

EDWARD THORP GALLERY
Press Release

Paintings, Flags & Iron: Haitian Art from the Last Fifty Years
March 16th through April 21st, 2007

The gallery will present an overview of some of the most revered Haitian artists, internationally known for their originality and mastery of their medium. Some of the artists to be included are: Edgar Jean-Baptiste, Georges Liautaud, Hector Hyppolite and Rigaud Benoit.

Haitian painting began to receive worldwide attention in the early 1940s when Le Centre d'Art in Port-au-Prince helped to galvanize a fever for art that was taking hold independently in individual artists. Haitian painters strive to represent their everyday lives as mediated by Vodou saints and rituals. These paintings are narratives that speak to the rich and turbulent ways of Haitian life. They utilize an intuitive approach to color composition and draftsmanship: vibrant color, a strong graphic sense and pervasive spirituality.

Flags, or *drapo vodou*, are an art form unique to Haiti. Constructed of sequins and beads hand-sewn onto fabrics of satin, velvet, or rayon, and adorned with sequins, beads, or appliqué, these flags are presented at the beginning of Vodou ceremonies to salute the spirits and to marshal the energies of their devotees. Each flag contains tens of thousands of sequins fastened to the back panel by a bead of the same or differing color. The *drapo* are similar in meaning to the stained glass windows of Catholicism.

Haitian iron is crafted from the recycled metal of oil drums. From this material, human animal and spiritual forms are chiseled and forged, using bold forms, negative space, and physical vitality. Primarily developed by George Liautaud, ironwork has now become a traditional art form in Haiti.

Haitian Vodou was born in the seventeenth century, when enslaved Africans brought their religious traditions from West and Central Africa to the Caribbean, and were in turn exposed to a variety of European traditions, including the art and ritual practices of Roman Catholicism. Vodou, still evolving through its practice in Haiti, represents the fusion of several different belief systems into an original religion. Vodou's popular appeal in Haiti finds expression in the social, political, and private realms. It is a way of life and has an integral place in Haitian art.

The gallery would like to thank Jonathan Demme and Pebo Voss for their assistance in putting together this exhibition.

Gallery hours are from 11am to 6pm, Tuesday through Saturday. For more information please call (212) 691-6565 or email: edwardthorpgallery@gmail.com.