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Roger Sansi. *Fetishes and Monuments: Afro-Brazillian Art and Culture in the 20th Century.* Remapping Cultural History Series. New York: Berghahn Books, 2007. 213 pp. $60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84545-363-3.

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New Views on Old Brazilian Candomblé Debates

Based on ten years of research, *Fetishes and Monuments* seeks fresh ways to consider cultural (ex)change, breaking stridently with past scholarship that stressed "purity" and agency of African/Afro-Brazilian arts and Candomblés (African-derived religions). Although Roger Sansi's single case study is of Mãe Madelena do Vale of Cachoeira (an inland town seventy-five miles from Salvador, Bahia), he grounds most of his theoretical and historical discussions in what he terms the "Black Rome"–Salvador da Bahia (Brazil's capital during the slave trade) (p. 1). Sansi also makes minor references to the industrial, European-centered city of São Paulo, a leading center of modern art in Brazil since 1922 (p. 125).

One of Sansi's central arguments is that Afro-Brazilian arts and religions are objectified, historical constructions, jointly negotiated by "cultural elites" comprising foreign and Bahian artists, writers, and intellectuals as well as priests and priestesses of Candomblé "court societies" (pp. 4-5, 2, 188). Sansi defines "objectification" as "processes in which things, persons and places are recognised as bearers of specific and different forms of value or quality … always accompanied by its complementary term: appropriation, or the process by which strange things are recognised as familiar, as parts of the self" (p. 4). Key questions Sansi poses and attempts to answer are how Afro-Brazilian arts and cultures become objectified and how some concealed values and practices become public. One answer is through the processes of what Sansi terms an "Atlantic modernity" occurring globally after World Wars I and II, in "mongrel Manhattan" in the United States, in Europe, and in Brazil where indigenous and African influences infused diverse streams of creativity to generate new products (pp. 4, 9-10, 90, 125-134, 147, 155).

Consistent with his disquieting title *Fetishes and Monuments* and his equally worrisome overuse of the term "sorcery," Sansi devotes an entire chapter to an examination of the processes by which Candomblé arts morphed from criminal/forensic evidence, i.e., "fetishes," to crown jewels in museums, i.e., "monuments" (pp. 83-107). He suggests that Candomblé's shift from secrecy to increasing public recognition is the result of Afro-Brazilian congresses, Orixá Tradition World Conferences, continued scholarly attention, and changes in legal status (pp. 68-74, 114-115, 158). Finally, he indicates that the mutual experiences of cultural appropriation by intellectuals and Candomblé followers (foreigners, Brazilians, and Afro-Brazilians) wherein priests become intellectuals, while artists, musicians, politicians, art historians, and anthropologists become worshippers/Candomblé leaders, as well as the controversies surrounding Orixá art in the Dique de Tororo and other public spaces, have contributed toward unveiling African/Afro-Brazilian Candomblés and their sacred arts (pp. 2, 116, 146, 155, 160-161, 165-183, 189).

Sansi's exploration of the nature and definition of Afro-Brazilian art is both a valuable and rich critical inquiry. He raises the question of how Afro-Brazilian art is defined: Is it art produced by Black Brazilians or is it art produced by anyone using Afro-Brazilian references, symbols, or styles? Does it deal with "race" or "culture"? (p. 153). He contends that " 'race' and 'culture' " dialogically absorb each other, noting that "within the space of Afro-Brazilian art there is a hierarchy constituted not by degrees of colour but by degrees

of culture: whoever is closer to the hierarchical centre of Afro-Brazilian culture–Candomblé–is represented as more of an 'Afro-Brazilian' artist" (p. 153). Sansi bases his extremely interesting answers to the questions above on Mariano da Cunha's encyclopedia entry on Afro-Brazilian art in *Historia Geral da Arte do Brasil* (1983). Cunha developed a hierarchical classification scheme of Afro-Brazilianity from a center to the periphery, based on artistic themes, techniques, materials, degrees of participation in Afro-Brazilian culture or Candomblé, and working methods. While artists, such as Tarsila Amaral, Carybé, Rubem Valentim, Emanuel Araujo, Eneida Sanches, Yeda Maria, Agnaldo dos Santos, and Mario Cravo Junior, would occupy varying degrees away from the core, "the 'paradigmatic' case [of the center] is Mestre Didi" (pp. 150-155).

Didi (Deoscredes dos Santos) is the son of the late Mãe Senhora (Eugenia Dos Santos), former leader of the Ilê Axê Opô Afonjá Candomblé in the São Gonçalo neighborhood in Salvador. He is initiated in the Candomblés for the Orixás (Yorùbá-sourced deities) and for the Eguns (ancestors). He now heads his own Candomblé Egun in Salvador. Didi frequented the CEAO (the Center for Afro-Oriental Studies at the Federal University of Bahia) where he learned the Yorùbá language. He became an author and published before he met and married Juana Elbein dos Santos (an Argentine anthropologist). For example, in 1946, Didi published a Yoruba dictionary, and "in 1961, he published *Black Tales of Bahia (Contos negros da Bahia)*, with a preface by Jorge Amado and illustrations by Carybe" (p. 57). Didi is also an artist whose work is based on the symbols of the Orixás Nana and Omulu/Soponna, and is never sold, according to Sansi. Though he took part in the 1989 Magiciens de la Terre display on "non-western artists" at the Parisian Pompidou Centre, Didi is not represented by a gallery as are many artists who are as internationally acclaimed as Didi is. His work is only shown in Afro-Brazilian exhibits worldwide, usually curated by his wife or himself. The duo established the Society for the Study of Black Culture in Brazil (also known as SECNEB) that organizes conferences and theoretical publications (pp. 71, 117, 146-150).

Sansi's field case study of Madelena is an important study of an initiate who can be thought of as representing the "every day" Afro-Brazilian woman/man who has not remained a member of what Sansi characterizes as the "aristocratic" or elite Ketu Candomblés (pp. 23-46). Madelena's life exemplifies an atypical negotiation of contested values assigned to orthodox initiation procedures in Ketu Candomblés, as opposed to unstructured manifestations of the "gift" of mediumship (available to anyone). Madelena primarily incorporates Caboclo Oxossi (spirit of the Brazilian Amerindian indigenes but named for the Yorùbá Orixá of the hunt/forests) who came to her before she was initiated into Ketu Candomblé. Sansi, Madelena, and her neighbors conclude that her legitimacy as a Candomblé leader need not be based on the official discourse of initiation. More of Sansi's own field photographs, more in-depth presentation of his field interviews, and more inclusion of Madelena's personal definitions of *axe* (sacred natural, ritual, and personal energy/power) and other Candomblé terminology/rituals/beliefs would have greatly solidified this study. There is too great a reliance on published material from the "canonical" Candomblés or sources on Santeria (pp. 26-27, 43-46, 65-81).

Sansi's *Fetishes and Monuments* is an abundantly detailed work that will be valuable to anthropologists and art historians, as well as Latin Americanist, Africanist, and Diaspora scholars interested in Brazil and the imbrications of sacred, popular, and modern arts and museum practices. While it may not be suitable for undergraduates except for those who are advanced, this text would be a welcome addition for graduate seminars.

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