

TABLEAU

A detailed still life painting in a classical style, featuring a tall, slender glass vase filled with water and several long-stemmed flowers with dark, pointed leaves. The vase sits on a light-colored, draped fabric surface. To the right of the vase, there is a small, ornate plate with a floral pattern, and two small, round fruits, possibly olives or cherries, are placed near the base of the vase. The background is a soft, warm, golden-brown color, and the overall lighting is soft and directional, creating subtle shadows and highlights on the glass and fabric.

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THE NEWSLETTER *for the* DIVISION *of the* HUMANITIES

at THE UNIVERSITY *of* CHICAGO

DEAR ALUMNI
AND FRIENDS

This issue of Tableau examines the life of the arts in the Division, as they are practiced and as they are studied. Throughout these pages, you will note recurring words that designate efforts in combination—words like “conjoin,” “conjunction,” “yoke,” and, of course, “and,” with its cousin, the ampersand. Our students, past and present, recognize that rigorous work in different disciplines with distinct methodologies often requires crossing boundaries and bringing seemingly disparate areas of knowledge together.

More than this, however, the insistent presence of conjoining terms in this issue points to our recent efforts to bring the arts more centrally into our intellectual enterprise. One of the most exciting markers of this effort is also a priority of the University's recently announced fundraising initiative: a new performing arts center, located adjacent to Midway Studios. Besides renovation of the sadly dilapidated but historic and vibrant Midway Studios, the performing arts center will make available new music practice rooms and rehearsal spaces, a medium-sized (500-seat) theater for student productions, and dedicated facilities for film- and video-making. By conjoining a number of arts facilities in one location, the center will also make possible the kinds of exciting collaborations that characterize contemporary artistic endeavors.

As a priority, the arts center joins other Divisional objectives that, while more familiar, are no less crucial to sustaining the excellence of the Humanities Division at Chicago: faculty endowments and graduate student fellowships. It is difficult to think of these separately. Students come to the Division to work with the best minds in their fields; faculty want to work with the most promising students in the nation. To attract

both, we must offer compensation that is both competitive with our peers and indicative of the high regard in which we hold such human excellence.

Yet another priority for the Division involves bringing together two entities: the humanities and the public. The Franke Institute for the Humanities and, now entering its seventh illustrious year, the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities have been at the forefront of bringing the Division's work to a larger public in Chicago, the nation, and the world. As they increase and refine their efforts, they will require resources for programming and growth that keep pace with the scope of their missions.

We are very grateful for the loyal support of our alumni and friends, and look forward to a continued partnership as we enter this exciting moment in the Division's history.

With cordial greetings,

Janel Mueller
JANEL MUELLER

Janel Mueller is Professor of English and of the Humanities and William Rainey Harper Professor in the College. She has been teaching at Chicago since 1967. Her publications include *The Native Tongue and the Word: Developments in English Prose Style* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, edited with Suzanne Gossett (Renaissance English Text Society, 1999), and *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, edited with Leah Marcus and Mary Beth Rose (University of Chicago Press, 2000). She was awarded the University of Chicago Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching in June 1998.



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Cover: Detail from Laura Letinsky, *Untitled, Rome, 2001. Morning, and Melancholia #32*. Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York.



ACROSS THE MIDWAY PLAISANCE, the five faculty-artists on the Committee on the Visual Arts combine a deep commitment to their craft with an equally large commitment to teaching. In the following pages, we focus on a single piece from each artist and reflect on some of the ideas and concerns that animate their work. >>>> BY WILLIAM ORCHARD





Space is often dismissed as mere emptiness, or it is mapped in the abstract coordinates of *x* and *y* axes. Yet, the effects of experienced space on the individual viewer can be transformative. Certainly such effects were evident to Herbert George during a Fulbright Fellowship in England in 1967, as he studied gothic architecture at first hand. In his words, “The experience of these enclosed volumes of space within the cathedrals made the exquisite stone sculptures seem less present.”

In the succeeding years, George’s sculpture has undertaken to establish a balance between the object created and the space evoked. *Chamisso’s Bottle* (1988) joins enclosed volume with sculpture, bringing them into harmonious coexistence in a work that visually invites the viewer to step inside. The curves of this sculpture com-

Herbert George, *Chamisso’s Bottle* (1988), Plywood, 79” x 60” x 30”. Permanent Collection, Detroit Institute of Fine Arts, Detroit, Michigan.

HERBERT GEORGE

bine with the architectural features as they do in George’s “Spaceholds,” a series of angular wooden structures with rounded metal planes that make salient the force that these spatial formations exert on the individual consciousness.

While *Chamisso’s Bottle* suggests slowness of volume when approached from the front, its substantiality becomes apparent when the plywood structure is viewed from the side or rear. From these vantage points, it extends into space, projecting backward: the shadow of some phantom object. Many mistake the silhouette of an object for its shadow, whose lightless volume expands from the object. “Thought of this way,” George writes, “both the shadow and a spatial volume are different aspects of the same thing—both define volumes, one revealed by light and the other defined by light.”

Chamisso’s Bottle alludes to the author of *Peter Schlemihl*, whose eponymous character sells his shadow to the devil for a bottomless purse. The shadow, a normally

unfelt presence, is metaphorically, if not literally, a protean figure. It can refer to the sinister underside of an individual consciousness or to an aspect of personality that refuses solitude (“me and my shadow”); it can signal a cultural heritage, or it can mark a negative, divisive influence.

For T. S. Eliot, in “The Hollow Men,” the shadow falls between the idea and reality, between conception and creation, between emotion and response. Eliot images this shadow as distancing things from each other and as obstructing unity and creative movement. In George’s rendering, by contrast, shadows take on a creative life, evoking absent forms and bringing new ones into existence. Perhaps because the shadow hovers on the threshold of so many different possibilities, simultaneously all and none of them, the medium of sculpture—which, as George notes, “exists in a form world that extends far beyond naming and knowing”—can emerge as the shadow’s most compelling mode of representation.



HELEN MIRRA

Standing at the edge of the 110 blue triangles made of cotton cloth woven in India, the assemblage that comprises Helen Mirra’s *Sky-Wreck*, a viewer ponders the etymology of the word *textile* and its permutations. Woven, web, text, context, textuality (the list goes on . . .). What secrets have been caught in this web of reiterated shapes that act on the senses like a visual mantra? The cool blue against the hardwood floor—the blue the Russians have a word for, the color of a pigeon’s egg or a cloudless sky—momentarily suggests a body of water as one anticipates the triangles rising and falling in a continuous loop of rhythmic waves. But, as the seams creep into view, we realize we are looking down on something normally obscured from view. The material is being pulled this way and that, as if in some pre-Socratic debate about the elemental composition of natural objects. Our expectations shift. Now we want to see the structure billow upward into a geodesic dome, to realize the utopian dreams of Buckminster Fuller, whose designs and efforts to conserve material resources partially inspire this project. Minimal forms radiate profuse ideas, so much so that we feel them crash down upon us with the force of falling atmosphere, and we love the experience.

A mixture of dense ideas conveyed in deceptively simple forms is a signature of the artwork of Helen Mirra, an artist of growing international reputation. The minimal, simple forms are never minimizing or simplistic; instead they are acts of precision that arrive at

Helen Mirra, NE 1/3%, detail from *Sky-Wreck* (2001). 40’ x 80’. Indigo cotton cloth.

an intersection of thought. Although Mirra is often termed as a conceptual artist, the label does not quite fit, if only because it suggests a single concept at play. Mirra’s work can be likened to carbon, submitted to high pressure, and then expertly cut and polished. The material under pressurization can lead to any number of forms: here a song or a poem, there an installation or a film, or all around some dizzying mixture of them all.

Certain themes recur: the sea, childhood, landscape. Her recording *Field Geometry* (2000) features acoustic-guitar playing that refers to and translates the educational exercises of Friedrich Froebel, the inventor of the kindergarten system that emphasized creative education through practical work and the direct use of materials.

Mirra is currently working on a project entitled *Elm/Angle of Repose* (to be exhibited this autumn at the Whitney Museum in New York), which takes the history of the American elm tree as its subject, to consider expansionism, colonization, and environmental destruction. The installation includes a wool felt floor sculpture, text work on two walls that provides both a context for the sculpture and a faint horizon line, and a sound piece that reiterates the sensibilities of the project. As in *Sky-Wreck*, the materials in *Elm/Angle of Repose* conspire to reveal the beautiful and its underside.

LAURA LETINSKY

I show a friend Laura Letinsky’s *Untitled, Rome, 2001*, the thirty-second piece in the *Morning, and Melancholia* series. In the center foreground is a glass vase, filled with murky water, with a wilted lily climbing out and then falling alongside it. The white background is barely distinguishable from the white tablecloth that announces its presence only through its folds, suggestive of recent use. The whites combine with the blue-patterned china in the background to evoke the familiar palette of Annunciation paintings. So painterly is the scene that one is surprised to learn it is a photograph. In both theme and representational mode, the work recalls the great Dutch and Flemish still-life painters. If the photograph seems oddly out of time—potentially a painting emanating from the sixteenth century or possibly a photograph from our own—the ten stray Cheerios on the white tablecloth underscore its contemporariness.

Laura Letinsky, *Untitled, Rome, 2001. Morning, and Melancholia* #32. Edwynn Houk Gallery, New York.



My friend regards the photograph: “It’s beautiful. It makes me sad.”

Letinsky’s title, with its sly pun on an essay of Freud, seems to anticipate this response. While Freud is concerned with loss and the proper and improper reactions to it, Letinsky refers to the moment (or “morning”) after desire’s fulfillment, when shadows of what has been enjoyed and consumed haunt the scene’s debris. Here desire disappears even as the scene inspires a nostalgia and longing for what has passed. The project partially origi-

nated during Letinsky’s stay in East Berlin, where the unfamiliar context made her aware of her own material and cultural relationship to food. Berlin’s inviting nightlife often postponed the normal clearing of dishes and countertops until early the next day, when Letinsky would discover unexpectedly beautiful tableaux bathed in morning’s kind light. In an introduction to Letinsky’s last series, *Venus Inferred* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), which shows couples in moments of love-tenderness, desire, and regret, Lauren Berlant

remarks on how the photographs capture “the familiar and estranged traces that desire leaves on the landscape.” The *Morning, and Melancholia* images similarly reveal these traces in objects that, as Letinsky notes, “form the texture of intimacy.”

But, if these images are familiar, they also evoke an unfamiliarity, an *Unheimlichkeit*, that again recalls Freud. The familiar in these photographs becomes uncanny, perhaps, because they are homely and because we are unused to locating the beautiful in the aftermath of display and consumption. Popular assumptions locate domestic beauty in the kind of pristine presentation that Martha Stewart or Ethan Allen would commend, but these photographs emphatically suggest that domesticity is most beautiful and most suggestive of its participants when this presentation is dismantled. Or, perhaps, our sense of the uncanny results from our habit of closing our eyes to intimacy and its contours, instinctively looking away and processing it through other senses. Here, the camera looks for us, discovering beauty in what remains.



Bob Peters, *Museum of National Dialogue*, 1996. Manuscript Room.

Something's fishy. Serious issues are argued without nuance, in extreme oppositions. Media outlets offer packaged debate: view, counterview, shouting match, roll credits. The script filters the particulars. The spectacle overrides the voices. Anything like an animated, open-ended "national dialogue" may be dead, a creature more at home in the cemetery or the museum. Bob Peters's installation, *The Museum of National Dialogue* (1996), suggests as much, with its camouflaged halibut lying suspiciously on the floor of its Manuscript Room. Something's fishy indeed.

The Manuscript Room is one of three rooms that comprise Peters's *Museum*, an installation exhibited at the Real Art Ways Gallery in Hartford, Connecticut. The aforementioned halibut blends into the checkered flooring, patterned to resemble that of

BOB PETERS

the Connecticut statehouse but composed of old newspapers—reporters of past dialogues, their shifts, their ephemerality.

Peters's installation exceeds the gallery space. At satellite components throughout Hartford, podiums with "magic slates" (a black wax tablet with a gray plastic cover on which one writes and then erases by lifting the cover) gave citizens opportunities to assume the authority of the podium as they wrote their responses to various questions. Disassembled, the resulting black wax slates were brought into the gallery and hung on the walls of the Manuscript Room, a murky archive of past and potential dialogues in which the latest voices speak over and obscure earlier ones. The outside world of the public enters the art space.

If *The Museum of National Dialogue* suggests that a national conversation may be dead, Peters's works appear more optimistic about the idea of conversation itself. The conversation that interests Peters is not the anaesthetized speech of dilettantes, evoked in T. S. Eliot's lines on those "who come and go, talking of Michelangelo," nor is it the pronouncements of specialists which can

sometimes produce incomprehension. Peters's art is invested in examining how the social conventions of discourse calcify thought, blunt perception, and mediate subjective experience. The works often pursue a different kind of conversation, one aimed at bringing disparate objects and views together so as to expose the categories that structure our experience. His installation pieces, comprised of different media brought into dialogue, attempt pointedly to erode the barriers between artistic activity and the public sphere. It will occasion no surprise that Peters often collaborates, and that his collaborators are often non-artists. These collaborations attempt to resuscitate normal communication by producing work in which different conventions of thought interact and intersect.

Peters will join other Chicago activist artists in the Smart Museum's upcoming exhibition, *Critical Mass* (see page 26). His contribution will engage the question whether aesthetic experience can be measured, challenging those who undertake to represent vital experiences in rigid categorizations.



LEON BOTSTEIN, AB'67 | CONDUCTOR AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

My four years as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago have exerted a lasting influence on my work as a musician. Through the prism of its construct of general education, making music and thinking about music as part of history and culture acquired an intellectual context that might have been absent elsewhere. I was forced to connect music to language and to the visual. Further, I was permitted to pursue the links between music and the study of society. But, perhaps more important, the popular perception of a gap between art-making as purely intuitive and the conducting of scholarship or research as intellectual and therefore reflective, was exploded not only by what we as undergraduates studied, but also by how we were taught with close attention to detail and how we, as students outside of the classroom, tried to penetrate surface interpretation, the limits of theory and conventions in repertoire and performance practice.

My own particular debt to the University, with respect to music, is perhaps greatest on the practical side. I was offered an opportunity to play and to conduct and to work closely with composers, theorists, and musicologists who, themselves, did not separate the study of music from its recreation in live performance. And most important for many aspiring musicians, contemporary music was at the center of the active musical life in which we participated. We did not feel ourselves imprisoned in a museum of the musical past. The moral (if there is one) of my experience is that the University has an obligation to integrate the making and study of the arts into the curriculum, not as an aspect of decoration, but as an essential component. Also, it must use its resources to nurture and

protect the arts in theory and practice that have no competitive viability in commerce and the marketplace.

At the University, music evolved for me not only into an essential language of meaning and expression, but a form of life at the center of critical inquiry and experience. It is ironic that in 1966, at the end of my junior year, I was interviewed by the alumni magazine of the University and asked to articulate my ambitions. Looking back at that interview, it is both frightening and heartening that the goals I set for myself during my undergraduate days are uncannily the very ones I am struggling to reach more than three decades later.

ALISON RUTTAN

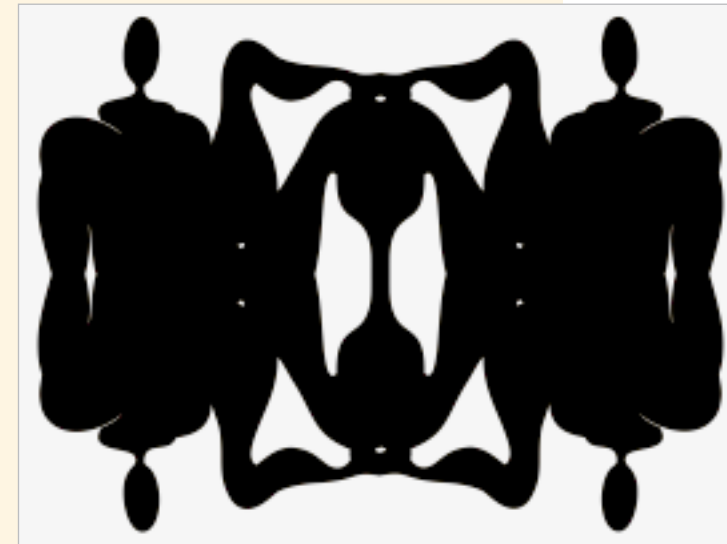
Chromophilia: love of color. The word is a fitting title for Alison Ruttan's digital animation, consisting of blue and gold patches undulating in time with the music of Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" and projected onto a wide, horizontal screen. The colors evoke several images: the benign forms of children's cartoons, the modernist shapes of abstract painting, the outlines of Matisse's dancers, the random figures of Hans Arp. While the shapes demonstrate chromophilia, the motion of the animated masses suggests that the colors may be—well, in love with themselves, maybe a little *too* in love. Taking focus in the repeating movements of these colored homunculi, as we watch, is the body of a woman astride a man in a noticeably aroused state. At least, we hope that is the case. Otherwise, what would we say about the state of our minds? With no small measure of relief, we discover that, yes, Ruttan's digital creations do use pornographic films to create abstractions that follow the movement of the live action.

Once the pornographic elements in the video are identified as such, our minds become receptive to a number of bad puns:

porn by numbers; porn to be wild; a pornucopia of chromatic delights; not to mention all the double entendres relating to "Nutcracker." This type of joking is not ancillary to Ruttan's work. Indeed, it may be central. She uses humor to draw us close to the image but then twists and flips our expectations and understandings. Is the benign Disney-like animation as benign as we like to think? Do the abstract images require the kind of formal initiation that some elitists would require? And is the distance between an inviting children's cartoon and a formidably "difficult" work of "high" art as great as we are trained to believe?

Ruttan's work also takes a novel and refreshing stance in relation to the pornographic image. Public discourse about pornography often reduces to legal questions of obscenity or to feminist critique. In both domains, sex nearly disappears as abstractions come to dominate the discussion. By contrast, Ruttan's work moves discussion about pornography from a distanced abstraction back into a sexual

but also artistic realm. Here, the motion of the figures almost embarrassingly reminds the viewer of his or her own sexual self. Ruttan's art, in the critic Laura Kipnis's term, "re-functions" the pornographic image by changing it into something that reflects the



Alison Ruttan, *Chromophilia* (2001), digital animation.

artist's interests in abstract painting, and yet recalls the humorous, awkward motion that characterizes the beautiful, clumsy sex of youth. As Ruttan notes of her own creations, "these playful abstractions suggest that sex is truly in the mind."

DEBORAH DRATELL, Ph.D.'82 | OPERA COMPOSER

The reputation of the University of Chicago is one of great emphasis on rational argument. Why, then, is it attracting students who hope to dedicate their lives to the arts? I was such a student, and I am forever grateful that a great deal of my future life was formed at the University, because the arts cannot flourish without logic and discipline. Of course, there are exceptions to every rule, but I can vouch for the fact that a musical composition is not merely forged by divine or not-so-divine inspiration but by a great deal of discipline—sitting down and developing a given musical theme, orchestrating it, editing what has been written, and sometimes having the courage to destroy it.

In my case, the University of Chicago not only gave me the tools to learn my musical craft, but it also strengthened the muscle that is my brain by exposing me to other disciplines. In addition to the intensive musical training in theory and composition that I received at the University, I pursued my

innate interest in the effects on musical theory of philosophical thinking by such luminaries as Adorno, Kant, and Hegel in courses offered by the Committee on Social Thought. Of course, my compositional studies with Ralph Shapey have served as a basic foundation for my work, and, without a doubt, my compositional thinking has been greatly influenced by the intricate polyphonic technique he taught.

The University also offered me practical applications, because my music was performed by the Contemporary Chamber Players, through a commission from the Fromm Foundation for this ensemble. Another practical application involved my performing as both a violinist and conductor with the University of Chicago Symphony and working as an assistant conductor to Henry Mazer, then the Associate Conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.



My administrative skills were developed through my assistantship as manager of the Contemporary Chamber Players, because as a student I was given the opportunity to learn how to run a performing arts organization. This was valuable background for the work I did at the New York City Opera when I inaugurated and ran for three years the "Showcasing American Composers" program, which meant dealing not only with scores but also with budgets, unions, fundraising, and logistics.

And finally, by living in Chicago, I was exposed to the very best there is in the arts, because, through student tickets, I was able to hear the finest performances in concerts by the Chicago Symphony, in opera by the Lyric Opera of Chicago, in recitals by visiting music ensembles, and in the theater. Chicago and the University of Chicago played a very important part in shaping my life and career.

**GREG KOTIS, AB'88 | PLAYWRIGHT**

The University of Chicago is still very much a part of who I am and what I write. The most obvious influence is the sheer breadth and depth of ideas we were all exposed to as students there. I majored in Political Science, which turned out to be a fine background for an aspiring satirist. I read a lot of political philosophy and a lot of papers on international relations. I discovered for myself a worldview tempered as much by classical thought as by what I read in the newspaper.

Urinetown is also very much a product of that education. The play is an allegory; it's a parable intended to be self-contained. My hope is that *Urinetown's* political science credentials become more apparent upon closer inspection. The story deals with ecological

devastation, oppressed populations, collusion between big business and government, charismatic leaders that haplessly lead people to ever-greater miseries, and an apocalyptic vision appropriate for an age of over-population and over-consumption. All the ideas presented in *Urinetown* have their roots in the dorms, classrooms, and library coffee shops of the University of Chicago, as will be evident to any alum who sees it.

Another influence is the particular university culture we were all a part of there. For me, Hyde Park felt very much like an island of misfits, an outsider's place, which is also a fine starting place for satire and theater. It can be a great advantage for an artist to stand apart from his subject. The U of C had the added advantage of allowing one to feel like an outsider among outsiders. In other words, it was the intellectual malcontents

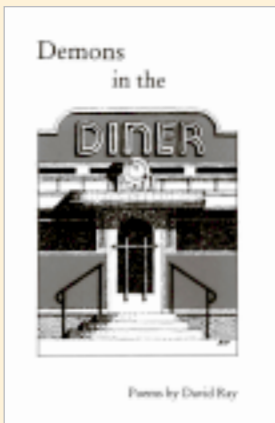
and madmen that I came to know as a student at the U of C that formed my thinking as much as any book.

Finally, there's the extent to which the U of C was unusually hard on its students that remains a central defining experience for me. The U of C, as we all know, is fairly grueling. Doing theater while a student was a refuge, a place to socialize and play. The quarterly cycle of fresh beginnings, midterms, and finals was, for me, almost always nearly unbearable. Theater gave me a place to be anarchic and childish in ways I never could in the classroom. So, I suppose, it was the grimness and strictness of the academic experience that made me appreciate theater all the more, and made me want to stay in theater even after most indications suggested the choice was folly.

DAVID RAY, AB'52, AM'57 | POET

The University of Chicago was a great challenge, for my Murphy Scholarship had to be supplemented with a series of jobs—in the Billings Hospital pharmacy and admitting office, at a service station on 47th Street, and in various places as a typist. The distractions of earning a living made meeting the intellectual challenge more daunting than I would have liked.

Every class presented new revelations. The professors offered original ideas, provocative suggestions for changing the world, and reverential devotion to the classics. I cannot imagine what my life would have been without immersion in great books inspired by the Hutchins curriculum, still a sharp contrast to the usual American teaching of summarized answers to problems and condensed rehashes of



history. My own teaching is always enriched by frequent reference to the classics.

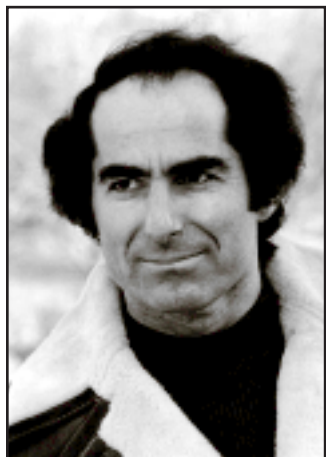
Opportunities for students abounded. Though I became editor of the *Chicago Review* at a troubled time in its history, when its funding was threatened, the work was a chance to use my resourcefulness for the magazine's survival and to sharpen my editorial judgments. That practice proved invaluable for my later stints as editor of anthologies as well as of *Epoch* at Cornell and of *New Letters* at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where my wife and I also founded and

developed the N.P.R. radio program, *New Letters On the Air*. Still a good read and deserving reprinting, *The Chicago Review Anthology* brought together a host of discoveries from around the planet as well as U of C writers including Frank London

Brown, Paul Carroll, Reuel Denney, Beth G. Fawkes, Isabella Gardner, Ruth Herschberger, Galway Kinnell, John London, Elder Olson, David Riesman, Isaac Rosenfeld, Philip Roth, George Starbuck, and Richard G. Stern.

I was writing for various publications, including *The Nation*, *The Progressive*, and *The New Republic*; and, as I do today, I was turning out essays and letters to editors based on concerns that I realized, after I became a Quaker, were inspired by leadings. Such an essay was one I wrote in *The Nation* about Robie House. I was told it helped persuade Frank Lloyd Wright to come to Chicago to save his creation.

Professor Donald Bond, at the last meeting of his Eighteenth-Century Literature class, asked us to jot a few lines about our professional futures. Thinking I was overstating my possibilities, I wrote down "Writing, Editing, and Teaching." But like the old man bucking hay for the horses in Gary Snyder's poem, that's just what I've gone and done.

**PHILIP ROTH, AM'55 | WRITER**

When I got to Chicago, I was thrilled by all the kindred souls. And there was a city—and I hadn't lived in a city since I was a kid in Newark. It was all exhilarating: the university, the new city, my new friends, manly independence. I felt that I was a man—and I began to write.

For the one year I was a student at Chicago, I took the standard master's degree program in literature. Good courses with Elder Olson, Morton Dauwen Zabel, and Napier Wilt, but also bibliography, historiography, Anglo-Saxon. Those classes were not for me.

I got to know the people who ran the *Chicago Review*. George Starbuck was poetry

editor (and later my first editor, at Houghton Mifflin). *Chicago Review* published one of my first terrible short stories—my first publication outside of the Bucknell College literary magazine. It's a story by someone who's twenty years old. That's all you can really say about it. . . .

I had nothing to do with any but literary or bookish people. I should say bookish men. With women I was more ecumenical.

Neurotic classmates? I suppose I would qualify. High-strung. Volatile. Opinionated. Argumentative. Playful. Animated. Quarrelsome. I'm sure I was as neurotic as any classmate I had.

I was instinctively fanatical about seriousness. Chicago didn't make me like that, but it sure didn't stand in my way. I wasn't a

fanatical student—I was fanatic about writing and books. I couldn't understand ordinary life. I didn't know what satisfactions it could possibly yield. Nor did I think my fanaticism was extraordinary. I was in a community where it wasn't extraordinary. Hyde Park's the last place I lived where books seemed at the heart of everything. . . .

I prefer the writer I was in Chicago at twenty-three, even if I can't read his writing. But who doesn't? Who wouldn't? Unguarded! I was actually unguarded. Hard for me to believe. I didn't know who might be inspired by my writing to want to smash me one right in the face, so I walked around with my kisser in the air as though I'd never heard of custard pies.

You know what I was? I was stupid! It was wonderful.*

BERNARD SAHLINS, AB'43 | FOUNDER, SECOND CITY THEATER**Everything changes but the avant-garde — PAUL VALERY**

The University had no theater department. It offered no courses on technical theater. Yet it managed to produce a significant number of theater professionals.

What did the University of Chicago teach us that accounts for this?

First, the preeminence of values in a world of facts. Then, a respect for the past along with the essential idea that the past is always subsumed in the present. It taught us to maintain the spirit of inquiry especially when it comes to one's own shibboleths; taught us the greater joy that comes from serving the art than from manipulating it

**SUSAN SONTAG, AM'51 | WRITER**

I don't think I would have been any different if I hadn't gone to Chicago. Yet it was a pleasure to be in a place where there was nothing to ignore. This was a place where all one was supposed to do was study. . . .

We were taught to be reasoners. We were encouraged to participate in class discussion, and one's contribution to discussion was judged by a very high standard. We were expected not to "answer" a question, but to present an argument. You would be asked to compare Aristotle's and Aquinas's ideas of virtue. You'd raise your hand and deliver a reasoned exposition that would go on for several minutes. The professor would listen and say, "How would you consider the

Later on, I was living on Cape Cod and needed to make a living. I wanted to teach high school, but I had no college degree. Since Chicago had turned down my thesis [after he completed the coursework for the master's degree], I had about seven years of college and no degree. So I wrote the people at Chicago a letter saying, "Hey, look, you guys, I'm way past a bachelor's. Won't you at least give me a bachelor's degree?"

And they said, "No. We're sorry, but you would have to come back here and take a course". . . There was no chance of my doing that; by then I had six kids.

So there I was, without any degree. Otherwise I would have become a teacher. I was quite angry about it.

I wrote another thesis, about the mathematical shapes of stories. That one was rejected, too. It got worse. Finally I was on the faculty at

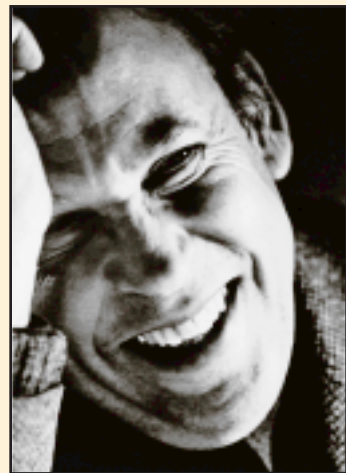
assistant), who became for all of us the embodiment of their subjects. We started out adrift in the sea of knowledge, not knowing where to look or what to look for. We came to admire the "being" of our teachers, and sought to acquire that being. This came through identification and imitation. We saw with their eyes, valued with their standards, reacted with their sensibilities, then added our own. It became a matter of course to work at the top of one's skill, to respect the audience, to serve art.

And finally, we learned from each other, from that great, diverse pool of talented students who had the good sense and the good grades and the great good luck to enter the University.

following?" You were expected to be able to develop an argument orally and, when it was questioned, defend it with precision.

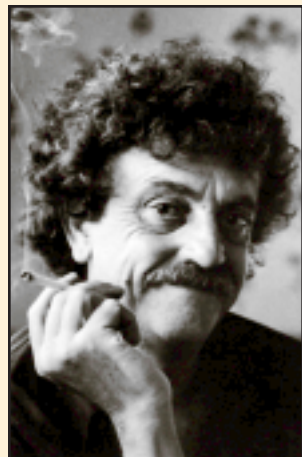
We were taught to be very close readers; we were taught incredible reading skills: to be able to examine a text thoughtfully word by word. . . . It was the best education for learning how to read that one could imagine. But we were not taught to write. At Chicago, no attention was paid to writing skills. Of course, some of us became writers anyway, because the kind of people attracted to that sort of education are often lovers of language.

I had been writing—stories, poems, and plays—from the age of about seven. But during the time I was so sated and happy a student at Chicago, writing was postponed. One couldn't give oneself to this exhilarating



education and then go back to the dormitory and write stories. Creative writing is a different way of thinking. (Writing comes from a kind of restlessness and dissatisfaction. And I was so satisfied at Chicago.) Besides, participating in the courses in the College was a full-time job—not to mention the classes in the Divisions I was not enrolled in but auditing, concerts on campus and screenings at Doc Films, and occasional forays to the Art Institute and the opera. I had no creative powers at all during that period. The university annihilated them.

I had been writing stories in high school, and I started writing again when I left Chicago. But the university was a total situation, a benevolent dictatorship. Which was fine with me.*

**KURT VONNEGUT, AM'71 | WRITER**

I thought a hell of a lot of the University of Chicago and Chicago didn't think a damn thing about me. I was a very fringe character in the Anthropology Department. . . .

I look on the University of Chicago community as a folk society—and I felt like an outsider in it. I felt excluded by that bunch in the department, although they had admitted me. I wasn't treated badly, but they already had a family.

My ironic distance as a novelist has a lot to do with having been an anthropology student. Anthropology made me a cultural relativist, which is what everybody ought to be. People the world over ought to be taught, seriously, that culture is a gadget, and that one culture is as arbitrary as another. . . .

Harvard, without a degree, and I had stopped bothering Chicago. I received a letter from a guy at Chicago who had taken over the Division of the Social Sciences.

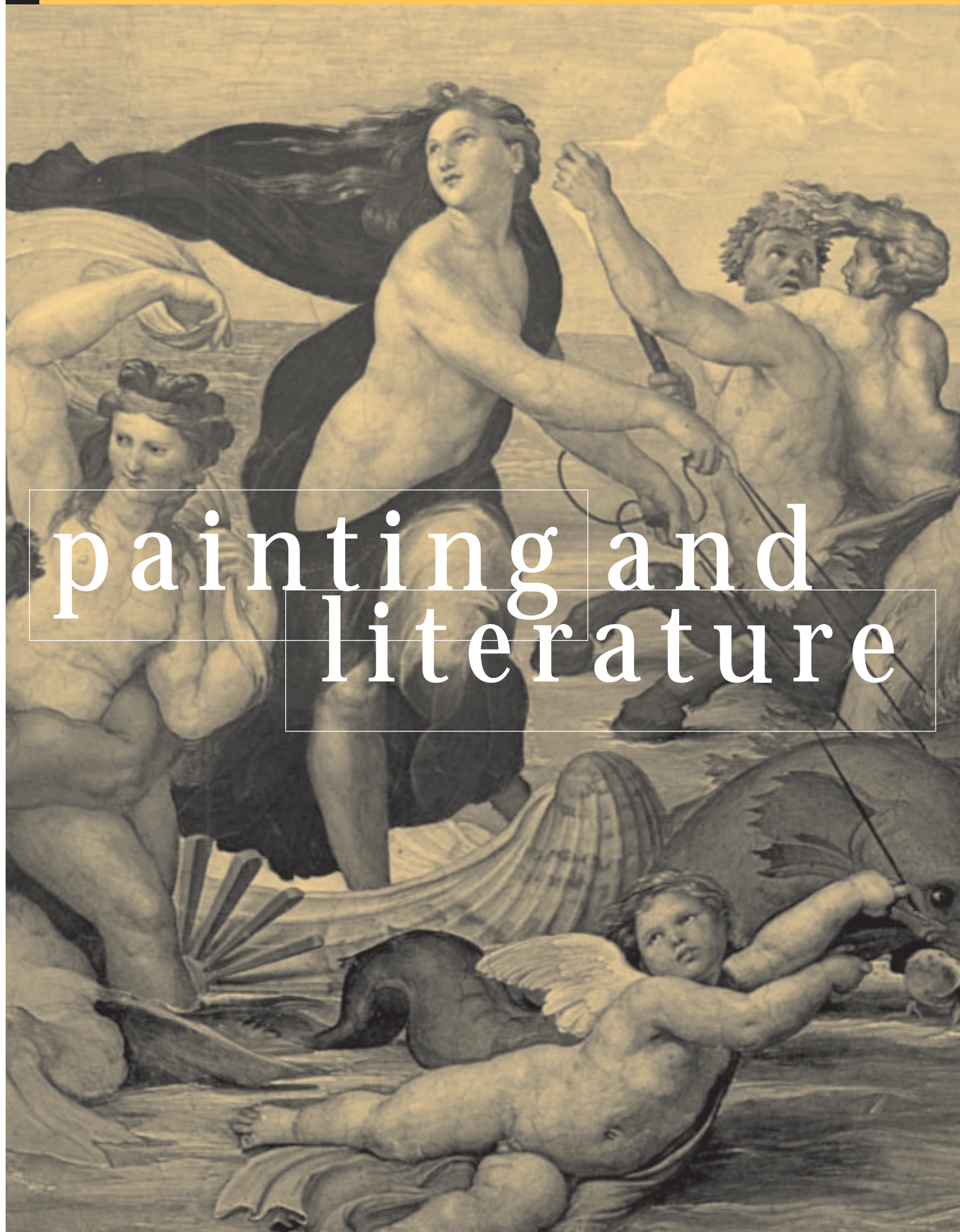
He wrote, "I have just become Dean of Social Sciences here, I was looking through a file, and I found an enormous envelope with your name on it. So I read it." And he added, "I am pleased to tell you that under the rules of the university, you have always been entitled to a master's degree, for having published a book of quality."

Cat's Cradle is what qualified me for a master's degree.

The novel was anthropology, but invented anthropology: in it, I wrote about an invented society.

So I had been entitled to an M.A. all along. Anyway, I like the University of Chicago. They didn't like me.*

* Full versions of the essays by Roth, Sontag, and Vonnegut appear in Molly McQuade, ed., *An Unsentimental Education: Writers and Chicago* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).



painting and literature

THE STROKE OF THE PAINTBRUSH ON A FRESH WHITE CANVAS.

The scratch of a pen on the blank page. The initial acts of painting and writing bear a strong resemblance to each other, but the resulting productions are quite different. On one hand, the painting freezes a moment of perception and hangs motionless in the gallery, requiring those who would partake of its impact to travel to it (or, if it is more generous, it makes the trip to its viewers). On the other, the work of literature circulates, falling into many hands and often propelled further by the kinesis of narrative. The poet Zbigniew Herbert has noted the impossibility of translating between these two media. One thousand words do not paint the picture, and a picture will never fully capture a given thousand words. Yet, the two arts have been engaged in a centuries'-long conversation.

In one direction, the nature of that conversation is clear: literature provides an archive of stories for painting to represent. In the other direction, however, the conversation is more varied and complicated: how does painting inform literature? Three scholars in different departments in the Division presently have their ears tuned to this conversation, examining episodes in this exchange from early modernity through the late twentieth century.

In the late months of 1569, a twenty-two-year-old Spaniard named Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra ventured to Rome and entered into the service of the man who would become Cardinal Acquaviva. During his brief sojourn in Italy, Cervantes was exposed to the art of the great Renaissance painters, which beautifully yoked the pagan with the Christian in a way that would excite the young poet who lived under the repressiveness of the Counter Reformation. According to **Frederick A. De Armas**, the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Spanish in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, this early journey left an indelible impression on Cervantes, whose work exhibits a persistent desire to return to both Italy and the Renaissance. In *Cervantes, Raphael, and the Classics* (Cambridge UP, 1998), De Armas

examines Cervantes's early play *La Numancia* and considers how its form, structure, and themes are influenced by Raphael's Vatican paintings and the interpretations of antiquity offered in those artworks.

De Armas's current project, *Quixotic Frescoes: Cervantes and Italian Renaissance Art*, broadens the scope of his original investigation by examining the influence and appearance of a range of painters in Cervantes's work, from his early pastoral *La Galatea* (1585) through his posthumously published romance *Persiles y Sigismunda* (1617). Cervantes uses Raphael's *Triumph of Galatea* to fashion the eponymous heroine of his pastoral romance. Sharing the work's Neo-Platonic aesthetics which exalt Galatea's chastity over Venus' carnality, Cervantes's Galatea departs from Raphael's in two ways. First, he situates Galatea in an ekphra-



sis that assigns her the role of Venus in Botticelli's *Primavera*. Second, he depicts her playing the *zampoña*, a wind instrument that is not only symbolically at odds with her chastity but also the instrument played by Polyphemus, the cyclops who is enamored of her, in the painting by Sebastiano del Piombo that hangs adjacent to Raphael's *Triumph*. Combined with a blush that Cervantes bestows upon his Galatea, the effect of these overlapping references, in De Armas's reading, sustains Galatea's chastity toward men while subtly incorporating her into a transformed homosexual tradition that acknowledges erotic currents between women. This complexity is representative of Cervantes's technique, which never resorts to simple imitation but rather plays upon the features of the archive, fashioning something novel and creating an alternative museum in language.

Two upcoming exhibits at the University are advancing De Armas's investigations. He and Smart Museum Mellon Projects Coordinator Elizabeth Rodini will curate an exhibit called "The Painted Text: Picturing Narrative in European Art," which will be shown at the Smart Museum from spring through summer 2003. With Alice Schreyer, Director of the University of Chicago Library's Special Collections Research Center, De Armas will

{ PAINTING AND LITERATURE }

organize an exhibition entitled “Writing for the Eyes from Antiquity to the Renaissance” which will run from April to October 2003.

.....

The peregrinations of poets and the artwork they encounter on these travels is also the topic of a forthcoming work by **Bożena Shallcross**, Associate Professor of Polish in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. In *Through the Poet's Eye* (Northwestern UP, 2002), Shallcross traces the travels of Polish poets Adam Zagajewski and Zbigniew Herbert through New York and Amsterdam, respectively, and of Russian poet Joseph Brodsky through Venice. While each of these writers from “the Other Europe” has established a reputation in poetry, Shallcross turns our attention to their equally accomplished prose which chronicles their encounters with art abroad.

Prose is sometimes seen as a degradation of the poet's art. Brodsky suggests as much when he writes that a “poet turning to prose . . . is like the shift from a gallop to a trot, a time-exposure photograph of a monument, or Apollo's one-year service as a shepherd for the flocks of King Admetus.” As Wordsworth notes, the prison of a more constricting form no prison is. It may be those very things that Brodsky figures as loss—the slower approach to an object more distant in memory as well as purpose—best suit the expression of epiphanies experienced by these poets in foreign locales.

More metaphysical than spiritual, these experiences are of a distinct order. In contrast to the Joycean epiphany in which deep spiritual understanding follows from serendipitous encounter with trivial objects, these “artistic epiphanies” require the stimulus of a visual masterpiece. The visual masterpiece conjoins with the movement of travel and the poet's visionary sensibility to release a rush of emotion and understanding which seems, on the one hand, to short-circuit the writer's poetic sensibility but, on the other, to beg for some approximate expression in language.

The artworks that propel these writers into epiphanic contemplation are often not the masterpieces enshrined in canons of Western art. Herbert, for instance, passes over the *Mona Lisa* with a yawn, but is catapulted into seizures of insight by Torrentius' *Still Life With a Bridle*, a modest work that was once used to cover a barrel of beans. Traveling through the National Museum in Amsterdam, Herbert is arrested by the still life's “suspicious simplicity.” If he stops, it is only physically, for, in his moment of arrest, he embarks

upon what Shallcross terms a “journey of the eye”: the poet visually absorbs the work and, with visionary perception, goes into and through it. Far from the frozen instant of modernist epiphanies, Herbert's experience is languorous and sustained. He surveys the work's surface, rejecting the text in the painting that begs to be interpreted as an allegory on restraint. Instead, his eye scrutinizes the three vessels in the foreground, the spectral bridle haunting the middle field of vision, and the dark void of the black background: a passage from visibility to invisibility. The black background—silent, solitary—inspires the same feelings in the poet and resonates with the illumination he cannot express, a presence marked only by a void.

.....

While Herbert moves from the still life into a void, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood moved in a reverse path. In the soaring void of the great gothic cathedrals illuminated by the glow of stained glass, the members of the PRB discovered a stilled attentiveness, not unlike the “unheard music” Keats discerns in his reflection on the Grecian urn. William Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the PRB's leading figures, also recognized this quality in the paintings they encountered abroad. In such works as Hans Memling's *Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine* and Giorgione's *Fête Champêtre* in which the detailed, realistic visual rendering transported the viewer out of his senses by making visible the sound of music or a person's touch, Rossetti and Morris detected an antidote to the ills of their historical moment, just as Cervantes did in the paintings of Raphael. Unlike Cervantes who felt rescued from Counter-Reformation repression by the pagan excess and refined composition of Renaissance paintings, the PRB traced the staleness of modern life to the idealizations that Raphael helped inaugurate, discovering in the work of Giorgione and Memling a naturalism that challenged the self-consciously classical tastes of the Royal Academy.

But in the gothic cathedrals and medieval illuminated manuscripts, the PRB also discovered something beyond the aesthetic: a moment, as Ruskin notes in “The Nature of the Gothic,” when art was (in Morris's words) “the expression of man's pleasure in labor.” The PRB's understanding that labor and object are both part of art's “work” came at a time when the success

of English manufacture and reproductive technologies made it possible for middle-class consumers to own objects aspiring to the category “Art”. While influenced by excursions abroad, the PRB was focused on the more proximate social and aesthetic stakes of art. Like the narrator of the poet Mark Doty's “The Ruined Boat,” they didn't “need to go anywhere” because “description itself [was] a kind of travel” and they could “study all day in an orient of color.”

But, they did not study in just color: words were a major component of their artistic production as well. For **Elizabeth Helsinger**, the John Matthews Manly Distinguished Service Professor in the Depart-

ments of English and Art History, the proximity of visual and literary forms in the works of the PRB and within the oeuvres of its individual members makes them ripe for examining anew the relationship between art and literature. In her current book project, *Pre-Raphaelite Arts: Poetry, Painting, Collection, and Design in the 1860s*, Helsinger reflects on Morris and Rossetti's artistic ambidexterity, following their minds as they think simultaneously about art (including particular works of art) through poetic and visual forms. Rossetti, for instance, described the stilled attentiveness he discovers in Memling in a sonnet and, in a painting like his *Annunciation*, attempted to convey the same quality of attention by depicting a just-awakened Virgin shrinking away from an intruding, muscular Gabriel. Helsinger focuses on areas of Pre-Raphaelite inventiveness, examining, among other things: how they employed color as an expressive, tonal, and structuring feature; how Morris used pattern in visual design, as a principle of literary composition, and as way of comprehending art's social function; and, the effects intimate relationships exerted on the productions of this fraternity. The PRB made art about art, and because they did so in a double sense, their works in different media seem to comment on each other in slightly different languages, prodding us to think differently about the relations between word and picture. □



WHAT MATTERS TO ME & WHY

I study nineteenth-century Italian opera, and I teach it to my students, both undergraduates and graduates, because I love it: I love the emotions and dramaturgical intensity of its characters; the beauty, grace, and power of its music; the complex culture that fostered it and exported its masterworks throughout Europe and America. My passion for this repertory dates back to my teens and has only intensified through the years. When I told my own teachers in graduate school that I wanted to work on *bel canto* opera

philip gossett

When I told my own teachers in graduate school that I wanted to work on *bel canto* opera... they looked at me with bewilderment, as if to say: “Why is a bright young man like you ruining his career?”

I KNOW WORDS

(the works of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti) they looked at me with bewilderment, as if to say: “Why is a bright young man like you ruining his career?” Study Beethoven. Study Renaissance music. Study Mozarabic chant (you might become President . . .). But I persisted in my wayward desires.

Not that I knew *what* I wanted to do with this music. I had been listening to Metropolitan Opera broadcasts from an early age, and I spent many Saturday afternoons as a high-school standee at the Old Met. As an undergraduate, first as a physics major, then (after seeing the light) as a music major, I sang through operas, read librettos, wrote warmed-over-lightly-Kurt-Weillish theater scores, accompanied at the piano choruses and individual singers, and played chamber music. My trusty tape recorder provided inexpensive operatic listening for cold nights with Kierkegaard and partial differential equations.

I never took a course in which Italian opera was highlighted. (Once, in an undergraduate analysis seminar, I insisted on studying the tonal structure of Verdi's

Il trovatore, to the dismay of colleagues working out tone rows in Webern's twelve-tone compositions.) After learning what it meant to do scholarly research, I sailed (literally) to Paris for a doctoral dissertation on the adventures of Italian composers in the French capital. I soon learned that in 1965 very little was known about this music. Every time I picked up a manuscript or printed edition of the same opera there were surprises: here one aria, there another, here a happy ending, there a tragic one, here a heroic tenor, there the same role sung by a mezzo-soprano *en travesti*. Before long I realized that *someone* had to

ductors and companies who don't care, who won't change a note or an expression mark in a score they have already learned (some of them—musically illiterate—by rote). Leave us alone; don't tell us; we don't want to know.

What seemed frivolous in 1965 seems so no longer. My experiences, though, have sensitized me to the limits of my own expertise (even in Italian opera). As teachers we must provide encouragement and support for students in avenues *they* wish to pursue, give them tools, and get out of their way. When I served as Dean of the Division of the Humanities, I wanted to



Philip Gossett is the Robert W. Reneker Distinguished Service Professor of Music and the Humanities. From 1989 to 2000, he served as Dean of the Division of the Humanities.

sort out these confusions. I've been sorting ever since: the editions of the works of Rossini and Verdi, of which I am general editor, are the fruit of collaborative research with wonderful colleagues from Edinburgh to Tokyo, from Los Angeles to St. Petersburg.

What has been most exciting about this work is that it has put me into daily contact with singers, conductors, directors. Our new editions attract the attention of Riccardo Muti, James Levine, Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Chailly, Renée Fleming, Marilyn Horne, Sam Ramey, Dario Fò, and Jonathan Miller, to name only a few of the remarkable artists with whom I have worked. There are also frustrations: con-

ensure that every student and faculty member in this Division (and throughout the University) was convinced, as I have been for thirty-five years, that the University of Chicago is second to none in supporting the best, most innovative scholarly and critical work both in well-tilled fields and in fields yet to be discovered. It has been an institution that understands my passion and makes my scholarship and teaching possible. I am very fortunate. So are we all. □

ART AND SOCIAL CHANGE Art is sometimes seen as a special reserve, a pastoral scene into which we retire to assuage the harsher edges of modern life. In times of crisis and great social upheaval, it often operates in this way by offering familiar images which feel strangely out of time. But, as the writers acknowledge in the following essays, art also becomes in these moments a medium through which political and social arguments,

a r t & s o c i a l c h a n g e

SOCIAL CHANGE AND CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART

WU HUNG

HARRIE A. VANDERSTAPPEN
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE PROFESSOR
IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ART HISTORY
AND EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES
AND CIVILIZATIONS

It is a truism for today's art historians that the course of art is inevitably affected by external factors, among which social change looms large. The recent development of Chinese art offers dramatic evidence for such causality: not long ago this art was reduced to Communist propaganda posters and Mao's portraits, but now young "experimental" Chinese artists travel to every major exhibition in the world from Venice to Sydney with government-issued passports. From a sociological point of view, this startling transformation of art is itself part of a broad transformation of Chinese society brought about by Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms and open-door policy: one can trace the "social changes" in Chinese art step by step from the late 70s, when these reforms were first put into practice.

To summarize some basic facts: unofficial art societies and exhibitions appeared in 1979, followed by a nationwide "avant-garde" movement in the middle to late 80s. The 90s saw the emergence of commercial galleries and private museums of experimental art—a radical branch of contemporary art that self-consciously challenges official, academic and popular art with its "cutting-edge" media and controversial subjects. Independent curators and art critics played increasing roles in advocating this art, and the

experimental artists themselves were rapidly internationalized. Some of these artists emigrated and gained fame abroad; others remained local while cultivating global ties. Numerous books and magazines on contemporary art have been published over the past twenty years, and many experimental exhibitions have been staged in all sorts of public and non-public spaces. Clashes between the avant-garde and political authorities have never ceased. But to many observers, two government-sponsored contemporary art exhibitions during the past two years—the 2000 Shanghai Biennale and the 2001 *Living in Time* in Berlin—reflect a new level of normalization of Western-style contemporary art in China.

The close relationship between contemporary Chinese art and the country's sweeping transformation has encouraged the compilation of a macro-history of this art, which interprets artists and artworks against large social and political movements. Taking a textual form and largely reflecting an academic interest, this historical narrative contributes to our knowledge of contemporary art by documenting specific conditions and stimuli for the creation of art in a Communist country, which is nevertheless attracting numerous overseas investors as well as a growing number of international curators. On the other hand, this

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"IF CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART HAS anything to do with social change, such change cannot remain simply an external frame, but must be internalized as intrinsic features and qualities of this art."

otherwise unspoken, find articulation. Wu Hung considers how Chinese art since the late 1970s has been a barometer of the social and economic changes introduced by Deng Xiaoping's reforms and open-door policy, while Lauren Berlant examines why Americans turned to the writing and reading of poetry as a therapeutic response to September 11.

POETRY, POLITICS, AND WAR

LAUREN BERLANT

PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE;
DIRECTOR, THE CENTER FOR
GENDER STUDIES

For many in the U.S. who continue to witness the events surrounding 9-11-01, with its crashing planes, falling bodies, weeping officials, performing celebrities, flag-studded raiments, commemorative CDs, and troubled survivors, the concept of trauma can describe a new boundary, marking a new space of collective and individual experience. In psycho-analytic terms, trauma occurs when an event that happens anywhere within your purview cuts you off from yourself, as though splitting you into selves that seem to live simultaneously in incommensurable historical moments. Post-traumatically, you are now what you could not have been before, and you can never again be what you were, but you can also never stop being the person who was once irreducibly different. After all, the traumatized subject has a sensual memory of a change that is both personal and depersonalizing: trauma enters your body through your senses and your thoughts; in its wake you remain you while also dying a little, and entering a new way of being. Trauma's changes are thus both direct and indirect. This is why a veritable alphabet of adjectives for characterizing the post-traumatic national present has emerged: as an attempt to shape an event whose repercussions are unpredictable and whose dislocations are at once psychological, metropolitan, national, and transna-

tional. This is to say that post-traumatic narrative always fails to contain the overwhelmed feeling that motivates it: we follow the rhythm of trauma rather than orchestrating it like so many maestros.

After the events of 9-11-01, the U.S. press pointed out repeatedly that Americans en masse were "working through" the experience by writing and reading poetry. "Working through" describes the practices people establish in order to come to terms with overpowering events. W. H. Auden's "September 1, 1939," was cited in particular as the most read and resonant piece: "I sit in one of the dives/On Fifty-Second Street/Uncertain and afraid/As the clever hopes expire/Of a low dishonest decade." It sounds here like Auden, evincing a serious lyrical cosmopolitan despair, almost mourns the passing of an era of shallow cleverness. But this is the same Auden who wrote, of Yeats,

... Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness
and her weather still,

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,

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"THIS IS TO SAY THAT POST-TRAUMATIC narrative always fails to contain the overwhelmed feeling that motivates it: we follow the rhythm of trauma rather than orchestrating it like so many maestros."

WU — Continued from page 12

macro-narrative has little impact on these curators, who rarely select artists and works based on a textbook, but are guided, often spontaneously and intuitively, by what they find new and compelling in visual forms.

We must realize that such spontaneity and intuition, though alien to many academic art historians, play crucial roles in advancing contemporary art by leading to the discovery of new styles and promoting new trends. For example, this is how a European curator selected as many as twenty young experimental Chinese artists for the 1999 Venice Biennale, more than the combined number of American and Italian participants. More generally, visual spontaneity underscores any exhibition of experimental art:



PROFESSOR WU HUNG

is the author of *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art* (1989), *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* (1995), and *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (1996). He has curated many exhibits of Chinese art, including *Transience: Chinese Experimental Art at the End of the Twentieth Century* (1999) and *Exhibiting Experimental Art in China* (2000).



Above: Rong Rong, *Untitled No. 1b*, 1996–1997, black and white photograph, 20" x 24". Right: *Her Blue-Moon Piano*. © 2001 by Jill Casid & María DeGuzmán, SPIR: Conceptual Photography (<http://www.home.earthlink.net/~mddeguzman>).

while the supposed novelty of such exhibitions defies historical determinism, their stimulating and often challenging display generates instantaneous response. An experimental art exhibition thus always poses unanswered questions, but also confines the viewers' responses to the display itself. (An excessive textual framing of a contemporary art exhibition often effectively kills the exhibition by transferring authority from image to word.) From this approach, if contemporary Chinese art has anything to do with social change, such change cannot remain simply an external frame, but must be internalized as intrinsic features and qualities of this art. Since I have primarily been conducting research on contemporary Chinese art through curatorial projects, I have been advocating this image-based approach in relating this art to social change. This type of interpretation discards the overall framework of a macro-history, but forges micro-narratives that

Both artists are stimulated by the large-scale demolitions that have become part of normal life in Beijing and other Chinese cities since the early 90s. Following China's "economic miracle," investment poured into the country from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the West. Thousands and thousands of old houses have been destroyed to make room for glittering hotels and shopping malls. Although demolition is a regular feature of any metropolis in the world, the enormity of the destruction that China has experienced in recent years has had profound psychological impact on city residents and artists. In theory, demolition is a condition for a city's renewal; in actuality, large-scale demolitions have brought about a growing alienation between the city and its residents: they no longer belong to one another. Works by Rong Rong and Zhan Wang do not represent demolition as a specific event, but rather register a suspended temporality between the past and the future, capturing

the anxiety and silence adrift in these modern urban ruins.

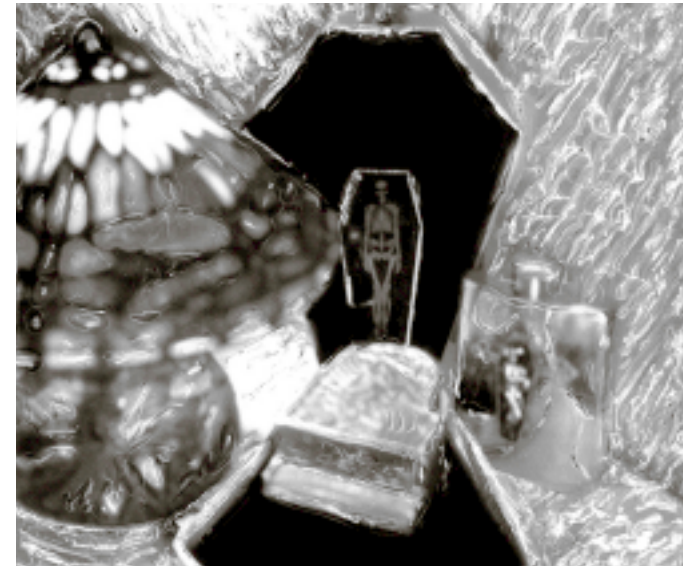
Urban development pushes experimental artists farther and farther to a city's peripheries. Although such movement is again a common experience of struggling artists around the world, the specificity of a particular place inspires specific works. Some of the most compelling performance projects in contemporary Chinese art were produced in the so-called Chinese East Village, a tumbledown residential district on Beijing's east fringe. From 1993 to 1994, a group of immigrant artists from the provinces founded their community there. They were attracted to this garbage-filled place by its cheap housing as well as its ugliness, and conceived moving into the Village as a form of voluntary self-exile. Deriving inspiration from the Village's "hellishness" in contrast to

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BERLANT — Continued from page 13

Raw towns that we believe and die in;
it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.
("In Memory of W. B. Yeats")

Art, a way of happening, a mouth: a thing through which the unofficial flows and spaces of history speak. After 9-11, poems were placed all over the landscape near Ground Zero; the web makes new archives of post-traumatic poesis written by the famous and anonymous. Additionally, almost immediately thereafter, New York galleries opened exhibitions of professional and amateur photographs witnessing the numbered events—9-11, Ground Zero—and the responses radiating from them, like circles of water from a dropped stone.



PROFESSOR LAUREN BERLANT

is the author of *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life* (1991) and *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (1997). She has also edited *Intimacy* (1998), a special issue of *Critical Inquiry*, and, with Lisa Duggan, *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the Public Interest* (2001).



What does it mean that these responses took the form of art rather than, say, of opinion—a letter to the editor, a public protest? What kinds of experience does art provide for a public overwhelmed by news genres? How does the relatively contained space of the lyric mirror back post-traumatic sublimity? How does it matter that the news and the artwork may have similar aims, to change people and the world by changing emotions about the world? How are we trained to move toward art's eloquence to mark what seems beyond words? Could the poem that witnesses collective or personal trauma now constitute mainly, as Adorno has suggested in another context, a form of pseudo-depth or pseudo-agency? In other words, when does turning to poetry substitute for turning to politics, as opposed to being a way of engaging its scenes?

Another definition of trauma locates it not in an event, but in an environment. In this model

what makes something traumatic is that no particular event can be said to have "caused" the post-traumatic sense of personal and social negation that characterizes many individuals' sense of wounding. People on the bottom of racial, class, gendered, religious, ethnic, and regional hierarchies, for example, are usually born into a world that takes for granted, more or less, their devaluation. In this sense environmental trauma is not about surprise, the way event trauma is: it is about the experience of structural subordination, a condition that produces a sense of ongoing vulnerability or powerlessness. People who come into being under these conditions tend to see violence as permeating potentially every space and social relation. Environmental trauma points thus toward ordinary relations of identity, power, and authority.

shaped subjectivity even as they may also speak to the majority outsider public. In these forms there is a different aesthetic than that of event-related trauma. More hardwired to everyday modes and spaces, an aesthetic of ordinary violence is more likely to involve narrative forms that witness problems of survival in the time of *living on*.

At issue is the relation between the particular event that has a date and that can be marked by clocks and on maps, and the global situation that requires different numbers. Let's call this The Actuarial Imaginary. *X* number dead, *x* number of planes, *x* amount insurance companies will have to pay out to *x* claimants, *x* number of dollars the Congress gave to the airline industry, *x* number of workers laid off by that industry, *x* number of dollars the administration has earmarked for corporate tax relief, *x* amount the economy's

productivity plummeted, *x* degree of stock market flux, *x* percentage cuts in the interest rate, *x* numbers of citizens killed in Afghanistan, *x* number of people watching the news on *y* and *z* cable venue.

It is easy for intellectuals and other skeptics to make light of phrases we see on the news, like "America's lost innocence," just as it is easy for feminists to curl the collective lip at seeing, once again, the United States characterized as virgin soil that breeds innocent people who must be surprised, all the time, by the violence of bad patriarchal uncivilized men. We have heard this all before: these are clichés of imperialism. In this case soft patriarchy in the U.S. looks liberating, practically nonexistent, compared to what is shown to us of the Taliban. Clichés reveal which opinions have had the privilege of being repeated into truths. This is why it matters what we say even or especially when we speak conventionally,

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A N O T H E R

chicago school

NOW IN ITS FOURTH YEAR as a Ph.D.-granting program, the Committee on Cinema and Media Studies (CMS) has witnessed continual growth in student and faculty activity. Regular events such as reading groups, film series, and conferences organized in the past few years have fostered a formidable intellectual environment for the creation of original work in the field. One particularly rich area of inquiry in the University of Chicago community is the study of spectatorship in relation to the culture of modernity out of which cinema emerged—a concern that has become one of the signatures of cinema scholarship at Chicago. Tom Gunning, Professor of Art History and in the Committee on Cinema and Media Studies, was one of the first to balance a concern with cinema's narrative dimensions with a concern for its appeal to spectators. In his influential essay, "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," Gunning asserts that "[e]very change in film history implies a change in its address to the spectator, and each period constructs its spectator in a new way."

Spectatorship is also a major concern in the work of Miriam Hansen, the Ferdinand Schevill Distinguished Service Professor in the Humanities and founding chair of CMS. In her book *Babel and Babylon*, she has traced the development of the relations between film and spectator in terms of filmic address and the actual conditions of reception, from cinema's early years in five-cent theaters to the emergence of what is known both inside and outside of film studies as "classical Hollywood." Her most recent work approaches these issues through the notion of film as "vernacular modernism"—a con-

cept that will be further explored in an upcoming international symposium sponsored by the Committee on Cinema and Media Studies (see insert below). "Vernacular modernism" implies a broader understanding of modernist aesthetics—one that does not limit itself to a lineage of artistic movements such as Cubism or Futurism but rather includes a whole range of artistic and cultural practices that emerged with modernization and have shaped the everyday sensory experience of modernity—such as fashion, design, advertising, architecture, and the photographic media. As movie-going in growing urban areas around the globe was a central facet of this experience, the study of film reception provides a key to understanding the development of modernism in this sense.

Hansen uses the concept of vernacular modernism to rework the notion of classical cinema which governed Hollywood production from roughly the late teens to 1960. The more technical definitions aside, the system of classical Hollywood filmmaking was defined by the imperative of telling a story and creating the impression of a closed fictional world. The dominance of this system worldwide has been a key topic in academic film studies since the late 1960s. What Hansen questions is the characterization of cinema as simply the most "natural" way of engaging the viewer's attention, a universal and timeless mode of telling stories. Instead, she argues that many Hollywood films offered their audience an aesthetic horizon that helped them recognize and negotiate the historical experience of modernization. It is this ability—above and beyond the well-known economic and political pressures—which enabled Hollywood to dominate the world market, though not everywhere at the same time and in the same way. "If classical Hollywood cinema suc-

ceeded as an international modernist idiom on a mass basis," Hansen argues, "it did so not because of its universal narrative form but because it meant different things to different people and publics, both home and abroad." She suggests that since at home Hollywood had to forge a rather robust idiom to appeal to diverse ethnic constituencies in the domestic market, even as it practiced racial exclusion, it offered a greater translatability to diverse publics abroad than other national film industries. The study of the varied ways in which diverse groups of spectators make sense of particular stars, theater spaces, and film genres shows how deceptive the monolithic conception of classical cinema can be.

Jacqueline Stewart, Assistant Professor in the Department of English and in the Committee on Cinema and Media Studies, extends this inquiry to the historical and theoretical questions of African-American



spectatorship. In her work, Stewart combines careful historical research on the physical conditions of film reception with an analysis of what Yuri Tsivian, Professor in the Department of Art History and in the Committee on Cinema and Media Studies, calls the "cultural reception" of cinema—those active reflections on film viewing by cultural figures of the time. Since the Great Migration of 1916–19, in which large numbers of African-Americans migrated from rural Southern towns to Northern urban centers, coincides with the onset of the classical Hollywood system, Stewart's work depends heavily on the nuanced notion of the classical described above. In a forthcoming article in *Critical Inquiry*, Stewart states: "I read black spectatorship as the creation of literal and symbolic spaces in which African Americans reconstructed their individual and collective identities in response to the classical system, and in the wake of migration's fragmenting effect." Her book-length study of this topic entitled *Migrating to the Movies: The Making of Black Urban Film Culture, 1893–1920* will soon be published by University of California Press. □

Still from the film,
Lonesome (Paul Fejos, 1928)

C O N F E R E N C E

CINEMA AS VERNACULAR MODERNISM

MAY 17–18, 2002

The Committee on Cinema and Media Studies will convene a conference on May 17–18, 2002 on the notion of cinema as "vernacular modernism," a concept recently proposed by Professor Miriam Hansen (see main article). Conference participants will examine the implications and usefulness of this concept in dealing with examples from both American cinema and various cinemas around the globe.

The conference will open on Friday, May 17, with a screening

of *Lonesome* (Paul Fejos, 1928) at 6 pm at Max Palevsky Cinema. In this stunningly photographed romance, two people find and lose one another on Coney Island only to discover that they had been living in the same boarding house all along. Director Fejos brings to life the sites of work, love, and leisure in the modern city.

More information on the conference may be obtained by contacting the Committee on Cinema and Media Studies at cine-media@uchicago.edu or by phone at 773/834-1077.



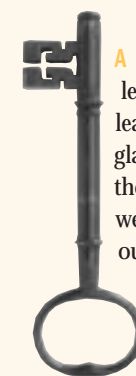
SPEAKERS AND DISCUSSANTS INCLUDE

Dudley Andrew, Yale
Edward Dimendberg, Michigan
Rosalind Morris, Columbia
Laura Mulvey, Birbeck College, London
Tejaswini Niranjana, Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore, India
James Schamus, Columbia
Lesley Stern, UCSD
Jacqueline Stewart, Chicago
Zhang Zhen, NYU



underworlds

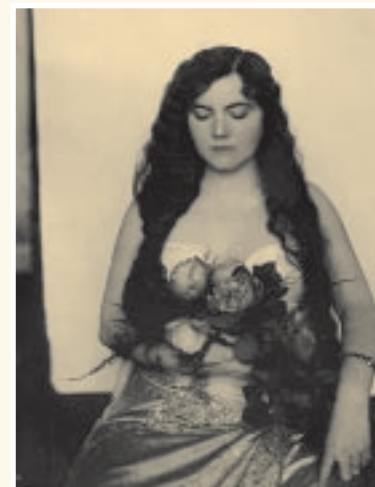
THE SECRET LIVES OF PHOTOGRAPHS



A WOMAN—her negligee slipped off her left shoulder, her legs encased in boldly striped stockings—sits on a chair, leaning enough on a nearby table to angle her glance toward a glass of rye whiskey she holds up in her right hand, almost as though she were about to lead a toast, almost as though she were making a connoisseur's assessment. This image stares out from the pages of the *New York Times Magazine*, reproduced for an article on a recent exhibition of E. J. Bellocq's photography at New York's Julie Saul Gallery. Bellocq's "Storyville Portraits" consist of photographs that he took of prostitutes in New Orleans in the early twentieth century. In

discussing these photographs, the reporter for the *Times* incorporates Bellocq's work into a history of the prostitute's appearance in art beginning with Manet's casting of a recognizable courtesan as a Titianesque Venus. But this proposed history also insists on the naturalness of the images (and, by extension, the transparency of the photographic medium).

For **Emily Shelton**, a graduate student in the Department of English Language and Literature, such accounts of these images are blind to the their "secret lives." Bellocq's "Storyville Portraits"



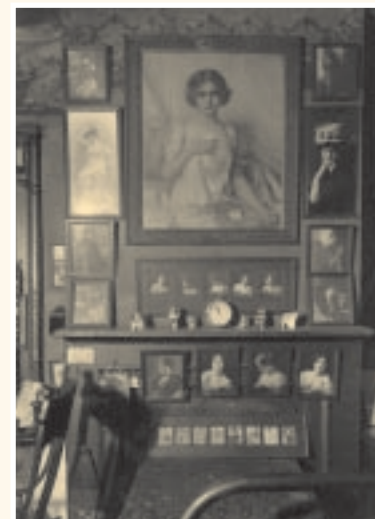
fetishes transgress privately and criminal photographs transgress publicly.

Shelton was awarded a Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation Dissertation Fellowship, enabling her to perform the kind of empirical, archival work that, in the words of Berlant, make the project "persuasive and memorable." Shelton investigates three case studies from the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Victorian barrister and minor poet Arthur Munby collected photographs of working women, most notably his maid-servant and lover, Hannah Cullwick. Victorian philanthropist Dr. Thomas J. Barnardo maintained a photographic studio at the heart of his charity empire of mission homes for street urchins. Finally, there is the aforementioned Bellocq. "Who Framed Hannah Cullwick?: Authenticity and Anxiety in the Arthur Munby Archive," the chapter that resulted from Shelton's research at Cambridge University, was awarded the Center for Gender Studies' Ruth Murray Essay Prize in 2000.

Elaine Hadley, Associate Professor of English, notes that, in addition to the uniqueness of the archive and the originality of the ideas, Shelton's work is

{ These images reorganize what it means to **LIVE**, to desire, to have social value, producing personhood that is endangered and **DANGEROUS**... }

—found unlabelled and defaced many years after his death—are examples of images that come to renovate personhood through an interplay between the developing technology of the camera and the coming into visibility of "low" life. These images reorganize what it means to live, to desire, to have social value, producing a personhood that is endangered and dangerous, existing where the boundaries between public and private are flexible and desirably ambivalent. In Shelton's reading, social and visual relations to the photographic image are animated by a "melancholy realism" which, while born at the conjunction of photography's origins and the underground's visual accessibility, finds further articulation in such contemporary genres as "true crime." According to Lauren Berlant, Professor of English Language and Literature, Shelton's work "reconceives the history and conventions of sensationalist discourse in the public sphere" by asking what the norms are against which such things as



marked by an artfulness of expression that recalls the critical writing of a poet-critic like Susan Stewart. It will not come as a surprise that Shelton has also recently completed her first novel, *Memphis*. *Memphis* is based on a true crime story of three socially outcast adolescents from West Memphis, Arkansas, who were convicted of murdering three seven-year-old boys as part of a Satanic cult ritual in a wooded area bordering Interstate 55, known as the Robin Hood Hills. While researching the novel, Shelton made several trips to Arkansas to attend

court proceedings, conduct interviews (including several with Damien Echols, the central defendant who now sits on Death Row), and examine case files. She has already begun another novel, *Alice Christie*, about an inventor's daughter who disappears in Battle Creek, Michigan in 1896 and the two young women who surface in Detroit fifteen years later claiming to be Alice. □

FOR THE UNCOUPLED, Valentine's Day is perhaps rivaled only by New Year's Eve as the most loathed day on the calendar. Although this year has seen a mild winter in Chicago, the over-cast grayness amplifies the holiday's oppressive effects. Confusing expressions of love with exchanges in material goods (boxed candy, stuffed monkeys with red satin capes, Mylar balloons with trite announcements emblazoned on their surfaces), the holiday seems a fitting time to launch a discussion of Molière's *The Miser* (1668), whose eponymous character often confuses love and money.

The appropriateness of this discussion on this day is not lost on Heidi Coleman, Lecturer in the College and the new Director of University

Theater, who begins the class with a short anecdote about her own Valentine's woes. She then steers the conversation to a different kind of love, the love between family members, through an exercise that requires the class participants to share an image or impression that evokes home. Sitting in a circle in the black-walled, black-floored design lab behind the stage of the third-floor theater in the Reynolds Club, the students return a barrage of staccato images: *hair; entropy; cigarette smoke; Louie the dog*. Nodding at the replies, Coleman prods her students toward further specificity: *Is the cigarette smoke stale or fresh? Is it from Marlboro Lights or Parliaments?* The next round of replies takes up her challenge: *peeled grapefruit on the kitchen table; dirty dishes in the*

sink dripping tepid water; the sound of everyone reading and me wanting to talk. For Coleman, such particular images bridge that crucial gap between the narrative urge to tell a story and the epistemological longing to know what is being represented.

These brief examples open into a consideration of the family, which is germane not only to the day's theatrical text but also to the critical text that has been assigned, Claude Levi-Strauss's *The View from Afar*. In chapters on family, marriage, and kinship, Levi-Strauss explores how those categories are historically, economically, and geographically contingent, never "natural" in themselves but always occupying a core position in the structure of a given society. Students then

consider the possible range of family formations and how those might be represented in their particularity. Conversely, they consider what specific images allow us to know about a given family. Moving between these two poles of examination is an experience familiar to participants in "Text and Performance," a class that continually asks how critical analysis can be a performative practice and how performance can serve as a critical endeavor.

By problematizing and defamiliarizing the family, the discussion prepares the students for staging scenes from *The Miser*. Molière's play presents the family in vexed terms: blood ties fail to produce the expected familial feeling while economic considerations and other common interests do. The scenes are rarely straight renditions of text. Instead, true to the course's view of performance as an intellectual act, students put pressure on the text by adapting it to new situations and locales in ways that exceed mere transposition. Translation is often associated with loss and a movement away from original intentions and meanings. But, as the French thinker Michel de Certeau noted, translation also "smuggles in a thousand inventions" which transform the work "into a new creation." Theater, then, becomes an experimental playground for working out ideas with other people, an association which itself resembles a family.

The last of the day's scenes is based on a moment in Act Four when Cléante, son of the miser Harpagon, proclaims his love for Marianne, whom Harpagon plans to marry (for reasons, of course, more avaricious than romantic). As the audience groups together at the side of the room (a fact not unimportant since the expectations and orientation of the audience will figure largely in the post-scene analysis), the players quickly assemble the stage, consisting of a single table, illuminated by one light. The stark table with its single ominous light elicits a number of possible scenarios.

Is this the table of a judge weighing evidence and preparing a verdict? Is it a medical examination room where some decision on a patient's health is about to be made? Is it a

simple kitchen table that will be the locus of some catastrophe?

The entrance of a black-jacketed, fedora-hatted figure slowly petting a cat begins to answer the question. With almost magisterial privilege, the figure sits behind the table and motions to the others to enter. These figures, crowned in green fedoras (perhaps coloring the scene in avarice's hues?), escort a young man who takes a seat in front of the seated figure. The seated figure speaks in a gravelly voice not unlike Marlon Brando's Don Corleone, informing us where we are: in the world of the mafia, another family structure superimposed upon the array of

that the energy and enthusiasm that emerge in Coleman's classroom are matched by "an agility that combines frenetic theatrical invention with an intense intellectual commitment that is quintessentially U of C."

In her short time at the University, Coleman has sustained the successes of her predecessor, longtime University Theater Director Curt Columbus, and has introduced a number of her own innovations. One initiative that Coleman brings to UT this year is the Friday Afternoon Lab Series in which members of the University community meet with guest artists in a workshop environment to discuss such things as

Theater, then, becomes an experimental playground
for working out ideas with other people,
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ANALYZING PERFORMANCE, PERFORMING ANALYSIS

in the theater

OF THE CLASSROOM



kinship structures already at play in Molière. The Godfather, seated and directing the action, becomes the figure through which the scene portrays the Miser's absolute authority and the stakes of his authority. The cat that he compulsively pets may at first project the Godfather/Miser as a figure of endearment, but the cat's increasingly apparent taxidermized state points to the menace of the Miser's avarice (in the play, he steals oats from his horses). When the Godfather's son finally proclaims, "I have loved her since the day I saw her. I was intending just now to ask your permission to marry her," the figures with green fedoras cast confetti into the air and begin to dance around the lovelorn Cléante. Love momentarily conquers all but the Miser. In the background, Frank Sinatra's "That's Amore" is heard, as the actor playing Cléante breaks into enthusiastic song himself. It's a beautiful, breath-taking moment, one that seems to be a special provenance of the theater classroom. Licensed by the text and scene, students are willing to take risks and enter into experience in a way that satisfies all who witness it.

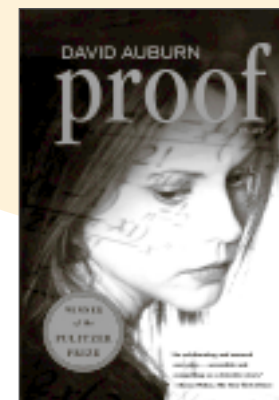
The same excitement surrounds Coleman, which is apparent in the regard of both her students and colleagues. Students consistently laud the way her pedagogy invites participation and unleashes that elusive, and essential, quality of aliveness. David Levin, Associate Professor of Germanic Studies and chair of the search committee that brought Coleman to her position as the new University Theater Director, notes

lighting, stage combat, and action dramaturgy. Among the artists brought to campus thus far are Andre Pluess (AB '96), the award-winning sound designer for the Court Theatre, who was recently featured in *American Theatre*, and Jim Lasko, puppeteer and Artistic Director of the Redmoon Theater. Additionally, Coleman is working to revamp the School Partnership Program, which hires UT students to teach drama in area schools; expanding course offerings to include such things as stage combat and ensemble acting; overseeing the expansion of UT physical spaces as a new offsite scenic lab has become available as well as spaces in the newly renovated Bartlett Dining Commons (formerly Bartlett Gymnasium); and organizing conferences on issues related to performance and performance studies both within and beyond the University.

With over 400 students participating, University Theater is by far the largest student organization on campus. If University Theater has sometimes functioned as something of a haven from the intellectual pursuits of the University, Coleman's presence, as Levin further notes, demonstrates the compatibility of a burgeoning academic interest in performance (perhaps best signaled by the recent formation of an interdivisional faculty Committee on Theater and Performance Studies) with the autonomy and vibrancy of a theater that continues to be entirely student-run. □



SET AT THE U OF C, *PROOF* — the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play by alumnus David Auburn (AB '91)—is a drama about genius, madness and, growing between these two states of mind, love. Catherine is a young woman who has devoted her life to her ailing mathematician father and who may have inherited both his madness and his brilliance, leading her sister and an unexpected suitor on a search for the truth behind a mysterious mathematical proof. ... In February, a group of alumni gathered to see the play at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. One of them was Gerald M. Kowarsky (AB '71, AM '72, Ph.D. '83), who writes theater reviews for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and co-hosts a theater review program on St. Louis cable television.



BY GERALD M. KOWARSKY

For University of Chicago alumni, the appeal of *Proof* goes beyond the play's wide acclaim. The author, David Auburn, graduated from the College with a concentration in English. The action takes place in Hyde Park, and the characters are from the University community: a professor, a graduate student, faculty children, and (heard offstage but not seen) a boisterous band of physicists. Alumni can experience nostalgia and pride in *Proof*'s Chicago connections along with the play's other attractions.

The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis was one of the first regional theaters to stage *Proof*, which opened in New York two years ago and at this writing is still on Broadway and on national tour. I saw the St. Louis production twice: first during its opening weekend for a cable television review, then later in the run at a University of Chicago alumni event. I found the play even more satisfying the second time.

Some of my extra enjoyment came from being part of the alumni group. A crack about an infinite Ph.D. program drew a knowing response from the audience with the U of C contingent, and it was fun to speculate with other former Hyde Parkers about the street on which the house in the play might be located.

The play itself, however, produced most of my additional satisfaction. The central question in a first viewing of *Proof* concerns the authorship of a brilliant mathematical proof discovered in the home of a revered University of Chicago professor who began a long mental decline in his mid-20s. Is the proof the work of the professor himself or his daughter, Catherine, who dropped out of college to live with her father when his mental illness required him to have a full-time caregiver?

Suspense builds around other questions, too. Is Catherine showing signs of her father's instability now that she has reached the age at which his symptoms began to appear? Will Catherine succumb to pressure from her older sister, Claire, to move to New York, where Claire can keep tabs on Catherine's mental condition? Will a bond grow between Catherine and Hal, a student of her father's who has been going through the professor's notebooks?

An indication of *Proof*'s stature is that knowledge of the outcome enriches the play instead of spoiling it. In a second viewing, when the authorship of the proof and other questions are no longer at issue, one can focus on how the construction of the play produces more than just suspense. *Proof* works as a mystery, but

it also rewards close attention to the development of Catherine's relationships with the other three characters. For example, Catherine's fascination with the correspondence between two of her mathematical idols, Sophie Germain and Carl Friedrich Gauss, has more bearing on her choices than one might recognize at first.

The St. Louis production, directed by Susan V. Booth, was a distinguished effort. Susan Pourfar (Catherine) and Brik Berkes (Hal) were believable as young academics whose intellects do not help them deal with matters of the heart. William Bogert's performance as Catherine's father was very well attuned to his different states of mind. Rhoda Griffis's portrayal of Claire, the outsider, impressed me more in my second viewing, when it was easier to understand a character who tries to manipulate someone so different from herself.

The set by Todd Rosenthal meticulously recreated the back of a brick house that might be found near the University. Theater companies do not need the resources for such an elaborate scenic design, however, to stage *Proof* successfully. The human story in the play will move audiences for many years to come in productions by companies at all levels. □

TEACHER WRITER CHICAGOAN

What has it meant to Richard Stern to be a teacher? His answer is a story told with his usual passion, brevity, and thoughtfulness. He once taught first- through fifth-grade reading and arithmetic in Germany in the U. S. Army's Troop Information and Education program. His students ranged in age from eighteen to fifty, including "a sergeant, no, a corporal, gray-haired." During one class, he recited Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life": "Tell me not in mournful numbers, / Life is but an empty dream!" The men wept. In the telling,

Stern...shares that his "joy" as a writer is in the ability to speak oneself, "to register what is best in you," which sometimes includes, "facing up to what is the worst of you."

richard stern

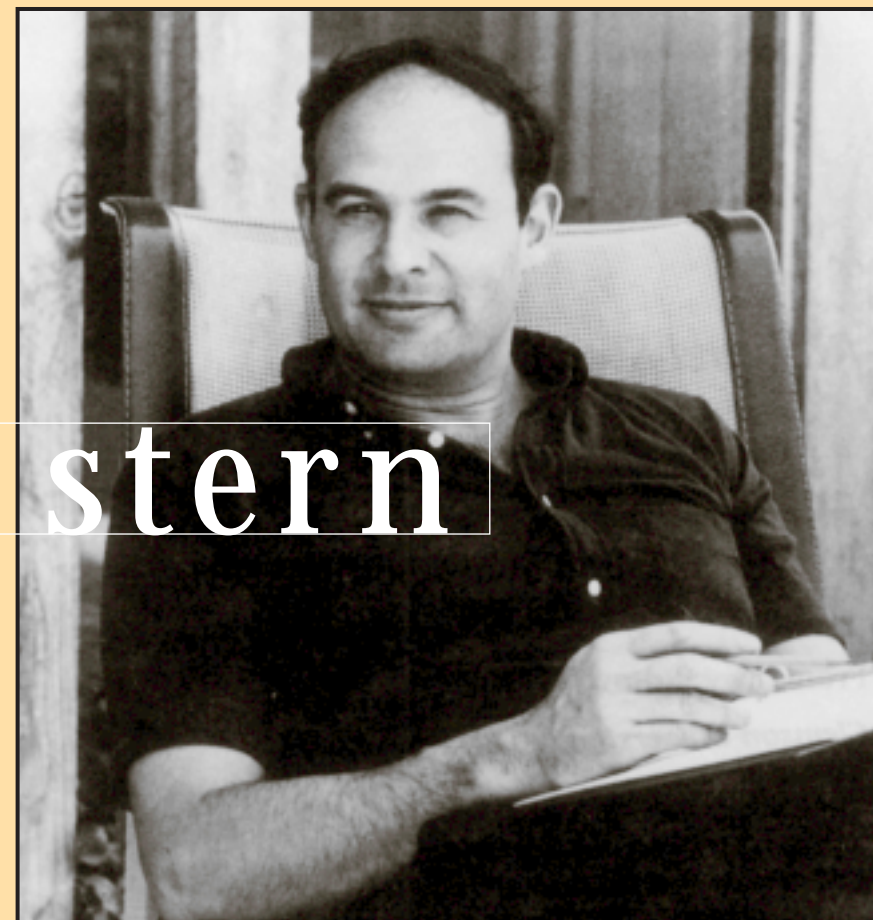
the story seemed to crystallize the mastery of storytelling and the passion for teaching that marked Stern's presence and contributions as an English professor for forty-six years at the University of Chicago.

Richard Stern has had a long and distinguished career. After earning a B.A. from the University of North Carolina (1947), an M.A. from Harvard (1949) and a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa (1954), Stern took his first American teaching position at Connecticut College. Before that, he had taught at the University of Heidelberg and the Collège Jules Ferry in France. In 1955, Stern began teaching at the University of Chicago with responsibilities both in the Committee on General Studies in the Humanities and the Department of English Language and Literature. Over the years, Stern has been a prolific and well-respected writer, a chairman of the faculty committee of the *Chicago Review*, and, of course, an educator teaching writing as well as courses on the novel, drama, and contemporary criticism both on campus and abroad. He has brought many notable authors to interact with students and faculty on the University

of Chicago's campus including Ralph Ellison, Norman Mailer, and Flannery O'Connor. At the time of his retirement on January 1, 2002, Richard Stern held the title of Helen A. Regenstien Professor of English and of the Humanities.

What constantly strikes me, as a former student of his, is that Richard Stern represents a legacy not just in the literary influences of his writing—figures such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, the early F. Scott

cal boundaries. He embodies what he loves most about Chicago, this "brutal yet gorgeous" city with its rich and diverse ethnic communities: the interdependence and interconnection of people and institutions on all levels, from politics to the neighborhoods to the university. This is a quality that he shares freely as a teacher, inspiring his students, especially his writing students, to see themselves as a valuable and contributing part of this legacy.



Fitzgerald—but also in the sheer list of distinguished writers that Stern has communicated with over his career. I recall a reception for first-year Ph.D. students, including myself, in the English Department. We were privileged to hear Stern's tale of his meeting with Pound in Venice and the circumstances of his receiving a bust of Pound, which now occupies a corner of the English Department's lounge. In the midst of my eagerness to begin the intellectual exchanges that characterize the University of Chicago experience, Stern's presence reminded me of how these exist alongside many other meaningful exchanges that extend beyond the university's geographi-

The question is, finally: what has it meant to Richard Stern to be a writer? His answer is a thoughtful reflection on writing as it applies to living. He shares that his "joy" as a writer is in the ability to speak oneself, "to register what is best in you," which sometimes includes, "facing up to what is the worst of you." If you're true to this requirement, he suggests, you will have done all right as a writer. Yet also, I suspect, one would have lived a well-examined life.

Richard Stern continues to be active in retirement. He is currently working on a novel, giving occasional talks, and anticipating the publication of a new book, *What Is What Was*. □

BY ROSIE BANKS
Ph.D. Student, Department of English Language and Literature

RECENT JOB PLACEMENTS FOR HUMANITIES GRADUATES Looking for other Chicago alumni at your institution or in your area? Curious about where last year’s class of humanities graduates got their jobs? Here is a list of recent graduates, with thesis or dissertation titles and job titles, who have accepted full-time employment that exercises their graduate training.

onward and upward

DEPARTMENT OF
ART HISTORY

MARIAN BLEEKE
“Situating Sheela-na-gigs: The Female Body and Social Significance in Romanesque Sculpture.” Assistant Professor, Beloit College.

KAREN CARTER
“L’âge de l’affiche: The Reception, Display, and Collection of Illustrated Posters in Fin-de-Siècle Paris.” Assistant Professor, Miyazaki International College (Japan).

LISA DEAM
“Mapping the Past: *The Fleur des Histoires* (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS. 9231–9232) in the Context of Fifteenth-Century Burgundian Historiography.” Lily Postdoctoral Fellowship, Valparaiso University.

REBECCA DEROO
“Private Objects, Public Institutions: French Art and the Reinvention of the Museum 1968–1978.” Assistant Professor, Washington University.

KATHERINE HASKINS
“Good Impressions of Good Things: The Art Journal Print and the Craft of Connecting in Mid-Victorian Britain, 1850–1880.” Director, Arts Library, Yale University.

LISA MEYEROWITZ
“Exhibiting Equality: Black-Run Museums and Galleries in 1970s New York.” Special Projects Editor, Publications Department, the Art Institute of Chicago.

DEPARTMENT OF
CLASSICAL LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURES

DANIEL RICHTER
“Ethnography, Archaism, and Identity in the Early Roman Empire.” Visiting Assistant Professor, Princeton University.

DEPARTMENT OF
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

HÜLYA ADAK
“Intersubjectivity: Halide Edib or the ‘Ottoman/Turkish (Women)’ as the Subject of Knowledge.” Assistant Professor, Sabancı University, Istanbul.

STEFANI BROOKE ENGELSTEIN
“Organs of Meeting: The ‘Natural’ Human Body in Literature and Science of the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.” Assistant Professor, University of Missouri, Columbia.

MARC FALKENBERG
“The Poetical Uncanny: A Study of Early Modern Fantastic Fiction.” Teacher, Roberto Clemente High School.

DANIEL H. FOSTER
“The Hellenization of Politics: Richard Wagner’s *Ring* Cycle and the Greeks.” Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of Pennsylvania.

KAMILA KINYON-KUCHAR
“Models of Exile: Koestler, Nabokov, Kundera.” Lecturer, Western Michigan University.

CYNTHIA KLESTINEC
“Theatrical Dissections and Dancing Cadavers: Andreas Vesalius and Sixteenth-Century Popular Culture.” Postdoctoral Fellowship, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Berlin).

NICOLE LASSAHN
“‘*Songes . . . qui ne sont nie mençoncier*’: Historical Content and Fictional Truth in Dream Poetry from the Time of the Hundred Years War.” Assistant Director, University Writing Programs, University of Chicago.

MARCOS NATALI
“The Politics of Nostalgia: An Essay on Ways of Relating to the Past.” Postdoctoral Fellowship and Visiting Assistant Professor, University of São Paulo (Brazil).

FRANCISCO ORTEGA
“The Anxieties of Trauma: Representations of Disaster in Colonial and Contemporary Latin America.” Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE

SAMUEL BAKER
“Written on the Water: British Romanticism and the Culture of Maritime Empire.” Assistant Professor, University of Texas, Austin.

COLLEEN BOGGS
“The American Translation.” Assistant Professor, Dartmouth College.

KAVITA DAIYA
“Violent Belongings: Nationalism, Gender, and Postcolonial Citizenship.” Assistant Professor, George Washington University.

JOSEPH DIMURO
“The 1893 Ferris Wheel and the Cultural Politics of National Identity.” Lecturer, University of California, Los Angeles.

BRIAN FAGEL
“Spirit Lessons: Post-Nuclear American Fiction and the Spirituality of Survival.” Consultant, The Boston Consulting Group.

LEE GARVER
“Lost Politics: The New Age and the Edwardian Socialist Roots of British Modernism.” Assistant Professor, Butler University.

NOEL JACKSON
“Sensation: British Romanticism, Human Science, and the Invention of the Aesthetic.” Assistant Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

MICHELLE JENSEN
“Imposture and Cultural Appropriation in Eighteenth-Century British Narrative, 1663–1800.” Lecturer, University of Chicago.

HILARY JUSTICE
“The Necessary Danger: Hemingway and the Problem of Authorship.” Assistant Professor, Illinois State University.

JONATHAN SACHS
“Antique Modernity: Romanticism, Republicanism, and the Matter of Rome.” Harper-Schmidt Fellow, Collegiate Assistant Professor, University of Chicago.

FREDERICK WHITING
“Monstrous Desires: Psychopathy and Subjectivity in Cold War America.” Assistant Professor, University of Alabama.

COMMITTEE ON THE
HISTORY OF CULTURE

PO-KAN CHOU
“The Translation of *The Dazhidulun*: Buddhist Evolution in China in the Early Fifth Century.” Associate Professor, National Taiwan University.

CHRISTOPHER I. LEHRICH
“Hermetic Hermeneutics: Language, Magic, and Power in Cornelius Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia*.” Lecturer, Boston University.

RICHARD SCHMITT
“The Form of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* with a New Translation of *Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*.” Project Manager, NSIT, University of Chicago.

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

LYNN HOOKER
“Modernism Meets Nationalism: Béla Bartók and the Musical Life of Pre-World-War-I Hungary.” Assistant Professor, University of Richmond.

BERNARDO ILLARI
“Polychoral Culture: Cathedral Music in La Plata (Bolivia), 1680–1730.” Assistant Professor, University of North Texas.

HILARY PORISS
“Artistic License: Aria Interpolation and the Italian Operatic World, 1815–1850.” Society of Fellows, Columbia University. Assistant Professor, University of Cincinnati.

SUZANNE SORKIN
“Night Watch.” Visiting Assistant Professor, Vassar College.

RICHARD SUTHERLAND
“ . . . not the songs of light.” Visiting Assistant Professor, St. Lawrence University.

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR
EASTERN LANGUAGES AND
CIVILIZATIONS

ANNE FALBY BROADBRIDGE
“Mamluk Ideological and Diplomatic Relations with Mongols and Turkic Rulers of the Near East and Central Asia (656–807/1260–1405).” Assistant Professor, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

PAUL LINCOLN HECK
“Qudama b. Jafar (d. 337/948) and his Kitab al-Kharaj wa-sina’ at al-kitaba: Administrative Contributions to Knowledge.” Society of Fellows, Princeton University.

ANNIE HIGGINS
“The Qur’anic Exchange of the Self in the Poetry of Shurat (Kharaji) Political Identity 37–132/ 657–750 AD.” Lecturer, University of Illinois, Chicago.

JOSHUA DAVID HOLO
“An Economic History of the Jews in Byzantium from the Eve of the Arab Conquest to the Fourth Crusade.” Assistant Professor, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley.

ALI J. HUSAIN
“A Developmental Analysis of Depictions of the Events of Karbala in Early Islamic History.” Lecturer, Loyola University, Chicago.

FUMI KARAHASHI
“Sumerian Compound Verbs with Body Part Terms.” Visiting Instructor, University of Chicago.

CLEMENS DANIEL REICHEL
“Political Changes and Cultural Continuity in the Palace of the Rulers at Eshnunna (Tell Asmar) from the Ur III Period to the Isin Larsa Period.” Lecturer, University of Chicago; Research Associate, Oriental Institute.

DEPARTMENT OF
ROMANCE LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURES

NATALIE HESTER
“Traveling for Writing’s Sake: Seventeenth-Century Italian Tourists and Their Narratives.” Assistant Professor, University of Oregon.

DEPARTMENT OF
SLAVIC LANGUAGES
AND LITERATURES

AMANDA EWINGTON
“A Voltaire for Russia?: Alexander Petrovich Sumarokov’s Journey from Poet-Critic to Russian Philosophe.” Assistant Professor, Davidson College.

DEPARTMENT OF
SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES
AND CIVILIZATIONS

SHANTANU PHUKAN
“Through a Persian Prism: Hindi and Padmavat in the Mughal Imagination.” Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The information is reported by each department or committee and includes students who graduated from spring 2000 to summer 2001.

If you or someone you know should be listed here, please contact your department. The Division is working to maintain accurate records of job placement.

note

WU— *Continued from page 14*
shown in this dark, unseen place readily draw on the political and social connotations of “underground.” Often designed to explore unknown territory outside conventional social norms and moral standards, these works reject “above-ground” spaces and their public functions. The “basement” exhibition *Post-Sense Sensibility: Distorted Bodies and Delusion*, for example, featured on-site installations shaped like human organs, creating a fictional interiority for Beijing. Finally, the transformation of the city has encouraged unofficial artists and independent curators to take over new urban spaces for their

own uses. By showing experimental art works in versatile places outside regular exhibition channels, they bring these works to the public in a guerilla-like fashion, and in so doing transform non-exhibition spaces—shopping malls, bookstores, bars, and streets—into public exhibition spaces. Related to these “experimental exhibitions” is the effort to adapt popular forms of mass media to create new types of experimental art. Artist Zhao Bandi turns his conceptual photographs into “public welfare” posters in Beijing’s subway stations. Other artists and curators have created works resembling the newspaper. The internet has added a new dimension for making and exhibiting

BERLANT— *Continued from page 15*
because our most ordinary speech intends a world we are bringing into being. Like poetry, ordinary speech has a utopian component, but it is usually unmarked. It implies mainly unarticulated relations to spaces of capital and political and military might that are also spaces where people live intimately. In moments of crisis the revival of cliché into polemical speech is a sign that some hallowed things can no longer be taken for granted. In moments of crisis skepticism is one of the most powerful tones of counter-hegemonic earnestness. Of course there is nothing at all simple about innocence, nor about the motives for character-

ing the “nation” as, at root, a collection of virtuous women and heroic men, whiter and more transparent in their blamelessness than the dark, mysterious terrorists who take pleasure in trying to destroy our national properties. Many kinds of self-righteous pleasures have been unleashed by this crisis. This isn’t finally a war about words or, really, about freedom seen as the thing mapped out by laws: it is more a struggle to shape the near and far future of world resource management, which is to say of profit, and it goes to the heart of the unthought thought we might as well be having about the material conditions, the *expensiveness*, of our (or any peoples’) freedom. Thus war forces us to think about the relation

art; one can actually find online an entire exhibition canceled by the authorities. At a seminar held in Beijing in 1999, I heard a well-known western curator confess that he actually knew little about the history of contemporary Chinese art, but he nevertheless decided to include many examples of this art in an exhibition because he found the “intensity of creative energy” in these works irresistible. This short essay suggests that we can find similar intensity in the social transformation of Chinese society; what makes contemporary Chinese art “irresistible” is the speed and depth of its internalization of social change. □ between the actuarial and the aesthetic, the material and the visceral, which are so much more complexly related than at first it seems. The relation of poetry to inequities of all sorts will continue to raise productive levels of stress in the humanistic academy. But for the various publics who turn to art to do *something*, though frequently they know not what, the turn to poetry and to cliché are plays in a struggle over the governing rules of pragmatism; these language games are utopian gestures toward re-zoning the spaces of necessity that we find ourselves drowning and waving in, on behalf of holding open the project of making the world something better than the rough currents in which we now live. □



APRIL 25 - JUNE 23, 2002

CRITICAL mass

ACTIVIST ART has a rich history in Chicago, one that has been marked in recent decades by artists who use conceptually-based practices to address complex social issues. Currently the mix includes artists and collectives who have been working here for years, newcomers from other cities, and emerging artists. Their work is sustained in part by a critical mass: artists who share information, debate ideas, and collaborate on projects. This is not a self-defined or regionally-identified group, but rather a series of overlapping clusters of artists who have chosen to base their practices in Chicago, but often work in far-flung places. To reflect the importance that

communication, dissemination, and collaboration have on this work, the structure and content of *Critical Mass* are being developed through close collaboration among artists and curator. The project will consist of interventions

into the museum and other sites to create a series of interconnected spaces and activities. Since activist art is often motivated by the desire to escape the confines of institutions, this project offers an opportunity to highlight current socially engaged art in Chicago while exploring the possibilities and limitations of

the museum. Among the artists featured in this exhibition are COVA faculty member Bob Peters and recent COVA graduates Marc Fischer (MFA '95) and Brett Bloom (MFA '96). □



Left and above right: Gregory Sholette, *i am NOT my office*, 2002 (detail). Below right: Temporary Services, *Groupings: Aesthetic Analysis of Human Groupings*, 2002 (detail).

THE SMART MUSEUM OF ART

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Errata:

Volume 3, number 2, page 5
We failed to mention the name of the editor
of *The Chicago Review Anthology* (University
of Chicago Press, 1959). It was edited by
David Ray (AB '52, AM '57).

Volume 3, number 2, back cover
"Errata" should have read "Errata."



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