Learning from Aging Artists

Almost all people eventually retire from their day jobs, often celebrating with parties, cake, and a tribute to their hard work over the past decades. Most artists, on the other hand, do not retire, continuing their work as long as they are physically able to do so — and sometimes changing medium depending on their physical capabilities. In 2007, Joan Jeffri conducted the first-ever study of aging professional visual artists in the five boroughs, entitled “Above Ground” (www.tc.edu/rca). She found that the artists, aged 62 and over, not only were still working but often led more social and emotionally fulfilling lives than their non-working counterparts.

The results of this study recently led to two major developments. One is a pilot program that matches aging artists with senior centers in the five boroughs which will provide them with studio space. This initiative, part of Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s effort to create a more “Age-Friendly NYC,” will be in conjunction with the Departments of Aging and Cultural Affairs. Joan is currently working with the borough arts councils to figure out the most effective way to implement this initiative.

The other is a project stemming from her study's discovery that 61% of the artists surveyed have no preparation or preservation plans for their work after their death, and that one in five had no documentation of his or her work at all. In an attempt not only to preserve existing work but also to encourage documentation, Joan is beginning a project entitled Art Cart, to start in fall 2010. Art Cart will be an interdisciplinary, intergenerational, year-long course involving twelve students from Arts Administration, Public Health, Occupational Therapy, Social Work, Studio Art, and Art Education. The students will work in teams of two with one aging visual artist to document his or her work.

The class itself will teach students about working with aging artists, documenting procedures, evaluating functionality in the studio, and doing oral history. After learning these skills, students will engage in the process of documentation during the spring.

Joan remarks that the six Columbia University programs contributing students are “incredibly excited [about the project] for different reasons, but they’re very synergistic reasons.” For example, Occupational Therapy students can help “maximize function for artists in their studios;” Public Health students can become an active part of the “creative aging movement;” and Studio Art students can learn proper methods for documentation that they can apply to their own work. The class will be offered in partnership with the Joan Mitchell Foundation, which has developed a software

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Dear colleagues,

Welcome back to TC! I hope you had wonderful and relaxing summers. We here at the Gazette are happy to be back as well and look forward to our second year, which promises to be busier and more ambitious than ever.

For this issue, we decided to kick off our second year with several articles about the Program in Arts Administration, which celebrates its thirtieth anniversary this year. We will also highlight some of the many new A&H full-time faculty members. As always, we hope you enjoy reading about what our faculty, staff, and students have been doing, especially the activities featured in this issue that range from New York City to South Africa!

Best,
Professor Margaret Crocco

A Very Special Thank You To:
Professor Sheridan Blau                  Professor Michael Kieffer
Professor Steven Dubin                  Daria Pennington
Professor Lyn Fogle                     Sarah Schramm
Professor Olga Hubard                   Professor Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz
Professor Joan Jeffri                   Rebecca Solow

for graciously agreeing to be interviewed for this issue.

All articles written by Allison Curran, with the exception of the faculty quotes on pages 4-5

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If you would like to be included in a future issue of the Gazette, please contact
Margaret Crocco at crocco@tc.columbia.edu or Allison Curran at amc2254@columbia.edu.
Information Organization: An Upcoming Event on the Cultural Data Project

There are hundreds of thousands of arts organizations in the United States. However, until recently, there have been few if any attempts to coordinate and evaluate their data. How can a small theater know how its financial status compares to others? How can policymakers effectively lobby for arts legislation if only limited data are backing up their arguments? An upcoming event at TC, co-sponsored by the Program in Arts Administration and Student Advocates for the Arts, features an initiative designed to help arts organizations better understand and process their own data.

The Cultural Data Project is an informational tool that allows arts organizations to enter their financial, operating, and programming information into one site. It provides organized, cohesive reports on the artistic life of the sector, which can lead to changes in cultural policy based on standardized, fact-based reports. It also gives arts organizations the ability to compare themselves to their peers (though the public information is anonymous so organizations do not have to reveal their financial data).

The Project has been adopted in Pennsylvania, Maryland, California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Ohio and New York. Many foundations in those states are now requiring that all grant applicants use the Project’s database to encourage widespread adoption of the system. The Project is just now beginning to be implemented in New York City, and the October event will feature some of the key players bringing it to fruition. Among the panelists are Marian A. Godfrey, Senior Director of Culture Initiatives at Pew Charitable Trusts, the organization that initially sponsored the creation of the CDP, as well as Kate Levin, NYC Commissioner of Cultural Affairs; and Michael Unthank, Executive Director of the Harlem Arts Alliance. Joan Jeffri, the Arts Administration Program Coordinator, explains that it makes sense for the CDP to be “talking to tomorrow’s arts managers” to familiarize them with the Project so they can use it in the future. Daria Pennington, Vice-President of Student Advocates for the Arts, concurs, saying that this program is a “real-world [application] of what we’re learning in the classroom.”

Both hope that the event will draw people from cultural organizations across the city, as well as a range of arts-minded people and administrators from TC and nearby schools. The more people learn the importance of data sharing and communicating, the more effective nonprofits can be in bettering themselves and their surrounding communities.

Stay Tuned...

What the Arts Managers of Tomorrow Need to Know: The Cultural Data Project

Wednesday, October 14, 2009
6:30pm - 9:00pm
Grace Dodge 179
RSVP to arad@columbia.edu

Readers know Rebecca Solow as the Gazette’s photographer (see examples of her work on the left) and the Social Studies program secretary. However, soon she will be adding a new title to her resume: mummy tracer. Rebecca left for Egypt at the end of September to work with the Metropolitan Museum of Art at an archaeological dig, cataloguing, and drawing artifacts. A talented artist, Rebecca will be making drawings and tracings of ancient wall carvings and hieroglyphics near Dahshur, 30 miles from Cairo.

Rebecca will work there for five weeks, after which she will travel to Spain for a few days before returning to New York and TC. Rebecca is excited about the journey, and says the opportunity is like “no experience I’ve ever imagined happening.”

We look forward to hearing about her exciting adventure!
Welcome, New Faculty!

Arts & Humanities welcomed many new full-time faculty members this semester. Below are their photos, courses this year, and their educational passions. If you see them in the hallway, be sure to say hello!

Profiles on each of our faculty are available on the TC website

Olga Hubard
Assistant Professor of Art Education

Teaching: Introduction to Painting, a master’s research seminar, and several museum education courses, including one that critically examines art histories.

“I am passionate about how art can help us be more attuned to the nuances of life, how it can help us experience the seemingly ordinary in fresh ways. I particularly enjoy opening artistic windows for people who have limited experience with art, and to prove those who have decided that ‘they are not artistic’ wrong…I am convinced that everybody, regardless of background or age, has the potential—and the right—to engage with the world through art.”

Lyn Fogle
Lecturer in Language and Education

Teaching: Introduction to Second Language Acquisition and Sociolinguistics and Education.

“I am passionate about how we can better meet the needs of second language learners in our schools and society. I am interested in how learners take on new identities as they acquire a new language and how they negotiate both their own and others’ language attitudes and ideologies in the process. I enjoy hearing learners’ stories about their languages, particularly when they have found ways to overcome interactional challenges or use their linguistic resources in innovative ways. I believe that understanding second language learning from a social perspective can help to inform educational policies that promote social justice and equity for learners from all backgrounds.”

Michael Kieffer
Assistant Professor of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Teaching: Core courses for students in the K-12 TESOL Certification program as well as designing a new course on second-language literacy instruction and development.

“I taught English as a second language for several years at a middle school in Long Beach, California. Although I loved teaching, I also became frustrated by the lack of instructional tools available to leverage my students’ unique strengths and to address their challenges. I started my doctoral work at the Harvard Graduate School of Education determined to address this problem by conducting empirical research on second-language literacy development and translating research findings into useable knowledge for educators. As a researcher, I am most fascinated by the complex cognitive and linguistic processes that go into adolescents’ reading comprehension, and as a former teacher, I am passionate about improving instruction for students from linguistically diverse backgrounds. I hope that my teaching and research can help teachers provide more students with the education they deserve.”
Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz
Assistant Professor of English Education

Teaching: The Teaching of Writing, Writing: Non-Fiction at the master's level, and Teaching English in Diverse Social/Cultural Contexts for masters and doctoral students.

“My academic passions live in the fields of English Education and Adult Education. I see my teaching and research as opportunities to enhance the learning that happens in classrooms for adult re-entry students and youth, particularly youth who attend urban public high schools. I am passionate about teaching educators ways to tap into the rich culture, language and worldviews their students bring with them to the classroom.”

Sheridan Blau, Distinguished Senior Lecturer in the Teaching of English Program at Teachers College, is also taking over this year as Program Coordinator after many years during which Professors Ruth Vinz and Janet Miller alternated in that position. Sheridan spent almost forty years as a Professor of English and Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara; he came to TC for almost two years as a visiting professor, before he agreed to make the TC position permanent, remarking that this is “an exciting time to be joining this program.” This is particularly so given the new faculty members and exciting new initiatives in the program. He is also pleased to be serving as Program Coordinator as the position, he noted, “brings me much more quickly into the center of the TC community.”

Sheridan, in collaboration with his colleagues, is currently in the process of rewriting and solidifying the degree program descriptions, developing the Ph.D. Program in English, and the Program's relations with the English Department on Columbia’s main campus. He is also happy to be supporting the development of a new course organized by Erick Gordon and built around TC’s Student Press Initiative, which he calls a “remarkable resource.” Sheridan is teaching two courses of note this semester: an in-service seminar for in-service masters candidates and a critical approaches to literature class. He is also immersed in research projects and writing articles about the teaching of literature, including one article that he is co-authoring with one of his TC doctoral students.

With so many faculty, students, and staff doing interesting work at Teachers College, Sheridan “would like to see [English Ed] develop…more collaborative work with programs within and outside our department.” TC, he explains, possesses “incredible riches” and he looks forward to finding ways that “we all can tap into them better.”

Though happy to move to New York, the hardest thing to leave behind was the South Coast Writing Project, a professional development program he founded and directed for thirty years. In spite of missing the Writing Project and California’s mountains and beaches, Sheridan loves living in New York City, which he describes as “constantly stimulating.” He has a passion for walking, and remarks that in New York there is “no street you can go down without discovering new things.” All in all, he is thrilled to get started in a city and with a program that is “moving in new and interesting directions.”

Coming up in the next issue of the Gazette, profiles of:

Marc Lamont Hill
Kirby Grabowski
Stay tuned!
A Busy Summer of Arts - Professor Steven Dubin

Some people make regular trips to New York City every year. Others go camping or to popular tourist locations. Steven Dubin, Professor of Arts Administration, makes annual trips to South Africa, where he spent ten weeks this past summer. Steven had a busy and exciting trip, although it began with the wrong kind of excitement: he was the victim of a scam and also a mugging during his first week.

One of the reasons Steven visited South Africa was to launch his most recently published book, Mounting Queen Victoria: Curating Cultural Change. At the Boekehuis, an independent bookshop in Johannesburg, he participated in a panel discussion as part of the launch event. He was also a guest on a television weekend morning show and gave a lecture at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research.

While in South Africa, Steven also visited Ardmore Ceramic Art, an arts community, having worked with them for two years (see page 7 for more information about Ardmore). Ardmore Ceramic Art invited Steven to edit the catalog for an upcoming 2012 Ardmore exhibition at Manhattan's Museum for African Art, which will be moving into its new location in the northeast corner of Central Park in 2010. This will be the first U.S. appearance for the show, entitled Ardmore Positive, which focuses on artists’ representations of AIDS. Although HIV/AIDS is epidemic throughout South Africa and affects people in all walks of life, the artists were slow to acknowledge this scourge in their work. They began to do so by first substituting monkeys for human representations in their art, and only gradually shifted to using people and calling the disease by its name. The catalog accompanying the exhibition will consist of a series of essays on the history of Ardmore as well as the representation of AIDS through art.

Steven also wrote an article this summer about another HIV/AIDS-related art show for Art in America regarding the exhibition Not Alone: An International Project of Make Art/Stop AIDS, which originated at the Fowler Museum in Los Angeles and is currently touring South Africa. This exhibit features photographs, installations, sculptures, and other art forms from the United States, India, Brazil, and South Africa.

Finally, Steven spent time with a group of Ndebele women, talented self-trained artists who received a grant to paint a mural on a children's science museum. The Ndebele have a very distinctive painting style, featuring bright colors, intricate patterns, and geometric designs. The work is so measured and precise that Steven says their art has been used to help teach children math.

All in all, it was quite a busy summer for Steven, who is now safely back in New York – until, most probably, next summer.
Communicating and Changing Through Art

Sarah Schramm, a second year student in the Arts Administration MA Program, spent the summer in South Africa working with Ardmore Ceramic Art, an organization that helps talented South African artists better themselves and their families through making intricately sculpted and painted ceramic pieces. While the art is valued highly and has been seen in museums and galleries worldwide, Ardmore is also designed as a community that betters the artists’ lives, helping them take care of themselves and their families through their artistic talents.

Though it is a for-profit organization, Ardmore Ceramic Art has a not-for-profit subsidiary called the Excellence Fund, which was created in 2006 and helps to fund social benefits for the artists and their families. However, a strategic business plan had never been created to determine a set of guidelines for the fund’s distribution, as well as to ensure that the Excellence Fund reserve was sufficient to cover the artists’ needs. Tension existed between the artists and the administrators due to a lack of organizational transparency and mutual understanding of business strategies. Furthermore, because the Excellence Fund was not fully explained and developed on Ardmore’s historical and promotional material, those outside the community had concerns that the artists were being exploited, which was damaging to the reputation of the organization.

In order to address these problems, Sarah traveled to Ardmore with the goal of creating a business structure and strategy for the Excellence Fund. Sarah had been interested in social entrepreneurship and the arts for some time, in particular examining the “potential for art as an engine for social change,” and was excited by the opportunity to have such a direct impact on an organization.

Once in South Africa, she interviewed the Ardmore artists, asking what social benefits they needed most, how they articulated Ardmore’s mission, and their goals for the future. She explains that an overwhelming number of them wanted to learn more business skills, and as such she began the process teaching them about marketing, budgeting, and maintaining... (continued on page 8)
Communicating and Changing Through Art (continued from page 7)

personal savings. This also helped ease the tension between the artists and the administrators. She went through piles of papers and records, meeting with Ardmore’s founder and teacher Fée Halsted-Berning and several accountants to budget for the Excellence Fund, and explored additional fundraising possibilities in case the Excellence Fund did not currently cover all of the artists’ needs. They determined that funds were needed for four major areas: effective health services, skills development, funeral expenses, and a museum fund for commemorating artists and creating a legacy of their work.

It is impossible to talk about Ardmore without talking about the specter of AIDS, which has an unusually high concentration in the area of South Africa where Ardmore is located. AIDS is a subject that permeates the artists’ work. Much of the Excellence Fund goes toward funeral expenses and

museums in order to properly commemorate and recognize the work of the artists, whose life spans are all too often cut short by the disease. Sarah said the experience has made her “obsessed” with the issue of health education, and the multidimensional issues that make AIDS such an epidemic for the Zulu people. As a social entrepreneur, Sarah explains that she is very interested in “identifying disequilibrium in society – the balance between what is and what could be” and creating systems that work to correct it. She expressed her frustration at how difficult it can be “when you find the disequilibrium but not the solution.”

After eight weeks’ experience, Sarah insists her work is still “very much incomplete.” She anticipates returning to South Africa at some point, not only to continue her work at Ardmore but also to help doctors work towards better health education and AIDS prevention. She explains that it is important to instill in the artists a sense of the future and to help them consider their own aspirations and long-term goals. While the situation seems daunting, she says that “building leaders is a great way to start.”

Learning from Aging Artists (continued from page 1)

program called “Lasting Legacy” for this purpose. After the course finishes, Columbia will partner with several universities and the National Center for Creative Aging to take the project to a national level.

While documentation will be the aim of the study, Joan is quick to point out, “This is not just a documentation project; this is a project about intergenerational learning.” Learning about the incredible lives of these artists is “as important as the documentation,” which serves as a “vehicle.” The project may also serve as a model for future interdisciplinary and intergenerational learning. Joan says that “what I would like to see in ten years is twenty-five universities around the country using interdisciplinary teams of grad students to work with their community of aging artists in this way.”