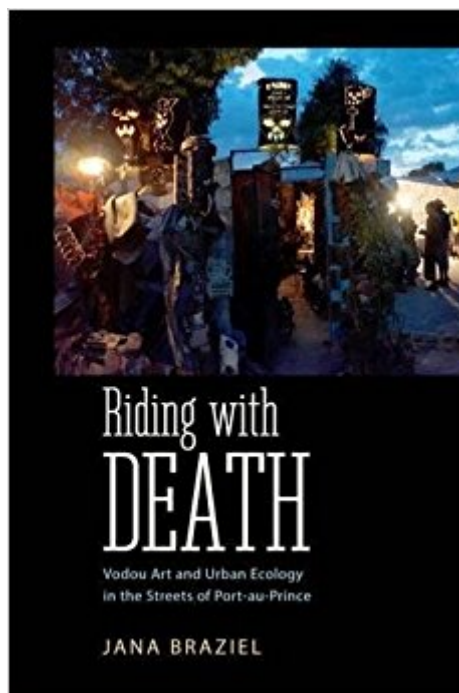




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Riding With Death: Vodou Art And Urban Ecology In The Streets Of Port-au-Prince (Caribbean Studies Series)



Synopsis

On the southern end of the Grand Rue, a major thoroughfare that runs through the center of Port-au-Prince, waits the Haitian capital's automobile repair district. This veritable junkyard of steel and rubber, recycled parts, old tires, and scrap metal might seem an unlikely foundry for art. Yet, on the street's opposite end thrives the Grand Rue Galerie, a working studio of assembled art and sculptures wrought from the refuse. Established by artists André Eugène and Jean-Henri Celeur in the late 1990s, the Grand Rue's urban environmental aesthetics—defined by motifs of machinic urbanism, Vodou bricolage, the postprimitivist altermodern, and performative politics—radically challenge ideas about consumption, waste, and environmental hazards, as well as consider innovative solutions to these problems in the midst of poverty, insufficient social welfare, lack of access to arts, education, and basic needs. In *Riding with Death*, Jana Evans Braziel explores the urban environmental aesthetics of the Grand Rue sculptors and the beautifully constructed sculptures they have designed from salvaged automobile parts, rubber tires, carved wood, and other recycled materials. Through first-person accounts and fieldwork, Braziel constructs an urban ecological framework for understanding these sculptures amid environmental degradation and grinding poverty. Influenced by urban geographers, art historians, and political theorists, the book regards the underdeveloped cities of the global South as alternate spaces for challenging the profit-driven machinations of global capitalism. Above all, Braziel presents Haitian artists who live on the most challenged Caribbean island, yet who thrive as creators reinventing refuse as art and resisting the abjection of their circumstances.

Book Information

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“The Swiss anthropologist Alfred Métraux, who saw Vodou as a modern, urban religion, may have been among the first to pay serious attention to what he called the “veritable junk shop” that found its way onto the altar in Vodou temples. Jana Evans Braziel’s *Riding with Death* takes us from the forties to the present in her original exploration of the hallucinatory assemblages that the artists of the Grand Rue have drawn from the recycled urban trash of Port-au-Prince. Objects charged with magical and supernatural meaning but improvised from the twisted, rusting materials abandoned by global capitalism are analyzed in terms of what she calls Vodou bricolage. *Riding with Death* is outstanding in its use of theories of imaginative dwelling in urban space to position Haiti in the art historical context of the Americas.” — J. Michael Dash, professor of French, New York University

Jana Evans Braziel, Cincinnati, Ohio, is Western College Endowed Professor and chair of the Department of Global and Intercultural Studies at Miami University. She has coedited five volumes and is author of *Duvalier’s Ghosts: Race, Diaspora, and U.S. Imperialism in Haitian Literatures*; *Caribbean Genesis: Jamaica Kincaid and the Writing of New Worlds*; *Artists, Performers, and Black Masculinity in the Haitian Diaspora*; and *Diaspora: An Introduction*.

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