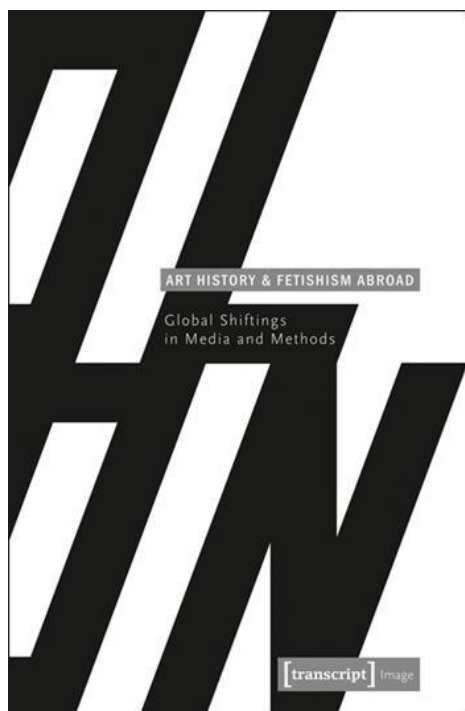


Art History and Fetishism Abroad: Global Shiftings in Media and Methods

ed. by Gabriele Genge and Angela Stercken. Columbia University Press, April 2015. 340 p. ill. ISBN 9783837624113 (pbk.), \$50.00.

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This collection of essays—gathered after a 2011 conference entitled "Between Fetish and Art: Is Sculpture Transcultural, Global, and Universal?"—explores issues surrounding material culture, otherness in the context of art history, and fascinating tensions surrounding sacred items. The subjects covered here are incredibly specific and densely academic, making it an uphill (if still rewarding) read for those new to this area of study. Yet, for people interested in exploring the intersections of psychology and ethnographic studies as related to the aesthetics of art, this book provides fertile territory for intellectual engagement. These writings contribute to a larger discussion of how we understand cultural objects, how we present these objects as art, and how the narratives of history are affected by these objects' very existence.

Divided into four sections, this book immediately plunges the reader into exceptionally detailed studies of masks, photography, appropriation, authenticity, and a host of other topical lenses for examining relationships between objecthood and artistic creation. Ikem Stanley Okoye's essay looks at West African fetishism theories and contemporary Ghanaian films. Eva-Maria Troelenberg discusses how museum exhibitions and publications can affect not only our interpretation of Islamic objects, but also our very concept of "sculpture" itself. Angela Stercken takes on the flexible, transcultural nature of Basquiat's imagery in her essay, "[Arte]Fact, Object, Image. Jean-Michel Basquiat's Archives of the Black Atlantic." These and all other contributions to this book share an expansive focus on art objects and the constructed auras, mitigating circumstances, and complex social mores that go into creative/interpretive processes. The well-respected academic authors, whose scholarly

backgrounds are rich with art history, anthropology, and postcolonial studies, use cultural and artistic documentation to advance sophisticated analyses of the ways that objects can ascend from "everyday" to "art" through multi-faceted political, institutional, and individual transformations.

Many books that address the idea of fetishized objects in art history focus prominently on works by Surrealist artists and authors like André Breton and Marcel Duchamp. This collection will allow scholars to set forth towards different avenues of examination, i.e., magic, thingness, rituals. The book (studded with color illustrations) draws not only on art and aesthetics, but also on the complicated histories that spurred reinvention of the art object. While the intricate, interdisciplinary discussion makes it, perhaps, not immediately accessible to the general art library patron, it could serve as a fine addition for collections and institutions with areas devoted to African studies or those serving scholars focused on political art, the history of sculptural objects, or psychology. A deep dive, surely, but worth the work.