The effort to promote the ethnographic specimen or folk art to high art is also reflected in labelling. Phillips claims that extensive labelling, long explanation of what objects mean to the ethnic groups which made them, exoticizes that art and alienates it from ordinary viewers. Phillips himself obviously prefers the "I-know-what-I-like-when-I-see-it" approach which decontextualizes art as aesthetic objects beyond the confines of particular cultures (Vincent 1996: 124). Ethnic contextualization may indeed hurt promotion. "And at least one New York art dealer agrees. 'We don't want to see the ethnic basis of the art become the focal point of the show ... Europeans have a connection with Africa, so they don't mind the ethnographic elements of the art. But for many Americans, these elements touch on racial attitudes. They look at African art and say, "We don't want 'black' art in our living room"'." (Vincent 1996: 127). In short, if such art can be divested of the meanings which the Africans who made it had in mind, it might not alarm white bigots who have money.

The Guggenheim exhibit features some wall exegeses and brief labels (Vincent 1996: 127), but those who want to know much about the pieces will have to buy this very expensive catalogue.

The newness of African objects as a category of fine art has important implications for its appreciation and exhibition, and this new status is debated and figures centrally in judging an exhibit such as that at the Royal Academy.

The British art critic Brian Sewell, who reviewed the Royal Academy exhibit for the London *Evening Standard*, questioned Phillips' competence, describing him as "a bloody awful painter who suddenly pops up as an African-art expert, but who has no idea of the difference between east, west, north, and south Africa" (Vincent 1996: 126).

How to define and select such art remain debatable. This is not an issue of "high" and "low" art or "fine art" and "decorative art", because these issues also characterize debate in the much older field of European art studies. The greatest problems here hinge on the fact that we still know very little about the arts of many areas of Africa. This may partly support Rubin's assertion that much "primitive" art in Western hands is really mediocre (1984: 21). Even in those parts of west and central Africa which have been studied for many decades, we are still learning to appreciate varied styles and remain weak at recognizing individual artists. (The names of only three individual African artists appear in the catalogue, and the works of only two, both Yoruba, are shown [419, 421].) Whether we should even care about the names of individual artists is a culturally determined question. The problem of variation in styles within any art tradition is necessarily only briefly mentioned from time to time, and as a result readers are left to assume that the objects shown are in some sense representative of the art of the particular peoples with whom the catalogue associates them.

In general, selection of objects in the catalogue is determined by the taste of the organizing curator. This is common in art shows. This choice is here validated by the curator's claim to long interest in African art and to his "eye" as an artist as well as collector. He has what Sally Price scathingly refers to as an all-seeing, aesthetic eye, presumably not requiring deep knowledge of the particular culture or experiences of the peoples who made and used these objects (Price 1989: 92 f.). The high-flown aesthetician or art connoisseur assumes an instinctive sense of what is good. Such experts on fine art tend to disdain the tedious particulars of sociocultural contexts (Price 1989: 99). They assume that what constitutes value, craftsmanship, beauty, and ugliness may readily be discerned by the sensitive eye of a cross-cultural connoisseur. Some exhibits of African art are organized by persons who have spent years trying to understand and appreciate particular forms of art on African terms, yet we still have catalogues and exhibits such as this where the all-seeing, judging eye roves magisterially over myriad cultures. To assess such arrogance, imagine a comparable exhibit of all European fine and decorative arts curated by an Asian or African artist who has no formal expertise in any of European arts or cultures but who admires these objects. Such a show might be quite interesting, but it would be unlikely to find its way into a national museum or to achieve the international recognition that this show at the Royal Academy has.

Some years ago, the Center for African Art in New York City presented an exhibit in which ten people with varied knowledge of African art (three museum curators, a scholar on African art, a writer, three modern artists, a collector, and one traditional African wood-carver) were asked each to select ten objects or sets of objects for exhibition (Vogel 1987). Each would then write briefly on why he or she had selected these objects, and these comments would appear in the exhibit's catalogue. The seeming spontaneity of that show, when contrasted to the reality of how it was set up, tells about the power and choices involved in exhibits. The selectors were not free to choose whatever objects they wanted; instead, the director