LE NXTRÉMIS

Death and Life in 21st-Century Haitian Art

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In Extremis: Death and Life in 21st-century Haitian Art organized by the Fowler Museum at UCLA

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About the Exhibition

About the Exhibition

> *in extremis* \in-ik'strē-məs, -'strā-\ adv [L] (ca. 1530) : in extreme circumstances; esp : at the point of death
> —Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition

A *coup d'état*, a devastating earthquake, hurricanes, floods, poverty, and epidemics; the 21st century in Haiti has been a study in tumult. *In Extremis: Death and Life in 21st-Century Haitian Art*—an exhibition on display at the Fowler Museum from September 16, 2012–January 20, 2013—demonstrates how leading Haitian visual artists are producing an enthralling, sometimes unsettling body of work that confronts these hardships head on.

Consisting of more than seventy works including paintings, prints, installations, metal sculpture, and mixed-media sculptures by established artists and a new generation of self-taught genre-busters, the exhibition offers unflinchingly honest and viscerally compelling reactions to Haiti's contemporary predicament.

The most emblematic of these rising artists, André Eugène, Jean Hérard Celeur and Frantz Jacques (aka Guyodo), have emerged onto the international art stage of biennials, galleries and museums from a warren of junkyards, auto salvage shops, and ateliers on Port-au-Prince's Grand Rue. They have moved Haitian sculpture into a new territory by constructing huge figures out of car chassis, human skulls, tire chains, and discarded computer parts.

Many of their sculptures are manifestations of Bawon (Baron) Samdi (Papa Gede)—the Vodou divinity who presides over mortality, sexuality and rebirth—and of the Gedes, his capricious sons. These bold works dramatically underscore the subject of the exhibition: the disjunction between social collapse and artistic florescence, and how Haitian artists' work can be seen through the prism of this increasingly dominant family of Vodou divinities.

Notions of an emerging dystopia loom large in the work of painters featured in the exhibition. Where Haitian artists of an earlier era envisioned Vodou divinities disporting themselves in paradise-like settings, today's painters imagine their gods in full retreat from a 21st-century nightmare. Edouard Duval-Carrié's depiction of Bawon Samdi in *Le Baron triomphant* strides confidently into an uncertain future. Didier Civil, more famous for raucous carnival masks, now paints Gedes with leering, blank white faces, utterly indifferent to human desperation.

Similar transformations have reshaped the making of ritual flags (*drapo*), which over the last half-century developed into the genre of Vodou art most popular in galleries and museums. A new generation of fiber artists featured in the exhibition—Myrlande Constant, Roudy Azor, and Evelyne Alcide—is responsible for this venerable tradition morphing into gigantic, beaded narrative tableaux. No longer simply saluting or celebrating divinity, these often ribald compositions evoke Papa Gede "in extremis": a god whose extravagant sexuality confounds his role as avatar of death.

About the Exhibition (continued)

As an introduction to the Vodou clan of Bawon Samdi and the Gedes, visitors enter a gallery meant to evoke the cemetery, their domain. A cluster of iron crosses by famed master blacksmith Georges Liautaud, mixed-media sculptures in the form of coffins by Pierrot Barra, paintings, textiles and more testify to the ever-presence of death.

Other ways of seeing and encountering the Gedes in Haiti are considered with tableaux by leading bead artists, paintings by Jean Philippe Jeannot and André Pierre, and a seven-channel video display installed in the form of a cross by Maksaens Denis. Looking towards global popular culture, Frantz Zéphirin's acrylic painting *The Immortal Dream of Michael Jackson for the Third World*, 2010 offers a haunting vision of the King of Pop assuming the guise of Bawon Samdi. Likewise, works by artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (whose father was Haitian) strongly suggest the presence of these avatars of death and regeneration.

A series of artists' responses to the massive earthquake of January 12, 2010 is anchored by Myrlande Constant's large (7' x 9'), apocalyptic beaded portrait of the disaster. She depicts a tragedy of such epic proportion that even members of the Gede family, who often laughingly attend to death, now find themselves overwhelmed by the immensity of their duty.

Toward the end of the exhibition, a site-specific installation by Vodou priestess Mambo Maud recalls altars by Jean Robert Celestin, aka Emperor Sonson, in Port-au-Prince. Sonson's altars are festooned with intimidating figures: spangled dolls, coffins inset with sculpted corpses and skulls, as well as an array of other objects. Like the emotionally charged sculptures of the Gran Rue artists, both Sanson and Mambo Maud create arresting assemblages that proclaim Bawon Samdi and the Gedes to be paramount spirits for a nation, and perhaps a world, *in extremis*.

Haitian Art at the Fowler Museum

In Extremis: Death and Life in 21st-Century Haitian Art is organized and produced by the Fowler Museum at UCLA and curated by Donald J. Cosentino, UCLA professor emeritus of Black Atlantic religions and popular culture, and Patrick A. Polk, Fowler curator of Latin American and Caribbean popular arts, with Leah Gordon, the late Marilyn Houlberg, and Katherine Smith.

The Fowler Museum has a long commitment to the research and presentation of the arts of Haiti. Over the course of five decades, the Fowler has amassed one of the largest and most important collections of Vodou-inspired 20th- and 21st-Century Haitian art in the United States.

The Museum has mounted several exhibitions of Haitian art, including the 1995 travelling exhibition *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*, also curated by Cosentino, which the *Los Angeles Times* termed a "landmark show" and *The New York Times* called "spellbinding."

About the Exhibition (continued)

Also available is the Fowler's companion volume *In Extremis: Death and Life in 21st-Century Haitian Art* (paper, ISBN 978-0-9847550-0-4), distributed by the University of Washington Press. The multi-authored volume is edited by Donald J. Cosentino with a preface by Edwidge Danticat.

Major support for the exhibition comes from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional funding is provided by the Barbara and Joseph Goldenberg Fund, the Shirley and Ralph Shapiro Director's Discretionary Fund, the Faye Bettye Green Fund to Commission New Work, and the Pasadena Art Alliance. Educational programs, resources and other opportunities were made possible by the generous support of the UCLA Dream Fund, the Winnick Family Foundation, and Los Angeles Education Partnership.

Educational Goals and Curriculum Correlations

Educational Goals and Curriculum Correlations

- To understand and appreciate the significance of the only successful national slave revolt in history.
- To understand the significance of Haiti's formation as the first republic with freedom for all its citizens.
- To appreciate the long history of Haiti and the many interrelationships between Haiti and other nations in its background.
- To understand that Vodou, the national religion of Haiti is an aesthetic, a philosophy, and a way of life that was shattered in the Atlantic slave trade and then desperately put back together on the Island of Hispaniola. Its arts and rituals reflect this difficult and inspiring history of people whose ancestors were brought from Africa to a new land in bondage.
- To introduce to the students the Haitian Vodou pantheon with emphasis on the role of the Gede spirits.
- To help students' realize how humans play a decisive role in the severity and collateral repercussions of natural disasters.
- To inspire awareness of how a culture confronts death and dying.
- To consider how sacred beliefs and visual interpretations of the divine change, especially in times of stress and crisis.
- To examine the many forms of crises that may be encountered by individuals, small groups, nations, and the world.
- To appreciate that imagination and creativity may be called upon in stressful times.
- To appreciate how discarded materials can be given new life, and in turn enhance the lives of many.

Correlations with National Standards and California State Standards

Frameworks

The following correlations address the importance of teaching about Haiti, especially in middle school and high school. These have been adapted from those included in the *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* Curricular Resource Unit for teachers, available on the Fowler Museum's website. Teachers presenting a foundational understanding of Vodou in preparation for *In Extremis* will find these of particular importance.

With The National Standards for History

Perhaps the most significant correlations with a study on Haitian Vodou reside in the *National Standards for World and American History*, produced by the National Center for History in the Schools, UCLA. These recommendations and teaching suggestions should be carefully considered, not solely because of their mention in *The National Standards*, but because they offer such a powerful rationale for the inclusion of Haiti and Vodou in the history/social science curriculum. Select correlations from the *National Standards for United States History: Exploring the American Experience* are discussed below, with Haitian extensions indicated by [bracketing].

As students in various grade levels analyze the historical events that characterized **Era 2: Colonization and Settlement (1585–1763)**, they are expected to "demonstrate their understanding of African life under slavery." Fifth and sixth grade students may "analyze how African Americans [and Haitians] drew upon their African past to develop a new culture; analyze the forced relocation of Africans to the English colonies in North America and the Caribbean; and trace the movement of enslaved Africans to different parts of the Caribbean [especially Haiti]." Students in grades 9–12 might "investigate religious practices, dances, songs, holistic medicine, work chants, cuisine, and marriage and burial ceremonies to determine the degree to which African Americans [and by extension Haitians] retained and transmitted their cultural heritage. Understanding Vodou, especially the role of the Gede spirits, and its relationship to central African beliefs and Catholicism is of primary importance.

During **Era 4, The Era of Expansion and Reform (1801–1861)**, students are expected to understand United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and Native Americans. In Grades 7–8, they may "draw upon geographic data, European diplomacy, and black rebellion in Haiti in order to construct a historical argument in the form of 'balance sheets,' debates, or partisan newspapers assessing the case for and against the acquisition of Louisiana." In Grades 9–12, students "might assemble evidence on such matters as the black rebellion in Haiti, French losses in the Santo Domingo campaign, pending hostilities with Great Britain, and American opponents to French designs on New Orleans in order to create a 'position paper' or argument such as French Minister Talleyrand might have developed in 1803 to advise Napoleon to sell all of Louisiana to the U.S." Studies of this same era also emphasize lessons in which students must "evaluate how enslaved African Americans [and Haitians] used religion and family to create a viable culture to ameliorate the effects of slavery." Standard 4 (Era 4), for example, recommends that students "understand the sources and character of reform movements in the antebellum period and what the reforms accomplished or failed to accomplish by analyzing the impact of the Haitian Revolution and the

Correlations with National Standards and California State Standards (continued)

ending of the foreign slave trade on African Americans." The historical events of this time period have had a profound effect on contemporary Haiti, and students should come to understand the long lasting and disastrous effects of foreign involvement in Haiti over time.

And finally, in **Era 10, Contemporary U.S. (1968–present)** young people are challenged "to demonstrate an understanding of changing religious diversity and its impact on American institutions and values by analyzing how changing immigration patterns have affected religious diversity." They are asked to "identify and describe important issues relating to religious beliefs in contemporary society." The question of religious freedom for non-mainstream religions in America is certainly at the heart of such discussions, and is central to understanding and appreciating the problems Haitian-Americans face in expressing their religious and cultural convictions in this country.

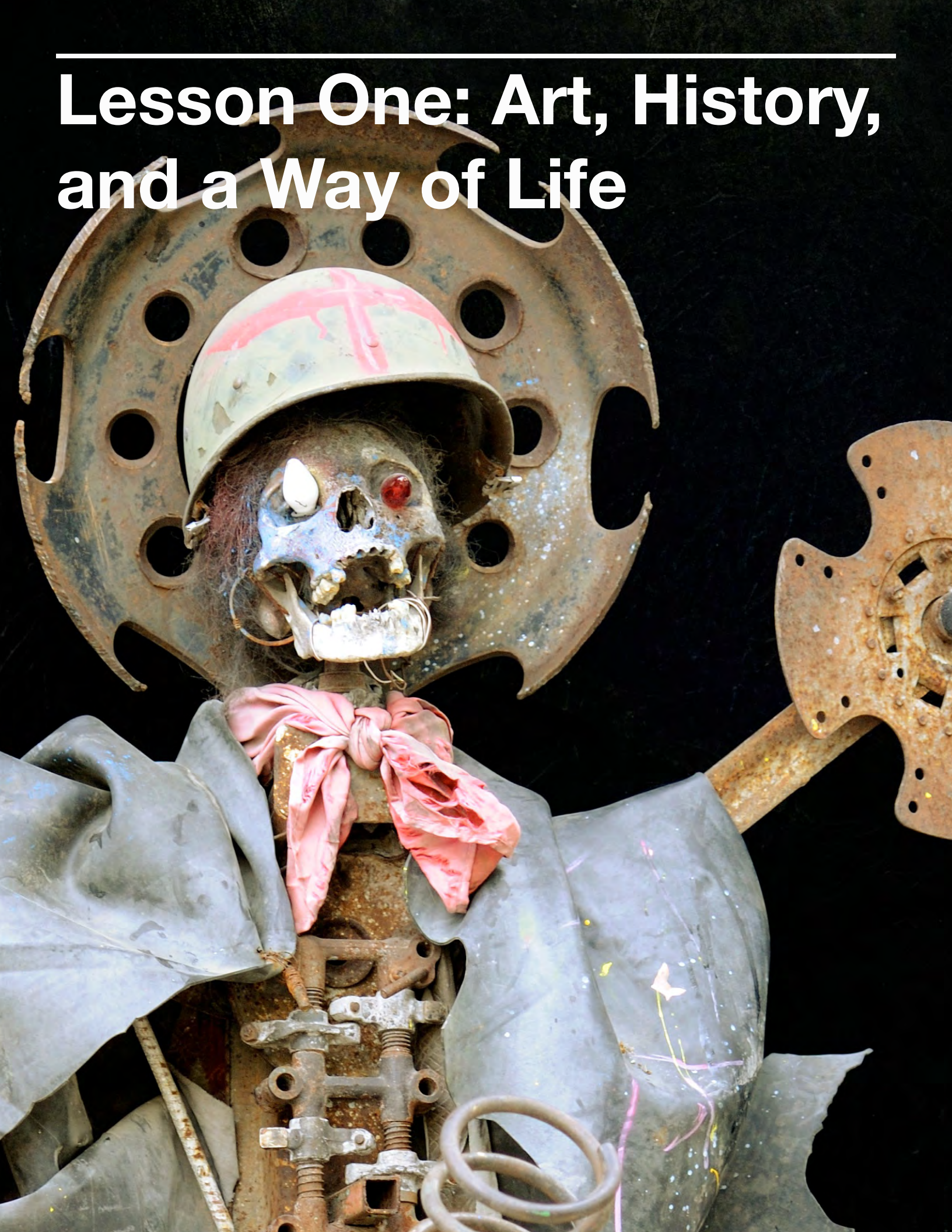
With the History-Social Science Framework for Ca. Public Schools, K-12
A study of the arts of Vodou and the works of contemporary artists as featured in these materials addresses three broad goals in the *California History-Social Science Framework*: the Goal of KNOWEDGE AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING, the Goal of DEMOCRATIC UNDERSTANDING AND CIVIC VALUES, and the Goal of SKILLS ATTAINMENT AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION. Each of the lessons in this unit of study is especially valuable as students work toward enhancing and developing their historical and cultural literacy through activities that exercise their basic study and critical thinking skills. *In Extremis* Lesson I and *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* Unit 1 lessons present concepts related to Haiti's place in the world and its ongoing, sometimes tumultuous relationship with the U.S. Lessons in both curricula encourage students to consider the powerful roles that art and religion play in the culture of a people. In *In Extremis* Lesson 3, in particular, students examine how crises—those faced by individuals, communities, and nations—are dealt with, and how our private and public responses to such emergencies and stresses reflect shared civic values and principles as well as perceptions—informed and ill informed—of the crisis at hand. In addition, the notion of social participation is clearly woven through all the *In Extremis* lessons, from discussions of Vodou as a way of life for a majority of Haitians, to the nation's response to the Earthquake of 2010, to artists' reactions to this great time of stress, and to our own participation in this crisis.

With the Visual and Performing Arts Framework for Ca. Public Schools, K-12
A study of the sacred arts of Haitian Vodou and the Gede family of spirits, in particular, also correlates directly with major goals of the Visual and Performing Arts Framework for California. In "Component 3, Visual Arts Heritage—Historical and Cultural", students are expected to "acquire knowledge of historical and cultural developments which occur as a result of varying needs and aesthetic points of view." Through specific activities, students will come to understand that the art of Vodou records and shapes Haitian history, at the same time it provides a mirror on the values and beliefs of a nation. The study of many different types of artworks will also help students clarify their own aesthetic values and learn to appreciate differences in the aesthetic values of others. The VPA Framework also asserts the importance of students studying contemporary works of art, [assessing] "the ways their work reflects, plays a role in, and influences present-day

Correlations with National Standards and California State Standards (continued)

culture." A focus on works by contemporary Haitian artists addresses this goal directly. Finally, these lessons provide the teaching strategies and expanded image base for teachers to broaden their art curriculum in a meaningful way, encompassing the rich artistic traditions and brilliant cultural heritage of Haiti. In correspondence with the guidelines of the art framework, teachers are directed to teach through direct contact with authentic images and artifacts the essential aesthetic qualities that are characteristic of objects and structures of a given culture. The images featured in the *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* and *In Extremis* clearly demonstrate that the visual and performing arts of Haiti are worthy of study, appreciation, and value.

Lesson One: Art, History, and a Way of Life



Lesson One: Art, History and a Way of Life

Background Information

Haitian art, familiar and especially popular in the broader world since World War II, has been produced by painters using vibrant colors to depict Haitian life, flag makers stitching narratives with beads and sequins, metal artists recycling steel oil drums for their sculptures, and creators of assemblage combining a myriad of materials. The varied depictions of beautiful forested terrain, tropical idylls, and colorfully dressed people inspired foreign dealers and collectors who labeled the post World War II period a "Haitian Renaissance." In many cases works were rooted in Vodou, Haiti's major popular religion and continuing source of social and cultural cohesion. Today, both Haiti and its arts are in extremis. Many of Haiti's natural resources are nearly exhausted, its forests have disappeared as exotic lumber has been exported as a cash crop, trees burned for needed cooking charcoal, and previously forested lands have been turned over to lucrative plantations to feed expanding populations. The pastoral idylls envisioned by earlier artists no longer exist as Haiti has been plagued by successive calamities, both natural and man-made.

Yet despite its present rank as one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti has always been rich in art and culture. During the first decade of this century, the country has suffered through an unbelievable series of natural and other catastrophes—including social and political violence, a cholera epidemic, and Katrina-sized hurricanes and floods. Adding to this, the unprecedented Earthquake of January 12, 2010, killed a quarter of a million Haitians in an instant and caused the loss of much of the artistic and architectural heritage of the world's first Black Republic.

Haiti's glorious and difficult history began with the original inhabitants, the agricultural Taino people of the Arawak tribe who were forced by the arriving Spanish (in 1492) to work in gold mines. The Arawaks were treated harshly and many did not survive. To replace the lost labor, the Spanish brought over, in bondage, almost 800,000 Africans. In the seventeenth century the French took possession of what they named St. Domingue and enslaved more African workers to labor in the coffee and sugar plantations. In 1791 the descendants of these enslaved Africans began the only successful national slave revolt in history. In 1804 they succeeded in creating the world's first Black Republic—the only one in this hemisphere where all citizens were free. Their success inspired admiration, fear, and scorn in the wider world. Cut off from Euro-American support,
Haitians managed to create their own dynamic "Creole" society—one rooted in Africa but responsive to all that was encountered in their new island home. Vodou is the Creole religion—but it is much more than that. Vodou is a way of life, and as such an inspiration to the country's artists.

Like the Haitian people, Vodou spirits, the *lwa*, came from Africa, and they too were profoundly affected by slavery and hard won freedom. Acting as intermediaries between the people and the remote powerful high god Bondye, they are expressions of life forces such as love, anger, and sexuality. Haitians "serve the spirits"—practice Vodou—by summoning them, making sacrifices in their honor, creating altars crowded with items to please them, and manifesting them through spirit possession. Hundreds of these spirit links between the human and the divine make up the

Vodou pantheon; each has its own personality, strengths, weaknesses, favorite objects, and identifying iconography.

Lwa make their homes beneath the ocean, and in other places of natural beauty. They animate such natural elements as the sea and fire, and can enter and possess the human body. Followers call upon them in times of need and honor them with ceremonies on their own special days. Sounds of their favorite rhythms and songs, the flash of banners, and the symbolically patterned *vévés* attract *lwa* to the ceremonies. They are a richly visual, auditory, and emotional tribute to the *lwa*—a response to Haiti's past and present. Based on African models, Vodou and its ceremonies display many influences of Catholic, Masonic, and other spiritual traditions.

The Gede spirits—divinities who embody death within Vodou—are understood to be an independent extended family, presided over by the grim patriarch Bawon Samdi (also known as Papa Gede) and his bride Grann Brijit. The Gede family is not solely associated with the afterlife; they are also spirits of sexuality and generation and beacons of hope. A god of many disparate parts, Gede remains the tribute of justice in an unjust land: a distant hope that beyond present miseries may lie renewal.

Activities

A. Haiti in history

It can be argued that the Earthquake of 2010, a natural disaster of horrific proportions, was made even more disastrous by the actions of human beings—individuals, groups, and nations—historic and current. Students will consider how events in Haiti's past contributed to the dire circumstances of the country today. They will also address the impact of actions of individuals and of other countries or continents (i.e., Europe, Latin America, and the United States) on Haiti.

Students may reflect on these centuries and the events of Haiti's past:

- 15th century—Columbus lands in Hispaniola.
- 16th century—Spaniards bring the first slaves to work in the gold mines.
- 17th century—French take possession of what is, by then, St. Domingue, and import more enslaved Africans to work the coffee and sugar plantations. As more acreage is given over to large plantations, and the population grows, they also continue the exportation of native tropical woods. All of these result in deforestation of the land.
- 18th century—the beginnings of the slave revolt in what was by then the most prosperous colony in the world.
- 19th century—Haiti achieves independence in 1804 and slavery is abolished. The United States does not recognize Haiti until 1862 during the Civil War.
- 20th century—U. S. Marines occupy Haiti from 1915 to 1934. The Duvaliers assume the presidency with Papa Doc in power 1957 to 1971, followed by Baby Doc, 1971 to 1986. Baby Doc's private army terrorizes the citizens. A popular uprising in 1986 ends their power. Jean-Bertrand Aristide wins the presidency in 1990 in Haiti's first free, peaceful election.
- 21st century—turbulent presidential elections and expansion of United Nations peacekeeping forces. Severe hurricanes, floods, cholera outbreaks, and the Earthquake of 2010 kill hundreds of thousands.

Lesson One: Art, History and a Way of Life (continued)

B. Meeting the *lwa*

Students will be introduced to some of the large number of *lwa* who make up the Vodou pantheon, including the family of Gede—images of which are featured in the exhibition. Each of this diverse group of intermediary spirits has its own preferences, behaviors, and realm. All of these *lwa*, and others, are called upon in time of distress. Preferably with more research, or even with only the basic information given below, students will create scenarios in which the *lwa* may be called upon to serve. Consider some of the many crisis situations enumerated in Lesson Three, following. Which *lwa* might have been called on for assistance and comfort? A more comprehensive list of spirits is included in the Appendix and would enrich students' understanding of the Vodou families of spirits.

As students learn more about Vodou practices, they will find many examples of *vévé*, the personal symbol of the spirit drawn to encourage the *lwa* to appear. Analyze the *vévés* for one or more of the *lwa* below, looking to discern the meanings of the drawings and how they communicate different aspects of the spirit. Students will discover that different groups of vodou practitioners draw distinct *vévés*, but all contain aspects of the represented *lwa*. Students should analyze the different vévés for references to the *lwas* and create a new design for one or more of the *lwa* below, incorporating some of the following information (and more that they will learn as they research).

- **Azaka**, patron of agriculture, a good-natured man of the mountains. Dressed like a peasant farmer in blue denim and a straw hat, Zaka is considered a member of the family and is usually called "Papa" or "Cousin." His trademarks are a tasseled raffia bag and pipe.

- **Ezili Freda** is goddess of love and luxury who enjoys fine clothes, jewels, perfumes, and lace. Her colors are white and pink, her drinks must be sweet, and she prefers food offerings of rice cooked in cinnamon milk or bananas fried in sugar.

- **Danbala**, the patriarchal spirit of life and wisdom, and his wife the rainbow **Ayida Wedo** are usually pictured as entwined serpents.

- **Gran Bwa**, lord of the great forest, presides over the deepest mysteries of healing and initiation. He is typically represented in the form of a tree and leaves.

- **Ogou** is a family of warrior spirits from West Africa. An important member is St. Jacques who rides a white horse as he fights for justice. His hot temper often gets him into trouble and he must be calmed and cooled. He has dominion over all things iron, including automobiles and airplanes.

- **Lasiren** is a mermaid who brings luck and money from the ocean's depths. She may lure to a watery death those who offend her, but those who serve her well receive welcome rewards. Altars in her honor always contain a comb, mirror, conch shell, and bugle.

See also **Appendix** for discussions of additional *lwa*.

Lesson One: Art, History and a Way of Life (continued)

C. Not an island apart
Students should understand the many ramifications, beyond the island, of the eighteenth-century Haitian uprising and the nineteenth-century establishment of independence. With research they will learn of the many connections and interactions between Haiti and other parts of the world. Reading about these from the list below will lead to discovery of such associations.

A particularly good reference for teaching these connections is the unit of study by Anne Chapman, *Human Rights in the Making: The French and Haitian Revolutions*, published by the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA (see **Suggested Readings**). Use of the above and other resources will lead to better understanding of the causes and the interrelated repercussions of the first slave revolt and the creation of the world's first Black Republic.

- **France and the French Revolution**
  France's Declaration of the Rights of Man

- **United States**
  Slave holders in the South
  Abolitionists in the North
  The U.S. government, especially the policies of President Thomas Jefferson
  People living in the eastern cities, including New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, to which former residents of St. Domingue fled
  Those who fled to "The Promised Land" of Haiti to escape racial violence in U.S. cities in 1824.
  The Louisiana Purchase and its doubling of United States territory, as well as its importance for France

- **Latin American countries**
  As inspiration for other enslaved peoples
  Impact on the continuing slave trade to Brazil

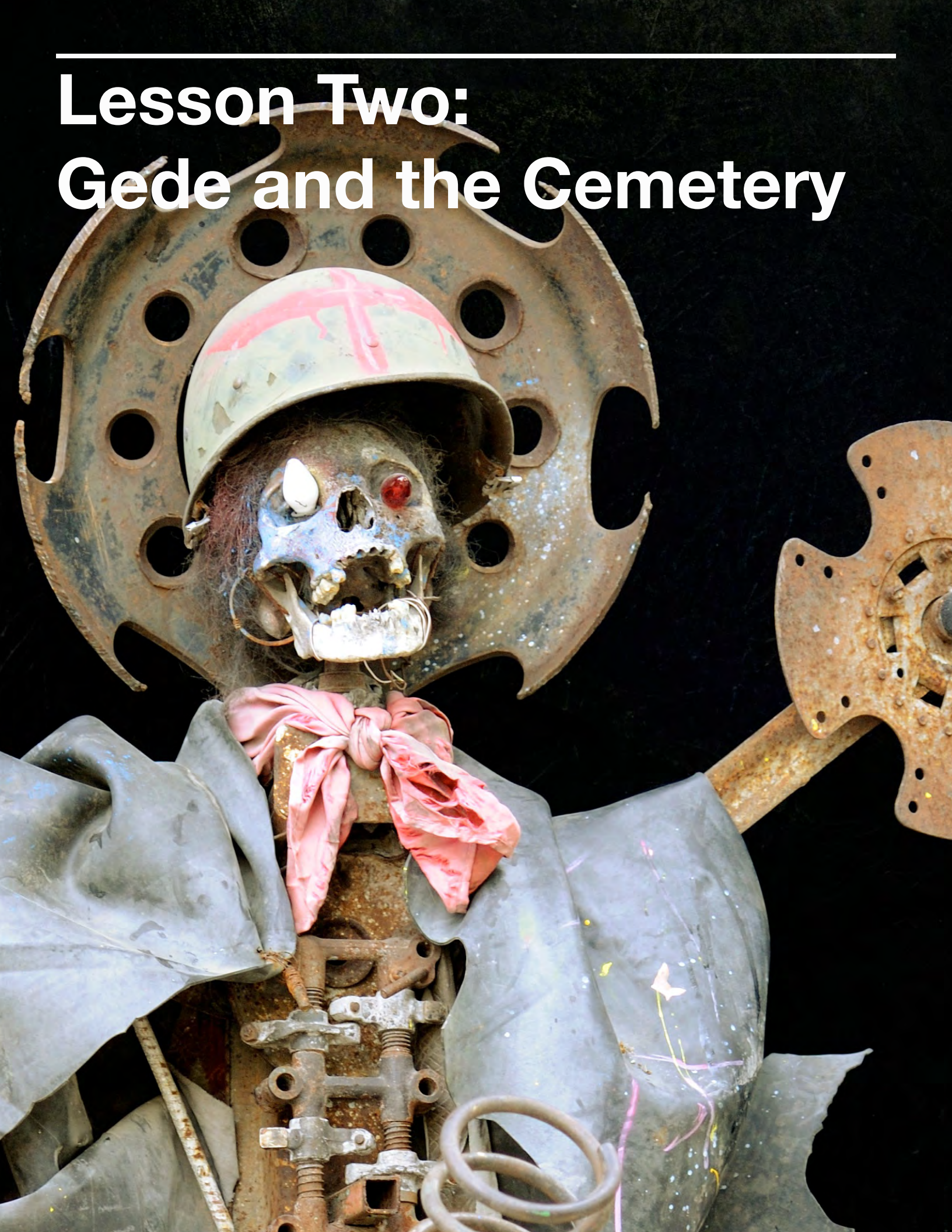
- **Caribbean islands**
  Relations with the Dominican Republic

Lesson One: Art, History and a Way of Life (continued)

Questions for Thought

- What roles do religions play in our lives? What does Vodou mean to Haitians?
- How does religion make life bearable for some in time of stress?
- In what ways do culture, history, religion, and art interconnect?
- Do all groups working toward a common goal (i.e., freedom) necessarily have the same motives?
- How did "Freedom for all" gained in Haiti's revolution differ from freedom gained in the revolution fought for U.S. independence?
- Should equal rights be guaranteed all people despite political and ideological differences?
- When a group's location or living situation changes, do other changes in practices necessarily result?

Lesson Two:
Gede and the Cemetery



Lesson Two: Gede and the Cemetery

Background Information

The natural and other catastrophes occurring in their country have not escaped the consideration of Haitian artists. They have continued to represent and reinterpret these unfolding disasters with unflinching vision and imagination. As circumstances and conditions have grown worse and worse, their art has grown richer, bolder, and more disconcerting. This is not surprising, since Haitian art has long been locked in a *danse macabre* with its own history. For more than half a century, this equation appears to have remained constant: the worse the circumstances, the more astonishing the art. Now both Haiti and its arts are *in extremis*.

Especially in this time of great challenge, it is around the Gede clan that some Haitian contemporary art, sacred and secular, is focused. The Gede, however, are not solely associated with the afterlife; they are also spirits of sexuality and regeneration, tribunes of justice, and beacons of hope. As the tragedies confronting Haiti increase, the contradictions in the nature of the Gede spirits seem to have grown more extreme. This has prompted some artists of postmillennial Haiti—working across a range of old and new genres—to profoundly reimagine and reshape the image of the Gede *lwa*.

While Vodou is the national religion of Haiti, it is also an aesthetic, a philosophy, and a way of life that was shattered in the Atlantic slave trade and then desperately put back together on the island of Hispaniola. It is Africa shipwrecked in the Caribbean, forced to adapt to what it then had to face. The arts and rituals of Vodou reflect the difficult and inspiring history of seven million people whose ancestors were brought from Africa to a new land in bondage.

The *lwa*, the Vodou spirits, also traveled across the Atlantic on the slave ships, and they too were profoundly affected by slavery and hard-won freedom. To honor and serve these spirits, Haitians created ceremonial arts based on African models, which were subsequently influenced by Catholic, Masonic, and other traditions, both sacred and secular. While Haitian Vodouists revere a supreme God (Gran Mèt or Bondye), it is the powerful *lwa* who are most present in lives of the worshippers and looked to for aid and assistance. The hundreds of *lwa* are divided into *nanchons*, or nations, much like human beings. One set of raucous spirits—the Gede family—personifies the ancestral dead and sexual regeneration. The Gede can be shameless tricksters, wise counselors, and benevolent healers known to have special love for children.

Unlike the other *lwa* within the Vodou pantheon, whose *nanchons* (nations) reflect shared African identities or were forged by the collective Haitian experience, the Gede spirits are understood to be an independent extended family. Presided over by the grim patriarch Bawon Samdi (also known as Papa Gede) and his dour bride, Grann Brijit, this clan notably includes Bawon Lakwa, keeper of the cemetery grounds; Bawon Simityè, who knows the secrets kept by the dead; and Bawon Kriminel who runs amok, biting himself, and wounding others.

Descended from these fearsome elders are a limitless band of capricious children, known collectively as the Gede spirits, who are as beloved as the Bawons are feared. The Gede are tricksters who cavort in opposition to the senior Bawons. The Gede always laugh, but Bawon never does. Bawon kills, but the Gede heal. Bawon is a skeleton, but the Gede are rotting flesh. Bawon is

boss, but the Gede are bums. Bawon imposes harsh order, but the Gede blow it off. Bawon has secrets, the Gede always tell the truth. Bawon tends to dress conservatively, often in a top hat and dress coat, the attire of an undertaker. His face is powdered white and he needs sunglasses because his eyes can't take the light after his underground work. Typically one lens is missing. His colors are purple and black. In art and action the Gede *lwa* morph into louts, rock stars, black-gowned college graduates, hipsters—whatever's new on the social horizon.

It is no surprise that the domain of the Gede family is the cemetery—the ultimate transition zone between life and death. The cemetery's poignancy lies also in its meaning as a crossroad, with references to Central African cosmology and Christian beliefs both present in the iconography of crosses.

Conspicuously positioned above the main entrance to Port-au-Prince's Grand Cimetière (Grand Cemetery) is the quotation: "*Remember that you are dust*" (*Souviens-toi que tu es poussière*). These words, potent reminders of human mortality, suggest that there is little room for subtlety or self-deception in this cramped, maze-like city of the dead. As with other cemeteries throughout Haiti, the burial ground is filled with cement and cinderblock crypts, some only temporarily rented, into which the recently deceased are carefully placed and from which the remains of previous residents may be removed to make way for the newly departed.

The aged bones of those who have served their time in the tomb and whose spirits have transitioned to another state of being are often gathered together in a communal repository or collected by family members for placement elsewhere. They may also be acquired legally by Vodou practitioners and contemporary artists for whom they epitomize the cycle of life and death.

Thus, skulls that migrate out of the graveyard and into temples and artists' ateliers give a deeper meaning to a welcoming quotation from Victor Hugo that is prominently affixed to an inner wall of the Grand Cimetière: "The tomb, which closes on the dead, opens the firmament. And that which on earth we call the end, is the commencement. Death is the portal of life."

Activities

A. Images of Gede: iconography and interpretation
Students will select works to analyze in an essay writing assignment. In preparation for their writing they may use their time in the gallery to look carefully at selected works. They may sketch out their essays as they visit *In Extremis* and/or in the classroom as they study images of works on view in the exhibition.

Haitians have confronted the reality of death and dying through song, ritual, dance, and other art forms. Images of the Gede spirits have traveled from the cemetery, to the streets of Haiti, and now to the galleries and museums of the world. Students will consider selected works and find visual evidence of the iconography of Gede and/or Bawon Samdi. They will then select one work of art and write a one-page essay about the piece. Students should identify the artist and any other works by the same artist and describe his or her artistic choices. Students will discuss their

interpretation of the works in their essays, following the rules for essay writing as provided by their teachers. Students' writing can be guided by the following questions:

- What are the attributes of the Bawon Samdi or the Gede spirits in the selected work?
- Does the image of Bawon Samdi allude to other historical or contemporary events? If so, what is the evidence for this claim?
- What colors, iconography, or other visuals lead you to Gede? Why?
- Why did you choose this particular work?
- What feelings does this work evoke for you? Why?
- How, if at all, does the artist 'regenerate' objects for his own use? Does it work? Why or why not?

B. Gede around and about

Can students find visual manifestations of Gede in their own lives? Pay attention to some advertising campaigns, as for power drinks, kitschy t-shirts, album covers, or mouse pads, etc. What connections can be made between Gede and Day of the Dead commemorations? Are there reminders of Gede in graffiti art around the city?

C. Behind the mask

One of the ways that we recognize Bawon Samdi is by his white face. The mask of death is in stark contrast to his black skin. Many authors and poets have compared the Black experience to wearing a mask. African Americans often wear a 'white' mask in order to fit into a society that devalues its culture. Students will read and interpret the poem of American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906), "We Wear the Mask." After discussing the ways in which we all wear different metaphorical masks, students will apply the metaphor to their own lives and compose original poems, using repetition and rhyme to describe the different ways that they wear masks in their lives.

"We Wear the Mask"
We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.
Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.
We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

—Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906)

Lesson Two: Gede and the Cemetery (continued)

Consider the following:
- What is the poetic structure of Dunbar's piece? Are the rhyming and repetition pattern what you expected?
- What does the poet mean by "We wear the mask?"
- In what ways do we wear a mask at school, at home, with our friends or otherwise?
- What masks have Haitians had to wear throughout history?
- What might the poet mean by "we sing, but oh the clay is vile beneath our feet, and long the mile" in relation to African Americans in this country during the time this poem was written?
- How have circumstances for African Americans changed since this poem was written? Conversely, how have circumstances remained the same?
- Who else might this poem be talking about or talking to?
- In what ways is this poem culturally specific? (Specific only to African Americans).
- In what ways is this poem universal to the human experience?
- In what ways do immigrants from this country mask their culture?

Students can follow up this writing assignment with *papier-mâché* masks. They will layer strips of paper onto a paper or cardboard mask form and adhere them with wallpaper paste, undiluted liquid starch, or regular white glue diluted with water (about one part to two or three parts glue). They are many suggestions on the Internet (keyword: papier mâché). If present at your school, a school art specialist or artist in residence may guide this art-making exercise. Students can also research the life and times of Paul Laurence Dunbar and compare and contrast the lives of African Americans in North America and Haitians in Haiti during this time. What historical similarities can they find? What historical differences can they find?

D. Gede and the government

In 1957, Jean Claude "Papa Doc" Duvalier became president of Haiti and began a twenty-nine-year dictatorship. Duvalier wore the 'mask' of Bawon Samdi, and when it was in his best interest he used Vodou for his own political gain—a process that further maligned the religion in some people's minds. The people of Haiti were ruled by Duvalier's dictatorship under his persona, or mask, as a controlling sinister god of death and it was a time of censorship, torture, and violence.

Students may delve deeply into this era of Haitian history by reading *A Taste of Salt* (2004) by Frances Temple. In this fictional account set in 1991 and told by seventeen-year old Djo, Haiti's resistance to the Duvalier dictatorship is revealed. The main character Djo tells his story from a hospital bed as he recovers from a beating by Duvalier's henchmen. Djo lived on the streets of Haiti before his adoption by Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is eventually elected President. Through Djo's fictional account, students are introduced to this important and difficult phase of Haiti's history as told by someone their own age. They will draw comparisons between Duvalier and Bawon Samdi. Students may read the text and compare the fictional account while fact-checking primary sources for the historical references.

Lesson Two: Gede and the Cemetery (continued)

Students can analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of different political systems across time, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances, and its obstacles.

- Explore the differing philosophies and structures of political systems (i.e., feudalism, mercantilism, socialism, fascism, communism, monarchies, parliamentary systems, and constitutional liberal democracies) to learn how they influence economic policies, social welfare policies, and human rights practices.

- Compare the various ways in which power is distributed, shared, and limited in systems of separated powers.

- Describe for at least two countries the consequences of conditions that gave rise to tyrannies during specific periods (e.g., in Italy, Japan, Haiti, Nigeria, Cambodia, Uganda, Germany).

- Identify the forms of illegitimate power that twentieth-century African, Asian, and Latin American dictators used to gain and hold office and the conditions and interests that supported them. In what ways were covert U.S. or other nations' interventions supportive or critical of these regimes?

- Demonstrate the transformations that Haiti has undergone historically by creating a visual timeline of Haitian history. Identify the types of political systems that have ruled the island beginning before the first European settlements.

Questions for Thought

- What comparisons can be made between Vodou practices and those of Latin America's celebration of Day of the Dead?
- What does sexuality have to do with death?
- In what ways is death like a mask?
- Why do you think Bawon Samdi is often characterized holding his phallus?
- The iconography of death within Haitian culture embodies many symbols, colors, and rituals; in what ways have artists used that imagery to communicate contemporary and historical events?
- How is a dictatorship like a form of slavery?

Lesson Three: Crises, Coping, and Creativity

Lesson Three: Crises, Coping, and Creativity

Background Information

> "When the earthquake struck I was driving down the mountain from Petionville. Our truck was being tossed to and fro like a toy and when it stopped I looked out the windows to see buildings 'pancaking' down like I have never witnessed before…."

Recounting his experiences on January 12, 2010, Bob Poff, the Salvation Army Director of Disaster Services in Haiti, continued with a description of the organization's camp in the days following. "All of the children and hundreds of neighbors are sleeping outside in our playground area tonight. Occasionally there is another tremor—another reminder that we are not yet finished with this calamity. And when it comes all of the people cry out and the children are terrified."

Fear, disbelief, and horror inevitably follow a major crisis whatever the location. This event, of course, took place in Haiti. Comparable calamities bring on similar reactions whenever and wherever they occur. Indonesian volcanic eruptions, Japan's tsunami just two months after the Haiti earthquake, the floods in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, and so many others, all put local residents into crisis mode. All proved the vulnerability of human beings to natural occurrences.

And as if human inability to control natural disasters isn't enough to demonstrate our vulnerability, we also are seemingly without sufficient defenses to forestall health crises. These have occurred throughout history with (among many others) the fourteenth-century's bubonic plague, the influenza pandemic that killed more people than the just-ended World War I, HIV/AIDS, and following the Earthquake of 2010 in Haiti, a crisis of epidemic proportions: cholera. This disease, usually caused by contaminated water supplies, has already killed thousands.

Sometimes a group primarily affected by a crisis can be geographically defined as is often the case with a political or economic crisis. Others are global threats such as Earth's warming and overpopulation.

Of course a crisis may be very personal, mainly affecting an individual, a family, or a community. A death of a close family member, marital discord leading to separation or divorce, loss of parental employment or one's home, a home destroyed by fire, neighborhood gang conflicts—all are traumatic and life transforming. Yet we cope. We call upon inner resources and often we make use of creative abilities and we cope.

Edwidge Danticat in her book, *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti* tells of the fantasies created by a seven-year-old boy named Junior who was trapped in the wreckage of his fallen house for eight days without food or water. To quiet his fears he thinks of the good times on his island: playing hide-and-seek with friends, happy days with Manman and Papa, and jumping in the puddles of a warm summer rain. Told very simply and written for young children, the book illustrates how resilience and imagination are called to use in time of great stress.

Lesson Three: Crises, Coping, and Creativity (continued)

Similarly demonstrating these characteristics, but in a visual rather than verbal form, are the artists of the Gran Rue, the Atis Rezistans. They have seen destruction of their homes and their workspaces, their artwork crushed and buried, and along with most of Haiti, the loss of family, friends, and fellow artists. “That thing,” as the Haitians call the Earthquake, was another calamity in the long line of crises affecting the citizens of this formerly rich first black republic.

Haiti has experienced many of the disasters enumerated above including those of natural origin such as hurricanes, earthquake, and fires. The country’s geographic location on the Atlantic Ocean hurricane track and its position on a fault line between the North American and the Caribbean tectonic plates certainly play a role. But “vulnerability to natural disasters is almost a direct function of poverty,” according to the director of the World Health Organization’s Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (http://www.3news.co.nz/Haiti-history-A-disaster-prone-nation/tabid/417/articleID/137257/Default.aspx) and Haiti is ranked as the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

This ranking comes after occurrences of many of the crises that are listed above. Governmental instability with three decades of U.S. occupation (until 1934), the despotic rule of ”Papa Doc” and “Baby Doc” Duvalier (1957–1986), armed rebellion leading to the forced resignation and exile of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, and subsequent and continued violence; economic crises; environmental degradation; poor infrastructure; cholera and HIV/AIDS are among the many events in Haiti’s recent history.

And still Haitian artists, along with the rest of the population, cope. They employ their creativity and they call upon their affiliation with Bawon Samdi. In most incidences of crisis there is a turning point, a transition, a traumatic change, and at these junctures there are the Gede spirits and there is the Bawon. As keeper of the crossroads and the focus of much of the art produced in the Earthquake’s aftermath, the Bawon holds forth. Indeed after the quake, standing tall in artist Andre Eugene’s courtyard, Gede is a survivor of the quake: a large intact metal figure sculpture of the Bawon surveys the destruction all around him.

The dramatically new art forms of the Atis Rezistans reflect the horror the people have endured. Picking up and using pieces of broken structures, artists are helping to pick up the wreckage of the world as they display resilience to their plight. Use of abundantly available detritus also shows a practical approach to their work, made necessary by yet another crisis—economic. Since Haiti’s artists have always been inspired by tragedy, the Earthquake gave them new fodder for creativity.

Activities Discussing Disasters

A. Natural disasters
Investigate the science behind natural events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, and hurricanes.

Research the differences in windstorms. What are the characteristics of hurricanes, typhoons, monsoons, tornadoes, cyclones, Santa Anas? Include distinctions between Atlantic and Pacific Ocean storms and their relative strengths. Consider hailstorms, snowstorms, firestorms, etc. What is "a perfect storm?"

B. Epidemics
Investigate the history of an epidemic: polio, flu, etc. Include the early recognition of the disease, when, how, and where it was documented, number of lives lost or affected, prevention techniques, and the background behind the cure, if there has been one.

C. Crises close to home
Give students the opportunity to list what they believe to be crisis events within their neighborhoods. Are there other situations that call for improvement but that the class would not quite classify as crises? What distinguishes the two categories?

Whether or not the situation exists near their schools students may address topics such as gangs, drugs, housing issues, and education failures since there is such a prevalence of these problems in our country and elsewhere in the world.

D. Personal crises
Each student should write of any personal experience that altered the course of his or her life. Was there a turning point or crossroads in that crisis, and if so what was it? The recounting of the experience could take the form of a journal entry or a news article. If the students choose to share their experiences, each should be given the opportunity.

Interpret the above experience in a poetry, music, dance, or visual art (i.e., drawing, painting, collage, video) project.

1. Investigate the correlation between destruction and new growth, i.e., regeneration after a forest fire, rebuilding a city with infrastructure and new building.
2. What do you think of the notion that artists and writers need to suffer before they can produce truly good work—that artists/writers produce their best work after undergoing a crisis situation?
3. Discuss human responsibility for disasters: for example deforestation, lack of infrastructure, political agendas, issues of ethnicity, and cultural difference.
4. Discuss the opinion quoted in the background of this lesson, "Vulnerability to natural disasters is almost a direct function of poverty." To what was the writer referring?

5. Often some people survive crises and are not directly impacted. What are responsibilities of local survivors? What are responsibilities of people who are not in the area, including international groups and individuals? How about government and non-government organizations? Do media outlets have certain obligations or special opportunities to respond? Address both prevention before a crisis and aid afterwards.

6. Through what channels are relief measures best handled? What needs are typically felt immediately following a disastrous natural event such as an earthquake, landslide, or tsunami? What the more long-term needs? How can agencies and individuals work to keep the public interested and responsive over time when there are remaining needs?

Questions for Thought

The Haitian language is rich in proverbs, often quoted in daily life and in time of crisis. Thus is the wisdom of elders passed to younger generations. There are usually multiple interpretations of each, so as your students give translations, others may provide differing interpretations. What is the significance of each before, during, or following a crisis? Are we familiar with proverbs or quotations in our own language that carry similar meanings?

Neg di san fe. Bondye fe san di.
Men talk and do not act. God acts and does not talk.

We jodi-a, men sonje denmen.
Live today, but think about tomorrow.

Deye mon gen mon.
Behind mountains are more mountains.

Woch nan dlo pa konn doule woch nan soley.
The rock in the water doesn't know the pain of the rock in the sun.

Bourikchaje pa kanpe.
The overloaded donkey can't stand still.

Yon sel dwet pa manje kalalou.
A single finger can't eat okra.

Sa je pa we ke pa tounen.
What the eye doesn't see, doesn't move the heart.

Kay koule tronpe soley, men li pa tronpe lapli.
The house that leaks can fool the sun, but it can't fool the rain.

Lesson Three: Crises, Coping, and Creativity (continued)

Ben anteman pa di paradi.
A beautiful burial does not guarantee heaven.

Piti piti, zwazo fè nich.
Little by little birds build their nests.

Ti moun fwonte grandi devan baron.
An impudent child grows up under Baron's eyes.

Gwo vant pa gwòs, gwo tèt pa lespri.
A big belly doesn't mean pregnancy, a big head doesn't mean intelligence.

Byen pre pa lakay.
Very close is not home yet.

Bèf san ke, Bondye pouse mouch pou li.
The ox with no tail, God clears out the flies for it.

Mache sou pinga'w pou pa pile si ou te konnen.
Walk on caution so you don't step on "if I had known."

Zèb ou pa vle leve nan jaden ou, leve devan pot ou.
Weeds you don't want to grow in your garden, grow in your front door.

Se pa lè moun ap neye pou montre'l naje.
Don't wait for someone to drown before showing him how to swim.

Merite pa mande.
The "deserved" don't have to ask.

Promès se dèt.
Promises are debts.

Se soulye ki konn si chosèt gen twou.
It is the shoe that knows if the sock has a hole.

Sim te konnen toujou dèyè.
"If I had known" is always behind.

Malè pa gen klaksonn.
Misfortune has no horn.

Menm nan lanfè gen moun pa.
Even in hell there are people from your clan.

Moun ki bezwen deyò, chache chemen pòt.
He who must go out, search for the door.

Kouto pa janm grate manch li.
Knife can never scratch its handle.

Padon pa geri maleng.
Sorry doesn't heal the scars.

Chemen bezwen pa janm long.
The road to need is never too long.

Nan pwem lapriyè ki pa gen amen.
There is no prayer without its amen.

Sa'k rive kodenn nan, ka rive kòk la.
What happened to the turkey, can happen to the rooster.

Lesson Four: From the Streets to the Museum

Lesson Four: From the Streets to the Museum

Background Information

As the Gede spirits populate Haitian cemeteries, so is their presence strongly felt in the Grand Rue art district of Port-au-Prince. Near the studios of the artists' collective known as Atiz Rezistans, stands a large sculpture of Bawon Samdi. Around him on all sides is wreckage, the aftermath of the most disastrous earthquake in Haiti's history. Coming as it did after centuries of calamities, "that thing," as Haitians refer to the Earthquake of 2010, delivered what would seem to be a final blow to aspirations and plans of the people, taking an estimated quarter of a million lives (if the true number will ever be known), and leaving 3,000,000 people in dire need.

But there is Bawon Samdi—taking it all in and though, with the other survivors, he laments the terrible losses, he also looks ahead. Around him are his fellow survivors, the creative population of the Grand Rue art district in Haiti's capital and largest city.

The Grand Rue is the main avenue through and beyond downtown Port-au-Prince culminating at the southern end with a makeshift car repair district, junkyards, and salvage shops. In the surrounding narrow streets, local artists crafted tourist bait out of materials recycled from nearby shops. Here in an atmosphere of junk-into-treasures artists have called upon their African and Haitian cultural heritage. The main street, Grand Rue, is officially named Boulevard Jean-Jacques Dessalines after the hero who was brought to Haiti as a slave, labored as a field worker until he joined the slave rebellion in 1791, and became a revolutionary leader in the defeat of Napoleon's forces.

Appointed as Governor-General, Dessalines named himself Emperor Jacques I of Haiti and is remembered as a founding father of Haiti. Fittingly, his background was one of diverse elements: slave, battlefield hero, ruler of a newly independent Haiti, self-proclaimed emperor, and father of his country.

Dessalines, Bawon Samdi, the expressive works of the Grand Rue artists—all are made up of many parts combining into dramatic wholes. The works of the Grand Rue artists include powerful sculptures made from the detritus of scrap metal, bed springs, tire treads, TV monitors, clothing, car chassis, bed springs, computer components, car engine parts, old shoes, hubcaps, doll heads, nails, bicycle parts, fan pieces, lumber, and sometimes human skulls. Discarded materials are given new life; death and life come together.

Many of the artists grew up in this neighborhood where everyday contact with creativity took the place of formal art training. Their studios are situated in a crowded area of Port-au-Prince—in a warren of interlocked junkyards, auto salvage shops, homes, and ateliers, abuzz with constant activity.

From the vast surrounding scrapyard they have assembled figures of the *lwa*, especially of Bawon Samdi and his trickster family, the Gede. The art world has taken notice. Some of the artists have been recognized for their talent by a public unable to comprehend the extent of the horrors of Haiti's recent past. Exhibitions of their sculptural work have been held in Havana, Dakar, Europe (London, Paris, Milan) and the United States (Chicago, Miami, Pittsburgh) where visitors both acclaimed and purchased the work.

Lesson Four: From the Streets to the Museum (continued)

In 2000 a group of the sculptors founded an artists' collective that they named "Atis Rezistans" (Resistance Artists) though they are generally known as the artists of the Grand Rue. André Eugène, Jean Herard Celeur, and Frantz Jacques aka Guyodo were early members. Their powerful works of sculpture and assemblage utilize a vast array of materials and typically speak to their common African/Haitian heritage. With the scraps of the Haitian economy in extremis along with the art, the artists are bolder and their work more astonishing and disturbing.

They are using the detritus listed above and more. Many of the recycled materials result from long-time use and overuse including scrap metal from cars and tap-taps (colorfully painted buses and trucks); many more represent the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake with the twisted and fallen remains of former homes, schools, and work places; and others come from the west where people responded to the devastation with monetary donations and contributions of used clothing and home objects. The aged bones of those who have served their time in the tomb and whose spirits have transitioned to another state of being are often gathered together in a communal repository or collected by family members for placement elsewhere, or acquired by Vodou practitioners and contemporary artists for whom they epitomize the cycle of life and death—as seen on some of the works by Atis Rezistans artists.

Sometimes the contributions see unintended usage. The artist Guyodo, in a film by Leah Gordon (www.deathandfertility.org) explains that the frequent choice of shoes in his work was not made just because they're available: "The reason I use them is because they are second hand shoes sent to Haiti, shoes that are not appropriate to Haiti. The streets are difficult in Haiti but they send us high heel shoes or shoes for the winter, and my idea is that it would be better if we had our own Haitian shoe production employing Haitians rather that French, Italian, English, American and others."

Sculpture and assemblage are not the only products of Haiti's current artists. Painters, photographers, filmmakers, musicians, and dancers offer new interpretations of their craft. The widespread transition of Haitian art into new interpretations of traditional works has included a makeover of the bright sequined flags called *drapo*. This genre, a favorite of tourists and art galleries, has been taken beyond the Vodou altars and temples. There their sequined surfaces attract the attention of the *lwa* and invite or summon them to rituals and celebrations. Artists usually depicted the spirits in graphic drawings of the *lwas*' *vévés* or as renderings of the Catholic saints who shared the *lwas*' traits.

Some of today's drapo artists—the works of several are in the exhibition—express their concerns by displaying in extremis depictions of the *lwa* and post-earthquake Haiti. To match the enormity of their concerns, the finished *drapo* are larger and more elaborate than ever before with buttons, beads, and other materials joining the traditional sequins in new and larger visual displays.

To ensure continued production of art here and, importantly to add to meager opportunities and incomes, the Atis Rezistans group organized a children's group called Ti Mouns Rezistans. Older artists and teachers present workshops for local children, helping instill skills, creativity, and pride in this typically deprived young group. The children exhibit their works and have been able to sell them at the Atiz Rezistans studio, in exhibitions, and online.

Lesson Four: From the Streets to the Museum (continued)

In 2009, Atis Rezistans members organized an event they named the Ghetto Biennale. Their goal was to display art despite the many government regulations that had proven frustrating and limiting to those who had tried to exhibit in international settings. Adopting the term Ghetto Biennale, the artists incorporated a designation they, themselves, used for their local area. (The ghetto originated in sixteenth-century Venice as a restricted and delineated area where Jews were forced to live.) The artists planned to hold the event every other year, mimicking the well-established art event held in Venice since 1895 and copied worldwide. Here in Port-au-Prince, literally in its own backyard, the collective set out to hold an international exhibition. They invited over one hundred artists from many countries and of diverse backgrounds, and selected more than forty to participate in making or showing work executed in the neighborhood.

Less than one month later, "that thing" occurred and Haiti was devastated. With the resiliency so regularly called upon, Haitians continue to pick up their lives and continue to make art. In 2011, Atiz Rezistans held a successful second Ghetto Biennale.

Activities

A. A workplace for many
Consider the many aspects of working in a community of people with similar interests. How might proximity to other artists affect creativity? Productivity? Expenses? Let students share any such experiences they've had.

B. Q and A with an artist
View and compare the works of specific artists of Atiz Rezistans. Have each student select one artist in the exhibition and compile a series of questions in the form of an interview about his/her work or life, to be answered in essay form, or by exchanging questions with another student. Select another artist and research him/her. Be sure to use the accompanying short biographies of artists in this exhibition.

C. Ghettoes and biennales
Students should research the histories of the two terms, both with origins in Venice. As they learn about the many restrictions on Jews centuries ago, they will also learn about ghettoes of more recent history, and will consider the use of the term for neighborhoods in their own region today. How do United Nation-designated "red zones" in Port-au-Prince compare to ghettoes students know or have researched? What are the reasons for restricting movement to and within these areas? Are there ever justifications for the restrictions?

In learning more about the Venice Biennale and similar exhibitions, students will understand how their beginnings were largely intended to promote the acceptance and sale of contemporary art. Does that differ from today's motives? Students should investigate and compare historical colonial exhibitions (intended to promote trade and support for colonial empires) and art salons, and today's many art biennials, triennials, and festivals. Students will evaluate the worthiness of these platforms as venues for introducing and marketing art. They would find interesting a recent

Lesson Four: From the Streets to the Museum (continued)

colonial exhibitions (intended to promote trade and support for colonial empires) and art salons, and today's many art biennials, triennials, and festivals. Students will evaluate the worthiness of these platforms as venues for introducing and marketing art. They would find interesting a recent article on the subject, "Rethinking the Biennial", that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 2012. They should pay particular attention to the motives for establishing the Ghetto Biennale in Haiti and evaluate its success in accomplishing them. Students may discuss a remark on the Atis Rezistans Web page by artist André Eugène, one of the early members of the collective, about the necessity of their work: "It's usually always the bourgeoisie who own the galleries. But I wanted to have a gallery, not only a gallery, but it must be a museum. This is the reason why I have given the name 'E Pluribus Unum' Musee d'Art to my studio and yard."

D. Artful statements with many parts

Students should have the opportunity to construct original assemblages. The project and the process will vary with the constraints of your classroom. For some a fully three-dimensional sculpture may be possible, others may need to contain works within a box or an equivalent, or alternatively restrict the work by attaching component pieces to a flat backing. For those with even more space limitations, the experience might be limited to collages making use of smaller components.

Among several aspects to consider:

- Terminology: **Assemblage** is a three-dimensional composition made by bringing together (assembling) various materials. Adhering flat elements and other items to a flat surface creates a **collage**. **Found objects** are natural or man-made, not previously intended for an artistic purpose.
- Themes: Will the assemblage be based on a personal, family, or community experience? Will it reflect situations in the world or in a more personal sphere? Can it illustrate aspects of this exhibition or other facets of your class program?
- Materials: Ready-made, discarded, and found objects can be collected from home, the class room, and, following a teacher-led precautionary discussion about trash, depositories of discards. As a group the class could suggest materials that would be particularly pertinent to the chosen theme. You may provide the beginning of a trash trove and over a period have students add to it. Students will probably do their own collecting and look to your central source for wanted additions.
- Related written activities: After students complete the assemblage, they will write a short essay on why they selected the materials (or a particular one) they used, how the material(s) related to their theme or idea, and what tools and techniques they used throughout the process to best communicate their idea or theme.

Lesson Four: From the Streets to the Museum (continued)

Questions for Thought

- How are artists inspired? What might comprise the inspiration?
- What comparisons can be made between the work of the Atis Rezistans members and graffiti artists in Los Angeles?
- Should traditional sacred art forms be reinterpreted by artists?
- How has Haiti's art proven to be a major resource of the country?
- How does art reflect the outlook—optimistic or pessimistic—of a people?
- How would you characterize the art of the Atis Rezistans?
- In what ways are Haiti's new art forms a reflection of its recent past?
- Can you find or share other examples of art "rising from the rubble?"
- What roles can the arts play in rebuilding a community or a country?

Appendix

BIOGRAPHIES OF EXHIBITED HAITIAN ARTISTS

Much of the information on flag makers provided below is drawn from Nancy Josephson's *Spirits in Sequins: Vodou Flags of Haiti* (2007). Due to the vagaries of the art market and its comparatively recent embrace of Haitian art and artists—coupled with the fact that most of the artists are self-taught—a full biography and exhibition history are not recorded or available for every artist.

Alcide, Evelyne (b. 1969, Port-au-Prince)—An extremely talented beaded-flag artist, Alcide creates much of her work in large format, and as a result, it is extremely heavy. Gede and La Siren appear frequently in her pieces, and she has created very powerful and complex images of the destruction caused by the Earthquake of 2010. Her flag art has previously been exhibited at the Fowler Museum and at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe.

Azor, Roudy (b. 1980, Port-au-Prince)—Like Evelyne Alcide, artist Roudy Azor creates beaded flags. At the large scale that both these artists employ, the term "flag" is somewhat of a misnomer. Azor often starts with designs drawn on bedsheets or other large pieces of cloth, transforming them with swirling patterns of beads in the background and demonstrating an extremely sophisticated sense of color.

Barra, Pierrot (b. 1942, Port-au-Prince; d. 1999, Port-au-Prince)—Barra was born in the Bel-Air district of Port-au-Prince, a neighborhood known for its artists and flag makers. He began his career making Vodou flags, but in the late 1980s, while working with his wife, Marie Cassaise, he began to create fantastic assemblages from discarded materials that depicted Vodou spirits. Barra was a Vodou priest and the president of a Bizango society.

Basquiat, Jean-Michel (b. 1960, Brooklyn, New York; d. 1988, New York)—Basquiat's father, Gerard, was Haitian, born in Port-au-Prince; his mother was of Puerto Rican heritage. Jean-Michel's brief career followed an amazing arc. He initially received recognition as a graffiti artist in the late 1970s and appeared in the seminal *Times Square Show* of 1980, which also included the work of Keith Haring and Lee Quinones. During the 1980s he was featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions. These included: *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture* (1984, Museum of Modern Art, New York); the Whitney Biennial (1983); and Documenta 7 (1982). Major retrospectives of the artist's work have been mounted by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1992) and the Brooklyn Museum, New York (2005).

Bazile, Clotaire (b. 1946, Port-au-Prince)—Bazile is a Vodou priest and a renowned maker of Vodou *drapo*. He began to create flags in the early 1970s. He reports that he received his artistic training from spirits who appeared to him in dreams. Initially, Bazile's flags were made solely for ritual use, but with growing interest on the part of tourists and others in Haitian *drapo*, he expanded his oeuvre to include secular flags. In 1980 he established a flag-making workshop in Port-au-Prince, which continues to operate, although the artist now spends much of his time in Miami.

Benjamin, Mario (b. 1964, Port-au-Prince)—Benjamin is the son of a pharmacist and an architect and is considered one of Haiti's leading contemporary artists. Although self-taught, he is a keen observer of contemporary art. Initially he worked as a painter of photo-realist portraits, making use of his considerable talents as a draughtsman. Later, however, he moved toward abstraction and expanded into video, multimedia works, and installations, in addition to painting. He has had solo exhibitions in Haiti, Mexico City, and Florida and was invited to participate in the Havana Biennial (1996), the Johannesburg Biennial (1997), and the Venice Biennial (2001).

Bigaud, Wilson (b. 1931, Port-au-Prince; d. 2010, Vialet, near Petit Goâve)—Bigaud initially worked as a sculptor, but he was encouraged by Dewitt Peters of the Centre d'Art to pursue painting and studied with Maurice Borno. In the early 1950s Bigaud's painting *Terrestrial Paradise* was awarded second prize at an international exhibition held in Washington, D.C., and it was ultimately acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In 1951, Bigaud painted his masterpiece *The Wedding of Cana*, a mural in the Episcopal cathedral in Port-au-Prince, which was destroyed in the Earthquake of 2010. Despite having suffered from severe depression, which interrupted his career for many years, Bigaud is still regarded as one of Haiti's preeminent painters.

Boyer, David (b. 1976, Port-au-Prince)—Born in the Bel-Air neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, David Boyer began working in the ateliers of renowned flag makers at the age of twelve and continues to be inspired by Vodou *drapo*. Also influenced by the assemblage pieces pioneered by Pierrot Barra, he often incorporates nontraditional materials, such as buttons and mirrors, in his works. Having been featured in Haitian exhibitions at Galerie Monnin in Port-au-Prince and Musee Georges Liautaud de Croix-des-Bouquets, Boyer was included in the 11th Havana Biennal (2012), and his creations are quickly garnering attention worldwide.

Celeur, Jean Hérard (b. 1966, Port-au-Prince)—Hérard is one of the founding members of the artists' collective known as Atis Rezistans. Like co-founder André Eugène, he grew up near the auto repair shops and junkyards of the Grand Rue, where Atis Rezistans maintains its atelier. Celeur received training as a sculptor from his brother. Working initially in a fairly traditional style, he has become increasingly radical in his themes and technique. His sculpture makes use of the detritus and abandoned auto parts that are abundant in the Grand Rue neighborhood. His work has been exhibited in Port-au-Prince, Chicago, Miami, Dakar, Milan, London, Geneva, Venice, and Paris.

Civil, Didier (b. 1973, Jacmel)—Civil is both a painter and a celebrated maker of papier-mâché masks for Carnival. He has led a number of mask-making workshops in the United States at venues including Brown University (2010); Wesleyan University (2010); Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe (2007); and Monsserat College, Boston (2007). In 2007 he was commissioned by the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève in Switzerland to create a representation of the ceremony of Bois Caïman, which launched the Haitian Revolution, as part of the exhibition *Le Vodou: Un art de vivre*. His work has been widely exhibited in Haiti and has also appeared in exhibitions in Seattle (2007) and Chicago (2003–2004).

Constant, Myrlande (b. 1968, Port-au-Prince)—Constant learned the art of beading as a teenager while working alongside her mother in a Port-au-Prince factory making wedding dresses. She quit her job over a wage dispute and went on to become one of the most celebrated artists working in the new style of Vodou *drapo*. Her works are often very large, much more densely beaded, and more painterly than the those of earlier flag makers (most of whom were men). In 2011 Constant was invited to Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, as part of the series of exhibitions, workshops, and lectures titled *Reframing Haiti: Art, History, and Performativity*, during which she conducted a three day flag-making workshop.

Denis, Maksaens (b. 1968, Port-au-Prince)—Denis studied audiovisual production at L'École Supérieure de l'Audiovisuel in Paris, graduating in 1992. He worked in television for about ten years before becoming disenchanted with it. He had simultaneously been engaging for a number of years in various visual experiments, and he gradually transformed into a full-time "video-artist," producing installations wherein the video screen was an integral part of a sculpture and in dialogue with it. In 2002 Haitian curator Barbara Prézeau-Stephenson invited him to mount his first solo exhibition at the Society of Technological Arts in Montreal. In 2004 he was invited to the Venice Biennale and included in exhibitions in Paris and at the Brooklyn Museum. He has traveled and exhibited internationally, participating in art residencies in Mexico, California, Senegal, Sudan, and South Africa.

Duval-Carrié, Edouard (b. 1954, Port-au-Prince)—Although Duval-Carrié was born in Haiti, his family moved to Puerto Rico when he was still very young. He received his formal artistic training at Loyola University in Montreal, Canada, and the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France. After residing in France for eight years, he moved to Miami, Florida, were he still lives and works. Duval-Carrié's art, which prominently features Haitian spirits and themes, has been exhibited internationally. His solo-exhibition venues have included The Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville, Florida (2008); The Fowler Museum (2004); Lowe Art Museum, Miami (2003): Galería Arcaute, Monterrey, Mexico (2003); Phoenix Art Musesum (2002); Musée du Collège Saint-Pierre, Port-au-Prince (1996); as well as museums and galleries in New York, Washington, D.C., Bogota, Santo Domingo, Paris, and elsewhere.

Eugène, André (b. 1959, Port-au-Prince)—Beginning his career as a builder, Eugène gradually became interested in sculpting wood. He was initially influenced by contemporary Haitian artists such as Nasson and ultimately by more established artists, including Mario Benjamin and Barbara Prézeau. His sculpture is characteristically figurative and imbued with a caustic wit and sharp sense of irony. Eugène often employs human skulls as well as the car parts and other detritus that abound in his Grand Rue neighborhood in his work. As one of the founding members of the artists' collective known as Atis Rezistans, he is keenly aware that access to the world of galleries and museums is often restricted to the bourgeoisie. The Atis Rezistans atelier was created in part to counter this tendency, and the artist refers to his studio and yard as the "E Pluribus Unum" Musée d'Art. Eugène's work has been included in exhibitions held in France, the United States, Barbados, Italy, and Sweden. He has also served, along with Leah Gordon and others, as a curator for the Ghetto Biennales of 2009 and 2011.

Ganthier, Patrick, aka Killy (b. 1966, Pétionville)—The artist known as "Killy" was born Patrick Ganthier." From 1987 to 1990, he studied at the Centre d'Art and the atelier Kaytiga. In 2004 Killy immigrated to Montreal, where he continues to live and work. His paintings, sculptures, and works on paper often deal with themes of impermanence and draw from his personal experiences as well as from the history of Haiti. His work has been internationally exhibited and was included in the 2011 Venice Biennale.

Gétho, Jean Baptiste (b. 1972, Port-au-Prince)—One of the younger artists associated with the Atis Rezistans collective, Gétho is building a reputation for his sculpture, which employs predominantly discarded toys and plastic items.

Jacques, Frantz, aka Guyodo (b. 1973, Port-au-Prince)—Guyodo was born in the Grand Rue neighborhood of Port-au-Prince and still lives and works in the house in which he was born. As a young boy he was employed finishing wooden items for sale to tourists. After a stint as a soccer player, he began to make art, exhibiting his work in Port-au-Prince for the first time in 1989. Guyodo was a founding member of the Atis Rezistans collective. In 2006 he was commissioned by the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool—along with André Eugène and Jean Hérard Celeur—to collaborate with internationally renowned Haitian artist Mario Benjamin on a *Freedom Sculpture* to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain. The *Freedom Sculpture* toured the United Kingdom before being permanently installed in Liverpool. Guyodo's work has been exhibited in the Ghetto Biennales of 2009 and 2011, as well as in Pittsburgh and Chicago.

Jean, Alphonse Junior, aka Da, Papa (b. 1978, Port-au-Prince)—An *oungan* as well as an artist, Papa Da resides in the Grand Rue section of Port-au-Prince and is affiliated with the Atis Rezistans collective. His work was included in the Ghetto Biennale of 2011. As is the case with other Grand Rue artists, Papa Da specializes in the recombination of scrap metal, wood, and other cast-off materials as a means of envisioning Vodou divinities (especially Gede) and other spiritual forces.

Jeannot, Jean Philippe (b. 1958, Port-au-Prince; d. 1997, Port-au-Prince)—Jeannot was both an *oungan* and an artist, and Bawon Mazaka was his Gede. An acclaimed and much sought after painter of Vodou shrines and decorator of ritual objects, Jeannot well exemplifies the cadre of Haitian ritual artists who have become celebrated outside the confines of the temple. Like Hector Hyppolite and others, he brilliantly translated images initially meant for the walls of sacred enclosures in Haiti to Masonite boards and canvas for display in galleries and museums.

Joseph, Silva (b. 1930, Léogâne; d. 2011, Port-au-Prince)—Flag maker and *oungan*, Silva Joseph created his first *drapo* in 1972. Maintaining a workshop within a few small rooms of his *ounfò*, Silva rose to become one of the most renowned of the Bel-Air school of flag makers. As he grew older, he transitioned from the actual sewing of flags to their design and to acting as an artistic director within his atelier. His work is characterized by a preference for traditional Vodou imagery with the predominant image usually based upon Catholic chromolithographs or *vèvè* associated with various *lwa*.

Lauren, Guerly (b. 1983, Port-au-Prince)—An up-and-coming member of Atis Rezistans, Lauren's work was included in *Nouvo Rezistans: An International Exhibition of Street Artists* (2011) at *l'Institute Français* in Port-au-Prince.

Leonidas, Rony (b. 1946, Cap Haitien)—Leonidas began painting in 1968 and continues the Cap-Haitien style closely associated with that colonial town in northern Haiti. Like Philome Obin and other notable painters of the region, he looks to the rich history of the area and notable aspects of daily life for inspiration. Accordingly, his paintings feature colorfully active scenes of marketplaces, agricultural work, and key communal rituals such as Carnival and Masonic ceremonies. His works have been exhibited in numerous venues and are included in the collections of museums worldwide.

Lhérisson, Dubreus (b. 1971, Cap Haitien)—At age fourteen Lhérisson moved from Cap Haitien to Port-au-Prince to live with his mother, who had settled there earlier. He was a frequent presence in the temple of his granduncle Tibout (Ceus Saint Louis, considered one of the preeminent Haitian flag artists and a legendary costumer for Haitian Rara groups). Lhérisson participated in the work of his granduncle's atelier and continued to make flags after Tibout's death. Some of his flags employ the insertion of padding between two layers of cloth, producing a quilted effect. Such stuffed and beaded work sometimes appears on older Rara costumes, which Lhérisson would have seen in Tibout's temple.

Liautaud, Georges (1899, Croix-des-Bouquets; d. 1991)—Sculptor Georges Liautaud lived his entire life in the small town of Croix-des-Bouquets, and his ornate metal crosses, recalling *vèvè*, fill its cemetery. He started working iron in the capacity of a blacksmith, repairing implements and tools, but as his skill developed, he progressed to making crosses and other ritual objects. In the 1950s Dewitt Peters saw Liautaud's crosses and sought him out. This meeting spurred the growth of Liataud's career as an artist and the development of a genre of cut and forged metalwork in Haiti. Liautaud made sculptures embodying many themes, including the *lwa*, Vodou rituals, *marasa* (twins), and states of possession.

Louisjuste, Pierre Charnel (b. date unknown, Croix-des-Bouquets). Son of Janvier Louisjuste and nephew of Seresier Louisjuste, Pierre continues the family tradition of crafting flat and three-dimensional metal sculptures for tourists and collectors. Moving beyond the traditional shapes and sizes of cut-steel drum art, he also fashions larger sculptural assemblages.

Louisjuste, Seresier (dates unknown, d. Croix-des-Bouquets)—Along with his brother Janvier, Seresier trained under master metalworker Georges Liautaud in the 1960s. By the 1970s, Louisjuste had achieved international recognition for ornate images—animals, mermaids, musicians, Vodou spirits—created from recycled steel oil drums. Additionally, he served as a key mentor to leading members of the next generation of Croix-des-Bouquets metal artists, including Gabriel Bien-Aimé (b. 1951), Serge Jolimeau (b. 1952), and Jean Sylvestre.

Magloire, Stivenson (b. 1963, Pétionville; d. 1994)—Magloire was the son of the well-known Haitian artist Louisiane Saint Fleurant, who was connected with the Sans Soleil school of painting. Magloire's own paintings were highly symbolic and often engaged the subjects of greed and corruption in Haitian politics and religion. He had his first exhibition in Haiti in 1989, followed by exhibitions in Europe, the United States, and Japan. He was successful and highly regarded as a painter by the mid-1990s when he was assassinated by anti-Aristide paramilitary attachés.

Monnin, Pascale (b. 1974, Port-au-Prince)—Born to Swiss parents in Haiti, Pascale Monnin moved with her mother to Switzerland in 1977. She returned to Haiti each summer and during school vacations where she was surrounded by Haitian art and artists. Monnin studied art in Geneva, and in 1994 returned to live in Haiti. She works in a variety of media and has exhibited her work internationally.

Pierre, André (b. circa 1915, Port-au-Prince; d. 2005)—At a young age, Pierre moved to Croix-des-Missions on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince where he eventually became a farmer. He also painted gourds with depictions of the *lwa* for the Vodou temple with which he was associated. Maya Deren saw his gourd paintings in the 1940s and suggested that he paint on canvas and offer his paintings to the Centre d'Art. Thus began a long career. Pierre ultimately became an *oungan* and was regarded as a major artist and spiritual heir to Hector Hyppolite. Collectors, journalists, and art historians from all over the world visited his modest home to see his detailed paintings of the *lwa* and to listen to him discourse on the subject of Vodou's legitimacy as a world religion.

Saintilus, Jean Claude (b. 1960, Port-au-Prince)—In the mid-1990s Saintilus began working with André Eugène, and in 2002 he began an association with the Atis Rezistans artists' collective. Saintilus relates that he comes from a very mystical family, and his work is very strongly connected to Vodou, more so than that of the other artists of the Grand Rue. Like other members of his family, he was baptized by a Gede. He maintains an ancestral yard just off rue du Magasin de L'Etat, which is filled with sculptures that serve as memorials to deceased friends and family members, along with depictions of Gede and Grann Brijit

St. Eloi, Lionel (b. 1950, Port-au-Prince)—Saint Eloi began to paint in the early 1970s and joined the Centre d'Art. By the 1990s, he had shifted his focus to sculpture. His works in these two media have been exhibited internationally. Music is an important part of his life, and he is the product of the movement known as Poto-Mitan, which involved painting, music, and dancing. Only in the last few years has St. Eloi begun to try his hand at flag making. In doing so, he displays a characteristic sense of experimentation, incorporating unusual materials—including disks cut from plastic bottles, which sometimes stand in for sequins— and his own unique interpretations of Vodou *lwa* and iconography.

Telemak, Yves (b. 1960, Port-au-Prince)—Telemak is the son of a famous *oungan* from the Bel-Air neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, and he received his training from the well-known flag maker Boss To (who studied with Telemak's father). After several years of factory work, while continuing to make flags on weekends, Telemak was fired. Soon after, he took up flag making as a career and began to experiment, developing extremely complex and abstract border patterns that represented a departure from older flags. He became the first flag maker to begin signing his work (after discovering another artist trying to pass Telemak's work off as his own). Today, Telemak is recognized as one of Haiti's best living flag makers, and his work has been internationally exhibited.

Valris, Georges (b. 1953, Cavaillion)—After working as a basket maker, textile worker, and cruise line employee, Valris was finally able to realize his dream of opening his own business in Port-au-Prince in the late 1980s. He had learned the technique of flag making from a friend and began experimenting. He prides himself on his control of his studio and his professionalism has led to commissions from well-known artists outside of Haiti, including Alison Saar, Tina Girouard, and Edouard Duval-Carrié. His flag-making style is recognizable with backgrounds filled with tightly packed imagery.

Zéphirin, Frantz (b. 1968, Cap Haitien, Haiti)—The son of an architect, Zéphirin is a self-taught artist, who today lives outside of Port-au-Prince. As a child he spent considerable time observing his uncle, Haitian painter Antoine Obin, and he begin to attempt painting on his own at age seven. Zéphirin has exhibited internationally in solo and group exhibitions including *Haïti Art Naïf: Erinnerungen an ein Paradies?* (2010, Denkmalschmiede Höfgen, Grimma, Germany, catalog); *Home and Beast* (2006–2007) and *Holy H_2O: Fluid Universe* (2005, both held at the American Visionary Art Museum, Baltimore); Fifth Biennal, Cuenca, Ecuador (1996); *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou* (1995, traveling exhibition originating at the Fowler Museum, catalog). Following the Earthquake of 2010, his work also appeared on the covers of the *New Yorker* (January 25, 2010) and the *Smithsonian Magazine* (September 2010). Zéphirin is a Vodou priest as well as an artist.

Appendix: Further Background: Haiti, A Historical View (updated)

Haiti, A Historical View, updated

From Lesson One, Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou Curriculum Resource Unit, Fowler Museum at UCLA

The Republic of Haiti, a Caribbean country roughly the size of Maryland, lies just 600 miles southeast of Florida. With the recent turmoil in Haiti, an understanding of Haiti's dynamic history is especially valuable. Behind the American media's portrayal of Haiti is a vibrant nation with a fascinating history, including the distinction of being the first independent black republic in the Americas. Haiti is the Western third of the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic.

Haiti was originally inhabited by the Taino people of the Arawak tribe. In their language, "Haiti" means "Land of the Mountains". When the Spanish first arrived on December 6, 1492, they renamed the island "Hispañola," or "Little Spain," and forced the agricultural Taino to labor in Spanish gold mines. European exploitation, murder, and diseases quickly took their toll; by the early 1500s, over four-fifths of the native population had been lost. By 1503, the Spanish had turned to the African slave trade to replace the Taino with a supply of cheap labor. Nobody knows exactly how many slaves were brought to Haiti in this "Middle Passage," but according to census document there were at least a half million African slaves by 1790. Several hundred thousand more were worked to death. Acts of rebellion became frequent. The Spanish continued to govern by force, subjecting slaves to harsh cruelties.

The Spanish, and later the French, used the Africans to build and sustain their flourishing economic empire in the New World. During each subjugation they forced the African slaves to work the plantations of coffee, sugar and lumber. The Europeans used a variety of methods designed to eliminate the Africans' own languages and customs, but they could not extinguish the Africans' religious beliefs. Distinct beliefs came form many different peoples in Africa, such as the Fon and Kongo kingdoms of West and Central Africa. These beliefs shaped and informed Vodou with its own basic vocabulary of shared principles, traditions and ideology; its art and practice also reflect its confrontation with European religious and mystical traditions and the intense hardships in the New World.

The island was ceded to the French by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. Under French rule, a new class of people arose: the Mulattos. They were people of mixed African and French descent, in whom elements of both cultures merged. In response to the increasing power of the bi- and multi-racial peoples, the French structured a social class system based on skin color, which placed Mulattos below the white French but above the Black slaves.

The French Revolution in 1789 weakened and distracted France, prompting the African slaves to rebel against their oppressors. The push for independence was impelled during a Vodou ceremony at Bois Cayman in August of 1791, led by a slave named Boukman. This event marked the first of a series of rebellions, the beginning of a thirteen year-long revolution to establish Haiti's independence. The leader of the revolution, the distinguished Toussaint Louverture, is still known

Appendix: Further Background: Haiti, A Historical View (continued)

as the “Liberator of Haiti.” By 1801, Louverture had gained control over the entire island. Napoleon responded by sending 30,000 troops to the island under the authority of General Charles Leclerc. Although Louverture was captured and sent to a French prison where he died, the Haitian forces prevailed, led on by Jean Jacques Dessalines. Haiti became independent on January 1, 1804.

Haiti’s early years were turbulent. Only two years after the victorious revolution, the republic’s first leader, Dessalines, was assassinated. The country divided briefly into North and South, then reunited. In1843, the Spanish-speaking region of the island broke away from Haiti, creating the Dominican Republic.
The U.S involvement in Haiti’s internal affairs began when U.S Marines occupied the island under the pretext of guarding against a feared German invasion. They remained from 1915 until 1934. These Americans misunderstood Vodou—the religion of the people, returning home with distorted stories of “voodoo” and “black magic.” The images in turn fueled American fears and apprehension, and the Western media magnified these misinformed and damaging perspectives. Racisim, as well, was certainly at the core of many misconceptions about Vodou and Haiti.

After the U.S. occupation, the Catholic clergy in Haiti joined the government to create an “anti-superstition” campaign, in an attempt to ban Vodou-related practices. Similar campaigns by the Europeans and the Haitian elite have been a part of Haitian history since the beginning. As a result of this campaign, many Haitians were required to publicly denounce the practice of Vodou. Francois Duvalier, better known as “Papa Doc,” assumed control over Haiti in 1957. His secret military task force known as the “Tontons Macoute” terrorized the Haitian people, following Duvalier’s orders to censor, torture, and kill his enemies. When it was in Duvalier’s best interest he used Vodou for his own political gain, a process which further maligned the religion in some outsiders’ minds.

The Duvalier era, from 1957 to 1986, left Haiti in political, social and economic turmoil. The country’s presidential leadership shifted several times as a result of military coups. Haiti received a taste of democracy in 1990 with the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest, as the first freely elected president of Haiti. Unlike his predecessors Aristide acknowledged the intimate relationship between Catholicism and Haitian Vodou. Just eight months after Aristide’s inauguration, he was forced into exile by a military coup. In an effort to restore Aristide to presidency, the O.A.S. imposed economic sanctions on Haiti. In 1993, President Clinton tightened sanctions and succeeded in getting General Raoul Cedras to negotiate with Aristide. Finally, in 1994, through negotiations led by former President Jimmy Carter and upon threat of U.S. military intervention, the Cedras government stepped aside. With Aristide’s return to power in October of 1994, economic sanctions were lifted. The restoration of Aristide to the presidency has given the Haitian people a new hope for a democratic reformation.

Appendix: Haiti, a Contemporary Perspective

Aristide's Exile

Aristide served out the remainder of his first term, which ended in 1996. Presidents cannot serve successive terms under the Haitian Constitution, however, Aristide's ally, Rene Preval, took the office in the second half of the decade until the former was re-elected in 2001. Domestic and international controversy surrounded Aristide and, again, his term was interrupted. In 2004 armed rebels backed by North American interests threatened to lay siege to Port-au-Prince and the U.S flew Aristide out of Haiti. Various factions dispute the circumstances under which Aristide was removed, however, at the time of his ouster, he no longer possessed the same popular mandate that energized so many in the prior decade. Since Aristide left, the United Nations has maintained a peacekeeping presence in Haiti in a mission to provide security and stability. Such continued military intervention echoes previous occupations by foreign powers and leaves many Haitians resentful of the international community's continued involvement in Haitian domestic affairs. President Michel Martelly is currently attempting to re-form the Haitian army, citing popular opposition to the U.N. mission as a major reason. Jean-Bertrand Aristide has returned to live in Haiti, although he is no longer involved in politics.

AIDS

In the early years of the AIDS crisis, as researchers scrambled to identify how the virus was spread, Haitians were singled out as a population with a high incidence of the virus. Many Haitian-American immigrants were some of the earliest known cases of the disease and, consequently, "Haitians" became a part of the so-called "Four-H Club" of groups considered to be high-risk of AIDS infections as identified by the Center for Disease Control: homosexuals, hemophiliacs, and heroin-users. U.S. health officials identified many of the earliest carriers of the disease among the Haitian immigrant community in South Florida and, in indicting an entire nationality as a high-risk group for a disease about which little was known, opened up many Haitian-Americans to fear-based discrimination and prejudice. In Haiti, the virus raged among the poorest and most vulnerable populations. The effects of the disease were compounded by structural problems in the country that contributed to a lack of care, education and prevention. Additionally, the early fear and misinformation surrounding the AIDS crisis destroyed the Haitian tourism industry. What was a thriving, moneymaking sector of the Haitian economy in the 1970s (Bill and Hillary Clinton had their honeymoon there) was non-existent by 1983.

Outsiders' impressions of Vodou played a large role in stigmatizing Haitians during the early years of AIDS epidemic. Among early reports on the crisis, the U.S. media ran sensationalized stories that suggested a correlation between the spread of the virus and Vodou ceremonies and practices. The medical community's reports were based on cursory, erroneous evidence, including a reliance on misinformed reports of bloodletting, animal sacrifice, and the consumption of blood in Vodou ceremonies. Additionally, Haiti was pegged as a waypoint in the virus's travels to North America and a likely place of origin for the disease. These assumptions were not based in fact: data from this period shows that while Haiti certainly felt the effects of the AIDS virus, many other countries had higher rates of infection yet were not so blatantly singled out. In fact, current research suggests that Americans brought AIDS to Haiti via sex tourism (another industry that

Appendix: Haiti, a Contemporary Perspective (continued)

thrived before the outbreak), and not the other way around.

In the United States, the Haitian-American Diaspora felt the discriminatory effects of this labeling. Community leaders called attention to a larger historical pattern of exoticism and racism, where, throughout the history of the relations between the two countries, Haiti had been blamed for all sorts of maladies for which the United States experienced. Haitian-American groups organized letter-writing campaigns and large public demonstrations against unfair and racist policies. After many years of protest, the CDC removed "Haitians" from its list of high-risk groups for AIDS infection and in 1990 the FDA lifted its ban on Haitians donating blood. AIDS is still a major problem in Haiti today, as it is in much of the developing world, but education and prevention have kept its most devastating effects in check.

Earthquake

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck near Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, killing thousands (the exact number remains in dispute – estimates range from 30,000 to almost a quarter-million) and leaving many more homeless or displaced. After the quake hit, tent camps immediately sprung up in virtually every public space in Port-au-Prince. In addition to the damage to homes and individual livelihoods, many official government buildings collapsed or were severely damaged and records were destroyed. What little infrastructure existed before the quake had been completely wiped away, furthering the extent of the earthquake's damage by handcuffing the Haitian government's ability to respond.

In the years since the Earthquake, recovery has been slow and piecemeal. Images of the devastation were broadcast around the world in early 2010 and a record-breaking amount of international donations were made in the wake of the disaster. International governments and individual donors wishing to help Haiti through the biggest catastrophe in its history donated around three billion U.S. dollars. However, the Haitian people have seen scant evidence of this outpouring of generosity as the money is tightly controlled by non-Haitian entities that prefer to award construction and development contracts to international Non-Governmental Organizations, groups that have no oversight or direct accountability to the Haitian people. Additionally, the sheer number of NGOs in Haiti, each with individual projects and agendas, has resulted in redundancies from a lack of coordination among the groups.

In the past six months the Haitian government has finally moved people out of the tent camps, although there are no guaranteed housing alternatives for many of the displaced as efforts to rebuild the number residences to accommodate all the people who lost their homes have been slow. Many people have returned to their condemned homes as a result, despite the risk of collapse. The most visible construction in recent days has been upscale hotel chains run by North American companies, many of whom cite the shortage of beds for NGO workers as a major incentive for their projects. Ironically, tourism has returned to Haiti, not of the type with resorts and beaches that left after AIDS hit, but one based on international relief and aid work. With the lingering problems exposed by the earthquake, as well as the unstable environmental and infrastructural situations in Haiti (Cholera broke out a year after the earthquake, a highly-preventable

Appendix: Haiti, a Contemporary Perspective (continued)

disease enabled by inadequate plumbing), the country is sure to retain the attention of international charitable organizations.

Not all efforts and funds have gone to waste: a new 320-bed teaching hospital near Port-au-Prince has recently reached completion; within a year of the disaster, a Haitian cell phone company rebuilt the historic Iron Market, an important daily center of commerce in Port-au-Prince; and many international investors are beginning to do business in Haiti. However, by and large, the international community's pledge to "build back better" awaits fulfillment while the specters of the mistakes that pepper Haiti's history continue to loom.

Appendix: Beliefs and Practices

Beliefs and Practices

From Lesson Four, Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou Curriculum Resource Unit, Fowler Museum at UCLA

When we seek to learn more about an individual, a community or a nation, we often consider various aspects of culture. The forms of art, music, dance, and literature instantly come to mind. We would also include history and politics. In addition, any study of culture is incomplete unless it also addresses the importance and impact of religion on and in a society. An appreciation for the beliefs held by the followers of a particular religion or belief system may also help to explain behavior, practices, or differences previously misunderstood, thereby enhancing our understanding of one another.

Religion is a vital part of the human experience everywhere, taking many different forms. It has exerted a significant influence on the formation of almost every society. Throughout the history of time, religion has bonded groups together through commonly held beliefs, practices and sacred rites. While drawing groups together, conversely, religion has also been the catalyst or major factor in political unrest, warfare, the emergence of nations and the decline of empires.

Religion has the ability to unite, divide, or mobilize human beings in profound ways. Individuals' religious beliefs can influence any number of things from dietary restrictions to educational choices, from clothing requirements to political ideologies. Religion may offer answers to age-old mysteries about human life, explain the properties of the world in ways different from modern science, probe the transitory nature of life, or inform healing processes of mind and body. Some religious philosophies (such as African-based religions) put more emphasis on freeing the body and energizing it, while others ('religions of the book' – Islam, Christianity and Judaism) are more concerned with disciplining it (Brown, Karen in Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou). These are powerful and controversial ideas that are not necessarily treated and taught the same way by all religions.

A subject that inspired such divergent reactions among its followers presents even more interesting challenges for educators who wish to inform their students about the different religions of the world, and the multitude of beliefs presents in our own country. As Americans, our backgrounds and cultural experiences are wide ranging and wonderfully varied; our religious heritage is certainly included in this diversity. In some religious traditions worship occurs in institutional settings such as churches, mosques or temples and/ or it may take place before a home altar or in outdoor places held to be sacred. At the same time, many families hold agnostic or atheistic beliefs. An appreciation and respect for our religious diversity is integral to any understanding of contemporary American culture.

Discussions about religion should be presented as a way of understanding what people have thought their lives were about. Each should be shown to have a history that links us with people living in other times and places. Such a study, according to Houghton Mifflin's *Teaching About World Religions: A Teacher's Supplement*, can help us identify with people of the past. Like us,

Appendix: Beliefs and Practices (continued)

they wanted to know where people came from, what life means, what death is, and what occurs after death. While the experience of a religion may be inward and quite personal, it is expressed outwardly as well, in words and practices, art and institutions, and ways of life. Familiarity with these will help teachers present complex concepts in fair and comprehensible ways.

Individuals' religious beliefs are often formally-held convictions, adhered to with equal fervor by adults, teenagers and children. It can be said that religions are true for the people who get to practice them. The challenge for teachers lies in informing their students about religion while maintaining respect for students' personal beliefs, thus enabling them to respect religious differences as they would respect other aspects of cultural diversity. This presents its own special challenge, for some people may oppose not only what they see as a misrepresentation of their religion, but even the act of aligning it alongside others for the purpose of comparison. Some may object to any mention of religion in the schools altogether. This need not be the case, for the story of world religions can be taught in ways that can enhance the sensitivity of students to others in their communities, to the great cultural heritage of religion and to the search for meaning that underlies belief. The intention should never be to measure or rate religions, but to understand how the religious ideology functions for the individual and the community. The power and beauty of the arts, as they express religious concepts and communicate complex notions of life, can be the entry point for your students' process of discovery and knowledge.

Appendix: Vodou, a Way of Life

Vodou: A Way of Life

From Lesson Five, Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou Curriculum Resource Unit, Fowler Museum at UCLA

The word “vodou” was introduced into Haitian Creole from the Fon language of Benin, where it means “sacred.” Vodou is used now to refer to the most commonly practiced religion in Haiti. It is rooted in African religious belief systems with superficial borrowings from Roman Catholicism, Freemasonry, and native Taino (Arawak) culture. The name Vodou was used initially to refer to a particular style of ritualizing brought to Haiti from Africa; it was only one of the various religions of African repertoire found on the island. Later, the word was appropriated by outsiders to name the whole of Haiti’s ritual practices. Some Haitians use the word in this same general fashion, but many prefer to say instead that they “serve the spirits.” The preference for naming the act rather than labeling the religion emphasizes the fact that both its identity and its continuity are established through ritual practices. The ritual of religion has played a central role in the creation and maintenance of Haitian communities, from the initial presence of Africans on the island up to the present day.

Enslaved Africans were brought to Hispaniola as early as 1503. They were strategically dispersed into different regions of the island, so that family members and groups of the same village were separated from one another. This practice denied the slaves the ability to retain fundamental aspects of their African life, such as language and religion. Under these conditions, the slaves learned to communicate with each other through contrived customs and rituals. They discovered that they shared a common theology, with one remote High God and a pantheon of intermediary spirits who could be appeased through sacrifice and manifested through spirit possession. They demonstrated this belief system through dance and music, especially drumming. In addition, objects found a predominant place in their rituals, as the sacral power of images and spirits-infused objects were observed. In ceremonial practices, they also incorporated ritual ground drawings of cornmeal, using them to call spirits to the temple at the beginning of the Vodou service, just as their African ancestors had done.

All Africans had to be baptized into the Catholic Church according to the colonial slave code. Forced into conversion, Africans found many correspondences between their ancestral religions and the rites and images of Catholicism. Catholic images, especially of the saints, therefore, were freely appropriated to honor African deities. The merging of symbols grew more intense after the French fled Haiti in 1804, abandoning their churches to the religious imagination of their former slaves. The influences of Catholic art and ritual on Vodou remain dramatically visible today. Both share the same ritual calendar. The Catholic rosaries and candles have found equivalents in Vodou prayer ropes and candles. Vodou ceremonies have incorporated Catholic prayers and the *lwa* are known as often by the names of Catholic saints as they are by their African names. Little in Catholic practice is alien from service to the *lwa*.

Vodou also shows the influence of the Freemasonry movement. In the 18th century, Masonic organizations and cult rivals swept Europe, and they were introduced into Haiti by the French.

Appendix: Vodou, a Way of Life (continued)

The idea of mystical fraternities also appealed to Haitians whose ancestors had developed their own secret societies in Africa. After Independence, they joined Masonic lodges in great numbers and freely used fraternal imagery in other sacred contexts. The all-seeing eye, pyramid, square and compass, skull and crossbones, pick, shovel, top hat, and other funeral symbols are especially prevalent in imagery evoking the Gede and the Bawon Samdi. Still today, many Vodou practitioners participate in Masonic brotherhoods.

After the Haitian revolution of 1804, Catholic priests were driven out along with the other French colonists, and Haitians were left with the churches to further incorporate the Catholic imagery and ritual objects into their own religion. Chromolithographs of Catholic saints are now mass produced; these brightly colored pictures of saints have become an important means of honoring vodou spirits. The Haitian manner of infusing foreign imagery and iconography into their belief system reveals that these influences do not eclipse, rather they enhance their religious practices and way of life. Vodou's powerful ability to evolve and adapt has enabled it to survive, and it continues to exist as one of the strongest factors of social cohesion among the Haitian population.

Appendix: The *Lwa*

The *Lwa*

From Lesson Six, Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou Curriculum Resource Unit, Fowler Museum at UCLA

Lwa is the term given to spirits who act as intermediaries between the High God Bondye and humans. These spirits are often referred to as "the mysteries," and likewise, "the powers," divine expressions of life forces such as love, anger, and sexuality. The *lwa* dwell beneath the ocean as well as other places of natural beauty such as waterfalls, caves, tall trees, or even the center of stones. They animate such natural elements as the sea, the forest, and fire, and can enter and possess the human body. The ancestors and souls of twins complete the triad of spirits who link the human with the divine.

Humans who "serve the spirits," or practice Vodou, call upon the *lwa* daily for their problem solving abilities. While they possess great concern for human welfare, they also enjoy being treated with human hospitality. *Lwa* are especially attracted by the sounds of their favorite rhythms and songs, the flash of banners, and the symbolic patterned *vèvès* drawn for them on the peristile grounds, the place where ceremonies are held.

The hundreds of *lwa* are divided into nations and families, much like human beings. The largest nations are **Rada**, benign spirits from ancestral West Africa; and **Petwo/Kongo**, fiery spirits who represent Central African and Creole traditions, from Haiti itself. The *lwa* are often represented by images of Catholic saints or ritual items appropriated from the Masons. Two hundred years ago, spiritual recycling helped African people survive slavery. Now Vodou is a way of life, a religion of tolerance. It freely borrows from other traditions to keep alive African beliefs. Eleven important from the **Rada** nation and **Petwo/Kongo** nation are listed below:

Lwa that are predominantly Rada (or associated with the benign spirits from ancestral West Africa):

• **Azaka**, affectionately known as Zaka, is the patron of agriculture and a good-natured man of the mountains. He is considered family and addressed most often as 'Papa' or 'Cousin.' Zaka is dressed like a peasant farmer, wearing sturdy blue denim and a straw hat. A tasseled raffia bag and pipe are his most prominent trademarks. The chromolithograph of St. Isidore is easily understood as a version of 'Cousin' Zaka.

• 'Admiral' **Agwe**, one of the primary Rada spirits, is captain and protector of ships on the sea. Agwe's ritual boat may be suspended from the temple rafters and altar offerings to this *lwa* have nautical and marine themes. Chromoliths of St. Ulrich (holding a fish) are naturally linked with Agwe. With his consort Lasirèn, Agwe rules the sea.

• 'Mistress' **Ezili Freda**, goddess of love and luxury, is a flirtatious light-skinned Creole woman who adores fine clothes, jewels, perfumes, and lace. The love she seeks is forever unrequited and causes her to weep. Ezili is manifest in the bejeweled Mater Dolorosa, her heart pierced with

Appendix: The *Lwa* (continued)

knife. Freda's colors are white and pink, and one of her favorite perfumes is Anaïs- Anaïs. Her drinks must be sweet and are often made with orange syrup or grenadine. Food offerings might include rice cooked in cinnamon milk or bananas fried in sugar. If she smokes, her cigarettes are mild, like Virginia Slims.

• **Danbala**, the patriarchal serpent divinity, is an ancient water spirit associated with rain, wisdom, and fertility. He is usually entwined with his wife Ayida Wèdo, the rainbow. Danbala is often represented as St. Patrick, who mastered the serpents of Ireland; and sometimes as the patriarchal Moses holding the Ten Commandments. In many temples, a permanent basin of water is maintained for this lwa. Many representations include Danbala's main sacrificial food—an egg.

• **Gede** names a family of raucous spirits who personify the ancestral dead, and sexual regeneration. Their boss is the Baron (Bawon Samdi, or 'Baron Saturday'), married to Grand Brigitte, the mother of the Gede. Family members dress themselves in black and purple costumes reminiscent of Masonic garb, and surround themselves with graveyard imagery. They also favor sunglasses because the world above ground is too bright. Gede is a shameless trickster, a wise counselor, and a benevolent healer known to have special love for children. Devotions to Gede are carried out on Fridays and/ or Mondays, and during the entire month of November, especially the Days of the Dead All Saints (the 1st) and All Souls (the 2nd).

Lwa that are predominantly Petwo/Kongo (or the fiery spirits who represent Central African and Creole traditions, from Haiti itself) include:

• **Gran Bwa**, lord of the great forest, presides over the deepest mysteries of healing and initiation. Representations of this lwa tend to be abstract and usually evoke the form of a tree and leaves, or natural wood objects. The martyred St. Sebastian, tied to a tree, is taken as a representation of Gran Bwa.

• **Ogou** names a family of warrior spirits descended from West Africa. St. Jacques mounted on his white horse is a very important member of the family. Ogou fights for justice, but his hot temper gets him in trouble. He must often be calmed and cooled. Because of his fiery nature Ogou appears in both Petwo and Rada rites. Like his African forebear, this lwa has dominion over all things iron, even cars on the road. A powerful healer, an army man, a Freemason, a magician, Ogou is one of Ezili Freda's husbands. The cock is his sacrificial animal; rum is his preferred drink.

• **Bosou**, the three-horned bull, is something like a spiritual 'body guard,' often invoked for protection. He has Rada and Petwo sides but is most often seen in his Petwo aspect where he connects loosely with Kongo spirits of the crossroads and the grave. Bosou is represented by triple-horned objects, and sometimes associated with the triple-rayed halo of Christ the King.

• The **Marasa**, or Sacred Twins, are often depicted as three rather than two because twins represent abundant life, and triplets signal surpassing abundance. Broadly, the Marasa represent all those born in special circumstance: e.g. multiple or breach birth children, those with extra

Appendix: The *Lwa* (continued)

fingers or toes. Every 'nation' of divinities has its Marasa. They are invoked along with Papa Legba at the start of each Vodou ceremony. In addition they are linked with the *lwa* Gede, who has special concerns for children. They are most commonly syncretized with twin saints Cosmos and Damian, and with the Virtues, called 'The Three Egyptians.'

• **Ezili Dantò** is a dark-skinned, hardworking country woman who dresses in blue, red, or multi-colored fabrics. She has no husband, but is fiercely devoted to Anais, her daughter. She is a ssociated with black pigs; black Madonnas such as Master Salvatoris; or other Madonnas with children, such as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. In such chromoliths, the child in the Virgin's arms or on her lap is understood as a daughter. The scratches on Dantò's cheek are a reminder of her bitter rivalry with Freda, her city cousin. A knife is encoded in her sacred sign or cosmograph and that of her alter-ego, the angry Ezili 'Red Eyes.' Dantò likes the scent of Florida Water, drinks raw rum, savors fried pork, and smokes unfiltered Camels.

• 'Mistress' **Lasirèn** is a mermaid. She brings luck and money from the ocean's depths where she makes her own unearthly music. Lasirèn is a seductress like Ezili Freda and fierce like Ezili Dantò. Many call her Ezili of the Waters. She may lure those who offend her to a watery death, but richly rewards those who serve her well. Servitors keep her altar supplied with comb, mirror, conch shell, and bugle. She is discerned in the image of Our Lady of Charity (Caridad del Cobre). Lasirèn is the consort of Agwe; a popular song also links her to the whale, Labalèn.

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