

# THE FETISH A(R)T WORK: AFRICAN OBJECTS IN THE MAKING OF EUROPEAN ART HISTORY 1500–1900 A CLARK CONFERENCE OCTOBER 19–20, 2023

## BIOS

Alexander Bevilacqua is associate professor of early modern European history at Williams College. His book, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment* (Belknap Press, 2018), won the Baxter Adams Prize of the American Historical Association. He co-edited the volume *Thinking in the Past Tense: Eight Conversations* (Chicago University Press, 2019). An excerpt from his current research project, entitled “Race-Making Festivities in Brandenburg-Prussia,” is forthcoming in *Past and Present*.

Yaëlle Biro, PhD, is an Africanist art historian whose research focuses on African arts’ commercial networks, exhibitions, and representation at the turn of the twentieth century. From 2010 to 2021, she was curator of African arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. She now works independently. Notable publications include edited volumes *The Brummer Galleries, Paris and New York. Defining Taste from Antiquities to the Avant-Garde* (2023); *Rhapsodic Objects: Art, Agency, and Materiality (1700-2000)* (2021); and the single-authored volume *Fabriquer le regard. Marchands, réseaux et objets d’art africains à l’aube du XXe siècle* (2018).

Justin M. Brown is a Ph.D. candidate in the History of Art at Yale University and current Samuel H. Kress Predoctoral Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA). His dissertation examines Afro-Surinamese calabash art from the period of slavery and emancipation. He has held curatorial and research positions at the Yale Center for British Art, the Worcester Art Museum, the RISD Museum, and the W.E.B. Du Bois Research Institute.

Joshua I. Cohen is an associate professor of art history at the City College of New York and the CUNY Graduate Center. His first book, *The “Black Art” Renaissance: African Sculpture and Modernism across Continents* (2020), received honorable mention for the Modernist Studies Association First Book Prize. His second book project, tentatively entitled *Art of the Opaque: African Modernism, Decolonization, and the Cold War*, has received support from the Dedalus Foundation and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Roberto Conduru is the Endowed Distinguished Professor of Art History at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. His publications include *Axé Bahia – The Power of Art in an Afro-Brazilian Metropolis* (Fowler Museum UCLA, 2017); *Architecture Agouda au Bénin et au Togo* (MRE, 2016), *Pérolas Negras, Primeiros Fios* (EdUERJ, 2013), *Arte Afro-Brasileira* (C/Arte, 2007), and contributions to *3rd Text Africa*, *Art in Translation*, *Ars*, *Arts*, *Critical Interventions*, *Juni Magazin*, *Modos*, *Perspective*, and other journals.

Cécile Fromont is professor of the history of art at Yale University. Her writing and teaching focus on the visual, material, and religious culture of Africa and Latin America with a special emphasis on the early modern period (c. 1500–1800), on the Portuguese-speaking Atlantic World, and on the slave trade.

Gabriele Genge chairs the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art History and Art Theory at the University Duisburg-Essen in Essen, Germany. Her research interests focus on French colonialism and African and African-American image theory, knowledge systems, and epistemology. She is the author of *Art History and Fetishism Abroad: Global Shiftings in Media and Methods* (Transcript-Verlag, 2014), co-edited with Angela Stercken. Genge has also supervised the project, “The Anachronic and the Present: Aesthetic Perception and Artistic Concepts of Temporality in the Black Atlantic,” resulting in the anthology *Aesthetic Temporalities Today: Present, Presentness and Re-presentation* (Transcript-Verlag, 2020), edited together with Ludger Schwarte and Angela Stercken.

Simon Gikandi is the Class of 1943 University Professor of English at Princeton University. He specializes in the literatures, arts, and cultures of Africa and its diasporas in Europe and the Americas. He is the author of *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*. His essay, “Blackness and European Modernism” was published in *Black Modernisms in the Transatlantic World*, eds. Steven Nelson and Huey Copeland (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2023), and he is completing *Otherwise Modernism: The Aesthetic of Global Blackness*.

Alexandre Girard-Muscagorry is a curator at the Musée de la Musique (Philharmonie de Paris) in charge of the African, Asian, Oceanic, and American collections, as well as a lecturer in African art history at École du Louvre, in Paris, France. He holds degrees from École du Louvre, ESSEC Business School, and Institut national du patrimoine. As a PhD candidate at EHESS (École des hautes études en sciences sociales) in Paris, he is studying Victor Schœlcher’s transatlantic collecting practices and the uses of objects in his abolitionist and colonial projects.

Anne Lafont (*convener*) is an art historian and professor at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris, France. She is interested in the art, images, and material culture of France and its colonial empire in the modern era, as well as in historiographical questions related to the notion of African art. Her most recent book, co-edited with François-Xavier Fauvelle, is *L’Afrique et le monde. Histoires renouvelées de la préhistoire au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (La découverte, 2022). Her book *L’art et la race* (soon to be published in English by the Getty) was

awarded the 2019 Maryse Condé Prize and the 2020 Vitale and Arnold Blokh Prize. She participated, as a member of the scientific committee, in the Musée d'Orsay's exhibition *Le modèle noir* (2019). In 2021–22, she served as the Robert Sterling Clark Visiting Professor of Art History in the Williams/Clark Graduate Program in the History of Art.

Daniel H. Leonard is assistant professor of instruction in the College of Liberal Arts at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He completed his Ph.D. in French Literature at Columbia University. His research traces the development of the Enlightenment human sciences through the lens of the history of science and aesthetics, with a special focus on the relation between humans and machines. Publications include articles on Enlightenment theories of knowledge and comparative religion, and he is the co-author, with Rosalind C. Morris, of *The Returns of Fetishism: Charles de Brosses and the Afterlives of an Idea* (2017).

Risham Majeed is a scholar and curator specializing in European medieval art and the historical arts of Africa. She is an associate professor of art, art history, and architecture at Ithaca College in South Hill, New York. Ongoing projects include an examination of sub-Saharan Africa in conversation with Europe during the medieval period, alongside the consequences of this new research for universal museums. She is currently completing her book, *Primitive before Primitivism: Medieval and African Art in the 19th Century*, which chronicles the parallel reception of the two fields during the emergence of art history as a discipline.

Lionel Manga is a writer based in Douala, Cameroon. The author of *L'Ivresse du papillon*, a pictorial and unique journey in the contemporary Cameroon through a selection of artists and their works, he also contributed the afterword of Benjamin Bratton's *Terraformation*. Recent projects include co-directing a seminar in Paris in spring 2018, *Cosmocides*. His first novel, *La Sphère de Planck*, which appeared in fall 2022, explores the decay of Cameroon due to corruption. He trained in economics at Paris 1-Tolbiac.

Matthew Francis Rarey is associate professor of art history at Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio. His writing on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Black Atlantic visual and material culture has appeared in *African Arts*, *The Art Bulletin*, *19&20*, and *Black Modernisms in the Transatlantic World* (Yale University Press, 2023). His first book, *Insignificant Things: Amulets and the Art of Survival in the Early Black Atlantic*, was published by Duke University Press in 2023.

## MODERATORS

Michelle Apotsos is associate professor of art, chair of the Art History Department, and co-chair of the Art Department at Williams College. Her scholarship and teaching focuses on Islamic architecture in Africa, and African art history and art-making. She is the author of *Architecture*,

*Islam, and Identity in West Africa: Lessons from Larabanga* (Routledge Press, 2016) and *The Masjid in Contemporary Islamic Africa* (Cambridge, 2021).

Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen is assistant professor at The Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. Her first book, *Modern Art & the Remaking of Human Disposition* (University of Chicago Press, 2021), was a finalist for the 2022 Modernist Studies Association First Book Prize and received Honorable Mention with Distinction for a Single-Author Work from the Dedalus Foundation. For the past six years, she taught in the Williams Graduate Program in the History of Art at the Clark Art Institute and served as Associate Director of the Graduate Program since 2019. Her current book project examines how Darwin's theories of sexual selection reshaped the trajectories of three key aesthetic concepts: design, hierarchy, and taste.

Erica Moiah James is an art historian, curator, and assistant professor at the University of Miami. Her research centers on Indigenous, modern, and contemporary art of the Caribbean, Americas, and the African Diaspora. She was the founding director and chief curator of the National Gallery of The Bahamas and taught previously at Yale University. In 2022, she curated the exhibition *Didier William: Nou Kite Tout Sa Dèyè* for the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami. Her forthcoming book is entitled, *After Caliban: Caribbean Art in the Global Imaginary* (Duke University Press).

Christophe Koné is associate professor of German at Williams College and the director of the Oakley Center for Humanities and Social Sciences. At Williams since 2013, Koné has taught several German language and literature classes as well as German for Reading Knowledge in the Graduate Program at the Clark Art Institute. His research interests include German Romanticism, the European avant-garde, Modernism, film studies, art history, comics, and fashion studies. He is the author of *Uncanny Creatures: Doll Thinking in Modern German Culture* (University of Michigan Press, 2024).