

Looking for Africa in Carl Einstein's *Negerplastik*

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ALL PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE NOTED

In 1914, two men strove to publish the first theoretical treatise on African art composed in a European language. The Latvian painter Voldemārs Matvejs and the German author Carl Einstein worked virtually simultaneously and without knowledge of one another. Matvejs died precipitously in May, delaying publication of his manuscript, *Iskusstvo Negrov* ("Negro Art") until 1919. During his lifetime, Latvia was part of the Russian Empire and Matvejs wrote in Russian under the pseudonym of "Vladimir Markov." When published, after the Revolution, his text exercised a formative impact on the Soviet avant-garde, for instance, on Malevich, Tatlin, and Rodchenko, before the Stalinist art establishment consigned it to oblivion in the 1930s. Einstein's book *Negerplastik* ("Negro sculpture") appeared in 1915 with notable success, but then also gradually disappeared from view.¹ Since 1961, the text has garnered increasing attention thanks to the rising profile of Einstein himself. For both men, the claim to be the "discoverer of African art"² has helped shaped their image as culture heroes suitable for canonization in the twenty-first century.

But what role was there for Africa in theories of African art? Simon Gikandi warns us: "Much has been written on Picasso and primitivism but little on his specific engagement with Africa" (2006:33).³ By so doing, he argues that scholars replicate Picasso's own strategies in separating works of art from the people and societies that produced them and perhaps for the same reason: "to minimise ... the constitutive role of Africa in the making of modernism" (*ibid.*, p. 34). The questions asked of Picasso need to be posed for the larger community of European modernists fascinated by art objects from other parts of the world. This essay takes up Gikandi's challenge to query what the critic Carl Einstein believed about Africans and what his sources were.⁴

THE FIRST LIFE OF NEGERPLASTIK: THE PHOTOGRAPHS⁵

"Another hole in the classical canon of beauty."—Hermann Hesse

Both Matvejs and Einstein recognized instantly that they could not write critically about African art without first generating a substantial body of images. At the beginning of his book, Matvejs emphasized how few photographs of freestanding African sculptures existed when he began his project. As a consequence, he was forced to travel extensively across Europe in order to document outstanding sculptures in museum collections (2009 [1919]:79–80). In contrast, Einstein took advantage of his connections in the art world to scavenge for professional photos. Both books provide striking confirmation for Frederick Bohrer's thesis that photography was essential to the invention of art history because it was able to generate a body of comparisons and (as Bernard Berenson believed) "[improve] upon the actual experience of art" (2002:248–49) by granting viewers access to what they might not normally be able to see or see well.

Negerplastik was published with 119 black-and-white photographs illustrating ninety-four different sculptures.⁶ Eighty percent of the objects are presented from a single view, frontal or three-quarters. The works were usually presented full-figure from a consistent vantage point. Frequently, skilled lighting interprets the sculpture as an interlocking series of planes (Fig. 1). The emotional tenor is cool and cerebral. Einstein worked primarily with private collections and, with few exceptions, the objects have been stripped down to the wood carving. This means extracting the blades and clothing from *nkisi nkondi* (Figs. 2–3), removing the hats and raffia ruffs from masks, and toning down brightly colored paints (Figs. 4–5). As an ensemble, the systematic presentation of a doctored and highly selective group of images from roughly twenty countries conjured "African art" into being as a corpus that

Eighty percent of the objects illustrated in *Negerplastik* were presented from a single view, frontal or three-quarter. The photograph interprets the sculpture as an interlocking series of planes.



had literally never before existed.

It is worth contrasting the presentation of objects in *Negerplastik* to its precedents. In *Notes analytiques sur les collections ethnographiques*, published by the Musée du Congo in 1906, nearly 700 photographs were reproduced on the finest paper along with a certain number of contextual field photos (Fig. 6). This was one of the earliest and most lavish of publications devoted to the visual culture of Africa. Each sculpture was fully and evenly lit and submitted to the rigor of full frontal and full profile comparisons, reproduced with the highest resolution. Furthermore, the

exact size of the figures was carefully calibrated from one to the other, permitting scientific assessment of identity and difference.

The layout of *Negerplastik* was also built around comparisons, but the strategy was radically different. The open book invites formal comparisons between facing images of one to three objects, which are facilitated by the uniform scale, lighting, and vantage point, seeking judgments on similarity and difference (Figs. 7–8). For example, the viewer is invited to compare two masks of (apparently) equal scale and surface patina (Figs. 9–10). In both cases, the features of the face are situated along the lines of a cross subdividing the face into four quadrants. This cross is formed by cicatrization continuing the vertical line of the nose and the horizontal line of the eyelids. Difference is subsumed by this structural logic into a play of opposites: the eyes are convex, the eyes are concave; the mouth is closed, the mouth is open; ears, no ears; etc. The comparison manufactures a relationship between dissimilar objects even as it acknowledges their individuality (Fig. 11).

Remarkably, seventeen sculptures were presented through multiple views.⁷ And yet, pure profiles are rare, reserved for the unveiling of a visual surprise in the composition. Eschewing scientific models, *Negerplastik* instead invites poetic “reverie” (Grossman 2007:296) through a variety of techniques: soft focus, floating objects in space with only occasional whispers of shadow, spot-lighting to heighten the sheen of patina whenever possible.

André Malraux has brilliantly argued that the circulation of object photographs marked a critical development in the “intellectualization of art.” As Mary Bergstein summarizes his position: the photography of sculpture created “a homogeneous pool of images” enabling the viewer to compare and contrast works of art in an “almost algebraic way.” The images increased the intimacy of the viewer’s engagement with the works by giving equal access to the object, no matter what the scale or setting of the original. It abstracted the works from their geographic origins (1992:476). In the case of *Negerplastik*, it does not matter where the work originated, whether Gabon or the Belgian Congo, whether from the forest or savanna, whether for public display or domestic interior. All such distinctions were obliterated in the search for “pure sculptural forms” (Einstein 2004 [1915]:128).

The resulting impression of stylistic unity is so compelling that it wise to remember Allan Sekula’s warnings about how “archival projects” achieve a fake coherence made credible by the sheer quantity of images assembled. Photographic truth here lies not in the argument but in the experience (1983:199). It is the archive which “liberates” meaning from use, which extracts the object from its context in order “to establish a relation of *abstract visual equivalence* between pictures” (ibid., pp. 194–95). Even in 1915–20, a few of the better informed reviewers resisted the logic informing a compendium of “Negro sculpture.” Sascha



2 Kongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo).
Nkisi nkondi (detail)
Wood, metal, pigments, glass, pigs' teeth, beads, cowries, fiber. 112 cm x 40 cm x 34 cm
©Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium) EO. O. O. 19845, detail
PHOTO: R. ASSELBERGHS

3 Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik*, plate 19. Kongo.
Nkisi n'kondi.

In the early colonial period, some collectors and dealers experimented with stripping sculptures of their blades, clothing, and applied paints in order to enhance the viewer's appreciation of sculptural form.

Schwabacher satirized the vagueness of the concept, comparing it to a category like "Indo-European sculpture." She wondered how useful it was to lump together works from Benin, Kongo, Melanesia and Polynesia (in Baacke 1990:120). Viktor Christian argued that it would be more precise to locate the project in West African "*kulturkreises*" (ibid., p. 128).⁸ However, most accepted unquestioningly the cohesiveness of the ensemble and Einstein fell prey to his own success. He later wrote that the "one fact" governing the "painful sentiment of uncertainty" surrounding African art was its "unity of style" (1922 [1921]:6).

No less a figure than Hermann Hesse voiced the impact of *Negerplastik's* photoarchive in decentering his expectations about art: "Truly I cannot say that I find the Negro sculptures beautiful." Nevertheless, he was convinced by Einstein that, while anyone might find "this art foreign and disturbing," no one had the right to reject its status as "art ... valuable and fully justified in itself. Another hole in the classical canon of beauty" (in Baacke 1990:96). Ironically, the Tanzanian artist and critic Ever-

lyn Nicodemus praised Einstein for this very achievement even as she acknowledged that she only became aware of what has come to be called "classical African art" in Europe: "I went to see the sculptures in the museums of Paris and London. Even now, I cannot explain my feelings in front of them: they represented an unknown Africa; perhaps they did not speak to me because I came from a region without a sculptural tradition" (1993:32).⁹ The photoarchive of *Negerplastik* defined the canon of African art displayed in museums through wooden carvings overwhelmingly from French and Belgian colonies.

Who was responsible for this collection of 119 photographs, which were published without labels of any kind and without any

direct correspondence to the text?¹⁰ We may never know. Einstein volunteered for service in World War I and suffered a serious head wound in November 1914 (Meffre 2002:52–53). A letter exists in French in which he regrets that his first book was published as a “fragment” while he was in the hospital.¹¹ In the same letter, he tries to get his respondent to send him some photos of objects in his personal collection with the promise of publishing them in his next book (in Baacke 1980:142; Bassani 1998:102). The cost of hiring a professional photographer was debilitating for young authors. However, by 1913, serious collectors and dealers of African were having their objects photographed, partly for promotion and partly to exchange information.¹² Although Einstein is likely to have amassed images from diverse sources, their consistency indicates that a demonstrable style had emerged for the presentation of “primitive art” in this community. The difficulty in acquiring photographs lends credibility to Hans Purrmann’s hunch that the art dealer Josef Brummer served as

the “instigator” for *Negerplastik* (in Baacke 1990:87). Jean-Louis Paudrat has argued that it was Brummer who not only provided the lion’s share of images but who may also have also financed the book’s publication.¹³

German graphic design was held to a lofty standard at this period and Wendy Grossman has rightly commented on the “artful juxtapositions evident in the book’s layout” (2007:296). It was probably the designer who retouched the photographs to enhance their consistency and who created the formal logic governing the sequencing. The original edition measured 25 cm x 19 cm in size and was printed on heavy coated paper. The publisher’s advertisements consistently emphasize the importance of the reproductions, in number, size, and quality.¹⁴ The superiority of the printing and layout made all the difference.

On its release, *Negerplastik* received an impressive number of reviews from across the cultural spectrum, testifying to the topicality of its subject. Although many readers gave thoughtful, even searing criticisms of the writer’s methodology, there was general consensus on the book’s value as an “atlas of images” (*Bilderatlas*).¹⁵ In fact, several scholars have observed that the glossy plates in *Negerplastik* had a far greater impact initially than the text itself, consumed as they were by artists across Europe, many of whom did not read German (Zeidler 2004:122; Grossman 2007:297–99, 328). Even more importantly, from my perspective, the creation of a homogeneous archive of images, skillfully sequenced for purposes of comparison and contrast, constituted the founding act of African art history.

4 Central Pende. Fumu (The Chief)
Artist: Gabama a Gingungu (ca. 1930)
Wood (*Ricinodendron heudelotii*), raffia; H: 22.9 cm (face)
©Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium). EO 0.0.32128.
PHOTO J.-M. VANDYCK

5 Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik*, plate 92. Central Pende.
Masculine face mask.

The colors of masks were dulled down and they also frequently lost their hats, raffia ruffs, and other attachments.





6 Notes analytiques sur les collections ethnographiques. Annales du Musée du Congo (Tervuren), Ethnographie et Anthropologie (série 3), tome 1, fasc. 2 (Les Arts—Religion): July 1906, Plate 40.

The Congo Free State supported ethnographic and art publications as part of its public relations program. This lavish volume reproduced nearly 700 photographs on the finest coated paper. Every sculpture was presented in full frontal and full profile comparisons with the exact size calibrated from one to the other, inviting scientific appraisal of identity and difference.

BEFORE AND AFTER BRUSSELS

"i am completely going black. excess of africa [sic]."

What did it mean to write a book on African art, 1913–14? Many scholars have demonstrated a fatal desire to project backwards onto his early writing what is known about the Einstein who worked with Michel Leiris on *Documents*; the Einstein who fought in favor of the Republican cause in Spain; and the Einstein who was hounded to his death by Nazis in France in 1940. To appreciate the originality and full eccentricity of *Negerplastik*, one must be vigilant to respect the arc of his intellectual development.

Einstein first made his name as a writer when he published *Bebuquin oder die Dilettanten des Wunders* in 1912. At this time, he supported himself primarily by publishing cultural criticism on a broad slice of artistic life, although he began to concentrate more on art criticism in 1913, when the first known references to African

art emerge. In August, 1913 Einstein wrote to the Director of the Department of Anthropology at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, seeking assistance. Einstein cited the enthusiasm of leading European artists for "primitive art" and proposed dedicating a special supplement of the revue *Der Merker* to the subject, publishing "a few of the wonderful things" belonging to the museum with the stated goal of arousing the interest of German collectors of modern art "in the great artistic value of Negro sculptures [and] Mexican works" (in Baacke 1990:136).

The supplement for *Der Merker* did not come to pass and Einstein very quickly narrowed his interests. In November 1913, he collaborated in organizing an exhibition at the Neue Galerie in Berlin, which displayed the works of Picasso, Derain, and Matisse alongside a room devoted to African sculptures (Neumeister 2008:173–75, 178). In December 1913, he included what one reviewer called "a series of superb Negro sculptures" in a retrospective of Picasso's work, 1901–12 (in Neumeister 2008:175, 182 nn. 12–13).

As Heike Neumeister demonstrates, Einstein's curatorial interventions provide crucial information on his mindset just prior to or during the writing of *Negerplastik* (2008:175). He was moving in a nexus of galerists and collectors who were intrigued by the enthusiasm of avant-garde artists for so-called primitive art, especially African sculpture. Brummer was in Berlin at the time of the both exhibitions (ibid., p. 182 n. 8) and their proposed collaboration on *Negerplastik* may date from this period. From this chronology, it appears that Einstein wrote most of the text in the first half of 1914.

In August 1914, Einstein volunteered for service in World War I (in striking opposition to his patron and brother-in-law Franz Pfemfert, the publisher of *Die Aktion*) (Meffre 2002:52). Einstein was attracted his entire life to the romanticism of male camaraderie during war, writing at this time: "We have entered into a new human community; of men who wanted to die or to win together" (in ibid., p. 52 n. 98). In November, he suffered a serious head wound in Belgium (ibid., p. 58) and spent over four months recuperating in a military hospital in Berlin, from January to early May 1915. As noted above, Einstein regretted that *Negerplastik* was assembled while he was recuperating in hospital.

After serving with light duties in Alsace, Einstein was transferred in spring 1916 to the colonial department of the civil administration for the Gouvernement Général de Bruxelles. Liliane Meffre hypothesizes that it was the publication of *Negerplastik* itself which was responsible for this desirable posting and she highlights the critical importance of this period for Einstein's future work on African topics (2002:62–66). Einstein liked his superior officer, Edmund Brückner, who was a career administrator in the German colonial service and who had served as Governor of Togo before the war. Finally, someone with concrete experience of Africa entered Einstein's circle (ibid., p. 66).

As a colonial officer, Einstein enjoyed ready access to one of the best libraries in the world on Africa, in particular, the art and culture of Central Africa, in the Musée du Congo, at Tervuren.¹⁶ As part of its public relations program, the scandal-ridden Congo Free State built a grand museum and funded many publications on art and culture, including the sumptuous *Notes analytiques* already described. When Belgium assumed control over



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75

7-8 Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik*, plates 74-75. Left/ Kuba Drinking Cup. Right/ Kuba Drinking Cup. Berlin: Museum für Völkerkunde #III C 19637.

The layout of *Negerplastik* instead invited formal comparisons between two to three objects on facing pages.

the Congo Free State in 1908 (which had previously been governed as the private domain of King Leopold II), the new regime (the “Belgian Congo”) continued its commitment to ethnography, publishing four of the titles cited in the bibliography of Einstein’s second book on African art.

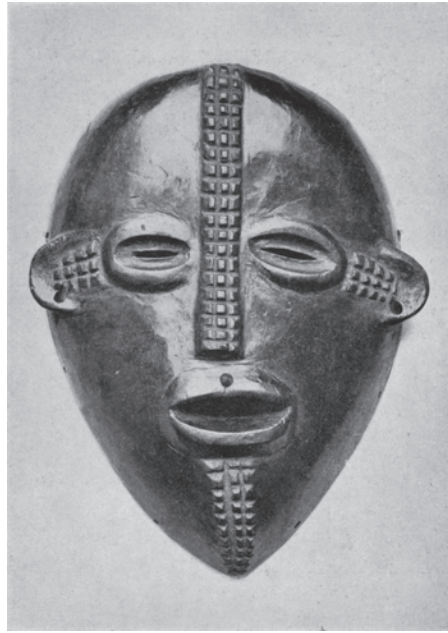
Einstein enjoyed a certain notoriety as someone who had published on Africa and he sometimes misled people into believing that he had actually traveled there (Meffre 2002:62–65). His success whetted his appetite for more ambitious projects. A giddy letter survives from this period when he wrote to his patron Franz Blei from “the desk of the late Belgian colonial minister”: “i am completely going black here. excess of africa [...] And this time I’ll collect Africa in two volumes [and the public] will even have occasion to remark on the Germanic thoroughness of my work.”¹⁷

Einstein’s choice of words is fascinating. By writing “*ich negriere*,” he implied that he was spending all his free time reading and thinking about Africa and promised that “this time” (in contrast to *Negerplastik*) he would “collect” or “assemble” Africa (*Afrika ... versammeln*) according to German standards for meticulous attention to detail (*die heimatlische Gründlichkeit*).

Einstein served in Brussels from spring 1916 to October 1917 and there is clear evidence of his work in the library at Tervuren in his future publications. In his project to “collect” Africa, he began with legends, which comprised a lifelong interest for him. In 1916–17, he began to publish translations in free verse of songs, prayers, and myths for various Central African peoples.¹⁸

In 1921, Einstein revealed that his search for oral texts was partly fueled by the hope that they would illuminate the visual arts but found that they belonged to “diverging currents” (1922 [1921]:6). Oddly enough, his conclusion echoes that of Friedrich Markus Huebner, who reviewed *Negerplastik* in 1915, punning on the title of Frobenius’s *Und Afrika Sprach*. Huebner wrote that it was tempting to seek connections between “terrifying idols carved from garish painted wood” and “roughly carved ghost stories or magic formulae” but that “Negro sculpture” and “Negro poetry” belonged to two separate artistic branches: “Leo Frobenius witnesses against Carl Einstein.”¹⁹

In October 1917, Einstein was sent back to the front, where he wrote to his wife, “I can no longer stand the war. Everything is falling apart; whatever I cared about has been destroyed” (Meffre 2002:73). Einstein was quickly reinjured and hospitalized, possibly for psychological trauma (ibid., p. 73–75). It seems that it was this experience that aroused Einstein’s political conscience, as happened for so many (Kiefer 1987:149). After the war, he supported the Spartacus League, which he described as “the will to give the possibility of a human society to the human subject” (Meffre 2002:88).



9–10 Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik*, plates 90–91. Left/ Kuba or Lele Mask. Visible stamp in lower left reads: "Collection [Charles] Vignier." Right/ Mask of unknown origin, northeastern Congo (?).

Negerplastik was assembled while Einstein was recuperating from a head wound received during World War I. Probably the gallerist Josef Brummer was responsible for gathering most of the photographs and may also have financed the book's publication (Paudrat 1984:144, 151). We do not know who was responsible for the layout, but many of the facing images were carefully calibrated to permit systematic comparison.

Let us review the significance of this chronology. In 1913–14, Einstein still had literary aspirations and was moving in a circle of galerists and collectors of modern art curious about "l'art nègre." He was not yet politically active on any significant scale and volunteered for service in the German army in the face of family opposition. There is no evidence that Einstein was reading or thinking deeply about Africa. The claim that *Negerplastik* "places itself outside of colonialist discourse [and] is even a critique of it" is wishful thinking (Kiefer 1987:152).

The change comes in 1916–17 with the success of *Negerplastik* and his appointment to the colonial office in Brussels, where he was forced to compete with men with direct experience of the continent. Einstein's declaration that "this time" he was going to do a thorough job in collecting "Africa" does justice to the radical differences between *Negerplastik* and Einstein's follow up volume, *Afrikanische Plastik* (1921). The former reads as a self-confident work of criticism; the latter presents itself a painstaking and up-to-date piece of scholarship.²⁰ In contrast to *Negerplastik*, the latter text bristles with named authors, quotations, place names, and African terms for sculptural genres. The bibliography provided at the end is carefully calibrated to the objects selected for illustration and shows mastery of the contemporary literature.²¹

Scholars have universally commented on the disjunction in the two texts, dismissing *Afrikanische Plastik* as "more ethnographic," but that judgment is misleading. Einstein is interested neither in the function of the objects nor how they are embedded in social praxis. Instead, he clearly states that he gave himself the mission "of opening the door to specialized research addressing the history of sculpture and painting" rather than fueling the imagination of impoverished European artists (1922 [1921]:3).²² This revolutionary project to write a history of art for Africa may have been inspired by reviews of *Negerplastik*, which often demanded a more historical methodology. In the second book, Einstein attempts to establish historical relationships among varied artistic traditions

through visual analysis of specific objects and to provide dates where possible. He prioritizes portraiture and raises the question of the relationship of sculpture to painting. *Afrikanische Plastik* is only "ethnographic" in the sense that Einstein was privileging authors with significant field experience over popular sources like newspapers, museum guidebooks, and travelogues.

LOOKING FOR AFRICA IN NEGERPLASTIK

There are not many traces of Africa in *Negerplastik*, published before Einstein's sojourn in Brussels. In this regard, Einstein's text poses a significant contrast to its theoretical twin, *Iskusstvo Negrov*. Matvejs opened his own book with a long synthesis of the publications of Leo Frobenius since he believed it imperative for Russian-speaking artists to have access to this cutting-edge research. Europeans were astounded by the German ethnologist's archaeological discoveries in Nigeria, 1910–12. For scholars today, Frobenius is a mixed bag, to say the least, but what he demonstrated for Matvejs was that Africans have a history (and a history of art) like anyone else: "It turns out that there is a rich, powerful, and fabulous past" (2009:84).

It is hard to believe that Berliner Einstein did not consult *Und Afrika Sprach*, a sumptuous multivolume set, or other reports, which began to appear in 1912 (Fig. 12).²³ He opens *Negerplastik* with the following condescending lament: "Perhaps the illustrations in this book will establish this much: the Negro is not undeveloped; a significant African culture has gone to ruin; perhaps the Negro of today relates to what may have been an 'antique' Negro as the fellah relates to the ancient Egyptian" (2004:124). On the one hand, the discovery of accomplished, naturalistic figures in brass and terracotta at Ife demonstrated that sub-Saharan Africa was "once" a site for civilization. On the other hand, for bourgeois observers schooled in the Greco-Roman tradition, it implied that this civilization had been lost, partly through contact with Europe: "The deeper one penetrates the layers of ancient cultures, the more refined artefacts one

finds. It follows from this that there was an ancient culture during antiquity, which was far superior to what we find on African soil today (Frobenius 2009 [1912]:195). Although Einstein did not accept the superiority of naturalism, he seems to have been affected nonetheless by the conviction of interminable decline.²⁴ The irony here is that most of the sculptures illustrated in *Negerplastik* were not so old as Einstein imagined and testified to the vitality of contemporary African art at the turn of the century.

With all its problems, *Und Afrika Sprach* made available a wealth of data that challenged many prevailing models for African societies. It demonstrated enough historical complexity to render untenable the view of Africans as “people of an eternal prehistory” (as Einstein worded it). There is no need to look further than Frobenius for Einstein’s conviction that a history of African art existed and that “one should disabuse oneself of the illusion that the simple and the originary could possibly be identical.”²⁵

And yet, Einstein’s section devoted to “Religion and African Art” could not have stemmed from Frobenius, nor indeed any respected contemporary work of scholarship. He begins by asserting that “the art of the Negro is determined above all by religion. As with many an ancient people, the sculptures are worshiped. The maker creates his work as the deity” (2004 [1915]:129). Hear the jealousy, *the desire*, that Einstein expresses for the African artist (and he does say “artist”) who creates a god, whose “work ... is self-sufficient, transcendent, and unentangled” (ibid.). The African artist has no mandate to imitate nature, as in the European tradition: “Whom would a god imitate, to whom would he submit?” Instead, the African work of art “signifies nothing, it does not symbolize; it is the god” (ibid., p. 130).

Einstein never once uses the term “fetish.”²⁶ However, make no mistake: the work that collapses signifier and signified, the thing that is mistaken for a god, is none other than the “fetish.” Jean Laude wrote in 1961 that assimilating African sculpture to the fetish was “unacceptable” but attributes Einstein’s error to the weakness of contemporary ethnography (1961:88). This statement has served as the alibi for innumerable apologists; however, it misrepresents the state of the field in 1914. Lurid images of natives worshipping so-called fetish-objects would continue in the tabloids and in comic books like *Tintin* for some time, but rarely in the professional literature on Africa. Einstein’s formulation recalls Charles de Brosses, who wrote in 1760, “These divine fetishes are nothing other than the first material object that it pleases each nation or each individual to choose.... They are taken for Gods” (De Brosses 1760:18–19). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it was de Brosses who first argued that a fetish was “worshipped in its own character, not as the image, symbol, or occasional residence of a deity.” It is precisely this distinction that Einstein insists upon—the purported non-symbolic, non-referential nature of the fetish.

11 Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik*, facing plates 18–19. Left/ Fang reliquary head. Right/ Kongo Nkisi n’kondi.

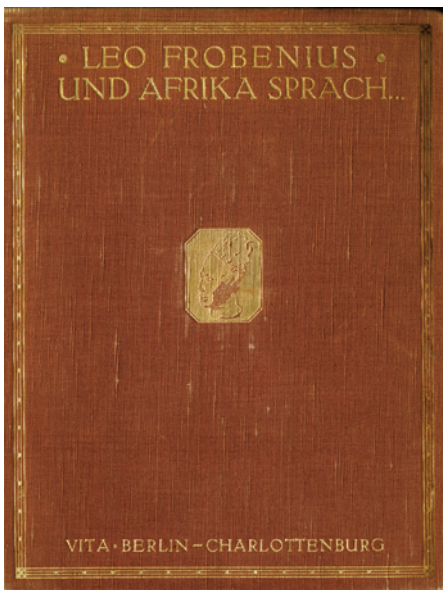
The play of opposites in the photographs can be witty. In this case, the designer contrasts two heads; one smooth, one rough; one blind and mute, the other defined by bulging eyes and fleshy lips. The game of formal contrasts subsumes differences in meaning associated with scale, viewing conditions, and cultural origins.



18



19



12 Following splashy newspaper coverage of Frobenius' expedition to Nigeria, the publisher Vita released *Und Afrika Sprach* in multiple editions, 1912–13, graded for every pocketbook. By publishing antiquities from Ile-Ife, Frobenius established with one blow that Africa had both a history and an art history. Einstein was certainly aware of Frobenius's work by the time of *Negerplastik*. He absorbed some of its lessons on history while ignoring the revelations about Yoruba religion.

The term “fetish” remained peppered through popular sources on Africa (including art books) with no meaning more precise than “African carving.” However, de Brosses's interpretation of the “fetish” as an object mistaken for a god was discredited by the 1870s, when Europeans began to interview practitioners and grapple with the complexity of African religious praxis. In John Lubbock's widely consulted compendium, *The Origin of Civilization*, he traces a proto-evolutionary spectrum from those without religion, to “Negro” fetishism, to the dawn of religion in totemism (1871:349–51). He cannot decide if “fetishism” is a low stage of religion or “anti-religion” because “the negro believes that by means of the fetish he can coerce and control his deity” (ibid., p. 164). Lubbock equates the fetish with witchcraft images in the European tradition, which could be used to inflict harm on their models (ibid., pp. 164–65). Lubbock's view that the African “by means of witchcraft, endeavors to make a slave of his deity” (ibid., p. 349) is the absolute reverse of Einstein, who imagines the sculptor fabricating a god-object, adoring it, and eventually being “consumed” by it.

Also in 1871, E.B. Tylor published an influential revision of “fetishism” as “the doctrine of spirits ... attached to, or conveying influences through, certain material objects” (1871, II:144). However, another influential text, *Notes analytiques*, disputed this connection to spirits. As was not unusual in serious publications on Africa in the early twentieth century, one senses that its authors felt a mission to overturn images of African religion culled from newspapers. They stated (over and over again) that Africans do not worship images as gods: “The fetishes are not

idols, they are not beings or objects that receive actual worship” (*Notes analytiques* 1906:149). “It is an image, an effigy, a symbol invested with a temporary power” (ibid., p. 151). “The black man never prostrates himself before a fetish.... They do not adore it like an idol, like a god” (ibid., p. 160). As the definitive publication of the Musée du Congo, the *Notes analytiques* served as a reference guide for the world's research museums and for researchers like Matvejs. Frobenius also roundly denied that Africans were subject to the “insensible fetish” (1912–13:xiii–xiv). Their analysis is incomplete, their interpretations in conflict, their tone patronizing, but all these authors were grappling with reality on a much more sophisticated level than what one finds in Einstein.

What I am emphasizing is that Einstein's choice of an anachronistic model was deliberate and self-conscious. It is striking that he abandoned it entirely in all his later writings.²⁷ Yet, in an argument forwarding “pure sculpture,” the concept of the fetish existing only for itself provided a powerful model for the autonomous art object advocated by European critics since the 1870s.

IN THE DARK?

To date no documentation has surfaced for the sources for *Negerplastik*.²⁸ Therefore, we are forced to turn to close analysis of the text itself. One revealing clue lies in Einstein's curious claim, repeated twice, that the “beholder often worships the images in darkness” (2004:129–30). Travelogues and early ethnographies on Africa were published with a steadily increasing number of engravings and eventually photographs beginning in the 1870s. One need only flip the pages of these volumes to discover enough illustrations of daytime masquerades and the public display of works of art to problematize Einstein's assertion (Figs. 13–14).²⁹

Darkness was the trigger for the “dread” (*Grauen vor dem Gott*) evoked by Einstein (1915:xiii). In his treatise on the sublime, Edmund Burke had emphasized “how greatly night adds to our dread” and claimed that “[a]lmost all the heathen temples were dark” (1968 [1757]:59).³⁰ According to Matthew Rampley, the sublime became a “fundamental trope in theories of primitive culture, and in particular, in theories of primitive and prehistoric art” (2005:251). Between 1876–1903, the image of prehistoric humans underwent a profound transformation. No longer regarded as noble savages, nourished by fertile fields and forests, they had become pitiful creatures struggling to survive in a dangerous world (Groenen 1994:328–29). The depth of change is measured by the series of novels penned by J.-H. Rosny on prehistoric life, culminating in *La Guerre du feu* (1911), which details the perils besetting a family when their fire is extinguished and they are plunged into “terrifying darkness” (1911 [1977]:5).

Darkness took on special urgency in the debates swirling around the discovery of Paleolithic paintings, beginning at Altamira in 1880 (Fig. 15). The French archaeological establishment disputed their authenticity until 1902, when respected archaeologist Émile Cartailhac published a dramatic retraction, “Mea Culpa.” He explains how difficult he found it to believe that anyone could have executed works of such quality “in these dark caves, by the flickering light of smoky lamps” (1902:349).

Even after their authenticity was accepted, darkness remained the single most important factor driving interpretations. In 1903,

Salomon Reinach wrote that the location of the paintings “in the darkest part of the cavern” rendered their “religious and mystical character ... incontestable” (1903:263). Like Lubbock (above), he was inspired by European witchcraft to interpret the image (or “effigy”) as a means to influence or gain power over what was represented (1903:260). He cautiously drew analogies with recent ethnography on the Aruntas of Australia (who executed paintings restricted from view by noninitiates with the goal of multiplying game animals): “If the troglodytes thought like Aruntas, the ceremonies that they performed before these effigies would help insure the proliferation of elephants, wild bulls, horses, Cervidae, which they used to eat” (1903:263). Truly lavish publications with color illustrations in the 1910s kept Paleolithic artists in the public eye. Reinach’s interpretation that the paintings were used for “hunting magic” (as it came to be called) reigned for over fifty years. Whereas Einstein opposed the model that the artist was seeking to control what was represented, he was still inspired to believe that darkness was a key to interpretation, as could not have been supported by contemporary scholarship on Africa.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ARTIST

Negerplastik ends with a discussion of tattoo and masquerading, the originality of which has not been recognized. When Captain James Cook published his travelogue on Tahiti in 1769, he initiated a European obsession with tattoos, which continued through the early twentieth century. Travelers of scientific bent were careful to describe who wore tattoos (men, women, warriors, etc.) and where the designs might be located. Drawing on this voluminous literature, John Lubbock concluded: “Ornamentation of the skin is almost universal among the lower races of men” (1871:43). He judged the Maori to have “the most beautiful of all” tattooing, and his illustration was reproduced by Alois Riegl, among many others (ibid., p. 47) (Fig. 16). The reason that tattooing became so important was that, as Lubbock indicates, it was imagined to offer crucial evidence on the history of ornament and, by extension, the origins of art.³¹ Riegl argued that the “urge to decorate ... is one of the most elementary of human drives” and cited the Polynesians as proof that tattooing was invented before clothing (1992:31).

13 The Temple of Shango, Ibadan, Nigeria. 1910. From *Und Afrika Sprach...* (frontispiece) from a watercolor by the expedition artist, Carl Arriens.

Beginning in the 1880s, new photographic and printing technologies allowed an increasing number of images to be reproduced showing African art objects in their original viewing conditions.

14 A photograph showing the public display of a *nkisi* (power object like Figure 2) in a Kikongo-speaking region during a medical diagnosis.

PHOTO: J. A. DA CUNHA MORAES, *AFRICA OCCIDENTAL*. LISBON: DAVID CORAZZI, 1885, N.P. ENTITLED “A FAMILY, ON THE BANKS OF THE ZAIRE RIVER.”

The Baptist missionary W. Holman Bentley, who worked for many years among the Kongo, published an engraving drawn from Moraes’s photograph in his widely consulted book *Pioneering on the Congo* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1900, vol. 1, p. 268). The label reads: “The Practice of Medicine (The girl on the left is the patient.)”

Modernist Adolf Loos gave one of the most notorious statements on this topic when he argued that human evolution could be measured by the willingness to eschew ornament:

The Papuan tattoos his skin, his boat, his paddles, in short everything he can lay hands on. He is not a criminal. The modern man who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty per cent of the inmates show tattoos... If someone who is tattooed dies at liberty, it means he has died a few years before committing a murder (1964:19).³²

Loos accepted that the origin of art arose from the “urge to ornament” one’s body for “erotic” purposes. The popularity of Loos’s lectures testifies to the continuing relevance of the subject at the time Einstein was writing.

Africans did not feature prominently in the theoretical literature on tattooing, although cicatrization was folded into the general category at this period.³³ Cicatrization appears on numerous of the sculptures illustrated in *Negerplastik*, but Einstein restricts himself to discussing the human body and what its modification reveals about the *psychology* of the artist. There are clear traces of the literature on tattooing, e.g. in references to “erotic power” (*Kraft der Erotik*) or the debate on whether or not the design “reinforces the form sketched by nature.”

Nevertheless, Einstein’s interpretation is unprecedented for the period and delivered in one of the most highly styled passages in *Negerplastik*, both “terse and expressionistic.”³⁴ He is struck by “What a remarkable sort of consciousness ... which conceives





15 "Bison ramassé," reproduction of an original painting by Abbé H. Breuil from the Caverne d'Altamira. Printed by B. Sirven. Émile Cartailhac and abbé Henri Breuil, *La Caverne d'Altamira* (Imprimerie de Monaco, 1906), pl. 28.

Einstein's assertion in *Negerplastik* that African sculptures were worshipped in the dark more likely stems from writings on the sublime and from the publicity surrounding the discovery of extraordinary Paleolithic paintings deep in caves than any contemporary publication on Africa.

of one's own body as an unfinished work" (1915:137). Once again, he can only attribute to "despotic religion" the unflinching will-power to "make the individual body into a universal one through tattooing" (*den individuaellen Leib durch Tätowierung zu einem allgemeinen machen*). He argues that the ability to see oneself as an object, as a medium, is a "tremendous gift for objective creation" (*ibid.*, p. 137).

In this section, Einstein attempts to weave the anachronistic notion of the fetish with its emphasis on the arbitrary over-valuation of things together with the burgeoning literature on totemism. He argues that it is understandable for someone who "deems himself a cat, a river, and weather to transform himself accordingly" (*ibid.*). It is no coincidence that Einstein uses forms of the word "change" or "transform" seven times in his short discussion of masks (*verändern; verwandeln; Verwandlung*). Spencer and Gillen, the authors of *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, used some form of the verb "transform" thirty-five times in their text: animals, birds, and witchetty grubs all transform into humans and vice versa.

For twenty years, the publications of Spencer and Gillen were of outstanding importance in European intellectual life since they offered exhaustive, eyewitness descriptions of life and culture among the Arrernte (Arunta) of Australia, who were trumpeted as survivals from the Stone Age. Spencer and Gillen provided the data which Frazer, Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl, Reinach, Henri Breuil, and a legion of others spun into golden theories about totemism and the psychology of the "primitive mind."

In 1902, Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss argued that stories about "metamorphoses" were found around the world: "They all presuppose the belief in the possibility of the transfor-

mation of the most heterogeneous things one into another" (1963 [1901/02]:6). Drawing on Spencer and Gillen and other ethnographers, they speculated that for the least evolved peoples:

Here, the individual himself loses his personality. There is a complete lack of distinction between him and his exterior soul or his totem. He and his "fellow-animal" together compose a single personality.... The Bororo sincerely imagines himself to be a parrot (*ibid.*, p. 6).

In Durkheim and Mauss's influential model, "transformation" is predicated upon extinction of human personality.

In 1910, Lévy-Bruhl nuanced the discussion differently, drawing on many of the same sources. In his view, it was more a question of "fusion" or "mystic participation" when a man dressed in an animal skin:

They are not concerned with knowing whether the man, in becoming a tiger, ceases to be a man, and later, when he becomes a man again, is no longer a tiger.... That which is of paramount importance to them is the mystic virtue which makes these individuals "participable" ... of both tiger and man in certain conditions, and consequently more formidable than men who are never anything but men, and tigers which are always tigers only.³⁵

Although Lévy-Bruhl will become extremely important for Einstein's work in the 1930s, he leans more towards Durkheim and Mauss's perspective on the psychology of transformation in *Negerplastik*. Instead of fusion, as articulated by Lévy-Bruhl, he insists that "all individuality is annihilated" (1915:xxvi; 2004:137). The mask is expressionless because it is liberated from the "lived experience of the individual" (2004:137). The masquerader becomes the God. For Einstein, the stakes are higher in masquerade than in tattooing because dance induces ecstasy. He argues that the masquerade counterbalances the self-annihilation implicit in religious adoration: he prays to God, he dances ecstatically for the clan (or community), and "he transforms himself through the mask into the clan and into the God." In the emphasis on "the God," one hears the echo of the fetish. Lévy-Bruhl defined ecstasy as one of the "border states in which representation, properly so called, disappears, since the fusion between subject and object has become complete" (1926 [1910]:362). Einstein calls masks a "fixed ecstasy" (*die fixierte Ekstase*), meaning that they freeze-frame the fleeting passage of ecstasy. In particular, he believed that certain grotesque masks conveyed the experience of transformation (1915:xxvi). He even wonders if donning the mask might not serve as a "stimulus" to ecstasy.

Note Einstein's emphasis on the masquerader's experience. Previous theorists were more interested in the audience. The early Frobenius considered masks as representations of the dead, which were animated in performance (Streck 1995:256). For James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, masquerading was intended to give a realistic representation of the gods in order to render belief more persuasive (1913, part 6:374–75). Einstein's speculations are an early expression of the seismic shift in masquerade literature, as identified by historian of religion Henry Pernet (1992:117), when a fascination emerges with the psychology of the masquerader.

From the 1930s–60s, a circle of influential theorists transferred theories on the psychology of the "archaic mind" to masquerade (Lévy-Bruhl 1963 [1931]), Eliade 1964, Buraud 1948, and Callois

1961 [1958]). In 1964, Mircea Eliade summed up their position in terms curiously reminiscent of Einstein:

Whatever sort of mask is worn, the wearer transcends earthly time. Whether ritual, funerary, or for any spectacle, the mask is an instrument of ecstasy. He who wears one is no longer himself, since he is projected beyond his personal temporary identity (Eliade 1964, 9: col. 524).

It is interesting to observe that the bibliography for Eliade's influential entry on the "mythological and ritual origins" of "masks" in the *Encyclopedia of World Art* cites six works on Central European masks, Caillois's book *Man, Play, and Games*, and only one work on Africa (the early book by Frobenius, which was not based on fieldwork) (1964, 9: col. 568).

In fact, the transformation hypothesis only began to appear in fieldwork-based studies in Africa in the 1970s. A pivotal figure in this transfer was Herbert Cole, in his 1970 exhibition "African Arts of Transformation." In 1985, he published a catalog of graduate student essays called *I Am not Myself*. The preface to this modest publication has become the most quoted text on African masquerade. He writes that speakers of English suggest that

by means of mask and costume a spirit is *represented*. This is not the African attitude.... The masker, the wearer who is now "ridden" or imbued by the spirit, also believes in his own new and altered state. His personal character and behavior are modified, fused with those of the spirit he creates and becomes. Human individuality is lifted from him. He is not himself (1985:20).

As Pernet argues, there are so many well-documented alternatives to this theory that it is startling that it should be argued as the rule, "the African attitude." Although Cole conducted important fieldwork among the Igbo of Nigeria, masquerade was not the focus of his research. He has generously admitted in interviews that he was inspired by Eliade (whose text he echoes) although he stands by the argument.³⁶

In a future publication, I will trace the genealogy of masquerade theory for Africa (outlined in Strother 2002). What Einstein makes clear is that the transformation hypothesis was not born in Africa. Instead, it emerged from the transfer of theories on the "primitive mind" to masquerade, in particular, the claim that humans were transformed into their totem either through "fusion" or through total alienation of personality.³⁷

It is important to realize that Einstein was drawing not on African ethnography but on a mishmash of sources on the so-called primitive mind because it reveals something important about his project. *Negerplastik* has presented a puzzle to scholars since Einstein describes his method as one based on "formal analysis" (2004

[1915]:126) and yet frames his study with long exegeses on religion and psychology. Perhaps the problem lay in collapsing Einstein's "analysis of forms" (*Analyse der Formen*) (1915:viii) with the dry description that passes today for "formal analysis." Einstein was seeking to recover "ways of seeing and the laws of perception" (*Sehweisen und Gesetze der Anschauung*) (1915:viii). The term for "vision" or "perception" in German (*Anschauung*) has both physical and philosophical dimensions.³⁸ At the end of his note on methodology, Einstein acknowledges the "arbitrary" nature of artistic creation due to the "individual forms of vision/perception" (*die einzelnen Formen der Anschauung*). Therefore, vision itself is shaped by both culture and psychology. If Einstein wished to recover African "ways of seeing" from the sculptures, it behooved him to explore what kind of psychology could have produced them.

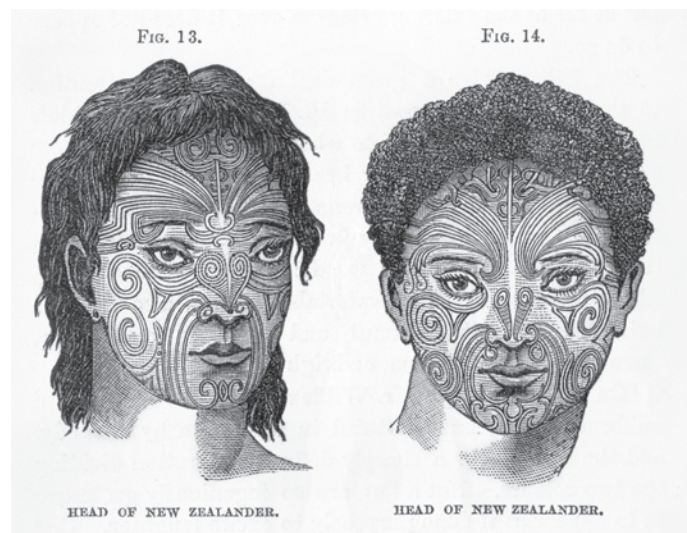
A FINAL WORD ON TRANSFORMATION

"Voir ne signifie plus observer..."

Einstein continued to work through his ideas on transformation throughout his life and his most elaborate statement by far on primitivism comes, unexpectedly, in his monograph on Georges Braque.³⁹ Here "fetishist" is a dirty word, mockingly applied to *European* aesthetes who venerate but secretly fear the art object ("in the manner of primitives") (1934:13, 54). By 1930, Einstein was influenced by a Jungian critique of Freud to argue that the unconscious should be considered a creative, progressive force, rather than a negative one (*ibid.*, p. 118). He wrote that Braque was a visionary because he explored the unconscious through dreams or hallucinations, working courageously in isolation without benefit of religion or the collective solidarity of "primitives." Although Einstein never mentioned Africa, he invoked the "ecstatic rupture" of masquerade and reiterated how the animist or totemist was "dominated by the need to destroy his own subjectivity, in other words, dominated by the principle of metamorphosis."⁴⁰ Braque was living this "drama," which had freed him from the need to imitate nature, so that his art had become "a form of magic, [which has] the power to transform reality [*le réel*]" (*ibid.*, p. 139). The mature Braque had experienced a "transformation of his vision" to achieve the transcendental state where: "Seeing no

16 Illustration showing Maori Tattoos. John Lubbock, *The Origin of Civilisation* (New York: D. Appleton, 1871), p. 47.

Europeans became fascinated by tattooing following the publication of Captain Cook's travelogues in 1769. Prominent art historians such as Alois Riegl (who also illustrated this same image) believed that tattooing offered important evidence on the history of ornament and, by extension, the origins of art. Einstein drew on this literature to speculate about the psychology of the African artist.



longer signifies observing" (ibid., p. 140). The desire expressed in *Negerplastik* now becomes clearer. Einstein studied the forms that he admired from Africa and elsewhere in order to master the psychology that produced them.

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Notes

Parts of this essay were first presented at the symposium "African Art, Modernist Photography, & the Politics of Representation, organized by Wendy Grossman, at the Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, on November 14, 2009. The author is the source for all translations, unless otherwise noted; in particular, all quotations from Einstein 1915 are translated by the author; quotations from Einstein 2004 [1915] are by Haxthausen and Zeidler.

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1 See the reviews for *Negerplastik*, 1915–20, reproduced in Baacke 1990:85–133. The press Kurt Wolff released a second edition in 1920.

2 Meffre book jacket.

3 An exception is Patricia Leighton, who examines reports on Africa in the French newspapers, ca. 1905–07 (1990).

4 Joyce Cheng argues that Einstein's "reflections on the social use of the objects, in particular their ritual function" is critical to his theoretical project of "meta-physical immanence" (2009:87–97). Where I differ from her, as will become clear, is in the attribution of sources, which leads to very different conclusions about the role for Africa in his work.

5 Wendy Grossman has pioneered the study of "how photographs functioned in promoting non-Western objects as Modern art" (2009:4). For analysis of photography in *Negerplastik*, see Grossman 2006; 2007; 2009:64–67.

6 Ezio Bassani attributes ten of the ninety-four illustrated works in *Negerplastik* to sources in the Pacific or Philippines, reflecting the state of knowledge at the time (1998). The first edition (1915) was published with 111 plates containing 119 photographs. The second edition (1920) dropped three photographs (plates 106, 107, 111, including two objects from Melanesia) for a total of 108 plates, 116 photographs, and 91 sculptures.

7 Fourteen objects, two views; three objects, three views; one object from Madagascar, five views. Grossman underscores the importance of multiple views in *Negerplastik*, the originality of which was praised by a contemporary reviewer (2009:67, 78 n. 21).

8 Christian was here invoking Frobenius's model of "cultural circles," i.e. regions sharing clusters of stylistic or historically defined cultural traits (Frobenius 1898).

9 I thank Sebastian Zeidler for bringing this text to my attention. Today much more is known about the history of sculpture in Eastern Africa, e.g. Van Wyk 2013; Jahn 1994.

10 Several reviewers criticized the omission of dates, provenance, ethnic origins (see Baacke 1990:104, 108, 128). Einstein was scrupulous about the labels for his second book, *Afrikanische Plastik*.

11 "Mon premier bouquin c'est un torse [fragment] parceque c'était publié par l'éditeur pendant que j'étais au lazareth" (sic) (in Baacke 1980:142; Bassani 1998:102).

12 For example, Frank Haviland, who had his collection photographed by Druet before 1914 and some of whose photographs appear in *Negerplastik* (Laude 1968:115; Bassani 1998:106, 110).

13 Paudrat 1984:144, 151; Bassani 1998. Paudrat and Bassani have determined that fourteen objects came directly from Brummer's collection and that a substantial percentage came from his established clients. In

1913, Brummer had already made available nine photos (six objects) from his collection for publication in the Czech avant-garde magazine *Umelecký mesíčník*, which were recycled in *Negerplastik* (pl. 6, 16–17, 46, 57, 86–87, 99–100) (Bassani and Paudrat 1998:114–20). For Einstein's continuing struggle to acquire photos of African sculptures, see Neumeister 2012.

14 For example, one of the advertisements from 1915 promises "119 excellent, large plates . . . presented in an instructive layout" (in Baacke 1990:112). However, Bassani observes that he can discern no logic for the layout in terms of ethnicity, region, function, or style—in striking contrast to Einstein's later volume, *Afrikanische Plastik* (1998:102). Perhaps because of the differing conceptual logic for grouping photos, the juxtapositions in the second book are not visually interesting.

15 The phrase belongs to Friedrich Markus Huebner (in Baacke 1990:110).

16 Einstein even took the children of a literary colleague on a visit to the library in April 1916 when he discovered that they shared his passion for things African (Meffre 2002:62).

17 "ich negriere hier gänzlich. ein afrikanischer Excess [...] Also diesmal werde ich Afrika in zwei Büchern versammeln man wird sogar Gelegenheit finden die heimatische Gründlichkeit in meiner Arbeit festzustellen [sic] (in Baacke 1990:138–39).

18 Reprinted by Baacke 1980:397–400, 414–15, 421–37. In 1925, Einstein published a handsome expanded collection, *Afrikanische Legenden*. Most of his sources are drawn from Francophone Central Africa, e.g. Luba, Holoholo, Kaniok, Kuba, and Fang.

19 "Leo Frobenius zeugt wider Carl Einstein." In Baacke 1990:110.

20 Klaus Kiefer has even documented a stylistic shift in favor of modal verbs such as "scheinen" or "mögen" to mark speculation (1987:156).

21 Sixty percent of the twenty-three titles cited date from 1909 or later.

22 Didi-Huberman is the first scholar to recognize the importance of art history in *Afrikanische Plastik*; however, he argues that it represents a "prolongement systématique" of *Negerplastik* rather than a change of direction (1998:52).

23 Einstein was wary of acknowledging Frobenius. Although the latter had significant field experience, his grandiose theories, bombastic style, populist publications, and lack of formal academic credentials insured a ambivalent reception from the German academy. In *Afrikanische Plastik*, the prominence of the Yoruba, the selection of certain images, and even the wording of some of the labels demonstrate knowledge of *Und Afrika sprach*.

24 One of the few carry-overs from the first book to *Afrikanische Plastik* was a nauseating elaboration of this perspective on African regression, ending with what could serve as a partial abstract for *Und Afrika sprach*, "Les forces créatrices de la civilisation africaine sont presque complètement épuisées. Peu à peu, la colonisation a détruit l'ancienne tradition, et les apports étrangers se sont mêlés aux trésors héréditaires des idées originales" (1922 [1921]:3).

25 Einstein 2004 [1915], 125; Frobenius, *Und Afrika sprach*, vol. 1 (1912), ch. 1. However, Riegl could also have served as a theoretical source, as Cheng reminds us (2009:88 n. 7).

26 "On donne souvent le nom de fétiche aux statues africains; mais ce terme, dont on fait un emploi abusive, finit par perdre sa signification véritable et ne sert sou-

vent qu'à cacher notre ignorance." Einstein 1922 [1921]:6.

27 For example, his model in *Afrikanische Plastik* is "ancestor worship" as articulated by Bernhard Ankermann in 1918 (1922 [1921]:13ff). Probably the emphasis on "ancestors" seemed to offer possibilities for historical analysis.

28 Cheng identifies Hedwig Fechheimer's 1914 book *Die Plastik der Ägypter* as an antecedent (2009:90). I am not convinced by some other suggestions that stem from the bibliography of *Afrikanische Plastik*, for reasons delineated elsewhere in the article.

29 Cheng raises the question of darkness in Einstein's formalist theory and goes so far as to say that he was able to "deduce the presence-before-appearance hierarchy of value" from the formal structure of African sculpture. This is a dangerous game. She draws parallels to Susan Vogel's arguments about how the visibility of art is carefully regulated among the Baule (1997). However, even among the Baule, the ritual owner for restricted sculptures may hold, caress, and examine them closely. Restricting access is not equivalent to Einstein's model of worshipping the object in the dark.

30 I thank Noam Elcott and Ioannis Mylonopoulos for debating with me the role of darkness in art historical writing. See Elcott's forthcoming publication, *Artificial Darkness: An Art and Media History, 1876–1930*.

31 For example, Hirn 1900 and Grosse 1902. On the ornament debate, see Rampley 2005:255–56.

32 Loos 1964:19. Loos first published his essay "Ornament and Crime" in French in 1913; however, he delivered public lectures on the topic beginning in Berlin in 1909 and the "substance of his arguments" was developed in talks delivered from the turn of the century. See Long 2009 for clarification of the chronology of lectures and formal essay.

33 An exception was in Belgium, where a flurry of publications appeared on cicatrization in the Congo Free State, 1892–97. In a provocative article, Debora Silverman argues that Art Nouveau artist Henry Van de Velde took inspiration from this literature for his work in the 1890s, culminating in his formulation that "ornament is the scarification of the object" (2012:176). Einstein was unlikely to have had access to the Belgian material before his posting to Brussels.

34 I thank Eberhard Fischer for his many insights into this final section.

35 Lévy-Bruhl (1926 [1910]:99–100). Preceding this discussion, Lévy-Bruhl makes reference to blizzards, breezes, winds, rivers, and tigers (ibid., pp. 98–99). Could this be the source for Einstein's list of transformations into "a cat, a river, and weather" (2004 [1915]:137)?

36 Personal communication, UCLA, Spring 2005.

37 I am not arguing that Einstein invented the transformation hypothesis but that he gave early expression to it. It is hard to document influence from the text of *Negerplastik* (as opposed to the photographs) on other authors before the 1990s.

38 I thank Jonathan Fine for alerting me to the importance of philosophical terms in *Negerplastik*.

39 Kiefer gives a wonderful analysis of sources for the term "metamorphosis" in Einstein's work (1987:159–64). He argues that the appearance of the term marks an inversion of Einstein's formalist or ethnological methodologies, whereas I see it as a continuation of his interest in "transformation." For more on metamorphosis, see Lichtenstein 1998 and Zeidler 2010.

40 "dominé par le besoin de détruire sa personne (...) dominé, en d'autres mots, par le principe métamorphe" (Einstein 1934:137–38).

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