



CHRYSLER MUSEUM of ART | NOMA

Transcontinental Modernism:

JACOB LAWRENCE & THE ARTISTS OF BLACK ORPHEUS

Co-organized by the Chrysler Museum of Art & the New Orleans Museum of Art

The year 2022 marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the creation of Nigerian-based culture and arts publication *Black Orpheus* and the sixtieth anniversary of Jacob Lawrence's first exhibition in Nigeria. To celebrate these milestones, the Chrysler Museum of Art and the New Orleans Museum of Art will present *Transcontinental Modernism: Jacob Lawrence & the Artists of Black Orpheus*, the first museum exhibition of Lawrence's *Nigeria* series. The show will also include works by the international artists featured in the magazine and associated with the Mbari Artists & Writers Club.

Black Orpheus (1957–75), was initially published by the Nigerian Ministry of Education and later by Longman, a Nigerian commercial publisher. At the height of the journal's readership in 1963, its estimated reach was 3,500 subscribers throughout Africa, Europe, and the United States. Many of the artists and writers were major figures within modern African art and literature and founding Mbari members, including Bruce Onobrakpeya, Vincent Kofi, Wole Soyinka, and Chinua Achebe. Their works will be among those featured alongside Lawrence's *Nigeria* series.

Transcontinental Modernism will bring Lawrence's *Nigeria* series together for the first time in more than fifty years. In 1964, the African American artist presented eight new tempera paintings of Lagos and Ibadan marketplaces at the Mbari gallery in Ibadan, Nigeria. These images were the culmination of an eight-month stay in Nigeria hosted by German



cultural critic Ulli Beier, one of the Mbari Artists & Writers Club directors. The *Nigeria* series represents an ongoing legacy of African American artists venturing to the African continent for knowledge and inspiration. Lawrence's exhibition and residency placed him and his practice in conversation with an international consortium of artists, dramatists, and writers in post-independence Nigeria.

The exhibition will pair Lawrence's works with paintings, drawings, and sculptures from the *Black Orpheus* artists and those shown in the Mbari Ibadan and Oshogbo galleries. Featured artists will include Uche Okeke, Twins Seven-Seven, Jacob Afolabi, Ibrahim El-Salahi, Skunder Boghossian, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Susanne Wenger, Munakata Shiko, Wilson Tiberio, Genaro de Carvalho, and many others. Showcasing these artists together will allow for the exploration of several distinct but interrelated threads: the influence of Africa's



post-colonial movement on American modernist artists, the influence of the post-colonial movement throughout Africa on a new generation of African artists, how African artists negotiated their personal cultural practices with European art traditions, and the importance of art publications in circulating knowledge globally.

Transcontinental Modernism also highlights modernist artists working beyond the supposed “centers” of the U.S. and Europe. The exhibition will reveal the nuances of global modernist art practices during the mid-twentieth century. Nigerian artists

Onobrakpeya, Okeke, and Demas Nwoko were highly invested in developing a visually dynamic but politically charged art practice for a changing Nigerian audience. The work was decidedly associated with the artist’s self-identified cultural and national alliances, reflecting Nigeria’s post-colonial era and the broader African continent. Furthermore, Brazilian artist Tiberio and Japanese artist Shiko were producing works echoing the sociopolitical issues they were facing in their respective countries.

CURATORIAL

Transcontinental Modernism: Jacob Lawrence & The Artists of Black Orpheus is curated by Kimberli Gant, PhD, McKinnon Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art, Chrysler Museum of Art and Ndubuisi Ezeluomba, PhD, Françoise Billon Richardson Curator of African Art, New Orleans Museum of Art.

NUMBER OF OBJECTS

The exhibition will feature approximately 100 works, including paintings, drawings, watercolors, sculpture, textiles, photographs, original letters, and rare publications.

SIZE

5,500–6,500 square feet

SCHEDULE

Chrysler Museum of Art: October 7, 2022 – January 8, 2023
New Orleans Museum of Art: January 26, 2023 – April 20, 2023
Available for 12-week venue in summer 2023

PUBLICATION

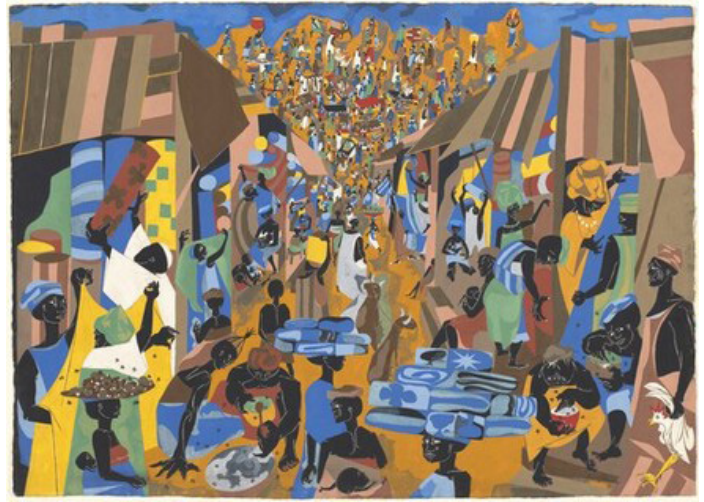
Full-color catalogue, including essays by the exhibition curators and leading interdisciplinary scholars

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SELECTED WORKS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 1 Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917–2000), **Market Scene**, 1966, Gouache on paper, Museum purchase, Chrysler Museum of Art, 2018.22
- 2 Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917–2000), **Street to Mbari**, 1964, Tempera, opaque watercolor and graphite on wove paper, Gift of Mr. & Mrs. James T. Dyke, National Gallery of Art
- 3 Susanne Wenger (Austrian, 1915–2009), **Diviner for Obatala**, ca. 1959, Screen print on cotton, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2013.216
- 4 Ibrahim El Salahi (Sudanese, b. 1930), **They Always Appear #4**, 1964–65, Oil on canvas, Newark Museum of Art
- 5 Agnaldo Manoel dos Santos (Brazilian, 1926–1962), **Monja**, ca. 1960s, Wood, Collection of Vilma Eid (Galeria Estacao)
- 6 Bruce Onobrakpeya (Nigerian, b. 1932), **Two Faces**, 1966, Linocut on paper, Newark Museum of Art

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