

John Warne Monroe

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Education

Ph.D. in European History, Yale University, 2002
Dissertation: "Evidence of Things Not Seen: Spiritism, Occultism, and the Search for a Modern Faith in France, 1853-1925" (with the Theron Rockwell Field Prize)
M.Phil. in European History, Yale University, 1998.
A.B. in History, *summa cum laude*, with certificates in European Cultural Studies and Creative Writing (poetry with supervisor Paul Muldoon), Princeton University, 1995.

Current Research

I am now in the initial research stages of a book-length study of the reception of historical African material culture in France and Francophone West Africa from 1940 to the present. It builds on my previously published work, but will take the analysis in new directions, exploring the consequences of decolonization and the complex historical questions raised by current debates on the restitution of objects from former colonies held in European museum collections. In a related project, I am collaborating with Dr. Amanda Maples (New Orleans Museum of Art) on a restitution case-study involving a small Benin brass sword handle, formerly in the second Pitt-Rivers collection.

Publications

Books

Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture and the Imperial French Invention of Primitive Art. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019.

- Winner: Arnold Rubin Distinguished Publication Award (ACASA)
- Finalist: Charles Rufus Morey Book Award (CAA)
- Honorable Mention: Eugen Weber Book Prize (UCLA)
- *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title, 2020

Laboratories of Faith: Mesmerism, Spiritism and Occultism in Modern France. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Laboratoires de la Foi: mesmérisme, spiritisme et occultisme en France, 1853-1914. Trans. Paul Veyret. Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2013.

Exhibition Catalogues

With Maria del Pilar Blanco. *Noumena and Other Spectralities: Phillip Chen – Prints and Paintings* (Chicago: Goldschmit Foundation, 2025).

With Lenore Metrick-Chen. *Imaging Others: Cultural Intersections in the Colonial Period* (Des Moines: Drake University, 2010).

Refereed Journal Articles

“What We Teach when We Teach Writing: Adopting Generative AI through a Pedagogy of Writing Against,” in *Writing on the Edge* (forthcoming).

“Facing Facts – and their Absence: Style as Historical Evidence,” in *African Arts* 53:3 (Autumn, 2020): 16-17.

“First Word: Restitution and the Logic of the Post-Colonial Nation State,” in *African Arts* 52:3 (Autumn, 2019): 6-8.

“The Market as ‘Artist’: Historicized African Sculpture and the Obsession with Provenance in Primitive Art,” in *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture*, 12:1 (2018): 52-70.

“Surface Tensions: Empire, Parisian Modernism, and ‘Authenticity’ in African Sculpture, 1917-1939,” in the *American Historical Review*, 117:2 (April 2012): 445-475.

“*Cartes de Visite* from the Other World: Spiritism and the Discourse of *Laïcisme* in the Early Third Republic,” in *French Historical Studies*, 26 (Winter 2003): 119-153.

“Making the Séance ‘Serious’: *Tables Tournantes* and Second Empire Bourgeois Culture, 1853-1861,” in *History of Religions*, 38 (Feb. 1999): 219-246.

Book Chapters

“African Art/European Art: The Rhythm of Call and Response,” in Zoya Frolova, ed., *Tukku Magi Rhythms* (Riga: National Museum of Latvia, forthcoming August 2024).

“Of Memory and a Masterpiece: A *Boli* between Mali and France,” in Lenore Metrick-Chen, ed., *Creating Public Memory: On Objects, Architecture and Other Ephemera* (Albany: SUNY Press, forthcoming 2025).

“Anatomy of a Chronological Hallucination: The Category of Primitive Art and Élie Faure’s *L’Art Médiéval*,” in Joseph Imorde and Peter Probst, eds., *Art History and Anthropology: Modern Encounters, 1870 to 1970* (Los Angeles: Getty Center, 2023).

“Crossing Over: Allan Kardec and the Transnationalization of Modern Spiritualism,” in Cathy Gutierrez, ed., *Handbook of Mesmerism and Spiritualism* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

Non-Refereed Articles

“Charles Ratton, Louis Carré, and the Landmark Auctions of 1931,” in *Tribal Art* 93 (Autumn, 2019): 116-129.

“The Louvre is Returning Sculptures to West Africa. Here’s How – and why – Emmanuel Macron Made it Happen,” in the *Washington Post*, January 2, 2019.

“The Way We Believe Now: Modernity and the Occult,” in *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, 2 (Summer 2007): 68-78.

“Spiritualism,” in John Merriman and Jay Winter, eds., *Europe 1789-1914*. New York: Scribner’s, 2006.

Exhibition Review

Picasso Primitif, curated by Yves Le Fur, in *African Arts*, 50:4 (Winter, 2018): 92-94.

Book Reviews

Susan Gagliardi, et al., *Senufo Unbound*, in *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines* (forthcoming).

Larry Sommer McGrath, *Making Spirit Matter: Neurology, Psychology, and Selfhood in Modern France*, in *Social History of Medicine* (Jan. 2022): <https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkac003>.

J. Lorand Matory, *The Fetish Revisited: Marx, Freud, and the Gods Black People Make*, in *American Anthropologist* 123:4 (December 2021): 973-974.

Emily Ogden, *Credulity: A Cultural History of U.S. Mesmerism*, in *Isis* 110:3 (September 2019): 610-611.

Jerrold Seigel, *Between Cultures: Europe and its Others in Five Exemplary Lives*, in *American Historical Review*, 123: 2 (April 2018): 637-638.

Claude Blanckaert, ed., *Le Musée de l’homme, histoire d’un musée-laboratoire*, in *H-France Review* 17 (January, 2017), No. 23.

Adam Jolles, *The Curatorial Avant-Garde: Surrealism and Exhibition Practice in France*, in *History: Reviews of New Books*, 44:2 (April, 2016): 48.

Alice Conklin, *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology and Empire in France, 1850-1950*, in *Museum Anthropology*, 9:1-2 (2015): 174-175.

Guillaume Cuchet, *Les Voix d’outre-tombe: Tables tournantes, spiritisme et société au XIXe siècle*, in *Journal of Modern History*, 86:4 (December 2014): 930-932.

Robert Ziegler, *Satanism, Magic and Mysticism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, in *Nineteenth Century French Studies* 42:3 and 4 (Spring-Summer 2014): online at http://ncfs.unl.edu/reviews_online.php

Sally Price, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai Branly*, in *Journal of Modern History*, 86:1 (March 2014): 193-196.

Michael Saler, *As If: Modern Enchantment and the Literary Prehistory of Virtual Reality*, in *Journal of Modern History* 85:3 (September 2013): 669-671.

Daniel J. Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945-1975*, in *Social History* 38:2 (May 2013): 261-263.

Sofie Lachapelle, *Investigating the Supernatural: From Spiritism and Occultism to Psychical Research and Metapsychics in France, 1853-1931*, in *Metascience* 22 (2013): 193-196.

Heather Wolfram, *The Stepchildren of Science: Psychical Research and Parapsychology in Germany, c.1870-1939*, in *Social History of Medicine* 24:1 (2011): 203-204.

Tim Blanning, *The Triumph of Music: The Rise of Composers, Musicians, and their Art*, in *Commonweal* (July 17, 2009).

Robin Wooffitt, *The Language of Mediums and Psychics: The Social Organization of Everyday Miracles, in Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* 4 (Winter 2009): 249-252.

Curated and Co-Curated Exhibitions

"Time and Space in African Art." University of Iowa Museum of Art, 2006-2008

"Imaging Others: Cultural Intersections in the Colonial Period." With Lenore-Metrick Chen. Anderson Gallery, Drake University, November 2010.

Awards and Fellowships

Honorable Mention for the Eugen Weber Book Prize from the University of California, Los Angeles, 2022.

Arnold Rubin Distinguished Publication Award from the Arts Council of the African Studies Association, 2021.

Finalist for the Charles Rufus Morey Book Award from the College Art Association, 2021.

Book selected as a 2020 *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title.

Iowa State University Liberal Arts and Sciences Dean's Emerging Faculty Leader Award, 2015-2016.

National Endowment for the Humanities Faculty Fellowship, 2015-2016.

George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation Fellowship in Art History, 2013-2014.

William Koren, Jr. Article Prize from the Society for French Historical Studies, 2013.

James Huntington Ellis Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Introductory Teaching, 2013.

Profiled in *The Best 300 Professors* (Princeton Review Books, 2012), as one of the nation's top teachers of undergraduates.

Iowa State University Center for Excellence in the Arts and Humanities Research Grant, summer 2010.

Millstone Interdisciplinary Paper Award, from the Western Society for French History, 2008.
Cassling Family Faculty Award for Teaching, 2007-2008.

Iowa State University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Early Achievement in Teaching Award, 2007.

Iowa State University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Research Grant for Early-Career Faculty in the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2006-2007.

Curatorial Fellowship in African Art, University of Iowa Museum of Art, 2005-2006.

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend Fellowship, summer 2005.

Visiting Fellow at the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, University of Iowa, summer and fall 2004.

Iowa State University Center for Excellence in the Arts and Humanities Research Grant, summer 2004.

Iowa State University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Faculty Development Grant, summer 2003.

Millstone Travel Grant from the Western Society for French History, summer 2002.

Theron Rockwell Field Dissertation Prize from Yale University, 2002.

Pew Charitable Trusts/Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion at Yale Fellowship, summer 2001.

Yale College Prize Teaching Fellowship, 1999.

Bourse Chateaubriand, 1999.

Gilbert Chinard Research Grant from the Société Française de Washington, 1999.

Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in Humanistic Studies, 1995.

Undergraduate awards: Elected to Phi Beta Kappa; Laurence Hutton Prize in History (given to the top undergraduate in the major); Frances Lemoyne Page Creative Writing Prize; Ward Prize for Literary Translation.

Presentations

“Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture and the Imperial French Invention of Primitive Art, invited talk at the National Museum of Latvia, Riga, July 31, 2024.

Presentation for “Roundtable in Honor of John Merriman,” at the Society for French Historical Studies Conference, Detroit, MI, March 17, 2023.

Commentary for the panel “The Art of Return: Collections, Museums, and the Restitution Debate,” at the Western Society for French History Conference, Victoria, BC, November 4, 2022.

Panel Chair for “Think Globally, Act Locally: The Circulation of Global French Identities in the Nineteenth Century,” at the Society for French Historical Studies Conference, Charlotte, NC, March 25, 2022.

“African Sculpture and the Imperial French Invention of Primitive Art,” invited virtual lecture for the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, November 16, 2020.

“Reconstructing the Eye of Paul Guillaume: Critics and Connoisseurs of African Art in Paris, 1917-1930,” invited talk presented at the *Parcours des Mondes*, Paris, September 13, 2019.

Commentary for the panel “Science from the Edge,” at the Western Society for French History Conference, Portland, ME, November 2, 2018.

“The ‘Medieval’ Art of the Tropics: Elie Faure’s Historicization of African, Oceanic and Native American Art,” invited talk presented at the University of Siegen (Germany) as part of the symposium “Regarding the Unknown: Art History and Anthropology – Early Encounters,” June 7, 2018.

“Correcting Apollinaire’s Vision: The Problems of Style, Anonymity and Authenticity in Historical African Art,” paper presented at the Triennial meeting of the Arts Council of the African Studies Association, Legon, Ghana, August 11, 2017.

“Presumed Antique: Paul Guillaume and the Connoisseurship of African Sculpture, invited talk presented at the Berlin Technical University as part of the symposium “All the Beauty of the World: The Western Market for Non-Western Art,” October 14, 2016.

“Mirages of Modernism: Inventing Histories of African Sculpture in Inter-War Paris,” invited talk presented at Princeton University, as part of the symposium “Europe Without Borders,” May 13, 2016.

“Of Art and Others: The Transcultural Journey of an African Mask,” lecture delivered at the Salisbury House, Des Moines, as part of the 2014 Iowa Humanities Festival.

“The Market as ‘Artist’: Traditional African Sculpture and the Institutions of the Modernist Art World,” paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Philadelphia, PA, November 2012.

“African Representations of Europeans in the Colonial Period,” gallery talk delivered at the Anderson Gallery, Drake University, November 2010.

Commentary for the panel “Great War Studies I: Images and Perceptions in the Great War” at the Western Society for French History Conference, Lafayette, LA, October 2010.

Commentary for the panel “France’s Colonial Past, Representations and Ideologies” at the Western Society for French History Conference, Lafayette, LA, October 2010.

“The Making of a Metropolitan Fetish,” invited talk delivered as part of the symposium “Transcultural Perspectives on Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Twentieth Century” at the University of Heidelberg, February 2010.

“Fetishes at Home and Abroad,” paper delivered at the Western Society for French History Conference, Boulder, CO, October 2009.

Commentary for the panel “Transnational Arts in the Twentieth Century” at the Western Society for French History Conference, Boulder, CO, October, 2009.

“Developing *Art Nègre*: Authenticity, Photographs, and the Perception of African Material Culture in Interwar France,” paper delivered at the Western Society for French History Conference, Quebec City, QC, November 2008.

“Taming the Visionary Imagination: Revelation and Authority in French Spiritism,” paper delivered at the annual meeting of CESNUR (Centro Studi Sulle Nuove Religioni), London, April 2008.

“Metropolitan Fetish: African Sculpture in the Spaces of French Modernism,” paper delivered at the College Art Association Conference, New York, NY, February 2007.

“Outfitting the Modern Soul: Spiritism, Occultism and the Subconscious in *Fin-de-Siècle* France,” paper delivered at the Society for French Historical Studies Conference, Champaign, IL, April 2006.

“Time and Space in African Art,” gallery talk delivered at the University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City, IA, February 2006.

“African Art/French Rooms,” lecture delivered to the Director’s Circle at the University of Iowa Museum of Art, Iowa City, IA, May 2005.

“From Mahatmas to Messiah: The Failure of Theosophy in France,” paper delivered at the Western Society for French History Conference, Newport Beach, CA, November 2003.

“‘A Genius for Associations’: Occultist Sociability During the *Belle Epoque*,” paper delivered at the American Historical Association Conference, San Francisco, CA, January 2002.

“The Medium and the Message: Spiritism, Performance and the Davenport Brothers in Second Empire France,” paper delivered at the Western Society for French History Conference, Indianapolis, IN, November 2001.

“Faith and Modernity under the Moral Order: Spiritism on Trial, 1875,” paper delivered at the Western Society for French History Conference, Los Angeles, CA, November 2000.

Teaching Experience

Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor at Iowa State University:

Graduate Seminar on Material Culture as Historical Evidence (2022)
Graduate Seminar on Teaching the Modern Europe Survey (2015, 19, 23)
Graduate Historiography Seminar in Modern Europe (2011)
Graduate Seminar in Writing Historical Narrative (2006, 09, 12, 13, 17)
History 495, undergraduate “capstone” research seminar (2010, 18, 19, 24)
The French Revolution (2005, 06, 08, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24)
Europe, Reformation-Present (2003, 04, 05, 07, 08, 09, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25)
France, 1789-Present (2002, 03, 08, 10, 11, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23)
Modern European Intellectual and Cultural History (2002, 03, 08, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17)

Instructor at Smith College:

Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century: Urban Society, Culture and Politics,
1789 to the *Fin-de-siècle* (spring 2002)

Instructor at Yale College:

The Avant-Garde and European Culture, 1900-1945 (fall 2001)

Teaching Fellow at Yale College:

European Civilization, 1648-1945, John Merriman (spring 1999)
France, 1789-1871, John Merriman (fall 1998)
European Intellectual and Cultural History, 1890-1990, Kevin Repp (spring 1998)

Professional Service

Member, Arnold Rubin Prize Committee, Arts Council of the African Studies Association, 2023
Member, MUSAA subcommittee, ACASA CCRBP Working Group, 2021-
Editorial Board member, *Magic Ritual and Witchcraft*, 2006-
Advisory Board member, Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History Series, 2008-
Executive Council, Western Society of French History, 2010-2013, 2018-22
Editorial Board member, *French Historical Studies*, 2011-2013