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glance
A PUBLICATION FOR THE CCA COMMUNITY

CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
SAN FRANCISCO / OAKLAND
FALL 2011
Dear friends,

I am often asked what sets CCA apart from other schools. I can easily boast about the interdisciplinarity, breadth, and diversity of our programs; our outstanding faculty; the high level of community engagement; the stewardship of our Board of Trustees; and our students’ desire to make a difference in the world. Admittedly, these qualities may not be unique to CCA. However, what best defines us is our location. The San Francisco Bay Area is a global hub of entrepreneurship, sustainability, and social activism. It’s also home to more than 250 art venues as well as some of most innovative design and technology firms in the world. I truly believe that there is no better place to pursue a creative career.

In this issue of Glance you will read about how our students, faculty, and alumni have reaped the benefits of studying and working in the Bay Area and are making an impact in their communities and beyond. Our feature articles take you from the local—the Recology transfer station and San Quentin State Prison—to the global—the Academy Awards in Hollywood and the glaciers of Iceland. I’m particularly pleased about the article on our new IMPACT Social Entrepreneurship Awards program, which, in the words of Sanjit Sethi, director of CCA’s Center for Art and Public Life, “celebrates the entrepreneurial drive of CCA students combined with their desire to create a tangible, positive impact within a specific community.” Read here about the winning student teams and their projects in Oakland, Kenya, and India.

CCA has always attracted students who want to engage in creative work that can positively and powerfully affect our world. As we look to the future, we ask: How might we better prepare our graduates to meet the challenges they will face? What will the art school of the future look like? What role will CCA play in the Bay Area community and around the globe? These are the kinds of questions that make my job as president of CCA so challenging, rewarding, and exciting.

Thank you for your continued interest and support.

Sincerely,

Stephen Beal
President
CCA ALUMNI AND FACULTY MAKE ART AT THE DUMP

A BREATHE OF FRESH AIR
by Lindsey Westbrook
F E A T U R E S

Junkestra

new ways. thinking about life and culture (and trash) in entirely been profoundly affected by the experience, without cally about reuse, but no one leaves without having profoundly affected by the experience, without being able to very powerfully translate these ideas into the realm of the object. My goal was to truly merge my writing practice and my visual art practice, and I am so that language, the small words and phrases that add up to one’s daily existence,” she says. “At the dump I was able to very powerfully translate these ideas into the realm of the object. My goal was to truly merge my writing practice and my visual art practice, and I am so excited about how far I got, how much I was able to accomplish.”

At her final dump exhibition Nichols presented a series of 14 sonnets, 14 complementary mixed-media sculptures, photographs, and a video installation. She also undertook an oral history project (which she plans to continue past the formal ending date of the residency), recording the thoughts and words of some of the workers there. One security guard in particular was her entree into a social world that might otherwise have been difficult to penetrate in such a short amount of time. He befriended her early on and took an active role in introducing her to other workers. “Many of them have been there for 20 years or more and have developed very moving philosophies about the objects that interest our lives.” Making their rounds at night, security guards have a lot of time for quiet introspection.

Nearly every resident artist experiences some stress, then zen, related to finding materials to carry out their ideas. Notable finds over the years have included some fascinating stuff, from irreparable historical documents—for instance ship logs from the 1870s (donated to the Maritime Museum)—to really valuable antiques: vases, furniture, rugs, old Victrolas, a monkey fur stole, 1950s baseball cards, toys, glass bottles . . .

“You have to be open to surprises,” muses SCOTT OLIVER (MFA 2005, Recology resident 2007–8). “Of course you can always find paint, or construction materials, but you can’t seek anything very specific. You also have to realize that objects are points in a process, not static entities.” Perhaps a surprising sentiment to come from a sculptor, but one with which many dump veterans would agree. “For me, the Recology residency was a time of intense productivity. It’s set up to encourage you to make a lot of work, which in my experience is different from the expectations of residencies run by nonprofits. I didn’t self-edit nearly as much as I usually do, which was freeing, and at the end I found I still had even more ideas that I hadn’t gotten around to executing.” One of Oliver’s projects was featured in the program’s 20th anniversary exhibition, held last year at Intersection 5M in San Francisco. It is a collection of scavenged LPs, to be mixed at a social gathering by guest DJs who have no familiarity with the collection. The title: Eighty-Sixed Thirty-Threes.

To spend all day, every day, at the dump is not for the faint of heart, and VIVIANA PAREDES (Sculpture 2001, Recology resident 2005) still cannot talk about it without a note of anguish in her voice. “You know intellectually how much trash our society produces,” she says, “but you don’t really understand it until you see it for yourself. My initial idea for my project was based on an exhibition I’d once seen featuring toys made from garbage, like bottles and cans. It was so inventive and creative! I wanted to do something similar, except I found perfectly good toys, sometimes brand-new, still in their packaging. Also shoes, household items, furniture, all still perfectly usable. I couldn’t help thinking that for most third-world people, visiting our dump would be like shopping in a dollar store. Not to mention all the personal belongings and family pictures. “It was shocking, almost paralyzing. Some days I found it very difficult to make anything or be creative. The residency had a huge impact on my studio practice: I constantly recycle, constantly consider how much waste a new work will create.”

“The residency can be a difficult experience for artists,” agrees ZACHARY ROYER SCHOLZ (MFA 2006, MA Visual and Critical Studies 2009, Recology resident 2010). “It inevitably forces you to come to grips with being a producer of things in a world already overrun with stuff. While I was in the residency my wife was pregnant with our daughter, and faced with enormous piles of waste I not only felt physically small, but also recognized the naive childishness that keeps us complicit in an irresponsibly consumptive system. Accepting impermanence allowed me to partly make peace with this paradox. Nothing is permanent or new. All of Earth’s atoms were created billions of years ago by exploding stars. We simply reorganize these bits to build our own bodies and the objects and structures that we inhabit...
and use to convey meaning. Nothing lasts of what we do directly. Art certainly doesn’t last, despite the best efforts of conservators. What lasts are the echoes of our actions and the way they influence the actions of those to come.”

SUSAN LEIBOVITZ STEINMAN (MFA 1989, Recology resident 1990–91) sums up this idea in one word: compost. “I am a great believer in compost. In lives and materials, composting makes room for new generations and feeds them. The production of non-compostible materials thwarts the organic life cycle. Art can make visible the idea that compost is more important than the proliferation of materials. Ideas matter most. Art has the potential to save cultural ideas. Materials themselves are just empty containers.

“Experiencing the dump is a cultural anthropology intensive—an epiphany on the squandering of resources. One witnesses waste on a monumental scale. If everyone stayed there for a few days, they would grow more, recycle more, package less, and share. Maybe it’s actually that simple. Schoolchildren who come through on tours see it, and soon become voters with the potential to make positive changes.”

The residency supported her first large-scale venture into community-based green “artscapes.” Her opus is Recology’s permanent, lush, water-conserving three-acre sculpture garden. One hundred local high school students and dump staff members worked on it with her. “Working at the dump was like I died and went to art heaven. I couldn’t believe that I was being paid to go to work every day to make art—in a 5,000-square-foot studio! Which back then was an old, unheated, leaky metal building immediately next to a huge pit where trucks dumped loads of wet garbage. It stunk. I ended up stinking too, I think. I used to put on a fake French accent and call it eau d’arte.”

RICHARD KAMLER (former CCA faculty member, Recology resident 1999) says it with tongue in cheek, but entirely truthfully: The dump was a breath of fresh air. “The residency was such a great gig! The stipend was generous, and I felt like a kid in a candy store every day.” He was also there when the studio was adjacent to the pit. “It was separated from the pit by these huge rolling doors, and flocks of seagulls were constantly coming in and out, and the smell—wow! It was just a really rich experience. Previously I had been doing work that

VIVIANA PAREDES

Trucks were coming in all the time, but when a Mercedes would drive up—look out! Everyone would attack. I found an old globe of the world, and turned it into a sculpture about war. I also found so many old photographs, which was so difficult to comprehend, but I made things out of them and gave them a new life. I found an old car door, fenders, and hood that I stenciled with quotes from J. G. Ballard’s book Crash, having to do with the sexual associations of cars. The program director at the time asked me to make some of the quotes more palatable for the kids who were coming through on the tours! That piece is still on permanent exhibit in the dump’s sculpture garden.

Val Britton

The first time I ever went out to scavenge, I came upon a treasure trove of old paper ephemera, textile scraps, costumes, and empty boxes with delicate tissue from local clothing shops—what looked like the contents of an attic, all over 100 years old. There was an old issue of the auto newspaper the Western Motor Record and a calendar, both from 1913, remarkably well preserved. Also wonderful wooden produce crates, loads of school notebooks, and beautiful watermarked stationery containing lovely pen-and-ink handwriting, rolls of hand-printed wallpaper, and a crumbling old map of the coast of San Francisco, with the city filled in and the surrounding expanses left blank and uncharted.

SUSAN LEIBOVITZ STEINMAN

Ironing boards, dirt-caked brooms, linoleum fragments—I found the most impressive story-laden detritus and visual inspiration in the construction debris yard. Also, two years after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, tons of rubble was still arriving on long-bed trucks. With staff and high school students, I hand-chose and stacked some of the jagged slabs into a concrete mountain, interspersed with soil and seeded with native plants. Today what was a field of barren dirt and fill is now a lush, green garden.
was very socially and politically engaged, and very intense, including three years working as an artist in residence at San Quentin. So for me the dump was actually a wonderful break, a relief, an opportunity to look in different directions. I’d always been a pack rat even as a kid, so I enjoyed thinking more abstractly about why we save things or throw them away.”

For Dee Hibbert-Jones (former CCA faculty member, Recology resident 2002), the dump experience has had a great influence on her research and teaching. “I had just begun to explore the role of objects and memory before I was given the residency. My father had recently died, and I was very much feeling the weight of owning so many things of his, all his stuff. It made the dump almost too much to handle! I began to look at the marks and traces made by people on furniture and objects. The small, useless things we hoard and then discard. I was interested in the manipulative and shifting role of nostalgia, the function of consumption, and how we manage issues of separation and loss through the retention and divestment of objects.” These experiences inspired her to create a cross-disciplinary elective course on the subject of memory, in which she and her students investigated Thing Theory, Daniel Miller’s theories of things and consumption, and Jürgen Habermas’s ideas about the object and the thing. She taught the class at CCA and at UC Santa Cruz, where she is currently an associate professor. Recently she revised it into a class titled From Object to Interface, which considers the dematerialization of the object in digital culture—how much or how little our relationship to material culture has changed now that we experience so much of the world through a digital screen.

Val Britton (MFA 2006, Recology resident 2010) reflects: “I spoke to tour groups and classes several times a week and was impressed and inspired by their curiosity. I feel that people are hungry for ways that their work can have meaning and make an impact on the increasingly urgent environmental predicament we face. I got a lot out of my experience at the dump. But, most profoundly, I feel an increased urgency to educate others about how to reduce their consumption and environmental impact. If it would have been possible to clear all other responsibilities from my life in order to spend 24 hours a day at the dump, I would have done it. Those four months passed far too quickly. I liked the sense of wonder and discovery, the inspiration found in unexpected materials, and the hope that small gestures matter.”
From the mosh pits of Olympia, Washington, to collecting an Oscar on stage at the Staples Center. From indie music scenester to hit documentary maker. (With a stop along the way in CCA’s Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice.)

AUDREY MARRS—former punk rock musician, Ladyfest cofounder, and CCA alumna—won the 2001 Academy Award for best documentary feature for producing Inside Job, the story of the 2008 financial crisis. The statuette was handed to Marrs and her artistic partner, the director Charles Ferguson, by none other than Oprah Winfrey. Marrs and Ferguson had also been nominated in 2008 for their documentary No End in Sight. The film was received to great acclaim and led to some of the same punk shows in the 1990s, about the American occupation. No End in Sight had also been nominated in 2008 for their documentary feature for Inside Job. Ferguson posted a job listing on Craigslist for an assistant to a writer/investor, and three (grueling) interviews later, Marrs got the gig.

Fast forward again. Six months prior to her thesis deadline, she and Ferguson realize that she has actually been making No End in Sight since the beginning. “We were so naive about the process of filmmaking that we didn’t realize that ‘producer’ was the function I’d been performing all along.”

Marrs says that her Curatorial Practice coursework was a lot more than just an incidental detour along her path from musician to filmmaker. Turning words into pictures is not easy, and knowing how to make exhibitions helped infinitely in learning how to make films. Understanding the director’s vision and figuring out how to make it manifest in a tangible form is absolutely exciting. "When making a film, similar to curating an art exhibition, a lot of the groundwork involves identifying who your audience is and communicating with them accordingly. With Inside Job we also realized that presenting this body of information in an aesthetically exciting way was going to be a major challenge. Early on we chose a few aesthetic themes to serve as ‘punctuation’: for instance, aerial cinematography, which was costly but worth it, we felt, because it would allow the audience moments of pause that would be crucial to the pacing and prevent them from feeling overwhelmed by all the information we were presenting. We didn’t want to dumb down the content, but instead to ask the audience to step up just a little bit. So we incorporated certain elements that would keep the film entertaining and motivate viewers to keep paying attention."

Marrs cites her CCA classes, and JULIAN MYERS’s art history and theory courses in particular, as indispensable in the building of her professional rapport with Ferguson. “From Julian we learned to look at and talk about art from an extremely sophisticated perspective. His course material was so unbelievably well curated. It turned out that he and I had gone to some of the same punk shows in the 1990s, and in class he would present us with so many interesting artists and works relating to the punk genre but also reveal traces of those same ideas in other historical periods, long before punk was invented. From Julian, and also from BENNY PRITIKIN, I learned how to look at and talk about art, which definitely helped me work more effectively with Charles.”

Myers praises Marrs in the highest terms as well. “Audrey came from the same DIY and punk culture that made such a mark on me. She’s one of the most resourceful, organized, independent, and dignified people I’ve worked with. I think this is what led her to curatorial practice—the desire not to receive culture as it handed down from on high, but, in the absence of compelling mainstream culture and discourse, to produce it yourself, on your own terms.”

Marrs’s involvement in the music business began when she was living in Olympia. She worked for the legendary independent label Kill Rock Stars and played with Mocket, Gene Defcon, and Bratmobile. She curated some art shows during that time, too. Olympia is a community, she says, where anyone feels like they can do anything; there are none of the conventional barriers to breaking into something new. She and five friends started Ladyfest (now a major global event), and at the first one in 2001 she was the art curator. “I didn’t know what I was doing—none of us did, and I remember there being a lot of arguing and crying during Ladyfest Olympia weeks—but we all made it through and loved one another in the end. And I somehow curated two art shows.”

These days Marrs spends most of her time on the phone, doing research for her next project with Ferguson. “We want to evolve into features. We’re not just documentarians; we’re in film because we really care about film. Right now we’re working on a feature film about WikiLeaks for HBO and the BBC. Making a feature narrative (with actors) is like learning how to make a film for the first time all over again.”

FACT: AUDREY MARRS’S MOTHER, MARIKO MARRS, IS AN ARTIST AND DID THE SET DECORATION ON INSIDE JOB. CHECK OUT HER WEBSITE AT namionline.net/ mariko.html
$10,000: It’s a daunting amount of money to a student, especially when the task is to spend it in three months on a single project. But three CCA student IMPACT teams proved up to the challenge in summer 2011.

The IMPACT: Social Entrepreneurship Awards is a new initiative at CCA, run by the Center for Art and Public Life under the direction of Center director Sanjit Sethi and program manager Rebecca Wolfe. It is one of a trio of unique programs managed by the Center that connect students with outside communities to address specific, real-world problems.

The three winning IMPACT teams had competed against numerous other contenders, and they all had what the judges were looking for: They were interdisciplinary, they had strong relationships with their proposed community partners, they were attentive to a relevant social and humanitarian need, and they balanced innovation and pragmatism.

Sanjit Sethi says, “The name of this speaks for itself. At its core the IMPACT program is about innovation, community, collaboration, and making. It celebrates the entrepreneurial drive of CCA students combined with their desire to create a tangible, positive impact within a specific community. In many ways IMPACT is advanced education. Students take the initiative to seek out other like-minded students and the collaboration of a local, national, or international community organization and propose a project. They aren’t doing this for a grade, but rather because they have conviction. It is exactly the type of experience that they will face out in the real world. IMPACT speaks to the character of CCA as an institution that inspires learning and creativity—not in a vacuum, but rather in service to one’s community.”

The year-one IMPACT teams reported on their successfully completed projects on September 29, 2011, in Timken Lecture Hall on CCA’s San Francisco campus.

WAZO DESIGN INSTITUTE (wazoinstitute.org) was composed of communications designer Konina Biswas (Design 2011), printmaker Ben Ikka (MFA 2012), business strategist James Lee (MBA in Design Strategy 2012), and product designer Paul Wood (Design 2011). Their proposal was to create a design and production facility in Kayafungo, Kenya, where local students would make shoes out of cloth and used car tires. The goal was to invent a locally sourced, sustainable, beautiful, functional, affordable product, and to have that product address a local health problem, hookworm, which is contracted through the sole of the unprotected foot. Paul Wood had spent the previous summer in Kayafungo, living with families and laying the groundwork.

Wazo’s project, in its final form, beautifully embodied the mandate to exert a meaningful “impact” on the selected site and the local collaborators. “We went to Kenya planning to make lots and lots of shoes,” reported James Lee, “but the project became much more about training the students to be design thinkers. They made shoes, for sure, but they also learned strategies and techniques that will enable them to become creative entrepreneurs and apply design thinking to any new product or endeavor. The bigger picture is that known design and imaginative processes can be used to tackle social issues.”

The team had to be constantly creative and flexible while on the ground in Kenya, navigating the maze of local individuals and organizations (official and otherwise) whose cooperation was required, not to mention dealing with material and facility shortages, and cultural and communication gaps. There were also budget management issues to contend with; once in Kenya it is possible to operate with very low costs, but flying there from the United States is expensive.

By the time the CCA students left, the Kenyan students had established a self-run organization that will continue to function. Six of them had secured future internships with one of the local craftsmen they met as part of the project, and all of them had earned certificates of financial literacy from Equity Bank, which means they can now apply for business loans.

WAZO DESIGN INSTITUTE WORKED WITH LOCAL STUDENTS IN KENYA

SOCIAL CRAFT (social-craft.tumblr.com) prefaced its final presentation with a guided meditation in which they asked audience members to imagine themselves “at home.” What do you do at home? What do you eat? Where do you sit, and sleep? The group was sculptor Cara Levine (MFA 2012), architect and sculptor Nicholas Morris (Sculpture 2013), and educator and social practice artist Cassie Thornton (MFA 2014). Even before they heard about IMPACT, Levine and Thornton were already plotting to somehow find a way to get to India and do a project. They met Morris at one of the Center’s “mixer” events for students in need of team members from other majors, and recognized in him a kindred spirit. Their project, they decided, would be to explore the idea of home by building an actual home on the campus of Srishti School of Art, Design, and Technology, a college in Bangalore, India.

The three spent July and August leading a class of Srishti students in doing exactly that. After arriving on campus they picked a location: the roof of a partially completed campus building, which happened to already be the temporary residence of the workmen constructing the building. The students at Srishti were from well-to-do families and not accustomed to interacting with workers, or the dirt and discomfort of a construction site. The “seats” of their improvised classroom were disused toilets, and the raw material for the new rooftop home was trash from the construction going on beneath. They built a makeshift crane to haul the trash up to their fifth-floor building site.

The CCA team soon discovered the upsides of working in India: materials are inexpensive (especially when you are making something out of trash), labor is affordable (especially when your workers are mostly student volunteers), and almost anything can be accomplished under the radar. At one point the class’s home-building efforts did surface on the radar—in a local newspaper story—and Srishti’s president paid a visit to the project site. “She said, ‘Hey, I’m a big fan of conceptual art, but we didn’t get any permits for this, so can you please start calling it a sculpture instead of a house?’ Great, thanks!” remembers Cara Levine. All along the trio deliberately blurred boundaries: between performance and everyday life, work and home, teacher and student, stranger and friend. The “visiting faculty” to their class included not
only the workmen but also a cook, a professor, a bricklayer, a working mother, an architect, and a master yoga teacher. One of the Indian students’ biggest challenges came at the end, when they confronted the socially onerous task of placing a value on these people’s contributions, and paying them accordingly. An even more difficult question than defining “home,” they found, is defining “work” and what it is worth.

**IMPACT SKYLINE** (impactskyline.com) was operating just a stone’s throw away from CCA—at Skyline High School in Oakland—and yet it too was dedicated, in a sense, to bridging cultural and communication gaps: Design strategists **ALVIN CHEUNG** (MBA in Design Strategy 2012), **MICHICHE DAWSON** (MBA in Design Strategy 2012), **COREY LEE** (Design 2011), and **SANAM NASSIRPOUR** (MBA in Design Strategy 2012) had proposed a multipart project to encourage interactions among Skyline’s teachers, who tend to stay in their own classrooms and shy away from interacting with one another.

The concept was holistic: Problems whose causes run wide and deep, such as teacher turnover and feelings of isolation and stress, can be helped via strategic interventions. The CCA students’ interventions included mechanisms for idea exchange in the copy room and a designed online space for discussion and resource sharing.

There were some challenges, mostly schedule-related. Many of the teachers who had planned to be on campus over the summer unexpectedly weren’t, which created delays, and some of the work the students had expected to do themselves, on the fly, actually needed to be done by union labor. Yet the team did succeed in transforming the room into a space that all the teachers now want to linger in, with whiteboards, chalkboards, and mailbox “badges” for inter-teacher messaging. And the online forum is in use and gaining in popularity.

The third component of the project—a culminating workshop—was a great success, according to Sanam Nassirpour. “We brought the teachers up to speed on their newly available physical and online forums. We also created some basic problem statements and led them through design-thinking exercises. The design-thinking mode was totally foreign to many of them, but at the end they all seemed really confident with it.”
On March 4, 2011, ten CCA writing students followed in the footsteps of Johnny Cash and entered the oldest correctional facility in California: San Quentin State Prison. We were there to attend a creative writing class, an invitation arranged by MFA Program Writing faculty member Anne Marino. Last year, Marino participated in a literary contest pitting a handful of Bay Area professional writers against a group of inmate writers. After experiencing the inmates’ responses and the quality of their work, she organized as part of the ongoing ENGAGE at CCA initiative a new graduate-level course—Slammer: Writing In and About Prison—in which students would read works about incarceration and explore the roots, themes, and social and psychological significance of prison literature. Which is how Paul Blumer, Lauren Camacho, Max Cherney, Kyler Hood, Luisa Leija, Julianquisquater, Rae Thomas, Rachel Volk, Jeff Von Ward, and myself came to pass through the razor-wire gates of San Quentin on this blustery Friday evening.

Before driving out to the bleak, windswept promontory in Marin County, we’d all familiarized ourselves with San Quentin’s guest handbook. The guidance notes issued by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation were intimidatingly direct. For instance: “Wear shoes you can run in.” No visitors are allowed to wear green (the color of the guards’ uniforms), orange (the color of the inmates), or blue. Inmates wear dark-blue denim pants and shirts the color of Tar Heel blue, stenciled with “CDCR PRISONER” in large yellow print.

At the main gate, we signed in with driver’s licenses or passports, then drove around to H-Unit, a lower-security section containing 1,000 of San Quentin’s 3,500 inmates. Before entering the yard, we passed through four more security gates, signed in again, went through a metal detector, and were reminded of the prison’s policy: “Hostages will not be recognized for bargaining purposes.” Then we were led to the classroom by Kent and Keith Zimmerman, two brothers who have written books on the Chicago mob, the Sex Pistols, and the Hell’s Angels, and who have run the creative writing program at San Quentin for eight years.

One by one, 30 inmates slopped into the classroom, some rodding at the Zimmermans, others quietly settling into their usual seats. Scattered around the room, writers shook hands and introduced themselves. Everyone seemed wary and watchful as Kent explained the plan. We’d all write for 30 minutes, then he and Keith would collect the work. Next Friday, then he and Keith would collect the work. Next Friday, we’d come back and they’d read the anonymous pieces aloud, then three judges would pick the winners. When each person stood up and introduced themselves, the tension broke. “Hi, my name’s David, I’m from Oakland and I love life.” “Look out,” said Larry, “cos here we come.” “I’m sorry I’m not gonna be here next week,” said Brian, “I’m tunneling outta here tonight!”

Before we started writing, inmate Greg Carter read an introduction he’d prepared on behalf of the H-Unit writers. He welcomed us to San Quentin and talked of his classmates and their work: “All those

It’s May 24, 2011, the beginning of my three-week summer course in Iceland with 15 other CCA graduate and undergraduate students under the leadership of faculty member John Zurier. Revived after volcano-related flight delays by a dip in Iceland’s famed Blue Lagoon, this MFA student is excited to finally unpack her bags in Reykjavík.

My classmates and I spend our first evening walking through an outdoor sculpture garden along the water, eventually winding up at the studio of CCA alumna Brynhildur Thorgeirsdottir. She has prepared a delicious fish soup dinner. We sit together at a long table, eating and listening to Thorgeirsdottir talk about her work and life as an artist, which has taken her from California to New York to Reykjavík.

In Reykjavík, our days are filled with trips to artists’ and designers’ studios, art museums, and other cultural stops. At night there’s a warm, misty glow on the streets. It’s never dark out this time of year, and a late-night weekday stroll through this petite northernmost capital of the world allows for extra hours of observation. Is this an artist’s fantasy come true? Almost limitless natural light, and time to observe, make, and look again and again.

After three days in Reykjavík we head by van to Lyshóll, an Icelandic horse farm on the remote western Snæfellsnes Peninsula, where we will spend the next two weeks. The main building where we work is exceptionally well insulated from outside sounds. Inside, it is bustling. Our host, Johanna, is cooking our next meal, and riders are chatting in Icelandic and German. Out the window, we’ve got a view of the pasture and about a hundred rugged Icelandic horses. Mountains and waterfalls are in full view in one direction, the ocean in the other. We can see the Snæfellsjökull volcano and glacier, the setting of Jules Verne’s Journey to the Center of the Earth, from our cottages. We watch geese and tractors fly by, and riders return frozen and wind-burned. It is summer, but temperatures are in the 30s (Reykjavík was much milder) and the winds are gale-force (that wind tunnel on Eighth Street in front of the main San Francisco campus building is a breeze in comparison). Luckily our hosts provide plenty of savory meals, cozy lodging, and a hot tub, and there’s a natural hot spring within walking distance.

I see an Icelandic cowboy driving a tractor while wearing wide-legged riding pants and a hand-knit Icelandic wool sweater with fuzzy silhouettes of horses running around the circumference of his torso. These northerners live in a remote and extreme landscape, and I realize that this sweater signifies a way of life. It’s not a fashion statement or a polite gesture to a sweater-wearing relative. Sheep’s wool is one of the most versatile, insulating, and naturally water-repellent fibers. Horses are a livelihood here, and they are rugged too, traversing big stones and rough lava fields. It’s so windy that the hair at the tops of their thick tails radiates out like a dandelion. Their forelocks cover most of their eyes, and their manes blanket their necks just as well as our wool sweaters bundle us. Their tails, too: they are as frequent as billboards along the interstate back home. Thankfully, billboards are prohibited here.

FROM THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS, ICE-ENCROSSED TERRAIN OF ICELAND TO THE ANYTHING-BUT-WIDE-OPEN SPACES OF SAN QUENTIN STATE PRISON, CCA STUDENTS ARE VENTURING OUT INTO THE WORLD AND BRINGING BACK DIVERSE EXPERIENCES THAT ENRICH LIFE INSIDE THE CLASSROOM AS WELL.

Here, two students tell their stories, one from his ENGAGE at CCA course in spring 2011, and one from her study-abroad course in summer 2011.

ON GLACIERS, LIGHT, AND THE FARM:

by Lindsey Lyons

by Simon Hodgson
Friday nights of study, while the world slipped by.” It was a lyrical opening, but there was a sting in the tail. Carter paused and looked up at the CCA students around the room: “Youse guys are in trouble. And just so you know, trouble is the only thing we were good at.” The Zimmerman brothers chuckled as Carter returned to his seat, grinning at the applause and appreciative yells.

The title of the exercise, “At the Crossroads,” elicited stories of adultery, bank robbery, seduction by the devil, grievous bodily harm with a gas can…and that was just the CCA students. Also in the mix were tales of Indian drug deals, regret, assault with a can of Pepsi, unrequited love, anger, auto accidents, Jack Daniels, hookers, family, and fishing. When Marino and the Zimmermans read them all out loud the following Friday, it was impossible to tell whose story was whose. Some were considered and plotted, most were raw and painful. The result? The inmates won.

“What will you take away with you when you go back to CCA?” one of them asked the student writers. “The shame of defeat,” said Julian Quisquater. The inmates roared. We’d lost the throwdown but gained something else: admiration of their skills, a new perspective on our education, and respect for other writers plotting their own literary path.

Some Californians would argue that prisoners don’t deserve programs such as this creative writing class. Why should offenders get a free education when everyone else has to pay for theirs? One response is that learning is freedom. For every additional level of education, Kent Zimmerman says, recidivism rates decline. Creative writing can also be transformative. Earlier in the semester, we’d already seen one example of this, when Joe Loya visited our class. A former bank robber who’d served eight years in federal prisons, including San Quentin, Loya turned his life around by writing, becoming a successful journalist, author, and screenwriter. Even in our short stint in H-Unit, we could see how the Zimmermans’ class was quietly changing lives when one veteran inmate revealed that taking the class had encouraged him to write twice a week to his mom.

As we swapped stories, what became clear were not our differences but our similarities. All of us were writers aiming for the same goal: to tell an endearing story. What else did I take from our strangely privileged visit to San Quentin? Memories of the watchtowers, the breezeblock classroom walls, the list of prison courses on an officer’s notice board (yoga, parenting, introspective art). An appreciation of the prison programming staff as well as volunteers like Keith and Kent. And the humor and humanity of the guys inside. One inmate confessed that he’d struggled with starting his story. Then, he said, he went to the restroom, “and it all just flowed from there.” The guy next to me leaned over and muttered, “He’s used to writing on the wall.”

There are no guardrails in Iceland. It’s possible I’m overgeneralizing, but I never see any: not when we walk to the edge of a famous cliff that was the supposed site of a battle in an Icelandic saga; or when we breathe rainbow-colored mist at Gulfoss, what I like to call the pie slice-shaped waterfall; or when our pair of eight-passenger vans teeters up winding gravel mountain roads to the 700,000-year-old Snæfellsjökull glacier.

We are at the foot of the glacier. The ground is covered in white snow and black lava rock scattered with light green, white, and orange varieties of moss and lichen. We find a patch of mossy ground that may be the new frontier of landscape architecture and furniture design. This moss is sunk into the earth to perfectly cradle a winded hiker in need of a chaise lounge, with the ground itself as armrests. We take turns lying in this mossy recliner before sloshing into the earthy moss island will reveal.

After our residency-like stay on the farm, we return to Reykjavik for the final days of the course. On Saturday night, we get a taste of the weekend partying that doesn’t stop until 3 or 6 in the morning. Many of us head to Bacus, the so-called dive bar that’s hipper than any street fashion blogger’s best portrait of the Mission. Upon exiting, we are blinded by the light. It’s 3 a.m. and at the end of the street, the sun is burning over the water. This sense of simultaneous awe and confusion remains one of my favorite moments of the trip.

At the Reykjavik Art Museum I purchased a book, Dreams of the Sublime and Nowhere in Contemporary Icelandic Art, and this fall I’m taking a graduate course entitled “The Sublime All the Time.” It’s a subject I know I want to pursue.

Also among the things I brought back: a two-pound tub of Icelandic orange marmalade. Yes, there was a luggage weight limit, and no, they don’t grow oranges in Iceland—in fact the country doesn’t exactly have trees (there is a local joke that you only have to stand up if you get lost in a forest). But there was something about the breakfast ritual I started at the farm—putting orange marmalade in the oatmeal or on homemade bread every morning—that I needed to bring back with me. Maybe it reminded me of my native Sarasota while I was there? In any case, sitting in my refrigerator in San Francisco, it’s a constant reminder of a trip that brought me closer to nature and the kind of artist I’d like to be.

The class will exhibit work made in, or inspired by, Iceland at the College Avenue Galleries on CCA’s Oakland Campus January 16–28, 2012. Join us for the reception on Wednesday, January 18, 5:30–7:30 PM. The participating artists are: Michael Bauch, Verna Bhargava, Courtney Costello, Aaron Esplin, Tré Greenhill, Jessica Jenkins, Eileen Long, Lindsey Lyons, Nicole Marroff, Ashley Pierce, Hilary Sanders, Dean Schneider, Katy Tuck, Sarah Ward, John Zurier, and Nina Zurier.
Walking as art is a long and respected tradition, its practitioners ranging from Francis Alÿs to Richard Long. In fall 2011, Capp Street Project resident artist Harrell Fletcher brought his student Travis Souza from Scotland to California to undertake a walking artwork. Over the course of four weeks, Souza and two of his brothers walked the path of the proposed high-speed rail line from Los Angeles to San Francisco, traversing at one point their family’s farm in the Central Valley. Along the way Souza collected the ideas and opinions of many farmers affected by the railway project, thus “recovering” data that would otherwise perhaps not exist about the relationships that exist today between the urban and the rural, the need for food and the need for transit. Fletcher, who has been teaching a course this semester in the Graduate Program in Fine Arts, traveled with his students to meet Souza at different stages of the walk and collaborate with him in planned and unplanned ways. Fletcher is a CCA alumnus—he received his MFA here in 1994—and one of the seven artists featured in the Wattis Institute’s three-year program The Magnificent Seven. By the time you read this, Souza will have finished his walk. Visit wattis.org and wemaketheroadbywalking.com to find out what happened. 

PATRICIA FITZPATRICK was a founder and past president (1999-2010) of the Fitzpatrick Foundation, which provided support for K-12 students and educators in the areas of technology and the arts, serving economically disadvantaged youth in the Bay Area. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Duke University with a minor in art history. She has remained active with the university, having served on the Board of Visitors and, more recently, helping to launch a major initiative in the School of Engineering. Fitzpatrick is an active member of SFMOMA, serving on the Accessions Committee and the Collector’s Forum. She is the mother of a CCA alumnus, who completed the Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice in 2009. 

M. ARTHUR GENSLER JR. is the founder of the global architecture, design, planning, and consulting firm Gensler, which began in San Francisco in 1965 and now has more than 2,500 employees (including numerous CCA alumni) in 38 locations in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. He is a multiple winner of the BusinessWeek/Architectural Record Award and a charter member of Interior Design magazine’s Hall of Fame. He is a fellow of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the International Interior Design Association (IIDA), and a professional member of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He has received numerous honors and awards, including Architectural Firm of the Year, the AIA’s highest honor for a collaborative practice; IIDA’s Star Award; Ernest W. Dudley Young, LLP’s Lifetime Achievement Award; and the Cornell Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Gensler graduated from Cornell University’s College of Architecture, Art, and Planning and is a member of its advisory council. He is widely credited with having elevated the field of interior design to professional standing.

NANCY HOWES received a bachelor’s degree from CCA in Jewelry / Metal Arts, graduating in 2005 with high distinction. As an alumna of the institution, she is a wonderful ambassador for the college. In 2007 she created the Susan Wood Memorial Scholarship. Her most recent work is on permanent display at the Maui Ocean Center. Prior to her work as an artist, she enjoyed a successful 20-year career in the high-tech industry, holding key management and technical positions at @ Home Networks, BBN Planet, Xaar Instruments, and Raytheon Company. She has been active in several philanthropic and cultural organizations, including SFJAZZ and Drawbridge: An Arts Program for Homeless Children. Most recently her time has been split between her two daughters and working as a developer on several residential building projects where she is experimenting with interior/exterior design to create animated and interactive living spaces.

JACK WADSWORTH spent the first decades of his career with Morgan Stanley and was based in the United States, Japan, and Hong Kong. During his years with the company, he organized its first leveraged buyout fund and served as a member of the investment committee. He also initiated its high-tech IPO business with the Apple IPO. Now he is founder and chairman of Manitou Ventures and Ceypan Ventures; former director of Pixar Animation Studios and Shinsei Bank; and advisory director of Morgan Stanley. The Wadsworths donate generously to numerous museums and educational institutions, many of which are dedicated to cultural exchange with Asia. He is CI0 (and his wife is CEO) of the W. L. S. Spencer Foundation, which funds educational and creative cultural activities all over the world. He is vice chairman of the Asia Society Board and trustee emeritus of both the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Foundation and Williams College. Wadsworth holds a bachelor’s degree from Williams College and an MBA from the University of Chicago.
**BOOKSHELF**

**HISTORY'S SHADOW**
Nazarali Press, 2011
Hardcover, 72 pages, $75

In the History's Shadow series, David Maisel (MFA 2006) re-photographs, then scans and digitally manipulates archival museum X-rays so that the images seem like transmissions from the distant past. The book is designed by Graphic Design faculty Bob Aulfuldish and was named one of American Photo magazine's Best Photography Books of the Year.

**SEEING GERTRUDE STEIN: FIVE STORIES**
UC Press, 2011
Hardcover, 416 pages, $45

Visual and Critical Studies chair Tirza True Latimer (with coauthor Wanda Corn) illuminates the lesser-known aspects of Gertrude Stein's life: the portraits for which she posed, the domestic settings she created, her styles of dress. Published to accompany an exhibition at San Francisco's Contemporary Jewish Museum, it is designed by alumna Lia Tzandra (Graphic Design 1997).

**JUST DESIGN: SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS DESIGN FOR CRITICAL CAUSES**
How, 2011
Hardcover, 208 pages, $40

Christopher Simmons (Graphic Design faculty) of the noted design office MINE explores how design can serve the greater social good. Works by numerous CCA faculty and alumni are featured, and Graphic Design chair Cinthia Wen contributes an essay.

**NONOBJECT**
MIT Press, 2010
Hardcover, 240 pages, $29.95

In this book that is also an iPad app, coauthors Barry Katz (Industrial Design faculty) and Branko Lukic show us objects from the future, derived from as-yet undiscovered materials, imagined manufacturing processes, and invented rules. Product design meets philosophy, poetry, and the theater of the imagination.

**NOON**
NOON, the studio of Graphic Design chair Jens Hoffmann (Graphic Design faculty member), designed this book to look like a treasured scrapbook, every page a compelling mix of drawings, photos, and handwritten text. It is a collection of letters, notes, and interviews: the fruits of a monsterologist’s research. Winner of the Society of Illustrators Gold Medal and AIGA’s 50 Books/50 Covers!

Volume Inc., of which Eric Heiman (Graphic Design faculty) is a principal, designed this book featuring four decades of photographs by Julius Shulman. It presents many never-before-seen images of a subject close to Shulman’s heart: Los Angeles and its environs.

**MODEL MAKING**
Princeton Architectural Press, 2011
Paperback, 160 pages, $24.95

Megan Werner (Interior Design faculty), founder of 2Dg Models, presents the nuts and bolts of model making in this addition to Princeton Architectural Press’s Architecture Briefs series. In 33 “concept blocks” Werner explores a wide range of possible types, including laser-scored acrylic models, acid-etched metal blocks, peeled paper blocks, D-print models, cement pour blocks, and more.

**THE REALLY FUNNY THING ABOUT APATHY**
Sunnyoutside, 2011
Paperback, 68 pages, $13

Says Kevin Sampell, author of A Common Pornography, “These stories are awesome little jigsaw puzzles that turn into a whole miraculous universe. And in this universe, Chelsea Martin (Individualized Major 2008) is yearning for the answers to life’s biggest questions in the most entertaining way possible. This contemplative little book is both funny ha-ha and funny peculiar.”

**THE WATERS OF ROME: AQUEDUCTS, FOUNTAINS, AND THE BIRTH OF THE BAROQUE CITY**
Yale University Press, 2011
Hardcover, 240 pages, $65

Architecture faculty member Katherine Rinne offers a pioneering study of the water infrastructure of Renaissance Rome, showing how technological and scientific developments in aqueduct and fountain architecture helped turn a medieval backwater into the preeminent city of early modern Europe.
NEW DIRECTORS FOR THE FINE ARTS AND DESIGN DIVISIONS

We are pleased to announce that Andrew Lyndon, formerly the chair of Animation, is now leading the fine arts division. Lyndon arrived at animation from a fine art background and holds an MFA in painting. Before coming to CCA he worked at Pixar Animation Studios. Emily McVarish has been named director of the design division. She is a writer, a designer, a book artist, and an associate professor in CCA’s Graphic Design and Writing programs. She holds a master’s degree from Camberwell College of Arts.

NEW HOUSING FACILITY IN SAN FRANCISCO

CCA is pleased to finally offer a college-owned residential option in San Francisco! The building is in Nob Hill, within walking distance of Chinatown, North Beach, and Union Square. Students live in fully furnished rooms on the third and fourth floors, with lovely views of the bay and the financial district. Approximately 50 continuing, transfer (domestic and international), and graduate students are now calling it home.

STUDENTS TAKE ON CAMPUS ENERGY AUDIT

Architecture students are helping CCA move toward the inspired goal of making our campuses climate-neutral. As part of a few different formal course offerings, they are conducting thorough energy audits of our 25 active facilities in San Francisco and Oakland and making the information available to others who can act on it. They are analyzing utility billing data, exploring conservation measures, producing financial assessments, creating an action plan and timetable, and producing signage to make the information transparent to the public.

CCA EXTENSION

Register soon for spring! CCA Extension courses take place on the San Francisco and Oakland campuses. Offerings range from one-session workshops to more comprehensive courses, in areas from the fine arts to design to computer applications. Gift certificates make great holiday gifts. For course listings and registration info, visit cca.edu/extension.

ENGAGE at CCA, a unique, project-based learning initiative, continues to make a difference for our students and the greater Bay Area. As of fall 2011, the initiative has involved:

- **40 COURSES**
- **508 CCA STUDENTS**
- **31 FACULTY**
- **16 DISCIPLINES**
- **34 ORGANIZATIONS**

ENGAGE COURSES connect students with outside professionals and community partner organizations to create solutions for specific issues. Past courses have been dedicated to creating ceramic nesting modules for endangered birds, writing with prisoners at San Quentin, and working with blind artists on an installation of light-based art. This fall the ENGAGE courses include:

- **INTERIOR DESIGN + DOLORES HOUSING PROGRAM**
  Faculty leader: Amy Campos
  Students are creating a proposal for the spatial reorganization of public and administrative spaces at a Mission District homeless shelter, with a specific emphasis on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBTQ individuals.

- **DIVERSITY STUDIES/MURALS + ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY FOOD BANK**
  Faculty leader: Eduardo Pineda
  Students are collaborating with food bank staff and the community on the design, execution, and installation of a mural focused on food justice and its rich history in the Bay Area.

- **COMMUNITY ARTS/GRAPHICS + CCA FACILITIES DEPARTMENT**
  Faculty leaders: Melissa Martin and Rosanna Yau
  Combining graphic design basics with qualitative research to develop “Deep educational” graphic interventions, students are communicating the energy efficiency and sustainability measures being undertaken on CCA’s San Francisco campus.

- **CREATIVE WRITING + SAN FRANCISCO CARTOON ART MUSEUM**
  Faculty leader: Justin Hall
  This course continues ongoing research and documentation of queer comics for a co-curated exhibition at the Cartoon Art Museum and a literary anthology titled No Straight Lines: Four Decades of Queer Comics.

- **MFA ELECTIVE + BRIDGE HOUSING**
  Faculty leader: Rachel Schreiber
  Students are researching, documenting, and then mounting a multimedia exhibition at West Oakland’s Central Station, exploring the area’s cultural history within the context of urban development.

Read more about ENGAGE at center.cca.edu/engage.
KOTA EZAWA HONORED WITH SMITHSONIAN ACQUISITION AND NEW YORK PUBLIC COMMISSION

The digitally animated work LYAM 3D (2008) by Film faculty member KOTA EZAWA was acquired by the Smithsonian American Art Museum early in 2011, and it was exhibited as part of the ongoing permanent collection show Watch This! New Directions in the Art of the Moving Image. Then in March, Madison Square Park in New York hosted Ezawa’s City of Nature project. To make the work Ezawa distilled images of nature—a waterfall, a mountain, a marlin—from movies and showed them as animations on four LCD screens. The commission was officially a part of Mad. Sq. Art, a program of the Madison Square Park Conservancy.

JIM GOLDBERG AWARDED 2011 DEUTSCHE BÖRSE PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE

Photography faculty member JIM GOLDBERG was awarded a 2011 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize. One of the most prestigious honors in photography, it is accompanied by a cash award of approximately $50,000. Goldberg was nominated for his 2009 exhibition Open See at the Photographers’ Gallery in London, which told the stories of refugees, immigrants, and trafficked individuals journeying from their countries of origin to their new homes in Europe. This past summer Goldberg was one of five featured artists in the SFMOMA exhibition Face of Our Time, which was devoted to photographers who are observing and documenting the sometimes-volatile civil and political transformations facing society today.
Yeon Joo Lee, Fetters, 2011
(Lee made this work as a student in the Ceramics Program. See her in the process of creating it in the video at cca.edu/ceramics.)
MORE AWARDS & ACCOLADES

CCA NAMED A TOP GREEN COLLEGE BY PRINCETON REVIEW

The Princeton Review has named CCA one of the most environmentally responsible colleges in the United States in its Guide to 311 Green Colleges.

It is a much-appreciated recognition of our long-standing commitment to environmental sustainability in and out of the classroom, from our academic offerings to waste management solutions, proactive environmental planning, the design of many buildings, campus activities, and career preparation. CCA is one of only two art colleges listed in the guide (Pratt Institute is the other).

Since its first audit by the Princeton Review in 2009, CCA has implemented the President’s Sustainability Steering Group, composed of students, faculty, staff, and trustees who are charged with aligning and communicating CCA’s values about sustainability. Almost all of the initiatives the steering group has coordinated have emerged out of the curriculum or individual student or faculty work. Rather than a top-down mandate, in other words, the group was created to capitalize on and amplify the sustainability innovation already occurring in the school’s classrooms and studios.

CCA ARCHITECTURE FACULTY AWARDED 2011 NEW YORK ARCHITECTURAL LEAGUE PRIZE

JASON KELLY JOHNSON and NATALY GATTEGNO, the founding design principals of the San Francisco-based Future Cities Lab, were among the 2011 winners of the juried New York Architectural League Prize for Young Architects + Designers competition. Johnson and Gattegno were the only West Coast architects selected this year.

DESIRéE HÓLMAN FEATURED IN THE BERKELEY ART MUSEUM’S MATRIX SERIES

Fine Arts faculty member and CCA alumna DESIRÉE HÖLMAN (Sculpture 1999) had her second solo museum exhibition this summer as part of the Berkeley Art Museum’s esteemed MATRIX series. For Heterotopias, Holman created multimedia installations that experimented with how sites of transgression, conflict, and play enable or disable deviation from the norms of so-called reality. She asked nine performers to channel fantasy narratives and personal desires to create an avatar, or surrogate identity, which she then realized, first with props and costumes, and then with fully rendered 3D models in a virtual gamescape.

DESIRéE HÓLMAN, HÉTEROTOPIAS, 2011

The CCA Alumni Association wants to help you map your road to success. Whether you are a recent graduate or an experienced professional, we have tools and resources that will help you along your path.

THE MAP: Creative Careers Ahead

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

CCA.edu/alumni

Based on your comments in the 2011 alumni career survey, CCA’s offices of Alumni Relations and Career Services have teamed up to develop a series of career workshops for alumni. Résumé development, goal setting, networking, and informational interviews are just some of the topics covered.

POSTERA

postera.com

Postera offers easy-to-maintain portfolio websites for creative professionals. CCA alumni who join Postera will receive one free year of service ($150 value). After the first year, you can subscribe to Postera for 50% off the regular subscription rate of $24 per month for as long as you subscribe. Get your free account today with code CCAMXII_QZ7YDE.

SCORE

sanfrancisco.score.org

We are partnering with the small-business experts at SCORE to bring you free workshops and one-on-one mentoring for entrepreneurs and small business owners. Visit sanfrancisco.score.org or call 415.744.6827 to connect with a business mentor. Visit cca.edu/alumni to watch for upcoming workshops.

ETSY

etsy.com

CCA has created the CCA Etsy Team Page to bring together our community of artists, designers, and makers. Join today at etsy.me/ccaetsy and increase your Etsy shop’s visibility, learn from others in the CCA craft and design community, and take advantage of Etsy’s small-business-owner trainings.

MOO

moo.com

MOO prints business cards, postcards, stickers, MiniCards, greeting cards, and much more. You can upload your own artwork and designs or use a Moo template, and even print a different image on each card. MOO is offering an exclusive 10% discount to CCA alumni. Enter MOOCCA in the discount code box at checkout. (Please note, the 10% off excludes shipping.)

KICKSTARTER

kickstarter.com

Kickstarter is the largest funding platform in the world for creative projects big and small, serious and whimsical, traditional and experimental. Project creators keep 100% ownership and control of their work. Sign up today to solicit funding for your project, and join the special CCA page at kickstarter.com/CCA to increase your visibility among CCA affiliates.

VAL BRITTON (MFA 2006), DIVING SERIES, 2010

(THIS WORK WAS MADE DURING BRITTON’S RECologi RESIDENCY. READ MORE IN THE FIRST PAGES OF THIS ISSUE.)
GUMP’S 150th ANNIVERSARY GALA BENEFIT FOR CCA RAISES $417,000 FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

The dress code on the invitation read “Black/Glitter/Glam,” and the 370 guests more than obliged at the Mirror Mirror Gala on March 31, 2011, held in honor of the 150th anniversary of the legendary retail store Gump’s. The sold-out event raised $417,000, with net proceeds earmarked for the CCA Scholarship Fund.

CCA trustee ANN HATCH and Graphic Design faculty member JENNIFER MORLA, the co-chairs of the event, say, “We are so grateful to Gump’s for selecting CCA as the beneficiary for the gala. Our mutual interest in supporting artists and designers makes us ideal partners. Through the generous sponsorship of Gump’s, we will be able to help many talented and deserving students obtain a CCA education.”

As guests arrived at the cocktail party, they passed a dazzling array of one-of-a-kind mirrors created by 33 noted artists, architects, and designers, which had been donated for the evening’s auction. They ranged from a mirror in the shape of an axe by CHRISTOPHER DEAM to JIM CAMPBELL’s “fogged over” conceptual piece to KELLY WEARSTLER’s filigreed confection of recycled metal scraps. All told, more than $95,000 was raised from the auctioning of the mirrors.

Thanks to dinner chairs KAY KIMPTON WALKER (a CCA trustee) and ALLISON SPEER, the dinner seats were sold out weeks before the event. CCA is also pleased to thank honorary chairs WILLIE BROWN JR. and CHARLOTTE SHULTZ, both of whom were on hand all evening greeting guests and adding sparkle to the festivities. For more information and photos visit gala.blogs.cca.edu.


THE 24TH ANNUAL BARCLAY SIMPSON AWARD EXHIBITION, APRIL 2011 > 9. SHARON SIMPSON WITH AWARD WINNER MARYLENE CAMACHO 10. BARCLAY SIMPSON WITH AWARD WINNER MIK GASPAY 11. BARCLAY SIMPSON, JULIE HENZEN, NANCY NOWACEK, SHARON SIMPSON, MARYLENE CAMACHO, AND MIK GASPAY (IN FRONT)
**Gifts & Grants**

Gifts from alumni and friends fuel the success of CCA students. We thank all the donors who made gifts from February 2011 through October 15, 2011. Following are the highlights of these generous donations.

**Scholarships, Fellowships, and Faculty Development**

**Dr. Thomas J. White** gave $60,000 to establish two funds: the Leslie Scalapino Scholarship for poetry students in the MFA Program in Writing and the Michael and Amy Evans McClure Scholarship for undergraduates in the visual arts. **The Koret Foundation** granted $50,000 for the Stephanie Koret Scholarship, which supports Fashion Design students.

**The Barbbo Osher Pro Saeuca Foundation** granted $50,000 toward scholarships to graduate students from Sweden. **The Ferguson-Scott Family** made a gift of $35,000 to create the Ginny Kiker Commitment to Foundation.

**Funds for CCA**

The Fund for CCA supports core operations at the college. Many generous gifts were given for this purpose, including a bequest of $20,000 from the Estate of Norma Schlesinger, former CCA trustee, $12,000 from Anita & Ronald Wornick, and $10,000 from each of the following donors: C. Diane Christensen & Jean M. Pierret, Nancy & Pat Forster, The Hellman Family Foundation, Brenda & George F. Jewett III, The Mellor Family Trust, Lorna Meyer & Dennis Calas, Nancy & Steven Oliver, Gene Savin & Susan Enzle, Sharon & Barclay Simpson, Jack & Susy Wadsworth, Carlie Wilman, and Mary & Harold Zlot.

**Curriculum and Academic Programs**

**Intel Corporation** created an Interaction Design sponsored studio with a $50,000 grant. **Soncrim** gave $10,000 for a project in the Graduate Program in Design to introduce students to the theory and practice of design research. **Osterweil Capital Management** renewed its $10,000 sponsorship of the annual ACC Fashion Show. **Roger & Victoria Sant** donated $10,000 to the Graduate Program in Curatorial Practice.

We appreciate the generosity of our donors and all the others who invest in CCA’s mission of excellence in art and design education.

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**An Evening with David Sedaris 2012**

**A Benefit for CCA Scholarships**

**May 3, 2012, 8 PM**

**Zellerbach Auditorium, UC Berkeley**

**Early-Bird Discount!**

**Purchase by January 13, 2012**

**To Save $5 on Tickets**

**To Support Wattis Institute**

David Sedaris, the best-selling author and NPR humorist, will appear at a special benefit reading for CCA on May 3, 2012, at Zellerbach Auditorium on the UC Berkeley campus. The evening will include a reading from new and unpublished material, a book signing, and, for leadership donors, a special cocktail party with Mr. Sedaris. Visit cca.edu/sedaris for more information.

With his sardonic wit and incisive social critiques, Sedaris is one of America’s preeminent humor writers. His newest book, a collection of fables entitled Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk: A Modest Bestiary was an immediate best-seller. He is the author of Barrel Fever and Holidays on Ice as well as the collections of personal essays When You Are Engulfed in Flames, Naked, and Me Talk Pretty One Day.

“We are thrilled to have David Sedaris return to raise funds for student scholarships,” says CCA President Stephen Beal. “Back in 2009, he performed a sold-out reading that raised $150,000 for CCA scholarships.”

Early-bird discount tickets to the reading are $40 if purchased by January 13, 2012. After that, general-admission tickets will be $45. Purchase tickets at the Cal Performances box office: 510.642.9988 or tickets.berkeley.edu.

CCA trustee Kay Kimpton Walker is chair of the special pre-reading cocktail party catered by Taste at the Berkeley Art Museum. A limited number of tickets to the party and reading are available with a donation of $350 or more. Party tickets are available only through CCA’s Advancement Office at 510.594.3787 or cca.edu/give.

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CCA trustee Kay Kimpton Walker is chair of the special pre-reading cocktail party catered by Taste at the Berkeley Art Museum. A limited number of tickets to the party and reading are available with a donation of $350 or more. Party tickets are available only through CCA’s Advancement Office at 510.594.3787 or cca.edu/give.

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Walsh’s Individualized Major was a combination of Photography, Printmaking, and Graphic Design. Betsy Davids, professor emeritus, was his advisor. “My CCA professors Sue Ciriclio, Ginny Dofflemyer, Charlie Gill, and the late Ken Rignall were instrumental in assisting me through the Fulbright application process. I’m forever in their debt for it, and for their encouragement and support of my writing and photographic endeavors.”

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Legions of ravens drifted across a flame-colored horizon like a veil of coal dust, transforming the merciless sun god, Shen Yi, into a bloodless apparition. Alarms sounded . . . doors slammed . . . a young woman waited. Without warning, a great wave of Red Chinese soldiers surged down the emerald hills that surround Taipei . . . propaganda babies no older than twenty . . . jackboots and sweat-soaked uniforms . . . mouths agape in a black chorus. They spread like a wind-whipped grass fire, descended upon the flats, thundered through fallow cabbage fields toward the lights of the city, swallowing every tree, every dog, every house, every Taiwan dollar, every living thing on the island so they could return to Beijing and vomit it all up at the Paramount Leader's feet. The chalky old man was sitting upon a crate of Russian fairy tales tearing the wrings off white doves as casually as a child plucking the petals off a daisy—a dozen of the small bloodied creatures lay twitching on the floor in front of him. Carnival music groaned as a tiger tied to a stake ran furiously round and round. My ears began to pop—could faintly hear the high whine of landing gear. The sound of the wheels hitting the runway woke me . . . passengers rummaging through their belongings . . . pulling weeds out of their asses . . . someone begging for another varicose sandwich . . . I was wrapped in butcher paper and twine from twenty hours in coach . . . Taipei City . . . Shangri-la wrapped in a plastic bag . . . rolled like a shiny ten dollar coin down Chichi Hill . . . rubbed my face and thought of the blonde on the plane . . . playing stick pony with a flirtatious Marine—the aisle over . . . her skin-tight black boxer . . . a cigar and some of that Kentucky dye on the rocks. Carnival music groaned as a tiger tied to a stake ran furiously round and round. My ears began to pop—could faintly hear the high whine of landing gear. The sound of the wheels hitting the runway woke me . . . passengers rummaging through their belongings . . . pulling weeds out of their asses . . . someone begging for another varicose sandwich . . . I was wrapped in butcher paper and twine from twenty hours in coach . . . Taipei City . . . Shangri-la wrapped in a plastic bag . . . rolled like a shiny ten dollar coin down Chichi Hill . . . rubbed my face and thought of the blonde on the plane . . . playing stick pony with a flirtatious Marine—the aisle over . . . her skin-tight black boxer . . . a cigar and some of that Kentucky dye on the rocks. Carnival music groaned as a tiger tied to a stake ran furiously round and round. My ears began to pop—could faintly hear the high whine of landing gear. The sound of the wheels hitting the runway woke me . . . passengers rummaging through their belongings . . . pulling weeds out of their asses . . . someone begging for another varicose sandwich . . . I was wrapped in butcher paper and twine from twenty hours in coach . . . Taipei City . . . Shangri-la wrapped in a plastic bag . . . rolled like a shiny ten dollar coin down Chichi Hill . . . rubbed my face and thought of the blonde on the plane . . . playing stick pony with a flirtatious Marine—the aisle over . . . her skin-tight black boxer . . . a cigar and some of that Kentucky dye on the rocks. Carnival music groaned as a tiger tied to a stake ran furiously round and round. My ears began to pop—could faintly hear the high whine of landing gear. The sound of the wheels hitting the runway woke me . . . passengers rummaging through their belongings . . . pulling weeds out of their asses . . . someone begging for another varicose sandwich . . . I was wrapped in butcher paper and twine from twenty hours in coach . . . Taipei City . . . Shangri-la wrapped in a plastic bag . . . rolled like a shiny ten dollar coin down Chichi Hill . . . rubbed my face and thought of the blonde on the plane . . . playing stick pony with a flirtatious Marine—the aisle over . . . her skin-tight black boxer . . . a cigar and some of that Kentucky dye on the rocks.

I’d study the take as patriotic Bohemian folk songs on the phonograph marched gloriously over an assemblage of red men who’d fallen on their hammers and sickles. Late one evening, after a few dances with the Green Fairy, I found a pig’s blood cake nailed to my door wrapped in a Fulbright Scholarship. It was a prize I’d hoped for, and also, sadly, a notice of deportation. Sure I was grateful, but hated to leave my photography work in that magical city unfinished; knowing I probably wouldn’t have the opportunity to return to it. My gut told me that I’d be exploring Taiwan and Asia for years. I was right. In Taiwan I would forget about Prague, traveling every inch of the dragon’s scales for a full year and recording it all on 35 mm film. They’d pay me for that.

Some sweet and terribly thin Taiwanese immigration cop with a cracked porcelain face stamped my passport and slapped a Get Out of Jail Free card into my hand . . . stumbled out of the airport into a goddamned steam bath . . . I stank like a fat man’s hangover . . . quickly scanned the mad street for my ride. A brand new little taxi pulled up to the curb honking. I waved him on. My back ached from the long flight. A pint of Ten High rattled in my suitcase—what music! No rotgut clank! Yearned for the solitude of the hotel room—the bed . . . stripped down to boxers . . . a cigar and some of that Kentucky dye on the rocks. Something was biting my leg . . . felt in my pocket . . . too much fluid in the Zippo . . . it cried hot tears down my thigh . . . thought of the blonde on the plane . . . playing stick pony with a flirtatious Marine—the aisle over . . . her skin-tight black stretch pants . . . perfect nylon-encased feet . . . the way he dragged her to the john . . . the way she changed planes in Osaka.

The Fulbright Foundation slid up in a white van. Two blushing escorts wearing bell-bottom jeans and tank tops and platform moon-boots loaded my bags into the van. We sped down Highway 1 toward downtown Taipei in traffic thick as creosol. Taoist temples glittered on brooding hilltops. Watch out! The humidity turned the windshield into grilled cheese. Rice fields boiled and the Tamsui River spat in the hazy distance . . . scorched mullet flopped on the road, big as tomcats. The van slowed down as we entered the city—the Kuomintang (KMT) party’s gold mine . . . an endless maze of bellowing cement canyons burning with neon lights, foaming hyper-markets, and zillions of mom-and-pop stores—a swarming thing that gyrates and sputters all twenty-four. Its enterprises are battered with the sweat and genius of the Taiwanese, and billions in US cash showered on the KMT in the 1950s and early 1960s. Lady Liberty holding the island to her bosom, peering over her shoulder to mark the strategic military position in Southeast Asia.
On April 19, 2011, a Google Street View car was spotted in the Sunset neighborhood of San Francisco. If the crew was lucky, it might have glimpsed one of the city’s more unique vehicles: an old, white Honda CRX hatchback modified to look like a snail.

The car with the distinctive wooden shell on the back belongs to the alumnus, artist, and surfer JAY NELSON (Painting/Drawing 2004). “I got the car for 200 bucks,” he says. “I wanted to create a multifunctional work vehicle/camper. It became a kind of accidental artwork. Vehicles have no boundaries, so they can reach out and create an audience instead of needing the audience to come to them. When you build a house on the back of a car, everyone has an opinion about it, and it becomes a starting point for conversation.” The vehicle (along with Nelson and his wife, RACHEL KAYE, also a Painting/Drawing 2004 CCA alum) was featured on the cover of ReadyMade magazine earlier this year.

The Honda is one of several vehicles that Nelson has customized. He has augmented a Honda moped with a surfboard for a roof, modified a rowboat with a plywood canopy, and devised a wooden electric car that looks like an Airstream’s eco cousin. Quite a range for a surfer whose favorite mode of transport is a 1960s longboard, doesn’t even have wheels.

Whether he’s dropping in on an Ocean Beach wave or constructing tree houses (including one in Ukiah, commissioned by former CCA dean Larry Rinder, and another more recently in Bonny Doon, near Santa Cruz), Nelson’s particular skill is the imaginative ability to tailor his surroundings. “I have made things totally from scratch. But taking something existing, like a car, and making it completely functional for me, that’s really satisfying. That’s something I really know how to do. A lot of the attraction to tree house building, for me, is needing to conform to the tree, needing to understand the tree. It makes for a really interesting and fun process. There’s this thing that happens with making, where limited parameters actually force creativity. If someone told you to write a story about anything you wanted, you might sit there for hours with no ideas. But if someone said to write a story about a talking oven, you would probably immediately come up with something interesting. A parallel to that is riding old boards. When we have limits, we have to compensate and force creativity.”

Nelson’s love for making stuff was inspired by his parents. “My dad was a USC physics professor and inventor, very self-sufficient, always working on projects at home. That had a big effect on me, because I do a lot of construction now. I’d help him with jobs around the house. My earliest memory is one time when he left the room for a minute and I cut my hand on a circular saw.” Nelson’s customized Honda also has its roots in family holidays. “In 1985 we went to Europe and bought a Volkswagen Camper. My mom, who was a teacher of art and math, rigged up a Betamax with a TV plugged into the cigarette lighter. It was super cool. That vehicle was way ahead of its time. We traveled for a month, then shipped it home.”

Many of Nelson’s works straddle the “art” world and the “real” world. Whether he’s thinking up non-art settings for his paintings or shaping plywood to make a tree house, this capable surfer is constantly alert for connections between creativity and ordinary life. He cites the sculptor J. B. Blunk as a big influence. “My wife and I did an artist residency at Blunk’s former house in Inverness, in Marin County. It was like living in an artwork. Even the doorknobs are made by hand. Totally inspirational. How do you do that much good work? During his whole adult life Blunk was slowly creating his home, a merging of art and life.”

During his own undergrad years at CCA, he credits faculty member LINDA GEARY with having played the largest role in opening up the outside world. “She was a mentor. I still kind of think of her like she’s my teacher, although she’s now my friend. She broke down the typical student-teacher relationship and introduced me to people. She is always aware of what’s going on in the San Francisco art scene.”

“At CCA I gained a really great community. I also developed a new work ethic. It broadened my view of art and exposed me to work I wouldn’t otherwise have known about or been interested in.”

Nelson’s most recent projects include building a tree house for a family in Hawaii and creating a storefront on Valencia Street in San Francisco that is an offshoot of the Mollusk Surf Shop in the outer Sunset District. “Instead of a typical store setup, where there’s a rack of clothes, a rack of surfboards, and so on, it’s like a living room, but a living room in a submarine. Surfboards hanging from the rafters, porthole windows with a view onto underwater things. Somewhere between an artwork and a store and architecture.”
Where others see awkwardness, MELISSA WYMAN (MFA 2008) sees art. Like, those clumsy moments when one guy puts his hand out to shake just as the other guy reaches for a hug. “You can make a big deal out of it, or it can just pass, but you both know it’s there,” she says. Through her Fight Therapy videos, photographs, and watercolors, Wyman sharpens her eye for “fleeting, candid, unscripted” seconds of embarrassment, anger, or humor.

Fight Therapy involves people—partners, friends, and family members—wrestling, then talking about their experiences. The series emerged out of Wyman’s 15-year interest in jiujitsu, which began during her years as a UC Santa Cruz undergraduate, and through which she met her husband, a New Zealand diplomat. She developed her skills in the realms of both fighting and creativity during the three years they spent in Japan, then another four years in New Zealand, before they returned to San Francisco in 2006 and she came to CCA for graduate school, choosing fine art with an emphasis in social practice. CCA faculty member LYNN KIRBY helped shape her interest in martial arts into fodder for fine art: “Lynn was amazing at listening, and helping my project take visual shape. I was new to video, which became an important part of Fight Therapy.” Wyman was also inspired by mentor TED PURVES, thesis advisor MARIA PORGES, and teacher NATAN LYNCH, for whom she served as a teaching assistant. Then there was JORDAN KANTOR’s Death Class: “Eleven of us CCA students along with Jordan and visiting artist Kai Althoff spent a week practically living in PLAYSPACE Gallery, individually and collaboratively exploring our relationship to death. For the class, I asked my father to direct my death scene.”

After her 2010 move to Santiago, Chile, Wyman branched out from video into other media. Last year her book Fight Therapy: A Discussion About Art, Agency, and the Reverse Triangle Choke was published, and she has been working more and more with watercolors, reshaping wrestlers’ faces into the features of animals. She appreciates what watercolors bring to the physicality, and the vulnerability, of wrestling. “I like how temperamental they are. Also, they’re easy to lug around.” And she has taken on some gigs as a professional illustrator. She’s attracted, she says, “to the immediacy of pencil. There’s no lying with pencil.”

She connected with the local Santiago art scene thanks to contacts originally forged at CCA: the designer MARIANA TOCONAL (MFA Design 2008) and the Los Angeles–based artist PABLO CRISTI (MFA 2010). She advises current students: “Keep in contact with your fellow CCA artists. If you end up in different countries, a network of people is important for keeping your work alive. It’s awesome to hook into the local art scene. But sometimes it takes a while to get involved.”

Living overseas is second nature to Wyman. Now with this South American stint under her belt, she’s lived across five continents in 15 years, including time in Italy (part of her BFA), Japan (teaching English), and South Korea (work related). In New Zealand, she taught in a women’s prison art program. “It was very, very challenging,” she says. “It was unknown territory—a pilot program for eight students, five of them convicted for gang-related crimes.” Seven years later, the program is still going strong. New Zealand left its mark on Wyman, who named her daughter Aramaia, drawn from the Maori words for “pathway” and “courageous.”
Aramaia’s heritage illustrates another theme central to Wyman’s work, namely the fluidity of the idea of home. The artist was born in 1976 into an intentional community called The Farm, a Tennessee commune whose roots lay in the counterculture of 1960s San Francisco. Although she and her mom left within a year, she says those ideas about community became ingrained: “I think something might’ve been in the soil,” she laughs.

Her notions of home were tested in 2006 when she returned to the United States after seven years overseas. She was shocked by the security officials’ invasive questions, and the “Either you’re with us or you’re against us” insinuations that she attributes to the policies of the George W. Bush administration. “My accent had changed. They were asking where I was from. I felt like an outsider.” In response, she made an artwork based on teaching people to speak while wearing a mouth guard, an object that both protects and constrains.

In the last few months, after creating a new series of animal-headed wrestlers for Galeria Espora in Santiago, Wyman has come home to the Bay Area. Her next chapter might not yet be written, but what’s guaranteed is that she will continue to mine creativity from conflict. After all, who else would witness an awkward embrace and think, “Hm, that reminds me of a triangle choke.”

In the period before he started work at Log Cabin Ranch, he had a lull of three months and decided to spend it living on the streets of San Francisco. “At CCA I rehearsed with a band at a studio near César Chávez Street. I’d see this underpass just before Potrero Avenue starts and say to myself every time, without fail, that if I were homeless that’s where I’d sleep. I was curious—I didn’t have a job, and I had time. Christians are told, ‘Give up all your possessions and follow Christ,’ but that wasn’t something I’d seen Christians actually do. I wasn’t trying to be a missionary or a romantic. It was a question of: Let’s just go for a walk and figure out stuff, spiritually.”

An essay and excerpts from the poems he wrote as a result of that experience were published in Tea Party magazine, the City Lights anthology Days I Moved Through Ordinary Sounds, and Fourteen Hills magazine. When he saw that people were interested, he took it further. The published poems became Quintet (Prelude Insomnia), one in a series of seven books loosely based on Plato’s Symposium, which is about the path of absolute beauty. He’s currently seeking a publisher.

“Wouldn’t it be amazing to learn the craft of writing from Kim Addonizio at a dive bar? Or from devorah major at the Church of John Coltrane? Or from Paul Hoover at the Crucible!” These are the enthusiastic musings of Myron Michael (MFA Writing 2006), a poet, teacher, recording artist, and proprietor of the micro label Rondeau Records. “I’m envisioning an annual festival of free neighborhood writing workshops taught by performers, poets, and therapists. It would cover everything from semantic poetry to phonetic poetry—poetry and dance, poetry and photography. Slam, sonnets, spoken word, songwriting, rondeaux, rap. It’s all poetry.”

Based in Oakland, Michael is also the founder of the poetry publication project Move or Die and curator of the monthly reading series HELIOTROPE. After CCA he spent three years teaching writing to urban and incarcerated youth at schools such as Downtown High School, Ida B. Wells High School, and Log Cabin Ranch (an open-ended rehabilitation program for delinquent youth).

In the final days of his experience at Log Cabin Ranch, he decided to spend some time living in an underpass just before Potrero Avenue starts. He was curious—I didn’t have a job, and I had time. Christians are told, ‘Give up all your possessions and follow Christ,’ but that wasn’t something I’d seen Christians actually do. I wasn’t trying to be a missionary or a romantic. It was a question of: Let’s just go for a walk and figure out stuff, spiritually.”

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JOHN MCCRACKEN
CCA alumnus JOHN MCCRACKEN (Painting 1962) passed away on April 8, 2011, at the age of 76. He was best known for his monolith and plank sculptures, which he presented as freestanding or leaning against a wall. McCracken conceived of his work as minimalistic, but also sensual, contemplative, and spiritual. He is represented in most major American museum collections, including those of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. He is often mentioned together with James Turrell, Larry Bell, and Robert Irwin; in interviews he cited as influences Barnett Newman, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, and Carl Andre.

After graduating from high school, McCracken served in the Navy for four years before enrolling at CCA, earning a BFA and completing most of the work for an MFA. During these years he studied with GORDON ONSLOW FORD and TONY DELAP. He developed his earliest sculptural work while studying painting here. (Turn the page to Backward Glance for a great story about his early experiments with found-driftwood sculpture on the Emeryville mudflats.) He experimented increasingly with three-dimensionality and geometric forms, and began to produce objects using industrial techniques and materials such as plywood, sprayed lacquer, and pigmented resin, creating the highly reflective, smooth surfaces for which he would become known.

RYAN HUMPHRIES
Painting/Drawing student RYAN HUMPHRIES died at home in San Anselmo, California, on May 27, 2011. For the past two years he participated in the Community Student Fellows program at the Center for Art and Public Life, and he was a spring 2011 participant in the Alumni/Student Mentoring Program (his mentor was DAVID HUFF). Ryan’s teachers and mentors at CCA all remark on his extraordinary talent and energy, and his peers all remember him for his wonderful attitude, work ethic, and thoughtful contributions both inside and outside the classroom.
Dr. Robert Sommer—a photographer, friend of the college, and distinguished professor emeritus of psychology at UC Davis—recently donated to the CCA libraries an extensive personal archive of more than 5,000 photographs (plus news clippings and other documents) related to the renegade driftwood sculptures of the Emeryville mudflats, which were much beloved by commuters along that stretch of I-80 in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to being an amazing repository of one aspect of Bay Area art history, the archive reveals that the first Emeryville mudflat sculptor was actually the unheralded CCA alumnus JOHNN McCracken. (McCracken passed away earlier this year; his obituary.

Jackson relates that the first local experiments in driftsculpture took place one day in 1960 on Bay Farm Island in Alameda, led by CCA faculty members EVERETT TURNER, CHARLES GILL, ROBERT BECHTELE, ROBERT DHAEMERS, MEL HENDERSON, FRANCES MOYER, and MARGARET D’HAMER, plus several of their students. The objective was to determine conclusively whether junk art was true art. The undertaking was a one-day affair and did not lead to any specific epiphanies, but it was documented in photographs, which, in Jackson’s manuscript, McCracken describes seeing in 1962:

“The pictures really excited me, turned me on. I wanted to try something like it and I knew just the place.” The place was the Emeryville mudflats, an area McCracken had visited many times in search of pieces of driftwood that could, as he put it, “become useful, functional objects—like a table top or a lamp base.” McCracken had discovered one of the secrets of driftwood. “Many times you can sand down the brittle gray surface of a piece of driftwood and find a magnificent piece of Honduran mahogany beneath it,” he said.

“I chose the Emeryville flats because they seem to be the catch-all for the debris that floats into this part of the bay. The first time I went down, I wandered around for a long time just looking in amazement at the tons of ‘discovered’ material available to work with.” In all, over a period of three or four months, McCracken completed “seven or eight pieces.” They were unlike the Bay Farm project in that McCracken always worked alone and “none of them looked like anything. They were abstractions. I called them non-objective expressions.”

During the months he worked in the mudflats, sorting out choice pieces of this and that from the smell muck, McCracken never saw anyone else working on similar sculptures. “I guess I was the first.”

By the time he had completed five or six pieces, however, he had apparently attracted some attention. “I was working on either the last or next-to-last one when I discovered someone else had built one. I never saw the person or persons who worked on it,” McCracken said. “And shortly after that I gave up going to the flats and started concentrating my efforts in other areas. I’ve been down there on occasions since, but only as an observer. I’ve been amazed at the quantity of works that have arisen out of the nothingness that was there before.”

THE FORK ARTWORK ON THE COVER OF THIS ISSUE IS BY CCA STUDENT YOOJIN KIM (SCULPTURE 2012). SHE SAYS: “Plastic forks have unique and elegant shapes, angles, and curves. I studied their characteristics and connected them one at a time, leading to an organic shape—a big creature consisting of numerous cell-like units. The sculpture grew day by day. It could not ‘escape’ from my studio when I completed it. I had to separate it into several pieces and recombine it later.

I like to create organic forms with artificial materials, and I find beauty in ordinary objects that go unnoticed by most people. Although it is made of static materials, the fork creature has a kind of rhythm and vitality. The theme is about abandonment. I am interested in finding lost objects, animating them, and giving them new lives, new value. I describe my behavior of finding used things as ‘rescue.’ Sometimes the things call to me when I walk on the streets, and ask me to take them home.”

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