About the Magazine

Founded in Spring 2008, Artfusion News serves as a public voice for students of all majors who are interested in exploring and sharing their ideas on various forms of cultural expression, including art, music, dance, theater, and film. It contains works by practicing artists and interviews with Marymount students, alumni, and professors who are working in art-related fields. We also count on students to keep us posted on cultural activities abroad. As an interdisciplinary newspaper, we invite students to write articles and editorials on intersections among the arts, sciences, humanities, business, and social sciences. We hope, ultimately, to enrich the cultural awareness of all Marymount students by investigating and celebrating the unlimited and unparalleled artistic and educational resources available to us through our distinct location—the heart of a great cultural capital—and beyond.

This edition of Artfusion News is dedicated to Sister Judith Savard, R.S.H.M. (1939-2004), a beloved member of the Art Department at Marymount Manhattan College. Sr. Judith received her B.A. from Marymount College, Tarrytown, and an M.A. in Art History from Hunter College. An accomplished artist in her own right, she joined the faculty in 1966 and taught Studio Art and Art History to generations of students, many of whom continue to recall, with great pleasure, her inspired teaching.

Sr. Judith entered the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary at Marymount in 1958 and professed final vows in 1965. Moreover, she served as Director of Communications for the Eastern American Province of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

As Sr. Judith placed great value on seeing and studying works of art first-hand, the college has established The Sr. Judith Savard Endowed Travel Fellowship, which will provide financial assistance to an Art major or minor to study abroad. It has also created The Sr. Judith Savard Faculty Chair to provide funding to support scholarly research by current faculty and to fund additional full-time faculty at the college.
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Cover photo of DeWitt Fleming, Jr., by Kristie Khaun

Designed by Will Fischer, ‘11

Edited and Produced by Prof. Bell

Forthcoming in the Fall 2010 edition of Artfusion News

Spotlight on the Artist: Elizabeth Goodridge

I am pleased to announce that Artfusion News is now in its third year of publishing and going strong. Our first edition, published in Spring 2008, appeared in only fifty copies; we will publish 300 copies of the present edition. We are also permanently available online through the website of the Artfusion Club: http://www.mmm.edu/current/student/clubs/club22/index.html.

In keeping with the mission of Artfusion News to represent the full scope of cultural activities in New York, this edition contains articles on art, art history, dance, music, and film. We begin, as always, by shining a spotlight on two of our finest artists, Sarah Filiault, ’10, and Nicole Rubendall, ’09. As Seniors, they have produced impressive, inspiring work that represents the culmination of their experiences in Marymount classrooms and internships with professional artists in New York.

Our feature presentation (so to speak) is an interview with distinguished Marymount alumnus DeWitt Fleming, Jr., whom I had the pleasure of seeing perform at Lincoln Center last year. When I read in his bio that he had graduated from Marymount, I knew instantly that we needed an AFN interview. I contacted Meghan Quinlan, whose love of both dance and writing made her ideally suited to the project. Meghan asked just the right questions and produced an informative and lively interview. I hope that Marymount students will be inspired by DeWitt’s candid reflections and his passion for the art of tap dancing.

As an extension of our focus on dance, we are pleased to include Sarah Badger’s profile of Katrina Phillip, who has persisted, in an extremely competitive field, to craft a successful career as a professional dancer and choreographer in New York.

This edition of Artfusion News also features excellent critical analyses of several modern and contemporary artists. Erica Jackson’s assessment of Frida Kahlo’s work as “Surrealist”—a label with which she has a lot of trouble—sheds new light on the complexity of the artist’s sources of inspiration. It reminds us to question the summary judgments that we tend to give to certain artists, particularly those with whom we have developed a deep sense of familiarity. (On Honors Day this year, Erica received the Writing 102 Award for Excellence for this essay.) Leslie Manning draws our attention to a superlative exhibition of Rock and Roll memorabilia at the Brooklyn Museum, while Dana Marcus bravely grapples with the complexities of Anish Kapoor and Tino Sehgal at the Guggenheim.
Letter From the Faculty Adviser

The business of art comes alive in Jillian Moseman’s spirited description of the Antiquities Department at Christie’s, where she held a Spring 2010 internship. Emma Ramos, our resident film critic, trains her eye for good camp on Roman Polanski’s The Fearless Vampire Killers, a film that even the most ardent of the director’s fans might have overlooked for its ludicrous plotline. Ashley Ryan, a native of Melbourne, highlights powerful works of art with which she grew up: paintings by the Indigenous people of Australia. Kaitlin Yent pinpoints the most avant-garde contributions to “Dress Codes,” a thought-provoking exhibition on view last Fall at the International Center for Photography.

Our Cultural Studies Abroad section is packed to the gills this semester. We are delighted to include reports from Loren DiBlasi, who reviewed “Caravaggio” at the Quirinale while spending her Junior Spring in Rome; from Holly Lunn, who has essentially become Amsterdam while studying dance this semester at de Theaterschool; from the peripatetic Holly Gover, who, having begun her Junior year in Paris last Fall, is by now so deeply immersed in French culture that she’s taken to emailing her Adviser (me) in Franglais; and from Jordan Anderson and Virginia Melvin, who teamed up to report on “Art and Philosophy in Venice,” a version of ART 288-Visual Arts Abroad that I had the great pleasure of co-teaching with Carrie-Ann Biondi, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, during the January 2010 intersession.

We conclude with some general information on new cultural programs at the college: the Arts Management Minor, the annual Internships in the Visual Arts Symposium, and “Marymount at the Met.” We hope that all Marymount students will investigate these programs and participate actively in them.

Our sincerest thanks go to all of the students who contributed articles to this edition of the magazine. We are grateful to Nicole Rubendall and Dewitt Fleming, Jr., who graciously shared their thoughts on their lives as artists in their interviews. We also send a hearty “Thank You” to Will Fischer, ’11, my ace designer, and to Prof. Jim Holl, who kept an eye both critical and avuncular on his work. Will designed this edition with efficiency and style; we look forward to working with him on future editions of the magazine.

And speaking of future editions... if you would like to join the Artfusion News team—if you would like to contribute an article or work on editing or production—do let me know. There’s so much going on in New York and abroad—we need your help covering it all!
Rediscovering Pastel
by Sarah Filiault

In high school, as a part of my senior portfolio, I worked mainly in pastel. I created some of my very first self-portraits using this painterly medium. In college, as I explored a variety of different mediums, I left pastel behind. Finally, in Fall 2009, I interned with the artist Melanie Baker.* Melanie works mainly in pastel, creating large-scale, history-sized drawings. Each day in her studio, I watched her hands work: digging, rubbing, blending, and shading. I envied her dusty, pastel-stained hands, and decided it was once again time for me to open up my wooden box of pastels.

As a college student with limited funds, I raided my collection of supplies, carefully looking for the perfect paper: thick and sturdy in body, yet smooth in surface. After using up leftover pastel pads from drawing class, I was frustrated with the rugged tooth of the surface and thin quality of the paper. I experimented on a variety of surfaces, from cardboard to canvas paper, until, finally, I came across my one true love: watercolor paper. As watercolor is my medium of choice, my closet is filled with myriad watercolor papers. I pulled out a giant roll of thick, cold-pressed paper. Using a heavy, straight-edged ruler, I tore a piece of the roll to roughly 15 x 20 inches, creating a ragged, deckled edge. The paper had two sides, one being smoother than the other. I found the smooth side to be agreeable with the velvet texture that I was seeking.

I sat hunched back on my living room floor in front of a standup mirror. I pinned my paper to a heavy piece of cardboard and made a makeshift easel by propping the cardboard against the wall. Staring into the mirror, I made my usual, dramatic faces. I began sketching with vine charcoal, perfecting each feature to make the ideal distortion of my face. Finally, once each feature was roughly in place, I unhinged my wooden box and picked up the first whole morsel of pastel I had touched in a long time. As my pastel grazed the smooth paper, I felt the friction radiating through my fingers. The paper actually scratched the pastel, ultimately eroding the long piece into a stump. As I dirtied my hands, blending the pigments across the surface, I created a buttery, velvety quality. From the first scratch to the last blend, my dirty hands and dust-filled nose once again reminded me why pastel is truly my friend.

*Editor’s note: For images of Melanie Baker’s work, see http://www.roeblinghall.com/artists.php?artist=MBA.
Rediscovering Pastel

An Interview with Nicole Rubendall
by Virginia Melvin

We have all walked down the halls of Marymount Manhattan College to find student artists exhibiting their latest achievements on the walls of the galleries, but who are these artists, and how did they produce their works? Nicole Rubendall, a Marymount Manhattan College graduate (as of December 2009), will have her Senior Show in early May to display her body of works and her latest experiment combining digital media with painting. A Studio Art and Communications double major, Nicole has been creating art her whole life. She came to Marymount knowing she wanted to complete a degree in Studio Art and, in her words, “communications just fell into place.” Her Senior Show proves that this fortuitous combination helped to shape her latest artistic explorations. In the following interview, which was conducted at Starbucks (Lex. and 67th street branch), she explains the cross-disciplinary elements of her upcoming show.

**Virginia Melvin:** How would you categorize your style of painting?

**Nicole Rubendall:** Large, abstract color paintings—not so much color field but definitely inspired by it. I use primarily oil paints. However, I’ve been playing with digital images and toying with doing some type of digital

![Untitled](image)

**FIG 1:** Nicole Rubendall, *Untitled*, 2009, oil on canvas, 40 x 40", Collection of the artist.
An Interview with Nicole Rubendall

projection onto a canvas—moving imagery, moving colors projected onto a painted canvas so you have the painting juxtaposed with the digital animation and projection. Also, I’ve been trying to play with the idea of taking live data feeds and motion sensors, and capturing sounds and producing images from them. Taking information from the actual space of the artwork and projecting it—crossing mediums.

VM: Do you find motivation in any particular artist or period of art?

NR: Not really. I’ve been focusing on the emotional connotations of colors—modern and contemporary—and also how color was used in the past. I don’t look to one person in particular; I’m inspired more by color combinations. I’m looking at color-theorists from the 20th century, and their writings on color and their effects on emotions. Itten was one of the first to theorize about the importance of color, and not much has changed in the contemporary understanding of color, so I’ve been using that as an inspiration.

VM: How do you want the viewer to engage with your works?

NR: I try to avoid stories and narrative in my work; the approach is more abstract. My smallest work is 40 x 40 inches, which is still large, and they’re even growing in size. I want the viewer to think about himself or herself rather than me as the artist; the large size completely immerses the viewer into the work. I want them to think about how it makes them feel. I’ve always dealt with cultural ideas. I’m a double major in Communication Arts and Studio Art, and my programming class opened my eyes to the digital world and that’s how the animation came into my work.

VM: Why the Studio Art major?

NR: I’ve been producing art my whole life, but I really got into it during high school. It took over in college. Having graduated in December, I’ve been able to spend a lot of time on my paintings; I produce them in the art studios at school. The hardest part now is storing my paintings.

VM: How do you make your paintings?

NR: I stretch my own canvas and make my own stretcher bars. In this case, since the canvases are so large, I prop them up on paint cans, against the wall, and paint. I use a palette knife instead of a brush because it produces a lot of texture within the work. Light is very important; because of the subtleties of color and the texture, light really affects how you see the painting.
**VM:** Do you typically have a preconceived notion of what you want to make?

**NR:** I might have an idea of what colors I want to use, but I usually don’t go into the studio knowing exactly what I want to make; the process is more stream of thought. There are usually two primary colors. One will dominate the canvas while another area is comprised of a different color, but within that there are between eight to ten colors. I recently completed a blue painting that was comprised of four different shades of blue, but also included black, white, green, and red. Color and the subtleties of color have always been part of my work. There are always multiple layers of color—you have to look hard to see them.

**VM:** Do you have any advice for people viewing your show?

**NR:** Take the time to look and really spend time with it because the more time you spend with it, the more you’ll see. The paintings are really big, and you can’t see other paintings outside of the one you’re in front of, so it allows you to really submerge yourself in the work.

**VM:** Do you have anything you would like incoming studio artists to know?

**NR:** Stay true to what you do. If you have the passion to do something, take the time to explore it. Marymount is a great place to do that, and use that opportunity as a chance to explore what you’re interested in. The Studio Art major allowed me to do what I wanted as an artist, which is usually half the battle—being able to work on something that you truly love.
On a cold January afternoon early in 2010, in between a busy day of rehearsals for an event in the New York Times Arts and Leisure Weekend program, professional tap dancer and Marymount Manhattan College alumnus DeWitt Fleming, Jr. granted an interview to Artfusion News. After inviting me back to the Green Room in the Times Square Theater, this Washington, DC native spoke candidly about his careers—past, present, and future.

Meghan Quinlan: When did you start tapping?

DeWitt Fleming, Jr.: High school. I went to an arts high school in DC (Duke Ellington) and I studied acting there. And we had to learn musical theater, so we learned a little bit of tap
and it was like: “Eh, alright.” It was cool; it was fun for me because I was a drummer before that. I always played the drums. Of course, you got tap dancing, you got the rhythms, so that’s how I started to like it. What really got me is that they took us to see ‘Noise/Funk’ [the 1995 musical “Bring in ‘da Noise, Bring in ‘da Funk”], and I was like, “I wanna do THAT! I wanna do fun rhythms and crazy moves like this.” That’s what really got me into it because after that, I was just hooked.

**MQ:** Do you have any other forms of dance training?

**DF:** None, whatsoever.

**MQ:** You never took ballet or modern or anything?

**DF:** Nothing. And I’m paying for it now, too, with these shows that I’m doing here, because it’s like, I’m a visual person: if I see it, I can definitely imitate it in my body, but it’s not going to be as technical as it could be, so I’m working on that now, trying to do better with that.

**MQ:** So you’re taking dance classes now?

**DF:** Yeah, well, right now I’m picking up from friends, going into studios with friends and having them teach me technique little by little when they can, and then once we get settled in the city, I’m definitely going to start taking some classes to get better at it. I mean, I can do it, but I would rather know exactly what I’m doing and have a little technique.

**MQ:** Were you ever interested in learning it before?

**DF:** Not really, to be honest with you.... I wasn’t interested until I started doing more shows and having to learn choreography and stuff like that. And then I got interested in it because I would get mad about turns. I would try to turn, and...I’m falling off, and I can’t turn right, or can’t do certain jumps and leaps, and I’m like, “Damn.” I wanna like, you know, get some technique so I can do this stuff and then, like, learn how to do it. So that’s what really got me to say, “OK, I need to figure this out.” Before I was never really interested.... Dance was cool, but it didn’t move me, you know?

**MQ:** So you came to Marymount for acting from your high school.... How does your training in acting influence your performances? Are they more tap-based or theater-based now?

**DF:** It’s a little bit of both; I go off and on. I work mostly with tap. The theater stuff I do.... I still do shows and plays, but not as much as
tap. I really found a niche, like my own little place in the tap world, in the music world, with artists and stuff, so that’s really pushed me forward. The acting—when I can, I definitely try to get into plays, it’s just hard because when you’re traveling and doing all these tap gigs, it’s hard to do a play. Because you have to sit down somewhere and stay there and rehearse for, like, months or whatever. Or weeks—however long it is. So it’s kind of harder to do that, but whenever I can, and if I know I’m going to be in New York, I’m always looking for a play or something like that.

**MQ:** Do you still do percussion at all?

**DF:** Oh yeah, I still play the drums.... I haven’t done that in probably a year or two. I’m probably going to try to get back into it, now that I’m back in the city and I know I’ll be here for a while. Those are the things I know I definitely want to get back into...like playing the drums with different bands and doing shows and stuff like that.

**MQ:** I also noticed through your YouTube videos online that you tend to perform more street-style than Broadway tap. Is this your favorite style?

**DF:** Yeah, definitely. You know, the Broadway style is cool and has its place, but I’m definitely more into the improvisation, the more musical/jazz side of tap.

**MQ:** Do you have favorite steps or rhythms you normally default to when improvising?

**DF:** Oh, yeah, that’s what every musician.... I mean, tap dancing (the kind of tap that I do, the kind of tap that is out there) is definitely music-driven. I mean, we’re definitely musicians. It’s like any musician: you always have your vocabulary, that’s what we call it. And you have your...I call them set-up steps. You always have something you use to set up the rhythm that you’re trying to do, or melody, or music, or whatever. So you definitely have steps that you go to, that are rhythmically setting up whatever you’re trying to do.

**MQ:** Do you use set rhythms or do you make them up on the go?

**DF:** You make them up on the go! I mean, sometimes...you have a starting point, and you know certain steps sound a certain way, so if you have an idea musically that you’re trying to do, or that you’re trying to go for, you use, like I said, steps that set up a rhythm you already know. And then from there you expand and kind of make it up on the spot.

**MQ:** When you were just starting out, did you
perform in subways or public venues?

**DF:** Subways, yes! In my second year or third year at Marymount, I used to perform in the subway. I was dancing for two years by then…. I was tapping for two years, and I remember my buddy Jared came up, and my buddy Will, and he was like, “Yeah, you want to get your stamina up, and learn how to hit hard, and learn how to draw in audiences or whatever; you gotta dance with us in the subway!” And at first I was like, “I’m not dancing in the subway….” But it definitely helped my stamina, and it helped me to become a performer when people don’t care. It’s a little easier when you have an audience and you’re the focal point and they’re sitting in the theater or whatever, but when you’re in the subway and you have people walking by, it’s loud, and there’s no mics on the floor…it’s just you and the piece of wood. So, one, you gotta hit it so they can hear it, and, two, you gotta pull people in when they’re late for work, or you know, going wherever they’re going, and they’re not trying to stop or look in. That helped a lot with me learning how to improve my stamina—hit hard and draw people in, especially when they really don’t care what the hell you’re doing. So, yeah, I definitely did that.

**MQ:** When did you start performing in shows?

**DF:** I did a few shows while I was at Marymount, different little stuff, nothing major…although I did do an off-Broadway show. That was my first year, but that was acting…and other little stuff while I was there. So, yeah, that’s the great thing about New York, there’s tons of stuff out there.

**MQ:** So this is your only career—tapping and performing? Do you have to do outside work?

**DF:** No, man, honestly, I just…a year ago I was a criminal investigator with the public defender’s office. That job I got right out of college, and I mean, when I was in college, I did the whole waiter thing, the bartender thing, and all that stuff, and it’s cool, but it’s hard when the hours are kind of similar to when you have shows and stuff. I’ve lost jobs in college because I was trying to take off and do shows and stuff like that, and they weren’t having it. They were like, “No, you have to be here.” Yeah, I lost a few jobs like that. I needed a flexible something where I could just kind of move around as I needed to. I was blessed enough: my buddy—his aunt worked in the Public Defender’s office, so she helped me get a job over there and I was a criminal investigator and it was cool because with that job you’re supposed to be out in the streets; you’re not sitting behind a desk, so you kind of make your own hours. It was perfect for me because I can go do my shows, go to auditions, and just
An Interview with DeWitt Fleming, Jr.

travel…. You know, I left and did shows for a couple months and came back and…. Yeah, it was a blessing, it was definitely a cool thing. And that starving artist—no, that’s not me. I’m not trying to be broke for two or three months between jobs or whatever, so, I’ve always done other stuff just to keep moving.

**MQ:** Do you find that you still have to do side jobs between shows?

**DF:** I don’t know yet; I’ve been pretty consistent so far, so we’ll see what happens. But I’m not the type of person to sit around.

**MQ:** The project that you’re involved in currently is “Banana Shpeel.” Where can we see it, and what is it about?

**DF:** Beacon Theater. Previews start February 25th. [The opening of the production was ultimately delayed until 29 April.—Ed.] It’s kind of a variety show, almost. It’s taking it back to vaudeville, those days when you had those comedy acts and you had these dancers and all these other specialty acts. It’s just a whole bunch of fun. You just see all this other stuff—that’s what the show’s about. It’s not really a big story or anything like that. It’s just about this guy named Schmelky…he’s running the show! It’s a variety show, for lack of a better word.

**MQ:** What do you play in it?

**DF:** We’re the ensemble, so we have the different dance numbers that we do. We come out, sometimes during different parts of the show, and do different things, like silly comedy stuff.

**MQ:** Do you have any advice for aspiring dancers and actors?

**DF:** The thing that has helped me is to be true to who you are, to be as genuine as possible. And to really just do it. Whatever you want to do, just do it, do it to the best of your ability, and just be genuine. People can see that and that’s what people want. That reads a lot on the stage. I don’t care how technically good someone is, or how much training he has, or how wonderful he is. If people don’t like you on stage and you’re not genuine, they don’t like to watch you. So, yeah, just be as genuine as you can, be yourself. Just do it. Just do it. The only way you’re going to make it is to just do it.

DeWitt can be seen in “Banana Shpeel,” which is part of Cirque du Soleil, at the Beacon Theater from 29 April–29 August 2010. Although he does not currently have a website, some of his past tap dancing performances can be seen by searching his name on YouTube.
Katrina Phillip: Modern Dancer
by Sarah Badger

While dancers and choreographers struggle to find jobs in the midst of an economic recession, one young artist is using unconventional means to achieve success. In the Fall of 2007, dancers from all over New York City congregated in the empty aerobics room of an Upper East Side fitness center for a new musical theater dance class called “Strong Like Cattle.” Conceived by choreographer Katrina Phillip, the name “Strong Like Cattle” alludes to the open auditions (often called “cattle calls”) attended by freelance dancers. The idea of a collective of dancers who would teach and take class for free, and eventually perform new choreography was born out of Phillip’s desire to share her passions for dance and storytelling with an audience.

Katrina Phillip grew up dancing, often reenacting scenes from favorite films like “Singin’ In the Rain” for family members, but she didn’t begin to think seriously about choreographing until college. At Western Michigan University, Phillip gained experience performing in dance concerts and musicals, and also dabbled in choreography. During an extended interview with the author, she remarked, “[In college], I truly realized that this creative outlet, this voice, was an essential part of who I am and that I had to acknowledge and feed that.”

After earning her BFA in Dance, Phillip packed up and moved to New York, where she soon learned that it would take more than enthusiasm and talent to land a dream job on Broadway. “When I moved to New York, I knew I had a lot of work to do on my technique and style,” Phillip said, reflecting on her early experiences in the city. “I just wasn’t good enough, or as good as I wanted to be,” she noted. Aside from her BFA and college experience, she had few credits to her name.

Phillip delved head first into auditions and classes at studios such as Broadway Dance Center, but it wasn’t long before the daily grind of life in New York gave way to frustration. “The auditions, the politics, the life were all wearing me down,” she recalled. “I became depressed, never sleeping, losing hope.” One night after dance class, Phillip found herself on the roof of her apartment building, so unnerved that she couldn’t stop shaking. “All I could think of to do was dance it out,” she said. “It was so therapeutic.” Dancing on the roof soon became a nightly routine for her, relieving her stress and lifting her spirits. In that solitary rooftop space, she began to create again, developing new movement and choreography. She soon realized that she needed to do something about
Katrina Phillip: Modern Dancer

her newfound choreographic voice, but wasn’t sure where to begin. Slowly, the idea for “Strong Like Cattle” began to develop. She found a free studio space and began spreading the world at auditions and dance classes. Dancers attracted by the idea found themselves challenged by Phillip’s unique choreography, which she describes as “rhythmic, athletic, theatrical, and incredibly emotional,” and greatly influenced by artists such as Gene Kelly and Lucille Ball.

Phillip quickly entered her diverse pieces, which range from traditional and jazzy to contemporary and lyrical, in choreographic showcases at venues like STEPS On Broadway and New Dance Group. Her hard work and persistence has paid off. Last Spring, some of her work was included in the prestigious Choreographer’s Canvas showcase at the Hudson River Guild Theater.

Phillips has also been busy overseas. She recently set choreography for “The Nutty Nutcracker” in Dublin, Ireland, an experience she counts among the most memorable of her life. While “Strong Like Cattle” classes are currently on temporary hiatus, Phillip hopes to begin teaching them again on a weekly basis, with live musical accompaniment.

“Live music makes dancing to recorded music pale in comparison,” she mused. “The dancers can feel the energy of the instruments, the rhythms and tones in their skin.” In addition to live music, Phillip intends to offer a class she calls “iProv” during which dancers perform one combination of steps to many different songs. The exercise is intended to teach artists how to feel the music, rather than rely on counts.

“Dancers are too used to sticking to certain counts and rhythms and positions... and sometimes even to the story,” she said. For Phillip, the music is the driving force behind her creations, and she hopes that her classes and choreography reflect that passion. She is also beginning to think “outside the studio” and intends to begin posting combinations and pieces of choreography on her website weekly as a way to continue garnering a following as a choreographer in her own right. “I started this to get my name out there,” she confessed. “I thought this idea might be a way for me to bypass the ‘system’ of first becoming a performer, then a choreographer. I found that the ‘system’ is a tough one to break, especially if you are a woman. However, I keep going, keep creating. With luck, with determination, with timing, I believe my time must come sooner or later.”

For more information about Katrina Phillip and her upcoming “Strong Like Cattle” performances, visit her website at http://kphillip.wordpress.com or send her an email at slcdancers@gmail.com.
Frida Kahlo: Beyond Surrealism

By Erica Jackson

Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), the Mexican painter largely known for her self-portraits, is typically associated with artists of the Surrealist movement. The writer and champion of Surrealism André Breton described Kahlo as “a self-invented Surrealist,” “self-invented” referring to Kahlo’s lack of study and knowledge of the Surrealist movement prior to meeting Breton in the 1930s. This lack of awareness gave Breton the impression that the Surrealist elements he saw in Kahlo’s paintings came intuitively to her, and allowed her to blindly produce paintings that embodied the archetypal ideas of the Surrealists. Following Breton, scholars of twentieth-century art have often labeled Kahlo a Surrealist painter. They use as evidence her self-portraits, many of which contain objects of a disparate nature; for example, in Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair (1940) (Figure 1), Kahlo represents herself incongruously in a man’s suit. In Surrealist paintings, artists often juxtapose disparate objects, such as those in Kahlo’s painting, to mimic the fragmented nature of the dream life.

Although the disparate elements of Kahlo’s paintings create an oneric, surrealistic atmosphere, they should not tempt us into categorizing Kahlo solely as a Surrealist. In fact, Kahlo derived inspiration for her paintings from many sources, including Italian Renaissance art, Mexican folklore, Realism, and her own marriage and health. Moreover, she denied being a Surrealist painter; the association was one that Surrealists and those who admired her work later generated. For her
Frida Kahlo: Beyond Surrealism

part, Kahlo believed that her painting did not represent dreams but, instead, reflected her own reality.

In order to understand the concept of Surrealism and to address Breton’s argument, we must first explore the nature of the surreal. Surreal is defined as “having the intense irrationality of a dream” (Webster’s). The concept of art mimicking the dream world or reflecting dreams is an important part of the Surrealist movement, which arose after WWI as a reaction to the negation of art embodied by the Dadaist movement. Surrealism is further defined as the “principles, ideals, or practice of producing fantastic or incongruous imagery or effects in art, literature, film, or theater by means of unnatural juxtapositions and combinations” (Webster’s). Breton has suggested that a “work of art can only be termed Surrealist if the artist has tried to reach the total psychophysical field (of which the field of consciousness is but an insignificant part)” (Passeron, 263). Breton viewed Salvador Dalí’s approach to painting, which Dalí defined as “paranoid-critical,” as a primary example of Surrealism.

By 1930, Dalí (1904-1989) was one of the key figures of Surrealism. His “paranoid-critical” method, in the artist’s own words, “oneirizes all everyday activities.” Passeron describes “paranoid-critical” as an example of the fusion of “the imaginary and the real in order to satisfy desire”; it is a “mode of mythomaniac and fiction-spinning excitation, very close to what might be called ‘poetic life’” (Passeron, 58). Through this method, Dalí viewed paranoia as a “delirium of interpretation in the Freudian sense” (Passeron, 58). The delirious, or delusional, phenomena to which Dalí referred are “…daydreams, ‘half-waking visions,’…nocturnal dreams and, in certain cases, hallucinations” (Passeron, 59). As with Kahlo’s work, Dalí’s paintings, such as The Old Age of William Tell (1931) (Figure 2), contain

![FIG 2: Salvador Dalí, The Old Age of William Tell, 1931, oil on canvas, 98 x 140 cm, private collection.](image-url)
juxtapositions of disparate objects. Here, Dalf shows the Swiss folk hero William Tell, a character he often features in his paintings, as a bearded man with the body of a woman. Around him are several women, some of whom seem to have men’s faces. A sheet covers William Tell and two of the women, and the shadow of a lion appears in a mystical glow at the bottom of the canvas.

As with Kahlo’s *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, Dalf’s *The Old Age of William Tell* combines realistic qualities and hallucinatory elements. In *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, the combination of disparate elements could be considered surreal; indeed, the painting could be seen as an image of what the Surrealist painter Max Ernst called a “half-waking vision” (Passeron, 59). As noted, Kahlo’s small frame is engulfed in a man’s suit. She juxtaposes masculine and feminine elements in other ways. Her face is painted with make-up and we see a pearl earring hanging from her ear; both exhibit hallmarks of femininity. However, her open-leg pose is distinctly masculine. Other Surreal elements include the bizarrely activated strands of cut hair on the floor, which seem to have been transformed into phantasmal. Unlike Kahlo, who sits quietly in the chair, they are seemingly full of motion, resembling wild snakes and filling the space around her. The placement of musical notes and Spanish lyrics at the top of the painting seems to distinguish the scene from reality even further. These elements, from a Surrealist perspective, represent a hallucinatory faculty, a “special alien quality” that gives the image “the look of belonging to the world of dreams” (Passeron, 262). When considering the similarities between Kahlo and Dalf, we can conclude that Breton’s argument is somewhat justified.

Kahlo was first deemed a “self-created Surrealist” by Breton in his 1938 introduction to the brochure that accompanied Kahlo’s debut exhibition at Julien Levy’s gallery in New York. In the introduction, Breton writes, “My surprise and joy were unbounded when I discovered on my arrival in Mexico, that her work had blossomed forth, in her latest paintings, into pure surrealism, despite that it had been conceived without any prior knowledge whatsoever of the ideas motivating the activities of my friends and myself” (Chadwick, 90). Art historian Whitney Chadwick argues that although Kahlo denied she was a Surrealist, “her encounter with Surrealism in the late 1930s strengthened the psychological content of her painting and increased her reliance on symbolic imagery” (Chadwick, 90). When analyzing Kahlo’s *What the Water Gave Me* (1938) (Figure 3), painted in the same year that the artist was first labeled a Surrealist, Chadwick observes that while “daydreaming in the bath, Kahlo peoples the water with a swarm of freely associated images…. Images of sexuality, pain,
and death are filtered through the history of her art and memory, dream and art flow together” (Chadwick, 91). Images such as What the Water Gave Me (1938) fueled Breton’s view of Kahlo as a Surrealist painter and became a prime example of Surrealist art.

And yet, cultural historian René Passeron explains that “in order to provoke dreams, the figurative image should contain the potential of expression” (Passeron, 57); we can take this to mean that the images should have some connection to the life of the artist. Seen through this lens, the femininity of Kahlo’s face and the masculinity of her suit could represent Kahlo’s dual identities as both fragile woman and powerful man. The cut hair could reflect the idea that Kahlo cannot fully separate herself from her hair, even that it terrifies her. The Spanish lyrics at the top of the painting play into this interpretation as well. They read, “Mira que si te quise, fué por el pelo. Ahora que estás pelona, ya no te quiero,” or, in English, “Look, if I loved you it was because of your hair. Now that you are bald, I don’t love you anymore.” The statement could serve as commentary, from Kahlo’s husband, on his feelings about her now that she has cut her beautiful hair. These interpretations show that Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair embodies a narrative rooted in Kahlo’s life, and that, unlike the predominantly hallucinatory nature of Dalí’s painting, this narrative allows the work to transcend the fragmented world of dreams.

What were the motives of the Surrealists in labeling Kahlo as one of their own? It seems that they often objectified Kahlo as a Surreal object herself. Chadwick claims that Breton’s praise of Kahlo both flatters and patronizes her. As a whole, Surrealists thought that the woman artist arrived “intuitively at an ideological position created by man in her absence” (Chadwick, 90). They were drawn to Kahlo as a woman
because of her eccentric personality, as well as her art. Chadwick writes that “[Kahlo] was possessed, as Breton had remarked, of that magical quality of sorcery that they adored in their women.” She “fits completely the Surrealist ideal of woman…. She was always very consciously playing a role and her exoticism immediately attracted attention.” The art dealer Julien Levy viewed Kahlo as “a kind of mythical creature, not of this world…” (Chadwick, 90). Many women artists were objectified through Surrealism’s idealized vision of women; this idealization made it difficult for Kahlo to create her own, distinct identity as an artist.

In fact, Kahlo often denied being a Surrealist. Chadwick states that “Kahlo often said that Breton and his circle ‘thought I was a Surrealist, but I wasn’t. I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality’” (Chadwick, 66). Despite their surrealistic qualities, Kahlo’s paintings were not her way of transcending reality but, rather, of accepting it. Chadwick has described how, as the subjects of her paintings, Kahlo used “the duality of [her] life—an exterior persona constantly reinvented…and an interior image nourished on the pain of her crippled body….” (Chadwick, 90). In other words, Kahlo’s reality consisted of both the vibrant, eccentric persona that she showed the world and also the way that she saw herself, both mentally and physically, an image that thrived on the pain and handicaps brought on by her many illnesses.

In *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932) (Figure 4), Kahlo depicts herself lying naked on a hospital bed as she hemorrhages onto a single sheet. A large tear falls down her cheek, and her belly is still swollen from a pregnancy that she has miscarried. She holds six red, vein-like ribbons, each one attached to an object that floats around her bed. One of the objects is a fetus, and the red ribbon attached from its navel to Kahlo’s hand seems to be an umbilical cord. The fetus has male genitals and is placed directly above the pool of blood on Kahlo’s bed. The other
symbols include a salmon-pink torso on a pedestal, a snail, a lavender orchid, and a piece of machinery that lies underneath her bed.

According to Hayden Herrera, Kahlo’s chief biographer, the symbols displayed in Henry Ford Hospital represent a realistic account of Kahlo’s emotions at the time of her miscarriage. The fetus is how Kahlo imagined her child would look after birth. While she was in the hospital, she sketched several “careful pencil studies of a male fetus,” as she hoped that the child would be a “little Diego” (Herrera, 142-43). The salmon-pink torso has “several sperm-like organisms, presumably an X-ray view of the drama of conception” on its surface (Herrera, 144). Moreover, Kahlo studied medical illustrations of pelvic bones in effort to display what she claimed was the “principal cause of her miscarriage” (Herrera, 144). Herrera has observed that “[t]he snail, Frida once explained, refers to the slowness of the miscarriage, which, like a snail, was ‘soft, covered and at the same time, open’” (Herrera, 144). Although the images appear disparate, together they represent “maternal failure,” showing what Kahlo believed were the reasons why she failed, how she failed, and what she failed to create.

We may consider several other sources, beyond Surrealism, as influences on Kahlo’s work. In paintings of the 1920s, such as her Portrait of Alicia Gallant (Figure 5) (1927), “there are touches that prove that Frida did, as legend has it, spend hours poring over books on the history of art” (Herrera, 64). Indeed, the portrait of Gallant reveals how deeply Kahlo was influenced by Italian Renaissance art, specifically the works of Sandro Botticelli (1444-1510). Here, she represents Gallant as a regal, graceful, almost divine young woman. Gallant’s neck is elongated and elegant. She sits, with perfect posture, in a large, bluish chair; the darkness of night, illuminated only by two small stars, surrounds her. Her face is poised and pale; her elongated fingers take on an
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Altarpiece) (1484) (Figure 6). Botticelli’s paintings were characterized by the great biographer Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) as exemplifying a certain “Grace.” Here, the Madonna sits in a large, regal chair; she cradles her lively child in the crook of her left arm. Although her head is slightly bowed, like Gallant’s in Kahlo’s portrait, her neck is long and her upright posture is exquisite. As with Gallant, her frame and her small, thin hands make her appear light and graceful. The faces of the two women are also very similar in that both have a part in the middle of their hair, pale skin, and a thin nose and lips. The Madonna’s dress is red and gold, the two colors of the collar in Gallant’s dress. Moreover, both women are cloaked in purplish-blue, a color of both divinity and royalty. Through this comparison, it seems clear that Kahlo studied kindred works by Botticelli and other Italian Renaissance artists to find inspiration for her paintings.

Kahlo, a native of Mexico, also derived inspiration from Mexican folklore. Folklore refers to the traditional customs, tales, sayings, dances, or art forms preserved among the people. Kahlo’s Four Inhabitants of Mexico (1938) (Figure 7) is full of Mexican folkloric figures. It contains an “image of a child confronting the emblems of her cultural heritage” (Herrera, 16). Here, Kahlo represents herself as a child surrounded by four Mexican folkloric characters. To her right is a Judas figure, and to

![Image](image_url)
her left are a pre-Columbian Nayarit idol, a clay skeleton, and a straw horseman, respectively. The pre-Columbian Nayarit idol appears to represent a naked pregnant woman, a symbol of Mexico’s Indian heritage. The Judas figure is dressed in blue, presumably worker’s overalls, holding in his hand one of the fuses in his network of explosives designed to blow himself up. According to Herrera, Kahlo saw him not as a symbol of evil but as a “pretext for joy, gaiety, and irresponsibility...[having] nothing to do with religion” (Herrera, 17). The skeleton, which sports a bizarre grin, was a large version of the dolls that Mexican children play with during “El Día de los Muertos,” The Day of the Dead. The straw man behind the skeleton is wearing a hat and cartridge belt while riding a straw burro. Herrera claims that he could be seen as “perhaps a revolutionary bandit, like Pancho Villa” and that he is a symbol of the “fragility and pathos in Mexican life” (Herrera, 17-18).

The four central figures in *Four Inhabitants of Mexico* are based on Mexican artifacts that the Riveras actually owned. A photograph taken by Werner Bischof in 1954 shows a similar skeleton hanging on a wall inside Kahlo’s and Rivera’s house (Figure 8). Another Bischof photograph shows Kahlo in her studio; in the background are shelves of Nayarit idols akin to that of the pregnant woman in her painting
(Figure 9). Kahlo’s fascination with Mexican folklore may have been a product of her need to create a Mexican persona of her own. According to Herrera, Kahlo wanted to become as deeply ingrained in the country as the four figures she depicts; she wanted to be the most “Mexican of Mexicans” (Herrera, 18). Moreover, Mexican clothing helped to disguise Kahlo’s physical frailties; for example, the long Mexican skirts that Kahlo often wore allowed her to hide a leg that had become withered by polio. Kahlo may have wanted to develop this Mexican persona—to become one of the beautiful Mexican artifacts that she represented—because it allowed her to compensate for her many physical illnesses and wounds.

Several of Kahlo’s paintings also reveal her fundamental interest in Realism. One might say that while Kahlo tended to paint through insight, these works reflected her world as seen through her physical sight. For example, in *Doña Rosita Morillo* (1944) (Figure 10), Kahlo shows her rather dour subject, an elderly woman, in the act of knitting and surrounded by a tangle of vegetation. Here, perhaps partly in homage to the style of Vincent van Gogh, Kahlo has given “unusually close attention to specific textures… building up the image with heavy layers of pigment, and painting each detail with a different touch” (Herrera, 323). She has captured the hairy texture of the woman’s sweater and even the hairy texture of the flowering cactus in the

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**FIG 10:** Frida Kahlo, *Doña Rosita Morillo*, 1944, oil on canvas, mounted on Masonite, 30 x 23-7/8 in., Museo Dolores Olmedo Patina, Mexico City.
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background with thick impasto. For Herrera, Kahlo “paints every iota of what she sees, bit by bit, centimeter by centimeter, stroke by stroke” (Herrera, 323). With her finely tuned brushstrokes, she pays enormously close, even obsessive attention to every detail, as though she were trying to bring Rosita Morillo alive on the canvas in exactly the form in which she saw her in person. We discover this penchant for Realism especially in Kahlo’s portraits. Herrera suggests that Kahlo’s employed Realism because she “did not feel free to project all her complex fantasy and feeling—her ‘own reality’—onto the image” (Herrera, 322). This is not to say, however, that the portrait fails to convey Kahlo’s own emotional state. Indeed, Kahlo depicts Doña Morillo as “wise but judging, powerful but worn” (Herrera, 323), the essence of a grandmother. Kahlo did not need to inject fantasy into the painting; instead, she knew that through a realistic representation, her subject’s persona would shine through.

When we look at Frida Kahlo’s work as a whole, we find some features that appear, as in the work of Salvador Dalí and other Surrealists, to move the viewer past reality into a dream-like world. However, despite the Surrealists’ argument that Kahlo embodied their own ideals and philosophies, it is clear that she did not paint exclusively to construct a world outside of reality. She painted, instead, to represent her own view of reality. Her gift resided in her ability to represent life and the lives around her as they were, exposing both the internal qualities of a situation and the external. The idea that Kahlo merely adhered to the tenets of Surrealism, a movement created and led primarily by men, both strips her of her individuality and limits our understanding of her as an artist. It clouds our ability to see how she constantly reinvented her pictorial self, and how she constantly studied art and artifacts—from Early Italian Renaissance art to Mexican folklore—for new sources of inspiration. It hampers our understanding of her as a profoundly sensitive Realist painter. By seeing Kahlo’s need to reinvent herself and grow as an artist, we may perhaps finally move beyond the label of “Surrealist.” We may begin to value Kahlo as a creator of twentieth-century masterpieces, works that Diego Rivera himself once described as having “no precedent in the history of art.”

Works Cited


It's Only Rock & Roll—But I Like It

by Leslie Manning

While entering through the oversized doors into “Who Shot Rock & Roll: A Photographic History, 1955 to the Present,” a recent exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, I was greeted with the words of guest curator, Gail Buckland: “Rock & roll has a handmaiden and her name is photography.”

The photographic history chronicled in the exhibition appropriately begins the year that William “Red” Robertson captured a young, pelvis-thrusting Elvis Presley on film (Figure 1). The image, sans the thrust, was featured on Presley’s first album, and opposite this prohibition was born the rebellion and revolution of rock and roll. This pivotal point in music history solidifies the alliance between music and photography.

“Who Shot Rock & Roll” was the first major exhibition of its kind, emphasizing the photographers and their influence on the music genre. The exhibition consisted of six installments as follows: behind-the-scenes snapshots; photographs of tenderfoot, pre-fame musicians; images of live, exuberant performances; photographs that include fans and followers; portraits that reach past the exterior and fame of the musician; and abstract images and album cover art. Each section establishes the relationship between music and photography, as well as the visual identity created by photography.

The exhibition included the never-before-exhibited, complete sequence of photographs taken by Ed Caraeff, then seventeen years old, of Jimi Hendrix (Figure 2). The series portrays Hendrix sending his guitar into flames during his performance at the Monterey International Pop Festival. Until the Festival, Caraeff had not heard of Hendrix, and the renowned photographs might never have been shot were it not for the guidance of a fellow audience member who suggested he save a few frames for Hendrix. That he did—and just a few frames of 36-exposure Tri-X were all it took for Caraeff to generate rock-and-roll history.

The true significance of the exhibition,
It’s Only Rock & Roll—but I Like It


FIG 3: Max Vadukul (British, born Kenya 1961), Amy Winehouse, Miami, May 18, 2007 (printed 2009), gelatin silver print, 61 x 91.4 cm, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

however, resides in the juxtaposition of classic and contemporary musicians. For example, Max Vadukul’s portrait of Amy Winehouse features the singer in bed with a bleak expression (Figure 3). Winehouse withholds all signs of sentiment in this shoot for Rolling Stone Magazine, which accompanies her rancorous interview. Hanging just five photographs down from Vadukul’s portrait is Ian Tilton’s, “Kurt Crying” (Figure 4). The photograph depicts Nirvana’s lead guitarist, Kurt Cobain, crouching in a backstage corner with a tearful wince towards the camera. After Cobain annihilates an amplifier with his guitar and walks offstage during a set in Seattle, Tilton follows him backstage and captures the raw vulnerability of a musician facing his demons with each performance. Reflecting on this moment in an interview with National Public Radio, Tilton remarked, “[Cobain] said nothing, just accepted me...he showed great trust.... His trust resulted in one of the most famous images of a rock icon ever.”

The positioning of these two photographs was no accident. They serve as foils for one another to emphasize the present-day rift between the photographer and the musician; whereas Cobain displays his confidence in Tilton, Winehouse expresses distrust. Exemplified here is the conflict of the contemporary musician: what to expose and what to conceal. Moreover, the music
industry exhibits a growing concern for image in that photographers have become pawns in the formation of music’s visual identity. The catalyst in this aggravated relationship is, of course, the public’s heightened desire for access into their favorite musicians’ lives. Such means of entry can be obtained via photography, which has spurred the paparazzi and fuels the public’s obsession with idolatry. If the process of taking photographs once documented, humanized, and conceptualized contemporary music, it has now spiraled into a bottomless feeding frenzy, destroying the intimacy of an artistic relationship. Has music documentation set itself up for ruin? Buckland doesn’t grapple with this question, although it is an issue that this museum visitor would have liked to see developed in the exhibition.

In all, curator Gail Buckland achieved her goal of paying homage to the photographers responsible for the poster-clad walls of our teenage years. They acknowledged that it was only rock and roll—and it was okay to like it.
Anish Kapoor’s *Memory*

by Dana Marcus


You may never see something that swallows you whole as effectively as Anish Kapoor’s *Memory* (2008) (Figure 1).

The work was conceived as a shared Guggenheim exhibit, modeled specifically to be shown at both the Berlin and New York museums. A site-specific work, it pushes the notion of how we understand boundaries, and shatters the reality of their function. Built from Cor-Ten steel and weighing in at an impressive 24 tons, Kapoor’s industrial piece possesses a daunting scale. Created with heightened proportions and dimensions that cause it to kiss the walls and ceiling that confine it, *Memory* is constructed to raise questions. How could it possibly fit? How did it get here? What does it look like?

Kapoor explains that these are questions he will never answer because they are what make this work such an exploration in self-revelation.

Due to its massive scale, *Memory* can never be viewed in its entirety, and what one can see lends nothing to its conceivability. The exhibition is arranged to allow the viewer to see *Memory* from only three perspectives, and what the viewer can see is scarce, yet daunting in its infinity. Entrance to *Memory* allows merely a peek at the monstrous industrial structure, whetting our curiosity, never allowing us to see enough to get a full picture. Following the spiral ramp, the viewer takes a second glance that provides both a two- and three-dimensional experience. From a distance, it seems as though you are approaching a large, black canvas on a wall, but as you approach, you understand that the black is actually the belly of the work, an opportunity to see inside the massive steel capsule (Figure 2). Peering inside the lightless encasing, you try to follow the visible edges inward, striving to perceive the grand scale and mentally constructing a full image, but you soon lose any sense of space and surrender to the perfect darkness. You feel that you could hunt for the answers endlessly. However, in
seeing nothing only inches from you, you lose your sense of visual perception. 

*Memory* is an exploration in visual trickery. It warps our understanding of space and time; one can perceive its height but never fully its depth, or discover its width or length. Its appearance from one view to another contradicts its own dimensions.

Upon the third and final view, you hope to find a small detail overlooked so that you may know the answer to the mystery, but Kapoor overlooks nothing. *Memory* is perfectly designed to provoke a deeply primitive frustration and sense of ill-ease in each of us. Human nature is such that we must solve mysteries and find solutions. We demand to see the whole picture; otherwise, we are left feeling unsatisfied and restless. We confront these issues daily. Unable to fully reconstruct memories, we push them aside and satisfy ourselves by filling in the blanks with our imagination. By contrast, Kapoor will not allow his viewers to leave with the sense of having replaced the missing pieces. You can move back and forth through his work, analyzing it from a variety of perspectives, but you can never construct it in its entirety.

Ultimately, the design of *Memory* visually embodies the sensation of reflecting on one’s own past, or memories. It captures the impossibility of seeing the entire picture. Pieces of images will always remain missing, a byproduct of the circumstances of the memory, the subject’s feelings, the intentions of others, and the fog that inevitably accompanies the passage of time.

Every perspective of Kapoor’s *Memory* refutes what you thought you knew…but isn’t that the way it always is with memories?


Tino Sehgal and the Unexpected at the Guggenheim

by Dana Marcus

The last time I visited the Guggenheim Museum, a few things were out of place.

Visitors ascending the famous spiraling hallways noticed that the walls, which are usually lined with paintings by the likes of Kandinsky, Matisse, and Picasso, remained blank. As they continued to wonder about the change, they saw many patrons looking down....

On the Guggenheim’s lobby floor, a young couple lay intimately together locked in an embrace; they were sensually kissing one another (Figure 1). Then, they began rolling on top of one another—legs tangled, hands grazing their hair. Next, they made their way off the floor, which was, frankly, a bit of a relief. I watched a guard observe the two as they continued to kiss “off-stage.”

“I wonder when he’ll cut them off,” I asked myself. The couple continued to embrace and made their way back to the center of the lobby. Oddly enough, they avoided the dark corners of the museum, areas admittedly better suited for this kind of endeavor.

I realized that I had begun to stare at them and quickly resumed my search for paintings. I did notice, though, that people on every floor were staring at the couple entangled on the floor. After all, who could resist?

After I made my way back to the dorms, I did some research. I learned that what I had observed was one of many “living sculptures” created by the artist and choreographer Tino Sehgal (British-German, b. 1976). In this particular work, entitled “Kiss,” Sehgal has choreographed a movement piece, evoking concepts from contemporary dance and creating snapshot moments of some of art’s most famous erotic poses, such as the works of Auguste Rodin and Gustave Courbet. “Kiss” involved two dancers working in three-hour shifts, rotating in and out seamlessly with one another, on the lobby floor of the Guggenheim. The exhibition closed (or, rather, the work ended) on 10 March 2010.

Tino Sehgal creates works of art from what he calls “constructed situations”; they never involve tangible materials. You cannot hold one of his pieces, but you can see and even participate in them. This concept of the immaterial comes from his study of dance, which Sehgal described in 2007 to The New York Times as “a way of producing something and nothing at the same time.”

In honor of the Guggenheim’s 50th anniversary, Sehgal created another new work called “This Progress,” which was also on view until 10 March. Here, the visitor encountered
a series of “guides” on their way up the ramp of the museum. The first, a young girl, asked each visitor the following question: “What’s progress?” The visitor then discussed the issue with a series of other guides, each one somewhat older than the next. Although the timing of the meetings had been determined by Mr. Sehgal, the nature of each encounter was necessarily unique. Ultimately, the visitor enjoyed a most expressive journey.

If you missed “This Progress,” be sure to read about it in Holland Cotter’s article “In the Naked Museum: Talking, Thinking, Encountering,” accessible online at www.nytimes.com. And be sure to check out the next presentation—whether it’s a traditional exhibition or a completely unpredictable conceptual piece—at the Guggenheim.

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum is located at 1071 Fifth Avenue (at 89th Street). It is open Sunday–Wednesday, and Friday, 10:00 am–5:45 pm; Saturday, 10:00 am–7:45 pm. Closed Thursdays.
The Antiquities Department at Christie’s

by Jillian Moseman

During the Spring 2010 semester, I’ve had the extraordinary opportunity of interning in the Antiquities Department at Christie’s in New York. I’ve been involved in the entire process of selling a collection of ancient works of art. I’ve also come to understand, from an insider’s perspective, that there can be a symbiotic relationship between art and business.

I began my internship shortly after the department’s December 2009 sale (see two works from the sale, below). During the following weeks, Max Bernheimer, the International Head of the Department and a Vice-President at Christie’s, began the search for works for the next sale, which would be held in June 2010. He traveled throughout the United States and Europe to examine objects for potential consignment. Over the course of the following months, works came into our storage area—a room in which, astonishingly enough, the interns are given a desk to use. (Never did I imagine that I would be surrounded by a collection of Cycladic figurines, Attic vases, and Roman portrait busts!) One of my main responsibilities as an intern has been to research similar consignments from previous sales. I’ve used the information to draft catalogue entries for many small objects.

I turn over my drafts to members of the department, who finalize the copy for the sales catalogue. They engage in a process called “hilling”; they read entries aloud and correct them as they see fit. In drafting the entries, I have used knowledge gained from all of my Art History classes, especially Survey of Western Art I and Ancient & Classical Art. I have also become well-versed in the Art Loss Register (ALR). The ALR began, in 1976, as the International Foundation for Art Research. Stolen or missing works of art are periodically registered and added to their database. When consignments come into Christie’s, they are registered on the ALR website to certify that they are not stolen. Once they are cleared through the ALR, a certificate is awarded for the piece and the consignment moves ahead.

There is a wide variety of consignments in the Antiquities department. They range from ancient gems to large-scale funerary busts to ancient Greek vases. One small black-figure amphora depicts Herakles fighting the fish-monster Triton; despite its age (it dates to the fifth century BCE), it remains in magnificent condition. An ancient Roman glass plate and a Bactrian breccia bowl, also in near-perfect condition, offer a glimpse into the world of functional items for daily use during the ancient
The Antiquities Department at Christie’s

FIG 2: A Cycladic Female Figure, marble, Kapsala Variety, early Cycladic II (ca. 2700-2600 BCE).

FIG 3: A Roman Silenus Mask Appliqué, bronze, ca. 1st century CE.

period. Finally, pair of large funerary busts represents some of the larger pieces that are consigned. They will be displayed in Christie’s galleries before the sale to highlight their museum-quality status.

I’ve also been able to watch the experts in the department examine works of art. They’ve shown me that the temperature of marble can help to determine whether a work of art is genuine or fake. They’ve shown me how to look at a work of art under black light to determine whether or not it’s been repaired. I’ve seen how they use their skills as connoisseurs to identify the artist of nothing more than a tiny painted fragment of an Attic vase. In all, I’ve seen how they combine their knowledge of existing scholarship with on-the-job training to evaluate each work of art in the sale.

By the end of the sale, I will have been immersed in the entire consignment-to-sale process—from researching and cataloguing to “hilling” and handling objects to packing and sending them off to their new owners. I’ve seen how I can use the information and ideas from my schoolwork at Marymount in a professional business setting. I’ve also gained invaluable experience in the process of selling works of art, knowledge that I never imagined I’d learn in college and that has perfectly complemented my education in the classrooms at Marymount.
The Fearless Vampire Killers: An Example of Good Trash
by Emma Ramos

The highlight of my winter break was the four days I spent in Tampa, Florida, with my aunt and cousin. As I settled into the guest room, Preston, age twelve, began our first one-on-one conversation with a question.

“Would you rather be a werewolf or a vampire,” he asked.

“Neither,” I replied. “If I could be any literary or mythological creature, I think I’d be a hobbit.”

Thinking more about the question and noticing Preston’s contemplative expression, I gave the topic further consideration.

“Have you been reading the Twilight series?” I asked.

“No,” he replied, “Twilight is lame. But, I do like vampires. Though, I think if I had to choose, I’d rather be a werewolf.”

“But vampires are so much cooler,” I protested.

“No, they’re not, they’re weak. Werewolves are so much more powerful.”

“I don’t think that’s necessarily true,” I answered.

“Yes, it is,” he retorted. “Think about it. To scare off a vampire, all you need is a cross. For a werewolf, you’d need a silver bullet. How many people do you know who carry around silver bullets?”

Preston had a good point, and we moved on to a different topic—Who’s better, Jimmy Page or Eddie Van Halen?—I think it was.

Reflecting on my trip during the flight back to New York, I remembered that conversation. Sadly, it wasn’t the first time I’d been outsmarted by my kid cousin. Thinking about the recent vampire craze, I remembered the night I’d spent awake (I’m quite sure it was in seventh grade), chugging caffeinated soda and reading Stephen King’s Salem’s Lot (1975). I came back to Preston’s argument. The archetypal vampire did seem pretty flimsy in comparison to the less-sensitive werewolf. I seemed to recall something about Anne Rice’s vampires being unintimidated by crucifixes, only I couldn’t be one-hundred percent sure since it had been years since I’d last opened a copy of The Vampire Chronicles.

Then, the image of actor Jack MacGowran (1918-1973) popped into my head. A perfectly legitimate rebuttal to Preston’s argument would have been this: “I wasn’t thinking about the typical vampire when I said they were cooler than werewolves. I was referring to one of Roman Polanski’s vampires.”

In 1967, two years before the brutal murder of his fiancé Sharon Tate, Polanski directed his second English-language film (the first being Repulsion, 1965, starring Catherine Deneuve). The Fearless Vampire Killers or: Pardon Me, But Your Teeth Are in My Neck takes place in Transylvania. Professor Abronsius, played
by Jack MacGowran (who later had a role in *The Exorcist*, 1973), is a brilliant scientist. Scrutinized and shunned by his “more serious,” brilliant scientist colleagues, Abronsius, with the help of his protégé, Alfred, played by Polanski himself, journeys to vampireland—Transylvania. Count Von Krolock (Polanski’s version of Count Dracula) lives in a castle on a cliff and terrorizes the homes of neighboring villages. When Abronsius and Alfred come upon a small village in which all the homes are lavishly decorated with garlic bulbs, they know they have reached their destination.

Finding the inhabitants strange but hospitable—there’s a wolf eating a hunchback, a village idiot who spends his time plucking the feathers off of dead geese, and a beautiful virgin, played by Sharon Tate, who seems to have trouble keeping her clothes on—the scientist and his protégé set up shop. On the second night, the home in which Abronsius and Alfred have chosen to stay is attacked by a vampire. The vampire infects the man of the house with his curse of eternal life and, of course, Count Von Krolock appears and abducts the beautiful virgin. So far, the plot seems pretty straightforward and obvious.

But, there is a twist. The vampires in *The Fearless Vampire Killers* are not as easy to kill as the ones to which most people, including my twelve-year-old cousin, are accustomed. Polanski’s blood-sucking monsters have no fear of crucifixes. Why? Because they are Jewish Vampires.

No one in their right mind would argue that *The Fearless Vampire Killers* is a great film. However, Polanski’s pre-*Rosemary’s Baby* horror flick does have some redeeming qualities. For one thing, the cinematography is signature Polanski. There are a number of long shots—very similar to the ones in *Rosemary’s Baby*—that, accompanied with what is an unusual combination of slapstick humor and edge-of-your-seat tension, are actually quite skillful and effective. In fact, for the first twenty minutes or so of the film, the viewer finds herself asking, “Is this supposed to be serious?!?”

I have seen *The Fearless Vampire Killers* at least twice in the past five years. During both viewings, I was both embarrassed and enthralled. I can’t decide if the film is complete and utter trash or if the fusion of horror and slapstick, coupled with some exquisite shots, make it worth watching. The question actually brings me back to Stephen King’s novel *Salem’s Lot*. In an introduction to the novel, King writes about the difference between good trash and bad trash. He acknowledges that his novel is by no means a great work of fiction. King imagines a scenario in which his late mother gets a chance to read the story. At the end of the fantasy, she lays the book down on her coffee table and says something like, “Yeah, it’s trash. But, it’s not bad trash.” I guess that is how I feel about *The Fearless Vampire Killers*. 
Expressing Suppression: A Question of Identity in Queensland’s Indigenous Art

By Ashley Ryan

Many millennia ago, before Australia was named and colonized, her natives lived according to a parallel stream of time and activity known as “The Dreaming.” Here, the physical world was only a metaphysical shadow of the spiritual world, and the spiritual world was more real than reality. Art was not just a form of self-expression; it was a utilitarian instrument the tribal elders embedded with symbolism to depict narratives from “The Dream Time,” through which they established Aboriginal law. This practice ensured that their children retained a sense of identity, embraced spirituality, and valued the politics of their tribes.

Since the arrival of Gubbah (white people) in 1788, much of this identity has been lost and even destroyed. With the goal of “assimilation” and “preserving a dying race” (the precise reasons remain complex), Australian government agencies removed Aboriginal children and children of Torres Strait Islanders from their families. These removals took place from the late 1860s to the late 1960s; some continued even into the 1970s. These children are commonly known as members of the “Stolen Generations.” Though Aboriginal art has always been grounded in culture and identity, its focus has changed dramatically over the past forty years. The state of Queensland has played a key part in this artistic movement; however, the works have not only been relevant to the state or to the country as a whole. Indeed, the essence of the artwork evokes universal messages and warrants a worldwide audience.

“Contemporary Aboriginal Painting from Australia” (on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art until 13 June 2010) presents a selection of Aboriginal artwork, much of which remains obscure even in its homeland. Leading artists represented include Christian Thompson (from South Australia) and Julie Dowling (from Western Australia), but many hail from Queensland. Artists in this category include Gordon Hookey, Daniel Boyd, Judy Watson, Tracey Moffatt, Destiny Deacon, Richard Bell, Vernon Ah Kee, and Gordon Bennett.

In years to come, Vernon Ah Kee (b. 1967) will be recognized as one of Australia’s greatest Indigenous artists. Ah Kee describes his art as confrontational, direct, and intense; he focuses on the complexity of contemporary living for Indigenous Australians. He conveys his messages with various mediums and techniques, one of the most dramatic being his manipulation of words through post-conceptual texts. Ordinary phrases such as “FIRST PERSON” become satirical repartees; the subtext of the
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message is activated by the contrast of black words on a pure white background.

Text is transposed to the realm of the political when the words “NOT AN ANIMAL OR A PLANT” are arranged down the page (Figure 1). The dotted i of “ANIMAL” arrests our vision as it breaks up the statement; in so doing, it also functions as a period after the word “NOT.” We read the image, then, first as “NOT I [AM] AN ANIMAL…” and subsequently as “I AM NOT AN ANIMAL OR A PLANT”—in short, I am a person. Here, Ah Kee is referring to a 1967 Australian referendum that included Aboriginal people for the first time in the national census and, essentially, counted them, again for the first time, as Australian citizens.

Ah Kee extends this socio-political message in his more recent collections, specifically, in a series of works ironically named Unwritten (2008) (Figure 2). These figurative sketches convey a harrowing vision of an undefined face; together, they represent the missing identity of the children of the Stolen Generations. The absence of a mouth personifies the denied right of speech to the Aboriginals, while the use of negative space also, and somewhat paradoxically, evokes suspicion that the subject is white. In so doing, it asks the viewer to imagine the artist’s fear at beholding the spectral man. Ah Kee’s larger purpose may be to underscore the omnipresence of humanity’s struggle to come to grips with individual rights,
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FIG 3: Gordon Bennett, Untitled (dismay, displace, disperse, dispirit, display, dismiss), 1989, oil and synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 6 panels, each 30 x 30 cm, Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

FIG 4: Gordon Bennett, Self-portrait (But I always wanted to be one of the good guys), 1990, oil on canvas, 150 x 260 cm, Private collection, Brisbane.

regardless of race, gender, or nationality.

Gordon Bennett (b. 1955) is another Queensland artist who has adapted the distinctly symbolic conventions found in ancestral artworks. Through imagery and language, Bennett poses philosophical questions related to the construction of identity and its effects on religion, history, and culture. Consequently, his work is both provocative and discomforting. By referencing and appropriating familiar images, Bennett recontextualizes colonialism, forcing an enlightened perspective on the viewer.

Untitled (1989) depicts six commemorative images of Captain Cook’s arrival in 1788 at Botany Bay (Figure 3). However, words such as “DISMAY,” “DISPLACE,” and “DISPIRIT” transform our reading of each scene in each panel. The separation of the panels within the work as a whole references the segregation of Aboriginal from white culture, and alludes to maladroit assimilation efforts. The last panel is covered in careless black brushstrokes, its potency complemented by the word “DISMISS.” The power of language is emphasized as the interpretation of such iconic scenes turns hero into enemy with a word. The work allows the message of Colonial violence to resonate globally.

The words “I AM” dominate Bennett’s artfully titled Self-Portrait (But I Always Wanted To Be One of the Good Guys) (1990) (Figure 4). A four-year-old Bennett is shown wearing an Indian costume; the only hues are black, white, and brown, and the background hints at the traditional dot paintings of the Aboriginals. The cowboy-and-Indian imagery embodies the universal idea of displacement. Orthogonal projection both typifies Western aesthetics and serves as a metaphorical reminder of the importance of perspective
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in history and education. Much of Bennett’s work plays on perspective. One of his most celebrated paintings, Triptych: Requiem, Of Grandeur, Empire (1989), uses perspective to involve the viewer in the story, and even the structure of the work—three panels—is a bitter allusion to the Catholicism that was forced on native Australians (Figure 5).

Most Indigenous artists resent their work being labelled “Aboriginal”; they prefer to be categorized equitably as “contemporary,” which removes the romantic conventionalisms that critics often attribute to them. Richard Bell (b. 1953) represents the antithesis of partitioning; he identifies his work as “liberation art,” as it deals with the daily struggles of human beings against the forces of modernism and capitalism.

Still, the Indigenous undertone to most of the work of these artists is undeniable. When Ah Kee was asked if everything in his work is about race, he replied, “Yes, it is. But I’m not the one who makes it that.” There is nothing grandiloquent or ostentatious about Ah Kee’s work. It is about his own life and experiences as an Aboriginal Australian in his native land, so he must own and claim his identity first. His intention is, ultimately, to be recognized.

Who most profits from this work? Is the commodification of the work of Indigenous artists a mirror of the exploitation the Indigenous population has endured for generations? Moreover, money is invested in the artwork but not in improving the lives of the Indigenous, thereby, ironically, subjugating the art’s capacity to empower its own people. The works are relegated, in a sense, to non-Aboriginal control.

Although it is tempting to do so, we should not allow this sense of negativity to cloud our perspective on the won Aboriginal art. It’s vital to distinguish the industry of art from the capacity of artists to speak clearly and eloquently to the concerns of so-called “othered races.” Letting the critics fight over repercussions of his artwork, Ah Kee celebrates his mission. “It’s great fun,” he observed. “It’s funny, serious, deep, emotional, and it’s persistent, and it’s perseverance.” For Ah Kee, these are also the core qualities of his people.

\[1\] Captain James Cook (1728-1779) led the British colonization of Australia. Botany Bay is a few kilometres from Sydney’s Central Business District.
“Dress Codes” at the International Center of Photography

by Kaitlin Yent

On October 2, 2009, the International Center of Photography (ICP) opened its third Triennial exhibition, entitled “Dress Codes.” According to the ICP, Triennials are a “global survey of the most exciting and challenging new work in photography and video.” They are, in fact, the only periodic exhibitions of contemporary photography and video in America.

The “Dress Codes” exhibition delved into the worlds of fashion, and advertising, and the power that is bred into each of these branches of consumerism. We saw prolific artists blurring the lines between the beautiful and the grotesque, the ordinary and the strange, the rich and the poor. Visitors couldn’t help but wonder what fashion really is, and where advertising begins and real life ends. At every step, they were challenged to rethink conventions and their understanding of the world around them. The show was an impressive representation of contemporary art. Some works relied on shock value, while others offered brutal commentaries on America’s capitalist ideals. Regardless of what you thought of the collection as a whole, it certainly sustained your attention.

Some of the most captivating series in the show were those centered around advertising and the effect it has on our lives. Jacqueline Hassink (Dutch, b. 1966) contributed one of her subtly humorous films. Her video, entitled “BMW Car Girls,” focused on the shrewd use of fashion in advertising by large corporations, such as car companies (Figure 1). She featured models hired as “car girls” at an auto show. The camera followed the girls and the men who follow them; the men became confused by the thin line between the sexuality of the models and the power of the cars. Hassink photographed them as they stroked and fondled the machines, all the while staring unabashedly at the girls.

Barbara Kruger (American, b. 1945) employs a similarly sardonic tone in her artwork but is even more blatant in her commentary. She screen printed the words “WANT ME” on
a piece of fabric (satin) that hangs in front of a giant but beautiful and idealized woman’s face (Figure 2). Here, Kruger pokes fun at current advertisements that often say or imply that very supplication to their prospective clients. Kruger and Hassink’s works nicely complemented one another in the exhibition.

Hank Willis Thomas (American, b. 1976) also took up the theme of consumerism in his contribution to the show, although, he approached it quite differently. Thomas used sixteen advertisements dating from 1968 (after the death of Martin Luther King, Jr.) to 2003, all of them featuring African-American models (Figure 3). In each case, he removed the text of the ad. When considered outside their intended contexts in this way, the photographs reveal a stereotypical view of black America that implies subservience and heavy drinking, as well as a penchant for smoking, laziness, and violence. Thomas’s work goes so far as to suggest that all “non-white” ethnicities can be viewed the same way. He then added his own titles to each photo. In so doing, he made them his own and gave them an entirely new context, one that generates scathingly ironic criticism of the works and that hints at poignant social and racial commentary.

Cindy Sherman (American, b. 1954) used a similar concept in her “Paris Vogue” series from 2008. Here, she posed as several different models in each of her photographs, attempting
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to embody different aspects of the “fashionista” persona (Figure 4). In one, she has grotesquely Botoxed lips and heavy makeup, thereby highlighting the ridiculous lengths to which some women go to preserve their youth and beauty. In another image, she is bug-eyed and frumpy, and seems more awkward than the other women surrounding her. She does not belong, although she seems very much to want to belong. Both Thomas and Sherman have taken the idea of selling something and turned it on its head. Both viciously mock the very industries that provide them with the subject matter for their work.

Some of the most shocking photographs in the show were by Pinar Yolacan (Turkish, b. 1981), who created a series of portraits in which her subjects are swathed in visceral organs that she has designed to look, for example, like a collar or sleeves. Although the materials in which the sitters are cloaked are unquestionably unsettling and, in fact, revolting, the sitters themselves are almost more odious, thanks to the utter passivity they convey while wearing these horrific garments. They stare back unflinchingly with expressions of apathy, slight suspicion, and even subdued pride. Another artist who exploited shock value is Wangechi Mutu (Kenyan, 1972), who has used images and fragments from African postcards, fashion, hip-hop, pornography, and men’s magazines to create her small-scale collages. Although her resulting images are not profane, one must look very closely to make this determination. Women in exceedingly lascivious positions taunt the viewer, and, while the images do not portray sex, they suggest it loudly and even crudely.

“Dress Codes” was a revolutionary show, giving us a varied collection of modern photography and film, and also a thought-provoking peek at what is to come in these fields. While it is called an exhibition of fashion photography, it defines “fashion” in the broadest sense of the word, including the most outrageous forms of clothing. More than anything else, the exhibition deconstructed what modern photography has become, that is, overwhelmingly geared toward advertising. The artists collectively mocked the advertising industry; some even used old ads for their own purposes. Is the growing consumerism of America the cause or the effect of such work? “Dress Codes” advanced an exciting debate on this contentious topic, one that will undoubtedly continue for years.

“Dress Codes: The Third Triennial of Photography and Video” was held at the International Center of Photography from 2 October 2009–17 January 2010. The ICP is located at 1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street, New York. For information on forthcoming exhibitions, phone 212-857-0000 or visit www.icp.org.
The January 2010 session at Marymount Manhattan College might have been used to escape New York’s brutal cold by going home, by taking a course in New York, or by taking “ART 288/PHIL 298: Visual Arts Abroad—Art and Philosophy in Venice,” co-taught by Professors Bell and Biondi. A small group of us chose the latter. We spent eight days in Venice and the Veneto, the region containing and surrounding Venice, all the while exploring the artistic and philosophical history of Italy through its architecture and art. We visited numerous museums, including the Accademia, the Ca d’Oro, and the Peggy Guggenheim; some of the many islands off of the coast of Venice (San Lazzaro degli Armeni, Murano, Burano, and Torcello); and three important nearby cities: Padua, Verona, and Vicenza. As a class, we examined the expressions of humanism in Venice and discussed the repercussions of this movement on art, architecture, and the lives of leading writers and philosophers, such as Francesco Petrarca (1404-1374; known as Petrarch) and Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). We viewed Venice through the lenses of religion, philosophy, politics, economics, theater, visual art, and architecture, all of which enriched the many sites we visited throughout our travels.

For us, there were two highlights of the course: the Piazza San Marco and the trip to Murano.

The heart of Venice is located in the Piazza San Marco (Figure 1). Celebrated for its elaborately patterned floor, the Piazza embodies the spirit of Venice. It may be covered with vendors and tourists year round (and simultaneously with ruthless pigeons) but it is also richly saturated in history and breathtaking beauty. One aspect of the Piazza that solidifies its position in Venetian culture is the glorious Basilica San Marco, which crowns one of its long ends.

Constructed in 1063 under the auspices of Doge Domenico Contarini (died 1071), the Basilica embodies the Byzantine style, which is
Studying Art and Philosophy in Venice

FIG 2: Pala d’Oro (“Golden Cloth”), 10th-mid-14th century; gold with precious and semi-precious stones, silver, and enamel; 6-7/8 x 11 feet, Basilica of San Marco, Venice.

reflected in mosaics and sculptures throughout the building. The tessellated floor of the Basilica is adorned with various geometrical patterns and figures of animals, such as peacocks, foxes, and doves, all of which reflect the medieval time period in which it was constructed. A marble floor covers the entire church; every square inch of the walls is adorned with, arguably, the most beautiful mosaics in the world.

The mosaics represent stories from the Bible, allegorical figures, and events in the lives of Christ, the Virgin Mary, Saint Mark, and other saints. The majority of mosaics are gold (that is, made with gold leaf), which helps to illuminate the interior and convey a profound sense of spirituality to the visitors. Ultimately, the Basilica immerses the viewer in the spirituality and historical importance of Byzantine Christianity.

Our favorite experience within the Basilica was seeing the Pala d’Oro (Figure 2). The Pala d’Oro is used as an altar screen during liturgical celebrations. It is comprised of five registers. At the lowest level are scenes from the life of St. Mark, the patron saint of Venice. A large central panel shows Christ in Majesty surrounded by images in roundels of the Evangelists. There are also scenes from the Life of Christ and numerous semi-precious stones set into the golden background. It was one of the most beautiful and spiritual objects we had ever seen.

Venice’s magnificence extends far beyond its theatrical beauty; in fact, Venice and the Veneto have been centers for manufacturing and trade since the seventh century. During our exploration of Venice, we were fortunate
to visit the island of Murano, which is known for its long tradition of glassmaking and as an important trading center. Murano glass is world-famous for its impeccable quality, vibrant colors, and craftsmanship. During Murano’s prime years of glass manufacturing (starting in the late thirteenth century), the abilities of glassmakers were extremely honored—so much so that glassmakers were treated as respected, prominent members of Venetian society. They enjoyed such advantages as carrying a sword and marrying their daughters to some of the wealthiest, most important families in Venice.

Our class was able to observe a professional glass artist at work in one of Murano’s factories (Figure 3). We saw a specific type of glassmaking called “lampworking.” In lampworking, sticks of glass (made from silica) measuring approximately one foot in length are simultaneously placed in a flame, melted, and then maneuvered into the desired form. The glass melts and cools very quickly, so the glassmaker must work very quickly throughout this process. The work requires a great deal of practice and patience. Our glassmaker had been studying and practicing the art form for more than twenty years.

Visiting the Basilica of San Marco and the island of Murano were two experiences that stood out to us, but each experience allowed us to peel back another one of Venice’s many layers and understand her more thoroughly. Throughout the eight days we spent there, we learned about every aspect of this magnificent city…and yet there still seems to be so much left to discover. We can’t wait to return (Figure 4).
“Caravaggio”: Rome’s Testament to a Legend of Art
by Loren DiBlasi

Rome has many great monuments: the Pantheon, the Colosseum, St. Peter’s, to name a few. These are famous and cherished testaments to the Eternal City, beloved by foreigners and locals alike. With the Scuderie del Quirinale Museum’s newest exhibition, on view from 20 February-13 June 2010, another titanic name is added to the list. This time, it’s not a relic or a ruin but, instead, an artist: Caravaggio.

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (c. 1571-1610) may not have been a native son of Rome, but in the short time he spent in the city, he certainly left his mark. Rome celebrates his achievements with an epic exhibition titled simply “Caravaggio.” Featuring works large and small, legendary and lesser known, the exhibition marks the fourth centenary of Caravaggio’s premature death.

The exhibition takes viewers through the highs and lows of Caravaggio’s life and career. It begins with the intimate early work Basket of Fruit (c. 1599) (Figure 1) and concludes with the epic and mysterious Annunciation (c. 1608-10) (Figure 2). The Basket of Fruit is particularly exciting. As a modest still life, it hardly jibes with the works that we usually identify with Caravaggio, that is, large-scale religious scenes. However, closer inspection reveals browning, desiccated leaves and worm holes in the apples, testaments to the artist’s obsession with truthful expression. Looking around the exhibition, we see two massive, darkened rooms that house a more-than-impressive collection borrowed from museums around the world; it is truly a gift to see all of these works together in one place. Each painting is highlighted, in true Caravaggio fashion, with dramatic lighting that mirrors the light depicted in the paintings themselves. It is a grand setting, ideally befitting the grandeur of the art.

The exhibition moves chronologically, whisking the viewer through many of the highlights of Caravaggio’s short yet incredibly prolific career. All of the capolavori (masterpieces) are here: The Cardsharps (1595,
“Caravaggio”: Rome’s Testament to a Legend of Art

FIG 2: *Annunciation*, c. 1608-10, oil on canvas, 285 × 205 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy.

Museum of Fort Worth), *The Lute Player* (1595-96, Hermitage), and *Supper at Emmaus* (1601, National Gallery, London), among many others. One of the paintings first encountered is a signature work, *Boy with a Basket of Fruit* (c. 1592) (Figure 3). Even those unfamiliar with Caravaggio’s body of work will recognize this early portrait: a young boy, draped in a soft, white top, clutching a large basket of fruit and directing his intense gaze straight at the viewer. As an early work, this portrait exemplifies many of the qualities for which Caravaggio would become known: effortless naturalism, the dramatic use of light, and, perhaps most important, the interpretation of human emotion. One need not know anything at all about art to read the vulnerability and the raw expression across the boy’s face. His soft yet powerful gaze almost burns through the canvas.

Caravaggio is lauded as a great depicter of naturalism; his ability to craft a body or an expression down to the most minute details is nearly unparalleled. This talent is evident in a work like *St. John the Baptist* (c. 1602, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City), where no detail is lost, from the frayed edge of the red cloak to the dirt under the saint’s toenails.

What this exhibition accomplishes best,
“Caravaggio”: Rome’s Testament to a Legend of Art

![Image: Sacrifice of Isaac, 1603, oil on canvas, 104 x 135 cm, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.]

however, is the reaffirmation of Caravaggio’s greatest talent: his ability to represent human emotion. Caravaggio communicates ideas in a universal manner. Regardless of the viewer’s personal, national, or religious perspective, we can all relate to human emotions. In a face like Judith’s in Judith Beheading Holofernes (1599; Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica, Rome), in which we see her brow deeply furrowed and her eyes squinted in both concentration and repulsion at her enemy as she slices off his head, the viewer realizes that Caravaggio conveys his subject manner in a way that few others can.

In this exhibition particularly, we notice that hands are very important to Caravaggio; the hands of his subjects are always gesturing, flailing, grasping. In my personal favorite, The Sacrifice of Isaac (1603), a divine energy is transferred from the touch of the angel, to the tight grasp of Abraham, to the terrified Isaac, who lays pinned down and ready to be sacrificed (Figure 4). The viewer can positively feel the apprehensive yet determined tension in Abraham’s clutch as he wields the knife he will use to kill his own son. Isaac’s scream of horror is almost audible. As in a still from a movie, this is a scene of intense drama captured at precisely the right moment. No one needs to know the biblical story from which it comes; Isaac’s is a human story.

As the exhibition progresses to what we know are the final years of Caravaggio’s life, the themes of sleep and death become omnipresent, almost as if Caravaggio himself knew that his death was imminent. In Sleeping Cupid (1608, Galleria Palatina, Florence), the nude body of the little god lays in a divine slumber, his wings almost completely obscured in darkness and a large, dark shadow across his body. In David with the Head of Goliath (1610), the enemy Goliath is famously a portrait of the artist himself (Figure 5). Why would Caravaggio choose to portray himself as the villain instead of the hero? No one can know for sure, but what we can know is that this depiction is unlike any other. Surrounded by darkness, David holds the head of his opponent not in triumph, but almost in pity. Goliath’s dead face, with its open mouth and focused gaze, speaks to us still; it conveys his inner turmoil, his anguish. Caravaggio led a notoriously storied life, filled with fights, arrests, and even, apparently, a murder. Many
“Caravaggio”: Rome’s Testament to a Legend of Art

of his works were rejected by those who had commissioned them. He left Rome in 1606 never to return, and spent the remainder of his short life on the run. Perhaps in this portrait, Caravaggio tells the world not one of the many biblical stories he had often represented, but his own personal tragedy.

The last work displayed in the exhibition is the massive *Annunciation*, which may or may not even have been made by Caravaggio (see Figure 2). A church document dated 1645 indicates that it was created by “la main du fameux peintre Michel Ange” (the hand of the famous painter Michelangelo). Scholars believe that this “Michel Ange” must have been Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, who would most likely have completed the work in the final year of his life. However, the document does not close the case; even out of the context of the exhibition, this work seems strange. With muted, earthy colors and a dusty, foggy finish, the scene is bizarre and unlike Caravaggio’s signature style. With her severe features in profile and her expressionless face, the Mary who kneels before the reach of the Angel seems closer to the age of Giotto than that of Caravaggio. The only Caravaggistic touch is the hand of the Angel, whose delicate finger is raised in what could be a reference to the finger of Adam on the Sistine Ceiling, painted by that other well-regarded Michelangelo. We cannot help but to question this work: Is it by Caravaggio? When did he complete it? If not, then who did? However, one does not linger over these unresolved issues. The questions that are answered are much more important. There is no doubt in anyone’s mind that Caravaggio is Rome’s most beloved adopted son, and we are lucky when that city chooses to celebrate and share him with the world.

1 Caravaggio had already referenced that finger twice, both times in the same painting. We note the similarity in the gestures of Jesus calling the tax collector Matthew and St. Peter’s mirror-image pose in *The Calling of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600), one of three paintings on the life of the saint created for the Contarelli Chapel in the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome.
Elaine Sturtevant and the Razzle Dazzle of Thinking
by Holly Gover

Elaine Sturtevant (American, b. 1930) is a master of many disciplines. She can do Frank Stella, Andy Warhol (Figure 1), Marcel Duchamp, Robert Rauschenberg, and Joseph Beuys, among many other artists. Sturtevant has been making “copies” of artists’ works since the 1960s, when she chose to use works by her fellow contemporary artists as her base. “The Razzle Dazzle of Thinking,” on view at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris until 25 April 2010, showcases some of Sturtevant’s most important pieces.

Her work raises questions of originality and authorship, much like the works of artists she imitates. There is little to no technical difference between the originals and the works that Sturtevant produces. And yet, while her works are often referred to as copies, they are indeed far from simple duplicates of the original.

The authenticity conversation surrounding her work becomes multilayered as the artists she has chosen had originally raised questions of creativity and ownership with their own work. Sturtevant, in turn, is duplicating and copying their already duplicated and copied works (especially in the cases of Duchamp and Warhol). In the process, she creates something wholly, conceptually different.


When looking at Sturtevant’s Stella, for example, we recall his statement from 1962: “What you see is what you get.” Here, however, what you see is not what you get. While the technique and dimensions are near perfect—Sturtevant states, “…technique is crucial but not important”—her work is not the same as the one produced by Stella. The Sturtevant is no longer a simple “picture-as-object.” The painting—the paint on the canvas—becomes completely extraneous from the meaning of the work, the complete opposite of Stella’s
intention with his work.

Duchamp, more so than Warhol or Stella, challenged the role of the artist and took appropriation to its limit. Sturtevant’s renditions are mentally multilayered (Figure 2). All were present: the urinal (*Fountain*, 1917), the bottle rack (*Bottle Rack*, 1914), the snow shovel (*In Advance of the Broken Arm*, [lost original of 1915]; 1964). In a way, Sturtevant gives Duchamp the ownership of his work that he originally sought to relinquish. When Duchamp first released his *Fountain*, the question was raised as to whether or not he was an artist and whether or not this was a work of art. Sturtevant confirms (along with the history of art, and museums and galleries) that these objects are works of art and not anti-art, as Duchamp had initially intended. She duplicates the gesture—the gesture that made a urinal a work of art and the gesture that now makes what seems to be a Duchamp a Sturtevant.

I enjoyed mulling over the conceptual questions that the exhibit raised more than the exhibit itself, which is, I realized, precisely the desired effect of conceptual art. Gertrude Stein’s quotation came to mind: “Rose is a rose is a rose is rose.” As I was ruminating on the issues of ownership and authenticity, I thought, “An advertisement is a Warhol is a Sturtevant is a Duchamp is a….”
A Trip to the South: Sans Vitesse
by Holly Gover

When we exited the airport, the air was warm and dry. A portly gentleman asked us if we needed a taxi—we did. He graciously ushered us to a spot where we could sit and told us that he would come get us when a taxi arrived. We exchanged suspicious glances; we were definitely not in Paris anymore.

The too-often repeated remark that Parisians are rude is not true. However, when compared to the people of southern France, the word “snarky” does come to mind.

While in the South of France for a week, we were awestruck by the behavior of the residents. Directions were given out with gusto and smiles, and almost always included a café or restaurant recommendation. They never had a pained expression when we spoke French and even often volunteered their aid when it wasn’t requested. One woman darted across an entire restaurant to offer her help. We thought, “Do they think we’re celebrities? Did we win some kind of contest? What’s the catch?” However, after about an hour, we embraced all of this good will without question (Figure 1).

In the South, my legs did things they have never done before. They were strolling, not speed walking and not tripping over themselves to pass someone on the sidewalk. Instead, we leisurely meandered along the way. Espresso was never taken at the bar, as it is in Paris, but out where we could soak up the sun and follow the natives by leaning back and closing our eyes. We took a refreshing hike up Mont Sainte-Victoire and not only thought about Cézanne but also enjoyed cheese and bread at the top with some friendly hikers from Nice (Figure 2).

All activities were done under the sun, preferably sitting or lying down. We found ourselves repeating the following phrases: “Hmmm, does it get any better than this?” and “Van Gogh was right, the colors are more brilliant,” and “Let’s never leave.”

We did, however, have to leave. Paris greeted us with sunshine (thank goodness), the sound of high heels clicking on the pavement, and butter, butter, butter (in the South, it’s all about olive oil). Upon arriving, we quickly realized that, as much as we loved our little interlude sans vitesse, we wouldn’t have it any other way.
A Trip to the South: Sans Vitesse

FIG 1: The author diving into a crêpe near Aix-en-Provence.

FIG 2: Mont Sainte-Victoire. Photo: the author.
I AMsterdam!

by Holly Lunn

FIG 1: View of Montelbaanstoren, 1512-1606, Amsterdam

There are so many reasons why Amsterdam is an ideal place to study abroad (Figure 1). It has that cosmopolitan atmosphere of a big city, very much like New York, but its architecture and culture conveys a sense of Old Europe. What’s more, the people of The Netherlands couldn’t be more open and friendly.

Most people view Amsterdam as a party city, where the unspoken policy is Anything Goes. You’d be surprised to find that it really is the opposite. The Dutch people are very open to ideas but, like Americans, they have their limits.

When in Amsterdam, you are free to experiment and have fun. Generally speaking, when you’re going out, it’s not the Dutch who are acting wild, it’s the tourists. The only time I ever experienced the Dutch people partying hard was during a football game. The Dutch like to sip their drinks slowly and enjoy conversation and good company. It is a good idea to adopt their laid back and easygoing attitude. They are trying to enjoy the experience, not to gulp drinks and get drunk.

A word on the Red Light District. There’s no picture-taking allowed. The sex industry in
Amsterdam is a billion-dollar business, which the country takes seriously. Tourists are not welcome to stop and stare, to act as though the women are aliens.

Getting around Amsterdam is a breeze. Every street runs in a half-circle with both ends ending at the harbor. The canals can make the city confusing but like any other city, it takes time to adjust. You’ll get the hang of it in no time. I’ve be walking everywhere, instead of biking, so that I could see the city and experience it, not simply take a few, quick glances here and there.

The Dutch people, however, use their bikes. If you have to look out for cars in New York, you have to look out for bikes in Amsterdam. Within my first week here, I was in two small bike accidents.

Bikes have the right away over pedestrians and cars, so always look around to make sure it’s safe to go. When it comes to bikes, your biggest issue is that your own bike could get stolen. Almost every day at school, a student would complain about their bike being stolen.

One of the most important historical sites
I AMsterdam!

in Amsterdam is the Anne Frank House (Figure 2). The exhibit in the house is horribly sad but also very informative. All Dutch children learn Frank’s story in grade school; it was an overwhelming experience for me to see the location in person. Although the house is, essentially, empty, it contains a few items that had been left by the Germans after they raided it. Otto Frank, Anne’s father and the only family member to survive the concentration camps, wisely decided not to try to re-create the original setting.

Amsterdam is a great place to study for the semester, but it has one major drawback: everyone speaks English, so it is difficult to learn Dutch. I had not taken classes in Dutch before I arrived, and the only parts of the language that I learned were from other students or from a phrase book. It was easy to communicate with everyone—in fact, too easy. I had been looking forward to learning another language while abroad. Note that, as a courtesy to the locals, it’s a good idea to learn a few phrases in Dutch, such as “please,” “thank you,” “good bye,” and so on.

While staying in Amsterdam, I have been attending de Theaterschool for dance; it’s part of the Amsterdam School of the Arts. The curriculum has been very different from that of Marymount and a wonderful complement to my education as a dancer.

Unless they are strictly ballet schools, most dance schools in Amsterdam and, indeed, in Europe, feel that less is more. In other words, a dancer doesn’t need technique. Although I tend to disagree with that approach, I have been able to explore myself as a dancer, performer, and artist. I had learned the technical skills that I needed to become a very good dancer, but I have been developing and strengthening my skills as a performer in Amsterdam.

In Amsterdam, we still have all of our technical classes, such as ballet, Horton, and jazz. But we have been invited to explore our unique understanding of movement, which we created with our bodies. To be sure, every movement is a dance. What makes you a dancer is the internal rhythm that you use in order to move. Surprisingly enough, we were encouraged to abandon our technique and to begin to move as dancers.

Studying in Amsterdam has been one of the best experiences of my life. I loved the atmosphere of the city and the culture of the Dutch people. I would recommend studying in Amsterdam to any student who wants to enjoy their life and, at the same time, continue their studies without losing a sense of the feeling of New York. You will create enough memories for a lifetime while living in one of the greatest European cities.

All photos of Amsterdam are by the author.
New Programs in the Visual Arts at Marymount

The Arts Management Minor

Instituted in Fall 2009, the 19-credit Arts Management Minor is designed to train students with business and/or arts backgrounds for entry into arts management positions. The program covers cultural institution administration as well as the theoretical concepts and practical skills necessary for successful marketing, funding, programming, and management. The Arts Management Minor is a logical complement to a Dance, Act, Theater, or Art Major because it builds on the academic knowledge and skills that students have acquired in the classroom. At the same time, it prepares them for employment after graduation.

Internships in the Visual Arts

Every Spring, the Art Department and the Office of Career Services and Internships co-host an Internships in the Visual Arts Symposium. Students who have held or are currently holding internships in the visual arts give brief presentations on their work. They discuss how they were hired, daily responsibilities, special opportunities, and the many ways in which internships complement and enrich their work at the college.

Students have held internships in for-profit and not-for-profit businesses. In previous semesters, they have discussed their work in the Education Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Antiquities Department at Christie’s, Creative Time, Free Arts NYC, Betty Krulik Fine Art, the Rachael Ray Show, Artists Exchange International, and elsewhere. Students have also discussed their work as Studio Assistants to a variety of contemporary artists, including Melanie Baker, Katy Martin, and Jo Wood-Brown. In these positions, they have seen first-hand how professional artists develop and sustain their careers in New York.

The Internships Symposium will be held this year on 26 April 2010, from 5:30-7:00 pm in the Regina Peruggi Room. If you are interested having an internship in the visual arts, you are welcome to attend the Symposium and discuss the topic with current interns, their faculty supervisors, and with Melissa Benca, Director of the Office of Career Services and Internships.

Marymount at the Met

“Marymount at the Met” is a new program at the college. It features the work of Art History majors, who give tours of selected galleries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. On 5 March 2010, Virginia Melvin, ’10, and Jillian Moseman, ’10, both Art History majors, jointly led an hour-long tour of the American Wing for twenty-five alumni and their guests. Students, faculty, and alumni all gathered after the tour for dinner and lively conversation at the museum’s Petrie Court Café. Tours are scheduled for the Fall 2010 and Spring 2011 semesters.

For more information or to sign up for the tours, please contact Suzy Mulvihill, Director of Alumni Relations (smulvihill@mmb.edu) or Shelli Luchs, Alumni Relations Coordinator (sluchs@mmb.edu). If you would like to give a tour, please contact Professor Bell, the Faculty Supervisor for the program (abell@mmb.edu).
About Our Contributors

Jordan Anderson, ’12, is an Art History major with a fondness for all things Venetian.

Sarah Badger, ’10, is majoring in English and Philosophy & Religious Studies.

Loren DiBlasi, ’11, spent the Spring semester of her Junior year studying at the American University of Rome. She is an Art History and English double major, and hopes to pursue a career in writing after graduation.

Sarah Filiault, ’10, is a Studio Art major. She has served as a Studio Assistant to the artists Jo Wood-Brown, Katy Martin, and Melanie Baker.

Holly Gover, ’10, Art History major, has held internships in New York with Artists Exchange International and in the Education Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Erica Jackson, ’12, was recently selected as a 2010 Jeannette K. Watson Fellow. She is majoring in Art History and minoring in English. During the Summer of 2009, she was the Mary Wolfskill Intern in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress.

Holly Lunn is a Junior pursuing a Dance major and Art History and Business Management minor. She currently works with the American Ballet Theater as an assistant teacher in their Ballet for Young Dancers program.

Leslie Manning is a Sophomore. She is majoring in English Literature and minoring in Religious Studies.

Virginia Melvin, ’10, is an Art History major with a minor in International Studies. She held internships in the Antiquities Department and the Japanese and Korean Art Department at Christie’s. She and Jillian Moseman, ’10, jointly conducted the first “Marymount at the Met” tour.

Dana Marcus, ’13, is an undeclared major at Marymount and hopes to pursue an Arts Management minor.

Jillian Moseman, ’10, is an Art History major. Before interning in the Antiquities Department at Christie’s, she was a Gallery Assistant to the American Art dealer Betty Krulik.

Meghan Quinlan, ’11, is a Dance major and is Editor in Chief of The Monitor.

Emma Ramos, ’12, is majoring in English and working on her first novel.

Nicole Rubendall, ’09, majored in both Studio Art and Communications.

Ashley Ryan, ’13, moved to New York from Australia in August 2009 to complete her Art History major and Philosophy minor at Marymount.

Kaitlin Yent, ’11, is an Art History major and interned for the artist Jo Wood-Brown, during the Fall 2009 semester. She is currently interning in the Prints and Drawings Department at Christie’s.
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