

## Biographical notes for "The Benin Bronzes: Towards the Resolution of a Long-Standing Dispute?"

See all details on this April 9 event [here](#).

**Kokunre Agbontaen-Eghafona** is a graduate of the University of Benin, Benin City; University of Ibadan, Ibadan; University of Nigeria, Nsukka, all in Nigeria, and New York University. She holds a B. A (Hons.) and M.A History; M.Sc. Archaeology and Anthropology; Professional Certificate in Museum Studies, and Ph.D. Archaeology, specializing in cultural resource management and museum studies.

She was a Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) (1984-1989). She worked as a museum intern at the Department of Arts in Africa, Oceanic, and the Americas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and (1990-1991). She has been a lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin from 1992 to date, and an Associate Professor and Full Professor of Anthropology since 2003 and 2008 respectively. Her research interest includes oral literature and ethnography of the Benin people of Nigeria; peoples and cultures of Nigeria and Africa; cultural resource management; indigenous knowledge systems. She has over sixty academic publications mainly on Benin culture and tradition.

**Dr. Felicity Bodenstein** is an art historian working in France, specialized in the history of archaeological and ethnographic collections social, economic and cultural processes involved in their creation, classification, interpretation, display and reception during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. After completing a Ph.D. on the history of the collections of the department of coins and medals at the National Library in Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, she now works on questions of representation in the display of contested, translocated objects. Her on-going research since 2015 is dedicated to understanding the global destiny of the Benin pieces looted in 1897 by British Naval forces in present-day Nigeria and considers the value transformations and narratives that have accompanied their initial looting and the successive displacements through the market and through collections. She is also interested in the long history of the restitution debates that they are currently part of. Her research was supported by post-doctoral fellowships from the Max Planck Institut at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, by the musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac in Paris and by the Technische Universität in Berlin; where she worked for two years in the project translocations, piloted by Professor Bénédicte Savoy. Since 2019, she is a lecturer in the history of museums and heritage studies at Sorbonne Université, Paris. She is also a principal investigator of the digital humanities project, financed by the Ernest von Siemens foundation, "Digital Benin" (<https://digital-benin.org/>) that will bring together data from the close to 200 museums holding pieces from the 1897 expedition in their collections.

**Souleymane Bachir Diagne** is Professor at Columbia University. An alumnus of the École Normale Supérieure, he holds an agrégation in Philosophy (1978) and he took his Doctorat d'État in philosophy at the Sorbonne (1988) where he also took his BA (1977). Before joining Columbia University in 2008, he taught philosophy for many years at Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar (Senegal) and at Northwestern University. His field of research includes history of logic, history of philosophy, Islamic philosophy, African philosophy and

literature. He is the author of *African Art as Philosophy: Senghor, Bergson, and the Idea of Negritude* (Seagull Books, 2011), *The Ink of the Scholars: Reflections on Philosophy in Africa* (Dakar, Codesria, 2016), *Open to Reason: Muslim Philosophers in Conversation with Western Tradition* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2018). Bachir Diagne is also Director of the Institute of African Studies at Columbia University, an associate member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts of Belgium, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

**David Freedberg** is Pierre Matisse Professor of the History of Art and Director of the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America, Columbia University. He is best known for his work on psychological responses to art and particularly for his studies on iconoclasm and censorship.

Professor Freedberg is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, the Accademia Nazionale di Agricoltura and the Istituto Veneto.

He is the author of many publications including, *Rubens: The Life of Christ After the Passion* (1987), *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (1989), *The Eye of the Lynx: Galileo, His Friends, and the Beginnings of Modern Natural History* (2002), *Iconoclasts and Their Motives* (reprinted in 1993) and most recently "Seven Keys to Kentridge" in *Why Should I Hesitate: William Kentridge Sculpture* (2020).

**Dan Hicks** is Professor of Contemporary Archaeology at the University of Oxford, Curator of World Archaeology at the Pitt Rivers Museum and a Fellow of St Cross College, Oxford. He was Visiting Professor at the musée du quai Branly in 2017-18, and was awarded the Rivers Medal of the Royal Anthropological Society in 2017. Dan's new book, *The Brutish Museums: the Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* was published by Pluto Press in November 2020, and has been described in reviews by Ben Okri OBE as "a startling act of conscience", by The Economist as "a real game-changer", by The Guardian as "beautifully written and carefully argued", by CNN as "unsparing", by Nature as "timely", and by the Sunday Times as "destined to become an essential text". The Brutish Museums was listed as one of the New York Times Best Art Books of 2020, with the recommendation: "If you care about museums and the world, read this book". Twitter: @ProfDanHicks

**Phillip Ihenacho**, Chairman, The Legacy Restoration Trust, has a strong interest in ancient African civilisations and was instrumental in setting up the Legacy Restoration Trust ([www.legacyrestorationtrust.org](http://www.legacyrestorationtrust.org)) and is responsible for the overall fund-raising for the Edo Museum of West African Art (EMOWAA).

Mr. Ihenacho has had a successful career in finance focused on African markets, and is founder and partner of Amaya Capital, a principal investment firm that is an active investor in energy infrastructure in Africa. Prior to Amaya, Mr. Ihenacho was also founder of the London-based, Africa-focused investment banking firm Afrinvest (UK) Limited, which he ran for ten years prior to its successful sale in 2007. Phillip worked for five years (1990-1995) with the international consulting firm of McKinsey & Co. in New York, London, Stockholm and Johannesburg.

Mr. Ihenacho has a B.A. (Honours, Distinction in History 1987) from Yale University and a J.D. (Honours, 1990) from Harvard Law School.

Phillip was born in Lagos and grew up in Jos, Nigeria, and spends the majority of his time in Nigeria and Kenya.

**Christine Mullen Kreamer** is Deputy Director and Associate Director for Curatorial Affairs at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, where she has worked since 2000. Her exhibitions and publications explore art and ritual, gender, African systems of knowledge, and museum practice, and they bridge the disciplines of art history, anthropology, and museum studies. In addition to research in Togo, she has worked on museum exhibition and training projects in Ghana and Vietnam. She received her Ph.D. from Indiana University. Her more recent exhibitions and co-authored publications include *Conversations: African and African American Artwork in Dialogue* (2014); *African Cosmos: Stellar Arts* (2012); *Lines, Marks, and Drawings: Through the Lens of Roger Ballen* (2013); *Inscribing Meaning: Writing and Graphic Systems in African Art* (2007); and *African Vision: The Walt Disney-Tishman African Art Collection* (2007). She also co-curated *Visionary: Viewpoints on Africa's Arts* (2017, ongoing). Her scholarly essays in edited volumes have addressed provenance in the arts of Africa, in *Collecting and Provenance: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2019); African art connoisseurship, in *Visions from the Forest: The Art of Liberia and Sierra Leone* (Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2014); and two essays on African art collections, in *Representing Africa in American Art Museums* (University of Washington Press, 2011). In recognition of her outstanding achievements in the fields of art history and museum practice, Christine was named the Smithsonian Institution's 2018 Distinguished Scholar in the Humanities.

**Pierre Losson** graduated in international relations from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques of Strasbourg, France. He holds an MA in Arts Administration from the University of Lyon, an MA in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from Florida International University, and a PhD in political science from The Graduate Center, CUNY, with a dissertation titled "Claiming the Remains of the Past: The Return of Cultural Heritage Objects to Colombia, Mexico, and Peru." He held several positions in French cultural centers in Mexico City, Mexico, and Lima, Peru, where he lived for ten years in total. He currently lives in New York City and was an adjunct professor at Hunter College – CUNY, Lehman College – CUNY, and Yeshiva University. His research focuses on the politics of restitutions and returns of cultural objects and cultural policy in Latin America; he has published peer-reviewed articles in scholarly publications (in English and Spanish), among which the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, and *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*.

**Chika Okeke-Agulu**, an artist, critic and art historian, is professor of African and African Diaspora art in the Department of African American Studies, and Department of Art & Archaeology, Princeton University. His books include *Yusuf Grillo: Painting. Lagos. Life* (Skira, 2020); *Obiora Udechukwu: Line, Image, Text* (Skira, 2016); *Postcolonial Modernism: Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria* (2015); and (with Okwui Enwezor), *Contemporary African Art Since 1980* (2010). He recently co-organized, with Okwui Enwezor, *El Anatsui: Triumphant Scale* (Haus der Kunst, Munich, 2019). He is co-editor of *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, has written for the *New York Times* and *Huffington Post*, and maintains the blog *Ọfọdunka*.

His many awards include The Melville J. Herskovits Prize for the most important scholarly work in African Studies published in English during the preceding year (African Studies Association, 2016); and Frank Jewett Mather Award for Distinction in Art Criticism (College Art Association, 2016).

Okeke-Agulu serves on the advisory boards of the Hyundai Tate Research Centre, Tate Modern, London; The Africa Institute, Sharjah. He is on the executive board of Princeton in Africa, and on the editorial boards of *African Studies Review* and *Journal of Visual Culture*.

**Barbara Plankensteiner** is the director of the Museum am Rothenbaum – World Cultures and Arts (MARKK) since 2017. Under her leadership, the museum initiated a repositioning and decolonization process that also leads to a change of name. From 2015 she was Frances and Benjamin Benenson Foundation Senior Curator of African Art at the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut. Before, at the Weltmuseum Wien, she served as deputy director, chief curator and curator of the Africa collections where she had a decisive impact in the repositioning of the museum and the conceptualization of the new permanent collection. Her most well-known international exhibitions are *Benin—Kings and Rituals: Court Arts from Nigeria* where she was lead curator and editor of the accompanying handbook, and *African Lace. A History of Trade, Creativity and Fashion in Nigeria* that she co-curated and for which she co-edited the accompanying catalogue. Research and publications on African art and material culture, history of ethnographic collections, museum anthropology.

Barbara Plankensteiner is a co-founder of the Benin Dialogue and with Prince Gregory Akenzua the co-chair of its steering committee. One of its outcomes is the Digital Benin project.

**Abba Isa Tijani** is the current Director-General/Chief Executive of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Nigeria.

A professor of Museology and Anthropology, Tijani is a former head of Department of Fine Arts and Coordinating Head of Department of Creative Arts, University of Maiduguri, who coordinated the collaboration between University of Maiduguri and the Universities of Hamburg and Hildesheim, Germany. Until his current appointment, he was the Acting Director Centre for the Study of Cultural Sustainability, University of Maiduguri and the Executive Board of Director and Head, Nigeria DAAD-Funded project, SDG Graduate School “Performing Sustainability: Cultures and development in West Africa”.

He obtained a Bachelor’s Degree in Creative Arts, specializing in Arts History and Museology, from University of Maiduguri, and a Master’s Degree in Museum Studies and a Ph.D. in Anthropology from University College London, arising from his outstanding anthropological research of an autochthonous group—the Gamergu (Malgwa) in present-day Borno State.

Prof. Abba Tijani’s academic efforts have produced dozens of world-acclaimed publications, journals, and series covering the fields of Museology and Anthropology.