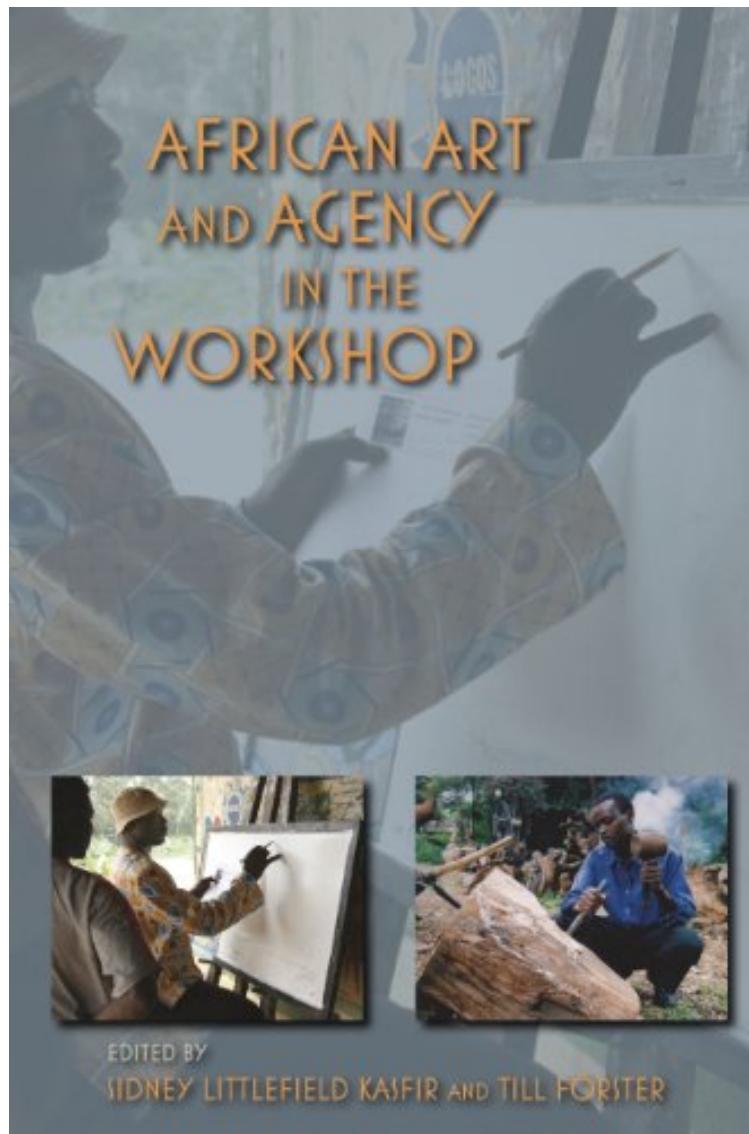


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African Art and Agency in the Workshop (African Expressive Cultures)

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From Indiana University Press : African Art and Agency in the Workshop (African Expressive Cultures) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised African Art and Agency in the Workshop (African Expressive Cultures):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A "Hall of (Western) Mirrors" By fastidious oneIt's been well over a year since I purchased this intriguing book composed of over a dozen academic essays worthy of continuous review. Critically speaking, "agencies of African art and workshops" obviously remain over-looked and generally

misunderstood. These essays convey a substance of "workshop creativity" in the way of essential functions, concepts, and influences actually occur between clients / buyers or purchasers. Major changes among "workshops" are largely due to politics, urban growth and development, environmental impact and resources, trade and tourism, and over-all economic changes. Yet, despite these realities - ironically - it so happens that Western and European collectors are inherently "stuck in traditional African art primitivism", not Africans... And, certainly not the legacy of Africa's historical cultural artists and designers. One might also assume (incorrectly) that collectors of African art interpret the market and understand trends, but in reality, the vast majority clearly do not. Among my favorite essays relates to the FRELIMO and Mozambican anti-colonial freedom fighters. This particular essay resonates with my personal studies and is emphasized within *A Host of Devils: The History and Context of the Making of Makonde Spirit Sculpture* (Studies in Visual Culture, V. 2) 1st edition by Kingdon, Zachary (2002) Hardcover. FRELIMO mobilisers not only set up carving collectives, they also influenced the subject matter of the carvings. They encouraged carvers to create new themes that would illustrate the evils of colonial oppression and the carvers responded by developing a "genre" of personages in a state of oppression. Among the themes included in this genre was the figure of the suffering woman with head in hand, the African carrying the European, the woman shielding her head from the attacks of a policeman, and the tied-up African being led away by a policeman. In addition to the personages in a state of oppression, satirical and subversive images were also carved. For example, the carver Nanelo Mtua-manu stated that during the armed struggle, members of the Beria co-operative used to make, among other themes, images of President Caetano and the one-eyed Luis de Cameos. These carvings were undoubtedly caricatures of the formal portraits that Portuguese patrons had previously commissioned from Makonde carvers. "Some Makonde carvers expressed their rejection of the colonial culture by creating works that subverted religious themes and a deep-seated hostility to the alien culture. Makonde work on traditional "Euro-colonial" Christian / Catholic themes often depicted rigidly stereotyped and life-less images. Occasionally, one would depart the stereotype, and when it would, it was nearly always because an element of doubt or defiance has been worked into it: a Madonna given a demon to hold instead of their Christ child image; or a priest represented with feet of a wild (feral) animal, a pieta became a study not of sorrow but of revenge - a mother raising a spear over the body of her dead son. In least some within the non-African academic world are sensible and are attempting to catch up... Finally.

The role of the workshop in the creation of African art is the subject of this revelatory book. In the group setting of the workshop, innovation and imitation collide, artists share ideas and techniques, and creative expression flourishes. *African Art and Agency in the Workshop* examines the variety of workshops, from those which are politically driven or tourist oriented, to those based on historical patronage or allied to current artistic trends. Fifteen lively essays explore the impact of the workshop on the production of artists such as Zimbabwean stone sculptors, master potters from Cameroon, wood carvers from Nigeria, and others from across the continent.

"This interesting volume is highly recommended, especially for institutions that have collections covering artistic practice, African studies, postcolonial studies, and art history." ?ARLIS/NA s "Taken as a whole, the case studies provide a wide window into the very diverse structural and functional characteristics of workshops. They also clearly describe how African workshops have served both contemporary political and cultural needs and have responded to patronage, whether it be traditional or stimulated by tourism. Equally important, some of the case studies demonstrate that diversity of forms can thrive within workshop organizations propelled by individual creativity and a desire to self-differentiate." ?African Studies "Mozambican freedom fighters direct artistic cooperatives to anti-colonial ends. An entrepreneurial Zambian king "brands" his people through patronage of distinctive visual and performance arts. These and equally compelling case studies demonstrate how African workshops have long mediated collective expression and individual imagination. In their nuanced contextualization of "the workshop" across cultural, geographical, and temporal diversities, the editors frame apprenticeship, cultural constructions of creativity, pragmatic materiality, and phenomenologies of production as no Africanist art historians have before, and in ways applicable anywhere in the world." ?Allen F. Roberts,, University of California, Los Angeles "A closer examination of the workshop provides important insights into art histories and cultural politics. We may think we know what we mean when we use the term 'workshop,' but in fact the organization of groups of artists takes on vastly different forms and encourages the production of diverse styles of art within larger social structures and power dynamics." ?Victoria Rovine, University of Florida "[These] essays are augmented with data from fieldwork done by the editors in Cocirc;te drsquo;Ivoire, Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania. To make the volume as formidable as it stands, chapters have been added by the coeditorsrsquo; intellectual colleagues who have conducted fieldwork in the above-named countries, as well as in Uganda, Mozambique, Zambia, and South Africa." ?Africa Today About the Author Sidney Littlefield Kasfir is Professor Emerita of Art History at Emory University. She is author of *African Art and the Colonial Encounter* (IUP, 2007). Till Fouml;rster is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Basel.