

Suzanne P. Blier

Allen Whitehill Clowes Professor of Fine Arts and Professor of African and African American Studies



Suzanne Preston Blier (Ph.D. 1981 Columbia, Allen Whitehill Clowes Professor of Fine Arts and of African and African American Studies, Harvard University) is an historian of African art and architecture in both the History of Art and Architecture and African and African American Studies Departments. She also is a member of the Institute for Quantitative Social Science and Faculty Associate at the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative. Her most recent book projects include the forthcoming *1325: How Medieval Africa Made the World Modern* (Yale University Press 2024), *The History of African Art* (Thames and Hudson 2023), *The Streets of Newtowne: A Story of Cambridge MA* (Imagine and Wonder 2023; commendation of merit from the City of Cambridge and the Cambridge Historical Commission), and *Picasso's Demoiselles: The True Origins of a Modern Art Masterpiece* (Duke University Press 2019), winner of the 2020 Robert Motherwell Book Award for an outstanding publication in the history and criticism of modernism in the arts was a finalist for the 2020 Prose Prize in Art History and Criticism, and was selected for the 2019 *Wall Street Journal* arts book holiday list and. Her other books include *Les asen: mémoires de fer forge dans l'art vodoun du Dahomey* (Geneva: Ides et Calendes. Jan. 2019), *The Image of the Black in African and Asian Art* co-edited with David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (2017 Harvard University Press) and *The Art of Jazz: Form/Performance /Notes* co-edited with David Bindman and Vera Ingrid Grant (2017 Harvard University Press). Blier's 2015 book, *Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba: Ife History, Power and*

Identity c. 1300 (Cambridge University Press) won the Prose Prize in Art History and Criticism. Her first book *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression* (Cambridge University press; paperback, Chicago University Press, 1987) won the Arnold Rubin Prize. Her second book, *African Vodun: Art, Psychology, and Power* (1995) received the Charles Rufus Morey Prize. Additional books include: *African Royal Art: The Majesty of Form* (1998 Choice Book Award), *Butabu: Adobe Architecture in West Africa* (2004 NY Times, Holiday Selection), and *Art of the Senses: Masterpieces from the William and Bertha Teel Collection* (Editor 2004).

in 2011 two of her articles were selected for the Centennial Anthology of the *Art Bulletin*, comprising the 33 top articles over the journal's 100-year history; she was one of only three art historians (along with Meyer Shapiro and Leo Steinberg) to have two articles included. In 2017 she was bestowed a Yoruba (Nigeria) chieftaincy title, Otun Yeye Obalufon ("First/Right Mother of Obalufon"), by Oba Aderemi Adedapo, Secretary General of the *Yoruba Council of Yoruba Obas* for her work on Ife art and history.

Blier currently serves as Clerk and Board Member of the National Committee for the History of Art. She is a Board Member and Chair of the Executive Committee of Delegates, American Council of Learned Societies, for which she also is the CAA Representative. She served as President of CAA, the professional association of art historians, artists, and designers from 2016-2018. In 2020 she was named Chair of CAA's Scholarship and Research Committee; she previously was Vice President for Publications from 2013-15 and Vice President for the Annual Conference (2015-2016); In 2014 she published [Art Matters](#) focusing on the importance of African art and the museum.

She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a past member of the College de France International Scientific and Strategic Committee (COSS) and past Board Member of the Society of Architectural Historians. Her fellowships include: ACLS, CASVA (Paul Mellon Senior Fellow, the National Gallery of Art), Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, the Dedalus Foundation, Fulbright Senior Research, Getty Center for the Study of Art, John Simon Guggenheim, I Tatti, National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, the Radcliffe Institute, the Social Science Research Council. She is Co-Chair of an Electronic Geo-Spatial Database: [Africamap](#), a site expanded into [Worldmap](#) (now part of ArcGIS online) where she serves a chair of the Faculty Sterling Committee. A profile on Blier's contributions to the field has appeared in the spring 2013 Harvard Graduate School publication, *Colloqui* essay, ["Facing African Art"](#).