed media and performance. Our study of traditional contemporary art will take into consideration many parts of sub-Saharan Africa as well as the African Diaspora, including artists such as Willie Bester, Yinka Shonibare, El Anatsui and Sokari Douglas Camp among others.

This course is appropriate to students with all levels of background in the field of African art history.

*This course fulfills the Non-Western Art core requirement.*

Background Reading:

Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*, 2000.

Monica Visona, Robin Poyner and Herbert Cole, *A History of Art in Africa*, 2007.