MARCH 5 – 6, 2021
VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM

ART HISTORY GRADUATE SYMPOSIUM
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

MARCH 5 – 6, 2021
VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM
Friday, March 5, 2021

2:45pm
Welcome
Dr. James Frazier, Dean of the College of Fine Arts

Acknowledgments
Britt Boler Hunter

3–5pm
Session I: Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Politics and Identity
Session Chair: Leigh Daniel
Hoyon Mephokee, American University
Zahra Banyamerian, City College of New York
Jordan Hillman, University of Delaware
Sheila Scoville, Florida State University

5:30pm
Introductions
Dr. Paul Niell & Dr. Tenley Bick

Keynote Lecture
Dr. Charlene Villaseñor Black
Professor, Department of Art History
University of California, Los Angeles

“Decolonizing Art History with Mexico’s ‘Tenth Muse,’ Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz”


Saturday, March 6, 2021

9–11am
Welcome
Dr. Adam Jolles, Chair, Department of Art History

Session II: Places, Spaces, and Urbanization
Session Chair: Caitlin Mims
Angelica Verduci, Case Western Reserve University
Hayla May, Oklahoma State University
Astrid Tvetenstrand, Boston University

1–3pm
Session III: Mortality and Spirituality from Antiquity to the Middle Ages
Session Chair: Madison Gilmore-Duffey
Holly Bostick Miller, University of Georgia
Sonia Dixon, Florida State University
Mia Hafer, University of Kansas
Rebekkah Hart, University of California, Riverside

3:30–5pm
Roundtable: Current Trends and Best Practices in Cultural Heritage Work
Moderator: Chase Van Tilburg

Opening Remarks
Dr. Kristin Dowell, Director, Museum & Cultural Heritage Studies

Panelists:
Alexis Assam, Philadelphia Museum of Art
Chelsea Dinkel, Smithsonian Institution
Ana Juarez, Tampa-Hillsborough County Libraries
Emily Thames, Florida State University

Closing Remarks
Dr. Preston McLane, Director, FSU Museum of Fine Arts

In 2016, Professor Villaseñor Black was awarded UCLA’s Gold Shield Faculty Prize for Academic Excellence, bestowed annually in recognition of exceptional teaching, innovative research, and strong commitment to university service. She has held grants from the Fulbright, Mellon, Borchard, Getty, and Woodrow Wilson Foundations, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Council of Learned Societies. Currently, she is Principal Investigator of “Critical Mission Studies at California’s Crossroads,” a $1.03 million dollar grant from the University of California’s Multicampus Research Programs and Initiatives. She was recently awarded an exhibition grant from the Getty Foundation’s Pacific Standard Time: Art x Science x L.A. Most recently she has accepted the Terra Foundation Visiting Professorship in American Art at Oxford University for 2021-22.

Can the tools of Chicana/o studies decolonize art history? I ask this question as I contemplate one of the most famous paintings created in colonial Mexico, Miguel Cabrera’s 1750 posthumous portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Mexico’s renowned writer, scholar, and muse. Portrayed at her desk, surrounded by her books and other scholarly accoutrements, Cabrera created his rendition fifty-five years after Sor Juana abdicated her life as a scholar. I argue that his version functioned as a painted vindication. What pictorial strategies did Cabrera employ in defense of the colonial muse? How do we today and how did the eighteenth-century viewer understand this portrait? This talk addresses these questions by reading colonial portraits of Sor Juana in dialogue with analogous depictions of scholars, nuns, and holy women (beatas). Literature of the period, most notably Sor Juana’s own writings, helps us unravel both the dangers of intellectual desire as well as its symbolic potential. I then turn to modern and contemporary Mexican and Chicana portrayals, which I similarly position in conversation with literary texts, including modern commentary and the novelization of Sor Juana’s life by writer and scholar Alicia Gaspar de Alba (1999), now a forthcoming opera. What can these contemporary depictions of Sor Juana reveal about the risks, dangers, and benefits of joining together art history and Chicana/o studies? What does it mean to move beyond the boundaries of art history? Can the tools of Chicana/o studies decolonize art history?
Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux’s *Fontaine des Quatres-Parties-du-Monde* (1867–74), also referred to as the *Fontaine de l’Observatoire*, is a public sculpture that adorns a fountain at the southern end of the Luxembourg Gardens. The monument sits on the axis between the Luxembourg Palace and the Paris Observatory. It depicts four allegorical female figures, who each represent one of the four continents: Europe, America, Africa, and Asia. Together, the figures hold up an armillary sphere, around which is a band that indicates the positions of the zodiac, and, at the center, the globe.

In this paper, I employ postcolonial and socio-historical methodologies to examine the colonialist discourse embedded in the iconography of Carpeaux’s monument, its placement in the urban geometry of Haussmannized Paris, and its spatial relationship to sites that embody French political and scientific authority. I extend the understanding of Carpeaux’s relationship to the Second French Empire and question his monument’s place in Third Republic ideology. In doing so, I make the case for broadening the consideration of nineteenth-century sculpture in art-historical scholarship.

Hoyon Mephokee is a recent graduate of the art history MA program at the American University in Washington, D.C., where he specialized in postcolonial and decolonial studies of nineteenth-century French painting and sculpture. He interrogates the diplomatic and cultural threads between France and its colonial contacts through a spatial and multimodal consideration of visual and material culture. He has applied to art history PhD programs, in which he hopes to study a cultural history of Franco-Siamese relations.

In this paper, I revisit *Women of Allah* and *The Book of Kings*, two photographic series by Shirin Neshat using the framework of nostalgia. Neshat created *Women of Allah* to address Iran’s 1979 revolution, while *The Book of Kings* was created in response to the Green Movement in 2009. The events of the 1979 revolution, Neshat’s exile, and the condition of women living under Islamic law have guided scholarship on Neshat’s works since 1997. However, scholarship accounting for Neshat’s trauma from the 1979 revolution has not yet received adequate attention.

The 1979 event led to political and social changes in Iran and interrupted Neshat’s memory of home. The revolution stopped the correspondence of her past, her present, and her future, thereby triggering Neshat’s fears, discontents, and anxieties, which, ultimately, evoked her nostalgia. Neshat’s nostalgia for home connects *Women of Allah* and *The Book of Kings* beyond their visual and thematic correspondence. Svetlana Boym’s *The Future of Nostalgia* distinguishes two kinds of nostalgia: reflective and restorative—the former is a longing for home, while the latter is the desire to return home. I argue that Neshat conveys her longing for home in *Women of Allah* and visualizes her homecoming in *The Book of Kings*.

Zahra Banyamerian is an independent curator and art administrator in Brooklyn, New York. She is Program Officer at New York Foundation for the Arts, Learning department. She directly works with the artists who share the experience of immigration for NYFA’s Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program. Zahra also pursues curatorial projects in alternative venues, creating space for emerging artists whose work may not conform to the standards of mainstream art. She is trained as a painter and printmaker and holds a BFA in Painting and MA in Art Studies from the University of Tehran, and a Post-Baccalaureate in Studio Art from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
In 1903, Félix Vallotton contributed a lithograph to the satiric journal Le Canard sauvage that depicts a policeman on a Paris street. Empty space fans out around the officer as the other figures in the scene flee in the opposite direction of his post. Here, the policeman’s presence alone proves capable of altering the street from a site teeming with life to an emerging void overseen only by authority. This print is just one of many Vallotton produced that contend with the increasing presence, and omnipresence, of police in Paris. Indeed, in other pictures, Vallotton registers their presence through absence, entirely removing the policeman’s image, but acknowledging the ways in which his palpable presence continues to shape the experience of the urban environment.

This paper considers how the unusual perspective, dramatic cropping, and pictorial wit in Vallotton’s prints of police worked against the orderly arrangements of official images of the police produced at this time. Through his distorted and violent translations of actual urban spaces into print, Vallotton produced powerful visual commentaries on the instabilities of police authority and the dynamics of its visibility and invisibility in the streets of Paris in the decades around 1900.

Jordan Hillman is a fifth-year doctoral candidate in Art History at the University of Delaware. She earned her BA in Art History with University Honors from American University in 2012, and her MA in Art History from the University of Delaware in 2016. Jordan was awarded a 2020-2021 University of Delaware Doctoral Fellowship to support work on her dissertation, “Mediating Authority: Representations of the Police in Paris, 1881-1918,” which explores the construction and disruption of police authority through image-making in the French capital during this period. She is spending the year abroad in Paris pursuing this project.

The painting Bato con Sunglasses by César Augusto Martínez articulates the incommensurable position of artists who have germinated their practices in solidarity with communities alienated by white normativity. In the late 1970s, after pursuing political art and activism for the Chicano Movement, Martínez began painting barrio characters isolated against planes of color. With the prospect of code-switching for a cultural establishment with apolitical pretensions, Martínez balances loyalty to La Raza and his ambiente, or barrio sensibility. This tension wrangles an uncanny union of aesthetic and ideological opponents on canvas, a lampoon or a dream, in which a Brown person photobombs the sacrosanct space of high art.

Although color fields are a signature of the Bato series, they have not prompted extended discussion. Rarely do stylistic assessments position US artists of Latin American descent in a synchronous view of American abstraction. Situating Martínez in dialogue with abstract art exposes the conflicts between modernist tenets and unassimilated expressions of minority experience. Bato con Sunglasses intersects the specificity of being Mexican-American with the universality of being “modern.” The artist’s heterodox use of the color field diversifies and revives the format, while his humanized modernism historicizes and disabuses abstraction of its professed neutrality.

Sheila Scoville is a doctoral student and a Patricia Rose Fellow in Art History at Florida State University. She studies the Indigenous sources of Latin American culture in the United States and abroad, focusing on Mesoamerica. The scope of Sheila’s work traverses the geography and history of the Americas to connect different regions and to relate antiquity to the present. Sheila holds an MA in Art History from the University of Houston and a BA in English from Rollins College. During her tenure at UH, she was the assistant art editor of Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts.
Angelica Verduci
Case Western Reserve University

**Sight, Sound, and Silence at the Oratorio of San Bernardino in Clusone**

The Oratorio of San Bernardino in Clusone, Italy was once the *domus* of the Disciplini Bianchi. There, these lay brothers expiated their sins through ritual self-flagellation and the singing of *laude*. These vernacular songs, when structured as a dialogue between the personification of Death and a *disciplino*, elicited meditation on death’s power over earthly vanity. In 1484, the flagellants commissioned a fresco for the outer facade of their *domus*, depicting the Triumph of Death accompanied by some verses of the *lauda*, “Io son per nome chiamata morte,” (I am called Death by name).

In this paper, I explore how the Clusone mural, by displaying images that foreground the senses of sight and hearing, becomes a visual meditation on this vernacular song. I argue that the conversation between Death and the *disciplino*, conveyed in this *lauda*, is visualized in the image of Death standing on a sarcophagus at the top of the fresco. Death establishes eye contact with its viewers, the *disciplini*, opens its jaw as if to speak, and holds scrolls bearing the words pronounced by Death in the song. By seeing painted verses from the *lauda*, the flagellants would have recalled and recited aloud other lines, thus activating a dialogue with Death.

Angelica Verduci is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in medieval art at Case Western Reserve University. Angelica’s interests lie at the intersections of macabre and eschatological imagery, performance, and vernacular culture. Angelica earned both her BA and MA in Art History at Università Cattolica in Milan. In 2020, she received the International Center of Medieval Art Travel Grant to fund a research trip for her dissertation on Italian “Triumph of Death” imagery, on which she is currently working.

Hayla May
Oklahoma State University

**Islam in the New World: Subversive Architecture in Colonial New Spain**

Many sacred spaces from late medieval and early modern Iberia integrate a multiplicity of visual cultures from Latin and Arabic spheres. Churches, mosques, and synagogues erected between the eleventh-century Almoravid dynasty and sixteenth-century Habsburg Spain synthesize spatial motifs found commonly in both the Middle East and Western Europe. I argue that these unique architectural designs which fold together conventions of Islamic and Christian structures contributed to a multifaceted sense of Spanish identity in the sixteenth century that was repeated and redefined in the New World.

Religious buildings in cities central to occupancy in Spain – such as the cathedrals of Seville, Zaragoza, and Cordoba – set visual paradigms that have largely been referred to in scholarship as *mudéjar* architecture. I will complicate this narrative to suggest an understanding of the intersection of Islamic and Christian architecture that acknowledges the complex matrix of Spanish identity that this architectural convergence actively participated in. These readings show the variegated experiences of the visual world in Mexico. Ecclesiastical spaces were informed by, participated in, and shaped perceptions of New Spain in ways that can be traced to Islamic design.

Hayla May is a second-year graduate student pursuing an MA in Art History at Oklahoma State University. She obtained a BA in Studio Art with a minor in Art History from the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith in 2015 with projects engaging with spatial experience. She is currently completing a thesis on the religious intersection of spatial design in the Cathedral of Seville. Her research focuses on architectural interchange between Christianity and Islam in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period.
During the nineteenth century, the territory of the United States expanded and consequently reimagined the boundaries of the nation. While many Americans traveled to the West, a select few ventured south to industrialize and establish the state of Florida. Encompassing a unique environment, Florida was foreign to elite Americans of the period. In 1845, Florida was admitted to the Union, thereby solidifying its value for the country. Contemporary perceptions of Florida were grounded in nineteenth-century actions and events. An increase in commerce was a direct result of the profound impact that industrialist Henry Morrison Flagler had upon the region.

Central to Flagler’s process of development was a heightened association with the arts and, more specifically, with landscape painting. This concept is best articulated through Flagler’s professional relationship and personal friendship with noted nineteenth-century American landscape artist Martin Johnson Heade. The origins of commerce in the region created a profitable and aesthetically beneficial bond that endorsed the ideal Floridian scenery and simultaneously created a site of human exchange, intervention, and commerce.

Astrid Tvetenstrand studies the history of American painting, decorative arts, and architecture. She explores these fields through practices of collection, economic development, and the consumption of American property. She investigates connections between the role of nature in the lives of nineteenth-century Americans and how it influenced the creation of art and commerce in the United States. Astrid received her MA in American Fine and Decorative Art History from the Sotheby’s Institute of Art in New York City and her BA in English Literature from St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY.

Numerous marble reliefs of scenes that prominently feature a reclining male banqueter were dedicated in Greece during the late fifth to fourth centuries BCE. An unpublished relief from the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, dating around the late fifth century BCE, is an interesting and little-known example of the type. Most such reliefs have been identified as modest funerary monuments representing the deceased at his funerary banquet and have been classified as examples of the so-called Totenmahl or “death feast.” Recent research, however, has demonstrated that this tradition of funerary reliefs actually stemmed from the imagery of an earlier series of votive dedications featuring banquets that honored traditional local Athenian heroes.

Although the Brooks relief has been identified as a “grave” monument, my research demonstrates that it is, in fact, a rare example of a hero votive relief produced in Athens circa 415 BCE. It has close parallels in objects from the Athenian Agora and from the southern region of Laureion. In this paper I explore how this marble relief would have been contextually displayed, identified, and interpreted by Athenian audiences as a new kind of dedication to a local hero in this period.

Holly Bostick Miller earned her MA in May 2020 from the University of Georgia where she specialized in Ancient Art and Architecture. She was the President of UGA’s Association of Graduate Art Students and has both curatorial and archaeological field experience. Holly received her BA in Art History from Oglethorpe University in Atlanta in 2015 where studying abroad in Greece sparked interest for her current research. Holly plans on pursuing a PhD in Bronze Age Aegean Art and Archaeology.
In this paper I revisit the identity of a Late Antique vault mosaic located in Room M of the Vatican Necropolis beneath Saint Peter’s Basilica. Evidence suggests that this room originally functioned as a pagan burial site in the second century CE. The current decorative mosaic program dates to the mid-third to fourth centuries. The walls feature images of Jonah, the Good Shepherd, and the Fisherman—all standard Christian funerary iconography during the third to fifth centuries. On the vault, the scene continues with a beardless, robed male with a radiant nimbus, holding a globe in his left hand and riding in a horse-drawn chariot.

Scholars generally argue and accept that the Christian narrative conveyed by images on the walls required a Christian image in the vault, and therefore, identify the charioteer as Christ with the attributes of Helios. In Late Antique Rome, pagan images were juxtaposed with Christian ones, and Christian imagery appropriated pagan iconography during this period of shift and continuity. I argue that in order to properly view and interpret the charioteer we must decenter Christianity. I argue that the image is purposefully syncretic, and will demonstrate the ways in which it could have been viewed by members of any cult, including Christianity.

Sonia Dixon is a Patricia Rose Teaching Fellow and third-year doctoral student in the Department of Art History at Florida State University. Her doctoral research focuses on the evolution of the function and meaning of the Chi-rho from the reign of Constantine to the reign of Justinian across time and space. She examines the material, placement, form, and variations of the Chi-rho in order to fully understand its function and meaning in the context of the Late Antique and Early Byzantine period. Sonia is also a Captain and Army Monuments Officer in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Though a stunning example of fourteenth-century ivory carving, the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Crucified Christ remains understudied. This is, perhaps, due to its medium: walrus ivory. Its variable color has led many to label walrus ivory as a cheap elephant ivory substitute. In this paper, I argue that the artist’s choice to use walrus ivory is due not to its market value but how the material lends itself to affective contemplation of Christ’s humanity.

Walrus ivory consists of two sections: a white outer layer, similar to elephant ivory, and an inner portion discolored by red and brown streaks. The tusk used for the Crucified Christ was carved so that its surface forms the lifeless front of Christ’s body, while its white layer composes his face, back, and loincloth. The sculpture beckons onlookers to visually experience its tactile qualities, all while suspending Christ in the liminal space between life and death. Christ’s discolored body evokes memories of his crucifixion, while his pure white face hints at his eventual resurrection. I will explore how the artisan’s manipulation of the material traits of walrus ivory heightens both the work’s agency and the reciprocal relationship between Christ and worshipper, allowing the piece to shape the viewer’s devotional experience.

Mia Hafer is a first-year PhD student in the History of Art at the University of Kansas. She is particularly interested in representations of identity and otherness in medieval art, and how markers of gender, sexuality, and nationality inform secular imagery. She received her MA in art history and her BA in art history and anthropology from Case Western Reserve University, where her paper “At Home, Abroad, and on the Wade Cup” received the Noah L. Butkin award. Mia has previously served as the Collections Management intern for the CWRU Putnam Sculpture Collection and the Special Collection Exhibition Coordinator for Holden Arboretum.
The translucent surface of polished alabaster not only resembles glowing, pale skin but also invites flesh-to-flesh contact between the living and material worlds—a tantalizing quality that the famed English alabaster carvers repeatedly employed in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. My research focuses on alabaster carvings of St. John the Baptist’s decapitated head commonly produced in England from 1417 to 1550. Often encased in wood or cloth which further isolated the exposed stone face, these tablets were used in private devotional settings, in which their tactile appeal heightened the worshiper’s spiritual experience.

In the visual culture of late medieval and early modern England, with its predominance of brightly polychromed sculpture, the pronounced use and display of luminescent, white stone invites tactile encounters and brings the materiality of alabaster to the forefront. The material produces meaning. In the case of St. John’s Heads, my research examines how the use of alabaster highlights certain religious ideologies and a wide range of associations repeated throughout the stone’s rich literary tradition. My reevaluation of the sculpted heads’ properties furthers the research on alabaster as material and adds nuanced meaning to the popularity of English alabaster St. John's Heads in European trade.

Rebekkah Hart is a graduate student in Art History at the University of California, Riverside. Her thesis investigates alabaster’s medicinal associations and its later role as a sculptural material in medieval and early modern England. She hopes to continue these avenues of investigation in her doctoral research. Rebekkah’s research has been funded by Brigham Young University’s Humanities Grant program as well as the Richard G. Carrott Award at UCR. Rebekkah’s interest in pedagogy has also led her to teach elementary and secondary students throughout California about Aztec codices and language systems as a two-time Gluck Fellow of the Arts.

Cultural Heritage Panelists

Alexis Assam (MA FSU 2018) is in her second year as the Constance E. Clayton Fellow in the Contemporary Art Department at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She was the 2018-19 Romare Bearden Graduate Museum Fellow at the Saint Louis Art Museum. While there she co-curated the exhibition, The Shape of Abstraction: Selections from the Ollie Collection (Sept. 2019–Oct. 2020), which presented the work of five generations of black artists who have revolutionized abstract art.

Chelsea Dinkel (MA FSU 2017) is a Collections Specialist at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. Chelsea has previously interned at The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, the National Museum of African Art, and at the Newseum. Recently she has worked on projects related to collection moves, storage, and inventories for the National Air and Space Museum, the Anacostia Community Museum, the National Museum of American History, and the National Postal Museum.

Ana Juarez (MA FSU 2017) is the Fine Arts Registrar at Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries. She previously served as the Barancik Community Engagement Fellow at The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. In her current role as registrar she cares for a diverse art collection spread among over twenty library branches. Juarez manages cataloguing, preservation, display, and inventory efforts related to this collection.

Emily Thames is a doctoral candidate in Art History at FSU specializing in the visual and material culture of the colonial Atlantic World, with a focus on the Spanish Americas and the Caribbean. In 2016–17 she was a Joe and Wanda Corn Predoctoral Fellow at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. In 2018, Emily was the Object Research and Teaching Programming Intern at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.
Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the William Johnston Building at Florida State University, home to the Department of Art History, is located on land that is the ancestral and traditional territory of the Apalachee Nation, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, the Miccosukee Tribe of Florida, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. We pay respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to their descendants, to the generations yet unborn, and to all Indigenous people.

We recognize that this land remains scarred by the histories and ongoing legacies of settler colonial violence, dispossession, and removal. In spite of all of this, and with tremendous resilience, these Indigenous nations have remained deeply connected to this territory, to their families, to their communities, and to their cultural ways of life. We recognize the ongoing relationships of care that these Indigenous Nations maintain with this land and extend our gratitude as we live and work as humble and respectful guests upon their territory. We encourage you to learn about and amplify the contemporary work of the Indigenous nations whose land you are on and to endeavor to support Indigenous sovereignty in all the ways that you can.

Thank You

Our special thanks to the student speakers who made time to share their research with us, to the roundtable panelists for sharing their expertise, and to the keynote speaker, Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black, for presenting her wide-ranging and influential work.

Many thanks to the members of the Graduate Symposium Committee of the Department of Art History and their advisors, Tenley Bick and Jean Hudson, whose assistance was essential for the success of the symposium. The Committee would like to thank James Frazier, Dean of the College of Fine Arts, Adam Jolles, Chair of the Art History Department, and Paul Niell, Kristin Dowell, and Preston McLane for their generous contributions. The Department of Art History is also grateful to Sheri Patton, business administrator, and intern Alexa Patton for their cheerful assistance.

Günther Stamm Prize
The Department of Art History faculty evaluates the student papers on the basis of originality and presentation, and recognizes one participant with the Günther Stamm Prize, in memory of a founding professor of the Department of Art History.

Athanor
Papers presented at our symposium are considered for inclusion in Athanor, a publication for art history graduate students sponsored by the Department of Art History. Athanor is indexed by the Bibliography of the History of Art and is held in the collections of research libraries worldwide.
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