

Janet Marion Purdy – ACASA Board of Directors Nomination 2023

Bio

Janet Marion Purdy is an art historian of the classical arts and architecture of Africa and East African diaspora. A Fulbright Scholar in Tanzania (2018-2019), she completed her PhD in August 2020 with her dissertation topic on the ornamentally carved doors of Zanzibar and the Swahili coast. She is currently the Mellon-Rice Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow in Arts of Africa at the Art Institute of Chicago and a part-time lecturer at University of Chicago and Cleveland State University. Her research examines visual exchange systems of social and cultural trade networks throughout eastern and northern Africa, the Gulf region, and Indian Ocean world, and related visual affinities in Afro-Arab-Asian artistic production and exchange. Curatorial work includes exhibitions and permanent gallery installations at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Palmer Museum of Art, and Galleries at Cleveland State University. Digital projects include [BrightInsight](#) (mapping African architecture and built spaces) and photographic inventories for threshold inscriptions from the Swahili coast and Arabian Peninsula. She has published essays in exhibition catalogues and edited volumes including a chapter about the Great Mosque of Kilwa in *The Routledge Companion to the Global Renaissance* (2023), and academic journals including *African Arts* and *Verge: Studies in Global Asias: Indian Ocean Studies, African-Asian Affinities*. Several journal articles and book projects based on her multi-sited dissertation research on Zanzibar doors and Indian Ocean connections are forthcoming.

Statement

It is an honor to have been nominated to submit a candidate statement for the ACASA board member-at-large position. It would be my great pleasure to have the opportunity to contribute to the organization to support the work of the board in all relevant duties, including attending meetings and participating in board deliberations; serving on committees as needed; and fulfilling vacant board member roles (e.g. VP and CAA/ASA reps). In these ever evolving and transformative moments in museum and academic environments, I would take an active role in current efforts that capitalize upon the solid base of strengths built from the work accomplished by those who have come before us, while establishing new initiatives to move the organization forward in innovative ways. I am especially dedicated to: expanding the focus on arts and artists that have long been marginalized in the study of African art; strengthening understandings of cultural and intangible connections that reach across the physical boundaries of the continent to broaden the definition of African art; and work that will educate and illuminate in a responsible and respectful way the histories of makers, textiles, textile production, and cultural significance of all types of textiles and fashions used and created across the African continent and the Indian Ocean/Arab world. I would take an active role in efforts to build an inclusive and equitable organization, and focus on broadening the reach of fellowships, research travel grants, scholarships, and other educational efforts through increased awareness and new pathways to a diverse range of recipients.