The College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University Bloomington has announced a $1.5 million gift from an anonymous donor to establish the Tanner-Opperman Chair of African Art in Honor of Roy Sieber, within the Department of Art History.

Roy Sieber, former university professor and distinguished scholar, was a pioneer in the field of African art, earning the first PhD awarded in its study. During his more than 30-year tenure at Indiana University, he supervised more than 30 PhD students studying African art history, served as curator of African art for the university’s museum, and ultimately held the title of Rudy Professor. He also served as associate director for collections and research at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art, authored multiple publications, and lectured prolifically around the world.

“We are so grateful to the donor of the chair, who had a real vision of how to sustain the study of African art and architecture into the future at Indiana University,” said Diane Reilly, associate professor and chair of the Department of Art History. “We have some of the best resources in the country for the study of African art, including the African Studies program with its expert language instruction, IU Press’s longstanding tradition of publishing in the field, and world-class museum collections at the Eskenazi Museum of Art and the Mathers Museum. With the Tanner-Opperman Chair, the College and Indiana University will take the lead in scholarship in this pivotal field, training curators and future faculty.”

The Department is currently conducting a search for the inaugural holder of the chair.

PHILANTHROPY ADVANCING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORIC WOMEN ARTISTS

Thanks to a generous pilot grant from Dr. Jane Fortune, founder of the Advancing Women Artists Foundation, Professor Adelheid M. Gealt (Director Emerita, Eskenazi Museum of Art) is directing a major project to assemble information on historic women artists active in Europe and North America before 1800.

Inspired by Dr. Fortune’s award-winning efforts to preserve forgotten art by women in Italian museums, Professor Gealt’s project is called A Space of Their Own, aimed at becoming a “virtual museum,” designed to be the most comprehensive source of information about artworks by historic female painters, pastellists, printmakers, and sculptors active from the 15th to the 19th centuries. Over five hundred women artists will be represented by thousands of images of their work, together with critical information about their lives and careers.

Part of this program is a hoped-for space where scholars can publish new research on women artists and be given credit for it. The Department is delighted to partner with the Eskenazi Museum of Art and the Florence, Italy-based Advancing Women Artists Foundation on this project.

FACULTY NEWS: BRET ROTHSTEIN

Professor Bret Rothstein has been working on a number of projects pertaining both to visual culture in general and to cultures of play specifically. For instance, he has been asked to run a course in Spring 2019 on the intellectual labor of building and solving puzzles. An offshoot of his course, “Toys and the Visual Culture of Play,” it will focus on designs with a strongly mathematical character, most notably combinatorial puzzles, such as the famous Rubik's Cube and its offspring. This course will form part of the College’s new initiative emphasizing points of contact between the humanities and STEM disciplines.

Professor Rothstein also recently submitted the final copy of a review essay, solicited by the journal Renaissance Quarterly, on the methodological problems of studying the history of play. This essay is due to appear in print next fall. In addition, he has just finished the final revisions on his next book, The Shape of Difficulty: A Fan Letter to Unruly Objects, which the Pennsylvania State University Press will be publishing in 2019.
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UNDERGRAD STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: AMELIA BERRY
Amelia Berry is a senior honors student in the Art History program who has already completed minors in Medieval Studies, French, and will finish one in the Philosophy of the Arts this spring, before she graduates. She decided to come to IU because of the diversity of options the campus offered in coursework. She declared her art history major by the end of her first semester, and quickly picked up French, a wonderful complement to the major. Through the Hutton Honors College she was offered a job as a page at the Lilly Rare Book and Manuscript Library, where she assists patrons in their research work by handling the rare materials in the collection. This experience led her to want to complete an honors thesis on medieval manuscripts owned by the Lilly. She is especially interested in the function within different religions and how the people who originally owned them experienced them as both functional and aesthetic objects.

I recently completed a six-week trip to Croatia, France, and Italy for my dissertation research on monumental arches from the Roman period across Western Europe. During this trip, I visited ten arches, architectural sites, museums, and archives. My dissertation considers Roman-era arch monuments in terms of their local impact. Typically these monuments are known as “triumphal arches,” which recalls many narrow connotations, most of which are specific to the city of Rome. Traveling from the Champagne region of France; to Provence; to the northern coast of Croatia; to several regions of Italy demonstrated how varied these monuments and their local contexts were.

During my research trip I was documenting the local character of not only the arch monuments but also of the ancient cities and regions to which they belonged. Particularly of interest was the material record from antiquity: Were there particular styles or trends popular in a region that made it unique? How did the local populace engage with Roman culture? As expected, they all had their own character, styles, and consumption of and interaction with Roman culture. By considering the local character of these intracontinental monuments, we can better understand how they functioned in antiquity, instead of just those located in Rome.

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I co-wrote a text for an edited volume on the two Michelin stars Catalan restaurant “Les Cols.” The restaurant was built by RCR Arquitectes, winners of The Pritzker Architecture Prize. She is expected to defend her dissertation on contemporary Catalan art in April. Kirstin L. Ellsworth published the book chapter “The Realisms of Elizabeh Cadlet” in Bury My Heart in a Free Land (Prager, 2017), edited by Hettie V. Williams. She is Assistant Professor of Art History at California State Dominguez Hills.

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Candace M. Keller marked the launch of the Archive of Malian Photography with an exhibition at the Musée Nationale de Bamako in May 2017. The archival project, which she has been directing since 2011, provides access to preserved and digitized collections of five important West African photographers. It is funded in part by the British Library and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and includes over 100,000 catalogued film negatives.
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“ART-chive in Post-war Lebanon”

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The Department of Art History at Indiana University
Spring 2018 Newsletter

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