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Royal Art Of Benin: The Perls Collection In The Metropolitan Museum Of Art



Synopsis

More than 150 works of sixteenth-to nineteenth-century Benin art with background on the history, art, and culture of Benin, and expert commentary on the objects. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

For more than 500 years, the West African kingdom of Benin has produced brass, ivory, wood and terracotta sculpture prized for its naturalism, beauty and technical sophistication. This sumptuous catalogue of an exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art reproduces mysterious brass heads of monarchs and queen mothers, palace plaques teeming with relief figures, regal roosters atop ancestral altars, carved ivory tusks and pyramid-shaped bells. Ezra, an associate curator of the museum, makes it clear in her informative text that this art is intimately linked to rituals of divine kingship and religion, as can be seen in complex altar tableaux depicting the king surrounded by courtiers, chiefs and attendants, and in cylindrical wood altars dedicated to the human hand, which is worshipped in the Benin religion. The book also surveys the intricate, luminous ivory sculpture of Owo, a nearby Yoruba kingdom from which Benin's reigning dynasty traces its origins. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Benin sculpture--cast bronzes, carved ivory, terracotta, and wood created to glorify a divine king--exerted tremendous influence on early 20th-century Western artists. The splendidly naturalistic heads, plaques, carved tusks, bracelets, and other ceremonial and personal ornaments

of Benin (now part of Nigeria) provide an unbroken record of one of West Africa's greatest kingdoms for more than 500 years. This publication coincides with a Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition celebrating art dealer Klaus G. Perls's 163-piece donation. An introduction gives background on Benin history, art, and culture; expert commentary accompanies the 265 illustrations, grouped according to the objects' type and purpose. A chronology, glossary, bibliography, and maps supplement this authoritative work. Recommended for African art and 20th-century art research collections.- Russell T. Clement, Brigham Young Univ. Lib., Provo, Ut Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Softcover, 11.5" x 8.5", 330 Pages, over 200 Benin object photos in color and B/W, (from 1/6 page to full page), 38 field photos, 2 maps, 6 drawings. Chronology of Benin Kings. Glossary, Bibliography, Index. "Royal Art Of Benin - The Perls Collection." Author credited : Kate Ezra. Published by The Metropolitan Museum Of Art 1992. A nicely executed publication on the Art of Benin drawn from The Perls Collection at the Metropolitan Museum Of Art, created to commemorate the exhibition "Royal Art Of Benin from the Perls Collection" held at the Metropolitan Museum Of art from January 16 to September 13, 1992. Nicely presented with good quality paper and binding, with well-defined photographs throughout. However, in common with a lot of books of its (relatively recent) era, you get the feeling that color photography was a distinct luxury. The book is divided into the following sections : "Benin Altars", "Palace Plaques", "Court and Ceremonial Objects" and "Art of Yoruba Kingdoms". The objects represented include Heads of Kings, Terracotta Heads, Royal Altar Tusks, Figures, Roosters, Staffs, Bells, Bracelets & Ornaments, Ivory Containers, Ivory Implements & Carvings, and Stools & Chairs. From the Introduction : "The art of Benin is unique in African art. Primarily made of cast brass and carved ivory, it provides an unbroken record of the artistic heritage of one of West Africa's greatest kingdoms. It is a royal art, made to glorify the divine king, or Oba, and to honor the great kings of the past." I wouldn't argue with anybody who wanted to rate this book as a 4-Star publication, but on a purely subjective note, I found it a little soulless, and some of the items a little ordinary. As a consequence, I've rated the book as 3-Stars, but I've also tried to be as objective as I can regarding the contents, so that you can judge for yourself whether the book is worth purchasing or not.

This book attempts to explain the form and symbolic content of Benin art in terms of the larger society of Benin and its traditional purposes. The book does not present an encyclopedic picture of Benin history and culture, but it is still extremely enlightening. Printed in Italy on heavy, glossy

paper, this heavy, 330-page book is semi-coffee-table in size, measuring 9 by 12 inches. My main disappointment is that most of the illustrations are monochrome, not color. Thus this 1992 book does not have the knock-your-eyes out, National Geographic impact of newer books such as the 2002 "Gold of the Akan from the Glassell Collection" by Doran Ross. But this is only a minor criticism to a very good book.

Good book to have in a personal library.

The Art of Benin first came onto the world stage in 1897, when the British TOOK thousands of art works which were in the Royal Palace. The Royal City of Benin was a JEWEL that was DESTROYED by the British. Many of the pieces went to London. Others were sold. For the very first time westerners saw magnificent pieces of art executed with great technical sophistication. The Perls Collection consists of 163 objects, and is considered to be the finest collection of Benin Art in the world. The art reflects the life of the OBA who is the central figure in the kingdom. He rules with divine right and is believed to have spiritual powers. The art directly reflects this. Among the works found in this catalogue are the heads of the OBA and the Queen Mother, which are executed in both wood and brass. These heads were just some of the items placed on the royal altar. Other items were royal altar tusks which were carved with figures of Kings, Queen Mothers, Priests, warriors and other figures. There are brass figures of court attendants, foreigners & priests. One will also find Altar Tableaus which consists of symmetrical, standing figures. Other objects placed on the Royal Altars were brass bells & rattle-staffs. Another symbol of the court is the brass rooster, which commemorates the Queen Mothers of Benin, ivory containers, and ivory trumpets. At the end of the book is an excellent chapter on the art of the Yoruba Kingdoms which were greatly influenced by the Benin court. I am pleased that this great collection is housed in my home town of New York City, and that the Metropolitan Museum of Art has produced this excellent catalogue!

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