

Exhibition Dilemmas: African Art/facts in the West

The course explores the history of African art history through a selection of key publications and exhibitions that, for different reasons, shaped the dominant perspectives, approaches and methodologies to African art studies over the last century. Events such as the punitive expedition to the kingdom of Benin in 1897 and the "discovery" of Ife art in the first decade of the 20th Century, for example, were decisive for the acknowledgement of African material culture as "art" in the West. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, scholars and curators have been struggling to define and redefine African objects as "art", while resignifying objects through new approaches in publications and exhibitions. How did authorship, creativity and invention start to be considered an important issue in African art studies? How did exhibitions such as "*Primitivism*" in 20th Century Art (MoMA, 1984) and *Art /Artifact* (Center for African Art, 1988) promote positive and negative reactions, and also new paths in African art studies? These and other issues will be addressed over the course, which presents some of the current debates, research and curatorial trends, in order to help students build inter-cultural competence as a key attribute of any contemporary curatorial practice.