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Spring 2008

Visual & Cultural Studies

Newsletter



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*a LETTER from
OUR DIRECTOR, Joan Saab*

I am writing this from an airplane on my way back from a brainstorming meeting in Los Angeles, which brought together scholars from a variety of academic disciplines to explore the intersections among visual culture studies, new media, and networked communication.

The meeting was incredibly interesting and could lead to a number of productive collaborations. Indeed, collaboration seems to be the theme of this past academic year. Over the past year, VCS students and faculty have been involved in a number of collaborative projects—through the President’s Humanities Project, the Mellon-funded Central New York Humanities Corridor, and initiatives at the George Eastman House, the Memorial Art Gallery, and the Rochester Contemporary (RoCo).

Intellectually this has been another exhilarating year. David Joselit delivered the Craig Owens’ Memorial Lecture, entitled “Art and Life: Toward an Ethics of Images.” Steve Kurtz inaugurated the graduate-student speaker’s series with a standing-room only talk on his work, and Mark Hostler of *Negativland* gave a multimedia presentation in collaboration with the Anthropology department. Next weekend we are hosting a two-day event on the topic of *Visual Memories* featuring keynote talks and symposium by Tom Gunning, Andreas Huyssen, Walid Raad, and Sasha Torres. It should be excellent.

Next year’s incoming class is once again full of exceptional students. We had a record number of applications this year and accepted five new students. Amanda Graham is interested in Latin American art, trauma theory, social justice, and issues of the ephemeral and scarring; Daisuke Kawahara wants to explore Asian and American film, postmodern culture, and globalization; Erin Leary has a background in design history and wants to study material culture and decorative arts; George Roland is interested in the creation of collective subjectivities in photography post-1945; and Iskandar Zulkarnaian is interested in virtual ethnography, viral and alternative visual media, and the subaltern in cyberspace. I am certain that they will thrive in Rochester and contribute greatly to the life of the program.

I hope you all have a relaxing and productive summer.

Joan

a look at
VISITING LECTURES

In partnership with other departments and programs, the Department of Art and Art History and the Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies have hosted exciting lectures and workshops by visiting scholars and artists.

In November we were fortunate to have David Joselit, professor and chair of History of Art at Yale University, to give a lecture titled “Art and Life: Toward an Ethic of Images” as this year’s **Craig Owens’ Memorial Lecture**. The talk was followed by an informal reception where VCS students and faculty had the chance to freely exchange ideas with Professor Joselit.

In the Fall, the VCS graduate students organized the **Inaugural VCS Graduate Student Speakers Series Lecture** featuring Dr. Steven Kurtz of Critical Art Ensemble, whose talk was entitled “Crossing the Line: Interdisciplinary Work in a Society of Fear.” The lecture was organized in conjunction with the Rochester Premiere screening of “Strange Culture,” Lynn Hershman-Leeson’s award-winning film about Kurtz’s post-PATRIOT Act prosecution, featuring Tilda Swinton.



*Steven Kurtz presenting
at the Inaugural VCS
Graduate Student
Speakers Series
Lecture.*

Throughout the fall and spring semesters, a transdisciplinary project titled **Theories and Things: Re-evaluating Material Culture**, took place to invite scholars and artists who have been instrumental in the recent re-invigoration and diversification of the field of material culture. This was organized by Professor Janet Berlo and funded through the Humanities Project.

Professor Katz discusses his essays “The Silent Camp: Queer Resistance and the Rise of Pop Art” and “Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Marcuse, and the Politics of Eros” with VCS students at a lunch time seminar held before his talk.



October 17: Lectures by Jennifer L. Roberts, the Gardner Cowles Associate Professor of History of Art and Architecture at Harvard University; “Audubon’s Burden: Materiality and Transmission in *The Birds of America*” and Jason Weems, an assistant professor in the art history program in the Department of Humanities, at the University of Michigan at Dearborn; “Wood’s Patchwork: Quilts, Modernity, and the Regionalist Landscape.”

October 23: Keynote Lecture by Bill Brown, Chair and the Edward Carson Waller Distinguished Service Professor, of the Department of English at the University of Chicago; “Objects, Others, and Us.”

November 5: Lecture by Jonathan Katz, the 2007-08 Clark-Oakley Fellow at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute and a visiting professor at Smith College; “Robert Rauschenberg, Sexuality, and the Utility of Things.”

January 20: Artist’s talk by Michael James, Ardis James Professor in the Department of Textiles, Clothing and Design at the University of Nebraska Lincoln; “Material Response – Recent Work.”

February 3: Lecture by Janet Berlo, Professor of Art History and Visual and Cultural Studies; “American Quilts as American History: The Lives and Works of Five Quilters”

January 20 – March 16: Exhibition, “Wild By Design: Two Hundred Years of Innovation and Artistry in American Quilts” at the Memorial Art Gallery.

Cosponsored by the Department of Anthropology and the Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies among many other organizations, **Adventures in Illegal Art: Creative Media Resistance and Negativland** invited Mark Hosler, a founding member of Negativland, to talk about pranks, media hoaxes, creative activism in a media-saturated multi-national world, file sharing, and intellectual property issues in a multimedia lecture and an informal discussion group. Negativland has created projects, hoaxes, pranks and “culture jamming” since 1980 and is most famous for being sued by their “U2” single.

*A poster advertising
Adventures in Illegal Art:
Creative Media Resistance
and Negativland*

**Adventures in Illegal Art:
Creative Media Resistance and Negativland**

Negativland

**Thursday, February 28th
7:30 p.m. Hoyt Auditorium, River Campus
University of Rochester**

A 90-minute film and storytelling presentation by **Mark Hosler**,
founding member of Negativland, with Q and A to follow.

Seminar with **Mark Hosler**
"Making A Cultural Public Domain"

**Friday, February 19th
3:00 p.m. 340 Lattimore Hall**

Pranks, media hoaxes, media literacy, the art of collage, creative activism in a media saturated multinational world, file sharing, intellectual property issues, seeking notions of art and ownership and law in a digital age, artists and funny creators of mass media and culture, so-called "culture jamming" (a term coined by Negativland way back in 1986)... even if you've never heard of Negativland, if you are interested in any of these issues you're sure to find this funny and inspiring presentation worth your time and attention.

For more information please contact Pat Turner at 585-275-2674 or by email patturner@rochester.edu.
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In March, Takahiro Ueda, a visiting scholar from the History of Art department at Ritsumeikan University, Japan gave a talk to conclude his sabbatical year at Rochester. His talk titled **Body (Un-)Installed: Two or Three Things I Know about a Cemetery, and One Relatively Long Supplement as an Ephemeral Visitor to Rochester** presented his experience in Rochester (and more specifically in Mt. Hope Cemetery) as a way to explore the intersection between art, body(-ies), and exhumation. 

an *INTERVIEW* with
Rachel Haidu

Rachel Haidu is Assistant Professor in the Department of Art and Art History, and a core faculty member of the Visual and Cultural Studies Program. She received her PhD from Columbia University in 2003, and began teaching at the University of Rochester in the fall of that same year. Rachel has had an exciting and busy academic year with much publishing, teaching and involvement in many groups at the University of Rochester (not to mention her ceaseless enthusiasm for and help with VCS and Art History students' work). Here, she tells us more about the work she has been doing, and what we have to look forward to from her.

Q. Can you tell us a bit about your upcoming book from MIT Press, The Absence of Work, or, Marcel Broodthaers 1964-1976 and your upcoming essay in October Files: Gerhard Richter?

The book is a very thorough revision of my dissertation; when I was finished with my dissertation I felt there were a few things I wanted to change, and it took a couple of years for me to figure out what I wanted to do differently. Teaching, especially in VCS, was crucial to forming that new perspective on a project that I had already worked on for about five years. Among other things, I wanted to problematize and historicize the relationship to poststructuralist theory that a lot of conceptual art (and other art of the 1960s and 1970s) is supposed to be vaguely aligned with. I am helped in that by the fact that Broodthaers was himself wryly critical of both conceptual art and its incredibly rapid assimilation by the institutions and markets of contemporary art—and by the fact that he not only read a lot of contemporary theory (from Barthes to Lacan to Foucault) but understood it in incredibly complex and productive ways. Not only did he compare concepts of the “death of the author” to Mallarmé’s poetics and aesthetics, but he compared them to technologies of publishing and authorship in the 19th century, and then to textual and representational systems—such as advertising—in the postwar era. VCS, with its broad investigations of visual culture, helped me to focus on that critical component in Broodthaers’s practice, which in turn has helped me to understand my own relationship to the theory that was most important to me when I was younger—the work of Derrida, Deleuze, etc.—and its relation to the history of the 20th century.

The essay on Richter is one that was commissioned for that volume, and is my third publication on the artist. I wrote it in my second year here, so it is for me a kind of barometer of the immediate responses I had to changing environments—from grad school at Columbia to my first years teaching at the UR, and from a system of lionizing artists like Richter, whom I absolutely love to look at but am a little tired of talking about, to turning towards other, younger or less well-known artists. It is an essay on Richter's pictures of his wife Sabine and son Moritz, who was born when he was in his 60s, and it takes a very particular view on the position that fathers occupy when watching their nursing partners, tying that position to Richter's own relationship to painting and photography. It was a difficult essay to write, very tense with my own relationships to paternity and authorship!

Q. Apart from these book projects, this year you have also published in Artforum and Texte Zur Kunst on contemporary issues and exhibitions. What sort of emerging art do you find interesting, or do you plan on working on?

The kind of art that I am most interested in right now is an offshoot of performance art—the work of artists like Artur Zmijewski, Tamy Ben-Tor, My Barbarian, Clemens von Wedemeyer. The work is itself often billed as “documentary” or video or film (except for live performances by My Barbarian or Ben-Tor), but it has performance at its root. Artists like the collective My Barbarian use spectacle to investigate issues of collective memory or oral history or even mimicry; Tamy Ben-Tor's work really tests “appropriation” and “mimicry” in the ways that theorists of postmodernism and postcolonialism have championed it, and places her intervention in the very frightening triangulation of identity that is automatically called up, I think, by her Israeli nationality. Von Wedemeyer and Zmijewski have both worked on the relation of prisoners to their confines—an analogue that I think very efficiently tests the constraints on subjective experience that are suggested by the categories of “fiction” and “documentary” that their works also test more literally. Also, prisons are a really fascinating measure of our ethical codes—how we manage to maintain the penal systems we do is at least as interesting as investigating the unconstitutionality of the recent expansion of executive powers in this country.

While I like writing for both *Artforum* and *Texte zur Kunst*, lately I've daydreamed about curating a show of these artists and others like them. Many freelance curators are finding projects like that increasingly tough to complete in this country, but I would definitely be interested in rounding out some of the work I do as a critic with actually bringing some contemporary art into different public situations.

Q. Over the last few years, you have done a lot of work and writing on Polish art. Is this something you will be expanding?

I hope so. I love Poland and have made a number of great friends there, and there are still lots of Polish cities and artists I want to know better. But I am also hoping to travel to and research art in a few other cities and countries in the former Eastern bloc—Slovenia and Croatia for sure, and we'll see from there. I am very interested in post-Communist Europe and the art that is being produced there, which is such a fascinating commentary on not only our lingering romance with Marxism—a romance in which I am certainly a participant—but also current ideas about “globalization,” “spectacle,” and other terms like that which are about as tired as they are vague in Western discourse. What I've found since studying Soviet Constructivist art in grad school is that you learn a lot more trying to understand the formations around those terms in other social and historical contexts than by just rereading Marx, Benjamin, Debord, and so on.

Q. This fall, you organized a daylong “Diversity Forum” at the University of Rochester. How did this event, and your involvement with it, come about?

That event came out of my long-term membership on the Campus Diversity Roundtable, an organization that Karen Beckman introduced me to when she was here, and of which Stephanie Li (English), who worked on the Forum with me, is also a member. I have always been invested in racial politics, though it plays a very minor role in my scholarship. I am also very interested in institutions: my first book is on an artist who is famous for innovating “institutional critique” not because he “hates” institutions, but because I share with him an inability to imagine life without them. I don't want to destroy museums or other systems in which people see themselves “represented”; I want

to understand them. The Diversity Forum came out of the same kind of investment in institutional life: the UR has recognized that it has difficulty attracting and retaining faculty of color, and President Seligman has isolated this issue as a key point in his work on diversity at the University. But what does it mean when an institution focuses its efforts on diversifying the faculty? Is it just a numbers game, or is it tied to a deeper understanding of what happens to community, discourse, and identity when you start

truly “diversifying”—when you invite what our keynote speaker Grant Farred called that “disaster”? By using that term Grant means that diversity shouldn’t be cleaned up or purged of its unsanitary aspects; it should be left as complete dissensus, a constant infraction of the codes of discourse as we know it. I wanted the Forum to really bring out that level of sophisticated,



theoretically informed discourse—the level that we, in an academic setting, are responsible for—and also to address some other very pressing and pragmatic issues. What about physical “disabilities” and how we conceive of the “whole” or “normal” student or teacher? What about class? What about our community here in Rochester, which is plenty diverse but also appallingly segregated by color and class? How does the University bear a responsibility to the standards of diversity that are represented by these questions?

Though I understand people’s exhaustion at the repeated use of a tired term like “diversity,” I also think that our institution—like the country as a whole—is at a pretty critical juncture, and I hope others will feel the same enough to continue with future events in this vein. 

a look at
OUR FACULTY

Janet Catherine Berlo's article, "Toward an Ecology of Native American Visual Culture: Eco-Aesthetics in Navajo Pictorial Arts and Eco-Crisis in Dinetah," in *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, ed. A. Braddock and C. Irmscher, is forthcoming from the University of Alabama Press. Her recent co-authored textbook, *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity*, was described in *CAA Reviews* as "a major achievement that promises to enrich and enliven the study and teaching of American art and visual culture."



Douglas Crimp gave the 16th Annual David R. Kessler Lecture in Lesbian and Gay Studies at the CUNY Graduate Center in November, 2007 and the 1st Annual Colin de Land Memorial Lecture at Anthology Film Archives in New York City in February, 2008. In the fall, he also lectured at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona, the Gender and Sexuality Seminar at the Harvard Humanities Center, and at Cooper Union and Parsons in New York City. In the spring, he gave the Art History Graduate Committee Lecture at the Art Institute of Chicago and spoke at UCLA in conjunction with the Fowler Museum's *Make Art, Stop AIDS* exhibition. He gave keynote addresses for the "Crossing the Boundaries" conference at SUNY, Binghamton and for the "Engaging Objects" conference at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis. He is due to give a keynote speech for the annual Lesbian and Gay Studies and Queer Theory Conference at Tel Aviv University in early summer. Crimp lectured at Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam and at the Avant-Garde Institute in Warsaw.

Crimp's publications include an essay on Ronald Tavel's scenarios for Andy Warhol's films, "Coming Together To Stay Apart," in *The Art of Queering in Art* (Birmingham, Article Press, 2007); an introduction to "1000 Words: Yvonne Rainer Talks about *RoS Indexical*," in *Artforum* (November 2007); "Alvin Baltrop: Pier Photographs, 1975-1986" in *Artforum* (February 2008); and "Disss-co (a fragment)," an essay drawn from his memoir of New York in the 1970s, in a special issue on disco of *Criticism, A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*. He is currently completing a book on Warhol's films called "Misfitting Together" and continues to work on his memoir of New York in the 1970s "Before Pictures."

Paul Duro presented a public lecture “Decoding Repetition: Series, Multiples, Variations, Copies,” in conjunction with the exhibition, *Déjà Vu? Revealing Repetition in French Masterpieces* at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore in October 2007. In 2007 he was appointed to the Editorial Board of *Art Bulletin* for a four-year term, and also to the Editorial Board of VCS’s own *Invisible Culture*. His article “Getting the Poussin We Deserve,” has been accepted for publication in an anthology of essays devoted to the art of Nicolas Poussin, to be published by Pennsylvania State University Press. He is currently at work on two articles, one on imitation in seventeenth-century art and theory, and the other on Joseph Wright of Derby and the Scientific Sublime.

Rachel Haidu participated in an inaugural lecture series at the opening of Edward Krasinski’s studio in Warsaw. She contributed “Thin Blue Line: Rachel Haidu on Edward Krasinski’s Studio” (September 2007), and “Set Piece: Décor—A Conquest by Marcel Broodthaers” (Summer 2007) to *Artforum* and “On Steven Parrino at Gagosian, New York,” to *Texte zur Kunst* 67 (Winter 2007). She has also contributed articles to the catalog of 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art and to an anthology on Krasinski. Her chapter entitled “Précarité, autorité, autonomie” will appear in *Communities of Sense* and “Arrogant Texts: Gerhard Richter/Roland Barthes” in *Gerhard Richter*. Her book, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers 1964-1976* will be published by October/MIT Press.

Robert Foster’s new book, *Coca-Globalization: Following Soft Drinks from New York to New Guinea*, was just published by Palgrave/Macmillan Global Publishing. His article “The Work of the ‘New Economy’: Consumers, Brands and Value” appeared in the special issue of *Cultural Anthropology* (November, 2007) entitled the “Coke Complex.” In the summer of 2007, he presented “Native Curios, National Patrimony, Primitive Art: Three Moments in the Biography of the P. G. Black Collection” at Musée du Quai Branly, Paris. He is currently exploring the theme outlined in the paper as part of his bridging fellowship with art and art history. Bob will be conducting archival research in Australia in July on a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend.

John Michael presented “The Law of Hospitality and the Limits of Community, or Why Arabs and Mexicans Look Alike” at the American Studies Association Annual Meeting in October 2007, and “What’s Home Got To Do with It?: Western Discourses of Identity and Belonging in The Kingdom of Heaven (Ridley Scott 2005)”, at the Group for Early Modern Cultural Studies. His article “Liberal Justice and Particular Identity: Cavell, Emerson, Rawls” was

published in *Arizona Quarterly* (Spring 2008) and “Identity, Masochism, and the Democratic Intellectual in the War on Terror” in the special issue of *The Hedgehog Review* titled “Intellectuals and Public Responsibility” (Spring 2007). His book, *The Failure of America and the Claims of Identity from Thomas Jefferson to the War on Terror* is forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press.

Joan Saab was invited to take part in “Scholarly Communication Institute 5: Visual Studies” at University of Virginia and a roundtable of Cultural Studies program directors held by the Cultural Studies Association entitled, “What does Cultural Studies Look Like at Your Institution?” She presented a paper, “Culture for Sale: Mexico and the American Modernist Imagination” at Columbia University. Her article entitled “Neither New nor Urban: Nostalgia and the City of Tomorrow” was published in *Journal of Planning History* (Fall 2007) and her review of *Culture: The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn* by Margaret Dikovitskaya will appear in a forthcoming *CAA Reviews*. In 2008, Saab presented a paper at the Organization of American Historians annual conference. She is currently working with Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Brian Goldfarb, Tara McPherson, and Nicholas Mirzoeff on a Mellon grant project which aims to integrate visual culture scholarship with digital technologies to advance the potential of collaborative work.

Last spring **Sharon Willis** was invited to present at the annual Roundtable Symposium at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women, Brown University. She also gave lectures at Royal Holloway College and at the Screen Studies Symposium (University of London). Her essay, “The Americanization of Emily: Memory, Management, Marketing, was published in *America First: Naming the Nation in U.S. Film*, ed., M. Merck (Routledge). “Dangerous Images: 1991,” is forthcoming in *American Culture/American Cinema: The Nineties*, ed., C. Holmlund (“Screen Decades” series, Rutgers University Press), and “A Cinema of Migrations: The Work of Ziad Doueiri,” is forthcoming in *Shifting Landscapes: Film and Media in European Contexts*, ed., E. Seka and M. Christensen (Cambridge Scholars Press). A co-authored essay “(Re) Inventing Camera Obscura,” will appear in *Inventing Film Studies: Essays Toward the History of a Discipline*, ed., L. Grieveson and H. Wesson (Duke University Press, forthcoming). She and her co-editors compiled two special issues of *Camera Obscura*, entitled “Fabulous! Divas.” 



a look at
HARTNETT GALLERY

This year the Hartnett Gallery featured artists from the Rochester area and New York City as well as the UK and South Korea. The season ended with a juried show of works from the University community.

What It Feels Like by Jonathan VanDyke

Sept. 12th-Oct. 5th

Curated by VCS' Mara Gladstone, "What It Feels Like" was an installation that, through objects and performance, actualized the idea of the itinerant. The gallery was covered over and transformed through painted objects, wooden constructions and dripping machines. VanDyke and student volunteers undertook a performance in this transformed space.



Naturally: Looking at Nature by Mark Grim, Stephanie McMahon, Nicholas Ruth, and Stefan Petranek

Oct 16th-Nov. 16th

Organized by Rochester-area artists, this group show took the premise that no monolithic definition of nature can make it visible to us; instead, the consideration of multiple perspectives on nature can help illuminate its dimensionality, make specific instances of nature concrete, and reify our role in creating and defining it. The show included photographs, paintings, video and a cyber-natural installation.

Incongruent: Contemporary Art from South Korea**Nov. 29th-Dec.21st**

This exhibition introduced some sociopolitical forms of South Korean art created since the end of the Korean War, and disputed the common display of Korean art works as exotic cultural artifacts. It included both historical and contemporary works and considered the manner in which history and identity are formed in the local and global context of South Korea.

Black Cube/White Horse by Alex Baker and Kit Poulson**Jan. 21st- Feb. 15th**

In another installation-based show, two British artists installed three large black cubes that loomed large in the Hartnett space. Over a few days, the cubes were transformed through drawing and construction by the artists. The installation also provided a space for socialization: each of the cubes could be booked by individuals and groups for gatherings and events.

***Family Gathering:******A Look into the World of Eating Disorders by Joy Christiansen*****Feb. 28th- April 4th**

This exhibition examined negative body image and eating disorders that affect many young women today, and involved the installation of a domestic space. Each piece of furniture was adorned with photographic imagery and text from personal interviews with individuals who have suffered from these illnesses.



Jen Burger's large oil painting, "Excess," was featured in the undergrad show.

Annual Student Juried Exhibition

April 24th-May 9th

The Harnett Art Gallery ended its season with the Annual Student Juried Exhibition. This exhibit featured works by undergraduate students from a variety of departments at the University of Rochester. 



A group of students map conversation about performance art; then Michael Frank is hoisted by their web.

a look at
OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS

This June, **Alex Alisauskas** will be presenting her paper “Just Imagine What a Fabulous Treat You Would Make” on Gordon Matta-Clark and his restaurant project at the Association for the Study of Food and Society in New Orleans. While there, she plans on eating a lot of alligator, crawfish, oysters and beignets. Her review of TJ Demos’ *The Exiles of Marcel Duchamp* will be published in the upcoming issue of *Invisible Culture*. Alex will be spending the summer in Ithaca, New York where she will be participating in Cornell University’s School of Criticism and Theory.

Aubrey Anable is currently a Teaching Fellow at the University of Rochester where she is teaching “Introduction to Visual and Cultural Studies” this semester. She presented her paper, “Playing at Work: Casual Games and the Videogame Theory of Free Labor” as part of a panel she organized on digital games and labor at the annual conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies. Aubrey has received a scholarship from the University of California Humanities Research Institute to participate this summer in the Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory, “Creative Societies/Cultural Industries/New Humanities.”

In the fall, **Maia Dauner** received a Friends of the University of Rochester Libraries Graduate Dissertation Fund Award for the library to purchase research materials that will aid her dissertation research. Maia received a Susan B. Anthony Institute teaching fellowship to instruct “WST 100: Gender and Bodies in Art” during the Spring 2008 semester. She was awarded travel funds to attend “Advancing the Dialogue: A Symposium on Native American Performance Art” at the Denver Museum of Art in April 2008. She presented her paper entitled “Radio Insurgente: Voice of Zapatista National Liberation Army” at the Global Fusion Conference and another entitled “Life After Death: The Abject Body and National Belonging in Coco Fusco’s *The Incredible Disappearing Woman*” at the University of Massachusetts 8th Annual Mark Roskill Symposium. This summer, Maia will travel to Vancouver to present her paper “Contemporary Caló: Articulating Stereotypes in Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s *Apocalypse Manaña*” at the annual Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies Congress.

This year, **Aviva Dove-Viebahn** served as Speaker of the Graduate Organizing Group at the University of Rochester. Her article “Embodying Hybridity, (En)gendering Community: Captain Janeway and the Enactment of a Feminist Heterotopia on *Star Trek: Voyager*” was published in *Women’s Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (December 2007). In March, she presented a paper entitled “Seeing is Believing?: Violent Dreams, Justice and the

Discourse of True Vision in *CSI* and *Medium*” at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference in Philadelphia. She is also co-editor of Issue 12 of *Invisible Culture*, “The Archive of the Future/The Future of the Archive,” due to be published in May.

Mara Gladstone curated the September 2007 exhibition “What It Feels Like” featuring site-specific work by the installation and performance artist Jonathan Van Dyke at Hartnett Gallery; the project included the participation of 6 UR undergraduates (Madeleine Cutrona, Chase Henson, Shannon McCarter, Scott Schulth, and Cristin Stephens). She also edited the 11th issue of *Invisible Culture*, “Curator & Context,” launched December 2007.

Dinah Holtzman presented “Save the Trauma for Your Mama: Kara Walker, The Art World’s Beloved” at the Northeast Modern Language Association Convention in April. Her essay “Between Yaars: The Queering of Dosti in Contemporary Bollywood Films” will appear in a forthcoming anthology, *Bollywood, Nation, Diaspora* (Anthem Press). She is presently teaching a course entitled “Trash Film: The Movies We Love to Hate/Hate to Love.” She also received a year-long graduate teaching fellowship for Writing Across the Disciplines through the College Writing Program.

This past year **Jessica Horton** presented papers at the Memory as Medium Conference at Carleton University in Ottawa, the Frick Symposium in New York, and the Yale Art History Symposium. She arranged the Craig Owens Memorial Lecture and headed the organizing committee for the 15th Annual SBAI Women’s and Gender Studies Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference. She is currently writing the wall text for a contemporary photography exhibition at Deborah Ronnen Fine Arts. As a recipient of a National Gallery of Art Predoctoral Fellowship for Historians of American Art to Travel Abroad, Jessica will spend summer 2008 in Guatemala and Mexico.

Still working hard to finish his dissertation in the summer or the fall of 2008, in June 2007 **Hossein Khosrowjah** was invited to give a talk titled “Most Unwanted: A Cross-Cultural Artistic Encounter” on the occasion of the artist Taraneh Hemami’s exhibition opening at the Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco; received The Raymond N. Ball Dissertation Year Fellowship for 2007-2008; continued working as a fellow in the George Eastman House’s Motion Pictures Department in the fall 2007; was asked to co-edit the forthcoming *Abbas Kiarostami: Image, Voice and Vision* (I.F. Tauris, 2008) with Professor Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak; presented “An Overview of Iran’s Political History in the 20th Century” at Metro Justice’s event “Perils of Persia” in January 2008; in March 2008 presented “Cinematic Encounters: Revisionist Use of Archival Footage in Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s ONCE UPON

A TIME, CINEMA,” at the Society for Film and Media Studies Conference in Philadelphia; will teach a course in “World Cinema” at the Eastman School of Music in Fall 2008.

Elizabeth Kalbfleisch was, in 2007-2008, Visiting Faculty Lecturer in the Department of Art History and Communications Studies at McGill University in Montreal. At McGill she developed and taught undergraduate and graduate courses: “First Nations Peoples and Photography, First Nations Art Practices” and “The Global World, The Culture of Craft, and The Home.” She presented a paper titled “Clara Forslund, My Eskimo Friend’: Cosmopolitanism, Friendship, and Photographs of Gladys Knight Harris” at the Global Photographies: Histories, Theories, Practices conference in Dun Laoghaire, Ireland in June. In November she presented a paper from her dissertation work at the Diversity and Dialogue Fellowship Symposium at the Eiteljorg Museum in Indianapolis. The symposium brought together artists and scholars of Native North American art to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Eiteljorg’s prestigious fellowship program for Native American artists. A publication of essays presented at the symposium, including Elizabeth’s, will be published later this year.

Kyoung-Lae Kang will be delivering two papers in May at the 58th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association, each entitled “the Korean War as Magical Realism: Memory and Healing in ‘Welcome to Dongmakgol’” and “Documenting Reality: Hybridity and Nationalism in Korean Reality TV.”

While working on his qualifying exam, **Yuichiro Kugo** translated Mark Linder’s book titled *Nothing Less Than Literal: Architecture after Minimalism* (MIT Press, 2004) into Japanese (forthcoming, Summer 2008 from Kajima Publishing in Tokyo). He also wrote the book review of Akira Mizuta Lippit’s *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)*, for our program’s online journal *Invisible Culture*, Issue 11, 2007.

Godfre Leung presented his papers “Manufacturing Commonsense: The Yes Men, Cosmopolitan Concern, and the Return of the American New Left” at the Fifth Annual American Art History Symposium at Yale University, and “Life Into Art: From the Imaginary Punk House to the Imaginary Museum” at the 15th Annual Crossing the Boundaries: Time, Space, Movement conference at SUNY Binghamton. The latter was published in a catalogue documenting the conference and its accompanying art exhibition, *Trading Spaces*. He also published his book review “After the Neo-Avant-Garde? New Genre Conceptual Art and the Institution of Critique” in *Art Journal* (Winter 2007). In the Spring, he completed a six session substitute appointment at the Eastman School of Music, teaching AH 282: “The History of American

Art.” He would like to thank Alex Alisuskas and Maia Dauner for their unfailing generosity and assistance with everything listed above.

Nicola Mann presented her paper “Tripping the Light Fantastic: Representing the Teenage Twilight in Sofia Coppola’s *The Virgin Suicides* and Gregory Crewdson’s *Twilight*” at this year’s Susan B. Anthony Institute Graduate Conference. She presented a version of the paper at the Constructed Light, Constructed Meanings conference at St. Louis University in April. Nicola will present “Criminalizing the ‘Hood: The Death of the Projects in the American Visual Imagination” at the conference Crime Cultures: Figuring Criminality in Literature, Media and Film at the University of Portsmouth, U.K in July.

Sohl Lee has developed new interests in Chinese cinema and feminist art practices. In April, she presented a paper on institutional critique of the Gwangju Biennale (South Korea) at the Association of Art Historians conference at Tate Britain. Her summer plan includes improving Mandarin skills and spending quality time with her family in Seoul.

Lucy Mulroney discovered Wegmans, got married at the Rochester City Clerk’s Office, and walked on the Acropolis during the fall of 2007. In the spring she presented her paper “Bouquet of Memories: Scrapbooking and the Performance, Commodification, and Remembrance of Self” at the 15th Annual Susan B. Anthony Institute Graduate Conference at the University of Rochester.

In the fall, **Shota Ogawa** worked as a research assistant for Rochester-based video artist Nicolle La Vann for her forthcoming documentary entitled *Homicidez*. The film looks at the issue of homicides in Rochester through interviews with those close to the victims as well as lawmakers and activists who attempt to tackle the issue. Shota is currently writing a review of *Transcultural Japan: At the Borderlands of Race, Gender and Identity* (Routledge: 2008) for the *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies*.

Derya Ozkan was a Teaching Fellow in the Department of Art and Art History in Fall 2007 and Spring 2008. She taught Advanced Sculpture: From Object to Installation and Introduction to Sculpture: Materials, Techniques, Forms. She participated in the Critical Geography conference at the University of Kentucky in October 2007 and presented a paper titled “From Crude Urbanization to Istanbul the Cool: Changing Representations of the City.” She gave two talks in Istanbul in March 2008. Her talk at Sabanci University, part of a Visual Studies speaker series organized by the Cultural Studies Program, was titled “The Misuse Value of Space: Oda Projesi’s Spatial Practices.” As a guest of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Istanbul Technical University, she gave a talk titled: “The *masses* flooded the beaches, the *citizens* could not swim: The Misuses of the Caddebostan Beach

and the Production of Space in Istanbul.” She is a publishing board member for *Istanbul*, a quarterly journal of urban history and culture in Istanbul. She has coordinated the publication of a section on Hans Haacke for the October 2007 issue of the journal.

Victoria Pass curated the exhibition “Facing Other Ways: Herbert Gentry & African American Abstraction,” which opened this past November in the Rush Rhees Rare Books and Special Collections Library. The exhibition was planned to highlight the recent gift of Herbert Gentry’s letters, photographs, and other ephemera to the library. The exhibition dealt with Gentry’s life as an expatriate living in Paris, Copenhagen and Malmo, Sweden and with his circle of friends and influences. Vicky also gave a lecture on Gentry for Meloria Weekend and participated in a panel discussion on the artist’s work.

This year **Lisa Uddin** conducted research in Washington D.C. on a Douglas Dockery Thomas fellowship in garden history and design and a predoctoral fellowship at the Smithsonian Institution Archives. In October she delivered her paper, “Racializing the White Rhino in Southern California,” at the “Nature Matters” conference organized through the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto. In November she presented a synopsis of her dissertation at the National Museum of American History Colloquium in Washington D.C. She did the same in a VCS post-exam talk in Rochester this March. Lisa looks forward to taking up a postdoctoral fellowship at Brown University’s Pembroke Center for Research and Teaching on Women, where she will participate in the 2008-09 research seminar, “Visions of Nature: Constructing the Cultural Other.” Her project will build on dissertation research that considers the revitalization of American zoos in the 1960’s and 1970’s.

Genevieve Waller participated in three exhibitions this year: “ArtXposium” in West Chicago, IL; “the Photography Invitational 10—Collective” at the Clayton Staples Gallery in Wichita, KS; and “Crossing Over” at the Annexe Galleries in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She presented a paper entitled “Children as a Critique of the Adult World in Victor Erice’s *The Spirit of the Beehive*” at the 15th Annual Susan B. Anthony Institute Graduate Conference. For Fall 2008, she has been accepted to mount a solo exhibition in The Gallery at the Art & Music Library at the University of Rochester. The show is tentatively titled “Kiss and Make Up.”

Bo Zheng participated in the 3rd Lianzhou International Photography Festival in Guangdong, China in December 2007. He exhibited “*He/She*,” a multimedia work about gay and lesbian couples in Hong Kong. He is also working on a project titled “Karibu Islands,” an imaginary place where time travels backward. This project will be shown in the Guangzhou Triennial in fall 2008. 

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ISSUE 12: THE ARCHIVE OF THE FUTURE/
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Fall 2008

ISSUE 13: AFTER POSTCOLONIALISM?

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VISUAL MEMORIES CONFERENCE: VCS Hosts Mellon Foundation Event

On May 8-9, 2008, the Visual and Cultural Studies Program played host to an exciting collaborative exchange between the University of Rochester, Cornell, and Syracuse University. As part of the Visual Arts and Cultures Cluster of the Central New York Humanities Corridor, made possible by a four-year, \$1 million grant from the Mellon Foundation, VCS put together the first event of the inter-institutional Visible Memories Conference. While a larger conference will take place at Syracuse University in October, 2008, the Rochester symposium brought together students from all three universities to interact with each other, with speakers, and with workshop leaders.

The Visible Memories Conference focused on the ways in which memories are manifested and experienced in visible, material, or spatial form. The symposium consisted of plenary talks and small group workshops.

Speakers included:

Thomas Gunning, Professor, Department of Art History, and Chair, Committee on Cinema & Media Studies, University of Chicago. “Visible and Invisible, Memory and Forgetting: Redefining the Archive of the Images of History.”

Andreas Huyssen, Villard Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Columbia University; founding director of the Center for Comparative Literature and Society. “Figures of Memory in the Course of Time: German Painting 1945-1989.”

Sasha Torres, Rogers Chair for the Study of Journalism and New Media; Associate Professor of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario. “Mockumentary, Counterfactual History, and Public Feelings.”

Walid Raad, Associate Professor of Art, Cooper Union and Founder of the Atlas Group. “My Neck Is Thinner Than A Hair: A History of Car Bombs in the Lebanese Wars Volume 1: 21 January 1986.” Raad’s event was also the Reni Celeste lecture for 2008, given by a VCS Alumnus in memory of Reni Celeste, a graduate of the VCS program, who died shortly after completing her Ph.D. 



From “A History of car bombs in the Lebanese War.”





at look at
SENIOR THESIS EXHIBITIONS

This year, an impressive twelve students graduated with a studio art major. Each student held a graduating exhibition, either at the Art Music Library Gallery at the University of Rochester, or in partnership with the Rochester Contemporary. The students' work demonstrated an extensive range of material and conceptual approaches and is in keeping with the department's emphasis of interdisciplinary education.

At the Art and Music Library Gallery, **Christopher Tseng** began the series of exhibitions with a group of paintings that imitate filmic framing to hold his viewers in anticipation and suspense. **Alicia Citro** transformed the gallery into a domestic space that



got its character from the plethora of quilts and other items relating to needlework – an activity she recently discovered. **Kali Crandall's** installation of illuminated forms encouraged viewers to become aware of their movement through a space that changed daily throughout the exhibition. "Preserves," a series of ambrotypes, records the inevitable decomposition of animal sponge toys that reference **Todd Rotkis's**

childhood memories. **Josh Kessler's** work, inspired by ancient civilizations, prompts us to examine our origins in nature and our subsequent distancing from it.





McKenzie Fisk grapples with the scientific and social complexities of the human body. Her drawings address how the body's physiology, the underlying bone and muscular structure, relate to its social function. David Fersh's group of sculptures explored space using light and geometric forms. Shannon McCarter used handcrafted garments that address the relationship of health to identity from the position of a patient. A show of Nicholas Sedney's videos and animations, which question the possibilities of digital media to imitate, affect, and depart from the physical world, concluded the schedule of exhibitions at the Art and Music Library Gallery.





At Rochester Contemporary, Madeline Cutrona, Cate Mattson, and Joanna Reynolds installed a group show in the artist studio space on the second floor. **Madeleine Cutrona's** multimedia installations questioned political incongruities by reconfiguring pop cultural and household objects, introducing alternative readings of objects that made



up the installation. **Cate Mattson's** work addresses self-image and identity using embroidery and domestic materials. **Joanna Reynolds'** installation explored Rochester's urban space through knitting, weaving and print making to represent different ways of mapping public space. 

*a look at
the BAUHAUS*

This Spring semester, Morey Hall and Sage Art Center were brought closer together through an interdisciplinary seminar. Dr. David Walsh, best known for his classes on archeology and medieval art history, used the Concepts in Introductory 2D class to expose students to the history and practice of the Bauhaus. The Bauhaus, a school that merged art and applied design, was established in Germany in 1919, and was influential in the practice of modernist design in many media.



Beginning with lectures and readings from Bauhaus artists and architects, students were then asked to implement what they learned into the design of two-dimensional objects and sculptures. Using paper, wood, and other materials the projects produced combined practices of craft and fine arts that followed the spirit of the Bauhaus school, and allowed students an opportunity to directly implement an art historical methodology into art practice. Studio Arts Major David Fersh (who will be attending RISD in the fall for a master's program in architecture), and Art History major Karen Gianetti, both appreciated the way this class combined art history and studio practices, allowing each to experience their twin discipline. Shaina Epstein (Psychology Major) and Elizabeth Beiser (History Major) said this class introduced them to the studio at Sage, and that as a result, they plan on continuing with further studio classes. Some of their work, including monochromatic wooden assemblages, and studies in color theory, were displayed at the AsIs Gallery in April. 

a look at
ASIS GALLERY



Situated at the entrance of Sage Art Center, ASIs (Artists' Space In Sage) offers an ideal venue for students enrolled in studio classes to exhibit their works. While the adjacent studios and labs provide well-equipped working sites, the separate exhibition space recognizes the importance of peer influence and invites interdisciplinary explorations. Many shows are organized by Sage's Studio Art Program Coordinator, Stephanie Ashenfelder, but it is also a venue for undergraduate studio majors' exhibits. Students sometimes plan exhibitions, managing all aspects of gallery operations, from installation to advertising and reception planning. 



Student works from David Walsh's Bauhaus course, Collete Quaglia's Introduction to Painting course, and Derya Ozkan's Introduction to 3D course. April, 2008.



Geoff Bennington, Paige Berkowitz, Sefira Bell-Masterson, and Jenny Viera in front of Alexander Squier's "Breakin' Down Walls."



Jessica Sheu performs during the gallery opening.

a look at
OUR FACULTY

Janet Catherine Berlo curated the exhibitions, “Wild by Design: American Quilts” and “Michael James: Reinventing Quilts in a Digital Age,” on view at the Memorial Art Gallery from January through March 2008. In February, Berlo chaired a session at the College Art Association meetings on the topic of “Not Native American Art: Fakes, Falsification, and Misrepresentation” in which she gave a paper entitled “Codex Covarrubias: 19th Century Hidatsa or 20th Century Mexican?” She also gave the annual Barbara Hail Memorial Lecture at the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology at Brown University on the topic of “Fakes, Falsifications, and Vexed Identities in Native American Art.” In April of 2008 she gave the inaugural lecture “Three American Quilters: Nineteenth Century American Quilts as American History” at the opening of the International Quilt Study Center and Museum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In the fall, **Carl Chiarenza** contributed work to several exhibitions: “THE ART OF LOOKING: Selections from the Collection of Charles Millard,” at the Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, NC, “20/20 Vision: Celebrating 40 Years of Photography at Sunset Center” at The Center for Photographic Art, Carmel, CA, and “In Circulation: Works on Paper” at The Luther W. Brady Art Gallery at George Washington University. In the spring, Carl exhibited in “The Digital Print: Work From Singer Editions” at Edwards Art Gallery, Holderness School, Plymouth, NH. Chiarenza’s book, *Picture Come From Pictures: Selections of Carl Chiarenza’s Work from 1955 through 2007* is forthcoming from David R. Godine Publishers.

Elizabeth Cohen presented her works in the exhibitions, “Unnamable Name” at Tompkins County Public Library in Ithaca and “Peace” at Sideshow Gallery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Elizabeth is the director of the Art New York Program.

In September 2007, **Emile Devereaux** received a grant from the Bureau of International Information Programs to give a lecture in Montenegro on “Media Interventions.” In 2008 he presented a paper titled “Foreign Skin in Sebastian Lifshitz’s *Wild Side*” at the Society of Cinema & Media Studies Conference in Philadelphia and presented his work-in-progress, “Alan Hart and X-ray Vision,” at Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender and Women’s Studies at the U of R. Devereaux’s video object titled “Osmosis” was part of the group show “Subjected Culture,” on exhibition at museums in Rosario and Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2008. In May, he had a solo exhibition in Buenos Aires,

entitled, “Bajo la Piel” which including site-specific installation, computer animation and video. He also exhibited work as an artist in residence at Experimental Television Center in Owego, NY.

Paul Duro published “Imitation and Authority: The Creation of the Academic Canon in French Art, 1648-1870,” in A. Brzyski (ed.), *Partisan Canons* (Duke University Press, 2007) and “The Return to the Origin: Heidegger’s Journey to Greece” in *Art Journal* (Fall 2007).

Heather Layton presented an artist talk, “(sub)Urban Homicide: The Real Effects of a Fictional Scenario” at the College Art Association conference in Dallas in February 2008. She installed “I Know it Happened and It Happened Like This”, a large-scale public monument, at the George Eastman House and International Museum. This project is one of two featured in a documentary called *Homicidez*. Her work has been exhibited in three juried exhibitions: “Borderlands”, at the South Seattle Community College Gallery, “Trading Spaces” at SUNY Binghamton, and “I/We Case Studies” at the Defoor Art Center in Atlanta. She also exhibited in “Last Gasp” at the Washington School of Photography in Bethesda, MD. Her work was represented in the juried exhibition “Word of Mouth” at the Aesthetic Technology Lab at Ohio University in April, and her next solo exhibition, “Thank You for Everything, Bruises and Bumps”, will open at the Firehouse and Wiseman Gallery in Grants Pass, Oregon, in October, 2008. New work for a proposed, two-person exhibition, “The Thirty-Nine Times I Tried to Use Glitter and Failed”, is currently under review.

Marni Shindelman collaborated with Nate Larson in an exhibition entitled “Witness” at Shawnee State University. Through twenty large scale Digital C-Prints and four drawings, the work investigated psychic viewing and telepathic communication. Shindelman also exhibited in “Big Food Pictures” at Bowman Gallery, Allegheny College, in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

Allen Topolski had an exhibition at Roberts Wesleyan College and his work is included in *Reimagining the Distaff Toolkit*, an exhibition traveling to eleven venues in the next four years. Allen devoted energy to the Memorial Art Gallery’s Art Committee and served as the Chair of the Humanities Project. As a member of the Wilmot Cancer Center Art Committee, he contributed to endeavors establishing environments conducive to healing in the new Medical Center’s facility. Allen’s participation in the Art On Campus Committee and independent efforts with the University’s administration have launched policy and planning for public art on the University’s campuses. 

a look at EVENTS at **SAGE ARTS CENTER**

Way out on the north end of campus students were toiling away in Sage making art until all hours of the morning. Energy was building. Ideas were beginning to take form. Faculty and students' dedication gave rise to a real 'joie de vivre' this academic year. To welcome Art History & Studio Art majors back, we kicked off the year with the first annual Sage barbeque and hotdog eating contest.



Then, inspired by the painting students, "The Animal Project" opened in ASIS, an exhibition exploring both the attraction human beings have to animals and our increasing uneasiness with them. In conjunction with the exhibition, Sage hosted animal behaviorist Karlene Bonnes and her furry entourage of rescued beasts who posed for a drawing and photo session. As the academic year progressed, we noticed a growing interest developing in textiles. As a direct response, the student activities committee invited textile artist Jeanne Beck for a three-day residency that included a hands on textile workshop for students. The grand finale at Sage this spring was a send off for our senior majors and a welcome to next year's incoming freshman. The spectacle was cosponsored with the Office of Admissions and included: an exhibition of senior works in ASIS gallery, a hotdog eating rematch, and the singing group The Midnight Ramblers.

Next academic year, way out here on the north end of campus, students will be toiling away in their studios. Energy will build and ideas will begin to take form. We anticipate another exciting year at Sage and can't wait to see what shape it takes. 

ARTISTS WORKSHOP with Jeanne Beck

In February, Sage Art Center hosted a two-day workshop entitled “**Textures on Painted Surfaces: Hand Stitching**” with Jeanne Raffer Beck, a nationally recognized artist/writer. With its open and blended studio labs and classrooms, Sage Art Center not only offers environment conducive to studio production that encourages peer collaboration, but also provides an ideal space for various workshops and co-curricular programs. Genevieve Waller, a student in the Visual Cultural Studies program, participated in the workshop and told us about it.



Genevieve: On the first day of the workshop, we choose a palette of various colored fabric paints to work with for the two days. Jeanne asked us to begin by using these colors to paint sheets of “fusible web,” which can be transferred onto fabric using a heated iron once they are dry and make gauzy, marbled or bright-colored layers. She also taught us direct painting techniques with brushes, spray bottles, and salt crystals as a resist, and demonstrated mono-printing techniques with the fabric paint first applied to plastic and then fabric pressed onto this. We improvised using commercial and handmade stamps to print and mono-print on fabric as well, including stamps made out of plastic plates, circular containers, and even crackers.



The second day of the workshop focused on combining the techniques learned on the first day with student-invented methods, as well as adding stitching with embroidery floss to painted fabric surfaces. Jeanne showed us various kinds of stitches that can be used as a form of drawing, such as French knots and cross-hatches. At the end of the workshop, we displayed the works we had completed during the two-days and exchanged information about each other's techniques and ideas, as well as suggestions for additions and further experiments. Jeanne's work was on display during the workshop in the AS-IS Gallery and in the workshop area as a reference. Her preoccupation with text was particularly noteworthy in her fabric pieces (Beck holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing). Professor Janet Berlo, who also participated in the workshop, and Professor Marni Shindelman gave other participants feedback on their work, and also kindly provided muffins and brownies to help us keep the creative juices flowing. 

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

The following graduating seniors received awards:

Elizabeth M. Anderson Prize

David Fersh

Madeleine Cutrona

**Roger Mertin Prize for Excellence in
Studio Art**

Todd Rotkis

Art and Art History Purchase Prize

Joanna Reynolds

INTRODUCING...

The newly formed Art & Art History Student Council:

President: **Olivia Davis**

Vice President: **Emma Vann**

Secretary: **Catherine Tremblay**

Business Manager/Treasurer: **Katelyn DeSieno**

Studio Art Representatives:

Jen Berger and **Faeza Masood**

Publicity and Community Outreach Chair:

Grace Hong and **Sarah Altone**

Graphic Designer: **Shirley Zimmer**

*an INTERVIEW with
Emile Devereaux*

In April 2008, Assistant Professor of Art Emile Devereaux sat down with VCS student Shota Ogawa to talk about his recent work.

Q: You were recently invited to Montenegro as a U.S. Speaker/Specialist in Video and Electronic Arts. Can you tell us more about how this came about?

The invitation to Montenegro was the result of an earlier art creation. In 2006, I was invited to participate in a project, “Intervencije Umetnošću” (“Art Interventions”) in Eastern Serbia, a remote area across the Danube from Romania. Funded by ArtLink, an organization based in Belgrade, the project had a commitment to bringing in five international artists and about the same number from urban settings in Serbia. One of the explicit goals of the project was to link the town of Majdanpek with other spaces, so the artists were encouraged to spend time learning about the place and the people beforehand without formulating too clear of an idea of the final product. I decided to follow up on some of my earlier art practices (such as the work of the Barbie Liberation Project in 1993-94) and went there with a proposal to complete a “media intervention,” and with many questions about what this term might mean within the unknown space.

I’ve begun to further reflect on the implications of the term “intervention” as it applies to artistic practices; especially the role of media interventions outside of the familiar terrain of the United States. As a result of the work that I completed in Majdanpek, this past September I was invited to Montenegro—which has recently been recognized as a nation separate from Serbia—to meet with media professionals and deliver lectures on the topic of media interventions.

Q: Is the media climate much different in these two places?

There are some similarities between the languages of Montenegro and Serbia, but in many ways the places I visited have very little in common. The capital of Montenegro is approximately 600 kilometers away from Majdanpek, at least twelve or fifteen hours of driving on treacherous mountainous roads in the direction of the Adriatic. Both spaces have different cultural traditions and histories of foreign invasion

that are difficult to summarize, in part because of centuries of flux. In the Balkans, leaders have manipulated differences in the geographical terrain in order to influence perceptions of “East and West.” Language differences have been presented as scientific facts, as well as boundaries such as rivers, in order to validate historically based narratives validating disparate points of view in regards to origin and ownership.

16 srijeda, 19. septembar 2007.
Vijesti



PROFESOR EMIL DEVRO SA UNIVERZITETA ROČESTER IZ SAD
ODRŽAO PREDAVANJE U KNJIŽARI “KARVER”

Humor video-arta

*Independent paper “Vijesti,” Podgorica,
Montenegro, September 2007.*

With translator Dubravka Bojanic

Montenegro was united with Serbia for eighty-eight years. Until Montenegro’s independence, the media networks of the town of Majdanpek and those located in Montenegro were controlled by state-controlled institutions run out of Belgrade. The eighty-eight year timeframe is incredibly significant if we consider that this constitutes the entire history of publicly available television broadcast and a large portion of the history of moving-picture technologies.

Before traveling to these locations, I didn’t realize that the concept of a “media intervention” would be such an engaging topic of exchange. Within these spaces, I’ve had to confront my own assumptions of the media associated with commercialized, capitalist markets and try to understand how an environment of state-run media programs shapes personal relationships to media. In Montenegro right now, there’s a lot of interest in developing independently-produced media forms and questions about how to support the two privatized television stations that have been established there during the last couple of years. I met many people who were avidly interested in the historical moment of the mid-1960’s during which video began to be used by artists and activists in the United States. It’s very exciting, as if they are about to launch into their own boom of D.I.Y. media production.

Q: Can you say more about how your work in Serbia and Montenegro has influenced your thinking about art interventions?

Although I think that the term “intervention” is overused as a substitute term for “site-specificity,” I do like the way it implies a way of playing with the unexpected. Intervention implies a moment of surprise on the part of the viewer at the discovery of an artistic gesture. It’s as if the art were wearing a disguise before it is safely reframed as “art.” My art practice developed out of my studies in social-cultural anthropology. Both art interventions and participant-observation methodology take different approaches to “blending in” during the process of cross-cultural exchange. The term intervention places an emphasis on the active presence of the artistic gesture, rather than on the active presence of observation.

Donning the garb of art, like hiding one’s message in humor, can be an evasive method for inserting other messages into institutionalized structures without legal ramifications, but I wonder if its status as art makes it dismissible and ultimately removes its impact. It’s interesting to me that interventions are taken as jokes rather than lies, even though false statements are often made in everyday contexts and fake identities are assumed without legal ramifications. I wonder if artistic gestures are contained or canceled by laughter... However, the ephemeral quality of the intervention usually means that its more lasting aspects remain in the realm of discourse. As performance or an artistic object, the gesture becomes a point of focus for a topic of conversation, a marker in the circle of exchange based on a particular moment and set of circumstances.

These interventions may occur in both physical locations or media spaces. Without the “site” as an actual location, but through its dispersal through information networks, bound by electronic communications technologies, media interventions participate within the circulation of the capitalist market economy. In Majdanpek, Serbia, without the backdrop of media saturation that we take for granted in the U.S., the work had to take an entirely new form that made me question if it could properly function as a “media intervention” at all. I decided to work with people in the town in order to create a humorous video about how the mobilized market economy is affecting the town of Majdanpek. Since there are no theaters, I constructed a screen out of old cardboard shipping boxes and projected the piece in the local marketplace.

Majdanpek has one of the oldest surface mines on earth. The mine has supported the people in the region for some 7,000 years, providing material resources such as gold, copper and aluminum for coins, jewelry, airplanes, racing cars, computers, internet technologies, and other goods throughout the ages. The town of Majdanpek is experiencing a period of inactivity as the townspeople wait for the mine to once again run at full capacity after being sold by the Serbian state to foreign investors. In the meantime, the region is looking for other ways to exploit its natural resources for income, such as tourism. The video begins as a tourist documentary about mining in the region and morphs into a fantastical television commercial advertising a brand of potato chips called “Zlato!” (Gold!). The piece has a hybrid form that doesn’t make much sense outside of Majdanpek, containing humorous elements understandable to a local audience and stylistic elements that appear particularly “Western.” “Zlato!” is a product formed by a circumstance and a moment of exchange; the physical manifestation of the media solidifies the encounter.



*Video still,
Zlato! (Gold!),
2006
Actor Aleksandar
Maksimovic*

The work itself becomes a site for the relationships that led to its creation and a way of maintaining them. As the piece is broadcast, copied and redistributed, or posted online on a variety of websites, various individuals lay claim to the work or feel a sense of ownership in one way or another.

Emile has been awarded a fellowship by the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program for research and lecturing in Montenegro during the 2008-09 academic year. ∞

*a LETTER from
OUR CHAIR, Allen Topolski*

Hello,

In a recent department meeting we met with University's new Provost; as we moved from person to person - faculty and staff - around the room, I was reminded of the diversity of disciplines we intertwine with the visual. Together, these form the well-grounded approaches we employ in understanding the cultures of our varied environments. Our distinguished faculty, staff, alumni and students constantly engage in a variety of approaches to learning and understanding that mirror those necessary both in day-to-day life and in academic pursuits. The theoretical is applied where the heuristic is usual and practical application is woven from the abstract. As we come to the close of another exciting year, it is a pleasure to introduce the Art and Art History Department's sixth annual newsletter.

Textiles formed the 'fabric' of many of this year's events where faculty and students played varied roles. The Memorial Art Gallery was the venue for an exhibition co-curated by Janet Berlo; it featured American quilts and a parallel show of contemporary textiles by Michael James. Janet Berlo had a show of her own quilts in the Art Library Gallery and Jeanne Raffer Beck hosted a two-day workshop where conventional and experimental approaches to fabric were put to the service of contemporary art production. Textiles and fabric manipulation were the crux of three of our graduating Seniors' thesis exhibitions and in a few weeks a collaborative effort by faculty and students will form a commissioned artwork to be permanently hung in the new Gleason Library - its large scale approach will utilize "extreme embroidery" and over-sized knitting.

This newsletter is not a comprehensive document, but a swatch of what we do. Reviewing these accomplishments, I note that a thread of student involvement marks its formation; I am continually impressed by how much of this work has been student directed, student initiated, or achieved largely through student involvement. The recent establishment of the Student Activities funded Art and Art History Student Council attests to a growing commitment and understanding of the communal aspects of art. The department looks forward to broadening its reach and role even further through this initiative designed by students to do just that. The initiative stems logically from the growing number of students realizing the value of cultural production and investigation - and the growing number of art students in general on this campus.

All the best in all your endeavors this coming year,
Allen C. Topolski

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Art & Art History

Newsletter