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## TANAKA INAGAKI, Riho. The Influence of Socles Created by Kichizo Inagaki on the Acceptance of African Objects as “Art”: A Study of the Barnes Collection

The Barnes Collection, which holds the famous early 20th-century French paintings and African objects collected by Dr. Albert C. Barnes, has played an important role in encouraging the acceptance of African works as “art” in the United States. This paper explores how socles created by Kichizo Inagaki contributed to the acceptance of African objects as “art”. Indeed, Inagaki’s socles are used to display 84 out of the 123 African works held in the Barnes Collection.

Kichizo Inagaki (1876–1951) was an *ébéniste* and sculptor from Murakamicho, Niigata Prefecture, Japan. He graduated from the Department of Sculpture at the Tokyo Fine Arts School in 1904 and moved to France two years later. He married Laure Peltre in 1914 and became a naturalized French citizen in 1924 and lived the remainder of his life without returning to Japan. Previous research has commented on Inagaki’s close relationship with Auguste Rodin and the fact that Inagaki created socles for his artworks. Moreover, scholarship has mentioned Inagaki’s collaboration with furniture designer Eileen Gray. He also worked with Paul Guillaume and Charles Ratton, two gallerists who dealt with “*art nègre*.” Moreover, Barnes obtained African objects displayed on Inagaki mounts through Guillaume.

This paper identifies and describes the form, features, and attaching mechanisms of the socles confirmed by the Barnes Foundation to be the creations of Inagaki. It uses textual analysis to clarify how Inagaki mounts were evaluated at the time, while also investigating the role of Inagaki’s socles in the exhibition of African objects in the Barnes Collection. At these exhibitions, Barnes strictly oversaw exhibition methods and arranged works to emphasize their context, particularly during the Harlem Renaissance period, showing concern for the equal rights of black people.

The characteristics of Inagaki mounts are identified to be: shininess of the surface, beveling, and his seal. This paper therefore highlights the formalization of mounts designed for the display of specific object and the use of beautiful symmetrical form. Using attaching methods developed in Japan, Inagaki minimized damage to objects and made it easy to remove them after exhibition. Indeed, documents show that Inagaki received praise for his sophisticated taste and the techniques he had inherited in his hometown of Murakami.

Although Guillaume, who sought to promote “*art nègre*,” and Barnes, who strived to enhance the value of all African art during the Harlem Renaissance period, heavily influenced the evaluation of African objects as art in the Barnes Collection, Inagaki’s well-balanced wooden mounts played a significant role, providing an installation environment that was aesthetically refined and a sophistication of figure as a result of the symbolical function of the mounts. He further contributed to an intensification of context by providing his seal. Therefore, in addition to the African artists who made the objects and peripheral characters such as gallerists, art critics, and collectors, it is important to recognize the influence of Inagaki, who was deeply involved in the formalization of “*art nègre*” or “*negro art*.”

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