

# JONKONNU FESTIVAL

1996

Color offset lithograph

Image/sheet: 21 $\frac{1}{16}$  x 29 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches  
(54.8 x 75.6 cm)

2009-61-80

## LET'S LOOK

What is the mood of this scene?  
How do the lines, shapes, and colors as well as the people and costumes help create this feeling?

How many instruments can you find? What other kinds of sounds might you hear?

Smith includes a clock near the center of the scene. What are some of the different meanings it could have?

How would you feel as a spectator or performer in this festival?



## ABOUT THE PRINT

This **print** depicts a celebration of Jonkonnu, an annual masquerade and dance tradition dating back to the time of African slavery in the seventeenth century. It's associated with Jamaica and other islands in the Caribbean, as well as some southern areas of the United States. Usually held around Christmastime, Jonkonnu provided enslaved people the opportunity to abandon their harsh labors for a day of festivity, parading with music and dance drawn from their African origins.

Hear the music! Feel the rhythm! Move to the beat! In this image, Smith captures the energy of African folk dance. The momentum begins at the top of this image and grows as marchers strut with their arms, feet, and hips in motion. Pulsating with rhythm, drama, and wit, Jonkonnu is a mimed performance with each character in elaborate costume. Cowhead, a main role, is recognized by its long horns; here, it strides across the **foreground** on stilts. With undulating lines, jazzy **patterns**, and bright colors, *Jonkonnu Festival* celebrates a cultural tradition that helped sustain a people through difficult times of oppression centuries ago.

*"And when I thought of myself as a painter,  
I dreamed of myself as a great painter."*

—VINCENT D. SMITH, 1999