

Authority Changes?

Using the Framework to Teach Evaluation in an Art History Class

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Art History 112: Survey of Non-Western Art

- Writing intensive class/~24 students
- First paper topic: “primitive art” and primitivism
- Current scholarly conversation problematizes earlier use of the construct in earlier scholarship
- How can we help students think through using “authoritative” secondary sources?

Critiquing the Construct

Antliff, M., & Leighton, P. (2003). Primitive. In R. S. Nelson & R. Schiff (Eds.), Critical Terms for Art History, Second Edition (2nd ed., pp. 217–233). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

As it has been constructed, “primitive” art is a binary opposite of “western” art. It has no historicity or cultural specificity. It is primeval, unchanging, timeless. There is no stylistic progression in “primitive” art. There are no individual “masters” of the form.

Authority is Constructed and Contextual

Constructed



Contextual



Activity Directions

ARH 112 Source Evaluation Activity

Group 1: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4103489>

Group 2: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3337534>

Group 3:

<https://archive.nytimes.com/query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage-9903E4DC1E30F93AA25752C0A9619C8B63.html>

Group 4:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/07/magazine/l-the-high-art-of-primitivism-234010.html>

Group 5: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4119863>

Please work with your group to answer the questions on this form:

<https://goo.gl/forms/IUEF0OzOziehO6xl2>

bit.ly/ARH112

Activity Questions

- **Who wrote this text? Is the author constructing themselves as an authority on non-western or indigenous art *in* this text? If so, how?**
- **Does the author have any characteristics of an authority on the topic? (You can do outside research!) If so, what are they?**
- **Does the publication have any features of an authoritative source for art criticism? (You can do outside research!) If so, what are they?**

Activity Questions

- **Think about your readings. Within the context of art history, would you consider this source to be a representation of current thought on the topic? Why or why not?**
- **Would you use as a secondary source, to help you analyze or interpret a related work of non-western art, in the context of an art history class today? Why or why not?**

Answers: Group 1

Think about your readings. Within the context of art history, would you consider this source to be a representation of current thought on non-western art or primitivism? Why or why not?

No for one thing its really old and uses the "n" word (the one that ends in "oes") to talk about African people. It also doesn't talk about any artists just tribes and who donated the sculptures to the msuem. The ending says that when primitive races gain civilization their art will lose spontaetiy but that they look better wehn shown in a msueum with western art.

Would you use as a secondary source, to help you analyze or interpret a work of non-western art, in the context of an art history class today? Why or why not?

No way. Its mad racis.t

*Mackenzie, H. F. (1930).
A group of primitive
carvings in wood and
horn. *Bulletin of the
Art Institute of
Chicago*, 24(1), 8-9.
doi:10.2307/4103489*

Answers: Group 2

Think about your readings. Within the context of art history, would you consider this source to be a representation of current thought on non-western art or primitivism? Why or why not?

she only uses the word primitive once to say that americans have fantasies about africa being a primitive world free from the stress of modern life. the readings explain primitive should not be used to describe about nonwestern art anymore. she doesnt do that, so yes.

Would you use as a secondary source, to help you analyze or interpret a work of non-western art, in the context of an art history class today? Why or why not?

yes. this would be a good article for writing about masks made by the pende people. it is about a sculptor named gabama a gingugu who made masks in the 1930s. she thinks african sculptors should be treated like individual artists. museums should use theri names.

*Strother, Z. S. (1999).
Gabama a Gingugu
and the secret history
of twentieth-century
art. African Arts, 32(1),
19-93.
doi:10.2307/3337534*

Questions?

Thanks!

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Related Reading

Watkins, Alexander. "Teaching inclusive authorities: Indigenous ways of knowing and the Framework for Information Literacy in native art." In *Disciplinary Applications of Information Literacy Threshold Concepts*, edited by Samantha Godbey, Susan Beth Wainscott, and Xan Goodman, 13-24. Chicago: ACRL, 2017.
https://scholar.colorado.edu/libr_facpapers/100/

Related Reading

Phillips, R. B. (2015). Aesthetic primitivism revisited: The global diaspora of 'primitive art' and the rise of indigenous modernisms. *Journal of Art Historiography*, 12. Retrieved from <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/phillips.pdf>