Remarkable new faculty join the Department as we begin our second year in the beautiful McMurtry Building.

Shane Denson, an assistant professor of Film and Media Studies, writes and teaches on film, digital media, comics, games, and serialized popular forms.

Usha Iyer, also an assistant professor of Film and Media Studies, works on dance, stardom, and gender in Indian cinema.

Marci Kwon, an assistant professor of art history, writes and teaches on the intersection of fine art and vernacular practice, on “folk” and “self-taught” art, and issues of race and objecthood.

Karla Oeler, an associate professor of Film and Media Studies, writes and teaches on film history, theory, and criticism, with an emphasis on the theory and practice of Sergei Eisenstein, and cinematic representations of violence and thinking.

In addition, the Department is fortunate to welcome Shawon Kinew, the recipient of a two-year Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship. Shawon works on the Maltese sculptor Melchiorre Cafà (1636-1667), particularly on the play between sculptural softness and hard stone in his work. Shawon, a member of the Anishinaabe (Ojibway) tribe, will teach an undergraduate course on the California Missions during each of her two years in the department.

Adding to the department’s strength in Film and Media Studies—with Denson, Iyer, and Oeler, we now have six professors teaching in that program—our new additions also diversify our department in important ways. For example, Marci Kwon’s courses on Asian American Art and on 20th-century African American Art and Culture give Stanford students a new chance to study these important areas of art history.

More broadly, writing of our new faculty reminds me of the department’s ongoing commitment to generous and open dialogue among the accomplished artists, documentary filmmakers, and teachers who work here everyday. With a thriving faculty salon now beginning its third year, and with spirited and challenging conversations about our work and teaching now a part of every faculty meeting, the Department is building a sense of Stanford as one of the world’s best places to make and study art.

Alexander Nemerov
News from the Neighborhood

Mellon Lectures to be Delivered by Alexander Nemerov

The Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA) at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, has announced that Alexander Nemerov, department chair and Carl and Mary Lyon Thomas Presidential Professor in the Arts and Humanities, Stanford, will give the third annual A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, titled The Forest: America in the 1830s. Professor Nemerov will explore the Hudson River School paintings and the monumental, for seeing in their art and did not share any of the meaning around them. The forest serves as a metaphor for the merely and uncritically real experiences that are only in our own minds. The lectures will present a fundamental new account of Thomas Cole, John Quidor, James Fenimore Cooper, and other artists and writers of that time. These lectures will be held at CASVA on March 26, April 2, 9, 23, and May 7, 2017, at 8:00 p.m.

Mellon-funded Student Publications and Exhibitions

In 2015-16 the Department of Art and Art History (CASVA) at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, Faults and Traces: Stanford Ghost Stories, an annual, student-run publication designed that ran from the Cantor from April 5 to July 4, 2016. A well-printed broadsheet, such as drawings, paintings, and prints (by or by) James Gillingham and William Blake, also featured the production of the Fine Arts, Stanford University, Faults and Traces: Some Ghosts and Haunting Tales, an exhibition of works of art that focuses on the relation between art and the afterlife. Joan Mitchell’s After, with the submission ceremony, considered works of art and other artifacts as connected to or in various states of the past. Selecting objects from the Cantor’s collection and other repositories on campus, and published with these goals in mind.

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Our New Home

The Department of Art & Art History is excited to announce the opening of the new McMurtry Building, located at the heart of the Stanford campus. This new facility will provide a state-of-the-art environment for teaching and learning, as well as numerous spaces for exhibitions, events, and community engagement.

New Faculty

The Department of Art & Art History is pleased to welcome several new faculty members to our community. These distinguished scholars bring a wealth of experience and expertise to our department, enriching our academic programs and expanding our collaborations with other departments and institutions.

Our New Faculty

- Bartana
- Douglas Crimp
- Kinew
- Ostrow
- Rydingsvard
- Solomon

Andrea Zittel in conversation with Rebecca Greenstein, Intersections, October 2016

New Staff

The Department of Art & Art History is also pleased to introduce our new staff members. These dedicated professionals are instrumental in supporting our academic programs and enhancing the student experience.

Our New Staff

- Bahrani
- Cotton

New Postdoctoral Fellow

The Department of Art & Art History is proud to announce the appointment of our new postdoctoral fellow. This position is a two-year term as a prestigious Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow. The new fellow will teach and write in the department, contributing to our dynamic and innovative academic programs.

Our Staff

Our staff members play a vital role in the success of our department, providing administrative support and ensuring the smooth operation of our programs.

Contact Information

For more information about the Department of Art & Art History, please visit our website at art.stanford.edu.
Welcoming our New Faculty

The Department of Art & Art History welcomes four new faculty members this year: Shane Denson, Usha Iyer, and Karla Oeler in Film & Media Studies, and Marci Kwon in Art History. We are extremely excited to have such aptitude and enthusiasm within the department! For the purpose of this newsletter, inspiration and enjoyment, the Department asked our new faculty to describe an illuminating moment in their research and teaching since arriving to Stanford. Here is what they had to say!

Shane Denson  ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  FILM & MEDIA STUDIES

“Looking back from week five of my first quarter teaching at Stanford, I recognize a moment, about a week before classes began: there was an almost palpable “click,” inexplicable at the time. Did I hear it? Did I feel it? I can’t be sure, but the experience was real. Since then, I have been propelled forward by the momentum of a wave, or a whirlwind, of teaching, talks, encounters, and events. The click, I recognize now, was the moment when my Stanford experience began in earnest, when the exhilarating energies of this environment aligned, or came into sync, with my own. I am excited to be here and honored to contribute to the ongoing momentum of this wonderful, welcoming community.”

Usha Iyer  ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES

“Two weeks ago, one of the students in my Indian Cinema course told me he loved the music of the film we had just watched – Sant Tukaram – so much that he saved one of the songs as his phone ringtone. A devotional song from a 1936 film about a medieval Bhakti poet-saint ringing through the air of the Stanford campus disperses traces of other times and places and bodies while also cohering in the body of the spectator-student who experiences and distributes cinematic affects. One of the dominant impulses in my own work on film dance is to study spectatorial pleasure and the cinematic configurations that aim to repeatedly and reliably produce that pleasure. With engaged students like these, I look forward to critically examining the sources of our cinematic pleasures and displeasures and investigating the processes that produce cinema’s affects and figurations.”

Marci Kwon  ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  ART HISTORY

“A man sits on a dragon. Where does the painted backdrop end and his body begin? Leaning forward under the soft lights of the Stanford Special Collections Reading Room, I realize the source of my confusion: the actor sits within a slit in the backdrop, straddling the plane separating real and artificial space. During my first month at Stanford, I have often thought about porous borders – between cultures, realms of experience, people - both in my scholarly research and my undergraduate course Asian American Art, 1850-Present. Perhaps this is why I am so excited to conduct research on May’s Photo Studio, which operated in San Francisco’s Chinatown during the early twentieth century. This project represents the meeting of my interests in theatrical fantasy and the history of Asian Americans, as well as my teaching and research. For me, being at Stanford is an opportunity to explore the permeable boundaries between scholarship, teaching, and life, thereby enriching all three.”

Karla Oeler  ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  FILM & MEDIA STUDIES

“I’ve been asked to describe an illuminating moment in my research and teaching since arriving at Stanford. I can’t point to one particular moment, as my experience here has been more like a sense of unfolding possibility. This has to do with joining a community that integrates conversing about, and critiquing, art with making it. I lecture on film theory and a student responds by sending a link to his own short film; another reveals her intricate technical knowledge of digital cinematography. There’s always a risk of loneliness in aesthetic experience -- and its teaching. (‘What if I show this film, which I love, and no one likes it?’). Here, however, I’ve been enjoying the flip side: conversation and community taking shape around art.”
Shawon Kinew is an art historian of Renaissance and Baroque art, focusing on the theory and practice of painting and sculpture in the Italian peninsula. A Canadian, Shawon was raised between Winnipeg and Lake of the Woods in northwestern Ontario, the ancestral land of her father Tobasonakwut-iban and the Anishinaabe people. She was educated at the University of Toronto and Harvard University, where she received her PhD in 2016. Within the department, she is the postdoctoral fellow in the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship of Scholars in the Humanities.

In her work on the sculptor Melchiorre Cafà (active in Rome in the 1660s), Shawon explores the aesthetics and rhetoric of Cafà’s “soft sculptures”, representations of divine figures in flight, doughy flesh, fluttering drapery, vapors and wind, all carved of hard stone. That these artistic innovations and discourses had a practical application by Cafà’s patrons in the evangelization of the New World is not widely understood. Shawon’s work traces this process through the creation and subsequent use and display of Cafà’s sculpture of Rose of Lima (pictured), carved in Rome in 1665 and sent to Lima, Peru in 1670, a year before Rose was canonized and became the first saint born in the Americas.

Before coming to Stanford, Shawon was one of 38 scholars at the Getty Research Institute contributing to its annual research theme of Art and Materiality. From 2013 to 2015, she was the Samuel H. Kress Institutional Fellow at the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome, Italy. Her research in Italy, Malta and Peru was also assisted by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, and additionally funded by the Lemmermann Foundation in Rome, the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, and Harvard University.

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“My time at Stanford has already expanded my thinking,” Shawon told us. “I see here the path to weave disparate threads from my research and those I haven’t yet explored from my own life. Mainly, I am encouraged by the conversations I’ve had so far with students about the need for art history to be at the forefront of many of the national conversations we’re having today. For example, these last few months my focus has been on the California Missions —photographing, traveling to and researching them—in preparation for a seminar I will be teaching this winter. In these contested spaces, I see Mexican copies of paintings by Titian alongside abalone shells and reliquaries made by indigenous artists. And then to be on a campus like this, where we currently have a dozen undergrads camping in a tipi in White Plaza to raise awareness for the protection of water and to fight pipelines, it connects to early conversations in California on land and water, and to resilience and cultural survival in which, arguably, Titian and the Missions are players.”...
Kelly Battcher  
ASST. MANAGER  

Kelly has been with the department since June 2006. She manages the administrative operations of the department, handling faculty search and hiring processes, faculty office space assignments, and faculty development. Her role involves ensuring the smooth running of the department's administrative functions, with a focus on providing excellent support to faculty, staff, and students.

Christopher J. Bennett  
FACULTY ADVOCATE  

Before joining the Department of Art & Art History in 2015, Christopher Bennett worked in various offices around campus and served as an assistant administrator for a regional music non-profit organization. As the Department’s Finance Advocate, he processes most of the financial transactions incurred by the department's faculty and staff. With 27 full-time faculty, over 30 adjuncts, and 15 staff in the department, Christopher is kept busy with reimbursement requests, reconciling credit card purchases, and paying vendors.

Lauren Douglas  
EXPERIMENTAL MEDIA STUDY MANAGER  

Lauren Douglas joined the Art & Art History Department in 2014 and oversees the operations of the Experimental Media & Emerging Practices Studios. She spent the majority of her first year preparing for the move into the department’s new home at McMurry, including researching and making purchases for the new Digital Print Studio that will help expand the department’s programing in the new space. Her oversight has expanded to include the new Emerging Practices Prototyping Lab, housed in the Art Gallery Building. Offering a variety of socializing options, including a 3-D printer, laser cutter and vinyl cutter, this Lab functions as a flexible installation space for students taking classes in Emerging Practices. Her studio practice focuses on photography and video installation and she has an MFA from Mills College.

Matthew Fishel  
ART MEDIA TECHNOLOGIST  

As Art Media Technologist, Matthew Fishel researches, implements and facilitates the use of art production and presentation technology for the entire department. His duties include classroom AV support, training and maintenance for advanced digital tools, and consulting for special projects.

Mark Urbanek  
DEPARTMENT MANAGER  

Mark oversees all operational and administrative functions of the department. He supervises the staff as an advisor and collaborates with the faculty, and is the department’s managerial liaison with other units within the school and university. His background is in non-profit administration, having held directorial positions with the California League of Conservation Voters, Education Fund and San José Repertory Theatre prior to her arrival at Stanford in 2005.

Regina Miller  
STUDENT SERVICES MANAGER  

Regina joined the department in August 2014 and has over 8 years of student services experience at Stanford. As our Student Services Manager, she oversees all aspects of student services and academic affairs in the department, with special focus on the graduate programs. She works closely with graduate students and faculty, and supports the four graduate programs including advising students, degree progress, curriculum planning, student funding, graduation, and admissions.

Jeff Stevens  
PREPARATION AND PRODUCTION ASSISTANT  

Jeff joined the Art & Art History team in July 2015 as a preparator and production assistant to help with exhibitions and events at the McMurry Building and the Stanford Art Gallery. Jeff assists students, faculty, and visiting artists to install and de-install artwork in various exhibition spaces on the Stanford campus. Prior to Stanford, Jeff served for fifteen years as a museum preparator and production supervisor at the San Francisco International Airport Museum. In this role he was responsible for the installation and de-installation of exhibitions as well as mounting and framing of photography shows. Jeff graduated from San Francisco State University in 2012 with a dual bachelor’s degrees in Art History and Studio Arts.

Dan Tiffany  
STUDIES & SCULPTURE LAB MANAGER  

Based in the sculpture shop, Dan, a member of the team since 2015, also oversees operations in the painting, drawing, and printmaking. He provides safety and skills training for students using all of the department shop tools, and advises a wide range of classes on material safety matters. Ever up for a challenge, Dan has the most fun helping students find a way to give form to their ideas.

Mark Urbanek  
FILM & MEDIA STUDIES TECHNICAL MANAGER  

Mark oversees all technical and facilities requirements of the Documentary Film Program, and manages the program’s operational budget. He is responsible for class film screenings as well as the quarterly student film screenings and the annual thesis screening. He also serves as a liaison to program alumni and is in charge of social media outreach.

Craig W. Weiss  
PHOTOGRAPHY LAB MANAGER  

Since the spring of 2003, Craig has served as Photography Lab Manager in the department. He oversees the digital darkroom facilities, computer workstations, scanners and printers plus the traditional analogue black/white darkroom facilities, including 35mm, 2 1/4, 4x5 & 8x10 film camera equipment. He works with undergraduates and graduate students on photography-related projects and also supervises 10-12 student lab technicians each quarter. His most recent personal black and white photography project, documenting Route 20 – the longest US road, will be exhibited during the summer of 2018.

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Matthew came to Stanford from Baltimore, where he helped found ICA Baltimore in 2012. He is a practicing artist and digital filmmaker, and earned his MFA in Interdisciplinary Art at Maryland Institute College of Art in 2010.

Elis Imboden  
DEPARTMENT MANAGER  

Elis oversees all operational and administrative functions of the department. He supervises the staff as an advisor and collaborates with the faculty, and is the department’s managerial liaison with other units within the school and university. His background is in non-profit administration, having held directorial positions with the California League of Conservation Voters, Education Fund and San José Repertory Theatre prior to her arrival at Stanford in 2005.

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Our New Staff

Gabriel Harrison  EXHIBITIONS MANAGER

Though trained as a traditional architect, Gabriel works at the intersection between art, installation and exhibition design, viewing his work as a three-dimensional conversation. As a member of the Harrison Studio, he worked on large-scale ecological art projects with the goal of engaging and reframing political debate around climate change. As curator of the Danish Pavilion for the 8th Architecture Biennale in Venice, his efforts focused on the impacts of global development on existing urban infrastructure. In addition to teaching design and working with city agencies to integrate art into public spaces, Gabriel has designed exhibitions for national and international museums. It is this role that brought him to Stanford where he works with faculty and students, helping to shepherd talented, emerging artists through the final execution of their work.

Chynna Obana  UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SERVICES COORDINATOR

Chynna moved to Stanford University after completing her Master of Arts in Higher Education at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD). During her time at UMD, she advised aerospace engineering students and her research revolved around the retention of underrepresented minorities in STEM fields. Even though Chynna has worked for schools of engineering, she still has a love for the arts. Chynna is actually a California native, and grew up in San Diego where she spent three years as an academic advisor at the University of California, San Diego. In her spare time, she loves being a foodie and traveling – this year she has been to Montreal, Cuba, and the Philippines. As the new Undergraduate Student Services Coordinator, Chynna hopes to foster a strong relationship with students and faculty. Additionally, she hopes to develop a sense of community where students feel supported in their academic and professional endeavors.

Christina Serruto  EVENTS & PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER

Originally from Melbourne, Australia, Christina joined the department in September 2016. Prior to moving to California, Christina had worked in local government organizing public consultation events, and worked as an events manager at a Member-owned Clubhouse coordinating many different event styles. Here at Stanford in the Art & Art History Department, Christina works closely with our faculty and visitors, overseeing all aspects of the busy event calendar. She also manages publicity and communications, handles donor and media relations, and liaises with a number of Stanford departments across campus to facilitate and cross promote art programs. Christina in her free time loves to explore her new home, California, cook for family and friends, hike, and yoga.
Stanford University
Department of Art & Art History

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Donations to the Department of Art & Art History can be made online at giving.stanford.edu/goto/artdepartmentgift or via our website.