

Art et authenticité

Extraits de textes

Alain Rey (dir.), *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française Robert*, 1998

AUTHENTIQUE adj. est emprunté (1211) au bas latin *authenticus*, adjectif signifiant «original et bien attribué (d'un texte)» et substantif neutre (*authenticum*), «acte juridique qui peut faire foi», lui-même hellénisme. Le grec tardif *authentikos* signifie «dont le pouvoir, l'autorité est inattaquable». Il est dérivé de *authentes* «auteur responsable» (notamment d'un meurtre), d'où *authentia* «autorité». C'est un composé de *auto-* (→ auto-) et de *hētēs* «qui réalise, achève», d'un thème indoeuropéen.

♦ Le mot français apparaît en droit comme adjectif (*authentique escripture*) puis nom (xiii^e s., déformé en

antentique); il s'écrit *auctentique* en 1403 (par confusion probable avec *auctoritas*), puis (xv^e s.) *authentique*. Il s'applique alors (1403) aux personnes dont l'autorité est reconnue et légitime, puis aux choses véridiques, indiscutables, emploi normal en langue classique et moderne. < Ce n'est qu'au xx^e s. (1923 chez Gide) que l'adjectif correspond à «sincère, naturel, non affecté». ♦ Le sens très spécial en musique sacrée, dans *modes authentiques*, a été pris (1751, *Encyclopédie*), au latin médiéval *authenticus* (v. 1230).

► Parmi les dérivés, **AUTHENTIQUEMENT** adv. (déb. xiv^e s., *autenticquement*; graphie moderne, xv^e s.) et **AUTHENTIFIER** v. tr., récent (1860, Goncourt), «identifier comme authentique», comme son dérivé **AUTHENTIFICATION** n. f. (1933), sont devenus relativement courants.

Le verbe **AUTHENTIFIER** v. tr., sous la forme *autenticier* (v. 1260), puis *autenticquer* (1316), est pris au latin médiéval *authenticare* (v. 1030) «déclarer (un acte) authentique». Son usage est limité au droit. ♦ Un dérivé isolé et régulier est *authenticité* (1557), repris sous la forme **AUTHENTICITÉ** n. f. (1748, chez Buffon), modifié d'après le radical latin et qui a pris aux xix^e et xx^e s. les diverses valeurs de *authentique*.

Online Etymology Dictionary

authentic (adj.) Mid-14c., "authoritative," from Old French *autentique* (13c., Modern French *authentique*) "authentic; canonical," and directly from Medieval Latin *authenticus*, from Greek *authentikos* "original, genuine, principal," from *authentēs* "one acting on one's own authority," from *autos* "self" (see *auto-*) + *hentes* "doer, being," from PIE **sene-* "to accomplish, achieve." Sense of "entitled to acceptance as factual" is first recorded mid-14c.

Traditionally in modern use, *authentic* implies that the contents of the thing in question correspond to the facts and are not fictitious; *genuine* implies that the reputed author is the real one; but this is not always maintained: "The distinction which the 18th c. apologists attempted to establish between *genuine* and *authentic* ... does not agree well with the etymology of the latter word, and is not now recognized" [OED]

Daniel Dumouchel, « Changement d'ethos : l'émergence du concept esthétique d'authenticité », in : Carole Talon-Hugon (éd.), *Ethique et esthétique de l'authenticité, Noësis* 22-23, pp. 15 à 27

(1^o) ce dont l'origine ou la provenance sont incontestables (tableaux, objets d'art ancien, artefacts culturels); on dit également authentiques (2^o) les produits qui sont conformes à une tradition ou à certains standards spécifiques ou dont la pureté n'est pas altérée; (3^o) ce qui est appuyé sur un témoignage incontestable (en parlant de faits, de détails, ou d'une histoire); et (4^o) enfin – ce qui semble être une acception plus récente –, ce qui, au-delà des apparences ou des conventions, reflète la personnalité réelle et profonde d'un individu. On le voit, dans tous ces cas, «l'autorité» qui accompagnait originellement l'authenticité s'est étendue pour englober la conformité des œuvres et des objets à leur origine, l'adéquation à des normes d'excellence, la véridicité des témoignages et la véracité de l'expression individuelle. Dans ce dernier cas, l'*autorité* a à voir avec la manière dont la personne elle-même soutient ses énoncés ou ses actions; ce qui se garantit, c'est l'adéquation avec la personnalité ou les composantes de la personnalité de l'individu expressif. Parler d'authenticité en ce sens présuppose que nos actions ou nos discours ne se soutiennent pas d'eux-mêmes, ne possèdent pas une validité publique indépendante.

Léon Tolstoï, *Qu'est-ce que l'art ?* (1898), trad. Teodor de Wyzewa, Paris, Perrin, 1898

Enfin, la quatrième méthode consiste à provoquer la curiosité, de façon à absorber l'esprit et à l'empêcher de sentir le manque d'art véritable. Naguère encore, on provoquait volontiers la curiosité en compliquant les intrigues ; aujourd'hui ce procédé se démode, et est remplacé par celui de l'authenticité, c'est-à-dire par la peinture détaillée d'une période historique ou d'une branche de la vie contemporaine. Ainsi, pour absorber l'esprit du lecteur, les romanciers lui décrivent tout au long la vie des Égyptiens ou des Romains, la vie des ouvriers d'une mine, ou celle des commis d'un grand magasin.

Nelson Goodman, « Authenticity », in : *Grove Online*, avant-dernière édition

Even if we cannot see any difference between an original painting and a forgery or between an edible mushroom and a poisonous one, that difference matters in the bearing it has on our behaviour. We can either look harder for a difference or avoid paintings and mushrooms entirely.

Value is often placed on an aesthetic object being ‘genuine’, ‘authentic’ and so on, but nothing is ‘authentic’ *per se*. If we are asked whether what is before us is authentic, our response could justifiably be: ‘Authentic *what?*’ It might be an authentic oil painting, an authentic Italian painting, an authentic Renaissance painting, yet not an authentic Leonardo da Vinci painting, not the authentic *Mona Lisa*. Authenticity is always authenticity under one or another description. The question ‘Is it authentic?’ must be replaced by, or understood as, a question of the form ‘Is it an (or the) authentic so-and-so?’.

When the question at hand is thus clarified, the term ‘authentic’ tends to become superfluous. An authentic Leonardo painting is just a Leonardo painting, the authentic *Mona Lisa* is just the *Mona Lisa*, and a non-authentic Leonardo is just not a Leonardo. Everything is authentically what it is and not authentically what it is not. The terms ‘authentic Leonardo’ and ‘not authentic Leonardo’ dichotomize not the class of Leonardo paintings but some class of supposed or claimed, or hoped-to-be, Leonardo paintings.

Denis Dutton, “Authenticity in Art”, in : Jerrold Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003

“Authentic,” like its near-relations, “real,” “genuine,” and “true,” is what J.L. Austin called a “dimension word,” a term whose meaning remains uncertain until we know what dimension of its referent is being talked about. A forged painting, for example, will not be inauthentic in every respect: a Han van Meegeren forgery of a Vermeer is at one and the same time both a fake Vermeer and an authentic van Meegeren, just as a counterfeit bill may be both a fraudulent token of legal tender but at the same time a genuine piece of paper.

Authenticity is contrasted with “falsity” or “fakery” in ordinary discourse, but, as noted, falsity need not imply fraud at every stage of the production of a fake. Blatant forgery and the intentional misrepresentation of art objects has probably been around as long as there has been an art market — it was rife even in ancient Rome.

However, many works of art that are called “inauthentic” are merely misidentified. There is nothing fraudulent about wrongly guessing the origins of an apparently old New Guinea mask or an apparently eighteenth-century Italian painting. Fraudulence is approached only when what is merely an optimistic guess is presented as well-established knowledge, or when the person making the guess uses position or authority to give it a weight exceeding what it deserves. The line, however, that divides unwarranted optimism from fraudulence is hazy at best. (Any worldly person who has ever heard from an antique dealer the phrase “It’s probably a hundred and fifty years old” will understand this point: it’s probably not that old, and perhaps not even the dealer himself could be sure if he’s merely being hopeful or playing fast and loose with the truth.)

Authenticity, therefore, is a much broader issue than one of simply spotting and rooting out fakery in the arts. The will to establish the nominal authenticity of a work of art, identifying its maker and provenance — in a phrase, determining how the work came to be — comes from a general desire to understand a work of art according to its original canon of criticism: what did it mean to its creator? How was it related to the cultural context of its creation? To what established genre did it belong? What could its original audience have been expected to make of it? What would they have found engaging or important about it? These questions are often framed in terms of artists’ intentions, which will in part determine and constitute the identity of a work; and intentions can arise and be understood only in a social context and at a historical time. External context and artistic intention are thus intrinsically related. We should resist, however, the temptation to imagine that ascertaining nominal authenticity will inevitably favour some “old” or “original” object over a later artefact. There may be Roman sculptures, copies of older Greek originals, which are in some respects aesthetically better than their older prototypes, as there may be copies by Rembrandt of other Dutch artists that are aesthetically more pleasing than the originals. But in all such cases, value and meaning can be rightly assessed only against a background of correctly determined nominal authenticity.

Despite the widely different contexts in which the authentic / inauthentic is applied in aesthetics, the distinction nevertheless tends to form around two broad categories of sense. First, works of art can possess what we may call *nominal authenticity*, defined simply as the correct identification of the origins, authorship, or provenance of an object, ensuring, as the term implies, that an object of aesthetic experience is properly named. However, the concept of authenticity often connotes something else, having to do with an object’s character as a true expression of an individual’s or a society’s values and beliefs. This second sense of authenticity can be called *expressive authenticity*.

Forgery episodes such as van Meegeren's Vermeers are unproblematic in terms of nominal authenticity: there is a perfectly clear divide between the authentic Vermeers and the van Meegeren fakes. But there are areas where determining nominal authenticity can be extremely fraught. Consider the complexities of the following example. The Igorot of northern Luzon traditionally carved a rice granary guardian figure, a *bulul*, which is ceremonially treated with blood, producing over years a deep red patina which is partially covered with a black deposit of grease from food offerings. These objects were already being made for tourists and for sale at international exhibitions in the 1920s, and one famous virtuoso Igorot carver, Tagiling, was by then producing figures on commission by local families and at the same time for the tourist trade. *Bululs* are still in traditional use, but specialized production of them ceased after the Second World War. Today, if a local wants a *bulul*, it is purchased from a souvenir stand and then rendered sacred by subjecting it to the appropriate ceremony. "The result," Alain Schoffel has explained, "is that in the rice granaries one now finds shoddy sculptures slowly becoming covered with a coating of sacrificial blood. They are authentic because they are used in the traditional fashion, but this renders them no less devoid of aesthetic value."

We do not necessarily have to agree with Schoffel's aesthetic verdict on "shoddy" souvenirs to recognize that he is legitimately invoking one of the many possible senses of "authenticity": the authentically traditional. The contrast to the authentically traditional carving in this context is a tourist piece, or one not made to take part in or express any recognizable tradition. On the other hand, a tourist piece that is bought by a local person and employed for a traditional purpose is just as authentic, but in a different sense: it has been given an authentically traditional use in an indigenous spiritual context. The fraudulent converse to authenticity in this sense would be a piece that is intentionally misrepresented as fulfilling a traditional function, but which does not, for example a piece that has been carefully given a fake patina and signs of use or wear by a dealer or later owner of a carving.

Arguments over the use and presentation of art are nowhere more prominent than in music performance. This is owing to the general structure of Western, notated music, in which the creation of the work of art is a two-stage process, unlike painting and other plastic arts. Stand in front of Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci* in the National Gallery in Washington, and you have before you Leonardo's own handiwork. However much the paint may have been altered by time and the degenerative chemistry of pigments, however different the surroundings of the museum are from the painting's originally intended place of presentation, at least, beneath the shatterproof non-reflective glass you gaze at the very artefact itself, in its faded, singular glory. No such direct encounter is available with a performance of an old musical work. The original work is specified by

a score, essentially a set of instructions, which are realized aurally by performers, normally for the pleasure of audiences. Because a score underdetermines the exact sound of any particular realization, correct performances may differ markedly.

With a painting, therefore, there normally exists an original, nominally authentic object that can be identified as “the” original; nothing corresponds to this in music. Even a composer’s own performance of an instrumental score — say, Rachmaninoff playing his piano concertos, or Stravinsky conducting *The Rite of Spring* — cannot fully constrain the interpretive choices of other performers or define for ever “the” authentic performance. (In any event, composer/performers interpret their music differently on different occasions.) Stephen Davies argues that a striving towards authenticity in musical performance does not entail that there is one authentic ideal of performance, still less that this would be a work’s first performance or whatever a composer might have heard in his head while composing the piece. The very idea of a performance art permits performers a degree of interpretive freedom consistent with conventions that govern what counts as properly following the score.

Nevertheless, the twentieth-century witnessed the development of an active movement to try to understand better the original sounds especially of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European music. This has encouraged attempts to perform such music on instruments characteristic of the time, in line with reconstructions of the past conventions that governed musical notation and performance. This concern with authenticity can be justified by the general, though not inviolable, principle which holds that “a commitment to authenticity is integral to the enterprise that takes delivery of the composer’s work as its goal. If we are interested in performances as of the works they are of, then authenticity must be valued for its own sake”. This interest can take many forms — playing Scarlatti sonatas on harpsichords of a kind Scarlatti would have played, instead of the modern piano; (...) performing Haydn symphonies with orchestras cut down from the late Romantic, 100-player ensembles used by Brahms or Mahler. These practices are justified by taking us back in time to an earlier performing tradition and, in theory, closer to the work itself.

In this way of thinking, the purpose of reconstructing an historically authentic performance is to create an occasion in which it sounds roughly as it would have sounded to the composer, had the composer had expert, well equipped musicians at his disposal. Enthusiasm for this idea has led some exponents of the early music movement to imagine that they have a kind of moral or intellectual monopoly on the correct way to play music of the past. In one famous put-down, the harpsichordist Wanda Landowska is said to have told a pianist, “You play Bach your way, I’ll play him his way.” The question for aesthetic theory remains: *What is Bach’s way?* If the question is framed as purely about instrumentation, then the answer is trivially easy: the

Bach keyboard *Partitas* are authentically played in public only on a harpsichord of a kind Bach might have used. But there are other ways in which the music of Bach can be authentically rendered. For instance, Bach's keyboard writing includes interweaved musical voices which, under the hands of a skilled pianist such as Glenn Gould, can often be revealed more clearly on a modern concert grand than on a harpsichord. In general, the dynamic range and gradation of the piano are an advantage for all music performed on it, in contrast with the harpsichord, though the older instrument displays some exquisite qualities in which Bach too can sound glorious. (Its lack of sustaining power, for example, required harpsichord composers to introduce trills and ornamentation which became part of the Baroque style.)

However, if an authentic performance of a piece of music is understood as one in which the aesthetic potential of the score is most fully realized, historic authenticity may not be the best way to achieve it. We would not go back to productions of Shakespeare plays with boys taking the female roles simply because that was the way it was done in Shakespeare's time. We regard the dramatic potential of those roles as ideally requiring the mature talents of actresses, and write off the Elizabethan practice of boy actors as an historic accident of the moral climate of Shakespeare's age. We assume, in other words, that Shakespeare would have chosen women to play these parts had he had the option. Similarly, the Beethoven piano sonatas were written for the biggest, loudest pianos Beethoven could find; there is little doubt that he would have favored the modern concert grand, if he had had a choice. (Davies points out, however, that the appeal and point of some of Beethoven's piano writing, for instance with the *Appassionata Sonata*, is that it pushes to the limit, and beyond, the capabilities of Beethoven's instruments: on a modern grand, the sense of instrumental challenge in the power *Appassionata* is lost, or in any event reduced.) The best attitude towards authenticity in music performance is that in which careful attention is paid to the historic conventions and limitations of a composer's age, but where one also tries to determine the larger artistic potential of a musical work, including implicit meanings that go beyond the understanding that the composer's age might have derived from it. In this respect, understanding music historically is not in principle different from an historically informed critical understanding of other arts, such as literature or painting.

In contrast to nominal authenticity, there is another fundamental sense of the concept indicated by two definitions of "authenticity" mentioned in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "possessing original or inherent authority," and, connected to this, "acting of itself, self-originated." This is the meaning of "authenticity" as the word shows up in existential philosophy, where an authentic life is one lived with critical and independent sovereignty over one's choices and values;

the word is often used in a similar sense in aesthetic and critical discourse. In his discussion of authenticity of musical performance, Peter Kivy points out that, while the term usually refers to historical authenticity, there is another current sense of the term: performance authenticity as “faithfulness to the performer’s own self, original, not derivative or aping of someone else’s way of playing”. Here authenticity is seen as committed, personal expression, being true musically to one’s artistic self, rather than true to an historical tradition. From nominal authenticity, which refers to the empirical facts concerning the origins of an art object — what is usually referred to as provenance — we come now to another sense of the concept, which refers less to cut-and-dried fact and more to an emergent value possessed by works of art. I refer to this second, problematic sense of authenticity as *expressive authenticity*.

Tolstoy claimed that cosmopolitan European art of his time had given up trying to communicate anything meaningful to its audience in favour of amusement and careerist manipulation. While he may have been wrong in so dismissing all the art of his age, the extent to which his bitter, cynical descriptions of the art world of his time apply to both popular and high art of our own media-driven age is surprising. Where and how Tolstoy drew the line between art that is falsely sentimental and manipulative on the one hand, and sincerely expressive on the other, has been hotly disputed. But it is impossible that these categories could be entirely dispensed with, at least in the critical and conceptual vocabulary we apply to Western art.

As one Kominimung carver told Smidt, “A woodcarver must concentrate, think well and be inspired. You must think hard which motif you want to cut into the wood. And you must feel this inside, in your heart.” For the Kominimung, good carving is a matter of technical mastery, of feeling, and of *meaning it*.

(...) the idea of expressive authenticity is not exclusively Western. Varieties of formalism in aesthetics have at various times attempted to discount its significance, but if it is possible for art ever to express anything whatsoever, then questions of sincerity, genuineness of expression, and moral passion, are in principle relevant to it. Expressive authenticity is a permanent part of the conceptual topography of our understanding of art.

While deeply sympathetic to Huichol culture, Shelton regards the development of a commercial market for Huichol work as having given birth to a meretricious form of art, something that is not an authentic Huichol cultural expression. (...) The two most significant aspects of Shelton’s critique of Huichol art involve issues of *continuity* and *audience*. While Shelton says there has been a

tendency for outsiders and dealers to regard the yarn *tablas* as “either a traditional artform or as having evolved from a traditional form,” he rejects them as part of a continuous tradition. (...) Shelton says that, with regard to the yarn constructions, he has been unable to trace any organic principle of evolution suggesting any kind of direct development from older forms. Shelton lists ways in which the *tablas* must be set apart from traditional Huichol art. The *tablas*’ brightly dyed commercial yarns on plywood or fibreboard, dense with elaborate color depictions, present something quite unlike sparingly decorated traditional votive objects. Furthermore, the context of production for the modern objects is not the sierra — they are made by Huichol people living in Guadalajara or Mexico City — and such objects, while illustrative of traditional mythologies, have no indigenous religious use.

Shelton notes that the flamboyance of the *tablas* makes them, in the view of Huichol people, items of “conspicuous consumption.” In this way, the values they embody “are foreign to the Huichol themselves, and conflict with their emphasis on humility and religious introspection.” Consequently, the *tablas* would never be purchased by traditional Huichols. The *tablas* have the overall effect of alienating Huichol people from their own culture. It is in these respects that it is legitimate to call Huichol *tablas* “inauthentic.”

Shelton criticizes Huichol yarn construction for its failure to be continuously linked to historic Huichol artforms by what he calls an “organic principle of evolution.” Continuity here means persistent presence of external form, and there is little doubt that this is an adequate criterion for authenticity in some contexts. But concentration on perceptible form ignores the more important issue at stake in assessing the expressive authenticity of art. Authenticity often implies that the original indigenous audience for an art is still intact; inauthenticity that the original audience is gone, or has no interest in the art, and that the art is now being created for a different audience, perhaps for foreign consumption. The authenticity question for Huichol yarn products does not depend on whether beeswax and/or yarn, commercially dyed or not, has been used in the past. The issue is that the yarn constructions have no part in the present religious economy or other aspects of traditional Huichol society, and therefore are not addressed to the people themselves, their fears, dreams, loves, tastes, obsessions. Nor are they subjected to criticism in terms of the values of an indigenous audience: they do not express anything about Huichol life to Huichol people. They are inauthentic in these respects.

A Pacific Island dancer was once asked about his native culture. “Culture?” he responded. “That’s what we do for the tourists.” But if it is only for the tourists, who have neither the knowledge nor the time to learn and apply a probing canon of criticism to an artform, there can be no reason to expect that the artform will develop the complex expressive possibilities we observe in the great established art traditions of the world.

Why, then, do critics and historians of art, music, and literature, private collectors, curators, and enthusiasts of every stripe invest so much time and effort in trying to establish the provenance, origins, and proper identity — the nominal authenticity — of artistic objects? It is sometimes cynically suggested that the reason is nothing more than money, collectors' investment values — forms of fetishizing, commodification — that drives these interests. Such cynicism is not justified by facts. The nominal authenticity of a purported Rembrandt or a supposedly old Easter Island carving may be keenly defended by its owners (collectors, museum directors), but the vast majority of articles and books that investigate the provenance of art works are written by people with no personal stake in the genuineness of individual objects. Moreover, when this comes into question, issues of nominal authenticity are as hotly debated for novels and musical works in the public domain as they are for physical art objects with a specific commodity value.

Establishing nominal authenticity serves purposes more important than maintaining the market value of an art object: it enables us to understand the practice and history of art as an intelligible history of the expression of values, beliefs, and ideas, both for artists and their audiences — and herein lies its link to expressive authenticity. Works of art, besides often being formally attractive to us, are manifestations of both individual and collective values, in virtually every conceivable relative weighting and combination.

This explains why aesthetic theories that hold that works of art are just aesthetically appealing objects — to be enjoyed without regard to any notion of their origins — are unsatisfactory. If works of art appealed only to our formal or decorative aesthetic sense, there would indeed be little point in establishing their human contexts by tracing their development, or even in distinguishing them from similarly appealing natural objects — flowers or seashells. But works of art of all societies express and embody both cultural beliefs general to a people and personal character and feeling specific to an individual. Moreover, this fact accounts for a large part, though not all, of our interest in works of art. To deny this would be implicitly to endorse precisely the concept of the eighteenth-century curiosity cabinet, in which Assyrian shards, tropical seashells, a piece of Olmec jade, geodes, netsuke, an Attic oil lamp, bird of paradise feathers, and a Maori patu might lay side by side in indifferent splendour. The propriety of the curiosity cabinet approach to art has been rejected in contemporary thought in favour of a desire to establish provenance and cultural meaning precisely because intra- and inter-cultural relationships among artworks help to constitute their meaning and identity.

« Un sculpteur doit se concentrer, penser bien et être inspiré. Vous devez penser intensément au motif que vous voulez tailler dans le bois. Et vous devez le sentir en vous, dans votre cœur. » (Dirk Smidt cité par Dutton)

Traité anonyme de 1782, cité par Thomas Crow, *La peinture et son public à Paris au XVIII^{ème} siècle*, Macula, Paris, 2000¹⁹⁸⁵, p. 256

L'artisan fait absolument dépendre ses aises des richesses, et il n'assure son existence sociale que par ses consommations ; l'artiste a pour moteur l'estime publique : il fait le bien par une abnégation entière de lui-même.

Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, "African Art and Authenticity: A Text with a Shadow", *African Arts*, 25, 2, avril 1992

(...) the implications of authenticity extend even further into an ideology of recording culture, whether through film or through writing. The ethnographic film is particularly vulnerable to this form of selective perception. In 1978 in Ibadan I watched a crew of perfectly serious German filmmakers systematically eliminating the Jimmy Cliff T-shirts, wristwatches, and plastic in various forms from a Yoruba crowd scene at an Egungun festival. They were attempting to erase Westernization from Yoruba culture, rewriting Yoruba ethnography in an effort to reinvent a past free of Western intervention – a pure, timeless time and space, an "authentic" Yoruba world.

Charles Keil relates the story of the Tiv women's dance known as *Icough* and how it was modified by filmmakers (in the face of considerable Tiv resistance) to fit the requirements of cultural authenticity and the attention span of a Western audience. A dance sequence of eight segments lasting well over an hour was reduced to three; the usual audience of "enthusiastic supporters pushing forward for a better look or breaking into the dance to press coins on perspiring brows" was completely absent. But most serious, the aesthetics governing the dance itself – what Keil refers to as the Tiv *expressive grid* – were modified by the insistence of the filmmakers that the women change their costumes from the Western-style circle-skirted dresses and pith helmets usually worn for this dance to the more common Tiv "native" wrappers. What is subsequently lost in the film is the interaction of costume and movement that is central to this particular dance:

Not only were the central symbols of a "rite of modernization" taken away or repressed, but the power of Tiv tradition to master those symbols, incorporate them into Tiv metaphor, was being denied.

Having been shown David Attenborough's film *Behind the Mask*, my students are always shocked to learn that tourists regularly visit certain Dogon villages. The film artfully presents the Dogon as a "pure" culture, untainted by contact with outsiders. In an equally popular film, Peggy Harper and Frank Speed's *Gelede*, the western Yoruba mask festival is performed in a nearly empty space with almost no audience, even though we know that in fact it takes place in a crowded

marketplace amidst noise, dust, and confusion. Presumably, clear camera angles took precedence over contextuality. By strict definition these are not documentary films, because they control and regulate the participants. Yet they are widely used in both museums and university classrooms. Despite their flaws they have defined and authenticated the performative aspect of African art for a generation of students.

Jean-Paul Colleyn, « Images, signes, fétiches. À propos de l'art bamana (Mali) », *Cahiers d'études africaines* 3/2009 (n° 195) , p. 733-746.

La collecte des parties constitutives, leur arrangement, leur élaboration en compositions complexes, leur entretien et leur traitement rituels mobilisent des capacités intellectuelles et artisanales considérables. Les fabricants sont vraiment des « hommes de l'art » respectés. Être le détenteur d'un *boli* postule un savoir, car cette « boule » est comme une enveloppe dans laquelle sont cachées des connaissances et des forces dangereuses. Leurs « propriétaires » savent qu'ils doivent s'y connaître sous peine d'y laisser la vie. Mais les *boliw* sont bien davantage que des réceptacles car leur efficacité tient à leur procédure de fabrication. Bien que chacun d'entre eux ait sa spécialité, son travail (*bara*), ils tendent tous à se poser comme une totalité et même à intégrer les autres puissances. Les grands cultes mobilisent de véritables batteries de *boliw*. Ce sont des choses que l'on cache, que l'on entoure de secrets, que l'on couvre d'enveloppes protectrices parce que leur puissance ne survit que si le détail de leur composition échappe aux investigations des rivaux. Sous peine de mort, les non-initiés n'ont pas le droit de voir certains d'entre eux et encore moins de poser des questions sur leur composition, leur fonction, et leur mode d'emploi.