Conference, exhibit explore Expressionists

The current exhibition and upcoming conference on Max Pechstein and German Expressionist art at the UO’s Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art focuses on Pechstein’s recently restored Ballet Dancers (recto). Originally displayed in the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, the oil painting was purchased in 1953 for $252 through the Widmer Art Fund and transferred to the museum in 1967. It is now one of the museum’s most important works.

Pechstein was a member of Die Brücke (The Bridge), an important German artist group in the early twentieth century. *Ballet Dancers* is initialed by the artist and dated 1912. Generous donations have allowed it recently to be restored and reframed so that a painting on the canvas’s other side, *Two Women in Lamplight* (verso), is now visible.

Other works by German Expressionists complement Pechstein’s double-sided canvas in the exhibition on view through May 19. Selections include works from collections at the Portland Art Museum, Oregon State University, and the JSMA’s permanent collection and include prints by Kandinsky, Kirchner, Klee, Kollwitz, Marc, Mueller, and Pechstein.

The exhibition currently serves students in courses offered by faculty members Sherwin Simmons and Joyce Cheng and has provided a unique learning opportunity for graduate students Megan Cekander and Sarah Hwang, who conducted extensive research to produce the accompanying interpretive materials. Student presentations about the works will be held May 15 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. in the Ford Lecture Hall of the JSMA. The exhibition is made possible by a JSMA Academic Support Grant, with thanks to matching funds from the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost, and University Relations.

An academic conference about German Expressionism to be held on May 18, 2013 has been made possible by another JSMA Academic Support Grant, supplemented by funding from the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, the Oregon Humanities Center, the Department of the History of Art and Architecture, the Department of German and Scandinavian, and the German Studies Committee.

The conference will be held on the UO campus in Gerlinger Alumni Lounge. Speakers include Charles Haxthausen, Williams College; Rainer Rumold, Northwestern University; Kimberly Smith, Southwestern University; Naomi Hume, Seattle University; Sherwin Simmons, UO; and Ken Calhoun, UO. The conference is free and open to the public.

For the schedule, visit arthistory.uoregon.edu/node/266.

Hurwit lectures on exhibit at Portland Art Museum

Visitors to the Portland Art Museum last fall had the rare opportunity to view *The Body Beautiful In Ancient Greece*, an exhibition organized by the British Museum. The museum is the first venue in the United States to present this exhibition of more than 120 objects from the British Museum’s collection. Marble and bronze sculptures, vessels, funerary objects, and jewelry explored the human form dating to the second millennium BC.

Art historian Jeffrey Hurwit, the Philip H. Knight Professor of Architecture and Allied Arts, lectured on the exhibition, then led a museum tour. His presentation, “Nudes and Nudities in Greek Art,” investigated the nature and meanings of nudity in the art of ancient Greece and Rome. “Ancient Greek images, both vase paintings and sculptures, still form the basis of Western ideas of what a ‘beautiful body’ looks like, or should look like,” Hurwit said, “but ancient attitudes toward the body and the nude were more complex than is often thought.”

Hurwit is a Guggenheim Fellow and has authored many works on the art and civilization of archaic and classical Greece. He also served as lead consultant and commentator in a NOVA documentary for PBS on the Parthenon in 2008.

“My personal favorite treasure was a small figure of a running girl, dating to around 520–500 BCE,” graduate student Kate Beaver said. “This figure demonstrates how viewers of *The Body Beautiful* were encouraged to challenge and think about the notion of the human body, and the significance of contemporary representation.”

Discus-thrower (discobolus). Roman copy of a bronze original of the fifth century BC. From Hadriani’s Villa in Tivoli, Lazio, Italy. The Townley Discobolus. © The Trustees of the British Museum 2012. All rights reserved.
More of our students seem inclined to, and the number of our graduates to anyone wanting to pursue a museum-related career, as increasingly sure to the works on view to the public. Such experiences are invaluable behind-the-scenes access to objects in ways that go beyond mere exposure to the works on view to the public. Such experiences are invaluable to anyone wanting to pursue a museum-related career, as increasingly more of our students seem inclined to, and the number of our graduates who can be found on museum staffs all over North America (as well as here on campus) provides a simple measure of our success in this arena.

Closer to home, classes routinely make use of the rich museum collections on campus; moreover, through various internships and other arrangements, many students are regularly provided with hands-on and selections on campus; moreover, through various internships and other arrangements, many students are regularly provided with hands-on and behind-the-scenes access to objects in ways that go beyond mere exposure to the works on view to the public. Such experiences are invaluable to anyone wanting to pursue a museum-related career, as increasingly more of our students seem inclined to, and the number of our graduates who can be found on museum staffs all over North America (as well as here on campus) provides a simple measure of our success in this arena.

Thanks to generous donations from alumni and other supporters.

The Barberini tapestries of the Life of Christ, once displayed in St. Peter’s Basilica and the Sistine Chapel, are some of the most impressive artworks of the Roman Baroque. A thirty-year restoration at the direction of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, who founded his own tapestry workshop in 1626. The tapestries are monumental in scale; the panels of the Life of Christ, for instance, are nearly sixteen feet high.

The project is a collaboration between Harper and Marlene Eidelheit, director of the Textile Conservation Laboratory at the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. The NEA funds will help to mount an exhibition in New York, Eugene, and at least one other venue, and to publish a scholarly catalog.

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The exhibition would include paintings and drawings by designers that influenced the tapestries’ final form. “The Barberini manufactory didn’t rely just on standard tapestry specialists for their designs but went to some of the ‘star artists’ of the time,” Harper says. Key objects on the exhibition checklist are by artists like Peter Paul Rubens, Pietro da Cortona, and Giovanni Francesco Romanelli.

As several of the stories elsewhere in this issue illustrate, students are not the only members of the department who make vital contributions to the museum world. Many members of our faculty are also deeply engaged in museum-related activities, ranging from lecturing about special exhibitions and planning gallery reinstallations, to advising about acquisitions, writing catalog essays, researching individual objects, and curating entire exhibitions (and more). Museums—and especially university museums—have come to depend on such art-historical expertise to interpret their collections and enrich the visitor experience.

While the high-resolution digital image has certainly transformed the study of art history in dramatic ways, the virtual experience of art—the projected image consumed in a darkened classroom—can still not replace the magical aura of the object experienced firsthand.

Charles Lachman
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From the Department Head

Art (History) Beyond the Classroom

One of the many benefits of studying art history at the UO, for undergraduate and graduate students alike, is that there are frequent opportunities to see works of art outside of the lecture hall. Students can apply for research and travel funding, for example, to visit collections both near and far (recent recipients traveled to Seattle, Italy, and Japan), thanks to generous donations from alumni and other supporters.

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Faculty News

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Faculty News

Charles Lachman, associate professor and department head, gave a lecture in February sponsored by the Institute of Asian Studies at Portland State University entitled “Beyond the Zigzag Bridge: Chinese and Korean Painted Screens.”


Giovanni Francesco Romanelli, “The Baptism of Christ” from the set of scenes in the Life of Christ tapestries woven in the Barberini workshop.
**Student News**

**Artist Kara Walker in Oregon; UO students join packed audience in Portland**

by Rachel Barth, graduate student
Department of the History of Art and Architecture

On October 2, 2012, Assistant Professor Joyce Cheng organized a group of art history graduate and undergraduate students who drove to Portland, Oregon, to hear renowned artist Kara Walker deliver a public lecture to a packed audience on her work, held in conjunction with a small exhibition being shown at Reed College’s Cooley Gallery. Walker showed images that represented a wide spectrum of her oeuvre, and spoke about the larger themes that concern her as an artist, such as the American history of slavery, racism, sexuality, and violence. She spoke about how she seeks to represent the unrepresented, the ignored, those who have been traditionally relegated to the status of “second-class citizens.” She focuses much of her work on the issue of identity, asking herself continually what it means to be both a black American woman and an artist.

Walker asserts her own right to speak and to introduce what she calls a “new set of mythologies” from the standpoint of an “unreliable narrator,” retelling shared black experiences and literary narratives of slavery such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Gone with the Wind. She does this frequently through the medium of cut paper silhouettes, panoramically arranged. Walker says she uses the device of the grand narrative as an artistic strategy in order to implicate all her viewers as agents responsible for the making of a particular narrative. She transforms these huge panoramic narratives into “grand history painting gone awry”: efforts to portray truth as grandiloquently as the old masters.

Walker also discussed her recent transition into video arts, which was occasioned by her realization that the silhouette really lends itself seamlessly to performance and cinema. Her videos, like much of her work in other media, explore issues of power, abuse, war, desire, greed, and sexuality, and they focus on “the great Negro heroine.” Her 2011 video Fall From Grace, Miss Pipi’s Blue Tale was among the highlighted works in the Cooley Gallery show. This powerful video shows Walker’s own shadow as she manipulates the actions of her marionette puppet silhouettes through touching and disturbing scenes of rape, cruelty, despair, castration, and death. We’re thankful for such an incredible opportunity to hear such an erudite artist speak about her work!

**Alumni Spotlight**

**Sarah Taylor receives Herskovic Essay Prize**

Sarah Taylor, MA ’12, has been awarded the prestigious Herskovic Essay Prize by the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center for an essay drawn from her graduate thesis, “Toward the Open Lattice: The Sculpture of Ibram Lassaw, 1945–1953.” The essay will be published in Art Criticism, a journal of the Stony Brook University Department of Art, Art History, and Art Criticism.

Taylor also received a $1,000 honorarium. The award, supported by Thomas M. and Marika Herskovic, recognizes outstanding scholarship by a graduate student on a topic related to Abstract Expressionism.

Taylor’s thesis is about the sculpture of Ibram Lassaw, one of America’s first abstract sculptors. “There was very little scholarly work published on Lassaw, although his work and his personality have endured,” Taylor says. This inspired a trip to New York to visit the sculptor’s widow and daughter and tour his studio. Her trip to New York was funded by the Sponenburgh Research Travel Award.

Taylor credits Professor Sherwin Simmons, her thesis advisor, and other faculty members for inspiration and continuing motivation on the project. Taylor is currently working as an instructor at Utah State University while planning to pursue a PhD focusing on sculpture in the twentieth century.

**Alumni News**

Send news of your activities and any address updates to arhist@uoregon.edu.

**Kelly Whitford, MA ’11**, is currently earning her PhD at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

**Jacob Leveton, MA ’12** is currently earning his PhD at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

**Department News**

**ARH 101 Global Masterpieces: Monuments in Context**

Discover the history of architecture and allied arts in a new way! This spring term marks the first term of Global Masterpieces: Monuments in Context (ARH 101), an introductory course with an approach that emphasizes the experience of sensed environments, medium integration, and contextualization of artwork within location and history. The course is a UO general education, group satisfying course for undergraduate students. Rather than traditional survey methods, ARH 101 will be organized around twenty case studies focusing on topics from around the globe and a range of eras. Each case study will be taught by a different professor, so that students are exposed to fresh voices, deep expertise, and the integration of research and teaching. Specific examples of sacred sites, institutional buildings, and residential structures will be explored in a way that equips students with practical skills to actively engage with all built environments. The class will be directed by Associate Professor James Harper with the goal of integrating art and the lived experience of political, religious, and domestic issues, and will include visits to a variety of buildings on the university campus and around Eugene.

Global Masterpieces: Monuments in Context course will include guest lectures by faculty experts interspersed with sessions in which the course convener addresses the themes of religion, politics, domesticity, and modernity in a close analytical review of twenty key sites from around the world.
AHA symposium examines unconventional art practices

The Art History Association (AHA) is pleased to announce its ninth annual interdisciplinary student symposium, *Experience and Experimentation: An Investigation of Alternative Artistic Practices*, on April 25–26, 2013 at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (JSMA) on the UO campus. The symposium is codirected by graduate students Jordan Koel and Kelsie Greer.

This year’s symposium is inspired by and will be held in conjunction with *West of Center*, an exhibition that highlights the art of the 1960s and 1970s counterculture, particularly of the western United States. It is the goal of this symposium to expand upon a number of the broad themes addressed in the exhibition, particularly unconventional art practices, art as lived experience, and the role of art within a social fabric. Through an inclusive and diverse approach, the symposium aims to illustrate the presence and unique methods of countercultures throughout history and around the globe.

Elissa Auther, this year’s keynote speaker, is the coeditor of *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965–1977*, a collection of essays that expounds upon the multitude of ways in which the subjective experience was reconsidered during the postwar period on the West Coast. Auther is currently an associate professor of contemporary art at the University of Colorado, at Colorado Springs as well as an adjunct curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver. Her book, *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft*, considers the historical status of craft and the social ramifications of the shifting notions rega material, makers, and function.

Art History Association symposium codirectors Jordan Koel and Kelsie Greer. Photo by Cody Rappaport.

"TV Magnet, 1965"
Credit: Nam June Paik Estate