



# Vèvè

The Haitian Art Society Newsletter

Fall 2023 Issue

**Marassa Trois, 1947**  
**Hector Hyppolite**

## **National Gallery of Art (NGADC) Acquires Its First Haitian Artworks Through Two Major Donations**

The National Gallery of Art announced on November 13th a transformative gift of 15 artworks (plus 6 more promised), by modern and contemporary Haitian artists from two important collections: the Kay and Roderick Heller Collection of Franklin, TN, and the Beverly and John Fox Sullivan Collection of Washington, VA. The first works by Haitian artists to enter the National Gallery's collection, the objects represent a variety of styles, mediums, and subject matter by some of the most celebrated Haitian artists of the 20th century. The Heller and Sullivan collections include work by artists, such as Rigaud Benoit, Wilson Bigaud, Hector Hyppolite, and Louisiane Saint Fleurant, as well as works by two living artists of international renown, Myrlande Constant and Edouard Duval-Carrié.

"Assembled with great care, curiosity, and passion over many decades, the Heller and Sullivan collections demonstrate the remarkable spirit and strength of artistic production across the Republic of Haiti. We are immensely grateful for these generous gifts as they contribute to the National Gallery's representation of the African Diaspora. The works included in the gift relate meaningfully to our collection of work by African American artists, and enable us to tell significant global, transnational stories," said Kaywin Feldman, director of the National Gallery of Art.

"To have our 40-year passion for collecting Haitian art validated by the National Gallery brings us such joy and pleasure. Beverly traveled to Haiti more than 25 times over three decades, discovering—often with Kay Heller—the extraordinary vitality of the country and its art. We are delighted to now share these works with thousands of visitors to the National Gallery," said John Fox Sullivan.

"Since Kay lived in Haiti in the 1980s, she has been impressed by the vitality, creativity, and dignity of the Haitian people and their art, and become a committed collector. Sharing our appreciation of Haitian art with Beverly and John Sullivan as well as other friends has been an inspirational and instructive experience. We are so pleased that the uniqueness and significance of these works are being recognized by the National Gallery and presented to a much wider audience," said Roderick Heller.

The gift provides the National Gallery an opportunity to shed light on Haiti’s cultural and religious traditions, difficult socioeconomic history, and complex geopolitical relationship with the US, which occupied it in 1915. This history also includes artistic connections made with the help of the Julius Rosenwald Fund (created in 1917 by the father of National Gallery founding benefactor [Lessing J. Rosenwald](#)). This fund has enabled African Americans, including numerous artists, to study and work in Haiti since the 1930s. Many of them are already represented in the National Gallery’s collection, which includes work by Richmond Barthé, Eldzier Cortor, Lois Mailou Jones, and William Edouard Scott.

### **Upcoming Exhibition**

The works will be on view in an exhibition tentatively entitled ***Spirit and Strength*** (September 29, 2024 – March 9, 2025). Organized by Kanitra Fletcher, associate curator of African American and Afro-Diasporic Art, with the assistance of Justin M. Brown, Samuel H. Kress Predoctoral Fellow at the Center, it will offer a survey of art from the past century through the works of some of the most prominent artists to have lived and worked in Haiti. A wide range of subject matter will be represented—portrayals of daily life, religious traditions, popular customs and rituals, as well as portraiture, and history painting.

Most of the featured Haitian artists were associated with the Centre d’Art, an important school, gallery, and cultural institution founded in 1944 in Port-au-Prince by the American artist DeWitt Peters. In an effort to expand the existing scholarship, the exhibition will also present artwork related to the Haitian Indigenist Movement, which preceded the establishment of the Centre d’Art, and works by African American artists who traveled to or were inspired by Haiti. By putting the Haitian artists in dialog with African American artists, the exhibition will foreground the significance of Haitian history and culture in the African Diaspora. African American artists like Scott, Jones, and Jacob Lawrence looked to Haiti as a source of not only artistic but also political inspiration. As the first Black republic, Haiti resonated with many people in the Diaspora.

[National Gallery of Art DC Press Release - November 13, 2023](#)

---

[Art Newspaper - US National Gallery of Art receives its first works of Haitian art, via two gifts](#)

---

[DC’s National Gallery Acquires Its First Haitian Artworks Through Two Major Donations](#)

---





**Rigaud Benoit, Marketplace, 11/3/65**

Gift from Kay and Rod Heller





Benoit





**Rigaud Benoit, Woman Picking Mangos, 1969**

Promised Gift from Kay and Rod Heller



**Rigaud Benoit, Annunciation, 1958**

Gift from Kay and Rod Heller











**Gerard Valcin, Papa Zaca, 1969**

Promised Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan





*Gerard Holan*  
84



Gerard Valcin, Rara Band, 1986

Gift from Kay and Rod Heller





**Wilson Bigaud, Section Chief, 1951**

Promised gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan



**Wilson Bigaud, Adam and Eve, 1953**

Promised gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan





Wilson Bigaud, Marketplace, 1962

Gift from Kay and Rod Heller





**Edouard Duval-Carrié, L'Aesthete Hindu, 1992**

Gift from Kay and Rod Heller





**Philomé Obin, President Tiresias Sam entering Cap-Haitien, 1958**

Gift from Kay and Rod Heller





**Philomé Obin, Paysans Sortant et Allant au Marche, 1953**

Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan





Andre Pierre, Baron Samedi Diptych, n.d.  
Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan





Andre Pierre, Mambo, n.d.  
Gift from Kay and Rod Heller





**Jasmin Joseph, The Fight, n.d.  
Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan**





**Castera Bazile, Cockfight, 1962**  
**Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan**





Hector Hyppolite, Marassa Trois, 1947  
Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan





**Hector Hyppolite, Houses by the Bay, 1945-47**  
Gift from Kay and Rod Heller





**Louisiane Saint Fleurant, Mother with Children, 2001**  
Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan





Louisiane Saint Fleurant, Woman with Three Heads, n.d.  
Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan





Myrlande Constant, Moudongue Massai, n.d.  
Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan





Myrlande Constant, Guede Diable 2 Cornes, n.d.  
Gift from Beverly and John Fox Sullivan

# Haitian Art Society 2023 Annual Conference Review

by Ed Gessen, President



One of the most widely anticipated and highly rated activities of the Haitian Art Society is our Annual Conference. The most recent Conference was just wrapped up with 30 people attending this event in Los Angeles and San Diego. Based on the feedback we have received; it was a major success! Our previous conference was held in Washington, DC in 2019, but this West Coast trip had to be postponed until now, due to Covid. Our past conferences were held in NYC, Miami, Tampa, Chicago/Iowa, Paris, Montreal, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, LA, San Francisco, and Port-au-Prince. We plan to continue this highly acclaimed program in the future.

We all met on June 29th in Los Angeles for a welcoming reception at our hotel and had a chance to reconnect with old friends and meet new acquaintances. The next morning, we boarded our bus and visited the home of a Beverly Hills entertainment attorney with a jaw-dropping collection of old Haitian Masters, never before seen by the public. Following that we headed to lunch at LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) which included a docent-led tour of the “Afro-Atlantic Histories” exhibition. We then traveled to the home of filmmaker Jacquil Constant for a screening of his film Haiti Is A Nation Of Artists. We then departed to Galerie LaKaye, where our hosts Carine Fabius and Pascal Giacomini treated us to a fabulous Brazilian dinner, wine, and another film by Pascal entitled Out of Chaos, the story of his exploits creating metal sculptures in the Grand Rue district of P-au-P, Haiti.

The next morning we travelled to the UCLA Fowler Museum for a personal tour of the Myrlande Constant Vodou Flag exhibit entitled “ The Work of Radiance” led by curators Kathy Smith and Kyrah Malika Daniels. This retrospective of Myrlande’s work was truly spellbinding. After the exhibition, we held a panel discussion on various Haitian Art topics entitled “Vodou in the Age of Consciousness” moderated by Peter Hafner (Centre College) and including panelists Kathy Smith and Patrick Polk (UCLA Fowler Museum), Joanna Robotham (Tampa Museum of Art), Eziaku Atuama Nwokocha (University of Miami), and Kyrah Malika Daniels (Emory University). The discussion was followed by a dinner and reception in the Fowler Courtyard.

Early on Sunday, July 2nd, we loaded our luggage on the bus for our journey to San Diego. We had two stops on the way one in Laguna Beach and another in Corona del Mar to visit two other private collections. The first was the home of Beverly White, who had a great 1980-90’s collection of paintings and metalwork, followed by a visit with Fabiola Kinder, daughter of renowned artist Sacha Thébaud (Tebó), to see his world-class artworks. And of course, more food and drink! We got back on the bus and headed south to visit the home of another well-known collector of outstanding Haitian paintings and metalwork, as well as a massive collection of Mexican Folk Art. This visit was followed by our final dinner at One Love, a Jamaican restaurant serving Caribbean Island cuisine.

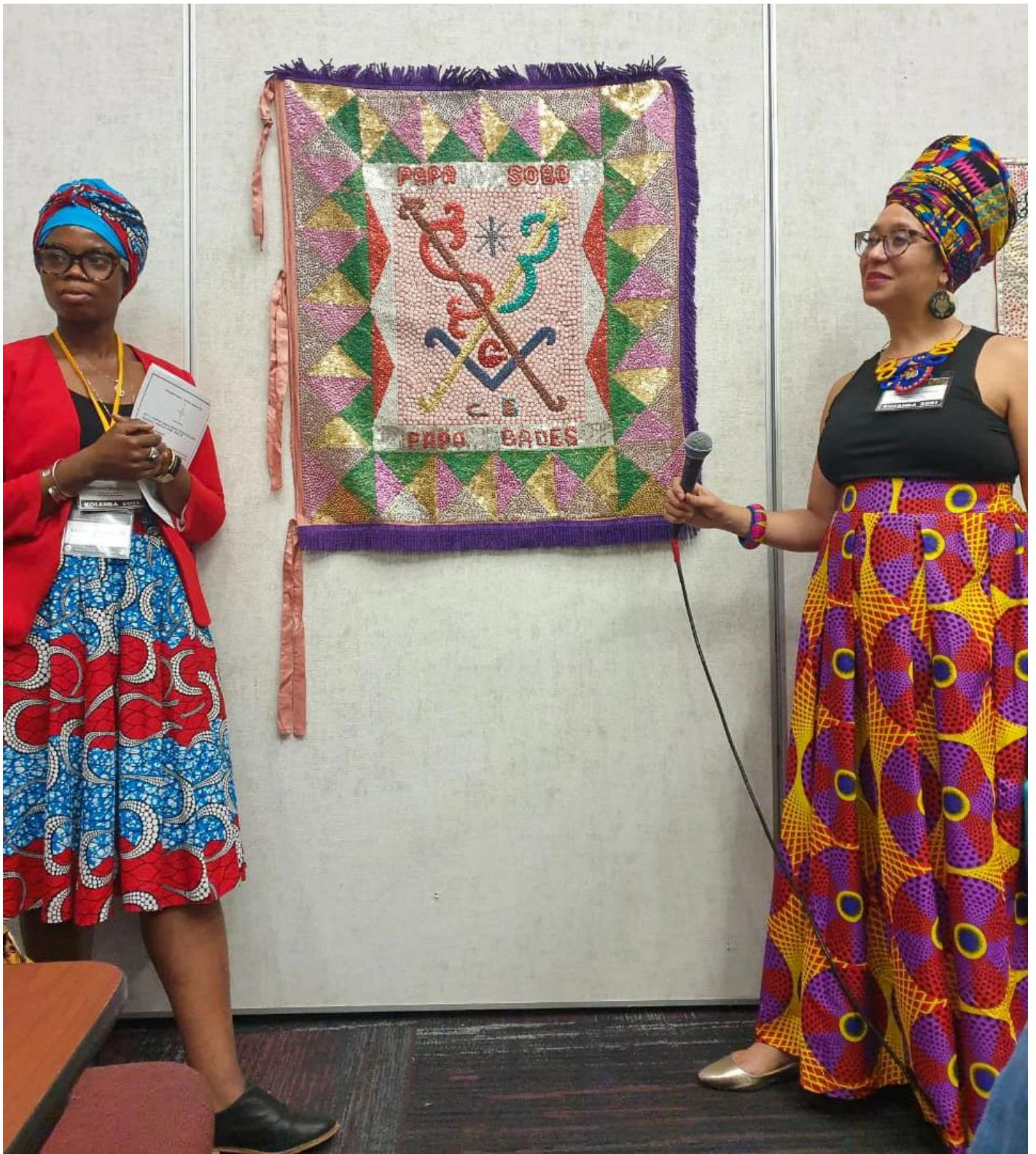


This trip was organized and managed 100% by our volunteers and executive committee from the Haitian Art Society. I am sending a special “thank you” to the contributors including Magdalah Racine-Silva (VP), Natasha Tauber (Secretary), Matt Dunn (Treasurer), and Larry Kent (local liaison). I sincerely hope everyone had a great time at our 18th Annual Conference, and I look forward to continuing this tradition in the future.



**Célestin Faustin, Untitled, n.d.**  
**Private Collection in Los Angeles, CA.**  
**Visited Collection at HAS 2023 Annual Conference**





## HAS at KOSANBA

Selections from The PWEN Collection, a 500-piece collection of Vodou art and artifacts in storage for 30 years, were shown at KOSANBA, the annual meeting of the scholarly association for the study of Haitian Vodou. A tour of drapo (ritual flags) was led by Dr. Kantara Souffrant, Curator of Community Dialogue at the Milwaukee Museum of Art (*left*), and KOSANBA Vice-President and Assistant Professor of African American Studies at Emory Manbo Dr. Kyrah Malika Daniels (*right*). Photo courtesy of Mx. Cecilia Lisa Eliceche.



# Ireqlá Qláifá

## Haitian Art Society's first representative in Central and West Africa

“When I began connecting to the depth of my roots, I activated ancestral remembrance.” Ireqlá Qláifá is speaking about the path she has taken from a South Florida-based family of Haitian descent to her ancestors' land in Benin. Qláifá is also speaking about the many art forms that have led the one-time Peace Corps Volunteer to call Benin one of many home bases.

Entering high school in Palm Beach, FL, Qláifá, the lead singer in her Church Choir, found herself at “the intersection of confusing socio-relational and socio-economic gaps.” “School failed us because we couldn’t identify ourselves in the curriculum and most teachers.” She’d grown up in “a traditional Haitian” household, speaking Kreyòl at home. It was through music, the choir teacher’s choice to perform “Negro spirituals” for competition, that Qláifá took an interest in school and was ranking superior ratings at state events. Moving on to the national level, the 2010 Santaluces High School “Vocal Pathfinder” found herself, by virtue of her talent, in a group of the U.S.’s most capable theatrical, visual, and performing artists.

Visual art did not speak to Qláifá as intimately as music until she discovered Haitian, Caribbean, and African Art. Qláifá immersed herself in Miami’s burgeoning arts scene: Little Haiti Cultural Center, The Art Black, enjoying the constellation of events that surround Art Basel. She made friends with artists “that felt like home,” among them painter Florine Démosthène, filmmaker Rachelle Salnave, and photographer Woosler Delisfort.

At the time Qláifá, was heavily immersed in community development work, and was struck by the plight of artists, “the too-frequent outcome of tapping the soul for a spiritual and creative process. And trying to understand why artists die poor while their managers thrive.” “The injustice” led Qláifá to obtain a Master's degree in the Music and Entertainment Business in order to “learn how to transform the industry.”

With a passion for developing and organizing folkloric art events and programs, Qláifá returned to Benin. As the Principal Consultant of DJAIYE, LLC., she bridges “old world and new,” African traditions with their new world successors. Qláifá is herself directly on the path from colonization to restitution as the international liaison to the touring exhibition “Benin of Yesterday and Today.” She selectively works with clients that possess “a clear understanding that Art and Culture are the



consciousness of the diaspora,” among them, Conseil National des Organisations d’Artistes, a governmental agency established to direct reforms in the cultural sector, and Africa Sound City, a cultural center providing workshops and residency programs to support emerging talent, career artists, and international cultural actors.

“Benin,” Q̄láifá suggests, “is becoming.” She cites the growing tourist infrastructure for a nation whose greatest resource is the “spiritual knowledge and rites as practiced for over thousands of years.” “Ayiti is a New World reservoir of Dahomean Culture, and art is the mouthpiece that speaks these stories.” She cites the tradition of African metalsmithing: “You cannot simply become a metalsmith. It has to be passed down. The processes have been sacralized. Sculptures are enchanted through ceremony and ritual. Not Just a piece to observe but a way to preserve culture.”

Q̄láifá’s experience of art is cultural, historical, and of powerful depth, “Every time I am confronted with art, it is innately from conception already a communal piece: To Heal. Shock. To Think. The reward of communication beyond possible in words, to access the depth of expression in these cultures is a process of renewed understanding of self and transformation.”

Please join us in welcoming Ireqlá Q̄láifá, the Haitian Art Society’s first representative in Central and West Africa!

## Join us today!

The Haitian Art Society is an all volunteer, 501c3 public charity. Membership dues are our only source of income. Donors may deduct contributions under the IRS - IRC Section 170.

[Donate to HAS](#)

### Haitian Art Society

620 R St NW, Washington  
United States of America



You received this email because you signed up on our website or made a purchase from us.

[Unsubscribe](#)



