



### Fellow Alumni:

We began last Spring's letter-from-the-editors with the words, "You will be truly surprised with the update on the Katzen Fine Arts Center." With this issue, we bring you more surprises and wonderful news. The Art History Program has been reinstated in the new building and will join the rest of the Arts Programs at AU in the Katzen Center when the building is completed. Students, faculty, and staff learned the good news just before winter break. Read about new building details in the *Departmental News* section.

Spring was a busy semester here. From the CAA Conference in Philadelphia in February to the interesting twist at the presentation of the Robert and Susan Pence Award at the Art History Luncheon, there has never been "a dull moment." We have filled the current issue with news and information about the department, the art history faculty, our current graduate students, and many of our busy alums. We hope you will enjoy reading about our activities and learning the latest news.

Have a wonderful summer and please keep in touch!

**Kathe Albrecht**  
*Visual Resources Curator & Newsletter Co-editor*  
[kalbrec@american.edu](mailto:kalbrec@american.edu)

**Trish Ballard**  
*Newsletter Co-editor*  
[tballard@mindspring.com](mailto:tballard@mindspring.com)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**August 26, 2002**  
**American University**  
AU Fall Classes begin.

**September 4-7, 2002**  
**Museum Computer Network (MCN) Conference, Toronto, Ontario, Canada**  
For more information, see  
[www.mcn.edu/mcn2002/index.htm](http://www.mcn.edu/mcn2002/index.htm).

**October 23-26, 2002**  
**South Eastern College Art Conference (SECAC), Mobile, Alabama**  
For more information, see  
<http://www.furman.edu/secac/mobile.html>.

**February 19-22, 2003**  
**College Art Association Conference, New York, NY**  
The 91st Annual Conference of the College Art Association will be held in New York City in 2003. The headquarters hotel is the Hilton New York, 1335 Avenue of the Americas.

**April 7-12, 2003**  
**Visual Resources Association Conference Houston, TX**  
Mark your calendars now for the 2003 VRA Annual Conference. The site of the 2003 meeting will be the Warwick Hotel, in the heart of the Houston Museum District.

▪ **Know of an event that you think other AU grads would enjoy? Please send dates, locations, and other information to the ARTifacts editors.**

## Faculty Update

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- The latest book by **Dr. Norma Broude**, *Gustave Caillebotte and the Fashioning of Identity in Impressionist Paris*, is now available.

- On February 24, Dr. **Mary Garrard** participated in a panel discussion, with filmmakers and other writers, which followed a performance of Cathy Caplan's play on Artemisia Gentileschi, "Blood Red, Lapiz Blue," in New York City at HERE, an off-Broadway theatre. Dr. Garrard also recently gave a public lecture on Artemisia Gentileschi at the University of Arizona. The following day, Dr. Garrard conducted a seminar with their graduate students. Later in the spring, Dr. Garrard gave the keynote address for a student conference on Artemisia Gentileschi at Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina.

- **Dr. Helen Langa** presented her paper "Illustrating Social Justice: *New Masses* Artists and Politicized Visual Culture," in the session on Illustration and Politics in the Early Twentieth Century at the CAA conference in February 2002. Her latest article, "Elizabeth Olds: Gender Difference and Indifference," appeared in the *Woman's Art Journal*, Fall 2001/Winter 2002. Dr. Langa also gave a talk at AU on March 25 entitled, "Wild Transformations: Lesbian Visual Art and Photography from the 1960s to the New Millenium," sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Allies Resource Center and the Women's and Gender Studies Program. During the summer, Dr. Langa will be teaching the course: "Twentieth Century Women Artists of the Americas." The class will run from May through the end of June.



- Professors Garrard, Langa, and Broude with new alumna Karla Huebner.

- Dr. **Rachel Simons** traveled to London and Paris during Spring Break. She saw glimpses of medieval London at the Tower of London—most notably the Norman chapel, and at Westminster Abbey where the monastic chapter house and cloister still stand. Late medieval Paris was easy to explore in the Latin Quarter and on the Ile de la Cite—Notre-Dame, Sainte-Chapelle and St. Severin were the high points. Examining paintings by Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin, and Rogier van der Weyden at the National Gallery in London proved once again the importance of studying the original and not the reproduction. Faculty, students, and staff in the department are pleased that Rachel will continue to teach at American University next year.

It has been a whirlwind of activity here in the department this year. But, it is finally summer break and students and faculty have scattered to various extracurricular pursuits. The slide library, quiet at last, will serve as the summer scanning lab for a new digital imaging project underway at the University. And during the first summer session, Helen Langa will be teaching a course on 20th Century Women Artists. Some highlights of the Art History Program's news from the first half of 2002 follow.

### The Katzen Arts Center

The announcement in December that the Art History Program will be included in the Katzen Arts Center, was welcome news, and we are busy once again with building planning meetings. In the Arts Center, the art history program will enjoy expanded spaces. Separate offices for each full-time faculty member, areas for student study, and more classrooms are all part of the new building. Within the slide library complex, there will be a separate media lab for scanning work, Web page development, and database maintenance, a small library to house the Kassalow Collection and serve as a study space, and a work area for slide library assistants. The Visual Resources Curator will have an office overlooking the Slide Library and the library itself (twice the size of our current cramped quarters) will accommodate separate work spaces for faculty members. Although keeping to a schedule is challenging with a project of this magnitude, work is moving forward nicely. We hope that within the next few years we will be announcing our move to the new building. We will keep you posted! Visitors to the department can view the plans and the architectural renderings.

### The CAA Conference

The historic city of Philadelphia formed a picturesque backdrop for the annual College Art Association Conference. As always, AU Art History alumni, students, staff, and faculty actively contributed to the conference. Current students benefited from attending many of the scholarly sessions. Small groups of AU's best could be seen rushing to sessions and then gathering in the hallways afterwards to discuss the merits of the papers and their thoughts on the subject matter. Faculty networked with their colleagues from across the country, attended sessions, and participated in committee work. The highlight event of the Women's Caucus for Art annual conference is the Honor Awards ceremony, at which lifetime achievement awards are presented to five distinguished women in

the arts. This year, **Dr. Mary Garrard** presented the award to Judith Brodsky, artist, educator, and former president of the College Art Association. Brodsky was the third president of WCA, succeeding Garrard, the WCA's second president. And current students assisted **Kathe Albrecht** in hosting the art history program reception, which was well attended by several alumni. **Allison Levy**, who is a professor of art history at Wheaton College stopped in. **Leo Costello**, who just finished his doctorate at Bryn Mawr, shared the news that he recently accepted a position at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. **Sue Nalezty**, a doctoral student at Temple University, and **Carolyn Cavallo** (B.A. '85), who lives in the Philadelphia area, also were in attendance at the reception. Current students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends enjoyed the festive break, shared their plans for the future, and reminisced about old times at AU.

### New Alums: The Graduates of 2002

Our first two graduates of 2002 were **Barbara Briggie-Smith**, a full-time employee of American University, and **Ginny Treanor**, who currently works at the Smithsonian Institution. Barbara and Ginny took part in the Winter Commencement Exercises held on January 27th. Some of our other graduates this year will be pursuing doctoral degrees in art history beginning in the fall. **Katie Poole** will be attending the Rutgers University program and **Karla Huebner** will be attending University of Pittsburgh. **Marissa Vignault** will be starting the doctoral program at Bryn Mawr in September. And 2002 graduate **Julie Cole** just began a new position as a collection consultant for a private art collector in the Washington, D.C., area. We wish the new grads the best of luck!

### Current Graduate Students

Current students have big travel plans for the summer break. **Bryna Campbell** and her husband, Mike, will travel to Italy for part of the summer. Their itinerary will include stops in Rome, Florence, and Venice, with shorter trips to other cities and towns. **Asma Naeem** will travel with husband and baby to Paris, France. From there they will spend time exploring other areas of that country. **Lynn Clement** will be joining her sister, who is a teacher, on a tour of European cities. Finally, we hear that **Samara Minkin's** travels will include Madrid, Spain. They will certainly bring back stories—and possibly a few new slides!

*(Departmental News, cont. page 4)*

### The Art History Spring Luncheon

The 6th annual Art History Spring Luncheon was a delicious, festive, and well-attended event. CAS Dean **Kay Mussell** and **Kathleen Kennedy-Corey**, CAS Associate Dean, joined students, faculty, and staff in celebrating the end of the academic year and recognizing undergraduate art history students. For several years, art history program benefactors and friends **Bob** and **Susan Pence** have given an annual achievement award to the top graduating seniors in art history. The awardees are presented with a check and a book selected to reflect the recipient's art historical interests. This year, Bob presented the award to three talented seniors, **Mark Parisi**, **Erica Savary**, and **Julia Backoff**. Bob surprised the recipients with the offer of an educational trip to Italy. Each of the lucky awardees will travel to Italy this summer under the kind auspices of Bob and Susan Pence, to study and enjoy the rich cultural heritage of that country. Many thanks go to Bob and Susan for their continued thoughtful interest and involvement in the Art History Program.

### News from the Kassalow Collection

The Kassalow Collection began several years ago with Mrs. Sylvia Kassalow's generous donation of an excellent collection of books on art and art history. Through the years, the collection has grown as more and more friends of the department have donated art historical materials to the collection. This year, **Asma Naeem**, a first year graduate assistant, was assigned the monumental task of cataloging the entire collection (over 1,000 volumes). Throughout the year, Asma worked tirelessly. At times alone, at times with assistance from other graduate fellows, Asma toiled away in The Annex next to the Art History Office (some alums may remember the year Kathe Albrecht cleaned out that closet and renamed it The Annex). We are pleased to report that the books are all cataloged using the Library of Congress system; they are labeled with professional spine labels; and they now comprise a neat and orderly library! Next fall, with the purchase of new book ends, the Kassalow Collection will certainly shine. Departmental thanks go to Asma and to the other graduate assistants who helped Asma during the year. ■

## AU at the CAA Conference, 2002



■ From L-R: Current AU Students Katie Poole, Samara Minkin, and Bryna Campbell.



■ Alum Carolyn Cavallo (left) (B.A. '85) with friend Barbara Wallace, an independent art consultant.



■ From L-R: AU students Stephanie Thornton, Karla Huebner, and Marissa Vigneault.



■ From L-R: Sarah Doris (AU adjunct professor), Dr. Helen Langa, and Sue Nalezty (M.A. '96).



Many American alums were thrilled at the opportunity to view the exhibition "Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi: Father and Daughter Painters in Baroque Italy" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art this spring. As the subject of two books (and many classroom discussions) by Dr. Mary Garrard, Artemisia is extremely well known to AU art history graduates, and several jumped at the chance to see a rare gathering of her works on American soil. But to many, the exhibition was a disappointment. The following is an article written by Dr. Garrard to the *Washington Post* in response to the exhibition's treatment of Artemisia and her work, sentiments which were shared by many of the alums who also viewed the Metropolitan exhibition.

### "Artemisia's Critics, Painting with Crude Strokes"

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'Once again, let's blame it on feminism. Artemisia Gentileschi, the 17th-century painter who is currently a hot topic in the art world, is being presented by the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a flawed artist whose reputation has been inflated. The exhibition's organizers claim it gives a more "nuanced" version of her achievement.

Met curator and spokesman Keith Christiansen likes to point out that Artemisia's achievement has been exaggerated by feminists preoccupied with her biography and victimhood, and in an interview with the *New York Times* he sums up her "whole mindset" as "small."

A very obvious strain of feminist bashing circulated in the Met's news releases has been evident in many newspapers (the *Washington Post* excepted). For example, the snide reference of *New York Times* critic Michael Kimmelman to the "clichés and predisposed interpretations of ideologues" echoes exhibition wall labels like the ones accompanying Artemisia's "Mary Magdalene" from Florence's Pitti Palace, which says that "a modern bias about preferred female role models and expressive means has supplanted a proper historical appreciation for Artemisia's achievement."

Yet feminism and sound scholarship are not incompatible. Let us not forget that it was feminist scholars who spearheaded the recovery of Artemisia from oblivion. Solid scholarship by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin produced the Los Angeles "Women Artists 1550-1950" exhibition of 1976, through which Artemisia's works first became widely known in this country. And it

was the combination of feminism and scholarship that paved the way for the explosion of interest in Artemisia. Over the past decade, this artist (born 1593) has inspired numerous plays, novels and films, as well as many homages of contemporary artists.

Properly understood, feminism is not an ideology, but a corrective. It aims to uncover the "masculinist" ideological bias that has pervaded history and to set things in more objective perspective. We are not seeing objectivity at the Met, but masculinist bias in a defensive form, as backlash:

- We see backlash in the Met's effort to elevate Artemisia's father, Orazio, to the ranks of "genius" (he's a lovely artist, sensitive and refined, but genius is a real stretch). Orazio is praised for heroically changing his style in mid-career to adapt to progressive Caravaggesque naturalism, and then evolving a poetic style all his own. Artemisia is faulted for being merely a Caravaggist who later rather mindlessly changed her style to keep up with local tastes in Rome and Naples. Same rules, different standards: men originate, women follow.

- We see backlash in the New York installation's inclusion of several pictures whose attributions to Artemisia are dubious at best, and have not been fully vetted by Artemisia scholars, for example, the Le Mans "Allegory of Painting." These paintings appear to be included baldly to support the thesis that runs through the wall labels and news releases, that Artemisia was an overrated mediocre artist. At least one such painting, the "Venus Embracing Cupid," is in disgraceful condition, heavily abraded and unrestored, carrying no credentials (or credibility) other than the apparent hope that Artemisia could be saddled with it. No museum today would exhibit a painting in such ruined condition, unless it were a solidly authenticated work, unrestorable but essential to the show. This one is not. On the other hand, several major Artemisia paintings, such as the keystone "Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting," are missing in this exhibit. True, some loans couldn't be secured, but couldn't the gaps be mentioned?

- We see backlash in the insulting indictment of "feminists," who are treated in wall labels and materials fed to the press as an anonymous political band rather than as individual scholars. If you believe the wall labels, feminists have focussed excessively and inappropriately on Artemisia's rape in 1612 by fellow artist Agostino Tassi and the highly publicized Roman trial that ensued.

(*Artemisia's Critics*, cont. page 6)

Yet the exhibit organizers are the ones who belabor this theme, mentioning the rape salaciously when it is least relevant to the object under discussion, while dismissing its relevance to such paintings as the *Susanna* and *Judiths*, which cannot be fully understood without knowledge of Artemisia's experience. As at least this feminist has repeatedly stressed, the violent decapitation of Holofernes in Artemisia's *Uffizi Judith* is not about private revenge. Artemisia's rape and sexual notoriety matter because of what she made of the experience: she turned it into art, creating images that imaginatively transcend female victimization, even as they are also about it.

As if to contain the dangerous power of Artemisia's art, the exhibition, its catalogue, and the ensuing publicity have stressed two themes, which I would call strategies. One is to portray her as just another working artist, who must be assessed apart from her sensational biography, as if separating her from her specific history would somehow be more objective. The other is to emphasize her exceptionality, her status as *marvel*. Indeed, both these apply. There is clear evidence that she aspired to be treated like other artists, though she was unable to escape the sexual reputation that dogged her heels. And she was perceived in her time as a *marvel*—but in the sense of a curiosity disconnected from the competitive mainstream.

Artemisia's true exceptionality was her ability to convert specific female experience into art, as no other woman artist had yet

perceptibly done (with the possible exception of Sofonisba Anguissola), and no man could do at all. Western art is filled with gender ideology but, overwhelmingly, that of only one sex. Artemisia's was the authentic voice of the sex that had rarely if ever been expressed in visual art, and the first time out, it was defiant. Why should this be surprising and why is this still so threatening?

It is also said that Artemisia's art has nothing to do with modern feminism. But feminism, on the simplest level, is a basic human response to gender injustice. "If I were a man, this wouldn't have happened to me." Artemisia said these words, as have countless women across time. One doesn't need a movement to have feminist reactions, but in fact there was a proto-feminist movement in Artemisia's time. Among her contemporaries were the Venetian writers Lucrezia Marinelli and Arcangela Tarabotti, who published treatises protesting injustices to women. New evidence suggests that Artemisia may have known Tarabotti in Venice. More likely than not, she was quite aware of what we today call feminist issues. Look at Artemisia's reception of today, to understand what she went through in her own time. Once more, she is put on display, ostensibly to celebrate her artistic significance, but with the barely concealed covert purpose of trivializing her actual achievement by conforming her to conventional gender stereotypes. It was feminism that allowed us to see the depth of Artemisia's art, and the current disavowal of its relevance tells us much about our own time. ■

## AU Commencent Spring 2002



■ From L-R: Dr. Garrard, Karla Huebner, Katie Poole, Julie Cole, Marissa Vigneault, and Dr. Broude.



■ Julie Cole and Katie Poole following graduation.

■ **Lisa Farrington (M.A. '80)** has written a biography of Faith Ringgold. The book, *Art on Fire: The Politics of Race and Sex in the Paintings of Faith Ringgold*, published by Millennium Fine Art, examines the evolution of Ringgold's work. The book is the first of its length to report on Ringgold's early career. Lisa is currently an art history professor at the Parsons School of Design. ■

■ **Sara Day (M.A. '85)** co-edited the recently published resource guide, *American Women, A Library of Congress Guide for the Study of Women's History and Culture in the United States* (Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 2001). In addition, Ms. Day contributed an essay entitled, " 'With Peace and Freedom Blest' Woman as Symbol in America, 1590-1800." She is currently working on several new book proposals.

■ Since his graduation with a double masters degree in fine art and art history, **Daniel Nie (M.A. '87)** has been living in North Carolina. There he established an art framing shop and continued his own artistic work. In December of 2001, Daniel and his family relocated to Washington, DC. He is pleased to be back and is looking forward to reconnecting with friends and colleagues in the area.

■ In 2001, **Katherine M. Bunker (MA '90)** formed the company, Learning Through Art. The new company and its team of educators provide resources, training, and evaluation to students, teachers, art museum docents and others interested in the arts. Teacher manuals, lesson plans, pre- and post-museum visit activities, docent training, workshops for volunteers, and evaluation of museum education programs are all part of what Learning Through Art offers its clientele. The company is based in Chicago, IL.

■ **Stephanie Miller (M.A. '92)** has been living with her family in the St. Louis area for about a year. She is teaching at Maryville University in St. Louis as an adjunct professor where she teaches survey courses, art appreciation, and Modern and Contemporary Art. In the fall, Stephanie will teach a course on the Italian Renaissance. She is also finishing her dissertation on Andrea della Robbia and His La Verna Altarpieces. This summer Stephanie and her husband are expecting their second child.

■ *ARTifacts* co-editor **Trish Ballard (M.A. '95)** is leaving her current position as a Slide Librarian at the National Gallery to accept a job at the Speed Art Museum in Louisville, Kentucky. She will be working with the museum's volunteer corps, the Art Alliance.

■ **Lara Fredrickson (M.A. '97)** has been working as a graphic artist for the past several years. We recently learned that Lara is enrolled in the graduate program in graphic design at Iowa State University. She began her coursework there in September, 2001.

■ Alum **Melissa Labelson (B.A. '97)** manned the Dahesh Museum's booth in the Exhibition Hall at the CAA conference.

■ **Kerri Eckardt (B.A. '99)** informs us that she will be pursuing an MLA (Master of Landscape Design) at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. She will start the program this fall.

■ **Susan Breitkopf (M.A. '99)** After a yearlong sojourn in New York, working for a magazine, Sue is back in DC working as a freelance writer. She is currently writing a piece for *The Washingtonian* about experts' favorite resources in the Washington D.C. area.

■ **Suzanne L'Heureux (M.A. '99)** reports that she has left her gallery position to return to teaching full time. Beginning in Spring '02, Suzie will teach full time at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco. Suzie notes that she originally obtained her job at the College through a contact with AU art history alum Julie Charles (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art). In fact, Julie will be support-teaching one of the art history courses that Suzie will be master teaching in the Spring.

■ This past spring, **Julie Cole (M.A.'02)** represented AU's Art History program at the annual Middle Atlantic Symposium for the History of Art held at the National Gallery of Art. She presented her paper, "Claude Cahun, Marcel Moore, and the Collaborative Construction of a Lesbian Subjectivity." ■

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## Full Time Faculty

- **Norma Broude**, Professor  
Ph.D., Columbia University  
(Modern European Art)  
[nbroude@american.edu](mailto:nbroude@american.edu)
- **Mary D. Garrard**, Professor  
Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University  
(Italian Renaissance Art)  
[mdgarrard@aol.com](mailto:mdgarrard@aol.com)
- **Helen Langa**, Professor  
Ph.D., University of North Carolina  
(American Art)  
[hlanga@american.edu](mailto:hlanga@american.edu)
- **Rachel Cropsey Simons**,  
Ph.D., University of Maryland  
(Northern Renaissance Art)  
[drsimons@erols.com](mailto:drsimons@erols.com)

## Visual Resources Curator

- **Kathe Hicks Albrecht**  
M.A., American University  
[kalbrec@american.edu](mailto:kalbrec@american.edu)

## Adjunct Faculty

- **Ellen Cooper Erdreich**  
Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University  
(Medieval Art)
- **Lisa Pfueller Davidson**  
Ph.D. program, George Washington University  
(Architecture)
- **H. Diane Russell**,  
Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University;  
Curator Emeritus of Old Master Prints and Drawings, National Gallery of Art,  
(Graphic Arts, Baroque Art)



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c/o Kathe Albrecht  
American University Art Dept.  
College of Arts and Sciences  
4400 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20016-8004

