

AFRICAN MODERNISM IN AMERICA: DECOLONIZATION, CIVIL RIGHTS & THE COLD WAR

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1960 was heralded as “The Year of Africa,” marking the independence of seventeen African nations from European colonialism. Decolonization movements in Africa resonated internationally—with the colonized world across the Global South and with Black Americans fighting for their own freedoms in the United States. With independence, artists in Africa developed new visual languages that drew on both indigenous traditions and the global avant-garde. The exhibition of this new work in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, supported by (occasionally covert) Cold War-era cultural diplomacy, encouraged American audiences to recognize their shared aesthetic and political concerns and challenged assumptions about African art in the postwar era. Based on an exhibition that will travel to the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC in 2023, this class will ask students to virtually curate galleries in the museum based on the histories and artists discussed.



Demas Nwoko (born in 1935, Nigeria), *Folly*, 1960, oil on board. 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 51 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Private collection.