New Global Field Study (GFS) Course Spotlight

Prof. Robin Fickle’s “Celts, Courts, Mystics and Lovers: Paris as a Window into Medieval Art in Paris”

Professor Robin Fickle’s diverse interests led her to pursue an unconventional path as both an art historian specializing in medieval art and a classical harpist. For years she offered upper-division courses in medieval art history and medieval humanities at California State University Northridge before coming to Arcadia. Her most creative course, Art and Life in the Middle Ages, (also taught at Santa Barbara City College and the University of California Los Angeles extension program) included a medieval banquet. Her elaborate costumes for medieval repasts were exhibited in 1989 at the show “Artists that Teach” at the Laguna Art Museum. Presently, her interests center on the interface of medieval art, particularly illuminated manuscripts, harp performance and traveling. She has visited most of the monuments of art contained in her lectures.

Prof. Fickle has written five harp music books with three devoted to arrangements of Renaissance lute pieces. She was a founding member of Decameron, a Los Angeles-based Early Music ensemble, where she performed on Gothic harp. She pursued vocal studies with the Early Music ensemble Sequentia of Cologne, Germany. With Sequentia she performed the vocal music of twelfth-century Abbess Hildegard von Bingen as part of an ensemble composed of professional singers and graduate students.

During Fall 2016, Prof. Fickle taught AH285 (GFS), a medieval course entitled “Celts, Courts, Mystics and Lovers: Paris as a Window into Medieval Art in Paris.” This course examines medieval art within the context of cultural history. Students explore a variety of cultural themes such as the art of courtly love, life in the castle, chivalry and the rules of the tournament, the culinary practices of the knightly class, the mystical tradition within the monastery, Europe’s pagan heritage, the Crusades, and the impact of the music and poetry of the troubadours and trouvères (students engage with two of Prof. Fickle’s hand-built medieval instruments). Students engage in several group projects, including reproducing the pageantry and ceremony of a medieval banquet in the Mirror Room of the Grey Towers Castle.

Special focus is given to the architecture, sculpture, manuscript illuminations, metalwork, ivories, tapestries and stained glass of the churches and museums of Paris. For the week-long field study in early January, students complete a short research paper and deliver some of their research findings to their classmates on site in Paris. They also write a special guidebook to Paris which includes information gleaned from lectures in combination with some of their own research into specific topics that are further augmented by snapshots, drawings and other memorabilia collected onsite in Paris. Students also participate in a treasure hunt in the Latin Quarter, the heart of medieval Paris. They experience the visual jewels of Paris as they cruise the Seine River on a Bateaux Mouche. Students explore several important churches and monuments, including Notre-Dame Cathedral, the Basilica of Saint-Denis, the Saint-Chapelle, the Conciergerie, the Louvre, the National Museum of Medieval Art (Cluny Museum), and the “Queen of Cathedrals,” Chartres.
Prof. Abbey Ryan Awarded Inaugural Norman Johnston Faculty Fellowship

Abbey Ryan ’03, Associate Professor of Art and Design, is the inaugural recipient of the Dr. Norman Johnston Faculty Fellowship in the Humanities and Social Sciences, beginning June 1, 2016 and ending May 31, 2018. Prof. Ryan was selected for her project “the light, the shade,” which examines light/dark on form and Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon as a visual metaphor. Her research involves Robert Lax’s minimalist poetry, his ascetic/contemplative life on Patmos, Greece (one of the oldest known penal colonies in history), and Norman Johnston’s writings on monastic imprisonment.

Prof. Ryan is a recognized leader in the global “Painting a Day” movement in contemporary realist painting. Her work has been featured in O, The Oprah Magazine; Linchpin: Are You Indispensable? by best-selling author Seth Godin; Making It In the Art World and New Markets for Artists by Brainard Carey; and on FOX 29’s Good Day Philadelphia. She was also ranked fifth on the list of 49 Creative Geniuses by Boost Blog Traffic. Prof. Ryan’s paintings are in more than 900 private, public, and museum collections around the world, including the John F. Peto Museum in New Jersey, Pratt Institute in Ithaca, New York, Mason Murer Fine Art in Atlanta, and Blutenweiss Gallery in Berlin.

Prof. Ryan joined Arcadia’s faculty in 2007. Each year since 2011, as part of her “Painting a Day” project, she hosts a live painting demonstration at Grey Towers Castle, and the auction of the piece contributes to the Jami Rodriguez Memorial Scholarship. During Prof. Ryan’s undergraduate studies in Fine Art and Scientific Illustration at Arcadia, she studied painting at the Art Students League of New York and worked as a scientific illustrator at the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the Department of Plant Biology at Stanford University. She has completed postgraduate work at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and earned her MFA from Hunter College/CUNY.

The Dr. Norman Johnston Faculty Fellowship was endowed by the estate of Dr. Norman Johnston to encourage talented and dedicated faculty members to excel in research and scholarship in the humanities and social sciences and to share their knowledge with the University community. The fellowship promotes the values of Professor Emeritus Norman Johnston, who understood the central role of faculty in the education process, the open exchange of ideas, and the engagement of the entire University community.

Prof. Elizabeth Ferrell Receives Fellowship

From February through July 2016, Elizabeth Ferrell, Assistant Professor of Art History, was a Fellow at the Georgia O’Keeffe Museum Research Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Research Center grants fellowships to scholars who are conducting research in the field of American Modernism. Dr. Ferrell’s current book project, The Ring Around The Rose: Jay DeFeo and her Circle, falls within that field. It examines collaborations that took place around The Rose, a monumental painting created by the San Francisco artist Jay DeFeo between 1958 and 1966. The fellowship supported the project by providing funding, library access, and an office at the Research Center, where Dr. Ferrell exchanged ideas with other fellows and museum staff.

Over the six-month fellowship, Dr. Ferrell wrote two new chapters for her book manuscript. One chapter examines paintings by Wally Hedrick, DeFeo’s husband, that reference The Rose, while the second chapter focuses on interpretations of the The Rose put forward in the writings of the poet Michael McClure, who was DeFeo’s friend and neighbor.

Dr. Ferrell complemented her scholarly pursuits by exploring the natural and cultural beauty of New Mexico. She visited Georgia O’Keeffe’s homes at Abiquiu and Ghost Ranch and explored the diverse landscapes that appear in many of O’Keeffe’s paintings.
**Sabbatical Spotlight**

by Prof. Robert Mauro, 2015-16

I have always been fascinated by the intersection of art and science. Although I was trained as a traditional printmaker, and then later a digital printmaker, I have always had a love for stringed instruments. If there were one instrument that embodied this intersection, it would be the guitar. My grandfather, who immigrated from Italy, was a mandolin teacher, and although he died when I was very young, that connection was passed on through my father. The great classical guitarist Andres Segovia said of the guitar, “The guitar and the dog, in order not to be separated from man, have submitted themselves with resignation to the worst alterations of size and appearance.” That being said, from the earliest Baroque guitars to modern day instruments, the variety in shape, design, materials, size and construction is like no other instrument. In the end it is a magical union of form and function.

In 1975, not having the financial means to purchase every instrument I wanted, I built my first stringed instrument with a handful of old Sears tools and a book by David Russell Young. Approximately one year later the neck fell off, and I learned a very important lesson about failure: I needed to know a lot more about being a Luthier. For the past 41 years I have honed my skills as a Luthier and studied the research done by Dr. Michael Kasha, Richard Schneider and Roger Siminoff.

Over the past ten years technology has played a major role in the construction and design of stringed instruments, from CADD-CAM design and construction, laser-cutting wood and inlay material, and the integration of non-traditional materials, to the focus on sustainable sources of instrument-grade wood. My 2015-16 sabbatical began my implementation of these technologies into the construction of hybrid acoustic-electric guitars. This ranged from the use of unique materials, body construction, and soundboard bracing patterns, to inlay designs. The sabbatical provided an extended block of uninterrupted time to focus in a way I was never able to do before. For me this meant spending 8-10 hours a day in the studio, seven days a week for fourteen months, struggling with technical obstacles and creative failures, but also understanding that struggle provides a path to success. It is through this type of experience that creative clarity surfaces. It is no different than an athlete who trains everyday to reach their full potential. Sustained artistic engagement begins with an undying passion to create -- to be connected not only to the materials, but also to a concept and vision that are a unique part of who you are, which never ends.
Jesse Vincent ’11: Other Than a Memory
Alumni Artist Lecture and Alumni Spotlight Exhibition

Arcadia’s Department of Art and Design teamed up with the Art Research Collaboration Exhibition Program (ARC) to present the fifth annual Alumni Spotlight Exhibition. The new installation by Jesse Vincent ’11, entitled Other Than a Memory, is on view in the University Commons Art Gallery through January 16, 2017. It combines video, sound, and sculptural elements to create an environment that questions the nature of remembering.

In her accompanying fall lecture, “Emergency Crossover,” Vincent surveyed her experiences as an artist since graduating from Arcadia. The event took place on September 29th in the University Commons Great Room.

For her installation, Vincent constructed a light-tight cube within the exhibition space that houses five projected videos that utilize footage and sound recordings of her family gatherings. Upon entering the space the viewer is surrounded by the sights and sounds of innumerable graduations, weddings, birthdays and other events projected onto surfaces layered with small squares of sheer white fabric.

The immersiveness of the space, combined with the volume of shifting and overlapping images is meant to provide the viewer with the experience of inhabiting Vincent’s own mind as she attempts to retrieve a distinct, coherent record of her past. The environment simulates how this recall process is confounded by memories of red on the outsides of abandoned buildings. Vincent has also presented her work at more traditional venues such as Prince Street Gallery in New York City and the Foundry Art Centre in St. Charles, Missouri.

Previous artists presented in this lecture and exhibition series include Jennifer Titone ’11 (2015), Jannalyn Bailey ’09 (2014), Christopher Thomas ’94 (2013), and Andrew Ortwein ’07 (2012). The exhibitions are curated by Matthew Borgen and are made possible by a donation from Theresa and John Rollins.

Arcadia University Department of Art + Design: Information

Producing curious, ambitious, and focused students since 1926, the Arcadia University Department of Art and Design offers nationally accredited undergraduate programs that empower the 21st century student. Situated in suburban Philadelphia in magnificent historic buildings, the Department of Art and Design has an educational philosophy dedicated to a highly personalized, interdisciplinary, and global approach to teaching visual art, design, and art history, fostering opportunities for student mentorship by faculty who fiercely champion the strengths and passions of each student.

Mission
The Department of Art and Design is committed to promoting academic excellence and cultivating personal relationships in the pursuit of a balanced, globally-minded, contemporary education in the visual arts within a liberal arts context.

Vision
To build a rigorous, intellectually and culturally diverse, and globally-minded program of study in the visual arts in a community that both inspires creativity while also instilling the practical grounding needed to succeed in the world beyond.

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