The AMAA@UST: How we have grown!

Learning from the Quilters of Gee’s Bend

Faculty and Student Research
As the university’s capital campaign draws to a close, we should acknowledge three significant gifts that came to the department as part of that multiyear effort.

The first major development was the gift of the collection of the American Museum of Asmat Art to St. Thomas. It provided an opportunity to bring students to the art in working with the collection and to bring art to the students in the classroom. With its installation in The Gallery of the Anderson Student Center, it now has the best exhibit space in its history and provides students with the opportunity to work on exhibitions at many new levels.

Second, the gift of the Winton Guest House brought a masterpiece of modern architecture by Frank Gehry to the Owatonna campus. It has opened up new opportunities for research and engagement with both the public and with art historians around the world that complement and expand upon those of the AMMA@UST.

Finally, the recent gift of paintings, drawings and other works from the collection of Dolly Fiterman has led to new opportunities, starting with a graduate seminar this fall and an exhibition this spring. Following on the heels of the Stoked exhibition of pottery from Richard Bresnahan and his associates, we are following yet more avenues of engagement with students and the community.

All of this helps prepare us to look beyond the current campaign toward our next goal – building a performing and visual arts center. As Dean Langan announced on Oct. 18, we already have pledges for $10,000,000 to support the arts center. As members of St. Thomas and the community see continued engagement with and vision for the arts at St. Thomas, we hope to build that support into a real structure in the years ahead. The current campaign has, literally, opened the doors for new possibilities for the department.

Mark Stansbury-O’Donnell is department chair of the Art History Department.

Calendar of Events

- **Building the Collection: Gifts and Recent Purchases**
  Through Dec. 21, 2012
  The Gallery, Anderson Student Center
  American Museum of Asmat Art at the University of St. Thomas

- **Stoked: Five Artists of Fire and Clay**
  Through Jan. 10, 2013
  O’Shaughnessy Educational Center lobby gallery

- **Contemporary Art: Selections From the Collection of Dolly Fiterman**
  Jan. 17-May 26, 2013
  O’Shaughnessy Educational Center lobby gallery

- **Wowipitsj: Man, Myth, Legend**
  Feb. 4-Aug. 4, 2013
  The Gallery, Anderson Student Center
  American Museum of Asmat Art at the University of St. Thomas

- **Generations and the Tradition of Art Lecture Series**
  The four-part speaker series concludes with:

  - **Dr. Peter Schulz**
    *Style, Continuity and the Hellenistic Baroque*
    6 p.m. Feb. 21, 2013
    O’Shaughnessy Educational Center auditorium

  - **Juliet Shen**
    *The Lushootseed Typeface: Designing for a Critically Endangered Language*
    6:30 p.m. April 8, 2013
    O’Shaughnessy Educational Center auditorium

  - **Emily Umberger**
    *Aztec Antiquarianism*
    6:30 p.m. April 18, 2013
    Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Art History Graduate Student Forum

4:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 14
O’Shaughnessy Educational Center auditorium

**SARAH MUENSTER-BLAKLEY**
*The Living Memorial to Ken Saro-Wiwa: Remembering an Activist through a Vehicle for Change*

**POPpy r. dicandeloro**
*The Grotesque Aesthetics of Hieronymus Bosch: Identifying Seven Qualities in Six Paintings*

**SARAH A. KuenZler**
*Edward FitzGerald and Elihu Vedder: Transforming The East Into A Western Type In The Rubaiyat Of Omar Khayyam*
Generations and Traditions: Graduate Student Symposium

On Nov. 15 and 16, after months of planning, the graduate student symposium committee was able to sit back, relax (kind of) and listen to the outstanding speakers they had assembled for the third annual graduate symposium, “Generations and Traditions: How Design Moves Forward.” Keynote speaker Dr. Nancy Wicker started off the event Thursday night with her engaging talk, “The Transmission of Artistic Knowledge: Learning from Early Medieval Goldsmithing.” On Friday, six graduate students from across the world, including our own Natalie McMonagle and Sarah Oelrich Church, shared their research on the role of design moving forward in art history. The event was a great success, and we are very proud to be part of this continuing tradition that showcases our commitment to be leaders in graduate art historical study in the United States.

It is impressive when thinking about all the work that our fellow graduate students have put into organizing every last detail of this two-day event. After sending out the call for papers last spring, the abstract committee selected six of the many proposals submitted for presentation at the symposium. Dr. Victoria Young and Dr. Heather Shirey selected the two UST graduate student presenters. The hospitality committee ensured the presenters had places to stay and transportation to and from the airport. In the meantime the marketing committee worked hard to promote the event, both the keynote speaker Thursday night and the student presentations on Friday, through multiple media channels. We are all very grateful for the faculty leadership of Young and Shirey.

Finally, the symposium committees had expanded to include new graduate students as well as undergraduate students. Everyone’s participation was vital and ensures that next year’s committee will have plenty of experienced students to continue producing this great event. It is important to our program to host such an excellent opportunity, but it is also important for students to experience this kind of event from the inside. The experience builds our confidence toward submitting our own research abstracts to other symposia and conferences and allows us to see the varied and complex research being conducted by other graduate students throughout the world.

“Generations and Traditions” is just the third of this new annual tradition of the Master of Arts in Art History program at the University of St. Thomas. I would like to thank all those who attended this year, and I hope to see you all next fall. Thank you to all my colleagues who worked on the committees as well as the committee chairs. I am proud to be a part of such a great group of people.

Brady King is a UST graduate student and the graduate program assistant.

Dumbarton Oaks Hosts Academic Symposium

Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., is a research library and art collection administered by the trustees of Harvard University. Its principle goal is to foster academic research and publication in each of its three different areas of emphasis: Byzantine studies, pre-Columbian studies and garden and landscape studies. Dumbarton Oaks is, itself, a historic place. The centerpiece of the growing campus in the midst of Georgetown is the 1810 Federal-style house bought by Robert Woods Bliss and Mildred Barnes Bliss in the early part of the 20th century. Before donating the house and its contents to Harvard, the Blisses developed 16 acres of its property into a formal garden and enlarged the house by adding a large music room (where the United Nations charter got its start in 1945), a wing to house their extensive Byzantine art collection, and a pavilion designed by architect Philip Johnson to display their renowned Pre-Columbian art collection.

Each year the directors of the three research areas convene an academic symposium where invited scholars deliver academic papers that center on that year’s theme. The pre-Columbian studies symposium is traditionally scheduled Columbus Day weekend. This year, I was invited to participate in the “The Measure and Meaning of Time in the Americas” symposium, organized by Anthony F. Aveni Russell, Colgate Distinguished University Professor of Astronomy, Anthropology (Colgate University).

From left to right in the photo, the speakers were Linda Brown (George Washington University), Harvey Bricker (Tulane University), John Monaghan (University of Illinois at Chicago), Victoria Bricker (Tulane University), me, Stella Nair (University of California, Los Angeles), Anthony Aveni (Colgate University), Collin McEwan (director, Pre-Columbian Studies, Dumbarton Oaks), Richard Landes (Boston University), Juan Ossio (Universidad Pontificia Católica del Perú), Markus Eberl (Vanderbilt University), Tristan Platt (University of St. Andrews), Alfredo López Austin (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) and Jahl Dulanto (DePauw University).

William Barnes is an assistant professor at St. Thomas.
“Building the Collection: Recent Gifts and Purchases” celebrates acquisitions to the American Museum of Asmat Art since its arrival on campus in 2007. Graduate students Gretchen Burau, Rachel Simmons and Wendy DePaolis along with undergraduate art history major Amanda Lesnikowski contributed to the exhibition, installation and design. Burau, this year’s AMAA@UST graduate curatorial assistant, selected most of the objects. Her work began in collection storage units over the summer.

Given possible conservation and preservation needs, as well as mount design, working with potential objects starts several months before an exhibition opens. Two carvings required off-site professional care: an intricate ancestor pole by Marselus Fin and a narrative sculpture by Kaitanus Deip of a man being abducted by a large flightless bird, a cassowary.

Works were donated to St. Thomas or purchased directly from artists by museum director Julie Risser with funds from AMAA@UST donors. American Crosier missionaries brought back many of the pieces in the exhibition. Father Frank Pitka, O.S.C., one of the first four American Crosiers to travel to Asmat in 1958, returned with at least two carvings. He provided one for a fundraiser premium, the other he gave to his sister Delores Millerbernd. These are displayed next to each other. Burau had a large selection of new works to choose from — Bishop Alphonse Sowada donated 272 pieces in April and May of 2012. Burau chose one shield, five small sculptures, as well as small bamboo items from the Sowada gift.

For Bishop Sowada and many of his confreres, collecting Asmat art was a way to raise awareness of Asmat culture in the world and the challenges facing it. Today acknowledgement of Asmat art has grown with major museums displaying some of the most recognized forms: ancestor poles, shields and drums.

Creating exhibitions offers opportunities for hands-on learning as well as traditional research. Tasks range from light preservation work (removing dust and debris), to designing and creating mounts for objects and images, to working on case displays and writing labels. Because the Asmat region remains challenging to access, artwork plays a fundamental role in fostering dialog with outside communities.

The current exhibition is in the Gallery, second floor east end of the Anderson Student center. It runs until Dec. 21. Gallery hours are Monday-Wednesday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, noon-4 p.m.

Julie Risser is director of the American Museum of Asmat Art at the University of St. Thomas and a clinical faculty member.
The fall exhibition features ceramics by master potter Richard Bresnahan and four of his former apprentices, on display Sept. 14, 2012-Jan. 10, 2013. This traveling exhibit was curated by Dr. Matthew Welch, assistant director of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, who wrote the catalog for the exhibit. Installing a major ceramic display safely, and without making it look like a craft shop, are both difficult tasks, but the result has been praised by viewers and has allowed us to step up our efforts in the very challenging space that is the Lobby Gallery.

Based on interviews with the five artists, Dr. Welch drew lines of connection among them, placing their work and its development in deeper context. Richard Bresnahan, master potter from St. John’s University, built the wood-fired kiln – the Johanna Kiln – at St. John’s based on the kilns used in traditional Japanese ceramic making. The kiln is 87 feet long, divided into three chambers, with a capacity of 1,600 cubic feet. The first firing lasted about five weeks: three weeks to load (the kiln holds up to 12,000 pieces of pottery), nine days to fire, and five days to cool and unload the kiln.

Bresnahan’s own work has undergone subtle but significant and multiple evolutions since returning from his four-year apprenticeship in Japan. On discovering a local source of clay, he stockpiled the raw material, to which he adds local plants and minerals to form his glazes. Many of his motifs are nature-based and his forms are both traditional and radical. Since the first firing in 1995, there have been 10 others, with the next planned for 2013.

Along with his own work and running the pottery program at St. John’s, Bresnahan has continued another tradition that he learned in Japan: extended apprenticeships for potters who share the same aesthetics and devotion to absolute mastery of the material. This exhibition, which has been traveling since 2010 and will continue next at Kalamazoo, Mich., reflects both the influence the master has had on the four other artists and their personalization of their work, each finding a new expression in clay and fire.

Each artist has found a tradition that was turned to his or her own devices. Stephen Earp’s interests led him from archaeological digs in Africa to Nicaragua, and finally to his studio in Massachusetts. Along the way, he discovered American Redware, a type of pottery produced by immigrants in the eastern United States, a deceptively simple-looking, figuratively stylized rich brown ceramic of both utilitarian and symbolic purpose.

Kevin Flicker transferred what he learned as an apprentice to his job as pottery teacher at the University of Minnesota–Morris, where he followed in Bresnahan’s footsteps, building a smaller, wood-fire kiln. His pieces reflect both traditional and unexpected shapes, and his glazes enhance the nature-based motifs he incises and impresses on the vessels. He even takes one of the least respected techniques, that of mold-casting, and rethinks it for results that are, at the same time, coordinated and strikingly individual.

Two of Flicker’s students at UM Morris, Sam Johnson and Anne Meyer, followed in his footsteps to apprentice with Bresnahan at St. John’s. Johnson, who worked with Bresnahan for three-and-a-half years, sought out an even more diverse education in both Denmark and France, as well as visiting his teacher’s teacher in Japan, before settling as pottery instructor at St. John’s sister school, the College of St. Benedict, as well as SJU. His work is characterized by simplicity of form and illusive effortlessness in embellishment, drawing on historical shapes but making them over in his own manner.

Anne Meyer is also heavily influenced by artist Nancy Randall. These influences, as well as her own abiding interest in sculpture, have led her on a completely different path than her fellow artists. Her three-dimensional forms, ranging from complicated combinations of yoga positions and the traditional “ages of man” to whimsical, if slightly startling large-scale geese to highly embellished portraits of her mentors and herself, are all expressive of her mastery of medium and deep thinking about symbolism and history. All of these artists are masters at their craft and all combine the teachings of their mentors with personal interpretations that raise them above the level of mere workers in clay.

The collaboration with both St. John’s University and UST’s family weekend, has permitted more than the usual events associated with an exhibit. Dr. Matthew Welch presented a lecture on Oct. 4 followed by a reception in the gallery, including three of the four apprentices. On Oct. 6, the annual Family Weekend multicollege Art Tour took place, with both occasions drawing over 250 visitors. Our thanks go to our colleagues, professional, academic, graduate and undergraduate who assisted with these efforts, as well as Ryan Kutter and Steve Lemke from SJU — and of course, the artists whose work help to define modern ceramic making.

Shelly Nordtorp-Madson is Chief Curator and Clinical Faculty.
How My Art History Degree Informed the Internet Cat Video Festival

On Aug. 30, 2012, more than 10,000 people attended the first Internet Cat Video Festival on Open Field, a program at the Walker Art Center. I created this program not only because I enjoy watching cat videos, but more importantly it was created in the spirit of a social experiment: Can you take an individual online small screen viewing experience and create a social offline big screen event? Where do public content, crowd sourcing, and the Internet fit into the museum world? What happens if a major cultural institution acknowledges the cultural relevance of keyboard cat?

After a month of taking online nominations, I (with a little help from some select “jurors,” including fellow UST alum Marria Thompson) watched about 10,000 cat videos and selected about 75 to show at the festival. How does one narrow down such a vast pool of unique material? The same way we, as art historians, address any piece ... critically. While this program focused on the community aspect of crowd-sourcing its content (this was not a program from a curatorial department, but rather the Education and Community Programs department), there was still a lot of analytical skill, time and thought put into the selection, organization, editing and production of the final festival screening piece.

Believe it or not, cat videos may be scrutinized through the same lens used when looking at a Mende mask, Rembrandt painting or, say, a water bottle. My approach centered on an agreement between form and content within the individual videos, and ensuring the overall balanced presentation reflected the range of nominated videos. While I’m not calling all cat videos art, I did assess them using skills I developed in the Art History MA program.

For example, the production value and content of these videos varied from the film student’s noir-like presentation of an existential black and white cat named Henri with music and subtitles and clean jump cuts to the incidental cat caught on someone’s shaky low quality cellphone camera doing something entirely silly or simply sleeping adorably with little to no editing at all. But these could both be excellent videos as their form matched the content. After watching thousands of cat videos, you start to develop your own criteria for judging their merit, but even after I’d whittled the material down to under 100 videos, there came the challenge of how to present them all in a way that would make sense to the viewer. I believe this question of presentation, sequencing, organization, packing and storytelling is one that faces every art historian, researcher, artist or curator.

It is also our job as art historians to get people talking about material culture. Internet content may be contemporary and often controversial, but that does not make it irrelevant to this culture. It actually raises very interesting questions about the idea of public content. When anyone can be an “artist” or producer and put work online for the world to see, it eliminates the filter of the institution, curator, editor, educator or other vehicle through which we otherwise experience art. The implications of the success of this cat video event may threaten the museum field’s status quo, but then again, isn’t that what good art does?

Katie Czarniecki Hill
M.A. ’12

Studying Contemporary Art in Tibet

In May and June of 2012, I traveled throughout mainland China and spent several weeks in Lhasa, Tibet. It was truly the trip of a lifetime. I traveled with Professor Jon Stoltz and his Ethics in Tibet class but was able to pursue my own independent research. My primary goal was to meet as many contemporary Tibetan artists as possible. Tensions were more than high this summer due to the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre as well as the recent increase in self-immolations occurring in the region. Despite all this I was able to spend time with several artists of both contemporary and traditional persuasions. Learning thangka, or Tibetan hanging scroll painting techniques with a master of the art form in his studio was a major highlight of my visit!

In addition to the absolute boon of just being in Tibet, my stay also happened to coincide with the monthlong Saga Dawa festival, a celebration of the historic Buddha’s birth, death and attainment of nirvana. Because of this, I rarely went more than a day without visiting at least one of the numerous temples in or near Lhasa. This served to be a true crash course in Tibetan Buddhist imagery and architecture. Every aspect of my journey was awe-inspiring, from examining the few religious murals and structures that actually survived the Cultural Revolution to climbing mountains at over 17,000 feet. It will be an honor to present my initial findings in the paper “From the Sweet Tea Houses to an Artists Guild: Reinventing Tradition in Contemporary Tibetan Art” at our graduate student symposium.

Sara Oelrich Church is a UST graduate student.
Contemporary Art in London’s Nigerian Diaspora: Team Research

London was the stage for big events during summer 2012, drawing in masses from around the globe. Between the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics, however, three academics from the University of St. Thomas went to London with a project of their own. In July, art history graduate students Sarah Muenster-Blakley and Natalie McMonagle traveled to London with faculty member Heather Shirey. Their team research project, “Art, Political Memory and Identity in London’s Nigerian Diaspora: Yinka Shonibare, Sokari Douglas Camp and Emanoke Ukeleghe,” was funded by the Grants and Research Office at St. Thomas.

Their goal was to investigate contemporary art produced in London’s Nigerian Diaspora through interviews with artists and site visits to view large-scale public works of art in context; additionally, the team sought to explore London’s museums and galleries in an effort to determine how contemporary artists of the Nigerian Diaspora fit into the larger art world of London. The conclusion: Nigerian art is a valuable aspect of London culture, a component of the city’s art and culture that the Twin Cities could one day hope to replicate in order to support its own diasporic communities. Here are some highlights and plans from the research team:

Sarah Muenster-Blakley: Trip Highlight
Interviewing Sokari Douglas Camp, Nigerian artist known for her steel sculptures that challenge the concept of identity. Douglas Camp was selected to build a memorial to a Nigerian writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, which has since traveled around the United Kingdom. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to interview Douglas Camp about the Living Memorial to Ken Saro-Wiwa, a large steel bus, and her creative process. Douglas Camp invited us into her home/studio, where we received a tour, including a peek at many of her sculptures, the model for the Ken Saro-Wiwa memorial and the model for her upcoming memorial to the abolition of slavery; additionally, she was open about her experiences as a Nigerian artist in London and provided insight regarding her memorial and why it would or would not have similar meaning in Nigeria.

NUMBER ONE REASON TO RETURN
Memorials are everywhere in London. We explored a few of the memorials near Hyde Park during one afternoon. I would like to visit the Living Memorial to Ken Saro-Wiwa when it moves next, but there are also numerous unexplored and possibly forgotten memorials to (re)discover. Though memorials in London often remember wars of the past few centuries, contemporary memorials, such as the July 7, 2005 bombings memorial in Hyde Park and the Ken Saro-Wiwa memorial, may provide a glimpse of the changing future of London’s proclivity for statuesque monument design.

Natalie McMonagle: Trip Highlight
Interviewing Ima-Abasi Okon, multimedia artist of Nigerian decent. Okon, who is launching a publishing house for contemporary African art books in Senegal, granted us insight into her life as a British-Nigerian artist. She offered her perspective on African diaspora artists and their position in the global art market. While interest in contemporary African art has increased significantly, there is a tendency to support artists (often male) whose work is easily translated to a western audience. In order to present alternative images of Africa, Okon’s publishing house will produce a library of diverse practices.

NUMBER ONE REASON TO RETURN
Tiwani Contemporary and other non-western art galleries. We had the privilege of meeting with co-director Maria Varnava at Tiwani, a gallery focusing on contemporary Nigerian artists. Like many emerging diaspora programs, Tiwani has both commercial and educational goals. While it presents the works of emerging and established artists, it also partners with Art Connect to produce talks, panel discussions, curated projects and events within the gallery space to advance the dialogue regarding diaspora art and artists. The gallery also collaborates with the Centre of Contemporary Art in Lagos to develop similar programming. Tiwani is not the only destination for contemporary African and diaspora artworks. The October Gallery and Ed Cross Fine Art Gallery are two that we missed the first time around that I would certainly put on my itinerary for round two!

Heather Shirey: Highlight of the Trip
Our meeting with Dr. Fiona Sheales, curator of West African art at the British Museum. The British Museum holds one of the world’s largest collections of brass and ivory artworks from the Benin Kingdom, located in present-day Nigeria. These objects were collected in 1897, as Great Britain exerted political dominance over the Benin Kingdom. The continued presence of the Benin pieces in the British Museum is a contentious issue today, especially since many people, including British-Nigerians, have requested their return to their country of origin. Sheales spoke with us about the museum’s approach to exhibiting African art as well as the institution’s response to the complex ethical issues that the museum must navigate as it continues to work with these pieces. It was wonderful to learn about all the work the British Museum does to build and maintain a positive relationship with the Benin Kingdom as well as other communities throughout Africa.

NUMBER ONE REASON TO RETURN
Yinka Shonibare’s “Nelson’s Ship in a Bottle,” a primary focus of our research, was only partially visible to us, so we must return to see it from the other side! The sculpture is on display at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, which also happened to be an important site in the Olympic games in July. On the day we visited the museum, the staff was busy preparing for the arrival of the Olympic torch the following day. As a result, we were only able to see the sculpture from one angle, and we did not have the opportunity to explore the museum’s library and archives; in addition, Shonibare’s work will be the subject of a major new retrospective in Yorkshire in 2013. Shonibare and his continued body of work will draw me back to the U.K. in the future.
Learning From the Quilters of Gee’s Bend

In July 2012, I had the opportunity to travel to Gee’s Bend, Ala., with the support of the Undergraduate Summer Research Fellowship from the Luann Dummer Center. My research project, titled “The Freedom Quilting Bee in the 1960s and Today: The Quilters of Gee’s Bend as Artists, Merchants and Civil Rights Activists,” focused on the famous African-American quilters who are best known for their vivid textiles and vibrant patterns.

I first became interested in this project in Dr. Heather Shirey’s class on the Arts of the African Diaspora, in which we discussed the quilters and their rise to international recognition. After months of preparation, I was excited to have a chance to talk to quilter Mary Ann Pettway. The first moments of the interview were awkward as we walked through the formalities of setting up the recorder and signing the consent forms. But soon the notes in front of me became a mess of scratches and notes. I asked Pettway the question I’d been wondering all along: “Do you consider yourself to be an artist?” She looked at me and relaxed her posture for the first time all morning. She looked comfortable and her tone became more friendly. Through a crooked smile, she confidently answered, “Yes, I do.”

Quilts created by the women of Gee’s Bend, Ala., are recognized as works of art throughout the world. The Gee’s Bend Quilting Collective consists of approximately 35 members, of ranging ages and experiences. The quilts, with their bright colors and bold, abstract patterns, have been featured in major art museums and are the subject of coffee table books. The quilts have even appeared on postage stamps! However, in Boykin, Ala., they lie haphazardly on folding tables and storage shelves waiting for the customer to leave and Mary Ann Pettway to reorganize the thousands of dollars worth of art. Reproductions of these quilts are sold across the world, and there are many books on the artists and their work.

The digital images and museum postcards I had seen of the quilts do not do the material justice. The colors that were so carefully chosen to tell a story lose their strength in reproductions. They must be admired and held in person, where you can see the individual stitches and puckers left behind by the artists. The power that comes from these quilts turned ordinary women into activists, artists and merchants.

In the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, quilters from Gee’s Bend created the Freedom Quilting Bee to market their work and engage with political issues relevant to African-American women. To study this group of artists, I gathered and analyzed primary documents and oral histories relating to the group’s history and contemporary developments. My trip began by traveling to Alabama with support from the Luann Dummer Center for Women at the University of St. Thomas. The trip started in Birmingham and Montgomery, where I met with experts and toured the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and Southern Poverty Law Center, respectively, to gain a deeper understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. I then traveled south to Wilcox County and visited Boykin. This bend in the river is traditionally known as Gee’s Bend and is home to the quilting collective. While visiting the collective, I interviewed Mary Ann, 55, and Nancy Pettway, 76. Through one-on-one interviews, I came to understand their working methods, learned about their families, and observed a day in Gee’s Bend.

My research contributes to the scholarship on the quilters of Gee’s Bend by focusing on an early period of their history and the development of the Freedom Quilting Bee, a movement which is often ignored in scholarship and museum exhibitions. Merging previous research with my own, I am able to further the study of the Quilters of Gee’s Bend, while encouraging other academics to do the same. Literature, interviews, and primary sources from the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the Southern Poverty Law Center provide the necessary information to begin my research. The events and important figures of the movement are woven in with the history of the quilters. There was adversity, oppression and the idea that being African-American was an impairment. The women of Gee’s Bend did not see it as such. The women of Gee’s Bend formed their own business, which was independently run and financially successful.

Amanda Lewnikowski is majoring in Art History and is chair of St(AR).
Over the past five summers, I have worked at the archaeological site of Sardis in Turkey. Sardis was the capital of the Lydian empire that fell to the Achaemenid Persians and was later controlled by the Greeks and Romans. The site is known for its public buildings such as the temple of Artemis, a synagogue and bath-gymnasium complex. In addition, the excavation has uncovered remains of Roman houses and tombs. I began my work at Sardis with a study of wall painting, primarily preserved in late Roman houses and underground tombs. Late Roman wall painting often imitates skoutlosis, or marble inlay that more commonly decorated public buildings. Part of my dissertation on wall painting involved considering the relationship between painted skoutlosis from domestic contexts and marble skoutlosis from nearby civic and religious spaces, including Sardis’ synagogue. When the opportunity arose, it made sense for me to also study the skoutlosis from the synagogue. In this way, I have come to specialize in ancient interior decoration for the Roman period at Sardis.

Most of my work involves trying to make sense of material excavated decades ago. I began looking at skoutlosis by cleaning out the old storage depots and sifting through boxes of marble fragments that were originally excavated in the 1960s. And for both skoutlosis and wall painting, it is essential to comb through fieldbooks and plans from the original excavations to make sense of where the fragments were discovered. For example, it is important to know which part of a room wall painting fragments came from and which level they came from. Some fragments come from earlier phases, were removed from the walls and used as fill under new construction, while some pieces represent the last phase of building that collapsed. Understanding how the pieces landed is essential to understanding what part of the wall they came from. One of my favorite spaces, a fifth-century dining room, has an interesting array of wallpaper-like designs whose closest parallels are found at other sites on ceilings, but a drawing of the pieces in situ before excavation makes it clear that they slumped down from the wall rather than the ceiling; thus, the already interesting designs become more interesting because of their location.

In many ways, the archaeological process is like detective work: What was the process of construction? How does the material compare with other sites? When were the different phases decorated? Why were certain patterns chosen? What were those patterns? This last is often the most challenging question, as there are always lacunae in the archaeological record. And sometimes that lacuna is a result of modern happenstance; for example, a painted Augustan-era room was discovered this past season, but the trench lines naturally did not match up with the walls of the room, so a large piece of painted plaster was partially in the scarp and the extent of the room and its painted decoration remain unclear – a mystery to be solved next season.

Vanessa Rousseau is an adjunct faculty member and graduate of the UST Master of Arts in Art History program.

Left: Vanessa inside a fourth century tomb near the Artemis temple at Sardis
Above: Vanessa Rousseau examining skoutlosis fragments at a site near Sardis called Laodikeia
Visual Resources News
Local happenings
The Fall Art Tour was a huge success with hundreds of people attending the afternoon event. A guided tour with busing between galleries, goodies to snack on at each stop and exciting art made for a fun day. This event happens once each year; keep it in mind for next year when planning your fall 2013 activities.

VR News
Lots of progress has been made on the slide conversion project. Many of you will remember the wall of slide cabinets in the basement. Well, all of those cabinets are now gone! The remaining slides are in boxes and the evaluation and digitization project continues on. With luck the conversion to a fully digital collection will be completed by the end of spring semester.

Did you know?
Richard Bresnahan uses locally dug clay and glazes crafted from natural materials to create his incredible pottery. You can check out the work of this nationally known artist and four of his former apprentices at Stoked: Five Artists of Fire and Clay, currently on display in the OEC Lobby Gallery. Or, if you are feeling adventurous, head up to Saint John’s in Collegeville and check out the Saint John’s Pottery where Bresnahan is the artist-in-residence.

Greetings Faculty, Colleagues and Friends of the Art History Program!
From your Grad Rep
After a summer filled with internships, summer courses, independent study, conferences, research travel and publications, we began another school year with great anticipation. At orientation, I was pleased to welcome an unprecedented number of new students. One week later, with the help from some exceptional assistants, the Asmat Gallery opened its second exhibition: “Building the Collection: Recent Gifts and Purchases.” We rounded off the month with Happy Hour at Sweeney’s, where I was excited to reconnect with colleagues and hear about the great research being conducted.

Many of you came out for the Dr. Welch lecture or the CAGC Fall Art Tour, which featured the artist and his past apprentices. These events not only enrich us academically by offering new points of view, but they allow others to see the great work our program is doing outside the classroom … plus, they are fun! Please consider joining in as active participants in the program.

Finally, now that we have settled back into our regular routines – however unbalanced they may feel at times – let us consider taking a moment to provide encouragement to each other. Offer to proofread a friend’s paper. Let your peers know how great their presentations were. These gestures will offer incredible support as we push toward the end of this semester.

Wishing you all a happy and productive second half,
Natalie Andron McMonagle

St(ART) The Art History Department Student Organization
St(ART) is having a wonderful semester. The club is growing in size each week and now has approximately 25 members. They’ve been meeting monthly and just recently carved and decorated pumpkins to celebrate the beginning of fall. Up next the club is going to Feed My Starving Children in Eagan to pack meals and volunteer in the spirit of Thanksgiving. To end the semester in a fun way, the club is going to dinner downtown and to see the Nutcracker at the Orpheum.

For more information, please email the club president, Amanda Lesnikowski, lesn220@stthomas.edu. We’re always looking to add new members!

Of Interest
The Russian Museum of Art’s January exhibit is “Concerning the Spiritual.”
http://tmora.org

Students get involved with SAM – Student-Alumni Mentoring program. Now in its 18th year, the program matches alumni with juniors beginning in the spring semester and lasting to fall semester of their senior year. Contact the Alumni Association, (651) 962-6430, or ustalumni@stthomas.edu for details.

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Faculty and Staff

Faculty Research grants have been awarded to William Barnes: “Divine Reckoning: The Calendrical Ground of Mexican Dynasty Imagery” and Heather Shirey, “Pierre Verger, Carybé and the Creation of Candomblé’s Iconic Imagery in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil.”

Craig Eliason presented a talk at the Typographic Education Forum at TypeCon in Milwaukee in August. He also earned “Typophile of the Year” honors at the type trivia contest there. In Chicago in October, he gave a presentation on his “Ambicase” digital type designs at the American Printing History Association annual conference.

Elizabeth Kindall’s article “Experiential Readings and the Grand View: ‘Mount Jizu’ by Huang Xiangjian (1609-1673)” was published in The Art Bulletin (September 2012).

Julie Risser will take the CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams) Basic Training course in November. Funded by FEMA, the training educates people about disaster preparedness, allowing them to assist others in their neighborhood or workplace in an event when professional responders are not immediately available.


Victoria Young spent the summer writing her book on Saint John’s Abbey Church by Marcel Breuer (1953-61). The University of Minnesota Press will be publishing the book sometime in early 2014. Her current research on Frank Gehry and his domestic designs for the Winton Guest House and the Make it Right Foundation duplex in New Orleans has been the subject of talks, including a paper delivered at the Louisiana Studies Conference in September. Young and her students have been giving tours of the Winton Guest House over the summer months with visitors coming from UST’s Selim Center, the University of Minnesota architecture school, the Walter Burley Griffin Society and the Frank Lloyd Wright Conservancy.

Graduate Students

Jenn Dello went to Los Angeles in August to hunt down Shepard Fairey street art to support her independent study with Craig Eliason. She was much more successful than anticipated, and it led to a lot of other ideas and opportunities. She just got back from Cincinnati, where she did the same thing, and she’s planning to go to the east coast sometime in the next few months to continue the hunt!

Olga Ivanova was accepted to present her research Nov. 22-23 at the fourth international scientific conference “Art Education. Ceramic. Gzhel” at Gzhel State Art and Crafts Institute in Gzhel city, Moscow region, Russia.

Sarah Kuenzler’s paper presentation, “Elihu Vedder: Transforming the East into a Western type in the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam,” received the 2012 Midwest Art History Society Graduate Student Presentation Award at the spring meeting in Wichita, Kan.

Natalie McMonagle began an internship at the Walker Art Center this fall in Education and Community Programs, developing interpretive materials for visitors with special needs. She is continuing her internship at the MIA, conducting research under African Arts Curator Jan-Lodewijk Grootaers. In June, she was also able to travel to Montepulciano, Italy, to visit the studio of father-daughter mosaic team Mario and Clara Sarcinelli and conduct an interview with them.

Sarah Muenster-Blakley was the recipient of a Luann Dummer Center for Women and Women’s Studies Department Student Research Fellowship Award. She presented her research on “Exhibitions for the International Community: The Photographs and Interviews of Rape Victims from Rwanda and Somalie y Jonathan Torgovnik and Fazal Sheikh.” Heather Shirey is her adviser.

Rachel Turner will be presenting the paper “Gendering a Disaster Monument: Exhibiting a Life in the The Hu Huishan Memorial House” at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate Student Symposium: Exhibition Complex: Displaying People, Identity, and Culture. She also is interning in the Asian Department at the MIA for “China’s Terracotta Warriors: The First Emperor’s Legacy.”

Special thanks to Stoked: Five Artists of Fire and Clay docents Wendy Depaolis, Lauren Greer, Brady King and Rachel Turner for their professionalism and assistance with the exhibition opening and Fall Art Tour.

Graduate Alumni

Melissa Aho ’09 is in her third year in the Ph.D. program in international development at the University of Southern Mississippi. She had book reviews published in Library Journal, Public Services Quarterly and Catholic Library World. She continues to teach for National American University and Rasmussen College. This summer she soloed in a fixed-wing aircraft.

Paige Dansinger ’10 is preparing to speak at the Tate Modern, London, at a Museum Games Conference where she will discuss and demonstrate #DrawArt, an iPad and museum engagement project, and more games for social change. She will spend the summer of 2013 in Israel creating an Indiana Jones-style archaeological and significant sites tour game.

Theresa Downing ‘11 is adjunct art history instructor at Bethel University this school year. This fall, Downing juried the exhibition “Changing Landscapes: A Shift from Rural to Urban” at Silverwood Park Gallery, St. Anthony, Minn.

Congratulations to Josh and Amanda Feist ’11. Alistair Harland Feist was born on Halloween night.

Undergraduate Alumni

Marissa Ellingson ’11 is a customer operations analyst at SPS Commerce. SPS is a new and growing company.

Lauren Graff ’11 is a corporate paralegal at Faegre Baker Daniels in downtown Minneapolis and on the committee for the
Eagan Funfest Ambassador Program. She looks forward to taking a grad art history course on campus in the near future.

AMIE KIEFFER ’08 is a local artist who specializes in painting and drawing and creates cartoons, invitations and does illustration work. Her work has been purchased by St. Catherine University and been featured in publications and newspapers. www.amiekieffer.com

GRETA KOWALIKOWSKI ’10 is an assistant account executive at McFarland Communications and lives in Minneapolis.

AMY OLSON ’11 is the visitor services associate at the American Swedish Institute and lives in Minneapolis.

EMILY RUSH ’97 completed her Ph.D. dissertation in June and is settling in at her new position, assistant professor, at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. She is working up a book proposal and working on panels for the APA and CAMWS.

NICK TUTTLE ’12 is a sweepstakes coordinator for Helgeson Enterprises.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Fresh faces are gracing the Art History Department. A new group of undergraduates has joined our current student workers in the Visual Resources Library. MACAULAY STEENSON, MAGDALENA KOEBELE and JOHNNAY LEENAY have joined RITA KOVTUN (currently studying in France) and SAM WISNESKI as part of our fabulous student employee team. Welcome!

Please welcome the following new majors to the Art History Program: ANDREA GREAMBA and MAGDALENA KOEBELE.

SAMANTHA (SAM) WISNESKI will be traveling to India over J-term for a UMAIE course, Indian Art and Music. She received scholarships from the International Education Center and the Roberta Ann Global Endowed Scholarship for this program. She also was awarded the Father James Whalen scholarship from the Communication and Journalism department and the Anna M. Kuhl scholarship for the academic year. This past summer she was a marketing intern for Visit Saint Paul, the official convention and visitors’ bureau for the City of St. Paul.

www.stthomas.edu/arhistory

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Magdalena Koebele and Johnnay Leenay

Sam Wisneski and Macaulay Steenson

University of St. Thomas
Department of Art History
Like us on Facebook and don’t miss any upcoming events.
https://facebook.com/USTArtHistory

The Quad is St. Thomas’ virtual meeting place that includes an online alumni directory and events listing. Sign on at www.stthomas.edu/alumni