History of Art Department Alumni Newsletter
Issue 15. April 2018

The Newsletter is produced twice a year to keep alumni informed about the activities of the Department – and each other! If you are not a member of the HoA Alumni Network and would like to be, or you have items for inclusion in the next issue, please email admin@hoa.ox.ac.uk

Department News:

In September 2017 Craig Clunas spoke at the University of Zürich on ‘Connectedness and Cosmopolitanism in Modern Chinese Art’. His talk at the Freud Museum is available as a podcast.

He also spoke about Chinese gardens in December at the University of Granada, and in November 2017 Craig began his term as a Visiting Professor of Chinese Art at Gresham College; his first two lectures of three on ‘Chinese Art 1911-1976: A Connected History’ are now available to watch here and here (Anyone who ever took Craig’s course on ‘Art in China since 1911’ will certainly recognise some of the art discussed here!).

In December he was delighted when his Chinese Painting and Its Audiences was listed as one of the art books of the year by the New York Times. Craig will retire at the end of this academic year, but hopes to remain active in writing and lecturing about the subject; he particularly looks forward to getting news of all the amazing stuff Oxford’s alumni in History of Art are doing. The teaching of Chinese art in the Department will continue after his retirement, since a generous donation has enabled the endowment of the June and Simon Li Associate Professorship of Chinese Art. This newest member of an expanded department will be a fellow of Lincoln College, which will begin admitting undergraduates in History of Art for the first time from 2019.

Last autumn, Hanneke Grootenboer wrote a catalogue essay for an exhibition of the contemporary artist Lisa Milroy (who teaches at the Slade) that took place in the Parasol Unit in London. The essay is entitled ‘Borrowed Presence’ and the other contributor to the catalogue is Briony Fer. Hanneke also published ‘The Self-Conscious Image: Painting and Hegel’s Idea of Reflection’ in The Art of Hegel’s Aesthetics (eds. M. Squire and P. Kottman, Wilhelm Fink, 2017), including other essays by Robert Pippin, Whitney Davis and Tim Clark. Another essay on paintings by little known Dutch artist Jacob Vrel is about to come out in the volume Time in the History of Art:

Temporality, Chronology and Anachrony (eds. by Dan Karlholm and Keith Moxey, Routledge, 2018). Hanneke has also co-organised a panel on shells in early modern art in a panel on Conchophilia at the annual conference of the Renaissance Society of America that took place in New Orleans. Her paper will be about a miniature shell collection in a famous, seventeenth-century doll house now in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

Since the start of the academic year, Geraldine Johnson has been both Head of Department and the Junior Censor at Christ Church. She was also elected to serve on Council, Oxford’s executive governing body. Despite these administrative obligations, she has managed to complete a number of publications on the photography of sculpture that have either recently appeared or are currently in press; see, for instance, her essay ‘Photographing Sculpture, Sculpting Photography’ in a volume published in 2017 by the Getty Research Institute entitled The Art Object in Reproduction. She is also writing a monograph on this topic that will be published by Reaktion Books. In the autumn, she joined the Editorial Board of the journal Art History.

Gervase Rosser has continued to research illustrations to Dante’s Divine Comedy, and is currently working on those made by the modern printmaker Geoff MacEwan. MacEwan’s work makes a brief appearance in Gervase’s recent blog for the Taylor Institution Library. In October he gave the keynote lecture at a conference held in Antwerp: ‘Transcending Boundaries? Solidarity in the Pre-Industrial Period’. He has recently spent some pleasant afternoons in the library of Waddesdon Manor, where he has been invited to review the medieval manuscripts of the Rothschild Collection, with a view to a possible future exhibition.

Alastair Wright is currently on research leave working on a number of projects including an essay on Matisse and Mallarmé for the Wiley Companion to French Art and an essay on Gauguin’s self-portraits for an exhibition to be co-hosted by Ottawa and the National Gallery in London in 2019.
Miguel de Baca joined the History of Art Department in 2017-18 as the Terra Foundation Visiting Professor of American Art from Lake Forest College in Illinois, where he is Head of Department. He published a book in 2016, *Memory Work: Anne Truitt and Sculpture* (UC Press), which explores the key role of personal and public remembrance in the evolution of a pioneering minimalist sculptor, Anne Truitt, as well as its dynamic importance to a contemporary viewership in the 1960s.

Presently, Miguel is at work writing a manuscript on activism and the changing nature of the public in video art, as well as editing an anthology on the sculptor Robert Morris. In May 2018, he will present a keynote lecture in conjunction with the Terra-sponsored blockbuster at the Ashmolean, *America’s Cool Modernism: O’Keeffe to Hopper.*

Also on Wednesdays this May, Miguel will deliver the Terra Foundation Lectures in American Art, a series collectively entitled ‘The Body of a Nation.’ All are warmly welcomed. More information can be found here.

Martin Kemp, Emeritus Professor of the History of Art, launched his new book *Living with Leonardo: Fifty Years of Sanity and Insanity in the Art World and Beyond* at the V&A on 26th March 2018.

Visual Resources Centre

The Visual Resources Centre has been awarded funding by the Edgar Wind Benefactors Committee for a graduate student to carry out provenance research on the Adolphe Braun photographs of the Sistine Chapel frescoes held by the Department. The photographs were taken by Braun’s studio in 1868 as the first photographic campaign of the Sistine Chapel. Research will also be carried out into a potential link with Professor Edgar Wind, the first Professor of the History of Art at Oxford University, and his teaching and research on the Sistine Chapel. The funding will enable for the photographs to be catalogued in preparation for their eventual digitisation and publication online. This will be a pilot project for the VRC to undertake further systematic cataloguing and digitisation of material from the photographic collections.

Alumni are welcome to contact the Visual Resources Assistant, Francesca Issatt, at vrc@hoa.ox.ac.uk if they wish to visit the VRC to view the Braun photographs or any of the other photographic collections.

Emma McKinlay (13 May 1993 – 3 September 2017; History of Art, 2001)

It is with enormous sadness that we report the death on 3rd September 2017 of Emma McKinlay, who matriculated in the History of Art in 2011. She died peacefully after a long illness. A service for Emma will be held at Wadham College Chapel at 12 pm on Sunday 6th May, to which all who knew her are warmly invited. Professor Jane Garnett, Emma’s college tutor, wrote the following obituary;

When Emma was in infant school the class was asked to lie on their backs under their desks, painting angels in emulation of Michelangelo working on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. She attributed to this experience her first sense of the excitement of the history of art. It was a characteristically vivid, idiosyncratic – and slightly wry - memory. Emma took delight in jewel-sharp detail. The memory was also revealing in its tangibility: Emma was as talented an artist (and musician) as she was an art historian, and her perspective on the world was informed by the richness of this mutual creativity.

Emma seemed in so many ways a figure out of medieval romance – or perhaps even more out of nineteenth-century medievalism – a William Morris tapestry, a Burne-Jones watercolour – with her beautiful long hair; her fascination with myths and fairy tales; her sensitivity to the poetics of space, to landscape and architecture; her flute-playing; her love of craft; her strong sense of social justice which found inspiration in John Ruskin’s ‘Nature of Gothic’.

Just as Ruskin and Morris did, Emma believed passionately in the transformative power of art. A historical sensibility informed a compelling contemporary critique. Her intellectual enthusiasms were broad-ranging – taking in cinema and modernism, as well as baroque architecture and twentieth-century Chinese art.

In her accomplished journalism she made innumerable stimulating connections across genres and media. Her interests in contemporary art and her commitment to community engagement came together in the extraordinarily ambition exhibition she co-curated in 2013 with fellow art historians and in collaboration with Ruskin students in the OVADA Gallery’s temporary warehouse space in west Oxford. Emma’s energy and imagination conceived a brilliantly theatrical intervention in a historically resonant setting – paintings in conversation with the found aesthetic of peeling colour and bare brickwork, video installations revealed in rickety galleries behind velvet curtains. The project both drew on and was a vindication for her intellectual concerns – her capacity to generate ideas and to work dynamically with others – and her perfectionism – her constant determination to get things right. She placed great – often excessive – demands on herself, and worried unnecessarily that she was not being as effective as she hoped to be. She was correspondingly modest about her achievements – which were remarkable. Yet she never compromised in her resolution to set high bars and to take risks. In her quiet way she was always intellectually courageous, always curious, always ready to challenge received opinion, and to raise critical questions. These qualities and depth of character were to sustain her throughout her cruelly testing illness. She demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to take it on as a project. Just as her academic life was lived holistically – intellectual concerns always embedded in their wider social and moral implications –
so her illness was confronted in all its multidimensionality – as presenting distinctive intellectual and personal challenges in amongst the sheer existential awfulness – the roller coaster of hope and despair. As a result, Emma achieved a higher degree of self-understanding than most of us reach in much longer lives, and she managed to maintain her vital sense of creative connection both with the world of ideas and with those whom she loved and whose love sustained her.

Right up to her last months she was exploring new forms of self-expression, and re-thinking her own assumptions. After her death an article by her was published in Vogue. Entitled ‘The long and short of it’, it addressed with incisiveness and humour the fashion for the shaved head – the buzzcut – reflecting on the circumstances in which that look is far from a style choice. Emma struggled with the repeated loss of her lovely hair, but she worked at turning loss into gain, and at reinventing her own sense of style without it. The final paragraph of her article reads: ‘Will I be embracing the buzzcut for longer this time? I’ll consider it, since it’s the summer: being bristly in the winter gets unbearably chilly.’ Once again, Emma was brave, articulate, witty and upbeat. She was a summer person, who brought warmth and light. She was spared the coming of winter.

Current Student News:

Alessia Pannese (DPhil 2015-) was awarded a fellowship by the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg (Institute for Advanced Studies, Delmenhorst), where she is currently in residence, working on German philosophy and philosophy.

Alumni News:

Sylvia Barker (D.Phil. 2008) is a part-time Seniors’ Coordinator for the Cutteslowe Seniors, arranging talks and visits to places of interest, encouraging elderly people to participate in activities which interest and stimulate them. She has also been researching the work of Henry Fitzcock, a little known Victorian artist, illustrator and designer and has just finished a paper on William Adolphus Knell, the Victorian marine artist, many of whose works are housed in the National Maritime Museum. Another interest has been reviewing the novels of John Fraser, an English philosopher, musician, and author, based in Rome. Fraser’s books have been compared to those of Thomas Pynchon, the American novelist, also noted for his surreal and complex novels. Of particular relevance to art historians is the graphic content of his output, with numerous references to a wide range of artists and genres. Information on Fraser’s novels can be found on: www.johnfraserfiction.com

Rosalind Blakesley (née Gray) (DPhil 1997) won the Art Newspaper Russia Book Award, and Honourable Mention from the Heldt Prize Committee for Best Book by a Woman in Slavic/Eastern European/Eurasian Studies, for The Russian Canvas: Painting in Imperial Russia 1757-1881 (Yale University Press, 2016).

Kerry Bourbié (née Gavaghan) (MSt 2009, DPhil 2014) is Team Leader of the Art and Home Department at The RealReal, a luxury consignment start-up in San Francisco, CA. She heads a team of 4 copywriters and specialists who authenticate, price and write copy for art, furniture and home décor sent in for consignment. She is active in the alumni community and is the Social Secretary of the Northern California Board of the Oxford University Society. She can be contacted at kerry.bourbie@gmail.com.

Shing-Kwan Chan (MSt 2017) had a chapter of his MSt dissertation published as a journal article, “Public Displays of Affliction: On Zhang Huan’s 12m” in Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art in January. In March he presided as the moderator of a discussion forum with contemporary Chinese artist Xu Bing which was organised by the Hong Kong Documentary Initiative. He is currently Research Assistant I at the University of Hong Kong, and is working on a research paper which studies the role of photography in policy advocacy.

** A reminder about reference requests to academic staff from current and former students! **

Whilst staff are very happy to provide references for current/former students, sufficient notice must be given for this as it is a time-consuming task! It would be greatly appreciated if at least two weeks’ notice is given for such requests during term-time, with more given outside of term.

** Keep us posted! **

Please remember to update us on your activities and your contact details if they have changed since you left the Department: admin@hoa.ox.ac.uk

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Tanner, who was among the first Western women to travel solo to the Middle East. The collection of Persian art given to the Holburne by Miss Ellen Shiraz, Isfahan and Teheran during her visit in 1894 to 21 October 2018. The collection will be on show for the first time from 14 June to 21 October 2018. The collection will be accompanied by a catalogue and public programme. Tanner also spoke about Palestinian embroidery as resistance during the First Intifada at the AAH conference in April.

Rachel Dedman (BA 2011) is curator of the latest exhibition at the Palestinian Museum, West Bank. Labour of Love unfolds little-known political histories of Palestinian embroidery and textiles, through the lenses of gender, labour, commodity and class. The show is on until 25 August 2018, and is accompanied by a catalogue and public programme. Rachel also spoke about Palestinian embroidery as resistance during the First Intifada at the AAH conference in April.

Allison Goudie (MSt 2010, DPhil 2014) was recently appointed Curator of Collections at the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood. Ani Kodzhabasheva (MSt 2013) is continuing with her PhD at Columbia University in New York. She has recently completed her comprehensive exams and dissertation prospectus defense. In July, she will be speaking at the Cosmopolitanism and (Post-) Imperial Space: German-speaking Networks in Eastern Europe conference in Dresden.

Catrin Jones (BA 2007) is Curator of Decorative Arts at the Holburne Museum, Bath. Her current projects include the collection of Persian art given to the Holburne by Miss Ellen Tanner, who was among the first Western women to travel solo to the Middle East. Bath to Baghdad, an exhibition of textiles, metalwork and lacquer she bought from bazaars of Shiraz, Isfahan and Teheran during her visit in 1894-6, will run from 14 June to 21 October 2018. The collection will be on show for the first time following a major conservation project and Catrin is currently writing a book about Miss Tanner’s story. Find out more on Twitter - @catrin_curates.

Catrin’s other recent exhibitions have included Silver: Light and Shade (2016) and Tapestry: Here & Now (2017), and a forthcoming show with the Goldsmiths’ Company. She is speaking about the Holburne’s contemporary art programme at ‘The Museum is Not Neutral’ study day this month as part of the Fitzwilliam Museum’s season of ceramic-related events.

Assimina Kaniari (DPhil 2006) is the recipient of a library research grant at the Getty and in April is conducting research at the Kasmin Gallery Archive in connection to David Hockney, at the Getty, building on her earlier work and research at Princeton in the autumn of 2017 on David Hockney and Nikos Stangos, in the context of her sabbatical from the Athens School of Fine Arts. Her talk at Princeton was entitled ‘Erosion, Collage, Diaspora: Operations of the portrait in Nikos Stangos and David Hockney 1966 animation of C.P. Cavafy’. In April she is a guest to the Department of Media Theory of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, delivering a workshop on ‘Ways in and out of flatness: nature as decor from Broodthaers to Bio art’ in the context of an Erasmus + agreement between the University of Applied Arts Vienna and the Athens School of Fine Arts. In 2017, Assimina was the recipient of the Leonardo journal (published by The MIT Press) Awards for Excellence in Peer Reviewing.


Matthew Landrus (DPhil 2006) published a chapter on ‘Leonardo’s Lost Book on Painting and Human Movements’ in The Fabrication of Leonardo da Vinci’s Trattato della pittura which is edited by Claire Farago, Janis Bell, and Carlo Vecce (Brill, February 2018). In August, he will offer the opening keynote for the 18th International Conference on Geometry and Graphics in Milan.

Greg Lehman (MSt 2013) has been awarded Best Art Writing by an Indigenous Australian by the Art Association of Australia and New Zealand for his article ‘Benjamin Duterrau: The Art of Conciliation’ in the Journal of War and Culture Studies, Vol. 8, No. 2 (May 2015), pp. 107-24. In June he will commence as a McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Melbourne. The McKenzie Fellowships Program attracts outstanding recent doctoral graduates to the understandings of the role of visual rhetoric in framing knowledge and attitudes to Australian Aboriginal people; offering insights into the discursive formation of historical interpretation, public and media discourse, pedagogy, policy, administration, and constructs of cultural identity in contemporary Australia.
Many thanks to our contributors, and well done to all alumni, current students, staff and visitors on their achievements.

** Very Important Notice for HoA Alumni! **

We don’t want to lose you!!

Due to changes in legislation we need you to confirm that you wish to continue receiving Alumni communications from the History of Art Department.

Please complete the (very short) online form at: https://hoa.web.ox.ac.uk/contact-consent.