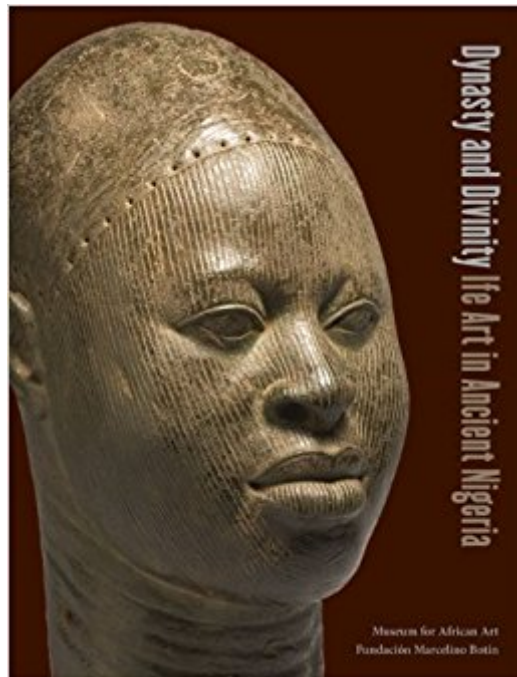




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Dynasty And Divinity: Ife Art In Ancient Nigeria



Synopsis

Dynasty and Divinity presents a major part of the extraordinary corpus of ancient Ife art in terra-cotta, stone, and metal, dating from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. Artists at Ife, the ancient city-state of the Yoruba people of West Africa (located in present-day southwestern Nigeria), created sculpture that ranks among the most aesthetically striking and technically sophisticated in the world. Dynasty and Divinity reveals the extraordinarily creative range of Ife art through a diversity of objects that includes handsome idealized portrait heads, exquisite miniatures, expressive caricatures of old age, lively animals, and sculptures showing the impressive regalia worn by Ife's kings and queens. Together, these illuminate one of the world's greatest art centers and demonstrate the technological sophistication of Ife artists, as well as the rich aesthetic language they developed in order to convey ideas about worldly and divine power. The refined sculptures from Ife demonstrate the dignity and self-assurance associated with the idea of dynasty, as well as the results of misfortunes and violence that could befall human beings -- both fates shaped by divine as well as human interventions. Among the many masterpieces from Ife art in this book are a group of life-size copper portrait heads, carved stone animals, and the spectacular seated male figure found in the town of Tada, Nigeria, shown dressed in an elaborate textile. Essays explore the significance of Ife's stone, terra-cotta, and metal sculptures in the context of Yoruba history and culture and consider the significance of this portrayal of an ancient African city. Today, the city of Ife is still a spiritual heartland for the 29 million Yoruba people living in Nigeria and countless descendants in the Americas and elsewhere in the world. Dynasty and Divinity accompanies an exhibition co-organized by the Museum for African Art, New York City, and the Fundacion Marcelino Botin, Santander, Spain, in collaboration with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria. The exhibition will appear at the British Museum, London, as Kingdom of Ife: Sculptures of West Africa.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A very good source for archaeologists and art historians interested in the African past. . . . looks at the art of Ife with regard to its aesthetics but also tries to understand the art in its anthropological perspective." *—C.A. Folorunso, Journal of African Archaeology, Vol. 9 (1) 2011* "Schildkrout discusses the fascinating history of the discovering, excavating, and collecting Ife art. Drewal delves further into Yoruba art and beliefs and then outlines a chronology of Ife art and culture. Summing up: Recommended." *—Choice* "Drewal [has] valuable anthropological insights on depictions, in both terracotta and metal, of apparel and beads, and equally non-elite faces and deformed and sick bodies, as well as presumed sacrificial victims, and on the significance of various animal sculptures." *—Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa*

Dynast and Divinity presents an extraordinary corpus of ancient Ife art in terra-cotta, stone, and metal, dating from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. Artists at Ife, the ancient city-state of the Yoruba people of West Africa (located in present-day southwestern Nigeria), created sculpture that ranks among the most aesthetically striking and technically sophisticated in the world.

This book accompanies a show recently exhibited at the British Museum. The exhibition is coming to Houston, Texas, September 19, 2010, through January 9, 2011, and I can't wait to see it. The works comprise what is regarded by many as the highest form of African art, and due to its materials, it, along with Benin and Owo, is certainly among the oldest, dating back to the 12th century. Only the Nok terra cottas are older, dating to circa 200 BC. I recommend acquiring this book and studying it in preparation to seeing the exhibit in Houston or elsewhere. The book is an identical re-titling of the "Kingdom of Ife" book which accompanied an exhibit at the British Museum earlier in 2010, only the title changed. I also recommend the dvd "Head of an Ife King" from the British Museum.

Softcover with flaps, 11.25" x 8.5", 186 pages, glossary, bibliography, 4 Maps. 109 objects featured in color, 38 other illustrations in color and b/w. Published by the Museum for African Art and

Fundacion Marcelino Botin, 2009. A well presented specialty book on the ancient art of Nigeria featuring stone, terracota, and metal, (mostly copper alloy), sculptures. The objects include portrait heads, minatures, caricatures, animals, plaques and adornments from the 12th to 15th centuries. Many of the objects are featured for their age and historical value rather than great artistic merit, but there are enough striking items to keep most tribal art enthusiasts interested, and the text illuminates the rich artistic history of the city state of Ife and the Yoruba peoples.

Thanks to Baba Rowland Abiodun, a real Yoruba academician...

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