Seeing the Unseen
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A book, like a power association object, results from exchanges of knowledge and pursuits of resources through diverse, interpersonal networks.

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At various moments in the writing process, I delivered lectures or other presentations related to this book at Brooklyn College, Columbia University, Indiana University, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the musée du quai Branly–Jacques Chirac, Oberlin College, Princeton University Art Museum, Reed College, Stanford University, Universität Basel, University of East Anglia, University of Oregon, Wellesley College, Williams College, and Yale University. Presentations that I gave at conferences, including the 2014 and 2021 Arts Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA) conferences, 2014 Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, 2016 ICOM-CC Conservation Science and Education conference, 2016 African Studies Association conference, 2017 European Conference on African Studies, and 2018 African Studies Association UK conference, featured material that appears in this book. I am thankful to the people who made the lectures possible as well as the conference and session organizers and participants who created fora for scholarly exchange. The opportunities to see familiar faces, meet new people, share works in progress, exchange ideas, and receive feedback enriched the writing process. In addition, colleagues and graduate students at my home institution generously responded to early drafts of the book’s fourth and fifth chapters when I circulated the work as part of Emory University’s Institute of African Studies Seminar in January 2015 and September 2017, respectively. My 2014 ACASA presentation served as the basis for the book’s fourth chapter, and Africa: Journal of the International African Institute published an earlier version of the same chapter in 2018. I thank David Pratten and the anonymous reviewers of the article manuscript for their constructive comments.

I appreciate the encouragement and input that a variety of people offered to me at different stages. Their names are too many to list them all. Chris Higa deserves extra special mention for his unflagging support and consistent patience throughout the process, from my first efforts to define a research topic on power associations and their arts to the final formatting and submission of the manuscript. My sisters Ann and Jane, my mom Marcia, and my dad Peter have also supported my being, my intellectual growth, and this project in innumerable ways. For their comments and insights at different junctures, I thank undergraduate and graduate students who explored themes in this book with me through courses I taught at the City College of New York and at Emory University. For their energy and thoughts as I researched or wrote or for their specific
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Research for this book brought me to archives, libraries, and museums on three continents. The names of many of the institutions I visited as part of this research appear throughout the text. It is impossible for me to name all of the people at each institution who made it possible for me to access historical documents, objects in museums’ collections, or museum records. Given the various ways in which things end up in institutions and the different ways institutions work, I imagine I never even met some of the people who were critical to my access. But I remain thankful for each person’s efforts to make documents and objects available for study, and I appreciate the warm welcomes I received throughout my travels.

When I was growing up in a small town in central Massachusetts, I spent hours in the offices and production rooms of the local newspaper. I watched my mother physically cut and paste text and images to lay out issues of the local high
school newspaper and annual yearbook. She reviewed hard copies before approving layouts for publication. Computers changed how my mother edited and produced publications by the time she opened her own publishing house. Still, I observed the intense labor involved in transforming an author’s collection of words into a published book. A university press is much larger than my mother’s publishing house, and it employs many more people. I can only begin to imagine the many people who dedicated their time and energies to producing this book, as I have only had direct contact with some of them. I remain grateful for the contributions of each member of Indiana University Press’s team. Big thanks to Dee Mortensen, my first point of contact at the press, and to the other people with whom I have worked, including Ashante Thomas, Gary Dunham, Anna Francis, and Darja Malcolm-Clarke. Thanks, too, to Vickrutha Sudharsan and Eileen Allen for their assistance with copyediting and indexing.

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