

News from Tappan Hall

Chair's Welcome

As we embark on another academic year, I'd like to take a moment to celebrate the retirement of several distinguished faculty in the History of Art. We bid a fond farewell to Celeste Brusati, Jennifer Robertson, Alexander Potts, Susan Siegfried, and Patricia Simons; we hope to see them again, and often, in Tappan Hall. While we are sad to see them go, we are delighted to welcome our new cohort of four graduate students: Madeleine Aquilina, Soyoon Ryu, Sandra Williams, and Youngshin Yook. Also joining our ranks this year are two postdoctoral fellows, Ashley Miller and Okey Nwafor, both of whom are offering courses in French and African arts.

This year has been off to a dynamic start for our faculty. Among many, I wish to shine the spotlight on three major faculty endeavors. This fall, Claire Zimmerman organized and hosted the international symposium, "[Moscow x Detroit](#)," which explored the effects of the Second Industrial Revolution on culture, social organization, and the built environment in America and the Soviet Union; Ana María León, in collaboration with Andrew Herscher, participated in the [Chicago Architecture Biennial](#), where they installed a series of placards that highlighted colonial practices that contributed to Chicago's urban development; and, as I write these words, Nachiket Chanchani is leading a Transregional Academy scholarly trip on "India and the World: New Arcs of Knowledge" in Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai.

Last year, [Ilene Forsyth made a transformational gift to our department](#), which will support high-impact faculty and student research, teaching, and exchange as well as an endowed professorship in medieval European art. Her extraordinary generosity is already bearing fruits: it will support our new initiative with the Dallas Museum of Art, which will provide one curatorial and one non-curatorial position every summer for our graduate students and majors and minors in History of Art. It also has allowed us to launch the Forsyth Distinguished Lecture series. This spring we will inaugurate the series with a visit and lecture by Prof. Paul Binski, a leading expert of European medieval art, in particular English Gothic architecture. Once again, I wish to extend a deep and heartfelt thanks to Ilene for ensuring the global standing and strength of our department as we sail into the future.

Indeed, a dynamic period of activity and growth lies ahead as we enter the new year. Stay tuned for more. For now, I look forward to working with each and every one of you as we "look anew, see anew, and think anew" in 2020. Go Blue!



- Christy Gruber

In this newsletter:

- [African Art After Independence, 1957-1977](#)
- [Visual Resources Collection Updates](#)
- Graduate Program Updates
- Undergraduate Program Updates
 - [Evan Binkley, Marshall Scholar 2020](#)
 - [Undergraduate Internships, Summer 2019](#)
 - [Spilt Milk - Helicon Student Art Exhibition](#)
 - ["La Promenade" by August Renoir, a review](#)
- [Giving Bluesday](#)
- Alumni Updates
 - [Shed Some Light - Justin Wong](#)
 - [Vivian Li Joins Dallas Museum of Art as Contemporary Art Curator](#)
 - [More Alumni in the News](#)
- In memoriam
 - [R. Ward Bissell](#)
 - [Walter M. Spink](#)
- Stay in touch



[African Art After Independence, 1957-1977](#)

- Ray Silverman

"In 1957, Ghana became the first African country to declare independence from its colonizers, spearheading a wave of political uprisings across the continent. By 1970, forty-five of today's fifty-four African states had regained their independence. The autonomy of these nations coincided with artistic revolutions. Everywhere, artists began rethinking their relationship to the new nation state, to the African continent and to a world fractured by the Cold War. The project, "[Making African Art, 1957-77](#)," seeks to position modern African artists at the forefront of critical conversations about making art that were taking place in Africa, the United States and the Soviet Union at this critical moment in the continent's history."



Expedition team, 1970. Grabar is pictured wearing sunglasses at the center.

Visual Resources Collection Digitization Project

- Michelle Al-Ferzly

This past summer, the [Visual Resources Collection](#) scanned over 2,000 photographs taken over the course of a seven-year excavation (1964-1971) at the early Islamic site of Qasr al-Hayr al-Sharqi in Syria. Directed by noted Islamic art historian and former UofM Professor Oleg Grabar (1929-2011), the project at Qasr al-Hayr constituted one of the first digs in the emerging field of Islamic archaeology in the 1960s and 70s. Long considered to be the father of the field of Islamic Art, Grabar began his career at the University of Michigan prior to moving to Harvard University in 1969.

Grabar's Qasr al-Hayr archives were entrusted to the Kelsey Museum in the early 2000s. They are comprised of over 20,000 photographs, as well as more than 20 boxes worth of letters, notes, and drawings. A selection of the scanned photographs will be published and annotated in a forthcoming catalogue by department chair Prof. Christiane Gruber and graduate student Michelle Al-Ferzly, entitled *Qasr al-Hayr 1964-1971: Oleg Grabar and the Rise of Islamic Archaeology*. The scanned images included in the catalogue were made possible thanks to the work of the VRC's Sally Bjork and Cathy Pense Rayos, as well as the research and cataloguing by undergraduate intern Ani Kalousdian.

The publication will appear in conjunction with the biennial symposium of the [Historians of Islamic Art Association](#), to be hosted at the University of Michigan in the Fall of 2020.



Kelsey photographer, Fred Anderegg, attempting to take a picture of a trench from above.



[Visual Resources Collection welcomes
new member Alice Sullivan](#)

Graduate Program

Every year, History of Art recognizes graduate students whose research, teaching, and contribution to the department goes above and beyond; this year, the Tappan Award for Excellence in Teaching went to [Michelle Al-Ferzly](#) and the Tappan Award for Overall Excellence went to [Rheagan Martin](#).



Michelle's nominations noted her remarkable classroom presence and consistent, positive feedback from her students.



Rheagan's nominations noted his excellent scholarship, as supported by his current status as Samuel H. Kress Institutional Fellow at the Warburg Institute.

Undergraduate Program



Evan Binkley,
Marshall Scholar 2020



Undergraduate Internships -
Summer 2019



[Spilt Milk - Helicon Student Art Exhibition](#)



["La Promenade" by Auguste Renoir, a review](#)



On December 3rd, 2019, alumni, friends, and all-around Victors came together to support History of Art in a meaningful way. Your generosity has funded our ongoing initiatives in undergraduate internships, experiential learning, and more! [Click to read more.](#)

Alumni in the News



Shed Some Light

Alumnus Justin Wong is only a few years out of school, but he's already worked for a number of transformational arts organizations — including one of New York's newest cultural spaces located in Manhattan's Hudson Yards.

- [More alumni in the news, 2019](#)
- Are you an alumni with news to share or would just like to keep in touch? [Click here](#).



Vivian Li Joins Dallas Museum of Art as Contemporary Art Curator

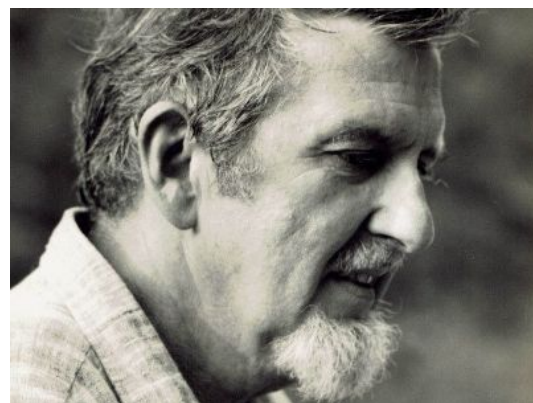
“Just as we recently created new curatorial roles in Islamic and Latin American art to support and further strengthen these areas of our collection, we are pleased to strengthen our curatorial expertise in contemporary art with Vivian’s appointment,” DMA director Agustín Arteaga said in a statement.

Sadly, this fall, we had to say goodbye to two emeriti professors, whose years of research and teaching helped shape our department into what it is today.



R. Ward Bissell
(1936 - 2019)

Professor Emerita Shelley Perlove and Professor Thomas Willette [share tribute](#).



Walter M. Spink
(1928 - 2019)

Professors Nachiket Chanchani & Kevin Carr [share tribute](#).

How to stay in touch...

- For the latest news and updates, make sure to follow us on [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)!
- [Click here for full calendar of History of Art events](#)
- Do you live in the Ann Arbor area and would like to be notified of public lectures?
Send a request to hstart-events-comm@umich.edu to be added to our mailing list!



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