

Affinities: African Art and Modern Expressions

16 February - 23 March 2024



New York, 9 February 2024 - Pace African and Oceanic Art presents *Affinities: African Art & Modern Expressions*, the last installment of our exhibition series which examines the visual relationships between Modern, Post-war, African and Oceanic Art, 16 February-23 March 2024. *Affinities* features masks and figures from Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Togo and early lithographs by Jean Dubuffet (b.1901-d.1985).

The tactile surfaces of sculptures such as the Losso Figure from Togo and the Mbembe Figure from Nigeria add an extra dimension which draw the viewer in. The rough and bumpy expanse of these objects connect with Dubuffet's earliest lithographic series, *Matière et Mémoire (Matter and Memory)*, 1944, as well as his 1963 lithograph *L'enfle-chique I (The Inflated Snob)*.

Dubuffet championed art that was instinctive and without artifice, unmotivated by thoughts of recognition or display, something he would eventually call Art Brut. In 1948, Dubuffet created the *Compagnie de l'art brut*, whose members included Surrealists André Breton and Benjamin Péret as well as critic Michel Tapié and dealer Charles Ratton.

In contrast to Dubuffet, the African carvers and artists had clear intention and design when creating their works. Although they had some freedom to interpret certain characteristics of utilitarian, spiritual or ancestral patterns, the final carving had to honor and communicate their intent effectively.

The African artworks offered in this exhibition capture the aesthetic values of Art Brut that Dubuffet cherished: these are atypical and unusual sculptures, on the periphery of "classical" forms, with strong expressionistic qualities, which exude spontaneity and feeling rather than formal beauty.

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