



## African-American Art (Oxford History of Art)

By Sharon F. Patton

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From its origins in early eighteenth century slave communities to the end of the twentieth century, African-American art has made a vital contribution to the art of the United States. *African-American Art* provides a major reassessment of the subject, setting the art in the context of the African-American experience. Here, Patton discusses folk and decorative arts such as ceramics, furniture, and quilts alongside fine art, sculptures, paintings, and photography during the 1800s. She also examines the New Negro Movement of the 1920s, the era of Civil Rights and Black Nationalism during the 1960s and 70s, and the emergence of new black artists and theorists in the 1980s and 90s.

New evidence suggests different ways of looking at African-American art, confirming that it represents the culture and society from which it emerges. Here, Patton explores significant issues such as the relationship of art and politics, the influence of galleries and museums, the growth of black universities, critical theory, the impact of artists collectives, and the assortment of art practices since the 1960s. *African-American Art* shows that in its cultural diversity and synthesis of cultures it mirrors those in American society as a whole.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Patton has written an excellent and comprehensive introduction to the historical development of African American visual art. She provides much new information on the art making of both slaves and freemen in the 18th and 19th century while later providing a broad art-historical context for black modernists. Pointing out that crafts did not necessarily precede fine art making during slavery, she examines African retentions (and Indian influences) in 18th-century black ceramics and architecture; black women and quilting; abolitionism and the rise of black landscape painters like Robert Duncanson; and sculptor Edmonia Lewis's black expatriate neoclassicism. Turning to generally better- documented 20th-century black artists, Patton arguably provides the first clear discussion of the relationship (both social and aesthetic) of black modernists to the prevailing mainstream artists and art movements of their time. As is perhaps inevitable, Patton's discussion of the contemporary art scene, while quite competent, is defined as much by the artists she fails to mention as by those she chooses to include. Well researched, scrupulously documented and organized, this lucidly written, fully illustrated book also includes numerous useful sidebars defining art movements, issues or individuals.

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## **Review**

'Sharon Patton has written a much needed text which surveys the broad scope of the history of African-American art from slavery to the present. She has followed a different tack, tracing art themes and their development throughout the history, rather than the influences of specific artists or periods. Thus, she shows how ideas such as crafts, formal painting and sculpture, or architecture, co-existed with equal importance to the culture from the times of the Colonies. In so doing, she breaks down the barrier between folk and formal art, and articulates an interrelationship of both concepts to African-American people and their culture. Her book expands the framework for the visual arts in the United States in the last two centuries.' Professor Keith Morrison, Dean, College of Creative Arts, San Francisco State University

## **About the Author**

**Sharon Patton** is Director of the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies, and Associate Professor in History at the University of Michigan.

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