

AHVS Newsletter

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Casa Morra opening, Naples, 2017. Photo: Fondazione Morra.

New Opportunities for Graduate Students

Dear Graduate students,

Our department continues to go from strength to strength. Thanks to the support of the late Jeffrey Rubinoff, sculptor and philanthropist, graduate students are now participating in an annual forum, *The Company of Ideas*, held at the Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park on Hornby Island every summer (www.rubinoffsculpturepark.org/coi.php). Chaired by Cambridge University art historian James Fox (specialty, British modernism), the forum brings together scholars from around the world for a weekend to speak on themed topics. Graduate students now have the opportunity to meet and learn from these scholars in a congenial atmosphere unlike any other. Jeffrey Rubinoff has also endowed our department with a four-year PhD scholarship and a fund for graduate student bursaries.

Additionally, in 2017 Art History and Visual Studies established a relationship with Italy's renowned Morra Foundation in Naples. The Morra Foundation is a centre for the study of modern and contemporary art located in the center of Naples (at Casa Morra) with a substantial collection focusing on post-1945 theatre, painting, photography, sculpture, conceptual and performance art. I first visited Casa Morra in 2016 to conduct research on the American artist/actor/stage designer Julian Beck, co-founder of the Living Theatre (www.livingtheatre.org/home). Under the terms of our agreement, AHVS graduate students may submit research proposals to the Morra Foundation related to their studies. If accepted, the students will be provided with an apartment at Casa Morra for a set period of time to undertake their work. I should emphasize that the Morra Foundation is very interested in students working with their collection or on issues related to it, so I encourage you to explore the Foundation's website: www.fondazionemorra.org/it/casa-morra-opening-28-10-2016. If you are interested in applying, please make an appointment with me to discuss your proposal. //



Jeffrey Rubinoff with his sculpture "Series 9-6" (Location: Jeffrey Rubinoff Sculpture Park, Hornby Island, BC, August 2016). Photo: Michelle Tarnopolsky.

Dr. Allan Antliff, Graduate Advisor | email: allan@uvic.ca

The Making of a Graduate Conference: Visual Impetus 2018

The 21st annual Visual Impetus conference, themed “For Your Viewing Pleasure? Ethics, Activism, and Visual Media,” kicked off the department’s winter semester in January. We caught up with Nellie Lamb and Abbey Hall, this year’s conference organizers, to find out what it takes to build a successful graduate conference and what’s next for VI.



Abbey Hall and Nellie Lamb, Organizers

Q: What is Visual Impetus?

Visual Impetus (VI) is the annual AHVS graduate student conference. Founded in 1996, this signature event is a multi-day conference that aims to promote inclusiveness among a range of departments across the university as well as internally. VI provides a unique opportunity for graduate candidates at both the MA and PhD level to present their research.

Q: How did VI go this year?

VI went extremely well this year. We narrowed the focus of the conference theme; in past years it has been very inclusive, but with the political climate of this year, we chose arts and activism because we felt it maintained the inclusivity of all time periods. This allowed for a larger conversation to occur beyond the individual papers, and even the individual panels. We also held a button-making workshop in an attempt to show how easy it is to create your own artwork, in a medium that has historically been a used as part of a larger activist strategy.

We wanted to include a keynote speaker from outside the department, and thanks to a suggestion from Zahra Kazani, we invited Haema Sivanesan to speak. Her presentation, “Acts of Care: Three Exhibitions on Art and Buddhism,” reflected on three exhibitions that look at the relationship between Buddhism and art, to consider the idea of curating as an “act of care.” What does it mean to care for objects – for what purpose, and to what ends? Is the notion of care culturally neutral? How do we recognize and facilitate the multiple historical and contemporary meanings of objects and their relationships to communities?

Haema’s presentation was both illuminating and inspiring, and we are so grateful to have had her be a part of the event.



Haema Sivanesan, Keynote Speaker



Button making workshop (L-R): Su Yen Chong, Ambreen Hussaini, Nellie Lamb, Alexa Heenan



Visit us online for more VI photos and conference details!

finearts.uvic.ca/historyinart/graduateassociation/visual-impetus-2/

AHVS ALUMNI UPDATE

Curious about what our grads have been up to since defending their theses? AHVSGA Alumni Representative Terry Rodgers shares an update on exciting alumni endeavours post-UVic.

Through the AHVSGA we are developing an Alumni network to highlight career paths and academic studies of recent grads, to promote alumni social events, and to provide mentorship for current students. AHVSGA Alumni continue to excel both locally and internationally. For example, **Ali Grey-Noble**, MA is currently studying Arts Management and Cultural Policy at University College Dublin in Dublin, Ireland. She is hoping to complete an internship with the Chester Beatty Library education department in the spring and complete her research connecting crowdsourcing technologies and heritage practices in the fall.

Ali Macdonald, MA is now a PhD candidate studying at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia. She was recently awarded a Harvard Research Fellowship and is also preparing to present at a number of conferences this year.

Jenelle Pasiechnik, MA is currently the Curator of Contemporary Art at the Campbell River Art Gallery and also assistant to Curator, Haema Sivanesan, at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria on the major exhibition project, "In the Present Moment: Buddhism, Contemporary Art and Social Practice."

Regan Shrumm, MA recently curated a successful show featuring women artists from the pre-1960s period during her residency at the Salt Spring Arts Council. Regan is now an Assistant Curator at the AGGV, thanks to a BC Arts Council Early Career Development Grant.

Q: What's the plan for next year?

Last year, the co-chairs left VI planning info in a wonderfully organized binder which allowed us to streamline the process of creating this event. We plan to pass VI on in a way that will allow future organizers to have more time to build relationships with the arts and academic community and restructure the conference in creative and innovative ways. Luckily, there are some dedicated committee members who have committed to step into the leadership roles for next year. We feel confident leaving it in their capable hands!

We want to thank everyone involved in this year's VI. We couldn't have done it without the support of the department, the faculty, and the GSS, among others. //

For more information on this year's event, please check out the AHVSGA website, under the Visual Impetus tab: finearts.uvic.ca/historyinart/graduateassociation/visual-impetus-2/



David Christopher



Alexa Heenan



(L-R): Emma Richan, Abbey Hall, Nellie Lamb, Claire Scherzinger



Brian Pollick



(L-R): Haema Sivanesan, Dr. Erin Campbell, Su Yen Chong, Emma Richan

Department Spotlight

This issue we asked AHVS sessional instructors Melissa Berry and Mitch Parry to tell us about some of the exciting projects they've been working on outside of the classroom.

MELISSA BERRY

BFA (LETHBRIDGE), MA (COURTAULD INST, LONDON), PHD (UVIC) | SESSIONAL INSTRUCTOR



Q: Congratulations on your new book, *The Société des Trois in the Nineteenth Century: The Translocal Artistic Union of Whistler, Fantin-Latour, and Legros*. Can you tell us about your process from inspiration to publication?

It was a massive learning process for me as I'd only ever published essays/articles prior to that, and those were largely by invitation, as opposed to me seeking out the opportunity. There were a few rejections until Routledge said they were on board, which, of course, was very exciting. Now that it's out in the world it feels like a tidy conclusion to my PhD but, happily, I'm still not bored with the subject.

Q: What aspect of the research did you enjoy the most?

I most enjoyed finding the connections between artists, reconfirming that none of these well-known figures worked in isolation. I guess the practicality of it all intrigues me: these were real people cultivating networks and careers in a dynamic period of European history.

Q: Do you have any advice for others who have a book in them "waiting to get out"?

It would be not to be discouraged. Rejections will happen, not because ideas are invalid or irrelevant but because each publisher has different goals and budgets. Ask questions and see what you might improve for your next submission.

Q: Your course "Impressionism: A Social History" (AHVS 397) was one of the highlights of my undergraduate degree. It felt like in every lecture you transported us to Paris and its art, culminating end-of-term in our "absinthe experience" field trip downtown. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I can honestly say I love teaching. I really aim to communicate that in each lecture. I get excited when students make connections between our (seemingly narrow) subject and the wider world. While we may not always agree on style, perspectives are constantly shifting and I want my students to feel empowered to engage with the visual world around them.

Q: If you could add a new course to our department curriculum in your field of study (and teach it), what would it be?

A new course?! How much time do we have?! First love would be an on-site course in Paris and London to focus firsthand not only on the art but also the historic institutions in which they're housed. Beyond that, Victorian Art. The nineteenth century in England was a bizarre and diverse time that has an inaccurate reputation for being prudish or dull. //



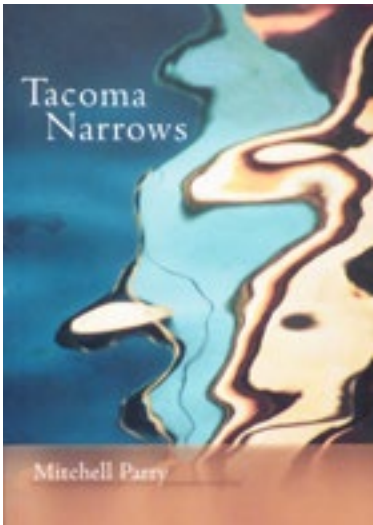
**WE WANT TO
HEAR FROM YOU!**

The AHVS Newsletter Editorial Team is always looking for exciting updates from the department to share with our community. Are you working on an exciting project, or involved with any upcoming events, exhibitions, etc.? Please tell us about it!

Email ahvsga@uvic.ca with your story ideas.

MITCH PARRY

B.A., M.A. (WESTERN ONTARIO) | SESSIONAL INSTRUCTOR, FILM STUDIES



If you've taken a film course from Mitch Parry, you'll know that his enthusiasm for film and Film Studies is infectious. A scan through his high ratings on RateMyProfessors.com include: "A really great prof." "Extremely knowledgeable, helpful and funny." "If possible he made me even more interested in film." And one, succinctly put: "I love this man."

Given this praise, it's ironic to learn that Mitch didn't actually start out in film. He began his undergraduate studies at the University of Western Ontario in English Literature. It just so happened that the Film Studies program operated under the same department. Mitch recalls, "I had to do a presentation for a Shakespeare course about a televised performance of *Troilus and Cressida*, and I had no idea what to say. And then I noticed that at the opening of the play, the shot opened over the city and moved down into the dungeons of Troy and then rose back out, and that sequence mirrored the narrative, which was like a 'descent into the underbelly.' So it was then that I discovered what I most wanted to study and teach."

Since leaving UWO in 1990, Mitch wrote a novella that won Anvil's three-day novel contest. "It's about a family that emigrates to Canada from England and collapses under its own weight." A French translation of this novella was recently published in 2015. Mitch also expanded into writing poetry, with *Tacoma Narrows* (published 2006) becoming a finalist for the City of Victoria's Butler Book Prize and the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, followed by *Imperfect Penance* in 2008.

Mitch currently teaches Intro to Film Analysis, Intro to Film Studies, History in Film, Documentary Film, Film and Modern Art Movements, and the Apocalypse in Cinema, as well as Special Topics courses. Is there a topic Mitch would like to teach that the department doesn't yet offer? "Lately I'm fascinated by New French Extremity films and by contemporary British films like *Kill List* by director Ben Wheatley. But they're harsh, and sometimes difficult to watch, so they'd be difficult to teach."

Whichever topics he teaches, students will no doubt continue to gravitate to his engaging courses. Cheers to Mitch for making Film Studies such a dynamic part of our department. //

EXHIBITION REVIEW: TRANS HIRSTORY IN 99 OBJECTS

Contributed by Katayoun Youssefi

The current exhibition at Legacy Gallery is the outcome of collaboration between University of Victoria's Transgender Archives and guest curator, Chris E. Vargas. Referring to *The Smithsonian's History of America in 101 Objects* and *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, the title of the exhibition acknowledges the untold stories and overlooked moments that create gaps in any archive. The exhibition is an attempt to shed light on some leading figures and key moments of transgender activism in America. At the same time, it builds bridges between past and present by including contemporary artists in the show. The artists, writers and activists presented in the exhibition have challenged their contemporary society's fixed assumptions of binary gender through the use of different media. Trying to neutralize 'history,' the exhibition itself confronts the viewer with complexities and difficulties of the subject. *Trans Hirstory in 99 Objects* is a unique exhibition that brings an archive to life.





Shanice in front of Faith Ringgold's African quilt, *Picasso's Studio*, at the Worcester Art Museum.

Research in the Field: Shanice Wolters

The newsletter team's Shanice Wolters shares some of her experiences from the field during a recent trip to Worcester, in Greater Boston, MA, highlighting the importance of hands-on experience in the study of art history.

I am a second-year Master's student and my research focuses on a painted African quilt by Faith Ringgold called *Picasso's Studio*. This complexly constructed quilt combines an array of images and materials that work together to depict Ringgold's alter ego in front of Pablo Picasso's 1907 painting, *Les Femmes d'Alger*.

From the initial stages of my research, I found it nearly impossible to find high-quality photographs that depict the stitching of the quilt, the material's details, and the specific images within this painting. Therefore, I knew it was imperative that I view *Picasso's Studio* in-person, as much of my research depends on visual analysis and interpretation.

In August, 2017, I had the opportunity to visit the Worcester Art Museum in Worcester, Massachusetts, where the quilt is currently being held in collection storage. When I arrived in Worcester, the museum staff had displayed *Picasso's Studio* readily for me to analyze. I found it extremely useful to take photos of this work, as well as close-up videos that captured

the vastness and the details of the art. By traveling to Worcester and viewing *Picasso's Studio*, not only was I able to determine the quilting methods employed by Ringgold, but I was given archival material on extremely specific details about the quilt. Having this information changed my research approach and gave my work a new sense of originality.

Other than engaging in research in the field, I also was fortunate to explore the city of Boston for the first time. This included time spent shopping, wandering through the Public Market, and eating a particularly delicious lobster grilled cheese sandwich.

The ability to view *Picasso's Studio* in person was an immense privilege and I owe many thanks to the staff at the Worcester Art Museum, and to my supervisor, Dr. Carolyn Butler-Palmer. I recommend that any student interested in doing field research should apply for travel grants and other funding as soon as possible. I can attest that it is an invaluable research experience. //

Oral Defense Q&A: Behrang Nabavi Nejad

In December 2017, Behrang Nabavi Nejad successfully defended her PhD Thesis entitled “The Simurgh: Representations and their Meaning in Persian Painting.” We asked Behrang about her experience defending her PhD Thesis and her plans for the future.

Q: Tell us about your PhD research. What was the focus of your project?

My field of study is Islamic art in general, Persian painting in particular, and the art of book illustration to be even more specific. I focused on the representations of a mythical bird called Simurgh that has existed in Iranian culture since pre-Islamic Persia. The bird and its meaning were transmitted and transformed into the Persian literature of Islamic Iran. So, the bird not only survived the religious and ideological transformations of the Iranian society but also was repeatedly represented in arts, idealizing the notion of divine protection. As such, my work examines extensive literature from across the genres, and interprets the paintings through intertextual and text-image analyses of those written sources.

Q: How was your experience completing your PhD at the University of Victoria?

I did my PhD while residing in Vancouver. Both my supervisors, as well as the present and former chairs of our department, were very supportive of me and my situation. I am fortunate to have had their support.

Q: How did you prepare for the Oral Examination?

That was the easiest part in my experience. I have gained lots of presentation and public speaking experience through attending national and international conferences as well as many years of teaching. Professor Milwright shared some very helpful tips with me prior to the exam, and I heavily relied on my knowledge of the topic that I gained through many years of working on it.

Q: Do you have any advice for Graduate students working towards the Oral Examination?

I was told by several people that I would be the expert in that room. My advice is, since no one has concentrated on the subject of your thesis as you have, listen to the questions and comments carefully and take your time before answering them.

Q: What is next for you after successfully completing your degree?

Of course, job search is the next step of the process. I also intend to publish my thesis, which means the work on my manuscript is not over! //



*Behrang at the gate of Masjid-i Hakim in Isfahan, Iran, Safavid architecture.
Photo: Behrang Nabavi Nejad*



CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT

Help us name this newsletter!

Last fall, we debuted a fresh new look for the AHVS Newsletter. Now we think it's time for a creative new moniker—and we need your help! Got an idea for a name that appropriately captures the spirit of our community and reflects the great work we do here in the department? Please email your ideas to ahvsga@uvic.ca with “newsletter contest” in the subject line.

The creative mastermind behind the chosen submission will win a \$25 Starbucks gift card, and the new name will be revealed in the Fall 2018 issue!



Students, faculty and guests engage with artworks in the new visual resources room (formerly the slide library). Photos by John Threlfall.

Former Slide Library Transformed Into Art Collections Room

Excerpts from John Threlfall

Until now, anyone conducting research on artworks in UVic's Legacy Collections required them to be transferred back and forth between campus and either the Legacy Gallery downtown or the Queenswood storage facility, which is risky and expensive. Now, work can simply be left in the room, safely stored and ready to be used. AHVS faculty member Victoria Wyatt is spearheading an experiential seminar concept in the new classroom. She explains, "Because we have to be really careful of security and conservation requirements, this creates an opportunity to make better use of the Legacy art collection and to have students engage with artworks much more intimately."

"As one of the leading world art history departments in the country, the new classroom gives our students the opportunity to work directly with the UVic Art Collection," says AHVS chair Erin Campbell. "[Wyatt's new class] was designed with the room in mind, and I believe it will be the first small-numbers, seminar-style class to be offered to first-year UVic students."

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

April 6, 2018

AHVS Celebrating Success
(10am-11am, Room FIA 115)

April 7, 2018

MEICON Conference
(Fine Arts Building)

Out of Town:

May 4 & 5, 2018

"Intersections: Visual Cultures of Islamic Cosmopolitanism," featuring Dr. Marcus Milwright. (University of Texas and Dallas Museum of Art)

As well as other AHVS courses, the new room will also be used for the department's new Museum Studies minor, Fine Arts classes, and by Legacy Gallery's art educator. "The classroom will also provide an inviting space for community members to work alongside AHVS faculty members and students with artworks from our collections," notes Campbell.

The art collections classroom is one of two new spaces unique to the department and UVic: also new this year is the Fine Arts interactive media lab, designed to support the growing strength of AHVS's Visual Studies stream. //

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is created by the Art History & Visual Studies Graduate Association twice annually to share news and updates from our academic community. Questions or ideas? We'd love to hear from you! Email us at: ahvsqa@uvic.ca

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