

The Graduate Program in

Visual & Cultural Studies

University of Rochester

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VCS

An innovative graduate program with an emphasis on visual and cultural studies, Rochester's Graduate Program in Visual and Cultural Studies provides students with an opportunity to study critically and analyze visual culture from a social-historical perspective. The Program stresses the close interpretation of artistic production within historical and cultural frameworks. The Visual and Cultural Studies Program, housed in the Department of Art and Art History, offers an interdisciplinary doctoral degree drawing on coursework and faculty expertise in several University of Rochester humanities departments. Because the primary faculty work in Art and Art History, Film Studies, Modern Languages and Cultures, and Anthropology, students are able to relate literary and cultural theory to visual culture, and to investigate the connections between cultural productions, critical theory, and society. Students may also take courses in such departments as History, English, Music, and Philosophy.

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Casting Doubt ?

A Conference held
Saturday April 5th, 2003
by T'ai Smith

Biennially, the graduate students in Visual and Cultural Studies organize a conference intended to explore a topic of timely concern and of interest to students and scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. In September 2002, eleven graduate students from the Visual and Cultural Studies program began organizing a conference to explore the topic of doubt. Shortly after the planning began, a graduate student from the History Department joined the conference planning committee.

Responding both to an official cultural climate which was increasingly failing to acknowledge voices of dissent and to a growing intellectual interest in emotional experiences of all kinds, the planning committee of "Casting Doubt" hoped to bring together recent scholarship that was seeking out and prying open spaces of doubt in order to consider their multiple meanings, modes, aesthetics, and impacts. The idea for the conference derived from the sense that there was an urgent need for a forum in which scholars could converge to collectively explore how doubt has historically been understood and visually represented, to explore how doubt currently figures in our social, cultural, and political systems, and to contemplate the efficacy of doubt as an ethical choice.

The conference keynote address was presented by Eduardo Cadava, Associate Professor of English and associate member of Comparative Literature and Architecture at Princeton University. Professor Cadava's address entitled, "Palm Reading: Fazal Sheikh's Handbook of Death," considered a series of photographs by the New York born Pakistani artist. The address offered a meditation upon the relations among images, memory, history, death, and mourning. In his talk, Professor Cadava suggested that if reading photographs performs an essentially violent act of interpretation, then it is from the acknowledgement of uncertainty that we can begin to look at the Other. A sense of responsibility for the pain and suffering of anonymous others, such as the war-ravished Afghani population, might arise from our doubt.

Following the paper panels and keynote address, a reception was held at the Hartnett Gallery in Wilson Commons. The gallery, which is currently featuring the work of Kathleen McEnery, offered a most appropriate environment to end the day. The gallery provides the campus community with a space to engage with visual culture in a contemplative mode and to consider the varied ways in which images may call the world, self, and our systems of knowing, into question.

In conclusion, the event was very productive and successful. University of Rochester graduate students and affiliates, as well as the conference attendees from other universities and the general Rochester community, have subsequently expressed much excitement over the outcome of the event and the important forum it offered for intellectual and political discussion. "Casting Doubt," just as the organizers hoped it would, began to illuminate the multiple dimensions and relations of doubting as a lived reality, an historical moment, a liminal state, a political position, and an ethical imperative. The conference gave some shape and meaningful form to the often elusive experience of doubt.

Professional Activities of Continuing Students

Matthew Brower delivered a number of papers this year. Last August, he presented "Trophy Shots: Early North American Wildlife Photography and the Display of Masculine Prowess," at the Annual Conference of the International Society for Anthrozoology, University College, London, England. At the 10th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference of the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender & Women's Studies at the University of Rochester, Matt gave his paper entitled, "Camera Hunting, Nation and Masculinity." In March, Matt attended the Trajectories of Modernism in 20th-Century Theory Conference at the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ontario, delivering his paper "Caillois and Visuality: Insect Appearance and the Gaze in the Expanded Field." [brwr@mail.rochester.edu]

Lauren Crabtree was the assistant editor of a new book entitled, *Composing Urban History and the Constitution of Civic Identities*, published in April 2003 by Johns Hopkins University Press and Woodrow Wilson Center Press. [cbtr@mail.rochester.edu]

Lucy Curzon presented a paper at the 2003 CAA annual conference entitled, "Domesticating 'the Modern': The Tate Gallery and National Identity, 1918-1939" on a panel entitled "Tradition, Revival, and the Modern in British Art and Design, 1910-1939" moderated by David Peters Corbett. Lucy also edited the Winter 2003 issue of *Invisible Culture* entitled "Visual Culture and National Identity," as well as organized the publication—and wrote the foreword to—the exhibition catalogue *The Art of Kathleen McEnery*. [curz@mail.rochester.edu]

Elizabeth Czach published her article "Polavision Instant Movies: Edwin Land's Quest for a New Medium" in the Fall 2002 edition of *The Moving Image*, and delivered a version of the article at the Association of Moving Image Archivists in Boston last November. Elizabeth also presented "Film Festivals, Programming and the Building of a National Cinema" at Terms of Address, University of Toronto/Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in March,

and also at the Annual Conference of the Film Studies Association of Canada in Halifax, Nova Scotia in May. [czch@mail.rochester.edu]

Lyell Davies' documentary co-production *Remembering Robert* was included in Ireland's prestigious 47th Cork Film Festival in October, as well as at festivals in New York, Washington DC, and forthcoming in Boston and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. This project has been broadcast on Public Television in New York City and in Auckland, New Zealand. A new documentary short, *Who's Not Irish?* had its US festival premiere at the Harvard Film Archive in late April as part of the 5th Boston Irish Film Festival. [lyelldkayt@earthlink.net]

Jonathan Finn gave a paper at CAA this year entitled "Identification Wanted: Photography, Information Databases and the Twenty-First Century Archive." Recently, Jonathan accepted a position for next year in the Communication Studies Department at Wilfrid Laurier University. [jfnf@mail.rochester.edu]

Leanne Gilbertson published two articles this year: "Andy Warhol's Beauty #2: Demystifying and Reabstracting the Feminine Mystique, Obliquely" in the Spring 2003 edition of *Art Journal*, and "The Vanni Altarpiece and the Relic Cult of St. Margaret: Considering a Female Audience," in *Decorations for the Holy Dead: Visual Embellishments on Tombs and Shrines of Saints*, edited by Stephen Lamia and Elizabeth Valdez del Álamo. [lgilbert_14611@yahoo.com]

Peter Hobbs presented his paper "The Canadian Landscape and Washroom Sex" at the 10th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference of the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender & Women's Studies at the University of Rochester, and his "The Image Before Me" at the Casting Doubt conference. [phlirt@frontiernet.net]

Dan Humphrey has been involved in a number of different projects this past year. In July of 2002, he read his paper "Cinema, Memory, and the Dialectic of Trauma: Derek Jarman's *The Last of England*" at the annual Screen Studies Conference in Scotland. That paper, reworked and

re-titled "Authorship, History, and the Dialectic of Trauma: Derek Jarman's *The Last of England*" will be published by the journal *Screen* this summer. In January, Dan organized the University of Rochester lecture by UCSC Film Studies professor Naomi Greene entitled "Salò in the 21st Century" in conjunction with a screening of the film *Salò* at George Eastman House. Also in January, his essay "Saving the Other/Rescuing the Self: Promethean Aspirations in Mikhail Kalatozov's *Sol Svanetii*" was published in the online journal *Invisible Culture*. In March, Dan chaired the panel "Shame and Spectatorship" at the annual Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference where he also read the paper "Watching Ingmar Bergman: Caught Between the Shame of Looking and the Shame of Being Ashamed to Do So." Dan will begin the second year of his two year George Eastman House Fellowship in September. [dihu@mail.rochester.edu]

Taro Nettleton curated the exhibition, *Just Like Music: Sound in the MCA Artists' Book Collection* on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, from September 14th through November 2nd, 2002. In Spring 2003, his article "White-on-White: The Overbearing Whiteness of Warhol Being" was published in *Art Journal*. [taro_netton@hotmail.com]

Daniela Sandler presented her paper "Uncertain Games': Social Exclusion, Culture and Urban Renewal in the Historical District of Luz, Sao Paulo" at the Casting Doubt conference, and will be delivering three papers in May. At a conference organized by the Department for the History and Theory of Art and Architecture entitled "Identity and Space" at SUNY-Binghamton, Daniela will be addressing "The City of Capital in Potsdamer Platz: Architecture and German National Identity after Reunification." At the Annual Meeting of the Society for Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture at the University of King's College in Halifax, Daniela will give her paper entitled "Nietzsche, Conflict, and Urbanism." At the Annual Conference of the Canadian Society...

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Professional Activities, Continued

...for Aesthetics at Dalhousie University and King's College in Halifax, she will present "Crossing the Lines: Reading the Architecture of Daniel Libeskind through Gilles Deleuze and Friedrich Nietzsche." Daniela recently received the DAAD Graduate Scholarship for Study and/or Research in Germany. [sand@mail.rochester.edu]

T'ai Smith delivered her paper "Color Casts Doubt: Prototypes and Color Theory at the Bauhaus Weaving Workshop" at the Casting Doubt conference. In May, T'ai will be giving a talk entitled "The Expressionist Picture and the Matter of Wool: Weaving at the Bauhaus in Weimar" at the Visual and Performance Studies Speaker Series organized by the University of California at Santa Cruz. T'ai also received the DAAD Graduate Scholarship for Study and/or Research in Germany. Both she and Daniela will be researching in Berlin next year. [smth@mail.rochester.edu]

Lisa Soccio, the 2002-2003 Susan B. Anthony Dissertation Fellow, delivered the Morning Keynote Address entitled "Locust Abortion Technician Meets 'Hamburger Lady': Shock as Symbolic Violence and Subcultural Signifier" at the 10th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference of the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender & Women's Studies at the University of Rochester. [lsoc@mail.rochester.edu]

Lisa Uddin presented her paper "Not an Ape, Not Yet Human: Lucy and the Construction of Ancestral Humanity" at the 10th Annual Interdisciplinary Conference of the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender & Women's Studies. [ludn@mail.rochester.edu]

Norman Vorano was one of the speakers at this year's Frick Symposium, held at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts on March 29th, 2003. His topic was "Establishing Contexts for the 'First Exhibition' of Inuit Carving." [nrnm@mail.rochester.edu]

Catherine Zuromskis gave her paper "Cast in Space: The Monumental Object in Rachel Whiteread's

House" at the Savannah College of Art and Design's Third Symposium on Commemoration and the City in Savannah, GA last February. In March, Catherine delivered two papers: "Tobias Schneebaum's Cannibal Tale: Ethnography and Identity in *Keep the River on Your Right*" at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies annual conference in Minneapolis, and "Andy Warhol's Snapshots: Countercultural Identity and Photographic Practice" at the Society for Photographic Education 40th National Conference in Austin, TX. [catzas@mindspring.com]

VCS Alumni Notes

Darby English, (Ph.D. 2003) who is currently Assistant Director for Research at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA., will be Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Chicago starting in September.

Amy Athey McDonald (M.A. 2001) is now the Public Relations Manager at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut.

Grant Kester (Ph.D. 1996) was awarded an Associate Professorship at the University of California-San Diego.

Rochelle Steiner (Ph.D. 1996) is the Chief Curator at the Serpentine Gallery in London, England.

Walid Ra'ad (Ph.D. 1996) has accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Art at the School of Art at The Cooper Union in New York City.

Hanneke Grootenboer (Ph.D. 2001) has been awarded a Mellon Post-Doc at Columbia University for 2003-04. She recently received the Millard Meiss Grant from the College Art Association for her upcoming book entitled *Rhetoric of Perspective*, to be published by the University of Chicago Press.

Dissertations Completed, 2002-2003

Darby English; "Black Artist, Black Work? Regarding Difference in Three Dimensions"

Cyril Reade; "Mendelssohn to Mendelsohn: Representations of Jewish Life in Berlin from the Enlightenment to the Weimar"

PhD Candidates who passed their Qualifying Examination, 2002-2003

Elizabeth Czach; "Careless Rapture: Artifacts and Archives of the Home Movie"

Daniel Humphrey; "Projected Affects/Constructed Subjects: Considering the Masculine American Spectator of 'Foreign' Feature Films"

Daniela Sandler; "Incarnate Politics: The Reconstruction of Berlin after 1989 and the Identity of Reunified Germany"

T'ai Smith; "Weaving Work at the Bauhaus: The Gender and Engendering of a Medium"

Norman Vorano; "The Construction of Inuit Art: Modernism, Material Culture and the Public Imagination"

Master's Degrees, 2002-2003

Odetta Norton

Incoming Students Fall 2003

Aviva Dove-Viebahn
[acd7z@neon.mail.virginia.edu]
MA, Art History, University of Virginia
BA, Biochemistry & Theatre, Mary Baldwin College

Joel McKim [joelmckim@hotmail.com]
MA, Media Studies, Concordia
BA, English, McGill

Derek Rushton [derekushton@yahoo.ca]
MA, Art History, Queens University
BA, Art History, Carleton (Ottawa)

Lucia Sommer
[luciasommer@earthlink.net]
MFA, Film, Video & New Media,
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
BA, Carlow College

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