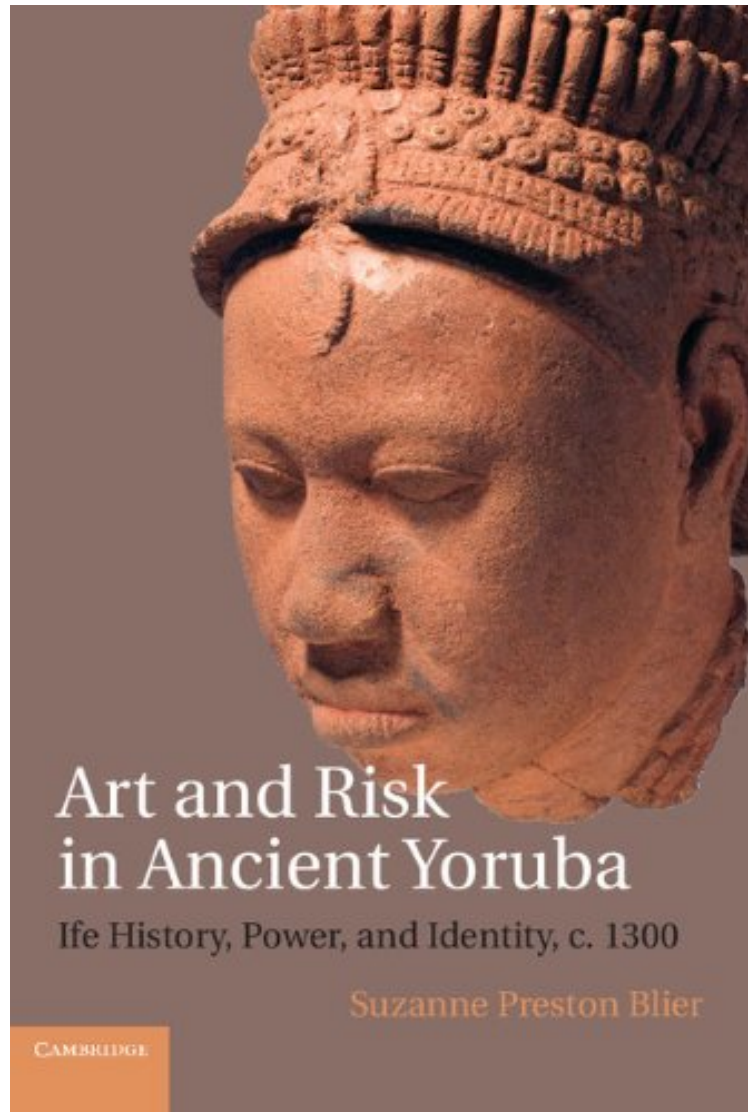


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Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba: Ife History, Power, and Identity, c.1300

Suzanne Preston Blier

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Suzanne Preston Blier : Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba: Ife History, Power, and Identity, c.1300 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba: Ife History, Power, and Identity, c.1300:

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Preserving the Yoruba IdentityBy Barbara SteinbergBlier connects us with the Yoruba way of thinking about the living and the dead, art, war, and God. She preserves their genuine, detailed identity against the more prolific histories of colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.Using the holes near the roots of trees, the dead would travel in and out of Ileacut;-If", a modern Nigerian city that was once the

center of a Yoruba Empire from 1200 to 1400 AD. A world through Yoruba-educated eyes was dynamic, linking symbolic objects, life, and the birthplace of Gods. What Blier sees in the art is the risk the artist took to make it: uncertainty, speaking truth to power, survival from an ancient civil war, burying the objects of yearly rituals, trying to reach perfection, and most of all, owning the narrative to their own history and identity. The Yoruba had a king, Obalufon II, who invented copper casting. A 13th Century mask is said to represent his likeness. At the site Wunmonij, many more heads were found in various modes of decoration. They were perfect and elegant, with almond eyes, imposing headdresses, and could have been made by the same artist. The Yoruba say, "It is death that turns an individual into a beautiful sculpture. A living person has blemishes." 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Anne Kenis A new reference for Ife lovers and specialists. Anne-Catherine Kenis, Art Restorer, Belgium.

In this book, Suzanne Preston Blier examines the intersection of art, risk and creativity in early African arts from the Yoruba center of Ife and the striking ways that ancient Ife artworks inform society, politics, history and religion. Yoruba art offers a unique lens into one of Africa's most important and least understood early civilizations, one whose historic arts have long been of interest to local residents and Westerners alike because of their tour-de-force visual power and technical complexity. Among the complementary subjects explored are questions of art making, art viewing and aesthetics in the famed ancient Nigerian city-state, as well as the attendant risks and danger assumed by artists, patrons and viewers alike in certain forms of subject matter and modes of portrayal, including unique genres of body marking, portraiture, animal symbolism and regalia. This volume celebrates art, history and the shared passion and skill with which the remarkable artists of early Ife sought to define their past for generations of viewers.

"First encountered by foreign observers a century ago, the arts of ancient Ife have since astonished and baffled scholars and connoisseurs alike. Blier's research, Shakespearean in scope, at last connects these sublime sculptures to a tumultuous past and a vital present." Donald J. Cosentino, University of California, Los Angeles "Blier deploys an understated rhetoric in this well-researched, historically grounded, thought-provoking analysis of Ife art, reverberating far beyond the field of African art history. ... her fresh arguments are ... precisely what had to be achieved by new critical scholarship on such a well-established corpus." Ikem Stanley Okoye, University of Delaware "As much a history of ancient Yoruba art as an investigation into the ways in which thenbsp;creation, exhibition, and preservation of art are seriously risky ventures, Suzanne Prestonnbsp;Blier's magisterial new book brings medieval African art alive and reminds us that art and itsnbsp;meanings have been and will remain a subject of heated contention.nbsp;This is the definitive analysis of the arts and civilization in the long and splendid history ofnbsp;the Yoruba culture." Henry Louis Gates, Jr, Harvard University, Massachusetts "In the beginning of each of the chapters that are grouped under two parts, Blier's deep understanding of the subject, particularly as displayed in some of the Yoruba proverbs as well as similitudes from revered western artists and thinkers, is not in doubt." Tajudeen Sowole, Nigerian Guardian About the Author Suzanne Preston Blier is Allen Whitehill Clowes Professor of Fine Arts and Professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. Her first book, *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) won the Arnold Rubin prize. Her second book, *African Vodun: Art, Psychology, and Power* (1995), won the Charles Rufus Morey Prize. Other books include *African Royal Art: The Majesty of Form* (1998), *Butabu: Adobe Architecture in West Africa* (2003) and *Art of the Senses: Masterpieces from the William and Bertha Teel Collection* (2004). She is a member of the Collegegrave;ge de France International Scientific and Strategic Committee (2011-2013) and is on the board of the College Art Association. Her past fellowships include CASVA (Paul Mellon Senior Fellow, the National Gallery of Art), John Simon Guggenheim, the Radcliffe Institute, NEH, the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton), Fulbright Senior Research, Social Science Research Council, ACLS and the Getty Center for the Study of Art.