



Mbari: Art and the Life Among the Owerri Igbo (Traditional Arts of Africa)

Herbert M. Cole

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One of the most fascinating artistic phenomena in tropical Africa, mbari houses are little known outside Igboland. Art historian Herbert M. Cole has drawn from his extensive research in eastern Nigeria to produce the first book-length study of this unusual art form. Cole describes the building of a mbari mud house to honor the gods, a process rich in tradition and ritual, marked by body painting, drumming, dancing, singing, and chanting. The ecology, socio-cultural systems, and religion of the Owerri area are examined as a backdrop to the elaborate stage of the building process, which may take up to two years to complete.

Illustrated with rare field photographs and superb line drawings, this volume describes and interprets mbari houses not as isolated works of art but as monuments growing out of, and expressive of, the values and beliefs of Owerri Igbo culture.

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