Notes from the Chair

By James A. Miller

This has truly been a banner year for the GW American Studies Department. In November 2007, we learned that we had placed 7th on the most recent ranking of faculty scholarly productivity among American Studies programs and departments in the country, right behind Brown University. The “Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index” ranks graduate programs at research universities on a number of criteria: books and journal articles written by their faculty, citations of those books and articles; and awards, honors, and grant dollars they have received. This index provides a good measure of where the department stands in relationship to our peers—and it sets a standard for one our key goals: to become a top-ranked American Studies departments in the country. We are making progress.

We are equally pleased by the outstanding achievements of our recent graduates, two of whom have received tenure-track assistant professorships. Stephanie Ricker Schulte will be joining the Dept. of Communication faculty at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; and Laurel Clark will be joining the Dept. of History at the University of Hartford. In addition, Julie Passanante Elman has been offered a position as assistant professor/faculty fellow at New York University; and Cameron Logan has received a visiting professorship at the University of Melbourne, Australia. As for other recent graduates, Paul Gardullo, has been hired as curator at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture; Laura Cook Kenna has taught in our department as a Visiting Assistant Professor of American Studies; and Peter Brownlee just completed a second year on a prestigious postdoctoral fellowship at the Terra Foundation for American Art in Chicago. This is a truly distinguished record of achievements, and it speaks well of the future for our graduate students.

Among our current PhD students, a total of eight (roughly one-third of our current cohort) have been accepted to present papers based on their seminar and dissertation research at the 2008 annual meeting of the American Studies Association in Albuquerque, New Mexico—a truly remarkable achievement for a department as small as ours. Meanwhile, our graduating majors showcased their research at the annual Senior Research Colloquium in April. And our second annual GW American Studies Conference, also held in April, has now become an expected feature of postdoctoral fellowship at the Terra Foundation for American Art in Chicago. This is a truly distinguished record of achievements, and it speaks well of the future for our graduate students.

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After thirty-one years serving as a distinguished member of the GW faculty, Jim Horton has retired from his post as Benjamin Banneker Professor of American Studies and History. Jim reports that “these three decades have been marked by great excitement and personal satisfaction.” Prof. Horton’s scholarship, academic achievements, and tireless commitment to the field have had a significant influence on countless GW students and faculty. And we are happy to announce that he has been awarded emeritus status and will continue his association with the department and the university.

This past year, Jim taught both graduate and undergraduate classes during Fall of 2007 at GW. He then spent Spring term at the University of Hawaii, teaching and organizing a series of programs at the University of Hawaii commemorating the bicentennial of the outlawing of the Atlantic slave trade by the U.S. Congress in 1809. He also continued his research on race relations in Honolulu during World War II, gathering additional oral history from war veterans.

Jim also appeared in a number of TV presentations this year, including the ongoing PBS series, “African American Lives,” hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. He has been honored by the Governor of Kentucky who appointed Jim to the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels. First presented in 1813, this is the highest honor awarded by the Commonwealth of Kentucky to individuals for their “noteworthy accomplishments and outstanding service to a community, state, or the nation.” An award of great distinction, Jim admits, “this was quite an unexpected honor.” Past recipients include Winston Churchill, Bill Clinton, Tiger Woods, Muhammad Ali, and Pope John Paul II.


Clearly the concept of retirement hasn’t fully registered with Jim, given that his agenda shows no signs of slowing down! He will continue his work with the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission in preparation for the commemoration of Lincoln’s birth in 1809. His research has recently uncovered surprising information about the links between the Kingdom of Hawaii, the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, the Civil War, and the abolition of slavery. Jim will present much of this information in an upcoming PBS special and several public lectures in the US and in Berlin and Munich, Germany during Summer and Fall of 2008. He is also organizing a series of presentations at the University of Hawaii to mark the bicentennial of Lincoln’s birth in Spring of 2009. A number of Lincoln scholars will participate in public lectures on campus and in Honolulu and will hold seminars on the subject for Hawaiian school teachers. And don’t be surprised if you sometimes bump into Jim at the American Studies building (2108 G Street, Room 201B) where he will maintain an office for the foreseeable future. You can also continue to reach him by e-mail at horton@gwu.edu. He’d love to hear from you!
Alumni News

Mike Bodnarik (BA ‘04) has just started his post-graduate career as the Program Coordinator for Greek Life and Leadership Development at University of California, Davis. Mike recently received his graduate degree from Florida, and is finishing an article for publication on infusing moral and ethical development within fraternity advising. Mike writes that his GW American Studies degree has been extremely beneficial to his success, and—given his involvement in Student Affairs and Higher Education—he is happy to offer advice students who are interested in pursuing American Studies and/or looking to start a career. He can be reached at mrbodnarik@ucdavis.edu.

Juretteta Hecksher (PhD ‘00) is progressing at stately speed to prepare her dissertation for publication while continuing work as a Research Specialist, Library of Congress. She wrote the entry “Folklore, Folklife” (with Susan Garfinkel) for Material Culture in America (ABC-CLIO, 2008). Her article, “Our National Poetry: The Afro-Chesapeake Inventions of American Dance” opens an anthology of new dance scholarship entitled, Ballroom, Boogie, Shimmy Sham, Shake: A Social and Popular Dance Reader, edited by Julie Malnig, from the University of Illinois Press, Fall 2008.

Paul Gardullo (PhD ‘06) is currently the Museum Curator at the Smithsonian’s new National Museum of African American History and Culture. In the Winter of 2009, his exhibition "The ScuRlock Studio and Black Washington: Picturing the Promise," will open at NMAH. He is editing an accompanying exhibition catalogue that will be published by Smithsonian Books and distributed by Harper Collins. He is also at work on his book manuscript exploring the topic of slavery in 20th Century cultural memory for Oxford University Press. His second daughter Eve was born in November, joining big sister Natalia, now eight.

Jane C. Loefller (PhD ’96) recently published an article concerning the New Embassy Compound program and the US embassy in Baghdad, entitled "Fortress America" in Foreign Policy (September/October 2007). The paper has led to appearances on CNN, C-SPAN, NPR, and numerous other media outlets, and is playing a role in the organization of congressional hearings on the subject of America’s foreign building program. Since receiving her PhD at GWU, Jane has published two books, contributed to three others, and published twenty-six articles on topics ranging from embassy design and security to the work of the Olmsteds (Sr. and Jr.) in the nation’s capital. In June 2007, she delivered a talk at Wellesley College entitled, "Branding a Nation: Design as a Tool in Public Diplomacy." Jane currently teaches in the University Honors Program at the University of Maryland, College Park, where her courses include seminars on architecture and public policy, and on American landscape history and interpretation.

Erin Mavian (BA ’07) moved from DC to New York this past June to begin working at NBC News on their new project, NBC News Archives on Demand, which offers complete access to their collection of news archives. The content is directed at educators and students of courses in US history (from pre-colonial to the present), US government and politics, and English language, literature, and composition. Future courses include African American history, women's studies, environmental science, health, technology, business, and finance. Erin reports that “it’s an incredible collection of over 6,000 clips, with more clips and resources being added daily.” The project is in full start up mode as of August, with plans to offer the site for colleges and universities in the year to come. For now, access to the site is free until January 31, 2009. Registration is through Hotchalk (http://www.hotchalk.com/mydesk/) and there is a tab to the NBC News Archives. Erin writes, “I would have never imagined in a million years that my degree would be so relevant to what I do, but I am forever grateful for my knowledge on the subject and ability to research.”

Peggy Pearlstein (PhD ’92) became Head of the Hebraic Section, Library of Congress in June 2007. She has been employed in the Hebraic Section throughout her career at the Library, which began in 1982. She served as President, Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington (2005-07) and President, Research, Archives, and Special Libraries Division, Association of Jewish Libraries (2004-06). Recent publications include entries of "Sandra Feldman" and "Jane Harman" in Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., 2007; and entries for "Rose Brenner" and "Sylvia Porter Field" in Jewish Women: a Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia, 2006. Her presentations at conferences of the Southern Jewish Historical Society have appeared as publications in the Society’s journal, Southern Jewish History: "Israel Fine: Baltimore businessman and Hebrew Poet" (Vol 9, November 2006) and "Macey Kronsberg, Institution Builder of Conservatism in Charleston, S.C. and the Southeast" (Vol 8, October 2005). Peggy also reports that she is currently the proud grandmother of seven.

Brian Rideout (BA ‘07) writes that he will be returning to campus to attend GW Law school this Fall.

We welcome news and updates from students and alumni. Please direct correspondence to:

Department of American Studies
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E: amst@gwu.edu  W: www.gwu.edu/~amst

E-newsletters…Go Green!

Our newsletter reaches over 1,000 recipients annually – which is a tribute to the strength of our program. The downside, however, is the enormous amount of paper used (and postage paid!) to send the newsletter to so many readers. Please help us keep GW green by requesting an electronic version of our newsletter. Just send us your e-mail address at amst@gwu.edu.
Senior Research Colloquium

The senior research colloquium, held April 25-26, 2008, featured presentations from the graduating majors’ original research projects, a requirement that distinguishes American Studies from any other undergraduate major. Many of the students began these projects in a fall-semester research course that pointed them towards the immense primary resources in DC. By the end of the year, the seniors reflected that the research experience pushed them beyond the usual undergraduate posture of being information receivers and gave them confidence that they could become part of the community of knowledge creators.

**The Progressive Era**
- Alison Scotti—The Transformation of the Department Store
- Emily Mendez-Penate—Rejecting the Modern Age: Edward Hopper’s Return to Traditionalism Through Art
- Elizabeth Cavanaugh—Thomas Jefferson and the Classical Influences of the Library of Congress

**Politics & Ideology**
- Lauren Kirkpatrick—The Exception to the Rule: How Dolley Madison Thrived in the Republican World
- Zeeshan Aleem—The Project for the New American Century: Blindness to Sovereignty
- Shannon Holmes—Paradox City: Washington, DC and Attitudes Toward Drugs During the Late-1980s to Early-1990s
- Jared Elster—The War on the War on Drugs

**Culture & American Identities**
- Erica Rancatore—Negotiating Identity through Conspicuous Consumption: An Analysis of Teen Vogue
- Libby Ellsworth-Kasch (Carper Prize Winner)—The Commodification of Authenticity: Graffiti in the Marketplace
- Emily Enberg—Hunter S. Thompson: His Contribution to Sixties Counter-culture and New Journalism
- Katie Murray—“Baller Bitch”: Foxy Brown and the Appropriation of Masculinity in Pop Gangsta Rap

**Politics, Policy, & Sports**
- Samuel Salyer—The Politics of Disenfranchisement: Race, Region, and Party Politics at the 1835 North Carolina Constitutional Convention
- Joshua Maak—The Teachers Speak: The Effects of No Child Left Behind on Teaching American History
- Paul Marmaro—More Than a Game: The Importance of Sports after September 11

**Redevelopment & Gentrification**
- Charles Basden—To Build or Not to Build: “The Rock” Arena in Newark
- Sarah Fuller—If These Walls Could Talk: The Role of the Built Environment in Historic Preservation
- Christine Doelling—The U Street Takeover: The Artisan Relationship to Gentrification

**The 1980s**
- Katherine Doland (Carper Prize Winner)—Why American Teenagers Got “Grim’n’Gritty”: Explaining the Popularity of Watchmen and The Dark Knight Returns in the Eighties

**Carper Prize Awards for Outstanding Senior Thesis**

**Katherine Doland** In the 1980s, comic books began to shift away from the bright colors and optimistic themes of prior decades; art turned gritty, stories were darker and more cynical, and heroes were depicted as increasingly complex—less ‘super,’ more ‘human.’ In “Why American Teenagers Got ‘Grim’n’ Gritty’,” Katie explains why comic book readers embraced these changes so enthusiastically. Focusing on two legendary, iconic 1980s comics—Frank Miller’s _Watchmen_ and Alan Moore’s _The Dark Knight Returns_—and drawing from her own online discussion forums, as well as interviews, public opinion surveys, media articles, and cultural texts, Katie argues that readers were drawn to these new kinds of comic books primarily because of changes to the comic industry’s publication and distribution standards, critical acclaim of these works, and, especially, growing fears of nuclear war.

**Libby Ellsworth-Kasch** "The Commodification of Authenticity: Graffiti in the Marketplace" investigates graffiti's transformation from criminalized urban art to an aesthetic used by corporations in tennis shoe designs and other consumer goods. Libby analyzed graffiti artists and their works, as well as marketing campaigns that use graffiti, to explain how this form signifies authenticity to consumers even when it is uprooted from its original context. Using the cultural theory of Guy Debord, Fredric Jameson, and others, her project argued that this migration of graffiti from the street to the marketplace has blunted the art form's resistive potential.

The American Studies Department extends a special thanks to all of our generous donors this academic year:

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- Ms. Nancy Solomon
- Dr. Kathleen Anderson Steeves
- Dr. Philip Gibson Terrie

If we have accidentally omitted your name, please accept our apologies and our sincere thanks for your generosity.


Graduate Student News

Laurel Clark completed her dissertation, *Taming the Territory: Women and Gender on the Florida Frontier*, and was awarded her PhD in American Studies in 2007. She was married to her partner Carolyn Arber in April, graduated in May, and moved to Connecticut in June. She will join the faculty of the History Dept. at the University of Hartford this Fall, where she will teach Introduction to US History to 1865, US Women's History, and African American History. After fifteen years in Baltimore, adjusting to suburban Bloomfield, CT will take some time, but she does enjoy the quiet and the tiny woodland creatures. She can be contacted at clark@hartford.edu.

Bernard Demczuk was awarded his PhD in American Studies with an emphasis in African American History & Culture in May 2008. His dissertation was entitled *Unionville: Race, Time, Place and Memory in Talbot County, Maryland, 1634-1892*. Bernard is the Assistant Vice President for government relations at GWU. He was elected Vice Chair of the Washington Historical Society in 2008 and serves as the Chair of the Society’s Government Affairs Committee. He continues to lead tours of DC black history and culture for both the Society and GW. He also teaches a course at the DC Public School Without Walls entitled “African American History & Culture from a DC Perspective.” Bernard is also the co-chair of the Ben’s Chili Bowl 50th Anniversary. He often lectures on DC black history and culture and Talbot County and Eastern Shore black history. Currently, he is re-writing his dissertation into a book, and writing the movie script of the story of the Unionville 18. Bernard continues to live in the Shaw neighborhood of DC with his ten-year-old, switch-hitting son, Che Marley Demczuk.

Julie Passanante Elman received an Honorable Mention commendation this year as part of the Philip Amsterdam Graduate Teaching Assistant Awards for Outstanding Teaching at GW. In August 2008, she will defend her dissertation, *Medicalizing Edutainment: Enforcing Disability in the Teen Body, 1970-2000*, co-directed by Melani McAlister and Robert McRuer. Julie is thrilled to be joining New York University's Dept. of Social and Cultural Analysis as an Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow this Fall. She will teach courses in both gender/sexuality studies and disability studies for the department's Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Julie will also present portions of her dissertation at the studies for the department's Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies but looks forward to the challenges of her new position.

Ramzi Fawaz recently completed his coursework towards the PhD, garnering his Master’s in American Studies. This summer he participated in the 23rd annual meeting of the School of Criticism and Theory, held at Cornell University. A six-week intensive theory workshop, the SCT program provides an environment for advanced graduate students and faculty to think through issues circulating in contemporary critical theory. This year's meeting focused largely on issues relating to the politics of recognition, the security state, and political violence. Ramzi was a participant in Elizabeth Povinelli's seminar on the politics of recognition titled "Recognition, Espionage, Camouflage." Earlier this year, Ramzi presented his paper "Flame On: James Sturm's Unstable Molecules and the Queer History of the Fantastic Four" at the DC Queer Studies Symposium held on the U of Maryland Campus. He also co-chaired “Collected Stories,” the department's second annual American Studies conference. He is now gearing up for this year's ASA conference and a not-so-little hurdle called Field Exams.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Cammarata Fazio completed her Master's degree this year, culminating in her thesis, *Invisible Leaders: The Women of the March on Washington Movement*. The conventional story of the 1941 March on Washington lauds the accomplishments of its male leaders (e.g., A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Walter White of the NAACP) whose early acts of civil disobedience anticipated the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. However, Lizzie's thesis explores another side of this story. Though undervalued through the "masculine rhetoric" of the time, women's contributions were vital to the success and legacy of the movement. Employing abundant scholarship from the latter half of the twentieth century, this social history takes a gendered approach to the lived experiences and key roles of women in the 1941 March on Washington. Lizzie spent this past year in her new home in Ann Arbor, MI finishing up her thesis and job hunting. This summer she will be back in Washington, DC, interning at the United States Supreme Court in the Office of the Curator.

Dave Kieran is currently working on his dissertation, *Vietnam Redux: The Legacy of Vietnam and the Cultural Memory of Trauma in America*, which he plans to finish this year. He presented research from his chapter on public memory at the Flight 93 Memorial at a panel he organized for the American Studies Association Annual Meeting. There, he also gave a paper that examines the intersection of the cultural memory of lynching and images of contemporary urban violence in Black Arts Poetry at the Midwestern MLA annual meeting. An expanded version of that paper is forthcoming as an article for the M/MLA Journal. At GW, he designed and taught two classes this past year. “The Sixties” studied the cultural history of the 1960s, as well as the stakes of remembering “the sixties” in American culture, “Trauma and Memory in 20th and 21st Century America” examined how a variety of cultural texts approach the problem of representing and constructing the memory of traumatic events including lynching.

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Japanese internment, the Vietnam War, the AIDS epidemic, and 9/11. Having discovered that long runs give him plenty of time to think about his dissertation, he also completed his first two marathons and has started training for a third.

Shelly McKenzie happily defended her dissertation, *Mass Movements: A Cultural History of Physical Fitness and Exercise, 1953–89* in December 2007. This Spring she presented conference papers at the national meeting of the Popular Culture Association in San Francisco, and at the Strong Museum of Play in Rochester. She also participated in the National Institutes of Health Graduate Student Symposium in May, and served as an exhibit judge at the National History Day competition at the University of Maryland. Her essays on aerobics, diets, and food trends were recently published in Salem Press’s encyclopedia, *The Eighties in America*, and her article, “Weak Hearts and Wedding Day Figures: Exercise and Health Promotion in the 1960s” will be published in *Women, Wellness, and the Media* by Cambridge Scholars Press.

Eid A. Mohamed has successfully passed his field exams and is currently working on his dissertation proposal. As a scholar of American and Middle Eastern Studies, Eid is also working with the Gallup Organization in Washington, DC, to provide cross-cultural awareness training in an immersion-proficiency based environment. These services offer “cultural translation” to help Gallup analysts bridge the gap between their mother culture and the target one. For the upcoming ASA conference, Eid has organized a panel on “Global Circulation of Images: Middle East Meets West in US Motion Pictures.” There, he will present a paper entitled, “Transnational Wheel of Images: Hollywood Makes a Plea for Mutual Understanding Between Middle East and West.” Eid reports that he is happy to be spending part of his summer back in Egypt where he is reconnecting with family and friends.

Stephanie Ricker Schulte completed her dissertation, *State Technology to State of Being: The Metamorphosis of the Internet in Global Popular Culture*, and was awarded her PhD in American Studies in May 2008. Her dissertation investigates the ways news media, popular culture, and policymakers in the United States and Europe made sense of the internet as it became a public technology. By charting the often contradictory discursive constructions of the internet, she argues that the technology was (and is) a culturally-constituted historical object that participated in and was produced by debates about the nation, the state, globalization, democracy, and capitalism. In turn, culture and policy (as a cultural actor) – and not necessarily technology – determined the ways the internet was understood and developed. This Fall Stephanie begins her tenure-track faculty position with the Communication Dept. at the University of Arkansas.

Joan Fragaszy Troyano presented her research on the circulation of photographs of immigrants from the turn of the 20th Century at the ASA and Midwest MLA meetings last Fall. She is expanding this work in her dissertation, which will be supported by a month-long residency at the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in Philadelphia. At the 2008 ASA meeting in Albuquerque she will help facilitate panels on ethnic studies and visual studies.

Amber Wiley has had an eventful year in dissertation research support. She is a recipient of the SRI Foundation Research Fellow Scholarship for her dissertation entitled *Concrete Solutions: Race, Class, and Architecture of Urban High Schools from 1960–1980*. She was also awarded the Society of Architectural Historian’s Richard Hubbard Howland Fellowship for the *Architecture and Landscapes of Louis I. Kahn* Study Tour offered by the organization.

Katie Wilmes completed her Master’s degree in American Studies this past Spring, for which her coursework focused on 20th Century social history. Since graduating, she has begun work as a Public Program Coordinator at the National Archives, and intends to continue her career path in museum work.

### American Studies Spring Conference 2008

On April 11th, the faculty and graduate students gathered for the 2nd Annual GW American Studies Conference, “Collected Stories.” Developed by graduate student Ramzi Fawaz, the event proved to be a great success as GW scholars convened to tell stories of American identity, history, culture, media, and society.

Kevin Strait “The Duke Steps Out of the Jungle: Race, Minstrelsy, & Activism in Duke Ellington’s “Reminiscing in Tempo”

Laurel Clark “These barbarities have been perpetrated chiefly upon females: Indian Depredations on the Florida Frontier”

Melani McAlister “What is Your Heart For?: Affect and Internationalism in the Evangelical Public Sphere”

Maureen Kentoff “To Live Deliberately: Inter-dimensional Awareness in "High Tide in Tucson"


Jeremy Hill “Country Comes to Town: Country Music’s Tenuous Relationship with the City”

Conference organizers Ramzi Fawaz and Julie Elman
GWU AMSTeam Rocks the Walk

On October 5, 2007 the "GWU AMSTeam" participated in the 21st annual AIDS Walk Washington, a 5K fundraiser with proceeds to benefit the Whitman-Walker Clinic, a non-profit that provides health care and social services for people with HIV/AIDS in the DC metropolitan area.

PhD student Amber Wiley coordinated the GW AMSTeam, which included department head Jim Miller, Tom Guglielmo, Suleiman Osman, Matt Kohlstedt, Eve Errickson, Diana Dinerman, and Natalie Zelt. Many thanks to Amber for who, along with the support of department faculty, students, staff, friends, and family, the team, raised $1,415 for the event!

Faculty News

Libby Anker spent a stimulating and productive year as postdoctoral fellow at Brown University’s Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women. While there, she worked on her book manuscript, The Venomous Eye: Melodrama and the Making of Identity and Power in America. She presented various chapters from her manuscript at the Law, Culture and Humanities Conference, The Watson Institute for International Relations, the Western Political Science Association Meeting, and the Brown Political Theory Workshop. She also completed an essay on post-9/11 patriotism titled “National Love in Violent Times,” which will be published in Political Theory this summer. And she was interviewed for a documentary film on the 2004 election titled Who Stole My Vote which will be released at the end of the summer. Libby is spending the summer on the Kennebec river in Maine, where she’ll be writing, hiking, and learning to kayak. She is very excited to join the American Studies community in DC and to begin teaching in the fall.

Jim Deutsch is teaching a summer distance-learning class on American Films of the 1960s, while continuing to work as a program curator at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Recently he has been curating a Folklife Festival program on the occasion of NASA’s fiftieth anniversary in 2008 which celebrates the occupational culture of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. During the past year he has published articles on the Irish-American presence in Washington, DC, as well as biographical entries on Shelley Duvall, Tyrone Power, Glenn Quinn, Ernest Shackleton, and Woody Strode. Jim also presented lectures at the Corcoran College of Art and Design, Eckerd College, Rutgers University, and the National Association for Interpretation’s annual conference.

In addition to teaching two graduate seminars during the past academic year, Frank Goodyear continues in his capacity as associate curator of photographs at the National Portrait Gallery. Earlier this year the museum opened two new exhibitions that he curated, "RECOGNIZE! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture," and "Zaida Ben-Yusuf: New York Portrait Photographer." The latter includes a book-length study of Ben-Yusuf’s life and photographic career published by Merrell. Prof. Goodyear has also recently completed an essay on photographer Richard Avedon that will appear in a catalogue accompanying "Richard Avedon: Portraits of Power" at the Corcoran Gallery of Art this September. He is currently at work on a new exhibition that highlights photographic portraits of the one hundred men and women who were most responsible for the dramatic changes in the trans-Mississippian West between the time of the Mexican War and the passage of the Indian Citizenship Act in 1924.

This past year, Tom Guglielmo taught a graduate readings course on race; a graduate research seminar on the US and the world; an undergraduate lecture on twentieth-century U.S. immigration; and the senior thesis proseminar. He presented his work at the Social Science History Association

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Spotlight on Faculty Research: Facing Up To Slavery

By John Michael Vlach

The exhibition “Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art” opened this summer at the Gibbes Museum in Charleston, SC. Based on my book The Planter’s Prospect (2002), this exhibit presents ninety-three works of plantation art, including paintings, photographs, works on paper, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, and mixed media assemblages. Collectively the exhibit offers comment and criticism about our nation’s four centuries of chattel slavery, and silently asks the viewer to reflect on slavery’s lasting impact on our current social understandings and apprehensions.

Moving beyond the grand salon graced with Tiffany skylights, the exhibition concluded (if one followed the curators’ tacit directions) with a small selection of works by contemporary artists. Toward the end of this collection, the path was interrupted by an eight-foot wall towering over visitors’ heads, consisting of unusually large, smooth, and precisely-laid bricks (see photo above).

Upon moving to the ‘other’ side of the wall, one was struck immediately by the artist’s powerful message—the ‘back’ of each brick displayed, in bas-relief, the outline of a man on his hands and knees (see photo below). Startling the viewer with these images, sculptor Juan Logan asserts that the African-American labor which built so much of this country has been consistently denied, if acknowledged at all. Logan’s work makes it abundantly clear that the toil, skills, and lives of African-Americans have been built directly into the structures and fabric of America.

Agricultural themes have long been a staple of American art, as evidenced in many early works depicting harvest scenes that celebrate bounty, success, and God’s grace. But, as art historian Katherine Manthorne writes, “The plantation is the harvest’s evil twin.” Similarly, the main point of the “Landscape of Slavery” project is to propose that, for far too long, plantation art functioned as a mode of propaganda intended to validate the appallingly unjust and evil system of slavery.
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meetings in Chicago and chaired a panel on race and racism in contemporary America at the American Sociological Association annual conference in New York. He continues to work on his book, Race War: World War II and the Crisis of American Democracy (under contract with Oxford). Next year he will be fellow at the Charles Warren Center for the Studies in American History at Harvard.

Chad Heap spent much of the past year focused on his responsibilities as the department’s Director of Graduate Studies, overseeing the revision of the graduate curriculum, as well as MA and PhD admissions and advising. In his spare time, Chad provided historical context for Sen. Larry Craig’s sex scandal in an interview with RNN-TV, and began research for his new book, tentatively entitled, “A Dangerous Subject to Study”: Sociology, Anthropology, and Homosexuality in the United States. During the 2008-09 academic year, Chad will spend a much-earned sabbatical year working on this new project in New York. His first book, Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940 (University of Chicago Press) should appear in bookstores by the end of the year.

Kip Kosek is excited to rejoin the department after spending the year as a fellow at the John W. Kluge Center in the Library of Congress. There he completed researching and writing his book Acts of Conscience, to be published by Columbia University Press this winter. The book traces the history of some American religious radicals whose belief in nonviolence led them to work for international peace, economic justice, and racial equality amid the catastrophic bloodshed of the twentieth century. Kip also participated in a panel on publishing at the American Studies Association conference last fall. He reviewed the memoir of civil rights minister Robert Graetz for the Alabama Review, and wrote about the Catholic faith of football star Brett Favre in the online journal Sightings. This coming year he looks forward to teaching his lecture course on US religion and politics, and a new Dean’s Seminar for first-year students on the 1920s.

During the past year, Richard Longstreth published an article, “Bringing ‘Downtown’ to the Neighborhoods: Wieboldt’s, Goldblatt’s, and the Creation of the Department Store Chains in Chicago,” in the inaugural issue of Buildings and Landscapes (successor journal to Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture). A volume that he edited, Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Historic Preservation, was released by the University of Minnesota Press in May. Work has been completed on another edited volume, Housing Washington: Two Centuries of Residential Development and Planning in the National Capital Area, which is scheduled for release by the Center for American Places and the University of Virginia Press in 2010. That same year, Yale University Press will publish The Department Store Transformed, 1920-1960, which he has been preparing for over a decade. He also submitted the lead essay, “The Levitts, Mass Production, and Community Planning in the United States during the Mid Twentieth Century,” for an anthology, Inside Levittown, P.A, to be published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

In May, Prof. Longstreth delivered a paper, “Protecting Artifice Amid Nature: Camp Santanoni and the Adirondack Mountain Preserve,” at an international symposium, “Designing the Parks: The History of Park Planning and Design,” at the University of Virginia and co-sponsored by the Cultural Landscape Foundation, George Wright Society, and National Park Service. Keynote addresses included “The Imperative of Preserving the Recent Past” for the annual meeting of Landmarks Illinois in Chicago last June, and “Never Done: New Challenges for the Preservation Field,” at the annual Rhode Island Statewide Historic Preservation Conference in Providence in April. And his lectures included “Moving On: The Evolving Landscape of the Central United States” at Eastern Illinois University in April, and “Modernism without Fanfare: The Quiet Legacy of Thaddeus Longstreth,” at the University of Pennsylvania in November. Other presentations were given at the annual meeting of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy in Chicago; the Twelfth National Conference on Planning History in Portland, Maine; the Annual Washington Studies Conference; and at the National Building Museum in DC.

In the preservation sphere, Prof. Longstreth serves as a board member of the Fort Ticonderoga Association, co-chairing a new committee formed to ensure the optimal preservation of “The Pavilion,” a singular Neoclassical residence and hotel erected on the grounds in the 1820s. This fall, he will help lead a brainstorming session among distinguished leaders in the preservation field, including GW Preservation program adjunct faculty members Orlando Ridout and de’Teel Patterson Tiller. He gave the testimony for landmark designation of the Third Church of Christ, Scientist and the Christian Science Monitor Building, a remarkable complex design by I. M. Pei & Partners in the late 1960s, which was granted protection by the DC Historic Preservation Review Board in December. He continues to support efforts to preserve many other signature works of the recent past, including Lord & Taylor in Stamford, Connecticut; Midtown Plaza in Rochester, New York; City Hall in Boston; and Richard Neutra’s VDL Research House in Los Angeles. Since last June he has been a consultant to Jones & Stokes on the first citywide survey of historical resources for Los Angeles. He is on the planning committee for the Sixth National Forum on Historic Preservation Practice, to be held at Goucher College next March and chairs the planning committee for the Vernacular Architecture Forum’s 30th-anniversary meeting in DC, 2010.

Melani McAlister spent this academic year continuing work on the manuscript for her new book, tentatively titled...
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Our God in the World: The Global Visions of American Evangelicals. She spent the fall semester as a fellow at the Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University, and the spring semester ensconced in her home office. McAlister wrote three essays for publication this year, and spoke at international conferences at the American University of Beirut and Ben Gurion University in Israel.

Next year, Melani will teach the third-year seminar in Cultural Criticism, and a graduate class called “The United States in a Global Context” co-taught with Prof. Andrew Zimmerman in history—an exciting chance to work across disciplines and share perspectives. And in 2008-09 she will also be Director of Graduate Studies for AMST. But the biggest excitement for Melani this year was seeing four of her PhD students complete their dissertations and move on to new adventures. Laura Cook Kenna and Shelly McKenzie both graduated in January 2008, Stephanie Schulte in the summer of ’08, and Julie Elman is scheduled to finish this fall. Melani couldn’t be more proud.


In February, Prof. Miller was also a panelist on the “Wright Scholars Memorial Panel” at the annual Heart’s Day Celebration Conference: “African American Fiction From Richard Wright to Edward P. Jones,” sponsored by the English Department at Howard University. He continued his long-standing relationship with the School Without Walls by speaking there in November 2007 on “Researching Jazz History,” and lecturing at its annual Harlem Renaissance Symposium on “Black American Writers in Paris: From Harlem to Paris” in March 2008. He spoke on “African American History and Culture in Washington, DC” to the University of Michigan DC Internship Program/U. of California Washington Center in November 2007. He also lectured on “Why Scottsboro? Why Now?” at Franklin and Marshall College in April 2008. In his capacity as Editor of the Richard Wright Newsletter, he organized and chaired two sessions on “Richard Wright at 100” for the annual meeting of the American Literature Association in San Francisco in May 2008. His reviews of Zakes Madi’s Cion and John Edgar Wideman’s Fanon appeared in the Washington Post; and his reviews of Arnold Rampersad’s Ralph Ellison; David A. Nichols’s A Matter of Justice: Eisenhower and the Beginning of the Civil Rights Revolution; and Paula Giddings’s Ida: A Sword Among Lions appeared in the Boston Globe. He was also a recipient of the 2008 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award at GWU. During the Spring of 2009 he will travel to Johannesburg, South Africa as a Fulbright scholar at the University of Witwatersrand.

Terry Murphy has continued her work in women’s history this year. Her new book, Women and the Making of America is now available for fall classes. She also completed an article on “Women and Politics from 1828 to 1865.” Terry is maintaining her interest in public culture through her teaching. This past spring, she taught a Dean’s Seminar for first-year students on “Museums and the Politics of Representation.” Students visited museum exhibits around Washington and spoke with curators and historians from several Smithsonian sites: Mark Hirsh, from the Museum of the American Indian, Paul Gardullo, from the African American History Museum, and Frank Goodyear, from the National Portrait Gallery. Students were particularly thrilled to see Frank’s new exhibit on Hip Hop Portraits.

Suleiman Osman has enjoyed a productive second year at GW. Along with the graduate introductory seminar in American Studies, he designed a new freshman Dean's
Seminar on the 1960’s and a graduate course in urban studies. Suleiman was also busy revising his manuscript on gentrification in Brooklyn, now in its last stages of review by Oxford University Press. Suleiman served on several student-organized panels about race and diversity on campus. He is also a juror for the City Visions program, the National Building Museum’s youth outreach program.

Phyllis Palmer received copies of her new book, Living as Equids: How Three White Communities Struggled for Interracial Connection During the Civil Rights Era, from Vanderbilt University Press in June. She continued to work with doctoral students to improve student writing in the writing-intensive version of the American Studies survey. She introduced a new first-year course on “Food in Washington, DC” in which student research produced evidence of the poor state of campus food for undergraduates. She hopes to encourage more discussion next year about the importance of good food and eating communities to the University’s academic mission.

Elaine Peña is pleased to be in DC after spending her first year as postdoctoral associate and lecturer at Yale University’s MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies. Her article “Beyond Mexico: Guadalupan Sacred Space Production and Mobilization in a Chicago Suburb” will appear in a special issue on Nation and Migration in American Quarterly this September. Peña recently signed a book contract with the University of California Press to publish Performing Piety: Building, Walking, and Conquering in Central México and the Midwest.

This past year, John Vlach developed “The Making of African American Identity,” a curriculum for high school students covering the earliest phases of slavery in the United States. Developed with co-authors Colin Palmer of Princeton and William Andrews of the University of North Carolina, it will soon be fully available online at the National Humanities Center. In the meantime, parts of the project can be viewed now by visiting the following site: http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/index.htm

Covering the years from 1500 to 1865, the curriculum investigates the broad themes of freedom, enslavement, community, identity, and emancipation. In addition to access to historical texts, the site is richly illustrated with maps, photographs, paintings, and various works of art. Accompanying the site are essays by its three consultants. Prof. Vlach’s contribution, entitled “Rooted in Africa, Raised in America: The Traditional Arts and Crafts of African-Americans across Five Centuries.” Just go to: http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tservefreedom/1609-1865/essays/afri.htm

Prof. Vlach has also served for many years as a consultant/advisor to the Frontier Cultures Museum in Staunton, Virginia. This summer, the museum will begin construction of an African farm compound based on the homes of Ibo farmers from southeastern Nigeria. Because a high percentage of the first enslaved Africans in Virginia were captured from Ibo homelands, the museum will now provide a complete visual and tactile record of all the Virginia settler populations in the 18th century. The Ibo exhibit will join a set of farms already created with structures obtained from England, Ireland, and Germany. In the case of the African farm, a team of Ibo farmers will be brought from Nigeria this summer to assemble the required buildings.

Prof. Vlach’s book The Planters Prospect, was the basis for an exhibition “Landscape of Slavery” which opened in February at the University of Virginia. This summer, the exhibit begins its second showing in Charleston, SC at the Gibbes Museum (see feature article on p. 8) before moving on to the Morris Museum in Augusta, Georgia. As in past years, he also gave a number of invited lectures: “African-American Housing in Washington, DC—1790 to 1890,” Overbeck Capitol Hill Oral History Project; “Homegoing: African-American Funeral Customs in the South,” Marion Wright Thompson Lecture Series; Public Grief and Private Mourning in African-American Life and History, Rutgers University; “Shotgun Houses: Their Future Thirty-Five Years Later,” Keynote Address, Louisiana Folklife Society, New Orleans; “What Are We Saying and What Does It Mean?: Discovering How People of African Descent are Interpreted at Louisiana Plantation Sites,” Symposium for Louisiana Teachers, National Park Service, Baton Rouge. ■

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