

# HAITI ART HISTORY

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## Brief History of Haitian Art

Haitian art came into its own slowly and its genesis goes back very far, well before the emergence of the Haitian people, before the arrival of slave ships and the caravels of Columbus, in the marvelous paintings realized by the Taino Indians on the walls of caves and the colored graphics they made on their naked bodies and the walls of their huts. The painting tradition was consolidated and enriched in the worldwind of Saint Domingue with the works of "talented negroes," and reached its first blossoming in the newly born Haitian nation under the governments of Christophe, Pétion, Boyer, and Soulouque, with painters such as Denis, Thimoléon Déjoie, Numa Desroches, Colbert Lochard and his son Archibald Lochard.

After a difficult period due for the most part to political instability, economic stagnation, the rise of photography and the introduction of chromolithography and during which such artists as Louis Rigaud, Edouard Goldman, Lorvana Pierrot Lagojanis distinguished themselves against great odds, Haitian painting experienced a renewal in the 1930s. With Pétion Savain, Georges Remponneau, Edouard Preston, and Antoine Derennoncourt as its core, the *Ecole Indigéniste* was formed which led to the creation of the *Centre d'Art*. Many artists were then discovered, among them Hector Hyppolite, Philomé Obin, Castera Bazile, Rigaud Benoit, Préfète Duffaut, Jacques Enguerrand Gourgue, Wilson Bigaud, and Louverture Poisson. Among the non-primitive artists who participated early at the *Centre d'Art*, it is worth noting the names of Luce Turnier, Lucien Price, Antonio Joseph, Max Pinchinat, Lucner Lazare, Elzire Malbranche, and Roland Dorcelly.

In 1950, following a disagreement, many artists led by Lucien Price, Max Pinchinat and Dieudonné Cédor left the *Centre d'Art* to create the *Foyer des Arts Plastiques*. There emerged the *Réalisme de Cruauté* so brilliantly illustrated by Cédor, Néhemy Jean, Denis Vergin, and Denis Emile.

From the *Foyer des Arts Plastiques* emerged the *Galerie Brochette* founded by Dorcelly, Cédor, and Lazare. Without breaking completely with *l'Indigénisme* and the *Réalisme de Cruauté*, Haitian painting became more conscious of purely esthetic standards and took a more intellectual and modern orientation, in particular with Spencer Depas, Villard Denis (Davertige), Jacques Gabriel, and Gérard Hyppolite. Rose-Marie Desruisseaux got her initiation into painting at the *Galerie Brochette*.

At the *Centre d'Art*, Andre Pierre and other primitive artists had enhanced the reputation of Haitian art, while Gesner Armand joined the ranks of the *sophisticated* artists.

Founded in the early '60s, *Cal Fou* was the last great association of Haitian artists. With Bernard Wah, painting took a decisive turn towards *l'Esthétique de la Beauté*. This school which is more formal and less socially engaged, made a definitive break with *l'Indigénisme*. It found its more forceful expression in the works of Bernard Séjourné, Jean-René Jérôme,

Simil, Jean-Pierre Théard, Carol Théard, Jean-Claude Legagneur, and Philippe Dodard. At the margin of *l'Ecole de la Beauté*, one should mention such artists as Ronald Mews, Fravrange Valcin, Celestin Faustin, and Jean-Claude Garoute (known as Tiga).

Of a style that is totally different but that catches the attention immediately, the works of Sacha Thébaud, Frank Etienne, and Marilène Phipps are realized in an advanced modern style.

During the '60s, *Saint-Soleil* emerged in the hills of Laboule as a powerful renewal of the primitive school. Within that trend, Stivenson Magloire's work constitutes an incomparable statement of primitive art.

Today the vitality of Haitian art, both in Haiti and abroad is an astonishing reality. Today's promising artists are numerous, such as Lyonel St Eloi, Marithou Latortue Dupoux, Fritzodt Antoine, Pascal Moin, Joselus Joseph, Pascal Smarth, Engels, Odille Latortue, Albert Desmangles, Elie Lescot Jr., Essud Funcap, Marilène Phipps, Patrick Wah and Jean Marcel Wah, Jr. And more than ever, its future is assured.