On the trail of
Islamic Art

New Research and Courses at UD
From the Chair

In the course of a meeting of Art History graduate program directors held at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York, the conversation turned to the larger question of why art history matters. Although it might seem odd that the very folks directing Art History programs in the colleges and universities of the northeastern U.S. would pose this question, there it was. Everybody around the table voiced an opinion:

Art is the ambassador to understanding cultures and Art History teaches the visual and cultural literacy necessary to that understanding. In an era of increasing globalization, we provide the tools for looking and learning from art and architecture in all its diversity.

Art History is central to the education of designers, artists, conservators, and museum professionals. We must incorporate Art Historical education in our university curriculum if we want to move our society forward in the world.

We educate and inspire the next generation of Art History scholars who will steward the world’s cultural treasures.

The comments made in our conversation were directed largely to art history in a professional context. I believe in a broader purpose—that Art History enables us to comprehend the inspiration we find in art and to put that inspiration to work in our everyday lives, not only for ourselves but also for a greater good. Art History is essential to undergraduate education. It teaches visual literacy, historical literacy, cultural values, the role of creativity, and much more.

Art History at the University of Delaware is recognized as one of the most distinguished programs of its kind in the United States. Other Art History programs look to our accomplishments as a model for excellence. Always innovative, our faculty pioneered the history of American art and architecture. We broke new ground in the history of photography, African-American art, and material culture. Our graduates are leaders in the art world, teaching and working in universities and museums around the globe. Our department is in the vanguard of bringing decorative arts, material culture, and visual culture into art-historical contexts. Our collective endeavors—students, faculty, and alumni—in fields ranging from ancient to contemporary have shaped the larger understanding of art in its myriad international contexts.

We are committed to the broadest histories of art, from the vernacular to the sublime, from Africa and Europe to Asia and the Americas. Ours is a community to be celebrated, and I invite you to do so in the pages of Insight.

As our fiftieth anniversary approaches, we ask you to join us in building for the future. Excellence needs to be nurtured. Your support can provide a graduate or undergraduate student with a competitive fellowship and stipend to transform him or her into teacher, curator, scholar, or cultural citizen. You can help inspire students with professional development opportunities, bringing them into direct contact with art and architecture, museums and collections, and scholars around the world. Please help strengthen teaching by providing faculty with the means and opportunities to conduct research and bring the fruits of their scholarship into the classroom. There are many ways you can be central to our collective future, and we invite your participation at every level.
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Professor Lawrence Nees, an international authority on Early Medieval Art, has taught in the Department of Art History since 1978. His outstanding scholarship and staggering productivity (four books and several dozen articles) have been recognized with prestigious fellowships at such academic powerhouses as the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the American Academy in Berlin, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. He has received innumerable grants, including a Guggenheim, and was recently elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. The Society of Antiquaries is one of the United Kingdom’s oldest learned societies, holding its first official meeting in 1707 and receiving its Royal Charter in 1751.

Nees’s recent work has taken a bold and exciting departure, focusing on Islamic Art, a subject he began teaching for the first time only in recent years. He has also undertaken several major research trips to such places as Egypt, Israel, Palestine, and Turkey. Insight editor David Stone sat down with him in December to find out more about his new interests.

DMS: Congratulations on your recent award to attend a conference last month in the Middle East. Can you tell me something about it and why you applied?

LN: Three years ago, Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts started a biannual symposium on Islamic art at their campuses in Richmond and Doha. I received the 2007 Hamad Bin Khalifa Fellowship to attend “Rivers of Paradise: Water in Islamic Art and Culture,” the title of this year’s conference, held in Qatar. This was a major international conference on Islamic culture, and it was a big honor for me to have been chosen to participate as a Fellow. [Editor’s note: according to its organizers, Professor Nees was selected for the competitive fellowship from more than 500 applicants from 63 countries, including historians, art historians, architects, engineers and curators. Only 15 participants received this award, which was given to scholars from diverse countries and backgrounds.]

DMS: You’re an internationally recognized authority on early medieval art, especially illuminated manuscripts. When did you begin to get interested in Islamic art?

LN: Already in graduate school at Harvard I was fascinated by Islamic art. I took courses with Oleg Grabar, the leading Islamicist in the U.S. But, generally speaking, I’ve always cast a wide net in my work. Earlier in my career I studied Irish art, Syrian manuscripts, Byzantine painting, and so on. And I have always been very interested in broad geographical interactions. At important as those cross-currents of cultures are, they have tended to be de-emphasized in scholarship because of religious differences, geographical boundaries, and the barriers of language – not to mention the tendency of academic specialization per se to construct walls rather than bridges. The connections between western and Islamic traditions are terribly important, but that’s not the only reason for my interests – quite simply Islamic art is among the most beautiful and captivating of all artistic cultures, and poses fascinating intellectual issues. Since arriving at UD, I have consistently hoped that the Department would someday hire an Islamic art specialist. To that end, I kept myself informed about the field and the people doing important work in it.

DMS: When did you switch from being “informed” to actually teaching Islamic art?

LN: A few years before the attacks of September 11th, I felt that we just could not afford to ignore such an important area of art and culture any longer. At the time we didn’t even teach Arabic language courses and there were few of any courses in other departments dealing with Islamic countries and culture. I decided to develop a 200-level undergraduate course on Islamic art, and I gave it for the first time in 1999. Since then I’ve taught it a total of three times, and plan to offer it again in the near future and on a regular basis at least until our department hires a specialist in Islamic art, which I continue to hope will occur. I am pleased to be able to say that since I began teaching Islamic art, the University has added a number of scholars in history and language who specialize in this area. I participate in the Interdisciplinary Minor in Islamic Studies at UD, which is a new initiative and very promising for the future. President Hacker’s arrival is hopeful, in my view, for he has on many occasions stated his belief that UD needs to do much more in terms of its offerings in foreign languages and cultures, and that students across the university need to develop a more global perspective. Our department is already ahead of this curve a bit, with relatively recent new faculty positions with specialists in African, Latin American and Asian art, and I hope that with presidential support we will be even more so.

DMS: When you work on new material, it is often the case that you confront new methodologies. Has this been your experience with Islamic art?

LN: Arabic and Islamic historical traditions are rooted in a vastly different approach from those used by most medievalists in the West. In fact, art history is not studied in any Arabic country; they focus exclusively on archaeology. The exceptions are places like the American University in Cairo or Beirut – but in those schools, it is mainly outsiders doing the teaching.

DMS: Has studying Islamic art, including its unfamiliar methods, enhanced your research in your principal field?

LN: It definitely has. Some of the limitations in studying Islamic art provide insights into solving similar problems in early medieval studies. This is a bit complex to explain, but let me try to sum up the situation. Almost all our sources for early Islamic art are much later in date, that is, they post-date the art by hundreds of years in many cases. Naturally, this poses huge problems for understanding the origins of Islamic works. The role of oral tradition in Islamic studies is much more prominent than in the West; and one has to work backwards in Islamic art – in hindsight – casting the later evidence on the earlier material in order to begin to construct some kind of reliable context for dating and interpreting the art and architecture of this period. There are areas of early medieval art where, lacking contemporary evidence, one has to find other means of building a foundation for understanding.

So, the very weaknesses in the record of Islamic art and the imaginative ways in which scholars have set about dealing with it – using a rigorous process of framing and testing hypotheses – paradoxically is a strength for me; it helps me think more creatively about my own material.

DMS: In Spring 2008, you are offering your first graduate/undergraduate seminar in this field, which has never previously been taught in our department at this advanced level. Is this new seminar, “Problems in the Beginnings of Islamic Art,” related to any of your current research?

LN: Yes. The seminar comes out of my current project, which deals with the earliest stages of the formation of the Islamic artistic tradition, with a focus on two special issues. The first of these is architecture, and the second is illuminated manuscripts. In some ways the beginnings of the Islamic tradition are very clear and well-attested. We have the...
Professor Margaret Werth and two of her graduate advisers, Elizabeth Scheiden and Pepper Stetler, were recently invited to participate in a two-day symposium at the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts in St. Louis, Missouri. The event, held on November 1–2, 2007, brought together a group of twelve art historians, museum professionals and artists from around the country to discuss issues related to the exhibition Water. All the works of art included in the exhibition featured some reference to water, such as Roni Horn’s serial photographs of the Thames River or Claes Oldenburg’s Soft Bathtub. But more importantly, the exhibition’s theme focused attention on an active dialogue between works of art and the unique influences of water, such as randomness, formlessness, and containment. The symposium took full advantage of meeting in the Pulitzer Foundation galleries while they were closed to the public. As Stetler observed, “conversations took place deliberately during various times of day and in different parts of the exhibition space, making it all the more apparent how light and reflection shaped our interpretations of the exhibition.”

The symposium was led by Matthias Waschek, Director of the Pulitzer Foundation, and Camran Mani, Curatorial Assistant. In addition to the cohort from the Department, participants included the curator Lynne Cooke from Dia Center for the Arts, along with three of her students from the Curatorial Studies Program at Bard College, and the artists Ann Hamilton and Michael Mercil from Ohio State University, who brought with them several MFA students. The symposium took the form of a series of discussions, which were free-flowing and informal but also intense and stimulat...
Collaboration in Motion: Dominguez and Bellion Colonial Art Seminar

A familiar saying holds that necessity is the mother of all creation. But as Professors Monica Dominguez and Wendy Bellion learned this year, collaboration also yields creative opportunities. Dominguez, a scholar of Spanish colonial art, and Bellion, who specializes in early United States art, teamed up for their work in 2007 to offer a seminar on the topic of “Colonial Art Across North America.”

The result was an innovative course that immersed a group of fifteen graduate and undergraduate students in a wide-ranging exploration of the material cultures of New France, New Spain, and British America.

Supported by a Faculty Fellowship from the University of Delaware’s Center for International Studies, the seminar built upon the Department’s historical strengths in American art, proposing a new direction for study: a hemispheric look at art from Montreal to Mexico City, encompassing the geographical scope of early North America. This comparative approach linked two art-historical fields – Latin American art history and the art of the United States – that are ordinarily studied separately. In the process, it introduced students to the astonishing cultural diversity of the colonial Americas and the cultural practices that emerged out of colonization.

“Colonial Art Across North America” was enthusiastically received by our students, who for the first time were able to look beyond the well-traveled routes of early North American art. Dominguez and Bellion learned a great deal from this course – about early North America, and about the rewards of collaborative teaching, too. They look forward to offering the seminar again in the near future. In the meantime, they will be busy working with their students on the organization of a related spring symposium: “Objects in Motion: Art and Material Culture across Colonial North America,” which will bring scholars from Canada, Mexico, and the United States to Newark to engage in conversations about early North American art. Supported by a $20,000 grant from the Terra Foundation for International Studies, the semester-long symposium will take place April 25-26, 2008. For more information, visit www.udel.edu/materi-akulture/objectsinmotion.html.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

FACULTY AWARDS

Wendy Bellion and Monica Dominguez Torres for the “Objects in Motion: Art and Material Culture across Colonial North America” symposium (April 2008), grants from the Terra Foundation for American Art, the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States, and the Faculty Fellows Program, Center for International Studies, University of Delaware.


AROUND THE DEPARTMENT

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An early highlight of the seminar was a September field trip to Washington, D.C., to take in a symposium and exhibition organized by the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery, “Legacy: Spain and the United States in the Age of Independence, 1763-1848.” M.A. student Rachel Schwartz, who helped organize the exhibition, treated the group to a tour of the works on display. The field trip also provided an impetus for the major seminar assignment: a mock exhibition about colonial North American art. Complementing the collaborative nature of the course, students worked in teams to identify places in early America that were especially notable as cultural exurbs. Their choices included New Orleans, the Caribbean, Californias, and Salem, Massachusetts – aptly reflected the cultural mélange of native Americans, Europeans, and Africans that characterized the northern New World. The objects selected to represent these places, ranging from prints and paintings to a Puritan sugar box and a Jewish gravestone, likewise suggested the extraordinary range of material life in early America.

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Art History Welcomes New Visual Resources Director Derek Churchill

The Department of Art History is very happy to welcome Derek Churchill as the new Director of its Visual Resources Collection. Derek comes to Delaware from the University of Pittsburgh, where he was Lecturer and Curator of Visual Resources in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture. Over the last seven years, he has overseen that program’s transition to a digital environment. Derek will work to expand visual resources and bring together the University of Delaware’s diverse image collections into a single digital repository that will aid teaching and research across the disciplines. He hopes to put Delaware at the leading edge of new technologies for the development and management of visual resources, and to this end he will be actively involved in collaborating with the Library, Information Technologies, and departments throughout the university as well as colleagues at the national level.

Derek joins Jennifer Hintlian, Assistant Curator of Visual Resources, and George Freeman, Staff Photographer, who have worked tirelessly over the past several years on the VRC’s digitization project. This huge undertaking began with the receipt of a UNIDEL grant in 2003 under the direction of Lenis Northmore, Slide Librarian, who retired in June 2006. The project has benefitted in myriad ways from many of our graduate student Research Assistants, and also Lynn McCarthy, who has been an especially great asset to the VRC over the past two years.

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Margaret Werth, Associate Professor of Art History, chaired the search committee for this new position. Other members included David M. Stone, Monica Dominguez Torres, and Bernie Herman, all from Art History; Sandra Millard and Susan Davi from the University Library; and Dick Sacher from Instructional Technology.

A specialist in the art of the Northern Renaissance, Derek has taught advanced courses on Early Modern European art, published an exhibition catalogue on Gothic Revival art and architecture, and is preparing a study on the Netherlandish painter Diiric Bouts. He holds degrees in Art History from Oberlin College and Yale University.


Receptions and Gala Events

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Discovering Delaware Valley Architecture: The William Allen Research Assistantships

Standing in the forlorn and frozen interior of the Chrome Hotel in Chester County, Pennsylvania, graduate students Cara Zimmerman and Katie Wood carefully recorded the complex evolution of the structure’s interior as it developed through the early 1700s. The previous summer Colleen Terry spent a sweltering afternoon documenting the ruins of a 1730s outbuilding in Bucks County. Eliza Butler scrolled through a literal mile of microfilm tracking down room-by-room listings of personal possessions in Delaware Valley households prior to 1740. Rebecca Schwartz scoured through hundreds of files compiling a first-ever comprehensive list of early colonial Delaware houses. Their combined efforts are part of a continuing project to produce an architectural and social history of the first-period (1675–1740) dwellings of the Delaware Valley, from the falls at Trenton to the capes of Delaware. Now in its third year, the project led by Professor Bernard Herman intends not only to address a significant gap in the broader narrative of early American building but also to provide a professional research experience for advanced students.

Alumni William Allen (Class of ’72), long a supporter of our department, initiated the first-period buildings project, providing a matching research assistantship awarded each year to a graduate student working in the history of American architecture. Additional support has come from other donors, as well as from the Center for Material Culture Studies and the Dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of Delaware. Student experiences have varied, but all feel that the opportunity for hands-on research has been beneficial.

Rebecca Ayres Schwartz recounted, “I began the project by amassing a list of existing first-period houses in the Delaware River Valley. The project forced me to deal with the problem of identifying the houses based on a particular problem as opposed to starting with a house and making up a problem to match the object. It was a great exercise in locating objects and organizing information in a database. But the best experience was participating in fieldwork with Professor Herman. We measured and recorded the Hallam House, an 18th-century Pennsylvania German log cabin. Despite the latter cold of working in an unheated house, recording the building’s measurements and interpreting its space and materials was invaluable practice.”

Current William Allen Research Fellow Katie Wood elaborated on her experiences, “Prior to this fellowship, I had only gained text-book exposure to decorative details. By closely examining materials such as painted surfaces and carved ornament, and by thinking about the ways that 18th-century cultural practices dictated the use of these spaces, the Delaware Valley Housing Project simultaneously utilizes my existing knowledge base and provides time for in-depth study of those things which I find the most interesting. This project has also provided a benefit that I didn’t expect: interaction with my community. What happens when a structure requires significant rehabilitation? What sort of ethical guidelines are available for buildings that are slated for adaptive re-use? What sorts of processes are involved when determining the fate of these historic façades?”

Katie Wood

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Colleen Terry echoed the sense of the importance of learning to look at houses: “buildings can be extraordinarily informative when the physical and historical evidence is interpreted within the context of an expansive visual memory.”

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“It Was Worth It”: Looking Back at Art History
A Convocation Address by Kate LaPrad (BA ’07)

“I wonder if the more compelling question might be, not where art history will take us in the future, but where it has already taken us.”

As I think all the new art historians in the room can confirm, there are many reactions to informing others that one is an art history major. No matter how the conversation begins, it invariably turns to a somewhat dizzyingly asked question, “Where are you going with that?” Though we are masters at recognizing Manouso’s one-point perspective and eloquently discussing the historical import of an Impressionist work, others can’t imagine our lives after collegiate art history. Yet, as I consider the question, I wonder if the more interesting (and compelling) one might be, not where art history will take us in the future, but where it has already taken us. I questioned, emailed, and begged responses from a wide swath of graduating art historians, conservators, and artists. Their answers reveal a desire to see as a way to know, a willingness to experience the unfamiliar, and a profound curiosity about the worlds of both the past and present. Here is what they told me—some in their words, some in mine:

Art history has provided us with both mental and physical challenges. It took a visual communication student’s one-point perspective and allowed us to look inside the building to our persuasive and persistent requests, a confused manager eventually conceded and allowed us to look inside the building for the NGA curator, and several staff members.

Samantha Cooper

Samantha Cooper, Photo George Freeman

“Picturing” Samantha Cooper
Junior Samantha Cooper does not know what the words “compelling” mean. A double major (Honors) in Art History and Art Conservation— with a minor in History—Cooper has already packed more experience into her young life than most people five years her senior.

Her passion for art history began at the age of twelve when she won a National History Day research project entitled, The Impact of Photography on Art. Since then, she has dedicated herself to studying art history and art conservation in their broadest dimensions and has volunteered for several important student leadership and service positions at the University of Delaware.

Last summer, Samantha, a National Merit Scholar, was honored to receive an internship from the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C. During her ten-weeks there, she was attached to the NEH’s first program in the “We the People” project: Picturing America. This initiative will introduce K-12 students across the country to forty iconic American images in the form of a set of posters and an accompanying teacher’s manual as a way to teach a multitude of classroom subjects, including history, politics, social studies, English, science, and art history.

Cooper edited the art-historical essays in the accompanying teacher’s manual, edited the poster proofs, wrote citations, conducted research in order to find more resources for teachers, and created a timeline and action plan for the program. In addition to contributing to Picturing America, she was also able to attend numerous special closed NEH grant- offering sessions, giving her firsthand experience on how such grant processes function. One of her favorite memories of her internship was being part of a small lunch gathering at the National Gallery of Art with NEH Chairman Bruce Cole, an NGA curator, and several staff members.

The Department’s Art History Club has thrived under Cooper’s leadership. She served last year as Secretary and is the current President. “I have seen the numbers of our active membership expand hugely and the degree of enthusiasm for our activities grow noticeably. This year we emphasized taking trips to a few new locations, namely the Walters Museum in Baltimore and the Barnes Foundation in Lower Merion, Pennsylvania. More importantly, we sought to bring increased unity to the Art History Department. Fostering events that would bring together undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty,” Samantha has been an invaluable representative of our department in other ways. For the past three semesters, she has been a member of the BHA Ambassador program. As a BHA, she has spoken to high school students interested in Art History. She recently served on an Arts and Humanities Panel during Blue & Gold open house days and was invited to attend the Woman of Promise banquet.

As a BHA, she has spoken to high school students interested in Art History. She recently served on an Arts and Humanities Panel during Blue & Gold open house days and was invited to attend the Woman of Promise banquet. Cooper is particularly proud of being awarded the Undergraduate Teaching Assistant position in the Department, where she will work with Professor Lawrence Nees.

In case you think she is resting up for the spring semester and all her extracurricular duties, think again. When we last contacted Cooper in January, she was busy applying for numerous museum internships believing the coming summer would allow packing for a Winter Session course in Museum Studies and Anthropology—in Chile and Peru. 18.

Undergraduate Awards
Trudy Vinson Award for Outstanding Junior in Art History Samantha Cooper (2008)
Outstanding Senior Award in Art History Lauren Bradley (2008)
Geis Student Research on Women—Undergraduate Division Lauren Bradley (2007)

Art History Club Events
Fall 2007-Spring 2008
Art History Faculty Luncheon: September
The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, September
First Friday, Philadelphia: October
The Barnes Foundation, Merion, PA: October
First Friday, Philadelphia: November
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington: March
First Friday, Philadelphia: March
Art History Faculty Luncheon: April
The National Gallery of Art and Smithsonian Museums, Washington, D.C.: April
First Friday, Philadelphia: May
Longwood Gardens: May

RISING STARS

ALUMNI CORNER

Kate LaPrad.
Winning Biggs: Three Students Awarded Dissertation Writing Fellowships

The Choptank Foundation was created by University of Delaware benefactor Sewell Biggs, a great supporter with a keen interest in historic preservation, art conservation, art history, and Delaware heritage. In 2005, the Foundation endowed the Sewell C. Biggs Dissertation Writing Award in Art History and Preservation Studies. This award provides additional support for one or more students in their final year of dissertation writing in the Department of Art History and/or the Ph.D. Program in Preservation Studies at UD. To date, Art History students have received critical support through these grants.

This past August, the Foundation and University announced the creation of the Robert R. Davis Dissertation Writing Award, in honor of Bob Davis’s exemplary career at UD, which began three decades ago in 1977. A University of Delaware Art History alumna, Davis recently held the position of Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations. Since September 2007, he has served as Director of Development at Winterthur. Since September 2007, he has served as Director of Development and Alumni Relations. Davis had a successful 30-year career at UD, which began three decades ago in 1977. A University of Delaware Art History alumna, Davis recently held the position of Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations. Since September 2007, he has served as Director of Development at Winterthur. Davis had a successful 30-year career at UD, which began three decades ago in 1977. A University of Delaware Art History alumna, Davis recently held the position of Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations. Since September 2007, he has served as Director of Development at Winterthur. Since September 2007, he has served as Director of Development and Alumni Relations.

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the punch bowl: sociable drinking and the consumption of empire in the Atlantic World” at Alcohol in the Making of the Atlantic World: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, York University, Toronto, Ontario, October 2007; and “The World I Drank, or Empire in the Punch Bowl,” to be presented at Material Culture Now: Sixth Annual Material Culture Symposium for Emerging Scholars, University of Delaware and Winterthur Museum and Library, April 2008.


Lyndse Anne Herbert completed her Ph.D. coursework this fall, and will finish her exams by May. Last spring, she presented “Duccio di Buoninsegna: Icon of Painters, or Painter of Icons?” for the Italian Art Society at the 42nd International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan. This spring, she will present a paper stemming from Dr. Peterson’s “Egypitomania” course, “Egyptian Appliance: Seeding the Seeds of Cultural Revival,” in the 2008 Material Culture Symposium for Emerging Scholars at Winterthur Museum.

Catherine Reed Holochwost was awarded the one-year Douglass Foundation Fellowship in American Art for the 2007-2008 academic year, awarded by the American Council of Learned Societies. While conducting research funded by the Lace Fellowship, she was a Madison Moeller Research Fellow in Southern Material Culture at the Museum of Early Southern Culture at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In the summer of 2007 and a Lord Baltimore Fellow at the Maryland Historical Society in the fall of 2007. In 2007 she presented “Real Views Taken on the Spot,” Landscape Painting and Atlantic Networks in Baltimore c. 1830 at the Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference in Colonial Williamsburg and “The most eminent thing” Landscape Representations in British American Intérieurs, 1756-1780 at the Smithsonian American Museum Linslough Series, in Washington, D.C. In 2008 Anna will present “Japanese and Gilt: Painted Furniture, Merchandising Networks, and Transatlantic Taste in Early Federal Baltimore” at the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon.

Dorothy Moss, winner of the Sewell C. Biggs Dissertation Writing Award in Art History and Preservation Studies 2007-2008, and the UD University Dissertation Fellows Award, is finishing her dissertation and learning to balance research and writing with motherhood. She and her husband Steve welcomed a healthy baby boy named James on January 6, 2007. She is enjoying learning to see all over again through his eyes. She helped to organize a colloquium at the Stedelijk and Francis Clark Art Institute on Practicing American Art History in December 2007.

Jessica Murphy continues to work as a Research Associate at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she is researching the Alfred Stieglitz Collection for a forthcoming publication. She has also recently authored essays on subjects including Arthur Dove, Edward Hopper, and Precisionism for the Courtauld Institute of Art. The seminar will meet four times in London over the next year and half the last meeting, summer 2009, will be a conference in which participants will present their work to the public.

Corina Weidinger presented “Party and Horror in Pierre Valfièr’s Young Holdling His Dead Daughter in His Arms” at the Fourth Annual Graduate Student Symposium in Nineteenth-Century Art at the Dahesh Museum, New York.
Jhennifer A. Amundson (Ph.D. 2005) is Associate Professor at Jilson University, where she teaches the history of architecture. A chapter drawn from her dissertation on Thomas W. Walter is included in the new volume American Architects and Their Works, 1840-1940, edited by James O’Gorman (University of Massachusetts Press). In January 2008, she began her sabbatical with research funded by the United States Capitol Architect’s Office to study the architectural history of the pediment for the House Wing of the US Capitol. Anna Andrezewski (Ph.D. 2001) is Assistant Professor of American Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She recently published in Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, and gave papers at the Vernacular Architecture Forum and the Society of Architectural Historians. She currently serves as co-editor of the VAP book series. Her book on surveillance in Victorian America is forthcoming from the University of Tennessee Press.

Kelly Baun (Ph.D. 2005) began working in December 2007 as the Locks Curatorial Fellow for Contemporary Art at the Princeton University Art Museum, where she is launching a new contemporary art program. This past year, while still working at the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas, Austin, Kelly curated five exhibitions on topics ranging from painting and narrative to contemporary art and alternative systems of distribution. She also published a number of essays, brochures, and catalogs.

Jode Blake (Ph.D. 1992) continues to be active in the visual and performing arts world as curator of the Theatre Arts at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio. Highlights in 2007 include: co-authoring the catalog of the United States exhibition at the Alderman International Theatre Design Exposition; contributing an essay “Africa on the Spiral” to the catalogues of the upcoming exhibitions at the Rift Valley Museum in Addis Ababa; and visiting the Museum of Modern Art in Bogota, Colombia. She is also working on a monograph about the history of Latin American photography in the period of the first decade of the 2000s.

Cynthia Fowler (Ph.D. 2002) began a new appointment as Associate Professor of Art at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, Boston. She received the James Renwick Fellowship in American Craft from the Smithsonian Institution for three months of research on craft production and its relationship to modernist in early twentieth century American art. She also published this year “Strategies for Self-Determination in American Indian Art,” Social Justice 34 (Fall 2007). “Oklahoma: A View from the Center,” co-authored with Maria DiPristo and Ruthie Blalock Jones, Studies in American Indian Literature 19 (Fall 2007); and “Representations of the Female Nude by Women Artists of Generation X,” in Bicentennial: Discourse on Feminism (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007).

Johanne M. Clement (Ph.D. 2007) is in her fifth year as Curator of Fine Art Collections at the St. Louis Mercantile Library at UM-St. Louis. She has recently completed writing a handbook of the art collection to be published in spring 2008 and distributed by the University of Missouri Press. She has also begun research for a Frederick Oakes Sylvester catalogue raisonné. She organized the exhibition The Faces of Labor: Photographic Portraits by Lee Burcham and Daniel Dieruff and taught a course on art patronage in St. Louis for Washington University’s American Culture Studies program.

Diane Evans (M.A. 1995) is working as the Director of the new Tech Virtual Exhibits Development Program at the Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose, California. She is also getting her MBA through Dukie University.


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salem. My study of this material thus far

sits beside the much larger and better
the so-called Dome of the Chain, which
a problematic early Islamic building,
century) that sheds unexpected light on
tine art, I have discovered an important
historical and artistic sources, and my
texts. Drawing on my expertise in Latin
sources, a problem we will address in the
some important scholars have raised
although it must also be recognized that
for his life and actions, and for
med to his followers, and we have many
studies matter. It influences so many other
disciplines — from politics and religion to
history and international relations. But,
there must be something else as well. As I
have learned, art history, art, and con-
servation majors are curious, active, and
certainly determined. I am honored to have
been counted among you for the past
four years.

with contributions from Amanda Antonucci,
Laura Armstrong, Stephanie Black, Sarah
Broick, Leslie Bernard, Kelly Consant, Carleen
Coulter, Rebecca Hussey, Stacy Kleber, and
Sarah Roseenthal.

DMS: Does the second part of your
project also wrestle with a chronological
problem?

Yes. It focuses on the earliest Qur'an
manuscripts — or, rather, my goal is to
identify them, since the earliest dated
example to survive is from 573 CE, leav-
ing a gap of two and a half centuries since
the time of the Prophet. Exactly which
of the surviving manuscripts might date
during that mysterious early period is also
highly controversial and contested, on
many levels. Few specialists in Islamic art
have more than a cursory acquaintance
with the Latin and Greek manuscripts
with which I have been engaged for the
last thirty years and more, and I think that
here too I can offer new insights about
the earliest stages of this great new artistic
and cultural tradition. I have just learned
that my proposal to present a paper on
these manuscripts has been accepted for a
major conference sponsored by the Histo-
rains of Islamic Art Association, meeting
this coming October at the University of
Pennsylvania. It is an area I intend to
explore with the students in the seminar.

Continued from page 14

Art is everywhere in Paris as well. One
art historian, in an assignment for an
architecture class, had to take pictures of
everyday Parisian things she found beau-
tiful. After being surrounded by eight
armed and shouting men, she realized
she had been taking pictures of an em-
busily. I know it is difficult to explain
the lure of art history in an era of suspicion.

So, what is it about art history? Clearly,
by the sheer number of steps climbed,
rules broken, and hours waited, art is
compelling. It is everywhere, and its his-
torics matter. It influences so many other
disciplines — from politics and religion to
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