

Welcome to the African Arts Editorial Consortium

by Leslie Ellen Jones

Volume 49 marks the beginning of a new era for *African Arts*. Since the journal's inception in 1967 as "a quarterly magazine devoted to the graphic, plastic, performing, and literary arts of Africa, traditional and contemporary," it has been produced out of the James S. Coleman African Studies Center at UCLA by an editorial board composed of scholars affiliated with the university's academic departments and museums. A consulting editor board of international scholars has contributed their time and energies in advising the editors and assisting with peer review, but for nearly half a century, *African Arts* has been primarily a UCLA production.

This situation arose almost incidentally. Unlike many journals, *African Arts* is not the organ of a scholarly association, and association journals rotate their editorship on a regular basis, first, as a reflection of their diverse membership and, second, as a way to distribute the costs of running an editorial office across the membership. Generally, the institution where the current editor resides kicks in with office space, release time for the editor, and at least a portion of the salary for support staff to manage the peer review process, while the association uses dues both to finance the layout, copy editing, printing, and shipping of the journal and to provide the journal as a perk for its members. *African Arts* was originally founded on a business model where operating expenses would be covered by advertising and subscription income, with a relatively small subvention from UCLA. There was thus not only no incentive to rotate the editorship, but there was, in effect, no-one to rotate it to. We are not affiliated with ACASA, ASA, or CAA, and whatever institutional support we got came from UCLA alone.

The onset of the Electronic Age and concomitant convulsions in the publishing industry have made our original business model no longer viable—as constant readers will have noticed, advertising in the journal is virtually nonexistent today, and consists primarily of exchange ads, where we publicize a like-minded journal in exchange for them doing the same for us. The African art galleries now buy

ad space in magazines like *Tribal Arts* that are more narrowly focused on a readership of collectors and, even more, rely on the Internet to attract new customers. The readership and editorial focus of *African Arts*, in the meantime, has shifted from broad discussion aimed at not only academics, but also collectors and general interest readers—who were inspired by the social and political changes sweeping through Africa in the 1960s—to the work and interests of postmodern academics and curators. While this has arguably made the journal more intellectually adventurous, there is still the small matter of paying the bills to produce it.

CONSORTIUM PUBLISHING

After several years of investigating the opportunities and pitfalls that new publishing paradigms present us, *African Arts* has decided that the best way to ensure our long-term survival, both intellectually and financially, is to institute a consortium with other institutions that will contribute to editorial oversight and production costs of the journal. Consortium publishing is a new way to share the burdens of high-quality academic publishing in an era of decreasing academic financial resources and increasing administrative demands upon educators' time. First instituted by the drama journal *TDR* under Richard Schechner at NYU in 2010, consortium editing allows for a variety of editorial viewpoints within a single journal.

The enhanced editorial board will now comprise teams based at UCLA—Marla C. Berns, Allen F. Roberts, Mary (Polly) Nooter Roberts, and Patrick A. Polk; University of Florida—Rebecca M. Nagy, Robin Poyner, Susan Cooksey, Fiona McLoughlin, and Mackenzie Moon Ryan; and University of North Carolina Chapel Hill—Carol Magee, Lisa Homann, David G. Pier, and Victoria L. Rovine. We are particularly excited to include editorial representation from the African continent—something promised in the very first issues of the journal and only now coming to fruition—commencing with Volume 50 in 2017, when Ruth Simbao of Rhodes University of South Africa comes on board.

Each team will be responsible for the feature articles and "First Word" opinion column for one issue per volume (i.e., one issue per year), while departmental and reviews columns will continue to be the responsibility of editors appointed by the consortium as a whole. The

coordinating editorial and production office will remain housed at UCLA under my direction as Executive Editor and Eva Howard as Operations Manager. MIT Press Journals will continue to distribute the journal, with back issues available on JSTOR and, from this issue forward, Project Muse.

All four institutions contribute towards the production and staffing costs of the journal, making up the lost advertising income and finally—we hope—removing the ambiguity in some people's minds as to whether we are an academic or a commercial publication. We will still run the occasional ad for books and museum exhibitions, which will be handled through MIT Press Journals, but advertising will no longer be a significant source of operating funds. In addition to subscription income and UCLA's established support for the journal, funding will now also be provided by the University of Florida Office of the Provost; the Department of Art, Department of African, African-American and Diaspora Studies, African Studies Center, Center for Global Initiatives, College of Arts and Sciences' Dean's Office, Global Education Fund, and Institute for the Arts and the Humanities of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill; and, as of 2017, Rhodes University.

Consortium members will participate in the review of independently submitted articles as well as overseeing themed issues. The latter will involve both commissioning themed articles and working with outside guest editors who propose themes to the board. Independent papers may still be submitted through the journal's online system (<http://ucla.in/1ouUunc>). Proposals (with abstracts and sample images) for guest-edited theme issues should be submitted to the Executive Editor at afriartsedit@international.ucla.edu. More information about *African Arts* and links to author guidelines can be found at our website (<http://www.international.ucla.edu/africa/afri-canarts/>).

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Our early steps in instituting the consortium have naturally been a learning process, but so far, things are moving ahead remarkably smoothly. We intend to continue our policy of limiting themed issues to two per

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volume so that there is always room for over-the-transom submissions. Teams will take turns producing themed and unthemed issues in alternate years. As new submissions come in, they are assigned in rotation to the next editorial team on the list; when papers are accepted, they go into a hopper that the unthemed teams can choose from to assemble their issues. Themed issue proposals are presented to the whole consortium for assessment, and teams decide among them who will work on accepted themed issues with the guest editors. For the rest of volume 49, we are concentrating on clearing the books of articles that have already been accepted or were in review when the consortium was established. Scheduling may become a little more complicated than in the days when accepted papers just went into the queue and were published in order of acceptance, but we feel that by quadrupling the number of editors involved in the process, papers will move through review much more quickly than in the past.

Of course, our new colleagues at Florida, North Carolina, and Rhodes are not just welcome toilers in the publication mills that have ensnared the UCLA contingent for so long (*mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha!*). Every institution develops its own habits of thought and approaches to scholarship, and opening up the editorial board(s) will bring fresh ideas and projects to the journal.

As we settle in to the new regime, we hope to explore new ways of presenting research, institute new columns exploring issues in curatorship and pedagogy, and who knows what else? (We are open to suggestions!) As the journal's first half-century draws to a close, we believe that the *African Arts* consortium will enable at least another half century of presenting the best scholarship in all areas of African visual culture to the academy and to the world.

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dialogue

Frederick Grant, Ghanaian Photographer

My attention has been drawn to an article published in the Summer 2012 issue of *African Arts* (vol. 45, no. 2): Rachel Ama Asa Engmann, "Under Imperial Eyes, Black Bodies, Buttocks, and Breasts. British Colonial Photography and Asante 'Fetish Girls'."

I think the author allowed herself to be seriously misled when she implies that the photographer of the portraits she analyses, Frederick Grant, was an Englishman. Grant is a well-known family name in Cape Coast, a Ghanaian coastal settlement. Furthermore, in a database of Basel Mission photographs which was put on general access online almost fifteen years ago, and for which I was co-director, "Fred Grant" is listed in the alphabetical browsing list of photographers and can be identified as a professional who was taking photographs in Cape Coast in 1874. The database, which is now in the hands of the University of Southern California, can be found online at bmpix.usc.edu.

Naturally there could have been two Frederick/Fred Grants taking photographs in Ghana in the second half of the 1870s and the early 1880s—but this is highly unlikely. And the fact that the photographer was registering his images for copyright protection and had a business address in London could very well be more an interesting insight into the attempt of an African photographer to profit from the undoubted interest in images from Asante in Great Britain—rather than 100% evidence that this Grant was an Englishman.

Perhaps I could allow myself to express a little the emotion of frustration about all this. For thirty years, with the backing of the Basel Mission and finance from a number of serious

foundations, like the Getty Grant Program, I was engaged as archivist in making the materials in the Basel Mission archive accessible to international scholarship—for example by making sure that the 25,000 images in bmpix are not only generally accessible online and equipped with the maximum possible catalogue detail, but that this catalogue detail was translated 1:1 from German into English. So it is extremely disappointing to find that there is no trace that Ms Engmann's methodology included a search of bmpix. Further: in a CD-appendix to the *Journal des africanistes* 2005 (subtitle: *Approches croisées des mondes akan II*) I published a "Provisional Survey of Nineteenth Century Photography on the Gold Coast and in Ashanti" with a summary discussion, admittedly somewhat speculative, about the potential holdings of photographs taken in pre-1896 Asante which might be found in European collections, other than those in the Basel Mission, in which I point out that anonymous images of people in or from Asante which I have seen from the years after the 1874 war could well have been taken by Fred Grant, the photographer from Cape Coast.

It is also a matter of some frustration for me that Dr. Jürg Schneider, a former academic assistant of mine, who wrote a dissertation in the History Department of the University of Basel on African photographers over the years 1840 to 1885 on the African coast between Luanda and Dakar (which I co-examined), also does not appear in Ms. Engmann's bibliography. Admittedly the thesis is in German, but Schneider has published in English, and his interest in nineteenth century African photographers is well known among most people in the field.

A final point—did anyone ask whether these are perhaps actually portraits of girls dressed for the Krobo *dipo* puberty rite and relabelled "Asante" for the sake of the higher price an image said to be from Asante could command?

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**Beginning with Volume 49, no. 1,
all new issues of African Arts will be
available on Project Muse**