Africa in the Surrealist Imaginary: Photography of Sculpture in *Minotaure* and *Documents*

Author Bio:

Lauren Walden is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Contemporary Chinese Art at Birmingham City University. Her PhD explored the global expanse of Surrealist photography in Africa, Oceania, Latin America and China. In 2019, she held a Visiting Research Fellowship at the Henry Moore Foundation in Leeds investigating Surrealist photography of African sculpture which this article is based on.

Email: lauren.walden@bcu.ac.uk

Keywords: Surrealism; African Art; Photography; Sculpture; Reproduction; Anti-Colonialism

Abstract

Surrealist journals *Documents* (1929-30) and *Minotaure* (1933-39) sought to overturn the euro-centric hegemony of art history, especially the notion that Greece formed the original cradle of civilisation. Due to close-knit linkages with anthropologists in these periodicals, the Surrealist's understanding of indigenous art was far from superficial nor was it limited to mere aesthetic borrowings as presented in William Rubin's controversial *Primitivism* exhibition (1984). The diverse range of African sculptures in both journals testify to a much wider influence upon Surrealist thought, often aligned with uneasy but core concepts of universality, freedom of the spirit, the occult, automatism and non-national limits. As such, the original use-value of sculptures within their indigenous African cultures will be interrogated beyond purely aesthetic concerns, rearticulated through the prism of core Surrealist ideas to delineate both genuine resonances and intentional deviations. Although the Surrealists attempted to attenuate the colonial legacy of art history, the movement seems to reside in a state of exception apropos the provenance of sculpture featured in their periodicals and personal collections. Indeed, *Minotaure* publishes Marcel Griaule's *Mission Dakar-Djibouti* and its treasure-trove of looted African wares that would become the property of France. Ultimately, photomechanical reproduction of these

sculptures did not satiate the colonial powers' lustfulness for possession, nor that of avant-garde collectors. The original, 'auratic' object still reigned supreme, creating a troubled complicity between Surrealism and the ideology of Colonialism they vehemently protested against.

Overview

Surrealist journals *Documents* and *Minotaure* sought to reify a universal conception of artistic endeavour through the commingling of World Cultures with modern Euro-American works. In the preface written by the editorial group at *Minotaure* [i], (1933:1: 1: tr) it is stated that: 'Our intention is for each edition of *Minotaure* to assume the form of a homogenous publication, wholly committed to embracing all the scientific and predominant issues of today, being firmly situated in the here and now'. In a similar vein, Georges Bataille conceived a universalising role for the museum affirming that: 'The Museum is where man can finally contemplate himself in all his different guises.' (Documents: 1930:300:tr). Notably, both journals intended to dispel the alterity of the so-called 'Dark Continent' through exposure to and contextualisation of its culture and rituals as opposed to James Clifford's oft-cited characterisation of Surrealist ethnography as an 'irruption of otherness' (Clifford:1981:562). Yet, the Surrealists reside in a state of exception apropos the provenance of sculpture, despite mounting an anti-colonial exhibition in 1931. Photographic reports from anthropologist Marcel Griaule's Mission Dakar-Djibouti were published in *Minotaure* and its treasure-trove of looted wares would become the property of France. Archival research from the former Trocadéro will reveal the extent to which Surrealist editors of both *Minotaure* and *Documents* were subservient to the curators of this ethnographic museum and others, particularly in terms of securing photographic reproductions of sculpture and deciding on the subject matter of articles.

Across both journals, a total of twenty-one articles consider African sculpture[ii] from modern-day Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali, Angola, Benin, the Ivory Coast and the Republic/ Democratic Republic of Congo, many having not been previously analysed. Whilst André Breton famously stated that, for him, Oceanic sculpture took more anatomical liberties than African sculpture, too rooted in the human form, African sculpture nevertheless comprises the dominant non-western iconography[iii] of both *Documents* and *Minotaure* and clearly held sway with other pivotal anthropological and Surrealist actors, notably, Marcel Griaule, leader of the Mission Dakar-Djibouti and Michel Leiris, the expedition's archivist and general secretary.

Because of their close-knit linkages with anthropologists, the Surrealists understanding of indigenous art was far from superficial, superseding mere aesthetic borrowings as posited by Rubin in his controversial *Primitivism* exhibition (1984)[iv]. Indeed, Rubin (1984:1) famously stated that: 'The ethnologists primary concern-the specific function and significance of each of these objects-is irrelevant to my topic, except insofar as these facts might have been known to the modern artists in question.' Conversely, African sculpture in *Documents* and *Minotaure* fascinated the Surrealists in terms of its anthropological, spiritual *and* aesthetic attributes. Whilst there has been a substantial, well-documented backlash against Rubin's exhibition, there remains a paucity of literature linking the originally intended symbolism[v] and use-value of individual African sculptures to Surrealist thought [vi].

The contentious 2003 auction of André Breton's art collection and archival materials reveals he owned several core ethnographic works[vii] dedicated to African sculpture such as Carl Einstein's foundational *Negerplastik* (1915) and *L'Art du Congo Belge* (1921) by H. Clouzot

and A. Level (Breton: 2003:44). That said, the fallibility of anthropologists themselves during the 1930s, particularly erroneous tendencies to mystify the use-value of objects which often assumed quite prosaic roles according to current scholars, could be said to play into Surrealism's propensity towards exoticism, and, of course, that of the European Art market at the time.

Documents* and *Minotaure

Despite a mutual emphasis on African sculpture in *Documents* and *Minotaure*, scholars have previously tended to focus on the division between respective journal editors André Breton and Georges Bataille, the former postulating an 'idealistic' version of Surrealism and the latter arguing for a 'base materialist' perspective (Ades: 2006:11). This is not a conception I wish to challenge. Indeed, Breton mercilessly takes aim at Bataille's 'matéralisme anti-dialectique' [anti-dialectic materialism] and his magazine *Documents* in the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* (1929) (Breton: 1988:1:825). However, there are substantive grounds to argue that *Minotaure* (1933-1939), under the editorship of André Breton, and *Documents* (1929-1930), edited by George Bataille, promote a similar stance on global art history, each propounding a highly universalist worldview.

In particular, many writers associated with the development of the ethnographic Trocadéro museum published in both journals. Moreover, archival holdings show that museum director, Georges Henri-Rivière, corresponded frequently with both Albert Skira, publisher of *Minotaure*, and Georges Bataille, general secretary of *Documents*. In the case of *Documents*, the journal was funded by Georges Wildenstein who, 'was closely aligned with the museum, being elected to the Conseil d'Administration de la société des Amis du musée

d'Ethnographie de Trocadéro' (Tythacott:2003:240). Indeed, the time lag between the publication of *Documents* and *Minotaure* coincides with Mission Dakar-Djibouti (1931-1933) which ostensibly caused the dissolution of *Documents*. The second edition of *Minotaure* is dedicated to the Mission Dakar-Djibouti, dominated by Trocadéro-based writers alongside the work of Surrealist ethnographer Michel Leiris who had previously published in *Documents* on several occasions, including an article highlighting the forthcoming Dakar-Djibouti mission. Michel Leiris also published an article pertaining to the mission in the very first edition of *Minotaure*. As such, the ethnographic museum, was certainly a pivotal powerbroker behind the content of both journals, in spite of their broad remit commingling both Euro-American and non-Western art.

A press cutting from the former Trocadéro archives (now part of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle) reveals that the Mission catalysed a resurgence in colonial pride with reporter Clovis Arel writing for *L'Homme Libre* on the 13th of October 1931: 'The Griaule mission will begin its immense voyage from Dakar to Djibouti (…) It's the colonial idea itself that will breathe new life' (MHN: 2 AM 1 B9:tr). Whether or not Griaule wished to reinvigorate the colonial ideal seems debatable. Despite attempts of magazines such as *Documents* and *Minotaure*, non-Western art remained widely viewed as culturally subordinate. However, this is something Griaule tried desperately to overturn. Indeed, in an interview with the journal *Beaux Arts* on the 1 February 1931, before the mission departure, Griaule comments:

A spirit of relativism is the moral lesson that ethnography teaches us, instead of mistrusting black people or being mystified by them, we could form a new mindset,

we need to understand they are just people like us, with customs similar to our own (MHN:2 AM 1 B9:tr)

Griaule's appeal to relativism must be considered amidst the wave of 'negrophilia' that swept the Parisian cityscape during the 20s and 30s. Petrine Archer (2010:30) affirms that 'the avant-gardes admiration and borrowing of black forms, which they called *les fétiches*, satisfied their need for a sense of the magical and spiritual that had been lost in their increasingly materialistic and mechanised society.' It didn't follow however, that accurate, academically-sound portrayals of Black culture and history would spread throughout the Parisian cityscape. On the contrary, what Kobena Mercer (2010:46) terms 'the symbolic economy of modernity' allowed for many racial conflations and stereotypes to proliferate such as Josephine Baker's gyrations in a banana skirt or the very first black fashion model to appear in a prominent fashion magazine, Adrienne Fidelin, being portrayed as Congolese royalty in *Harper's Bazaar* despite her Guadeloupian origins[viii]. Negrophilia also found its expression in multi-million attendances at the Parisian *Exposition Coloniale* of 1931 where human zoos[ix] , displayed indigenous African peoples' in a fabricated 'natural habitat', visited for the purposes of entertainment rather cultural understanding.

Despite this deep-set racist prejudice, archival evidence reveals that the special issue of *Minotaure* dedicated to the Mission Dakar-Djibouti sold very well, particularly granted its status as an 'avant-garde' publication. In a letter sent by the head of the Trocadéro, Georges Henri-Rivière, to Albert Skira on the 25th April 1933, he agrees to editorial conditions of 90 pages, 4000 copies, a sale price of 25 francs and a discount of 40% for members of the Friends of the Trocadéro Society. Interestingly, Rivière also notes: 'We will send you all the

articles and take care of all editorial matters' (MHN: 2 AM 1 K88a:tr). In short, this special edition of *Minotaure* is entirely run by staff of the Trocadéro museum; Skira's journal a mere conduit to help them disseminate their research findings worldwide.

Granted the Surrealists' enduring relationship with the Trocadéro for artistic inspiration and the presence of Michel Leiris as a Dakar-Djibouti expedition member, no protest appears to have been made against the Trocadéro's editorial hegemony. On the 6th October 1933, Thérèse Rivière (wife of Georges Henri Rivière) states to Skira that 82 copies of *Minotaure* have been sold at the Trocadéro and asks for commission. Moreover, Skira's global publishing organisation allows copies of the special edition of *Minotaure* to be sent to several important cultural organisations and figures. For example, eight copies are sent to Josephine Baker, one copy is sent to a French doctor in Djibouti, five copies are sent to the British Museum, two to the Peabody Museum at Harvard University and four to the National Museum of Mexico. (MHN: 2 AM 1 K88a). Complimentary copies are sent to (amongst others) the Smithsonian, the Chicago Field Museum and the New York Museum for National History. Hence, the rapport between Surrealism and Ethnography develops a worldwide appreciation (albeit an erudite and specialised one) through careful alliances with publishers, official institutions and celebrities.

Press reports reveal that the Mission received 700,000 francs of aid from the French government. Moreover, archival evidence uncovers copious private funders. Notably, African art dealer Charles Ratton (whose Gallery would host the *Exposition d'Objets Surréalistes* in 1936[x]) is asked by museum director Georges Henri Rivière to give a donation of 1,000 francs to the Griaule Mission (MHN: 2AM 1 K81d). Clearly, these large levels of expenditure, on both a personal and institutional level, were directed towards the

potentiality of possession in a colonial context. Ratton could build greater relationships with those in ethnography circles who were responsible for 'procuring' the items, whilst French government could undertake a symbolic affirmation of colonial prowess in material form. Tythacott (2003:96) aptly states, the 'Surrealists were fervently anti-colonial and anti-capitalistic, intrinsically opposed to the plundering of indigenous cultural wealth for the European market. Nevertheless, they amassed as much as they could from the colonial metropolis.' Whilst the Surrealists certainly interpreted African art in a cosmopolitan manner, their methods of provenance cannot be seen as commensurate with an anti-colonial ideology.

Bearing in mind these countervailing forces of possession, art market and exoticism, **this paper asks what elements of Surrealist thought actually resonate with the original use-value of African sculpture?** First, I interrogate a tension between universalism and otherness in Surrealist thought vis-a-vis the complex sculptural phenomenon of the mask in both magazines. Next, articles featuring African sculptures used in dance rituals are configured in relation to the surrealist concept of automatism and the frictions that exist between this European term and meticulously planned ritual and artistic processes. Subsequently, it is discussed whether objects that were beholden to communication with the beyond, usually ancestral figures, can be aligned with the surrealist imperative for 'occultation' espoused in their second manifesto of 1929. Then, metaphysical aspects of African sculpture will be extrapolated in relation to the surrealist notion of 'freedom of the spirit.' Finally, the tension between 'pure' African sculpture and hybridised entities testifying to external influence are positioned in relation to the 'non-national borders of surrealism' postulated by André Breton. Commentary on the status of this African art as

photography of sculpture Is made throughout. In particular, Walter Benjamin's (1935) seminal notion of the 'aura' in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' and photography's ability to attenuate the urge to own the 'original' object is somewhat cast into doubt due to the colonial compulsion to collect, categorise and contain.

Masks and Otherness?

The mask is often associated with the idea of a multifarious, 'othered' identity in western thought. Yet, the editorial teams of both *Documents* and *Minotaure* ardently advocated notions of universalism. Consequently, a comparison between Michel Leiris's 'Masques Dogons' [Dogon Masks] in *Minotaure* (1933) and 'Masques Janus du Cross River' [Janus-Faced masks from Cross-River] by Dr. Eckart Von Sydow in *Documents* (1930) is instructive.

Leiris couches Dogon masks as emblematic of male secret societies, generally limited to usage in funeral celebrations. He temporally situates the masks in the here and now instead of invoking any ancient, esoteric tradition commenting: 'the masks reproduced here were being used when the mission procured them' (1933: No.2: 51). Photography proves a vital medium here in capturing autochthonous peoples dancing with the masks mid-movement, emphasising the contemporaneous nature of the ritual. The masks in this particular photograph (FIGURE 1) are known as *Kanaga* and predominantly worn during a *dama*, 'the name of a rite that marks the end of the period of mourning' (Richards:2006:96), 'wherein the dead have to become ancestor's' (Van Beek: 2018: 10). Hence, the movement of *kanaga* serves to embody a liminal state between life and death.

Figure 1 : Anon. (1933) *Masques Kanaga Dansant sur la Place Publique de Sanga* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Minotaure* Volume 2 p.50 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

By capturing movement, the *kanaga* is placed in its original context instead of being extrapolated as a purely aesthetic artwork. This movement has a more practical use-value to the Dogon. Van Beek (2018:4) notes that men wearing *kanaga* 'bend over and swing the horns of their headpieces over the ground, stirring up dust… they can prove themselves real *sagatara* or strong men.' The photograph in *Minotaure* of the *kanaga* in use during a celebration is a far more dynamic portrayal than those subsequently pillaged to languish in the Trocadero, as Van Beek laments (2018:10): 'a headpiece in a museum may look good, but it is not a real mask—for two reasons; the first is the lack of costume, and the second is the fact that it just hangs on its spot without any movement.' This says a lot about the status of ethnographic photography during the colonial era; whilst it provided insight into the original use value of the object, decontextualized possession of the original artwork was much more revered, meaning was then free to be interpreted by interested parties to their own ends[xi].

Whilst the vast majority of masks were held under the auspices of male secret societies, Dogon customs made it possible for females to partake in ceremonial masquerades under specific circumstances. Leiris describes how any female who came into contact with a male dancer would become possessed. After several ceremonial offerings and rites to expunge demons, the women would hence become a 'sister of the masks.' To accompany this description, is an overtly sexual image of a *Masque Jeune Fille* (FIGURE 2). The photograph, however factual, imbues these masks with what Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* would term 'punctum' (2012:27), a sort of stinging sensation that attracts the viewers gaze, here

due to the dreamlike sense of otherness superimposed upon *the masque jeune fille* in its photographic incarnation, aligned with sexuality and desire. Leiris somewhat bypasses the fact that this mask is worn at a funeral. It should also be noted that the classically staid nature of ethnographic photography may have been inflected with knowledge of avant-garde photographical techniques, the rapport between the Surrealists and Anthropologists was not a one-way street of influence.

Figure 2. Anon. (1933) *Masque Jeune Fille* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Minotaure* Vol.2 p.51 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 3. Anon. (1933) *Les Masques Usées, abandonnées sur une roche* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Minotaure* Vol.2 p.51 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

The final photo of Masques Dogons is entitled 'les masques usagés' [Worn-out masks] (1933: No.2: 51:tr) and the revelation that 'they were discovered in a rocky mountain range where the village inhabitants had discarded the masks and accessories after having converted to Islam' (51) (FIGURE 3). Whilst Leiris endeavours to adopt a neutral tone, the word, 'disgarded' is telling. Yet, it is Leiris's who confers an artistic status upon these objects. Indeed, Tythacott (2003:64) notes: 'Dogon Masks from Mali were not necessarily meant to be seen. They were kept in sacred graves or caves sanctuaries outside villages.' Regarding the villagers' conversion to Islam referred to by Leiris, no moral judgement is explicitly made here but the uniformity of a world religion is seen to have destroyed the cultural idiosyncrasies of a minority ethnic group. The photograph graphically depicts the masks languishing as detritus which conveniently serves as a colonialist apologia for their subsequent pillaging thereof, safeguarding them from ephemerality under the auspices of 'heritage'.

Indeed, Leiris' journal written during the Mission Dakar-Djibouti, *L'Afrique Fantôme,* provides a useful counterpoint to his *Minotaure* article, discussing with frankness his colonial hypocrisy in attempting to procure Dogon masks. Leiris states:

> We bought some very beautiful masks from the Ireli dancers. Ritually speaking, these cannot be sold so we resorted to an act of subterfuge to satisfy both parties: it was understood we shall requisition them, it was also understood that since the Ireli dancers are good friends, we will give them each a monetary gift, but of course this transaction should not be confused with an act of commerce. Their responsibility waived, the dancers appeared content (Leiris:2011:151:tr)

By articulating the purchase of the object through the appropriation of Dogon culture, as a sort of mutual gift-giving, Leiris, appears not to show any remorse for his manipulation of cultural mores to his own advantage. Such an action is, of course, tinged with a profound irony: Leiris feigns assimilation into Dogon culture in order to acquire an object replete with otherness to Western eyes[xii].

The article 'Masques Janus du Cross River' (1930) in *Documents*, dramatically overturns the hegemony of Europe as a world centre for artistic production in the first sentence. Von Sydow praises 'West African civilisation which comprises the most fecund centres of artistic production' (Documents:1930:321:tr). The iconographical focus is upon 'Janus Masks' (FIGURE 4) which bear two heads 'diamétralement opposées' [diametrically opposed] (322). The form alone provides commentary on the intrinsic multiplicity of identity common to all mankind. We must equally note that the appellation 'Janus masks' is very much rooted in a

European perception of African culture. Further to this, commentary on the masks' colour scheme is equally elucidatory. The masks usually contain oppositional colours on either side such as black or white. (Documents: 1930: 323). Consequently, we can deduce that the masks are not exclusively carved in the indigenous people's own image but assimilate different reifications of the human form. Moreover, Von Sydow even goes so far as to state some of the masks display 'Caucasian traits' [traits Caucasians] (324). Indeed, the mask is not a product of a homogenous culture but of a heterogeneous one, colonial infiltrations into indigenous culture being an obvious cause. However, whilst, it is highly plausible that masks could depict the traits of the coloniser, Von Sydow postulates cultural exchange with the Greeks as a source for the unique appearance of these dichotomised masks. This is perhaps redolent of the preposterous "African Atlantis" theory proposed by fellow German anthropologist Leo Frobenius who believed that works by Yoruba peoples were simply too ornate to be crafted by locals and were instead remnants of the lost city of Atlantis[xiii].

Notwithstanding, Von Sydow does overturn the reference point of Hellenic art as that of original beauty. He comments the Janus masks 'present characteristics assuredly more beautiful and more expressive than any old Hellenic work' (Documents: 1930:326:tr). Henceforth, the mask is divided by Von Sydow into two categories: the 'sublime' and the 'démonique', which provides fertile ground for an ontological exploration, representing the two poles of the human being. Examples of the sublime comprise, 'a superhuman being in a state of profound meditation' (326:tr) whilst démonique masks attest to 'an air of strength and ferocity' (326:tr). This reflects the intrinsic nature of man and the different guises he can adopt. Furthermore, this binary transcends different cultures and acquires a universally understandable meaning of the self. Indeed, a negative and positive rendering of the self co-

exists within African art, comparable to Modernisms' ontological complexity and is hence included in a magazine alongside Euro-American avant-garde artworks as an equal rather than an 'other'.

Figure 4. Dr. Eckhart Von Sydow (1930) *Janus Mask* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Documents* 1930 vol. 6 p. 322 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

"Janus masks" do not only appear in Von Sydow's article published in the sixth issue of *Documents* in 1930. One year earlier in 1929, Carl Einstein writes a short article entitled 'Masque de danse rituelle Ekoi' to accompany a full-page reproduction of this sculpture acquired by the British Museum in 1911 (FIGURE 5). Einstein (Documents: 1929:7:396:tr) proposes: 'The masks often reproduce a Janus head representing the 'sky father'. The other half represents the head of a young man. These Juju heads are often covered by monkey or antelope skin. It would appear that 'Janus heads' are utilised by the Ekoi people to eschew any contradictions between the spiritual and terrestrial spheres of existence, or as Einstein puts it, 'the representation of a soul in a defined space'. Interestingly, the photographic reproduction in *Documents* only illustrates the young man rather than the sky father figure. By omitting the other half of the Ekoi mask that Einstein describes, this naturally serves to augment the sense of mystery surrounding the artwork, subverting ethnographic photography's impetus to convey the whole.

Figure 5. Maurice Beck (1929) *Masque Ekoi British Museum* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Documents* 1929 Vol. 7 p.400 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Einstein also writes on the Congolese *Pende* [xiv] mask acquired by the British Museum (FIGURE 6). Bidault (2013:9:tr) notes: 'The full-page reproduction of the *Bapindi* mask is positioned opposite an article on Cézanne' affirming that, 'it provides a representative example of the intertwining of diverse subjects and images in *Documents* that wilfully mix

popular modern imagery, renaissance Italian painting and non-Western objects.' This begs the question, does the juxtaposition of the *Pende* mask with a master of European Modernist painting, seek to engender a sense of a cosmopolitan Paris, accustomed to a multiplicity of artistic styles which can all benefit from the status of fine art, or alternatively, is this another example of what James Clifford (1981:563) termed a 'collage' display technique to merely engender a sense of otherness?

To focus solely on the visual display of the *Pende* mask in isolation from the accompanying text by Einstein would negate its original use-value. Einstein notes (Documents: 1930:1:48:tr): 'It seems that the wearer of the mask represents his ancestor, because the boy, after his circumcision, changes his name and adopts that of his ancestor'. Einstein's choice of both the *Ekoi* and *Pende* masks, both embodying ancestral spirits, resolutely positions African art in the metaphysical realm which reconciles the deceased and the living, unlike the separation that occurs between the two realms in Abrahamic religions. However, the very fact of commingling African works with European counterparts does in fact gesture towards a degree of universality, a common impetus of creativity, perhaps later embodied in the name change of the Trocadéro to the 'Museum of Man' in 1937. Louise Tythacott (2003:102) notes the change in title served 'to evoke the Universalist, democratic and egalitarian humanism (…) a potent political ideal in the context of accelerating racism in Europe.' As Sophie Leclercq (2010:30:tr) aptly comments, such an institutional remit 'taps into the cherished Surrealist belief in place together objects that are a priori so different that they cease to be perceived as contradiction.' Indeed, in the Second Manifesto of Surrealism, André Breton proclaims:

> Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low cease to be perceived as contradictions. (Breton: 1988:1:781:tr)

Conversely, in his seminal contribution ‘On Surrealist Ethnography’, Clifford (1981:563) states: ‘The Surrealist moment in ethnography is that moment in which the possibility of comparison exists in unmediated tension with sheer incongruity’. Michael Richardson (1993: 62) has since retorted: ‘Far from wishing to fragment reality, the essence of surrealism has always been to establish the ground for a greater harmony and its ultimate unity.’ The photographs of African masks in *Documents* and *Minotaure* on the one hand, do embody a resolute opposition to European cultural norms but ultimately convey the universal malleability of human identity across race, culture and religion.

Figure 6. Maurice Beck (1930) *Masque Bapindi British Museum* (Photography of Sculpture in *Documents* 1930 Vol.1 p.54.

Dance, Sculpture, Automatism

According to Palmer (2016):

As an embodied art form, dance is also connected to the surrealist idea of ‘automatism’ or involuntary actions operating beyond the realm of conscious control such as a heartbeat or behaviours produced by intoxicants or mental illness

This is certainly true of Surrealist dance considered in a Western context, Hélène Vanel’s *L’Acte Manqué* a spontaneous, hysterical intervention at the 1938 surrealist exhibition vernissage designed to reflect the rising power of the Fascists, Europe once again on the cusp of war. However, the majority of dances highlighted by *Documents* and *Minotaure* are performed with masks as ritual. The very definition of a ritual as ‘the prescribed form or

order of religious or ceremonial rites' (OED:2019), appears at odds with the Surrealist's movements defining concept of 'psychic automatism' in the first manifesto of 1924. Why then did the magazines *Minotaure* and *Documents* focus so intently upon African dance and its sculpted regalia if it did not align with, arguably, their most core principle?

The surrealist connection between dance and automatism in an African context can perhaps be attributed to the prevailing social context of *negrophilia* in which both Georges Henri Rivière and the ethnomusicologist André Schaeffner linked African dance rituals to jazz in another example of racial conflation (Levitz: 2006:608-609). The article 'Danses Funéraires Dogon' written by Leiris recounts the Dogon dance of the *sirige* at the memorial service of a deceased man (FIGURE 7). The *sirige* was a mask supporting an extremely tall mast which Leiris describes in *L'Afrique Fantôme* as over 7 metres long. Dieterlen (1988:35) notes 'The *sirige* mask represents the stars in great number, implying infinite multiplication and suggesting a series of galaxies and their movements in space'. According to Leiris' description it is clear that the dance and surrounding rituals follow at set format and the *sirige* dance is clearly planned. The participants then congregate at the house of the deceased. Subsequently, the mother of the deceased also joins in the dancing. Dancing then configures around a ceremonial stone where the alcoholic *dolo* beverage is drank, accompanied by rapacious drumming. Older men sit around a circle demarcated by animal bones. Leiris (1933:1:75) does however, segue into the emotive realm describing, 'old-timers who are agitating, exhorting those who shout dance and sing. In moments of paroxysm, long tirades in secret languages commence, the chiefs shake their bells and words are exchanged.' Leiris's evocation of a paroxysm implies a sudden action without

forethought, akin to surrealist notions of automatism which does not appear to correctly describe this meticulously planned ritualistic practice.

Figure 7. Anon (1933) *Danse du Sirigué* (Photograph of Sculpture) in *Minotaure* (1933) Issue 1 p.75

Automatism has been conspicuously aligned with the craze for 'primitive' art by numerous commentators, including Katherine Conley (2003:133) who couched Brassai's *Sculptures Involontaires*, made from banal everyday items such as rolled up newspaper and published in the third volume of *Minotaure,* as beholden to commonalities with African art. Conley makes the following analogy:

'Surrealist objects resemble the tribal masks brought back by ethnographers from Africa and Oceania and placed in museums […] At the height of the religious ceremony, therefore, these objects became double, embodying and representing a force other than themselves in a manner parallel to the way the surrealist experienced the dawning awareness, through automatism (often practiced in a group), of the functioning of the unconscious mind, as though it were a separate and mysterious part of the self .'

Yet Conley does not refer to the arduous process of creation that goes into making these masks in comparison to involuntary sculptures. This assumes that non-Western art is produced by dint of 'involuntary' actions which surely undermines the consummate artistry of indigenous African sculptors, moreover it assumes that religious ceremonies are not planned and scripted events. Whilst I view the *Sculptures Involontaires* as a ludic take on equating Surrealist sculpture with high art, Conely (2003:132) aligns them with a facet of African Art that contains 'a perceived sacred presence within the object capable of

marshalling “latent forces” and communicating with the viewer.’ In my opinion, this imbues the ‘sculptures involontaires’ with a metaphysical purpose they are not intended to serve, Dali’s captions such as ‘symmetrically rolled-up bus ticket’, ’a rare form of morphological automatism with evident signs of stereotyping’ (Minotaure:1933:3:68:tr), appear, rather, to parody the lofty prose of fine art critics.

Notwithstanding, Georges Henri-Rivière, director of the Trocadéro certainly wished to frame Dogon dance as automaton for his own commercial gain during the *Exposition Colonial* of 1931 in Paris. Members of the Dogon ethnic group were invited to perform at a dance gala as part of the colonial exhibition. Levitz (2006:607) notes that, despite the concurrent anti-colonial exhibition protest organised by Surrealists Louis Aragon and André Thirion, Rivière had invited Georges Bataille, Picasso, and Robert Desnos amongst others who all had associations with the Surrealist movement. The stage was intended to represent the grand ‘mud mosque’ of Djenné in Mali. The performers names were anonymised, none mentioned by name in the program. André Schaeffner, the self-proclaimed ethnomusicologist of the Dakar-Djibouti mission, described the dances as ‘a state of effervescence’ that ‘takes possession of people who abandon themselves to it’ (Levitz:2006:613). Sometimes different ethnic groups were not paired up with the correct drums needed for their performance, adding to the lack of authenticity of a ritual village dance being performed on a European stage. Indeed, the program entitled the Dogon’s performance simply as ‘the dance of animals’, referring to the anthropomorphic masks the dancers wore rather than refer to the true purpose of the dance ritual as a celebration of the deceased. It is somewhat difficult to imagine the automatic abandonment of Dogon dancers in such a contrived, staged setting.

In contrast to the Dogon funeral dance, the Makishi dance explicated in *Documents*, was performed by the Mabunda people of present-day Angola to represent the death of the child and the birth of an adult following circumcision (FIGURE 8). Leenhardt (Documents: 1930:8:492:tr). describes the protagonist in the centre of the photo brandishing a wearable sculpture that 'must represent the outer walls of a hut-dwelling'. From here, a small child is to appear. Each of the surrounding dancers represents a different stage in life. Interestingly, the author Maurice Leenhardt refers to the practice as a tradition that is dying. He states that the practice was however studied by a missionary named Ellenberger whilst Leenhardt was himself a missionary in the French territory of New Caledonia. Leenhardt's tone is somewhat revealing of a latent attitude of European cultural superiority and 'progress' stating 'the documents collated today which evoke these curious initiation schools will constitute in a hundred- and fifty-years' time the most surprising pages of the history books for future generations of black peoples' (Documents: 1930:8:492:tr). In other words, with the advent of colonialism and westernisation, future generations of Africans should look back on and feel alienated from their 'primitive' past. The preservation of African art in European museums was not just a source of inspiration for avant-garde artists, but equally framed as a justification for the colonial endeavour itself and the 'emancipation' of Africans from their 'primitive' past, something that certain writers in *Documents* seem to support. African traditions were to be musealised rather than practiced.

Figure 8. Boileux (1930) *La Danse Makishi* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Documents* 1930 Vol. 8 p.494 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

African Sculpture and the 'Veritable Occultation of Surrealism'.

In the second surrealist manifesto of 1929 André Breton espouses 'the profound, veritable, occultation of Surrealism'. Tessel Bauduin (2014:121), an expert on Surrealism and the Occult, has recognised the role that non-Western art has played in the incessant Surrealist attraction to mystical and magical phenomena that undermined European enlightenment appeals to rationality and logic:

Across the board, surrealists, anthropologists and psychoanalysts shared the idea that the magical worldview was still part of contemporary culture out in the colonies, but had become peripheral and outdated in the West after the triumph of the rational worldview.

In both Surrealist and Anthropological circles, the appeal to the Occult materialises through the highly mutable terminology of the 'fetish'. Pietz (1988:106) reveals that this word was used during the eighteenth century by European anthropologists West Africa to denote: 'the worship of haphazardly chosen material objects believed to be endowed with purpose, intention and a direct power over the material life of both human beings and the natural world. This conception implied a type of materialistic cult incommensurable with traditional Christian categories.' Surrealist use of the term fetish was more complex and unreservedly positive in orientation unlike the pejorative uses of the term in colonial anthropology circles. Indeed, Pietz notes its much wider application within Surrealist thought, commenting: 'the surrealistic object was often constructed to be a material thing that resonated throughout all the registers (ethnographic, Marxist, psychoanalytic, and modernist) of fetish discourse by appearing as a perversely anthropomorphized or sexualized thing.' As such, I would argue that, the Surrealist idea of the fetish freed African Art from the pejorative associations of colonial anthropology, by rendering it a part of other disciplinary discourses, transforming

it into an object of desire, whether monetary (Marxist), erotic (Psychoanalytic) or artistic (Modernism), however distanced from its original use-value the end result was.

In *Documents*, attention is drawn to so-called ‘Benin fetish trees’ sculpted from iron, and known by Yoruba peoples as *osun ematon* (FIGURE 9). The Austrian author Felix Von Luschan (Documents: 1929:4:230) is in awe of the advanced artistry of Beninese or Edo society (present-day Nigeria): ’the inhabitants of High-Guinea, around the 18th century, benefit from a civilisation they should rightly be proud of’. Von Luschan proposes that the works may resemble a family tree: symbols include chameleons, leopards, antelopes, snakes, ibis and men.

More recently, Ben-Amos (1995:74) has identified the *osun ematon* as a staff utilised by an priest stating, ‘The staff gives the specialist the power to escape danger and confront the evil world of witches’ but otherwise gives broadly the same explanation as Von Sydow. Fascination with sculptures such as the *Osun Ematon* was perhaps a precursor to Surrealism’s close alignment with priest-like figures such as Haitian voudou painter Hector Hyppolite who merged Yoruba religious iconography with Christianity, having travelled to Dahomey during World War One. If we view the ‘occult’ as beholden to magical sources but ultimately lacking any form of divinity, then surely African sculptures supersede such a definition.

Figure 9. Anon (1929) *Arbres Fétiches du Benin* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Documents* 1929 Vol. 4 p. 228 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

‘Ritual Dogon objects’, again written by Leiris, includes a *mise-en-abyme* of *Minotaure*’s intention, to procure African sculpture for museum display. The huge Dogon staffs of circa ten metres long entitled ‘mères de masques’ are photographed at the Trocadéro during the

exhibition celebrating the Dakar-Djibouti mission in 1933– decontextualized, these majestic items lose some their grandeur (FIGURE 10). These asymmetrical, elongated staffs, are only used for the special occasion of the s*igi* which occurs circa once every sixty years. As Richards explains (2003:117) the Sigi 'celebrated the replacement of one generation by the next. It commemorated several mythic episodes including the first death amongst mankind and the resulting appearance of speech, and served to atone for the actions of mankind that resulted in mortality, the word *sigi* meaning pardon.' Richards (2003:118) notes 'ranging from five to twelve metres in height, this ritual object resembles a *sirige* but was never worn.' Thus, the *sigi* ritual and the use of *imina na (*mères de masques) was profound rarity that the majority of Dogon would only experience once in their lives, neither Leiris or Griaule ever witnessed this celebration, although they were granted access to sculptures used during it and indeed took them back to Paris.

Figure 10. Anon. (1933) *Les mères de masques dogon au musée d'ethnographie* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Minotaure* Vol.2 p.26 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

There is, in Michel Leiris' narrative, a conflation throughout between occult magical practice and the religious domain. Indeed, Leiris (Minotaure:1933:2:26:tr) categories the objects somewhat uncommittedly as being 'of magical or religious proportions'. Aesthetically speaking, the accompanying photographs in *Minotaure* tend to align the Dogon objects to the occulted realm, emphasising the ritual purposes they serve. Notwithstanding, Leiris's written explanation of Dogon rituals alludes to a form of organised worship, ethics and metaphysical beliefs that are commensurate with the scope of world religions. Indeed, if we cross reference this article with 'Dogon Funeral Dances', Leiris comments 'Unparalleled

religiousness, the sacred oozes from all corners.' (Minotaure: 1933:1: 74:tr) Indeed, another statue in the 'Ritual Dogon Objects' article, entitled a *degue,* forms a human with raised arms, serving to 'communicate between heaven and earth' (Minotaure: 1933:2:30:tr), which emphasises the existence of a deity (FIGURE 11). As such, it seems that Leiris is torn between the Bretonian penchant for the 'occult' and the imperative to categorise the Dogon sculptures as religious items, more in keeping with the stance of Georges Bataille who favoured the terms 'sacred' and 'religion' [xv]. Ultimately, the Bretonian occult, which derives from the French term 'occulter' (to hide), aimed to converse an aura of mystique around the meanings behind non-western objects whilst ethnography, and indeed religion, intend to elucidate the meanings behind the metaphysical phenomena these sculptures were beholden to.

Figure 11. Anon. (1933) *Statuette aux bras levés du grand sanctuaire de Yougo* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Minotaure* Vol.2 p.28 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Death Cults and the spirit of surrealism

In André Breton's lecture *Limites Non-Frontières du Surréalisme* [Non-National Boundaries of Surrealism] (1936), he stridently proclaims: 'the future, including Surrealism's status as the only intellectual effort currently focussed on the international realm, can remain committed to the hope of liberating the human spirit' (Breton: V3: 1988:661:tr). This does seem to contradict material forms of religion which ensconce the spirit in sculptural form.

The spectre of death looms large in Michel Leiris' article 'Fragments sur le Dahomey' as we are confronted with images of skull-laden altars and markets from which to buy such

ritualistic wares. In quasi-homage to Georges Bataille, Leiris's narrative in this article (Minotaure:1933:2:57:tr) commingles sex and death as in Bataille's early literary works on Eroticism[xvi]: 'In Savalou, erotic altars neighbour pharmacies and factories'. Indeed, Leiris photographically juxtaposes animal skulls with carved female figures brandishing conical breasts (FIGURE 12). Leiris also alludes to the syncretic nature of Dahomey, drawing attention to the Portuguese colonial and religious influence: 'opposite the cathedral, the temple of snakes' (Minotaure:1933:2:61:tr). The dénouement of this short article consists In Leiris narrating his visit to the king of Porto-Novo, Agbehinto, who willingly guides him through the mortuary of his deceased father where the play-off between death and eroticism, a surrealist trope par excellence, reaches its apotheosis. Drinking beer with the king in the mortuary, Leiris depicts the death-bed of the king's father being flanked by warriors whilst the current king's courtesans dance before them, torso nude.

Figure 12. Anon (1933) *Fragments sur Le Dahomey* (Photograph of sculpture) in *Minotaure* Vol.2 p.57 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Carl Einstein's article on the *Afrique-Océanie* exhibition at the Galerie Pigalle encompasses a staider portrayal of death in African culture. Einstein elaborates an extended passage on the skeleton (Documents: 1930:2:106:tr). He begins by stating 'The African often designates sculpture and cadaver by the same word'. The fixed, unmalleable form of a sculpture is particularly important in terms of enclosing a deceased spirit to prevent it from wandering and disturbing the living or in Einstein's own words, 'the statue is the prison of the deceased' (Documents:1930:2:107:tr). Sculpture also serves as a cathartic way to express the fear of death, or perhaps normalise it. By living surrounded by deceased ancestors, the presence of death gradually becomes a banal facet of life or as Einstein puts it 'The African

considers life through the perspective of death'. Indeed, in *Camera Lucida*, Barthes (1981:32) comments 'photography is a kind of primitive theatre, a kind of tableaux vivant, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead.' By photographing a representation of death, what African peoples perceive as a *memento mori,* is decontextualized and the photograph ensconces the trapped spirit in a further layer of representation.

Foreign Influence upon African Sculpture and the 'Non-National Boundaries of Surrealism'

At the vernissage of the 1936 International Surrealist exhibition held at the New Burlington Galleries in London, André Breton proclaimed the 'Non-National Boundaries' of the Surrealist movement at an exhibition where African and Oceanic works were juxtaposed with Surrealist offerings. He states: 'Under the banner of Surrealism, the aspirations of innovative writers and artists from all countries hope to be unified. This unification, far from being a unification of style, responds to a new common consciousness of life itself' (Breton: V3:1988:661:tr) Indeed, during the 1930s the scope of surrealism would supersede the cosmopolitan metropolis of Paris and find favour with artists all over the world. Notwithstanding, the presence of African and Oceanic art had been a constant source of interest from the very inception of the Surrealist movement in 1924, with an exhibition in the *Galerie Surréaliste* of 1926 entitled 'Tableaux de Man Ray et Objets des Iles' being the first to juxtapose surrealist and non-western art.

The journals *Documents* and *Minotaure* also contribute to the cosmopolitan, borderless mentality of the Surrealist movement. Despite the ethnographic urge towards taxonomy, most of the writers for these two journals recognise that Africa is not a homogenous

continent but rather a centuries old by-product of cultural cross-fertilisation. Indeed, several of the sculptures explicated in both journals demonstrate a cultural and aesthetic hybridity that testify to the presence of multifarious foreign influences upon African art that were often in political interests to convey as pure and untainted by western influence.

A prime example of this would be the mutual focus upon Ethiopian art in *Documents* and *Minotaure* and the presence of Christianity in such imagery. Deborah Lifszyc focusses upon Ethiopian amulets which contain scrolls. Lifszyc, as part of the Mission Dakar-Djibouti, focuses on an embodied artistic tradition still in practice similarly to all the other traditions mentioned. For Lifszyc, the amulet symbolises an individual rapport with God through personalised designs whilst also depicting universal Christian symbols. Lifszyc notes that amulets without illustrations are hard to come by (1933: No2:72). These amulets are worn around the neck on a daily basis, emphasising the commingling of art and the everyday, a fundamental Surrealist precept which Louis Aragon terms 'Le merveilleux quotidien' [The everyday marvellous] in *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926). Furthermore, the Ethiopian amulets are not the exclusive propriety of the Church; they can be used in the service of individual magic and are therefore invite a syncretic element, commingling autochthonous practice with the modernity of a world religion. Indeed, Lifszyc notes of symbolic illustrations (1933: No.2:71) that do not pertain to traditional Christian iconography.

Here *Minotaure* presents us with a stance on the 'exotic' object reminiscent of Homi Bhabha's 'vernacular Cosmopolitanism' which 'joins contradictory notions of local specificity and universal Enlightenment' (Werbner: 2006:496). A photograph representing a typical Abyssinian woman adorned with such amulets accompanies the article (FIGURE 13). Her relaxed disposition and hybrid attire attest to a commingling of European modernity with

indigenous African practices. Furthermore, a full-page photographic reproduction of ‘Figures illustrant des rouleaux magiques Éthiopiennes’ [Figures illustrating magical Ethiopian scrolls] (1933:73) demonstrates the autonomy of the Ethiopian metaphysical. Invocations of angelic beings coexist with more visceral depictions of human souls guided by an intertwined system of universal constellations. Two of the designs are bereft of the human form and elaborate an intricate geometry of interlinking symbols whose value seems purely aesthetic in nature.

Figure 13. Anon (1933) *Femme Abyssine Portant Deux Rouleaux Magiques dans des Étuis de Cuir* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Minotaure* Vol.2 p.71 Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

In *Documents*, there are several examples of hybrid art. In his extended piece of the Africa-Oceania exhibition, Einstein alludes to the probable influence of Egypt upon sub-Saharan African sculpture. However, this hybridity was certainly not coveted by the discerning collectors of so-called primitive art. In the article ‘Un Coup de Fusil’, Marcel Griaule (Documents:1930:1:46:tr) waxes lyrical about the question of so-called purity. The object in question is a Baule drum from the Ivory Coast brandishing a soldier with a gun which is granted a full-page reproduction opposite Griaule’s text (FIGURE 14). Griaule comments ‘It seems a white man is not at all grotesque in declaring a Baule drum impure under the pretext that it is decorated with a man brandishing a gun’. The incorporation of colonial imagery is, in fact, entirely fitting with the Baule peoples’ conception of their works as art. Indeed, Segy (1969:67) notes that the Baule are ‘one of the rare tribes where sculpture is produced for aesthetic appreciation as well as ritualistic purposes.’ Griaule interpellates the reader with a paradigm shift in perception reversing the roles of exotifier and exotified:

> If a black man cannot use exotic elements, by this I mean European elements, without degrading himself, what should we make of our blind appropriations of the exotic world, that of colour, that we always proclaim in our defence we know nothing of

Inevitably, the spectre of colonialism began to leave its imprint on works of African sculpture. Appropriations of European entities rendered African art as hybrid as the influences upon surrealist works themselves.

Figure 14. Anon (1930) *Tambour de La Côte d'Ivoire* (Photography of Sculpture) in *Documents* 1930 Vol 1 p.46. Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Conclusion

This article has sought to posit for meaningful synergies between core Surrealist concepts and African sculpture presented in the journals *Documents* and *Minotaure*. Whilst a lot has been written about collage, otherness and incongruity in these journals regarding their methods of display, the majority of articles pertaining to African art were written by anthropologists who did explain the original use value of these objects in their social context, despite some erroneous, often mystified readings that I have flagged up. Ultimately, Surrealist thought has always been entangled and knotted between an impetus towards universality and the insatiability of difference and this tension goes beyond the Surrealist reception of African Art. Whilst clear aesthetic differences remained between Euro-American and African art, the explicitly stated goals of the journal editors was to inculcate a sense of universality on an ontological level.

The Surrealist concept of automatism becomes another contested terrain incorrectly predicated onto meticulously fabricated sculpture and rehearsed rituals, automatism cannot be said to align with the original use value of the works displayed in *Documents* and

Minotaure. As for the metaphysical realm, a toing and froing between the occult and religion when categorising African sculpture is more telling of the surrealists' own insecurities rather than the objects themselves. Indeed, is the reticence to describe Dogon celebrations as religious manifestations not a by-product of derogatory colonialist attitudes to so-called 'pagans' whose belief systems indeed match the metaphysical complexity of their Christian counterparts? In terms of the afterlife, Leiris clearly wished to imbue African sculpture with Bataille's dichotomy between sex and death whilst Carl Einstein illuminatingly explained the actual function of many African sculptures as a repository for the errant soul.

Finally, true to their vision of non-national boundaries, the Surrealists reproduced hybrid works portraying colonial inflections upon African society as well as syncretic works that amalgamate Christian and indigenous religion. In short, it is this latter concept of non-national frontiers that we can credit the surrealists with unwavering commitment towards. Ostensibly, the early fascination of the avant-garde with African sculpture, which predated Surrealism in the Fauves, Symbolism and Dada, paved the way for the international Surrealist movement to spread its wings to other non-western footholds such as Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. In terms of African art itself, Surrealism's reception is perhaps a more ambiguous entity, granting a sense of cultural prestige to the continent whilst remaining complicit in colonialism's politically-motivated machinations of possession despite their innovative use of photography's capacity for mechanical reproduction. Ultimately photographs in *Documents* and *Minotaure*, despite its indexical relation to the real, would not suffice. For the Surrealists, ethnographic photography was a mere precursor for possession of the auratic original.

Bibliography

Ades, Dawn. Baker, Simon. Bradley, Fiona. (2006) *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and Documents*. London; Cambridge, Mass.: Hayward Gallery; MIT Press

Aragon, Louis. (1961) *Le Paysan De Paris. 1926*. Paris: Gallimard

Barthes, Roland. (2012) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: The Noonday Press

Bataille, Georges. (1929-1930) *Documents* Available online at : https://gallica.bnf.fr/services/engine/search/sru?operation=searchRetrieve&version=1.2&collapsing=disabled&query=%28gallica%20all%20%22Documents%20George%20Bataille%22%29%20and%20arkPress%20all%20%22cb34421975n_date%22&rk=21459;2 (Accessed March 6 2021)

Bataille, Georges. (1972) *L'Érotisme.* [Paris]: [Union Generale d'Editions]

Bataille, Georges, and Robert Hurley. 2006. *Theory of religion*. New York: Zone Books.

Bauduin, Tessel. (2014) *Surrealism and the Occult: Occultism and Western Esotericism in the Work and Movement of André Breton*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Beek, van, W.E.A (2018) "Matter in motion: a Dogon Kanaga mask". *Religions.* Volume 9 No. 9. p.1-14.

Ben-Amos, Paula. (1995) *The Art of Benin*. London: British museum Press.

Benjamin, Walter. Underwood, James Amery. (2008) *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London : Penguin Books

Bidault, Coline. (2013) 'La Présentation Des Objets Africains Dans DOCUMENTS (1929/1930), Magazine Illustré'*. Les Cahiers De l'École Du Louvre* Vol. 3 Available online at : https://journals.openedition.org/cel/500?lang=en Accessed March 6, 2021

Breton, André. Bonnet, Marguerite. (1988) *Oeuvres Complètes Tome 1.* [Paris : Gallimard]

Breton, André. Bonnet, Marguerite. (1988) *Oeuvres Complètes Tome 3.* [Paris : Gallimard]

Breton, André. Goutier, Jean-Michel. Monbrison, Alain de. Drouot Richelieu. (2003) *André Breton : 42 Rue Fontaine à Drouot-Richelieu ; Expositions Publiques Paris*: Calmels-Cohen

Campbell, Robert A. "Georges Bataille's Surrealistic Theory Of Religion." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 11, no. 2 (1999): 127-42. Accessed March 6, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23555591.

Clifford, James. (1981) 'On Ethnographic Surrealism'*. Comparative Studies in Society and History: An International Quarterly* Vol. 23 no.4 p.539-564

Conley, Katherine. (2003) 'Modernist Primitivism in 1933: Brassai's "Involuntary Sculptures" in Minotaure'*. Modernism/modernity* 10 (1), 127-140

Dieterlen G. (1988). Masks and mythology among the Dogon. *African Arts.* 22, 34-43.

Gibson, Matthew. (2016) "Yeats's Notes on Leo Frobenius's The Voice of Africa (1913)," in Gibson, Matthew. and Mann, Neil. (eds) *Yeats, Philosophy, and the Occult*. Liverpool University Press, pp. 305–326.

Grossman, Wendy. (2009). *Man Ray, African art, and the modernist lens*. Washington, DC, International Arts & Artists.

Grossman, Wendy (2020) 'Unmasking Adrienne Fidelin: Picasso, Man Ray and the (In) visibility of Racial Difference' *Modernism/Modernity* Volume 5 Cycle 1 Available online at https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0142

Kelly, Julia. (2007) *Art, Ethnography and the Life of Objects: Paris c. 1925-35*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Leclercq, Sophie (2010) *La rançon du colonialisme: les surréalistes face aux mythes de la France coloniale*. Dijon: Les presses du réel.

Leiris, Michel. (2011) *L'Afrique Fantôme*. Paris: Gallimard

Levitz, Tamara. (2006) 'The Aestheticization of Ethnicity: Imagining the Dogon at the Musée Du Quai Branly'*. The Musical Quarterly* 89 (4), 600-642

Museum D'Histoire Naturelle Paris Documents (Georges Bataille) (1929-1930) Archive Code : 2 AM 1 K33b.

Museum D'Histoire Naturelle Paris Skira Editeur du Minotaure 20 documents (1933) Archive Code : 2 AM 1 K88a

Museum D'Histoire Naturelle Paris Coupures de Presse sur La mission Dakar-Djibouti (1931-1935) 1 carton Archive Code : 2 AM 1 B9

Museum D'Histoire Naturelle Paris Ratton (Charles), membre bienfaiteur de la Société des Amis du Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro, marchand d'art Archive Code : 2 AM 1 K81d

Oxford English Dictionary (2019) "Ritual, adj. and n.". *OED Online.* Oxford University Press.https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/166369?redirectedFrom=ritual& (accessed July 27, 2019).

Palmer, Carolyn. (2016) 'Surrealism and Dance' in Ortolano, Scott et al. "Surrealism Overview." *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*.: Taylor and Francis, 2016. Date Accessed 27 Jul. 2019 https://www.rem.routledge.com/articles/overview/surrealism-overview. doi:10.4324/9781135000356-REMO29-1

Pietz, William. (1988). The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism. *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* Vol. 16 105-124.

Richards, Polly. (2003). *"Imina Sangan" or "masques à la mode": contemporary masquerade in the Dogon region*. Thesis: SOAS, University of London.

Richards, Polly. (2006). What's in a Dogon Mask? *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics,* (49/50), 92-114

Richardson, Micheal. (1993) 'An Encounter of Wise Men and Cyclops Women Considerations of Debates on Surrealism and Anthropology'*. Critique of Anthropology* 13 (1), 57-75

Rubin, William. Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.), Detroit Institute of Arts. Dallas Museum of Art. (1984) *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern. Vol. 1* New York; Boston: Museum of Modern Art; Distributed by New York Graphic Society Books

Segy, Ladislas (1969) *African Sculpture Speaks* New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux

Skira, Albert (ed.) (1933-1939) *Minotaure : Revue Artistique Et Littéraire* Editions Skira : Milan Available online at : https://gallica.bnf.fr/services/engine/search/sru?operation=searchRetrieve&version=1.2&collapsing=disabled&query=%28gallica%20all%20%22minotaure%22%29%20and%20arkPress%20all%20%22cb343950177_date%22&rk=64378;0 Accessed March 6 2021

Tate Liverpool, Barson, Tanya, Gorschlüter, Peter, Archer, Petrine, Mercer, Kobena, Martin, Courtney J. Diawara, Manthia, Conduru, Roberto, Copeland, Huey. (2010) *Afro-Modern Journeys through the Black Atlantic*. Liverpool: Tate Liverpool

Tythacott, Louise. (2003) *Surrealism and the Exotic* London: Routledge

Von Sydow, Echkart. (1938) 'Ancient and Modern Art in Benin City'*. Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 11 (1), 55-62

Walker, Ian. (1997) 'Phantom Africa: Photography between Surrealism and Ethnography'*. Cahiers d'Études Africaines.* 37, 635-655

Werbner, Prina. (2006) 'Vernacular Cosmopolitanism'*. Theory, Culture & Society* 23 (2-3), 496-498

Wood, Paul. (2014) *Western Art and the Wider World* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell

---

[i] Albert Skira was named 'director-administrator', E.Tériade was 'artistic-director' with the Surrealists André Breton and Pierre Mabille named as editors.

[ii] In *Minotaure* the following articles are dedicated to African sculpture : Michel Leiris (' Danses funéraires Dogon (Extraits d'un carnet de route) *Minotaure* No.1 1933 p.73-76, Marcel Griaule 'Introduction Méthodologique' *Minotaure* no.2 1933 p. 7-12, Eric Lutten 'Les Wasamba et leur usage dans la circoncision' *Minotaure* no.2 p. 13-17, Michel Leiris 'Faites de Case et Rives de Bani' *Minotaure* no.2 1933 p.18-19, Anon. 'Casques et Masques de Danse de Soudan Française' no.2 1933 20-21, Anon. 'Variétés du Soudan Française'

Minotaure no.2 1933 p.22-24, Anon. 'Serrures Sculptés' *Minotaure* no.2 p.25, Michel Leiris 'Objets Rituels Dogon' *Minotaure* no.2 1933 p.26-30, Michel Leiris 'Masques Dogon' *Minotaure* no.2 1933 p.45-51, Michel Leiris 'Fragments sur le Dahomey' *Minotaure* no.2 1933 p. 57-61, André Schaeffner 'Notes sur la musique des populations du Cameroun Septrional *Minotaure* no.2 1933 p. 65-70, Deborah Lifszyc 'Amulettes Ethiopiennes' *Minotaure* no.2 1933 p. 71-74. In *Documents* the following articles are also dedicated to African Sculpture : Georges Henri-Rivière 'Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro' Documents no.1 1929 p. 54-58, Felix Von Luschan 'Arbres Fétiches du Benin' Documents no.4 1929 p. 230, André Schaeffner 'Des Instruments de musique dans un musée d'ethnographie' *Documents* no. 5 1929 p. 248-254, C.E Einstein 'Masque de Danse Rituelle Ekoi' *Documents* no.7 1929 p. 396, Marcel Griaule 'Un coup de Fusil' *Documents* no.1 1930 p. 46, C.E Einstein 'Masque Bapindi' *Documents* no.1 1930 p. 48, Dr. Eckart Von Sydow 'Masques Janus du Cross-River' *Documents* no.6 1930 p. 321-328, Michel Leiris 'L'oeil de l'ethnographe : A propos de la Mission Dakar-Djibouti' *Documents* no. 7 1930 p.405-414, Maurice Leenhardt 'La Danse Makishi' *Documents* no.8 1930 p. 52-54. There are other articles that pertain to different forms of African art, notably Ethiopian painting, but here the study is limited to African sculpture due to its prominence in both journals.
[iii] No articles dedicated to Oceanic Art can be found in *Minotaure* whilst in *Documents* only one article is dedicated to Oceanic Art: Clarke, Louis 'L'Art dans les Iles Salomon' *Documents* No.5 1930 p.277-278.
[iv] The exhibition was controversial at the time. Notably, Thomas MacEvilley lamented the 'absolute repression of primitive context, meaning, content, and intention (the dates of the works, their functions, their religious or mythological connections, their environments), they have treated the primitives as less than human, less than cultural.' See MacEvilley, Thomas. 1984 'Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief "Primitivism in 20th Century Art" at the Museum of Modern Art'. *Artforum*, November, 54-61. Available online at: https://www.artforum.com/print/198409/on-doctor-lawyer-indian-chief-primitivism-in-20th-century-art-at-the-museum-of-modern-art-in-1984-35322
[v] The original use value of several works of African art is (with some errors) certainly explicated in *Minotaure* and *Documents*. This is the main goal of both journals unlike other forms of Surrealist activity. Therefore, the majority of Surrealist's deviation from the African sculptures original use value would have been deliberate.
[vi] There are however some excellent texts analysing how the Surrealists collected, displayed and photographed various works of African art such as Tythacott, Louise (2003) *Surrealism and the Exotic* London: Routledge, Kelly, Julia. (2013). *Art, ethnography and the life of objects: Paris c. 1925-35*. Manchester, Manchester University Press and Grossman, W. (2009). *Man Ray, African art, and the modernist lens*. Washington, DC, International Arts & Artists.
[vii] A total of 13 specialist works on African Art were auctioned and can be found in (Breton: 2003:44-45).
[viii] For further information on the first black fashion model to feature in an American fashion magazine, Adrienne Fidelin, see Grossman, Wendy (2020) 'Unmasking Adrienne Fidelin: Picasso, Man Ray and the (In) visibility of Racial Difference' *Modernism/Modernity* Volume 5 Cycle 1 Available online at *https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0142*
[ix] According to Paul Wood (2012:199) 8 million people attended the 1931 *Exposition Coloniale* whilst just four thousand attended the Surrealist anti-colonial counter-exhibition *The Truth about the Colonies*.
[x] Interestingly, American and Oceanic objects were included but African objects were not. André Breton who had a predilection for Oceanic art was heavily involved in the organisation of this exhibition, writing the preface to the catalogue.
[xi] This includes fine art photography interpretations of Dogon artworks along with other ethnic groups. Surrealist photographer Man Ray's theatrical renderings of Dogon objects in 1936 are resolutely critiqued by Ian Walker (2009:117) 'Out of Phantom Africa: Michel Leiris, Man Ray and the Dogon' in Grossman, Wendy *Man Ray, African Art, and the Modernist Lens* p.112-125. Walker states 'In their decontextualization, they work against the desire for scientific exactitude and cultural placement integral to Griaule's approach; in their drama, they cast a heightened emotional effect over a more detached aesthetic appreciation of the sculptures' form and objecthood'
[xii] Moreover, in another instance, when bargaining with indigenous Bambara peoples, Leiris and Griaule cannot reach the desired outcome, they simply resort to theft via subterfuge. Leiris details an occasion in Dyabougou, Mali where in order to obtain a kono mask that villagers did not wish to part with, Griaule demands that the chief grant him the kono in exchange for 10 francs otherwise police, hiding in a van would arrest the village chiefs and demand an explanation of them before the colonial administration (Leiris:2011: 70).
[xiii] As Gibson (2016:306) notes:' His belief in an African Atlantis (*VA1*349)—in which the original Yorubaland, before it became "negrofied" (*VA1*318), constituted the mythical kingdom of Atlantis described by "Solon" in Plato's *Republic* (*VA1*345)—is based on very flimsy, amateurish evidence, and is used to cement his belief in the superiority of light–skinned over dark–skinned people, constituting a refusal to accept that sub–Saharan

Africans could have been responsible for their own sophisticated sculptures' Leo Frobenius who also wrote for *Documents* on 'Dessins Rupestres de la Sud de la Rhodésie' [Rhodesian Cave Art] see *Documents* (1930) No. 4 p.185-188

[xiv] In colonial usage it was spelt 'Bapindi'

[xv] George Bataillle was however not afraid of using the word religion. Campbell (1999:134) notes that 'Bataille sees the sacred as the social glue that holds societies together, and many of his themes centre on transgressing the boundary between the sacred and profane.' Bataille published the work *Theory of Religion* in 1948.

[xvi] In his treatise on eroticism, Bataille (1972:17) famously states: 'With regard to eroticism, it is possible to say that it is the affirmation of life even in death' ['De l'érotisme, il est possible de dire qu'il est l'approbation de la vie jusque dans la mort]