

# History of Art

Newsletter Fall 2009 / Winter 2010  
University of Michigan



## Inside:

- Matt Biro profile
- Blogging for the Met
- Michigan and the Mouse
- Welcome Joan Kee

# Letter from the Chair

As the newsletter goes to press we are approaching both the holiday season and end of term in high tempo. The following pages offer you a glimpse of the many activities and projects keeping our students and faculty, and our alums busy, and allow me to reflect on some highlights of the past year. We began the fall term with much to celebrate, starting with our new cohort of



Celeste Brusati

eleven graduate students, six in history of art and five in IPCAA; and the arrival of Assistant Professor Joan Kee, whose expertise in contemporary art of East Asia adds an important new dimension to our existing strengths in both areas. The re-opening of the renovated UMMA in March and the Kelsey Museum just weeks ago has returned us to the campus collections so vital to our teaching and research. The publication of three major new books by faculty gives further cause for celebration.

That said, we approached the term with some trepidation as we joined the rest of the university in preparing for the vicissitudes of the H1N1 flu. The good news is that we have been able to keep courses and administrative services afloat without recourse to contingency plans. The inclusion of podcasts and online presentations in lieu of lectures in

our contingency plans was a reminder of how centrally new technologies now feature in the teaching and study of art history. Newsletter items underscore how newer media are shaping our field, whether through initiatives such as Matt Biro's course lectures on iTunes U or alumna Melanie Holcomb's use of a blog to open a wide-ranging public conversation about the fine medieval drawings exhibition she organized at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Other features highlight our redoubled efforts to complement our students' increasingly virtual experience of art with first-hand study of art and visual culture in museums and on site. You will find rich evidence in these pages of the ways that art history at Michigan is truly a moveable feast. I would like to express our gratitude for the generosity of alumni and friends, including James Ravin, Ted Lin, and the family of Lelya Turcuhin about whom you will read, who have played a significant role in underwriting research and teaching at sites as diverse as Disneyland and Damascus. As we approach the year's end we hope that you will consider contributing to the Strategic Fund or the Explorations in Art & Visual Culture Endowment to help us keep initiatives such as these possible, and affordable, for students.

We anticipate a lively winter semester with the Museums in the Academy theme year program in full swing and many departmental events on tap. Do watch for invitations to our departmental symposium at UMMA on "Contemporary Strategies in Documentary Photography," a topic we know will be of special interest to many. The symposium will take place at UMMA on two successive Saturdays, January 30, and February 6, 2010. We also invite you to our annual reunion at the College Art Association meetings in the Hyatt Regency in Chicago, on Friday, February 12, from 5:00-6:30. As always we look forward to seeing you wherever and whenever you can join us.

— Celeste Brusati

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## The Campus That Never Sleeps

If one of Matt Biro's students misses a lecture or wants to review something presented in class, the information is only a few computer clicks away. Like a growing number of U-M faculty, Biro records his lectures on a laptop and then posts the PowerPoint with voiceover on iTunes U. This relatively new service allows instructors and project managers to easily post content—e.g., audio, video, or pdf files of lectures, interviews, etc.—on the web. Students can then easily access this content at any time. No matter where they are—Starbucks, a dorm room, the library—they can listen to and view the content on their computers or transfer it to their mp3 player to listen to or view it on the go.

Dubbed by parent-company Apple Computer "the campus that never sleeps," iTunes U is based on the same web application that runs the iTunes Music Store, the online music service run by Apple Computer. However, instead of storing and accessing music files, iTunes U is used to store and access files with educational and research content.

"I'm interested in delivering content in new ways," Biro said, "and making lecture a more multi-media experience and one that is not simply confined to the lecture hall."

While most course lectures are password protected, a vast array of lectures, debates, performances, and events are accessible by anyone, anywhere in the world through Michigan on iTunes U, which launched in April of 2008. As the iTunes site boasts, "learning isn't just for the classroom anymore."

To learn more about iTunes U, visit  
<http://itunes.umich.edu/>

# Faculty Profile

## Professor Matt Biro

**P**rofessor Matt Biro joined the department in 1994. Although he majored in art history as an undergrad at Swarthmore College, his masters and PhD are in philosophy (he's the only faculty here who doesn't have a PhD in art history). His scholarly interests include aesthetic theory, methodologies of interpretation, twentieth-century art, and popular culture, with special focus on the art and culture of Germany and the United States. He is also a practicing art critic and has written for *Contemporary* magazine, *Art Papers*, and *The New Art Examiner*. Recently, he has turned his attention to contemporary photography. We sat down with Professor Biro to discuss his work, philosophy, art, photography, and the relationships between them.



Matt Biro

**Your BA is in art history and your MA and PhD in philosophy. How did that come about?**

I majored in art history as an undergrad and then became interested in various forms of philosophy as modes of interpreting works of art and culture, so I went from art to an interest in how to interpret works of art. I was always working in aesthetics-related areas.

**What do you see as the relationship between philosophy and art history?**

Art history started getting more interested in theoretical models again in the late seventies and early eighties. In order to understand contemporary artistic practice, critics and historians started working with concepts drawn from structuralism, post-structuralism, phenomenology, and other

forms of contemporary continental philosophical discourse in order to engage with the social, conceptual, and formal problems they saw artists wrestling with. So when I came back to art history and criticism from philosophy, it was with the intention of using theory to illuminate different aspects of artistic production. For me, the areas that philosophy engages art with are multiple. Philosophical models help me understand how a work of art communicates a semantically complex message, how it constructs a particular form of spectator, how it engages with society, history, and politics in either a critical or an affirmative manner, and how it represents both conscious intentions and unconscious impulses. For example, from phenomenology I have gotten insights into the different ways a work of art can help project a certain form of "ideal viewer," and semiotics has helped me to understand how certain artworks compare different representational systems.

**Your two books are *Anselm Kiefer and the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger* and *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin*. Can you talk about your interest in German philosophy and Weimar Culture?**

It evolved from a lot of different places, perhaps first out of my interest in twentieth-century philosophy. Some of the philosophers I was working on were writing during the Weimar Republic (Heidegger, Benjamin, and Kracauer). Also, half my family is German, and so I was interested in where they came from and why they left. In terms of my own personal life as well as my intellectual life, I'm very interested in the rise of fascism in Germany and how both Germans and non-Germans dealt with and represented the aftermath, because all my family members in one way or another have been refugees from Europe.

**What is your current project?**

Right now I'm interested in writing about the development of art photography since the 1970s. Photographers like Richard Prince, Cindy Sherman, Andreas Gursky, Thomas Ruff, and Robert Heinecken, for example. I'm interested in documenting the ways in which the medium photography broke down the final barriers that separated it from the sphere of fine art and the reasons why this occurred in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Why photography right now?**

I wanted to move out of the German art and philosophy realm and photography is an extremely widespread and international practice. I've written two books on German subjects, and I'm currently about two-thirds of the way through a monograph on Anselm Kiefer. So I wanted to move beyond Germany and examine more cross-cultural dialogues in art and visual culture. I've always been very interested in photography and film both as a practitioner and as an audience member. When I was in college I worked for a number of film production companies, later on one of my first jobs was organizing a telephone book for film and music video production in New York and Los Angeles. And when I went back to graduate school to study philosophy, I retained my interest in photography and film. For this reason, I feel like I'm coming back to stuff that I've loved for a long time, and this material will allow me to expand my investigations in a logical manner. The university is very open to its faculty developing the research projects they truly want to work on irrespective of disciplinary constraints, so long as they do it in a rigorous and historically specific way. I see the questions I want to ask of art and visual culture in general as broader than those that come up in relation to twentieth century Germany. This is not to say I don't love German art history, but it's one context among many that I want to explore, and one of the great things about Michigan is that they encourage you to do so.

*Continued on page 13*



# From Art History to Medical School

## History of Art Alumnus

### James Ravin, MD

When Dr. James Ravin (BA 1964) was growing up, his parents exposed their children to the mesmerizing world of art through frequent trips to museums. "I had a good visual memory," Ravin explained. "I could always remember pictures, and the museums entranced me."

Pre-med classes at U-M didn't get in the way of pursuing this passion. Although decidedly on a medical school track, Ravin chose to concentrate in art history. "I wanted to have fun," he said, explaining that one year he took a whopping seven art history classes.

Today Ravin is a clinical ophthalmologist who has mastered the art of combining his passion for art history with his interest in everything relating to the human eye. Ravin and Stanford Professor Mike Marmor have just published their second book, *The Artist's Eyes*, a fascinating juxtaposition of science and art history that examines the role of vision and eye disease in art. Their first book *The Eye of the Artist* (1997), was a unique analysis of art and its history that examined the work of famous artists from an ophthalmologist's perspective.

Ravin lives in Toledo, Ohio with his wife, Nancy, where he is in private practice with an ophthalmology group. He describes his work with art history as a sidelight, but a quick perusal of the many articles he has written shows his dedication to the subject: "Representations of Blindness in Picasso's Blue Period," "Goya's Illnesses--Infectious? Environmental?" "Pixels and Painting: Chuck Close and the Fragmented Image," and "James Thurber and the Problems of Sympathetic Ophthalmia."

"Art history can provide a broad perspective on the world, but the history of science can also do this in another fashion," Ravin explained. "I am a very visual person and images are very important to my thinking, whether it relates to creativity, fashion, or a medical question."

*Dr. James Ravin has remained connected with the university and the Department of the History of Art over the years. He is on the alumni advisory board of the Kellogg Eye Center and served on the alumni advisory board for history of art in the early nineties. Over the years his generous gifts to the department have helped support graduate students. The department is thankful for his many contributions.*



James Ravin, MD



## History of Art Alumnus

### Ted Lin, MD

Ted T. Lin (BA History of Art '88) and his wife Sharon Chang have established the Dr. Ted Tai-Sen Lin and Sharon Chang Graduate Fellowship to support study in the modern and contemporary arts of Asia.

As an undergrad at the University of Michigan, Ted Lin always planned to go on to medical school, but decided to pursue his love of art by concentrating in art history. "I knew I would be very specialized in medical school," he said, "so I wanted to study something broad and humanities-related as an undergrad."

For Lin, art history was the perfect choice because of its interdisciplinary nature and the way it helps students develop their writing and observation skills. He says that what he learned as an undergrad still affects his daily life. "It makes me more observant of the world around me," he explained, "and helps me make connections between seemingly unrelated things."

Lin, who lives in New York City with his wife Sharon Chang, a designer, focused the fellowship on the study of the arts of Asia because of his and Chang's interest in that area, most notably in the exciting changes happening in Chinese and Korean contemporary art. Mostly, though, the fellowship is a reflection of his time here at Michigan. "I had such a good experience with art history at Michigan," he said. "I wanted to return the favor."

### History of Art Alumni: What's New with You?

Are you going to medical school? Writing a book? Working for a non-profit or on Wall Street? We want to hear your story for a special alumni edition of this newsletter. Please fill out our alumni update form at <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/alumni>, email [HistArtPublications@umich.edu](mailto:HistArtPublications@umich.edu), or call Stephanie Harrell at 734.764.5733

## Congratulations 2008-09 PhD Recipients

### Jen-Yi Lai

**Dissertation:** “Cultural Identity and the Making of Modern Taiwanese Painting During the Japanese Colonial Period (1895-1945)” (Directed by Celeste Brusati and Joel Isaacson)

Jen-Yi Lai currently holds a full-time position as an assistant curator at the National Museum of History, Taipei. She curates all the Western-style paintings (primarily works by Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese artists) in the permanent collection and also works for particular international exhibition projects related to her expertise. In 2008 she organized a Millet exhibition and edited the exhibition catalogue *Millet and His Time: Masterpieces from the Musée d'Orsay*. She is currently curating the first Van Gogh retrospective exhibition in Taiwan.

### Bo Liu

**Dissertation:** “Political Expression in Song Dynasty Fan Painting” (Directed by Martin Powers)

Bo Liu is currently teaching in John Carroll University, Cleveland. She started this tenure-track position in September 2009. Her first major publication, “Cold Sparrows, Independent Scholars: Political Criticism in Song Poetry and Painting” will be published in the second volume of *Ars Orientalis* in 2009.

### Kirsten Olds

**Dissertation:** “Networked Collectivities: North American Artists’ Groups, 1968-1978” (Directed by Alex Potts)

Kirsten Olds is a postdoctoral research associate at the U-M Center for Research on Learning where she consults with faculty, conducts midterm student feedback sessions, provides workshops on teaching and learning, and supports the Public Goods Council. She plans to submit two articles for publication this year. The first is a case study on the Canadian trio General Idea’s 1984 Miss General Idea Pavillion as an intermedial form characteristic of 1970s collective practice. The second is on the “conceptual rock n’ roll group” Les Petites Bons Bons, whose artistic reputation was based mainly on being seen at appropriately hip venues and having their photographs taken and publicized.

## Blogging for the Met

Melanie Holcomb, Curator, History of Art Alumna

“Blogger” isn’t a term normally associated with a curator at one of the world’s most prestigious museums. But for history of art alumna Melanie Holcomb (PhD 1990), associate curator in the Department of Medieval Art and the Cloisters at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, her “Pen and Parchment: Drawing in the Middle Ages” exhibit presented the perfect opportunity to take her museum work out into cyberspace.

Although the Cloisters has a blog for its gardens, and the Met had dabbled in online comments on exhibits, this was the first actual blog the Met has produced for an exhibit. “I proposed the idea because I knew much of the material—particularly the diagrams—would be unfamiliar to our visitors,” Holcomb said. “This seemed a good way to make the material accessible, to generate interest, and to allow visitors to ask questions.”

The blog provided the venue for a dynamic interchange of information about the exhibit, which gave a chronological tour of the medieval draftsman’s art, beginning around 800 A.D. and ending in the middle of the fourteenth century. The exhibit offered a rarely traveled excursion through a series of moments when drawing achieved memorable aesthetic heights. Holcomb expounded online, posting weekly blogs on topics such as “the scribe as draftsman” and “elegant geometry.” Visitors—both virtual and those who had viewed the exhibit—commented on the posts as well as on what they had seen at the exhibit. Holcomb responded to the comments, answering questions, providing additional background information, or sending a word of thanks for praise of the exhibit.

In addition to the question and answer component, the blog included images (with detailed explanations and links to related images) of many of the drawings in the exhibit, explanation of the exhibition’s primary themes (“drawing and the learned tradition,” for example), and links to additional resources and related events. There are also links on the blog to the numerous reviews of the exhibit (including the *New York Times*, the *Economist*, and the *New Republic*) as well as a link to an interview with Holcomb on New York Public Radio WNYC.

The blog was a great success. “I was impressed by the level of engagement people showed, and indeed we found that the average length of time people spent on the “Pen and Parchment” blog was about three times longer than the average time spent on other features we have on the Met website,” Holcomb explained. It was also a lot of work, but a labor of love. “Many of the visitors asked interesting, sometimes difficult questions,” Holcomb said, “and I wanted to respond with care.”

Check out the blog on the Met’s website at <http://blog.metmuseum.org/penandparchment/>



Professor Emerita Ilene Forsyth, Melanie Holcomb, and Professor Elizabeth Sears in New York.



# The Kelsey Museum's New Wing

## Expanded Kelsey Museum of Archeology Features New Displays, Study Space

As an undergrad in the 1930s, Edwin Meader saw rare artifacts, pottery and sculpture, excavated by U-M scholars in the Mediterranean and Near East, being delivered to what was then called the Museum of Classical Archaeology (later the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology) and said to himself, "These things deserve a better place."

In 2003 a gift of \$8.5 million from the late Edwin and Mary Meader created that better place, funding construction of a new 20,000-square-foot wing. Adjoining the turreted stone building at 434 S. State Street, the new wing, which opened November 1, provides study, storage, and display space in a climate-controlled facility that now houses all of the Kelsey collections.

Named in honor of U-M professor Francis Kelsey in the 1950s, the museum has world-renowned collections of more than 100,000 ancient artifacts, some originally purchased by Kelsey in the 1890s. Based on excavated materials from Egypt, Turkey, and the Near East in the 1920s and '30s, they provide an extraordinary glimpse of everyday life in the ancient Mediterranean. The collections include artwork, toys, funerary offerings, sculpture, fragments of paintings, pottery, and jewelry.

"Professor Kelsey was a man ahead of his time," says Sharon Herbert, director of the Kelsey Museum and the John G. Pedley Collegiate Professor of Classical Archaeology. "He understood the power of objects to connect today's people with people of the past."

The Upjohn Wing allows more of the museum's collection—stored for decades because of a lack of display space—to be shown to the public. New displays highlight interconnections among cultures and peoples of the ancient Near East, Egypt, and the world of the Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans.

Themes running throughout the installation include political and divine power, death and the hereafter, work and leisure, commerce and entertainment, social hierarchies and rituals, and health and beauty.

"People have no idea what we have here," says Elaine Gazda, curator of Hellenistic and Roman antiquities at the Kelsey Museum and a professor of classical art and archaeology. "People will be stunned by the richness and depth of collections."

Perhaps the most stunning are watercolor replicas of the Villa of the Mysteries of Pompeii. In the mid-1920s Kelsey commissioned Italian artist Maria Barosso to create reproductions of the vivid frescoes on the walls of a reception room in a villa. Buried in an eruption of Mount Vesuvius near Naples in 79 A.D., the villa was found during an excavation in 1909. Except for a few exhibitions, the watercolors have been in storage since they arrived in Ann Arbor in 1928. In the Upjohn wing they are displayed on the walls of a space resembling the original reception room.

— Maryanne George

For more information, go to [www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/kelsey)



The grand opening celebration.



The new William E. Upjohn Exhibit Wing.

# Welcome New Faculty

Joan Kee

Having lived in Seoul, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, New York, and most recently, Washington D.C., Joan Kee is happy to be in Ann Arbor. Her primary field is modern and contemporary art in East Asia. Kee is also exploring the relationship between law and visual art, an interest inflected by her former life as an attorney specializing in transactions concerning the privatization of government-controlled companies. Her course "Visuality and the Law" will be taught for the first time during winter term 2010. Kee is currently editing a special issue of the UK-based journal *Third Text* on the matter of contemporaneity in Southeast Asian visual culture and is co-organizing a symposium on postwar Japanese art, to be held at UMMA in April 2010. She received a PhD in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts and holds a law degree from Harvard.



Joan Kee

## New Faculty Publications



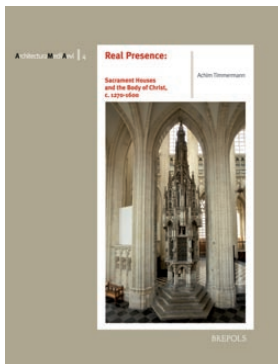
**Matthew Biro**

*The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin*  
University of Minnesota Press



**Susan Siegfried**

*Ingres: Painting Reimagined*  
Yale University Press



**Achim Timmermann**

*Real Presence: Sacrament Houses and the Body of Christ, c. 1270-1600*  
Brepols Publishers

## Faculty Notes

**Matt Biro**

Matt Biro's second book, *The Dada Cyborg: Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* was published in 2009 by the University of Minnesota Press. The review "Michael Fried, Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before," was published in *caa.reviews*. Forthcoming in 2010 are: "Personal Best" in *Hard Targets: Contemporary Art and Sport*; "Hannah Höch's New Woman: Photomontage, Distraction, and Visual Literacy in the Weimar Republic," in *The New Woman International: Representations in Photography and Film, 1890s-1930s*; and "Michel Pastoureau, Black: The History of a Color," in *The European Legacy* 15 (3). He is also co-organizing with Alex Potts the department's annual symposium, this year titled "Contemporary Strategies in Documentary Photography." (See page 9)

**Claudia Brittenham**

This year, Claudia Brittenham is the recipient of an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies Recent Doctoral Recipient Fellowship. She is currently completing a book on the Maya murals of Bonampak with Mary Ellen Miller of Yale University, and continuing research for book projects on the Cacaxtla painting tradition and the visibility of ancient Mesoamerican art. This past year, she presented a conference paper at the College Art Association annual conference and delivered a series of public lectures about the art of Epiclassic Mesoamerica at the Museo Amparo in Puebla, Mexico. *Veiled Brightness: A History of Ancient Maya Color*, co-authored with Stephen D. Houston and three other colleagues, has just been published by University of Texas Press.

**Celeste Brusati**

Celeste Brusati was pleased to switch hats several times during the past year to present several invited papers and lectures. In January she went to the University of Amsterdam to speak on "Framing (in) the Work of Samuel van Hoogstraten" at an international symposium on this seventeenth century Dutch artist theorist on whom she has written extensively. In February she presented a paper on the martial imagery of art in Dutch still life and vernacular writings on art at the Ohio State University's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies lecture series on the arts of war. More recently she gave an invited paper on "Perspectives in Flux: Viewing Dutch Art in Real Time," at a lively symposium on "Vision and Visibilities in Early Modern Dutch Art," held at the Vancouver Art Gallery in September. In October she joined Walter Melion and Karl Enekel as a co-convenor of the Third Lovis Corinth Colloquium on "The Authority of the Word: Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400-1800," held at Emory University. Her paper "Print Matters: Facticity and Duplicity in Trompe L'oeil" ended the conference on a decidedly paradoxical note. Her article, "Reforming Idols and Viewing History in Pieter Saenredam's Perspectives" appeared this year in the anthology, *The Idol in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions and the Early Modern World*, edited by Michael Cole and Rebecca Zorach.

**Kevin Carr**

Kevin Carr's book, *Plotting the Prince: Topographies of Shōtoku Cults in Medieval Japan* will be published by the University of Hawai'i Press next year. He has two articles forthcoming: the first, based on a paper he presented in Princeton concerns the epistemology of religious art in Japan. The second comes from a conference at Columbia and forms part of his next book project, on landscape and identity in medieval Japan. He just returned from a short research trip to Japan.

**David T. Doris**

David Doris was recently promoted to associate professor with tenure in the department and at the Center for Afroamerican Studies—a happy piece of news, he says, because "I adore this place." This past summer he spent a month in Techiman State, Ghana, researching a shrine called Mframa (the Wind), which represents a deity skilled at compelling "witches" to reveal themselves to their communities. The visit opened important doors toward completing a long-standing project. Other publications are in the works. His book, *Vigilant Things: The Strange Fates of Ordinary Objects in Nigeria*, will be published in 2010 by the University of Washington Press. A small, reworked portion of it recently appeared in *African Arts* magazine, as an article titled "Coming Together and Falling Apart: Something about Brooms and Nigeria." Through the year he has also been working on "The Absent Witness of Everything," an article for

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Joseph Imorde Colloquium.



History Painting panel discussion.



Susan Siegfried at book signing.



Margaret Vendryes.



Tappan Talks presenters Katie Brion and Katharine Raff.

## Fall 2009 Events

Each term the department hosts and is involved with many exciting events on campus. For 2010 events, see our online event calendar at [www.lsa.umich.edu/histart/events](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/histart/events).

September 14

### Joseph Imorde Colloquium

"Michelangelo Deutsch! Michelangelomania in Germany between 1860 and 1945," a lecture by Joseph Imorde, Professor of History of Art at the University of Siegen.

September 18

### Panel Discussion on Untitled (History Painting): Painting and Public Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Is painting a viable means of addressing contemporary and historical events? Jacob Proctor, associate curator of modern and contemporary art, led a discussion with Jordan Kantor and Matt Saunders—artists featured in the exhibition—and history of art's Professor Alex Potts and Assistant Professor Joan Kee.

September 23

### David Doris Colloquium

"The Absent Witness of Everything: Picturing Omnipresence in Yoruba Visual Culture," a lecture by U-M History of Art Associate Professor David Doris.

October 12

### Tappan Talks

U-M History of Art graduate students gave thirty-minute talks followed by Q & A. Today: Katie Brion on "From Opticality to Psychophysics: Neo-Impressionism and the Problem of the Sensual" and Katharine Raff on "Standardization in the Painted Decoration of the Apartments of Roman Ostia."

October 23

### Margaret Vendryes Colloquium

"Beneath the Black: Richmond Barthe's Nudes," a lecture by Margaret Vendryes, professor of art history at City University of New York

October 26

### Book Release Party: Susan Siegfried & Dena Goodman

A celebration of the publication of Professor Susan Siegfried's book *Ingres: Painting Reimagined* and Professor Dena Goodman's *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*.

October 28

### Stephen Bann Lecture

Stephen Bann, author of *Paul Delaroch: History Painted* writes about the relationship between painting and photography and the role of mass media in the evolution of imagery in the museum. His lecture was given in conjunction with the exhibit "The Lens of Impressionism: Photography and Painting Along the Normandy Coast, 1850-1874" which runs through January 3, 2010 at UMMA.

November 1

### Grand Opening of the Kelsey Museum Upjohn Exhibit Wing

The Kelsey reopened its doors after over a year of renovations and expansion, including the new William E. Upjohn Exhibit Wing. Provost Teresa Sullivan, LS&A Dean Terrence J. McDonald, and Kelsey Museum Director Sharon Herbert hosted the celebration. (See p 6)

November 5

### Confucius Institute Inaugural Lecture

Sally Michelson Davidson Professor of Chinese Arts and Cultures Martin Powers delivered the inaugural lecture celebrating the opening of the Confucius Institute at U-M, "De-familiarizing the Exotic: Appreciating the Arts of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

November 10

### Pizza with the Professors

History of Art winter course preview. Hosted by Helicon, the U-M History of Art undergraduate student society.

December 1

### 2009 Helicon Lecture

Helicon, the U-M History of Art undergraduate student society, presented this lecture geared toward undergraduate students. Today, Associate Professor David Doris on "Disneyland 1955."

December 4

### 2009 Honors Symposium

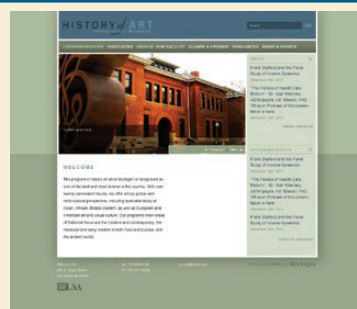
History of Art undergraduate honors students give twenty-minute talks followed by Q&A. (See p 14)

## Coming Soon: Redesigned History of Art Website

Look for it at

[www.lsa.umich.edu/histart](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/histart)

in early 2010.





# Save the Date

## History of Art Symposium: Contemporary Strategies in Documentary Photography

A two-part symposium exploring new practices in documentary photography through the work of some of its most important contemporary practitioners.

### Part I – Saturday, January 30, 2010

UMMA Auditorium, 1:30 pm

Featuring Alec Soth, a member of Magnum Photos who rose to international prominence with the publication of his first monograph, *Sleeping by the Mississippi*. A visual record of the people and things Soth encountered during his travels along the 2,300-mile river, it revealed Soth to be a new and important voice in the tradition of lyrical documentary developed by Walker Evans, Robert Frank, and others.

### Part II – Saturday, February 6, 2010

UMMA Auditorium, 1:30 pm

Featuring Allan Sekula and Sally Stein. Allan Sekula has been on the forefront of documentary practice since the 1970s, expanding our understanding of the photographic “objectivity” in his dual role as both photographer and theoretician. Sally Stein, recently retired from the faculty of UC Irvine, is an independent scholar who continues to research and write about twentieth-century photography and its relation to broader question of culture, politics, and society. Her most recent book on German émigré artist and photographer John Gutmann was published by Yale University to accompany the Gutmann retrospective that opened at the Center for Creative Photography in October 2009.



*Peter's Houseboat, Winona, Minnesota, 2002, Alec Soth*  
*Charles, Vasa, Minnesota, 2002, Alec Soth*  
*Study for The Forgotten Space (Guangdong), 2008, Allan Sekula*  
*Group-portrait, Weaving Workshop at the Bauhaus, Dessau, 1929, Lotte Beese*  
*Helena Mayer, Fencer, 1935, Imogen Cunningham*

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the journal *Res*. It addresses Yoruba secret society emblems in which iron is displayed as the visible but unseen proof of a ubiquitous but invisible power. One big project, especially, has been a labor of love: Doris was a member of the organizing committee for a September 2009 symposium at Yale in honor of art historian Robert Farris Thompson, and is now co-editing a volume of essays by his graduate advisees and colleagues.

### Cécile Fromont

In 2008-2009, Cécile Fromont spent her first year at the University of Michigan working on her book project on the Christian Arts of the Kingdom of Kongo. Research and talks took her to New Orleans, Chicago, Paris, Dubai, and Brussels. In addition, she taught classes on African and Latin American art and architecture. This year, she is particularly looking forward to leading the annual Helicon trip to a Latin American or Caribbean destination.

### Elaine Gazda

During the past academic year Elaine Gazda, professor of classical art and archaeology and Kelsey Museum curator of Hellenistic and Roman antiquities, taught Hellenistic and Roman sculpture and introduced a new museum studies course for undergraduates in anticipation of the department's new museum studies minor. She also served as a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Lecturer at eight college campuses. She coordinated the installation of the new Upjohn Wing of the Kelsey Museum, which opened on November 1 (see p. 6), and was responsible for installing the Etruscan, South Italian Greek, Ptolemaic, and Roman sections of the installation. Her current research focuses on Roman villas in region of the Bay of Naples and on the Roman colony of Antioch of Pisidia in Asia Minor. In June, she completed her term as director of the Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology and now serves as the program's graduate adviser. She continues to serve as a trustee of the American Academy in Rome and as co-chair the Academy's publications committee.

### Joan Kee

Joan Kee spent this past year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts in Washington D.C. where she completed a draft of her book manuscript. An excerpt of this manuscript was published in the fall 2008 issue of the *Oxford Art Journal* as "Points, Lines, Encounters: The World According to Lee Ufan." A revised chapter of the manuscript was also presented at the annual Association of Art Historians Conference. During her leave, she also delivered papers and talks at the University of Minnesota, the University of California at Berkeley, and George Washington University, among other institutions. She further published the lead essay for the catalogue accompanying "Your Bright Future"—the largest museum exhibition of contemporary Korean art held outside Korea—which opened in June 2009 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Other publications include an essay for the fifteenth anniversary issue of *Art Asia Pacific* and catalogue essays for Sasa (44) and Koo Dong-hee, two emerging Korean artists.

### Lisa Nevett

Lisa Nevett spent last academic year on leave. In the fall she completed the final revisions to her book *Domestic Space in Classical Antiquity*, which will appear next year from Cambridge University Press. She also started work on a new project using some of the information on Roman housing collected during Michigan's excavations at Karanis in Egypt, in the 1930s. Her goal is to explore how to interpret more clearly different aspects of the archaeological remains of housing in order to understand the roles played by the various social groups making up ancient households. In the winter Nevett began work on a new book, *Ancient Greek Housing*, for Cambridge University Press. She also gave the Bryning-Redford Lecture in Archaeology at the University of Puget Sound (Tacoma, Washington) and presented a paper to the classics department at Florida State University.

### Alex Potts

Alex Potts' work on ephemeral art work produced in the experimental moment of the late 1960s and early 1970s gave rise to one further publication, "The Art Work, The Archive and the Living Moment" in the book *What is Research in the Visual Arts? Obsession, Archive, Encounter*. He had the sad task of writing Michael Baxandall's obituary for *The Times*, which was republished in shortened form in *The Burlington Magazine*. Most of his energies focused on reworking for publication the eight Slade lectures he gave at Oxford last year. The book he is putting together has the somewhat modified (and simplified) title *Experiments in Modern Realism c. 1945-1965*.

Continued on page 11



Umayyad Mosque, "The Great Mosque of Damascus," 715, Damascus

## Lelya Turcihin Scholarship Funds Heather Badamo's Graduate Student Work in Syria

*When history of art alumna Lelya Turcihin died tragically at the age of 32, her family wanted to honor her memory by providing awards to other young art historians studying in areas of art that most interested Lelya, namely the intersection of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity during the medieval period and how this intersection affected the arts. Last summer, the scholarship was awarded to graduate student Heather Badamo. Her story follows.*

**I**n the summer of 2009, I fulfilled a long-held dream: to live and conduct research in Syria. Through the support of the History of Art Department and the Lelya Turcihin Endowed Scholarship Fund, I was able to attend a unique course taught by a team of specialists at the Netherlandish Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus, "Christian and Islamic Art and Architecture: A Heritage of Religious Interaction."

For six weeks, I lived with an international group of students in the Old City, just behind the Great Mosque of Damascus and within close proximity to a wealth of Umayyad and Abbasid monuments. Our days were divided between classroom instruction in the morning and afternoon excursions to sites that ranged from the Great Mosque to synagogues, churches, Sufi shrines, the National Museum, and madrasas.

Living in the city, we had the opportunity both to consider how the interfaith milieu of medieval Damascus shaped the building and decoration of these important monuments, and also to observe the legacy of that earlier society in the on-going diversity that characterizes the Old City. There, church bells and the call to prayer sound out in concatenation, while shop windows filled with icons and stores with calligraphy displays vie for the attention of passers-by. On weekends, we traveled throughout Syria to visit antique cities such as Palmyra, monasteries with medieval wall paintings, and even the famed pilgrimage site of Saydnaya, a place where both Muslims and Christians have venerated a miraculous icon of the Virgin since the era of the Crusades.

As a specialist in medieval East Christian Art, I was particularly excited to visit the Monastery of Mar Musa el-Habashi near Nbek, a fascinating monument that UNESCO recently added to its register of world heritage sites. Father Paolo, the head of the monastic community at Mar Musa, initiated a project in the 1990s to conserve the paintings, which provide an unparalleled record of medieval Syrian Orthodox art. Both the style and iconography of the paintings are suggestive of interaction between Syrian and Greek Orthodox Christians, providing insights into the ways in which this community positioned itself in relation to their Muslim and Greek Orthodox neighbors.

My summer in Syria came at the end of two years abroad in Egypt, conducting fieldwork for my dissertation on representations of military saints. During that time, I became aware of the considerable connections between Egypt and Syria. Attending the course in Damascus enabled me to photograph and examine recently discovered and conserved wall paintings, which will enable me to explore these connections in my work. Thanks to the support of the department and the Turcihins, I have returned to the United States with a wealth of intriguing material and, equally valuable, contacts with the generous academics who work in this region.

— Heather Badamo



Graduate student Katie Hornstein co-organized a major international conference “1789, 1989, 2009: Changing Perspectives on Post-Revolutionary Art” that took place this past June at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. The two-day event was jointly sponsored by University College, London; the Courtauld Institute; and the University of Michigan Department of the History of Art. The conference took a broad look at trends in nineteenth-century art history, and asked in particular how the field is addressing pressing contemporary concerns such as the economic meltdown and the war on terror.

The conference was distinctive in providing a platform for a multi-generational dialogue between emerging and established scholars. This was particularly true for Hornstein, since the two keynote speakers have made a significant impact on her academic career. Keynote speaker Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby (U-M PhD 1995) was Hornstein's mentor as an undergraduate at UC Berkley and keynote speaker Susan Siegfried is her advisor at U-M. The conference thus brought several generations of Michigan art historians together, and exported a University of Michigan model of graduate student/faculty collaboration across the pond.

<http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/researchforum/conferences/archive08-09.shtml>



Conference co-organizers Satish Padiyar, Melanie Vandenbrouck-Przyblyski, Katie Hornstein, Susannah Walker, and keynote speakers Susan Siegfried and Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby

## Courtauld Conference a Michigan Affair

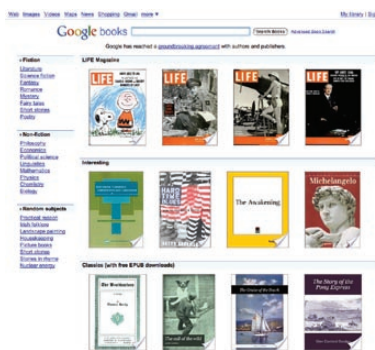
## Google Books Arrives at Tappan Hall

Five years ago, the University of Michigan and Google, Inc. entered into a ground-breaking partnership to digitize the entire print collection of the University Library. In November of 2009, the Google truck arrived on the front lawn of Tappan Hall. Each day, carts carrying a total of 5000 books are rolled out of the Fine Arts Library to be transported to an off-site location for scanning. Over 90,000 of the library's more than 100,000 holdings will be digitized in just one month's time.

The digitized collection, called the Hathi Trust Digital Library (formerly known as MBooks), is searchable in the library catalog, Mirlyn, as well as in the Google Book Search. Full-text of works that are out of copyright or in the public domain are available.

Beyond providing basic access to library collections, the university believes this activity is critically transformative, enabling the University Library to build on and reconceive vital library services for the new millennium. Additionally, the project will create new ways for users to search and access library content, opening up the collections to our own users and to users throughout the world.

To view a book online visit <http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu/> or <http://books.google.com/>



Continued from page 9

Potts gave talks at several conferences: “Sculpture ‘as found’: the Reality of Incongruity” in a session on David Smith at the College Art Association annual conference in Los Angeles; “Twombly's Classical Imaginary” at a conference on “The Modernity of Ancient Sculpture” at the Bristol Institute of Greece, Rome, and the Classical Tradition; and “Formations of Totality and Modern Critical Realism” at the British Association of Art Historians annual conference in Belfast. He was invited to give a public lecture at the Louvre in Paris, “Classical Sculpture and the Romantic Imaginary – Canova and Modern Reinterpretation of the Antique,” and gave a revised version of one of the Slade lectures “Joseph Beuys and Asger Jorn: Formations of a Political Art” at the University of Virginia and at Johns Hopkins University. The Getty Research Institute asked him to serve on the advisory committee for their exhibition “Pacific Standard Time” on postwar art in California. He is also co-organizing with Matt Biro the department's annual symposium, this year titled “Contemporary Strategies in Documentary Photography.” (See p 9)

### Martin Powers

Last year Professor Powers was in residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton writing a book on the cultural politics of “China” during the English Enlightenment. He expects to finish the book manuscript next summer. This past summer he traveled in England and Germany viewing and photographing the remains of eighteenth-century gardens, also visiting the archives in Surrey where he viewed and photographed documents pertaining to the picturesque garden at Painshill. His essay “Imitation and Reference in China's Pictorial Tradition” is due to appear this year in *Reinventing the Past: Archaeism and Antiquarianism in Chinese Art and Visual Culture*. He has just published another article in his editorial series “Reading Against the Grain” in *Du Shu*, October, 2009. This November he delivered the inaugural lecture for the opening of the Confucius Institute at the University of Michigan.

### Margaret Root

Margaret Root gave the Joan Vastokas Distinguished Lecture at Trent University in Canada last March on “Divine Kingship in Ancient Persia: Old Problem – New Perspective.” She presented a paper at the CAA in February titled “Palace-Plain-Domain: The Panoptic Porticoes of Persepolis.” Both talks, combined with a series of articles still in press, are elements of a broad initiative to probe the rhetorical dynamics of Achaemenid Persian court spaces and landscapes as sites of cult. Articles that have appeared in print include: “Reading Persepolis in Greek Part Two: Marriage Metaphors and Unmanly Virtues” (in *Ancient Greece and Ancient Iran: Cross-Cultural Encounters*). This, along with an essay still in press for the Getty (“Embracing Ambiguity in the World of Athens and Persia”), is a continuation of her explorations of Achaemenid Persian art and its reception in the west. Her 2008 article “The Legible Image: How Did Seals and Sealing Matter in Persepolis?” interrogates the social valences of seal iconography and seal use as part of the social apparatus of courtly life and discourse as this can be gleaned from her long-term research project on the seals ratifying the Persepolis Fortification tablets. A lecture at the Toledo Museum of Art in March 2009 titled “Seleucia on the Tigris: An Ancient City between East and West” related to Root's installations of ancient Near Eastern artifacts for the Kelsey Museum's Upjohn Wing, which opened to the public on November 1, 2009. (See p. 6) For the expansive new space, Root secured a long-term loan from Toledo of twenty-five key objects from Seleucia (the Hellenistic capital in Iraq), which was excavated by the U-M in the '20s and '30s. The Toledo material complements the Kelsey's much larger holdings from the site. These American collections have become increasingly charged due to the devastation of the site itself and the Baghdad Museum in the aftermath of 2003.

### Elizabeth Sears

Elizabeth Sears, now completing her second year as director of graduate studies, has continued to work on her current book project, tentatively titled: *Warburg Circles: Towards a Cultural Historical History of Art, 1929-1964*. She spent six weeks in London this summer working daily at the Warburg Institute Archive, and she has recently given talks on aspects of her research at Columbia University, Ohio Wesleyan, and the University of Colorado, Boulder. A co-authored article on an unpublished essay of 1935 by H. W. Janson discovered in the Heckscher-Archiv in Hamburg just appeared in the *Zeitschrift fuer Ideengeschichte*: “Amerika kennt keine Ruinen”: Horst W. Jansons Amerikabild.

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# Michigan and the Mouse

## A Fieldtrip to Walt Disney World

David T. Doris

In fall 2009, I taught a course called “Disney’s Lands: Consuming Wonders in America.” Despite the apparent whimsy of its central object—Disney theme parks—this was no Mickey Mouse course. Fifteen students were handpicked from over forty applicants, and put through their paces, scouring complex theoretical, historical, and critical literature on a wide range of topics: visual storytelling, nostalgia, architectural simulation, the American frontier, colonial adventurism, animation, utopianism, world’s fairs and commodity spectacles, experience design, nationalism and ritual, photography and the picturesque. . . the list goes on. Clearly, Disney theme parks are fertile grounds for students to think about how the world works. And these students did a whole lot of thinking.

Not that we didn’t have fun, of course. We did. And we didn’t have to go far to find it. To experience the gripping emotional power of architectural simulation, for example, we only had to pop across the street to the “gothic” Law School Quad and its cathedral-like library. And after a hushed tour of such ennobling and hallowed halls, the students were attacked by a band of medieval sword-fighters in full battle armor. No room here to explain—something to do with the role of story in creating the experience of place—but anyway, they sure didn’t see that coming! Likewise, a game of “Cowboys and Indians” played on the bulldozed landscape of the nascent UMMA allowed students to experience for themselves how outdated notions of frontier encounters with “otherness” persist powerfully and unconsciously even in simple childhood games, and, indeed, in Disney’s “Frontierland.”

After a semester’s hard work and focused play came what many students saw as the Mother of All Fieldtrips: three November days at Walt Disney World. Accompanying us were U-M’s own Professor Ray Silverman and Scott Mallwitz, associate director of experience design with Cuningham Group Architecture in Los Angeles. Mr. Mallwitz was then, and is now, working closely with Walt Disney Imagineering (the Disney Company’s theme park development arm) on several major projects, and shared some genuinely staggering insights on the intricacies of theme park conception and design. He also opened the door for us to meet with Imagineer Alex Carruthers, art director of Disney’s Magic Kingdom theme park, who spoke at length on the park’s history, structure, and historically themed architecture. Ray Silverman gave us a cultural tour of Harambe Village, the “Africa” area of Disney’s Animal Kingdom theme park, modeled with uncanny accuracy upon the architecture and planning of Swahili coastal towns of Kenya and Tanzania—only without any actual African people on hand.



The “Disney’s Lands” class in Animal Kingdom.

But the stars of the show were the students themselves. Amidst the throngs of tourists and bigger-than-life Disney characters, and occasionally besieged by the blaring music of a passing parade, they bravely gave presentations on individual Disney rides, attractions, and themed spaces. Each “schpiel”—to use the term the Disney Company uses to describe the spoken component of a theme park attraction—was followed by a visit to its corresponding ride or space. Such an immersive experience, as anyone could tell you, beats PowerPoint any day of the week. The presentations were based on essays the students had written for class, which were compiled in an illustrated booklet and distributed to all beforehand. Students chose to read each other’s papers on the plane to Orlando, rather than, say, listlessly leafing through the airline’s complimentary SkyMall catalogue. As it turns out, the shared essays were the touchstones for many rich, well-informed, and fruitfully troubling conversations.

One event sums up that Walt Disney World experience for me. There was a history of art major in the class—a very sharp, very hip guy with a keen, critical intelligence and a snappy sartorial sense—whose comments in class, fueled by weeks of intense analytical reading, had tended toward the cynical. For him, Disney theme parks were a profoundly uncool and exploitative enterprise, bourgeois kids’ stuff at best. One evening, after the sun had set and the Magic Kingdom had switched on its lights, the group stood about watching a parade pass by. It was an astonishing illuminated spectacle: dozens of huge floats and a menagerie of Disney characters were decked out top to bottom in millions of tiny light bulbs—one minute the bulbs were all white, like stars; the next minute they shifted into all the blazing colors of the spectrum. As I stood mesmerized (I’m a sucker for spectacle), I felt a hand tap my shoulder, so I turned around. It was this same student, but now wide-eyed, smiling, and ecstatic, his whole demeanor transformed. “Doctor D,” he laughed, “I get it now! I get it!”

And I couldn’t help but laugh myself.



## Welcome New Graduate Student Cohort

**Lehti Keelmann**, Late Medieval & Early Modern European Art

**Vivian Li**, Modern & Contemporary Chinese Art

**Kristin Schroeder**, Modern & Contemporary Art

**Antje Gamble**, Twentieth Century Italian Art; Sculpture

**Marissa Kuchek**, Modern & Contemporary Art

**Ashley Miller**, Nineteenth-Century French and North African Art;  
Orientalism



## Congratulations Tappan Award Winners

**Melanie Simpson**, Henry P. Tappan Award for Outstanding Teaching

**Megan McNamee**, Henry P. Tappan Award for Outstanding  
Achievement in Graduate Studies

## Welcome New IPCAA Students

**Dan Diffendale**

**Nicole High**

**Kate Larson**

**Jana Mokrisova**

**Emma Sachs**

## Congratulations 2008-09 IPCAA

### PhD Recipients

**Lisa Cakmak**

**Adrian Ossi**

*Continued from page 11*

### Susan Siegfried

Susan Siegfried's book *Ingres: Painting Reimagined* was published by Yale University Press in 2009. A festive book release celebration was held at Lane Hall in October. During the summer of 2009 she gave three new talks, including "Alternatives to Grand Narrative," a keynote at the London conference "1789, 1989, 2009: Changing Perspectives on Post-revolutionary Art conference" co-organized by U-M graduate student Katie Hornstein. (See p. 11) The other talks were "Expression d'une subjectivité féminine dans les journaux pour 'femmes', 1800-1820," *Historiennes et critiques d'art à l'époque de Juliette Récamier*, Colloque international, Musée des beaux-arts de Lyon and Institut national d'histoire de l'art, June 2009 and "Modern Court Dress: Josephine in Fashion," Colloque 2009 Versailles: Cultures matérielles, cultures visuelles du costume dans les cours européennes (1300-1815), Centre de recherche du château de Versailles, June 2009.

### Raymond Silverman

In addition to serving as director of the U-M Museum Studies Program, which this fall launched a new undergraduate minor, Raymond Silverman was appointed interim co-director of the U-M Museum of Art. His current research continues to focus on a long-term project directed at creating a community-focused cultural center in the town of Techiman (Ghana). (See the story in the spring/summer issue of this newsletter.) In the fall of 2009, Silverman is speaking about the project in a number of venues, including a conference in Accra, Ghana. In conjunction with the LSA theme year that examines museums in the academy, Silverman has organized a lecture/workshop series, *Translating Knowledge: Global Perspectives on Museum and Community* that is bringing to U-M ten international scholars who will examine strategies for engaging communities in the complex processes of interpreting and presenting their histories and cultures in the museum. Silverman published two papers, "Ethiopian Orthodox Visual Culture in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Material Religion* and "Icons of Devotion/Icons of Trade: Creativity and Entrepreneurship in Contemporary 'Traditional' Ethiopian Painting," in *African Arts*. In September, Silverman lectured on the contemporary visual culture of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) at Colgate University. Later this fall, he will present a paper that considers recent innovations in mural painting in EOC at the XVII International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa.

### Pat Simons

In 2008, three articles by Simons appeared in peer-review journals (*Art History*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, and *Renaissance Studies*) and six articles have been published in 2009. These include a lengthy review of two exhibitions on Renaissance secular art, co-written with our former graduate student Monika Schmitter (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), in *Renaissance Studies* (November 2009). Simons remains active at conferences, delivering papers at the annual meetings of the Renaissance Society of America (RSA) in 2008 (Chicago) and 2009 (Los Angeles), as well as the LA meeting of the CAA in February 2009. While in LA for the latter event, she also participated in a conference on "The Secret Spaces of Early Modern Europe," jointly organized by two former graduate students (Timothy McCall, Villanova, and Sean Roberts, USC). She delivered a paper at the July 2008 symposium, held at the University of Exeter on "The Notion of Obscenity in Renaissance France." At the end of the 2009 summer, she travelled to Australia where she gave two lectures at the University of Sydney and, in Melbourne, a paper for a conference honoring the German cultural historian Charles Zika.

### Walter Spink

The fourth and fifth volumes of Walter Spink's extensive series *Ajanta: History and Development* were published in 2008 and 2009. The final two volumes, six and seven, will be published in 2010. He will be conducting a short site seminar for students in early 2010—mostly Indian graduate students, but any foreign (i.e. western) students who are in India at that time are welcome to attend. He had similar seminars in both August and February of 2009. Spink has been asked to submit a resume of his history of the Buddhist Caves at Ajanta by UNESCO, since Ajanta is a World Heritage Site. An hour-long film on his work (*Ajanta: Some Kind of Miracle*) by Laurence Castle of Castle Productions ([Ajantainfo.com](http://Ajantainfo.com)) is now completed and ready for distribution. They are now collaborating with the organization Magicians Without Borders on a filming of magic shows for children in India.

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# Q & A with Honors Students

*The History of Art Honors Program is a unique and rewarding experience, especially in the context of a large research university like Michigan. For honors students, the occasion to work one-on-one with faculty advisors, and to undertake ambitious projects involving sustained research and writing, is daunting and gratifying—daunting because of the challenges involved, and gratifying because the completed senior theses represent the intersection of hard work, creative thinking, and the fruitful collaboration of veteran scholars with very talented undergraduates. Our three 2009–2010 honors students took time out of their busy schedules to tell us a little about themselves and their projects.*



Rosa Moore, Ariel Klein, Ariela Steif

## Why did you choose history of art as a concentration?

**Ariel Klein:** I have always had an affinity for art, as well as history. In high school I took my first history of art class, and have been in love with the subject ever since.

**Rosa Moore:** My mother is an artist so I have always been very conscious of art. When I was in high school I was dually enrolled in Jackson Community College and took two art history classes there. The first one was horrible, but luckily the second was great and I knew right away that I wanted to study art history.

## Why did you decide to write an honor's essay?

**AK:** I feel that the honor's thesis is a fantastic way in which to learn to write such an extensive and comprehensive essay. I plan on going on to graduate school, where essays of this type are the norm, and this seemed like the perfect opportunity to ease myself into such a different style of writing.

**Ariela Steif:** I was interesting in exploring a specific topic in a more in-depth manner than I would be able to on a paper for a class.

**RM:** I liked the idea of working on a project that stemmed completely from my own interests and ideas rather than being controlled by the parameters of a particular course.

## What is your topic?

**AK:** My thesis revolves around an ivory diptych from the fourteenth century at the DIA. This particular object is shrouded with mystery as to its authenticity, and it is my intent to attempt to answer this question by analyzing aspects of medieval iconography, narrative, and physical creation of ivory relief.

**AS:** Upper Paleolithic Franco-Cantabrian parietal art.

**RM:** I am writing on Joseph Beuys' site-specific sculpture *7000 Oaks* and its relationship to German environmentalism and national identity.

## What new, interesting, intriguing things have you learned thus far from your research?

**AK:** I have learned a great amount about form and structure of artwork in the medieval period. I have also learned about the art forgery market, which is a fascinating topic, and is one that is pertinent to many museums that face questions of authenticity and legality of their artifacts.

**AS:** The intensive role that ritual played in the production of prehistoric art.

**RM:** I did an internship in a Berlin art gallery this past summer and actually had the opportunity to travel to Kassel and see the sculpture in its environment. That was the most unique experience I've had as a part of this project: seeing how Beuys designed his work to actually be a part of the city.

## What have you found most challenging about the process?

**AK:** The most challenging aspect of this process for me has been the actual construction of the thesis itself. I am slowly learning how to organize and create a thesis of such an extent.

**AS:** Fusing different fields of study together in a coherent and cohesive way.

**RM:** The research is very time consuming, and since I recently started a full-time position at the University Special Collections Library, I find it challenging (but rewarding) to juggle all of my commitments.

## How have you grown from the process?

**AK:** At this point, I have become much better at researching specific topics, and have learned new techniques of research that will be imperative to my life in the future. I think that by the end of this process I will have grown not only as a researcher, but as a writer. Through the successful completion of my thesis I will reinforce my desire to stay in the field of art history, and will have gained important knowledge to help me with further studies.

**AS:** I've learned to function on far less sleep than normal.

**RM:** I'm learning a lot about approaching a work of art analytically in terms of temporal, social, and political context. For example, I started out looking at *7000 Oaks* mostly from the perspective of Beuys' own theories and concepts, but now I've changed the project to have a lot more emphasis on the German environmentalist movement.



## Faculty Profile — Professor Matt Biro (*Continued from p3*)

### **And what about the medium of photography that interests you specifically?**

One of the reasons why photography is very interesting to me right now – and one of the reasons I think it's important – has to do with the way it helps us reflect on the perceptual and cognitive changes that have been occurring over the last fifteen or twenty years, with the shift to digital technologies and the Internet becoming a new platform for art as well as other forms of culture. Photography is an early form of the mass media, so studying it historically helps you understand the strong changes in consciousness that occurred as a result of various modes of human perception becoming mechanized in one way or another. It helps me understand, in other words, the way being able to perfectly reproduce an image has changed people's understandings of the world around them, the distances that separate them from other countries, and their own personal relationships to time and history. Photography today helps us reflect on the ways our consciousness is being changed by technology, and it does so by taking things that speed by us very quickly and slowing them down a bit so as to allow us to reflect on them. Photography thus helps me think about art, but it also helps me think about society and the changes that are going on in contemporary life.

### **While at Stony Brook you studied under the well-known professor and art critic Donald Kuspit. What was that like?**

He was a supportive, but a fairly hands-off professor. Donald was also an extremely inspiring lecturer, and he basically encouraged me to do what I wanted. He influenced my work in the sense that he inspired me to be very open to different forms of artistic practice. He didn't have a particular party line; he was engaged in a lot of different things, and I think I've followed in those footsteps.

### **You're also a practicing art critic now. How is art criticism different than your academic work?**

Since the mid-nineties I've been a practicing art critic, writing reviews of painting, sculpture, installation, photography, and video for a variety of different magazines both here and in the UK, including *Contemporary*, *Art Papers*, and *New Art Examiner*. The real difference between art criticism and my academic work is that I view criticism as much more exploratory. It's how I investigate different artists. By the time I write a book on an artist or a group of artists, I've studied them fairly exhaustively. When writing criticism, the period of investigating is generally a couple of days. I find it a lot of fun because it allows me to explore new areas of art and culture. Donald Kuspit did a tremendous amount of art criticism, so his example is very important to me. The practice of going to a lot of shows, and thinking about what's going on in contemporary art, is an important part of my work because it helps me to think about historical issues as well.

*Continued from page 13*

### **Achim Timmermann**

Achim Timmermann completed his book *Real Presence: Sacrament Houses and the Body of Christ, c. 1270-1600*, which was published by Brepols in November 2009. He also published articles in two volumes of conference proceedings and delivered an invited paper at Emory University in Atlanta.

### **Thomas Willette**

Having returned to teaching from research leave in winter 2009, Tom Willette continues to work on his book about the publication history and reception of the *Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, one of the great books of the Italian sixteenth century but almost unread before the Enlightenment period. Freemasons have something to do with the clandestine printing of Cellini's outlandish story. A portion of the introduction, titled "The Two Faces of Benvenuto Cellini," will be presented in Venice this spring at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America. Willette is also enjoying his new undergraduate seminar on early modern art theory, called "Art and Philosophy." He is completing an essay on Giorgio Vasari's account of why the Renaissance (supposedly) never happened in the Kingdom of Naples. It will be published soon in the festschrift for his honored teacher Charles Dempsey, forthcoming from the University of Toronto Press.

### **Claire Zimmerman**

Claire Zimmerman recently completed editing Volume 21 in the Yale Studies in British Art series, titled *Neo-Avant-Garde and Postmodern: Postwar Architecture in Britain and Beyond* with colleague Mark Crinson (University of Manchester), which will appear in October 2010. The volume includes fifteen essays by architectural historians, including Zimmerman's own essay, "From Chicago to Hunstanton," and an introduction authored by Zimmerman and Crinson. She has recently submitted "Siegfried Kracauer's Two Architectures" to a volume on Kracauer's writings titled *Looking after Siegfried Kracauer*, due out from the University of Michigan Press in 2010. She is currently working on *Photographic Architecture from Weimar to Cold War*, a book that has given rise to a sequence of talks detailing parts of the larger project. These include a talk at the Silberberg series at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in December 2009; one at the Museum of Modern Art in January 2010, a third at a conference at the Kunsthistorisches Institut Florenz in May 2010, and a fourth at a Courtauld Institute conference in June 2010. Talks given during the past year included SAH and CAA conference papers, an invited lecture at Yale School of Architecture in May 2009, and participation in a the conference "The History of the Future" at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. She has been appointed guest editor to the new peer-reviewed journal *Positions* (University of Minnesota Press/ Nederlands Architectuurinstituut) beginning in Spring 2010. Her article "James Stirling's 'Real Function'" will appear in *OASE* 79 in fall 2009.

### **Rebecca Zurier**

Rebecca Zurier recently returned from an action-packed field trip to New York City with sixteen students from her freshman seminar on "American Moderns." The occasion was the Whitney Museum's exhibition of Georgia O'Keeffe abstractions which they were able to tour with the co-curator, Sasha Nicholas. This was the first trip to New York for many of the students and enthusiasm ran high. Students presented group reports in front of the actual works of modernist American art that they had researched in advance. The face-to-face experience with works of art that they had previously studied through digital reproductions was astonishing for the students and a testament to the importance of field trips. Other highlights included a walk over the Brooklyn Bridge and a visit to the Tenement Museum. All in all, the students gained a good sense of what made New York new and inspiring to modernists of many persuasions in the first decades of the twentieth century. They are enormously grateful to the alumni whose contributions to the department's field trip fund make such hands-on learning possible. Back in Ann Arbor, Professor Zurier presented new work on the relationship of pictorial realism to national myth in John Singleton Copley's iconic portrait of Paul Revere to the university's Premodern Colloquium. She has been invited to speak at the Newberry Library's American Visual Cultures seminar this December. She also participated in the symposium "Redrawing the Color Line" in conjunction with the provocative exhibition of racial caricatures by the antebellum artist Edward Clay, on view at the Clements Library through February.

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