

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

David T. Doris, assistant professor of Afroamerican and African studies, and assistant professor of history of art, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of Afroamerican and African studies, with tenure, and associate professor of history of art, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2002	Yale University
M.A.	1993	Hunter College
B.A.	1983	Southampton College, Long Island University

Professional Record:

2003 – present	Assistant Professor, Center for Afroamerican and African Studies (CAAS) and Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan
2003	Stuart S. Golding Visiting Professor of the History of African and African Diaspora Arts, University of South Florida at Tampa

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Doris has an impressive teaching record. He has developed six courses, ranging from a large introductory lecture course to small research-oriented seminars. All are characterized by innovative teaching methods and unique learning experiences that often take students well beyond the walls of the university. He has not only revitalized the teaching of African art and material culture in the two units where he is appointed, but he has also made great contributions to the emerging Program in Museum Studies. He currently sits on two dissertation committees, and he has served on a number of preliminary examinations, Masters of Art, and Masters of Fine Arts committees.

Research – As indicated by his numerous prestigious awards and fellowships, Professor Doris is one of the leading scholars of African art of his generation. His book and the associated articles in prestigious academic journals form a pioneering body of work on a vital yet almost completely neglected area of Yoruba visual culture. He moves beyond interpretations of Yoruba classical sculpture to examine Yoruba “anti-aesthetics,” objects deliberately constructed to depict the threat of social isolation and the consequences of moral decay. In making this shift, Professor Doris positions himself at the forefront of a key shift in art historical studies, namely a move from art history to the broader study of visual culture.

Recent and Significant Publications:

*Vigilant Things: the Strange Fates of Ordinary Objects in Nigeria*, University of Washington Press (in production), forthcoming 2008.

“Olu Amoda: Nigeria,” *Blueprint*, November 2007, pp. 68-74.

“The unfunctioning baby, and other spectacular departures from the human in Yoruba visual culture,” *RES*, Vol. 49/50, 2006, pp. 115-138.

“Destiny world: Textile casualties in Southern Nigeria,” *African Arts*, 39(2), 2006, pp, 36-47, 86-88.

Service – Professor Doris has been an excellent citizen, serving on multiple committees since his arrival at Michigan. Among other assignments, he has served consecutive terms on the CAAS Fellowships Committee and the History of Art Graduate Committee. He has been actively involved as a consultant to museum exhibitions at the UM Museum of Art, the Toledo Art Museum, the Museum for African Art in New York, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

External Reviews:

Reviewer (A)

“Without qualification, Professor Doris is among the most active and productive scholars of his generation. In all, his work is characterized by imagination, thoughtful innovative approach and painstaking research.”

Reviewer (B)

“David has moved into a kind of art history that seems genuinely new and emically valid. Reading him feels, mutatis mutandis, like a Duchamp or a Kandinsky moment: a breakaway from stale imposed categories into something startling, strange and very very exciting.”

Reviewer (C)

“As a scholar, he is innovative in his thinking, articulate in his formulations of research problems, and especially eloquent in both his writing and oral presentations. ... His Fulbright research...was not less than ground-breaking. ... His extraordinary talents as a scholar and writer are matched by his teaching abilities.”

Reviewer (D)

“Dr. Doris is one of the most important emerging voices in the overlapping fields of African Studies, Visual Culture Studies, and Art History and Aesthetics. It is the flexibility that lies at the very heart of his scholarly approach that makes him such a valuable colleague and scholar. ... He rightly describes himself as a disciplinary ‘bricoleur,’ an approach that is necessary for innovative research on contemporary visual practices and in dealing sensitively and effectively with the legacies of African art historical studies.”

Reviewer (E)

“David Doris’ book *Vigilant Things*...will make a major contribution to the fields of Africanist and African Diasporic art history, art history more generally, anthropology, material culture, and performance studies and it will set the bar very highly for others.”

Reviewer (F)

“I believe that his work of scholarship is valid in that he is extending the boundaries of what we consider to be objects worth studying in art history, much as the post-modern artists extended the boundaries of media, style and content.”

Reviewer (G)

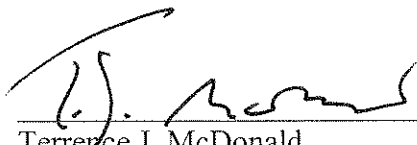
“I consider Dr. Doris to be one of the most brilliant scholars [of his generation] in the field of African art history at present. He is an engaging thinker with a lively intellect and an incisively analytical mind. His writing is clear and free of jargon, yet he is absolutely up to date with the most important theoretical perspectives.”

Reviewer (H)

“Having had an opportunity to review an extraordinarily impressive body of scholarly work, I have concluded that Professor David Doris is among the most creative, original and important scholars of his generation. When *Vigilant Things* is released by Washington University Press next year, I would argue that it will rank among the top ten most significant works in African art studies in the last decade.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Doris’ research is high caliber, his teaching is excellent, and he has made substantial service contribution. The Executive Committee and I recommend that Assistant Professor David T. Doris be promoted to the rank of associate professor of Afroamerican and African studies, with tenure, and associate professor of history of art, with tenure, in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



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Terrence J. McDonald  
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor,  
Professor of History and Dean  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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