

En Voyage
Hybridity and Vodou
in Haitian Art





En Voyage

Hybridity and Vodou in Haitian Art

Curated by the Exhibition Seminar, Art and Art History Department
under the direction of Fredo Rivera, Assistant Professor of Art History

January 25–March 18, 2018
Faulconer Gallery, Grinnell College

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Mireille Gonzalez
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Professor Susan Strauber
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Professor R. Timothy Chasson
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Professor Victoria Rovine '86
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Professor Jenny Anger
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Walking a Tightrope: German Expressionist Printmaking 1904-1928

Professor Jenny Anger
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I Saw It: The Imagined Reality of Francisco Goya's Disasters of War

Professor Susan Strauber
13 August–12 September 2004
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Photograph of the nine curators at the Pérez Art Museum Miami.



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Acknowledgements

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In August 2017 we visited Miami through generous funding by the College's Institute of Global Engagement along with support by the Instruction Support Committee's Innovation Fund (which funded our museum visits throughout Iowa during our fall break). Thank you to Curator María Elena Ortiz for giving us a tour of the Perez Art Museum of Miami and reminding us to be mindful of our gallery space and of the importance of accessibility. We also visited the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, where Curator Gina Wouters led us on a tour. We deeply appreciated Wouters imparting upon us her knowledge of catalogue design, which became crucial to our catalogue development process, as well as her own curatorial advice. We would also like to acknowledge Museum of Contemporary Art-North Miami and staff, specifically Grants Manager Miguel Seco, who gave an essential talk on creating a cohesive theme for an exhibition. We are especially grateful to Jon Mogul '85 for leading us through a tour of The Wolfsonian-FIU. The tour was not only enjoyable but also provided us with vital insight into the later of stages of exhibition planning. Thank you to artist Edouard Duval Carrié, who invited us into his home studio, supported our class efforts, and whose own art sparked our interest in the history and culture behind Haitian Vodou.

Finally, we would like to thank Professor Fredo Rivera, whose teaching, mentorship, and expertise has made this exhibition possible.

— *The En Voyage Student Curators*

Preface

by **Fredo Rivera**

Assistant Professor of Art History

Martinican philosopher Edouard Glissant opens his book *Poetics of Relation* with the example of the boat: the boat as womb, the boat as a site of trauma, and the boat as a space of traversal above the abyss. The analogy of the boat informs this exhibition. Glissant writes: “Relation is not made up of things that are foreign but of shared knowledge. This experience of the abyss can now be said to be the best element of exchange.”¹ The abyss, while a dark and harrowing concept, becomes a space of creation, a projection of the unknown that catalyzes relation. The boat, a vehicle for transport and exchange, provides a fascinating bridge across cultures and geographies. Glissant here echoes something evident within Haitian art, as claimed by artist Edouard Duval-Carrié: that “displacement creates new forms and aesthetics.”² This exhibition aims to introduce the creative brilliance of Haitian art to the Grinnell College community, albeit through a critical lens that accounts for the political and social implications of displacement.

Multiple challenges exist within the field of Haitian art history. One must account for the lack of literature in the field, as well as the inherent complexity of

Haitian art and visual culture. Beyond appearing as an art that is joyful and vivid on the surface, many of Haiti’s political and economic nuances emerge from the canvas, or are embodied within sculpted form. One major challenge within this exhibition, planned over the course of a single semester, was to provide a critical thematic with which to explore the rich tapestry of Haitian art.

Our exhibition, *En Voyage: Hybridity and Vodou in Haitian Art*, is part of a regularly offered course in Art History at Grinnell College — the Exhibition Seminar. Nine student curators had the unique opportunity to engage with Haitian art collections throughout Iowa, as well gain a deeper understanding of Haitian art through interactions with Visiting International Fellow and Miami-based artist Edouard Duval-Carrié. Course-embedded travel allowed each curator to identify their interests, and contribute to various components of the exhibition, from catalogue design work to its very installation. Each student brought a sense of passion and professionalism that is reflected in the exhibition. Many of the works draw from the expansive collection at the Waterloo Center for the Arts in nearby Waterloo, Iowa. The staff was incredibly generous, allowing curators to explore exhibitions and their vault space in order to select works for the exhibition. It was through



Barque de Agoue, n.d.
Jean Camille Nasson
Wood
Waterloo Center for the Arts, Gift
of Larry Kent

these engagements that students concocted their thesis — to look at Haiti through a lens of migration, displacement, and creation.

The opportunity to teach the Exhibition Seminar was especially poignant. In 2004 I participated as a student curator for *I Saw It: The Invented Reality of Goya's Disasters of War*, an Exhibition Seminar led by Professor Susan Strauber. This course was a defining moment of my undergraduate career, an opportunity to consider imagery of war and spectatorship. My experience as an instructor for the course was enhanced by our course-embedded travel to Miami and throughout Iowa, made possible by the Innovation Fund offered by

the Instructional Support Committee, with additional support from the Institute for Global Engagement. It allowed me to grow closer to the group of curators and to witness both their brilliance and dedication to this unique endeavor. The Exhibition Seminar itself provides a voyage — a hands-on experience that familiarizes students with museum culture and the curatorial process.

Many of the debates we had in class and throughout our travels were about the politics of displaying Haitian art. We hope our exhibition opens you to the world of Haiti — to see Haiti as a point of relation, to Iowa and beyond.

¹ Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 8.

² Quotation from interview with Edouard Duval-Carrié in his studio, 26 August 2017. Recorded by curators Charlotte Richardson-Deppe and Ellen Taylor in their curatorial field notes.