

## African Art

The traditional art of Africa plays a major part in the African society. Most ceremonies and activities (such as singing, dancing, storytelling, ect.) can not function without visual art. It can also be used as an implement and insignia of rank or prestige, or have a religious significance. African art consists mainly of sculptures, paintings, fetishes, masks, figures, and decorative objects.

Sculptures are considered to be the greatest achievement for African art. A majority of the sculptures are done in wood but are also made of metal, stone, terra-cotta, mud, beadwork, ivory, and other materials. It is found in many parts of Africa but mainly in western and central Africa. Many ancient rock paintings have been found in Southern and Eastern Africa. These paintings are believed to be attributed to the SAN (Bushman) people. Masks and fetishes are often used to scare off bad things such as evil spirits, witches or ghosts. They are also used to bring about a desired end-break a bad habit, improve ones love life, or kill a natural or supernatural enemy.

There are three basic themes of African art. The first is the dualism between bush and village. African tribes wear masks and headresses: the male is represented by the elephant, the most powerful of bush creatures and the female is delicately coiffed to express refinement and civilization. The second theme of African art is the problematic relationships between the sexes. African tribes use art as a therapeutic device to deal with the problems and issues dealing with the relations between the sexes. The third theme is the struggle to control natural or supernatural forces to achieve a desired end. African tribes often use masks in ceremonies (called Gelede) to please and honor the forces.

For each region in Africa, there is a different style of art. The western Sudanic Region have masks and figures representing legendary ancestors and religious sacrifices. The central Sudanic Region art includes mud architecture, embroidered textiles, elaborate coiffure, metal and beadwork jewelry, and leatherwork. This style usually doesn't represent anything special. The west Guinea Coast Region use masks and figures to police ceremonies, punish people for doing something wrong, settle land-owning problems and start or end wars. The Central Guinea Coast Region art employs aristocratic materials. Specialized artists create works of art for the leaders that include: stools, drums, cloth, pottery, terra-cotta, figures, miniature masks, combs, mirrors, pipes, and carved musical instruments.

African art is traditionally essential and optimistic. Without art, there would be no African culture.