



Non-Western Art: A Brief Guide (2nd Edition)

By Lynn Mackenzie

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Editorial Review

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Preface

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Having devoted years to this material, both in personal research and talking through ideas with colleagues and in the public forum of the classroom, I have come to sense themes that make the material manageable, intelligible, and memorable. I write this statement knowing full well that the problems with teaching Non-Western art are legion. No one wants to touch it because too much material is covered and nothing can be developed in depth. On this point I offer the words of Chacoan specialist Stephen Lekson, who wrote that selection involves weeding and pruning. We, as educators, are charged with determining what is worth knowing as well as the depth to which knowing should be taken in an introductory course. Topics can be

added and others expanded. We all have our specialties and presenting them to students only enriches their education and makes their encounter with us unique. Any text merely provides a platform or a foil for our own views and experiential resources. For example, to the reviewer who requested the addition of Laplander art, I would recommend outside readings to augment this intriguing subject. When covering the Asante, I always include kente cloth, although you never would know it from this text. Sometimes I begin the course with Chapter 7 (the Americas), other times with Chapter 1 (Africa), and occasionally I use Chapter 6 (Oceania) for the Introduction. Flexibility is the key. Start with your strength.

Others shy away from teaching Non-Western because the names are unfamiliar, difficult to pronounce. And tied to the problem of foreign words is the reality that the subjects themselves are "foreign" to those of us who have had a classical Western education. Two thoughts on this issue: First, no one person can know the artistic, religious, social, philosophical, historical, etc. nuances of all these cultures. It is an impossible and unreasonable expectation. Unfortunately, the most difficult sentence for a professor to utter in public is "I DON'T KNOW." Confucius offers all of us who stand with our backs to the screen a liberating strategy with the following advice from the *Analects*: "Shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, maintain you know it, and when you do not, acknowledge it. That is knowledge." (I am quite sure he was talking about "expertise.") The second thought on this issue of foreign pertains to our obligation in higher education. Equipping students with a basic understanding of Non-Western cultures will spare them the anxieties we suffer now when eventually they take our places. I truly believe it will cease being a problem in a generation.

Finally, others will not teach Non-Western because they argue the topic is invalid and "Non-Western" creates the notion of "The Other" by lumping together cultures that share nothing. These are major issues, and ones which cannot be addressed in a preface, although the situation is pitiful, indeed, if we are shackled by inherited methodologies. I always have been dissatisfied with the term "Non-Western" but do not feel the term has pejorative implications. The subject reflects our awareness of the richness of world cultures, even if a satisfactory word has yet to be coined.

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In conclusion, pages could be filled with the names of people who contributed to this project. Regrettably, I do not know the names of many who provided invaluable assistance. A note of thanks is due the vanload of women who picked me up at North Rim Overlook on the frightful road up to Mesa Verde and to Ranger Sherrie who helped me break into my car to retrieve the keys locked inside. At Chichen Itza, thanks to the white-haired man who helped me count backwards from 365 in Spanish after my backpack shifted and I froze on top El Castillo. Thanks also to the eagle-eyed proofreaders at Prentice Hall for their thoroughness, and to the reviewers across the country for their comments and suggestions. Others I can thank directly. At Prentice Hall, for their persistence, insistence, and patience, Bud Therien, Publisher Art, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Kimberly Chastain, Assistant Editor Art and Music; also, Production Editor, Judith Winthrop, to whom goes all the credit for the look of the book you hold. Among my colleagues, special thanks to Misty Sheehan, Associate Professor of Humanities at College of DuPage, for her insight on Asian cultures, and to a cenote of information on Mesoamerica, Jeff Kowalski, Professor of Art History at Northern Illinois University. Also at College of DuPage, thanks to Ed Kies, Dean of Liberal Arts, and Ed Storke, Associate Dean. In Louisiana, to Robert Connolly, then Station Archaeologist at Poverty Point, for opening the resources of that vast site to me; and at Watson Brake, to Joe Saunders, Regional Archaeologist stationed at University Louisiana at Monroe, and Reca Jones, who first mapped the site, for the same opportunities there. I would like readers to know the monuments they curate figure much larger in the story of world culture than the space I could give them in the text. From among the thousands and thousands of students whose ideas have shaped this book, and in a very real sense, who I am, I single out Corinne Louw, who helped structure many of the questions at the end of each chapter and suggested the expanded glossary; she is one of the people who will take our place. And finally, love and gratitude to my parents, Helen and Eric Yaeger, and, as always, to Kate.

Lynn Mackenzie *Glen Ellyn, Illinois*

From the Publisher

Nonwestern Art: A Brief Guide offers a concise, useful introduction to the indigenous visual expressions created in the Americas, Africa and Asia. It provides a foundation for understanding the context and aesthetics of art forms ordinarily addressed in specialty texts and advanced art history courses.

From the Inside Flap

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alfred Zoeller:

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