

Fusion: West African Artists at the Venice Biennale

The Museum for African Art, New York, 1993.

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by Susan Vogel

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Ouattara is a man of two worlds: he submerges, transforms, and appropriates motifs from traditional African cultures as readily as the materials, techniques, and styles of contemporary Western art. Ouattara prefers to guard a certain mystery about his references to traditional African and Oceanic art, references he does not want the critic to decode and identify. He wants the spectator to be free to dream and to see in his works whatever appears. Ouattara speaks of magic, spirits, and shamanism, and of his desire to infuse his paintings with a numinous presence. Texture, relief, and attached elements are the media of his paintings, which do not depict or evoke realities so much as constitute them. He creates presences often architectural or monumental in feeling, that become new places for us to visit, spaces in which our minds are free to wander and to encounter spirits both ancient and modern

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