



Jean Robert Dressed as Gede, Port-au-Prince Cemetery, 2013. Photo by Katherine Smith

Le Monde Invisible: Art, Death and Vodou in Urban Haiti

Tuesday, March 3rd
4:00PM – 5:30PM
Kaplan 365

In Haitian Vodou, one lwa (deity) is widely celebrated as the spirit of pèp la (the people). The lwa Gede is a trickster who resides over death and sexual regeneration. He embodies transgressive masculinity and carnivalesque freedom. This presentation explores how such a rogue became a national sign. It traces Gede's rise in popularity to early waves of urbanization in the first half of the 20th century, and new forms of masculinity that the city made possible. Through a close reading of ethnographic texts, the chapter maps Gede's ascendance against the centralization of political and economic power in the capital. The paper argues that Gede offers a powerful example of gender formation and apotheosis as popular historicity.



Katherine Smith, PhD is a visiting scholar in the UCLA International Institute and the Department of World Arts and Cultures/ Dance. She has participated in a curatorial projects and has published widely about the art and religion in Haiti and the Caribbean. She has had fellowships at NYU and Brown University.