

# Museum School Classes Fall 2021

## **Here + 54: From the Smithsonian to Soweto, Arts of the African Americas and Africa with Kymberly Newberry**

**September 28: Black architects and The National Museum of African American History and Culture –** Enjoy a virtual tour of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The Ghanaian architect Sir David Adjaye, OBE RA, referred to as the greatest architect of this generation, collaborated with a team of renowned architects to build a lasting tribute to the triumph of African American people from enslavement to freedom, “from dark to light,” the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Inside the state-of-the art building is the museum’s astounding collection of 3,500 artifacts spanning nearly every aspect of the African American experience from gut wrenching slave shackles fitted for children, to the 1973, candy apple red convertible Cadillac El Dorado of rock ‘n’ roll legend Chuck Berry. The National Museum of African American History and Culture is a great and mighty walk through the tragedies and triumphs of a people.

**October 5- Masterclass: Dr. Kimberly Juanita Brown discusses Carrie Mae Weems, *Roaming*, 2006** Throughout her career, photographer Carrie Mae Weems has affirmed the dignity of individual human lives in her work. Her images provide nuanced portraits of her subjects’ vulnerability and strength. In Weems’s 2006 series *Roaming*, Weems, in large-scale black and white photographs, appears dressed in a long dark dress standing before monumental architecture and sweeping landscapes in and around Rome. Her back to the camera, she confronts these sites and invites the viewer to share her perspective—and her position—in relation to these historically charged locales.

This “Masterclass” will feature a conversation with **Dartmouth professor Kimberly Juanita Brown**, whose research engages the site of the visual to negotiate the parameters of race, gender, and belonging.

**October 12: Polaroid & Apartheid and the Role of Photography in the Decolonization of West Africa** Photographs have an intimate relationship with history. German philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin wrote, “Photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance.” Photography in many ways is the first drafter of history.

Apartheid was a system of institutionalized racial segregation that existed in South Africa from 1948 until the early 1990s. Apartheid was characterized by an authoritarian political culture based on white supremacy. The term *resistance photography* was used to signify photography that in any way challenged the beliefs, policies, or actions of the South African government; it was a powerful tool of resistance for many reasons. Much of its power lay in its ability to expose the humanity of non-white racial groups that apartheid concealed at all costs.

And then there was June 16th, 1976, in Soweto, 12 miles west of Johannesburg South Africa...

Police opened fire on students protesting the enforcement of teaching in the West Germanic language, Afrikaans. The photograph of a mortally wounded schoolboy, Hector Pieterse, being carried by another schoolboy while his sister ran next to them, was published around the world. It is believed that this iconic photograph, capturing a moment in South Africa’s harrowing history, led to the dismantling of Apartheid.

The control of imagery becomes the control of history. We’ll also discuss the role photography played in the independence movements of West African countries from French colonial rule.

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**October 19: Masterclass: Dr. Christa Clarke Discusses: The Gilded Age Revisited: Yinka Shonibare CBE at the Newark Museum.** *Party Time: Reimagine America* is a site-responsive installation by the British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare CBE originally commissioned in honor of the hundredth anniversary of the Newark Museum in 2009. Shonibare is well-known for his subversive, often humorous, explorations of race, gender, and social class in a range of media, including sculpture, painting, photography, and film. Although he has long addressed the intertwined histories of the West and Africa, especially those of the Victorian era, *Party Time* was his first work created for an actual period environment and is an early example of the recent trend of artistic interventions in historic houses.

Within this period setting, the artist conjured a formal dinner party in the time of Jeannette and John Ballantine, the prominent Newark brewing family for whom the house was originally built. The installation takes as a point of departure the quest for refinement that accompanied industrialization in the United States, when the elaborate dinner party began to replace the humble repast, becoming a celebratory occasion for the white ruling class. The *mise-en-scène* invites us to consider the discrepancy of wealth generated by turn-of-the-century enterprise within a global framework, probing the relationship between luxury and labor. Playful yet pointed, Shonibare's reimagining casts a new light on America's Gilded Age, complicating and challenging dominant narratives about race, class, and cultural authority.

**Dr. Christa Clarke**, The Newark Museum's former Curator of the Arts of Africa and Senior Curator of the Arts of Africa and the Americas was one of the co-curators of *Party Time: Reimagine America*. Dr. Clarke will discuss this historic 2009 installation and its social resonance then and now.

**October 26: Black Women in the Works of the Impressionists and Contemporary Multimedia Artist Mickalene Thomas.** In 2018, a seminar paper expanded into a thesis and became an international art exhibition. During her doctoral research, Denise Murrell discovered an appointment from 1862 in a notebook of Impressionist Edouard Manet. He had scheduled a sitting in his studio with "Laure, très belle négresse." Laure, who according to her address in the notebook lived a mere ten minutes away from Manet's studio in northern Paris, indicated that she was a member of the new Black working class that Manet saw every day.

The exhibition, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today*, deals with challenging the Postmodernist interpretations of Black female figures in works from Impressionists Edouard Manet to Henri Matisse. Alongside our analysis of the efforts of Denise Murrell, we will approach the work of celebrated multimedia artist Mickalene Thomas, who is best known for creating complex, elaborate works using rhinestones. Thomas's work boldly embraces the challenges of redefining Black female identity and representation.

**November 2: Masterclass: Dr. Allen F. Roberts Discusses: "Brainsmithing": The Art of Senegalese Artists Ndary Lô, Viyé Diba, and Moussa Tine.** Based on twenty years of research conducted together with his late spouse, Dr. Mary Nooter Roberts, Professor Allen F. Roberts, Emeritus Distinguished Professor of World Arts and Cultures at UCLA, will discuss "Brainsmithing," the creative method used by Senegalese artists Ndary Lô, Viyé Diba and Moussa Tine, as they create remarkable artworks from detritus, granting it a sculptural, almost mystical second life.

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### **November 9: Seeing This Makes Me Sweat Big Drops: Dilemmas in Curating/Translating African Art in American Art Museums**

This lecture presents an opportunity to discuss the dissimilarities between African and Western approaches to curatorial methodologies of contemporary art from the African continent. Beginning with objects of African cultural expression entering into the collections of art museums in the United States in the late 1800s, we will consider modern day dilemmas of contextualizing African artworks once they are placed in U.S. museums. While curating is a privileged endeavor, it can present great dilemmas and be viewed as a form of...translating. According to German writer and philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz, the translator "must broaden and deepen his own language with the foreign one." For the curator, the task of properly and respectfully placing African art into Western museums, maintaining the essence, and original meaning of the artwork...translating, can be a complicated undertaking.

### **November 16: Masterclass: Dr. James Smethurst Discusses: The Black Arts Movement**

Conceived as the "aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power Concept," the Black Arts Movement (BAM) arose in the mid-1960s to develop a body of art that would provide "a change of vision" in the perception of African American identity. Like the New Negro Movement of the 1910s and 1920s, BAM, spanning a period from the mid-1960s into the 1970s, was a flourishing of artistic endeavor among African American writers, poets, playwrights, musicians, and visual artists who believed that artistic production could be the key to revising stereotypes of African American inferiority and sub-humanity --stereotypes that lay at the heart of American racism.

**Dr. James Smethurst**, a scholar of 20th-century African American literature, culture, and intellectual history, professor in the UMass Amherst W.E.B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies and author of numerous books on the Black Arts Movement, will discuss its distinctive place in the civil rights movement, the import of its legacy and the powerful role visual art plays as a vector for social change.