

ger on aspects of Afro-Cuban performance that I had previously overlooked in favor of music and dance. After reading the book, I made up my mind to spend more time in Santiago de Cuba during my next trip to the island.

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KIMBERLY L. CLEVELAND: *Black Art In Brazil: Expressions of Identity*. Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2013.

Black Art in Brazil is a terrific book. Author Kimberly Cleveland has written an insightful analysis of expressions of Afro-Brazilian identity in art. The book focuses on the work and lives of five artists: Abdias do Nascimento, Ronaldo Rego, Eustáquio Neves, Ayrson Heráclito and Rosana Paulino. Cleveland asks: what are the signifiers that make their work Afro-Brazilian art? The question and her subject matter lend themselves to a particularly clear discussion of the symbols of blackness in Brazil.

So what makes some Brazilian art Afro-Brazilian art? For Cleveland, Afro-Brazilian art is comprised of a set of visual signs of “blackness” that form, draw from, and inform a cultural literacy about the meaning of being black: images, symbols and themes that Brazilians would “read” as black. These signs vary across artists. The work of Abdias do Nascimento, for instance, employs images of *orixás*, spirits in Candomblé, or *adinkras*, symbols from West Africa, particularly Ghana. Cleveland sees in the use of these images and symbols an effort by Abdias do Nascimento to create a collective identity based on a common past and shared African roots. As she does with her examination of the other four artists, Cleveland examines the connections between Nascimento’s art, his life and his politics. She understands his artistic choices as expressions of his political commitments in forging a collective black political identity that would serve as the foundation for civil rights claims.

White Brazilians can produce Afro-Brazilian art, as Cleveland notes. Ronaldo Rego, whose work is derived from Umbanda, for instance, is white. But as Cleveland observes, the alternative is less possible: it has not been the case that recent Brazilian artists who are black are recognized for work that is not defined as Afro-Brazilian. In Rego’s case, as in Nascimento’s, blackness is signified through the use of religious symbols that are rooted in African influences. Theirs is a religious blackness that drew upon the first readily available symbols of Afro-Brazilian identity.

Cleveland traces the movement in black Brazilian art from religion and African legacies to themes of contemporary race and ethnicity. She explains:

In the 1970s and 1980s, newspaper articles, curators, and academics were responsible for first shaping of Brazilian audiences' ability to recognize and read the signs of blackness contained in black art. Subsequently, even Brazilians who were only vaguely familiar with the signs and symbols of Afro-Brazilian religion were able to recognize them as signifiers of blackness ... [More recently] the shift from a symbolic, spiritual vocabulary to more quotidian references to the black experience in contemporary production has made black art more accessible to the general public. Regardless of his or her knowledge of Afro-Brazilian religions, the viewer is more adept at 'reading' the signs of blackness, as they more directly deal with race and ethnicity (148).

This approach is evident in the work of photographer Eustáquio Neves, whose series *Other Slave Ships* focuses on the collective public spaces that poorer, often black Brazilians inhabit: crowded trains and buses, jails, or public hospitals. She cites Neves' statement that he "aims to establish a relationship between the past slave market and the current global economy" (96).

Black Art in Brazil traces the manners in which Afro-Brazilian artists engage with signifiers of blackness, as well as the manners in which they challenge expectations. For instance, they sometimes work against the regional expectations about black art, or expectations about religious purity. Their work is often political, as is the case with Rosana Paulino's engagement with subjects of gender- and race-based violence. The result is a study that renders subtle but significant cultural changes over time, along with an evolving political landscape.

Cleveland's writing style, attention to the historical contexts of the themes she engages, and most centrally, her engagement with expressions of blackness, make this book a welcome contribution to the field which would lend itself well to reading by both undergraduates and graduate students. The hardcover edition includes an excellent set of color plates of works by the artists surveyed, which are well integrated in Cleveland's analysis. I hope University Press of Florida will publish the book in paperback, as it is very well suited to classroom use.

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