

# This Month in the Arts

ART, ART HISTORY, TECHNOCULTURAL STUDIES, AND THE  
RICHARD L. NELSON GALLERY AND FINE ART COLLECTION

**UC DAVIS**  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

**NOVEMBER 2008**

## EVENTS

### Michael Corris, "The Dialogical Imagination: Art After the Beholder's Share from Abstract Expressionism to the Conversational Aesthetic of Conceptual Art"

**Friday**  
**11/7/2008**  
**4:00 PM**  
**Art 210**

In place of an art object whose media identity was secure and of sufficient external complexity and detail, Conceptual Art substituted text, ephemeral performances, banal photography and installations virtually indistinguishable from the environment in which they were sited. This paper will consider those practices of Conceptual Art that sought to dispense with the spectator entirely through artistic strategies that foreground the act of conversation, interactivity and a radical application of intellectual resources associated with the task of indexing and information retrieval. Under such conditions of engagement, can one sensibly speak of a work of art at all? If so, what might the 'work' be that a work of art of this sort aims to do?

Michael Corris is Professor of Fine Art at the Art and Design Research Center, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield; the Newport School of Art, Media and Design; and a visiting Professor in Art Theory at the Art Academy, Bergen. A former member of the Conceptual art group Art & Language, Corris's papers and archive of early Conceptual art are now housed at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. His art criticism has been widely published in journals and magazines devoted to modern and contemporary art including *Art Monthly*, *Artforum*, *FlashArt*, *Art History*, *art+text* and *Mute*. Corris' most recent books include *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth and Practice* (Cambridge U.P., 2004), *David Diaó* (TimeZone8 Books, Beijing, 2005), *Ad Reinhardt* (Reaktion Books, 2008), and *A MUTE Reader* (New Media: Autonomedia, Fall 2008) Cosponsored by Art and Art History programs and the UC Davis Humanities Institute.



### Jennifer Jane Marshall, "Machine Art," 1934: Plato Goes to the Modern

**Monday**  
**11/10/2008**  
**12:10-1:15**  
**Young 198**

In this lecture, Professor Marshall explores the intellectual history of Alfred Barr and Philip Johnson's 1934 exhibition, "Machine Art." Staged at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in the midst of the worst year of the Great Depression, "Machine Art" celebrated the beauty of simple, American-made products: airplane propellers,

ball bearings, pots, pans, and Petri dishes – all displayed on pedestals like so much avant-garde sculpture. However, if avant-garde sculpture suggested risky experimentation and hard-to-swallow rebelliousness, Barr and Johnson suggested something else for their ball bearings. The two men argued that the machine-made parts and products were nothing less than perfect incarnations of pure, Platonic form. As such, "Machine Art's" things were remade into reliable standards of absolute value, safely beyond the fluctuations of a volatile marketplace.

This lecture considers the social significance of "Machine Art's" neoplatonism at the time of the Great Depression, and traces the origins of the strategy to Johnson's undergraduate training at Harvard, as well as to the European avant-garde. Finally, the philosophical implications of modernist neoplatonism are considered from the vantage point of its greatest contemporary foe: American philosopher John Dewey, who visited "Machine Art" in the capacity of celebrity judge. Cosponsored by the Design Program, Art and Art History programs, and the Department of History.



### Sara Velas, The Velaslavasay Panorama

**Thursday**  
**11/20/2008**  
**4:30**  
**TCS main room**

Sara Velas is a visual artist and the founder and director of the Velaslavasay Panorama which currently exhibits a 360-degree arctic panorama - *Effulgence of the North*. A member of the International Panorama Council, Ms. Velas has traveled extensively throughout the world to experience the unique immersive

state offered by the panoramic art form in both its historic 19th century and contemporary manifestations. Born in Panorama City, California, she received her BFA from Washington University School of Art in Saint Louis, Missouri and resides in Los Angeles.

Drawing on the illustrious history of the Great Panorama Paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries, The Velaslavasay Panorama is an exhibition hall, theatre and garden dedicated to the production and presentation of unusual visual experiences. The Velaslavasay Panorama panoramic exhibition encircles the spectator within a fully enveloping atmosphere; the vast painting, of a continuous surrounding landscape, accompanied by sound stimulation and three-dimensional elements, affords the viewer an opportunity to experience a complete sensory phenomenon. Historically, the panorama (also known as cyclorama) was an immersive 360-degree painted environment, often including a three-dimensional faux terrain in the foreground of the painting to enhance the illusion. An early relative to the motion picture, the captivated public would visit these paintings-in-the-round as an entertainment or novelty, much along the same lines as the cinema is seen today. Located in the historic Union Square area of Los Angeles, The Velaslavasay Panorama presents an art form that has been all but lost due to the technological advancements of our time and the differing ways in which the public consumes mass entertainment. Sponsored by the Art Studio program. The first installment of the MFA visiting lecture series.



## Corey Keller, "Sight Unseen: Picturing the Invisible, 1840-1900"

Wednesday  
11/12/2008  
ARC Pavilion  
Ballrooms A&B

Corey Keller, Associate Curator of Photography for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, explores the use of photography in nineteenth-century science to document phenomena invisible to the eye. Her lecture will reveal what early photo-micrographs, astrophotographs, motion studies, and X-rays meant to science and how these pictures of the invisible touched people, for whom the worlds revealed would have been utterly inconceivable.

The Consilience of Art and Science Speaker Series.



## EXHIBITIONS

### Lucy Puls, Aspen Art Museum and Anderson Ranch Arts Center

October 30-December  
7, 2008  
Aspen Art Museum  
Colorado

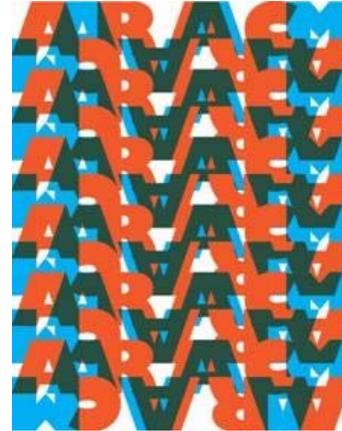
The Aspen Art Museum and Snowmass's Anderson Ranch Arts Center are proud to present a collaborative effort that highlights the artistic accomplishments of Anderson Ranch, its history of art-making, and its importance to the Roaring Fork Valley community. ARAC @ AAM will be on view at the Aspen Art Museum through Sunday, December 7. An "Artist

Breakfast" slideshow featuring Anderson Ranch artists is also scheduled at the museum on Monday, November 10, from 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

ARAC@AAM: *Anderson Ranch at the Aspen Art Museum* is organized from over 250 submissions received from an open call to all former artists-in-residence, workshop faculty, visiting artists and critics, and Anderson Ranch staff. Collaboratively invited by the museum and the ranch, Dan Cameron, the Director of Visual Arts at the Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans; Laura Hoptman, Senior Curator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York; and, Lauri Firstenberg, Director/Curator of LA><ART in Los Angeles, worked together to jury and curate the exhibition, which brings together works that are as rich and diverse as Anderson Ranch's own artistic legacy.

Of the exhibition, AAM Director and Chief Curator Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson comments: "It is a privilege to host this diverse exhibition at the AAM and to collaborate with the staff and the artists of Anderson Ranch. The Ranch has a remarkable history in this valley, and fosters the artistic practices of so many who attend to study, teach, share, and participate in the extremely rare and vital community environment that it embodies." Anderson Ranch Director Hunter O'Hanian adds: "This is just another wonderful example of how the cultural organizations in this valley work together to help enhance our community. The work selected showcases just a few of the hundreds of artists who are associated with the Ranch."

Featuring work by Aldwyth, Laura Berman, Lisa K. Blatt, Phyllis Bramson, Emily Cameron, Squeak Carnwath, Theresa Chong, Roy Dowell, Jessica Frelinghuysen, Don Fritz, Arthur González, Chris Gustin, Harmony Hammond, Cherie Hiser, Benjamin Koch, Christine Lee, Jeffrey Marshall, Scott McCarney, Liliana Mejia, Willie Osterman, **Lucy Puls**, Michael Puryear, Milton Rosa-Ortiz, Buzz Spector, John Torreano, Edie Tsong, and Mark Tribe.



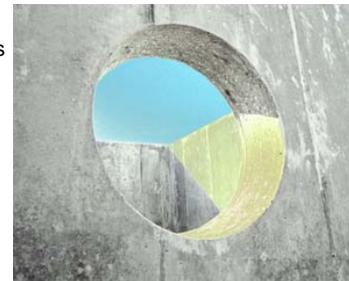
### Underwalls: Photographs by Allen Lowry

October 2-  
December 18, 2008  
Buehler Alumni  
Center

In coordination with the opening of the new Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Sciences this fall, the UC Davis Nelson Gallery presents at its satellite gallery in the Buehler Alumni Center an exhibition of photographs by Senior Project Manager, Architects and Engineers, Allen Lowry. Lowry has documented the construction project, with special

emphasis on the architectural details that become hidden forever as the building's walls are erected.

Image: Allen Lowry  
Vault 2007



### Aggregate: Three One-Person Shows

September 25-  
December 7, 2008  
Nelson Gallery

Aggregate: Three one-person exhibitions that address the idea of collage and assemblage open the new art season at UC Davis's Nelson Gallery, beginning on September 25th, 2008 with a reception for the artists from 6 to 8pm. Artists Davies and Utterback will be at the opening on September

25th. *Piece by Piece* by New York artist Laura Breitman; *Dog Models* by San Francisco artist Lauren Davies; *External Measures* by San Francisco artist Camille Utterback will be on display until December 7th.

"What I love about all three of these projects is their sense of humor and how they play with our need for art to represent reality. We want to believe our eyes but at this point in history we know better than to trust that anything will be exactly what it seems to be," says Renny Pritikin, director of the Nelson Gallery and curator of the three exhibitions.

Laura Breitman creates large, photo-realistic renderings of landscapes and cityscapes that, upon close examination, reveal themselves to be neither drawings nor watercolors, but collages of fabric. This eye-tricking work is the result of unusual techniques Breitman has devised over a lifetime. Lauren Davies creates 20% scale dogs—sheepdogs, terriers, et al—out of the fur she gathers from her own pets and from grooming salons and internet-solicited gifts. The resulting models simultaneously capture the charm and personality of the original animals while also embodying a creepy fetishism. Camille Utterback creates video systems that, within a defined square floor space, document a visitor's path via abstract video projection. Routes through space are marked and then computer programs visually elaborate on those movements. The result is a complex color drawing that succeeds as both a layered video painting and a history of one's travel through space.



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## REVIEWS

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### ***Hannah Sigur, "Japan at the International Expositions: Art, Agendas and the Birth of Modern Design," October 7, 2008***

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, Japanese art would, according to Hannah Sigur, effect a profound and lasting influence on design. Describing Japan's appearances at U.S. World's Fairs and International Expositions into the early years of the twentieth century, Sigur tracked Japan's quest for legitimization as a modern power. Japan's modernizers sought this legitimacy through official recognition at the expositions that Japan produced not only craft, but also "art," which Sigur asserts had earlier been a term foreign to the Asian country.

Sigur described Japan's modernizers using art, architecture and visual culture to counter its image as, on the one hand, a weak and backwards nation, and on the other, a romanticized, pure land in the eyes of Gilded Age America. In this process, Sigur argued, Japanese art "succeeded in changing the nature of the debate" about what constitutes fine art, permanently altering the course of art, architecture, and design since then.

In the Q&A, attendees wondered about the contemporaneous discourse surrounding the term "art" in Japan, and Sigur identified that there are indeed two terms, one of which may be older than the other. An early example of Japan-influenced exhibition design was found in James McNeill Whistler's exhibitions. When asked about issues of repatriation and cultural preservation, Sigur described Ernest Fenollosa, "the founder of Art History in Japan," as an individual who argued for the preservation of Japanese culture, "but not for the sake of Japan." Okakura Kakuzo, a Japanese national and the first curator of Asian art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was also identified as an early proponent of engagement with Japanese cultural history. Micki McCoy (MA Candidate, Art History Program)

### ***"What We Do and Why We Do It", a presentation by the Art History faculty of UC Davis, October 16, 2008***

The UC Davis art history faculty in residence each talked briefly to an audience of students and professionals about their current research. Speaking first on Western history's oldest cultural objects, archeology-trained Professor Lynn Roller stressed the lack of a discreet intellectual category of "Art". Rather the artifacts we know today were functional objects-- which nonetheless tell us many things about these cultures. Professor Jeff Ruda then spoke on his research of the late-Medieval to early-Renaissance period. He identifies this as a critical transition point in a particular understanding of art, specifically in two works by Masaccio.

Then Professor Catherine Anderson presented her project, which examines race, ethnicity, and nationality in the visual imagery surrounding the British-Zulu war of 1849. Anderson is interested in the role of visual culture in construction of Empire.

Next Professor Strazdes presented on her work in American art history in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century and her special interest in the interconnection of classical European tradition. She recent wrote on Augustus Saint-Gaudens, looking at his monumental sculpture "Seated Lincoln". Professor Blake Stimson spoke about his recent project looking at Andy Warhol as a figure of alienation. Warhol becomes the perfect epitome of a certain post-modern condition as he poses himself as an object which can be consumed.

Professor Simon Sadler spoke quite personally about his field of Architectural history and his hometown of Birmingham. He sees Birmingham, England's "second city", as a place of amassed memories as it "constantly reinvents itself over and over again through architecture."

Professor Katharine Burnett then spoke of her multiple projects addressing the issue of originality 17<sup>th</sup> century Chinese painting, which she identifies as a cultural value of the era. She has multiple projects at work each touching on some aspect of this issue. She has investigated the work of Wu Bin, an "originalist", the art criticism of the late Ming, and art collecting in late Qing. The evening ended with informal follow-up discussions over refreshments. Lucinda White-Frachtenberg (MA Candidate, Art History Program)

### ***Blake Stimson, "For the Love of Abstraction," October 21, 2008***

In a 2004 segment from BBC World, a member of the artist/activist group The Yes Men was interviewed posing as a spokesman for Dow Chemical and apologizing for the Union Carbide Bhopal disaster of 1984, on its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In accepting full responsibility and promising \$12 B in compensation to the families affected by the leak of deadly methyl isocyanate gas on Dow's behalf, The Yes Men jammed the cultural circuits long enough to reflect on the disaster and the way large corporations value profit over humanity.

In his lecture, "For the Love of Abstraction," Stimson raised the question of what it means to label the pranks of The Yes Men works of art, and he set out to answer that question by considering the place of such efforts at the intersection of the histories of technology and political subjectivity. In other words, he asked what it means to refer to The Yes Men as artists and not mere activists or pranksters. According to Stimson, technology has long housed the modern dream of creating a universal sense of belonging; technology as such can be considered a social medium. The "history of religion is replaced by the history of technology," he argued, enabling greater reflexivity and the creation of new capacities for social interaction. Cyborgs have served as an expression of the new mediated, machinic person who carries this universal dream. The fear of technology associated with historical developments like the Luddites, Taylorism, and the *hikikomori*, Stimson said, misses the modern promise of machine-being: self-realization through machine-enabled sociality.

For Stimson it is through figures of self-negation that this new political space can be found. Looking at a 1970 poster by Emory Douglass (Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party) and Hans Haacke's 2000 *Der Bevölkerung*, Stimson argued that it is through negation of the self (by leaving the faces blank in the former and by displacing the word "people" with the word "population" in the latter) that self-abstraction became possible and new democratic spaces were opened for the old Enlightenment dream of a universal rights of man.

How then can we read the opening of a political space and self-abstraction in the work of The Yes Men? Stimson says that their tactical use of media relies on their parodic use of the cheap, generic suit and the figure of the business man more generally to *negate* the self-abstraction of corporations and *reclaim* the corporate identity of the public. For Stimson, simple ironic displacement or negation is not enough to ensure that their efforts carry on this dream of a common language of a liberated public space. It is the sincerity of The Yes Men's hearts, or their commitment to the old democratic ideals, that keeps their work relevant. This is their "love of abstraction"

In the Q&A, Stimson was first asked by Professor Ruda whether their work could also be considered as design. Stimson believes that design implies a reliance on the craft as in the pre-Enlightenment tradition whereas art in its modern sense can be aligned with the principle of self-abstraction and thus the Enlightenment dream of a public sphere, universalism, the rights of man and so forth. After clarifying details on some of the works shown, Stimson was asked to comment on how The Yes Men might justify giving false hope considering the inherent gap between them and the people for whom they purport to speak. For Stimson, it is through their "sincere pursuit of justice" and their historical perspective that they may be able to claim this universal voice, but that this may come down to a distinction on whether or not they agree with the possibility of this universal ("human dignity, justice, responsibility") as a product of Enlightenment thinking. One site of contestation was on the notion of the cyborg. Stimson distinguished the dualism of this machinic man as the difference between being controlled by the system or achieving some public autonomy and democracy, as the internet may be seen to provide.

Russell Gullette (MA Candidate, Art History Program)

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## DEPARTMENT NEWS

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Each month, in our Department News section, we will feature several of our graduate students, faculty, or staff. We hope this helps to put names to faces and allows us to become better acquainted with the various people who make up our community.

### ***November's Featured Art Studio Graduate Students***



**Aleksander Bohnak**

Aleksander Bohnak grew up in Upper Michigan and Wisconsin. He received his B.F.A. in ceramics from the Maharishi University of Management, a small school in Fairfield, Iowa that focuses on meditation along with other academic subjects. After graduating from MUM, Alek attended a post-baccalaureate program at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. While there his work shifted from ceramic objects to large-scale

interactive pieces that substantially affects the mind and body. He hopes his work frees the viewer from everyday existence to have a playful and powerful experience that heightens perception. He is now exploring interactivity in all materials, especially through physical computing.



**Linda Miller**

Linda received her BFA in Ceramics from California State University Long Beach. She previously taught ceramics classes at various locations including a retirement community, an art school for disabled adults, and many elementary schools in Southern California. In conjunction with teaching ceramics, Linda has sold artwork to a gallery in Manhattan Beach and shown her work at various venues. She is presently continuing her education at UC

Davis to achieve her MFA in Studio Arts. Although ceramics is her area of concentration, she is also interested in creating a more extensive pallet. Linda aspires to expand her vision and to see her artistic ambitions attained.

### ***November's Featured Art History Graduate Students***



**Kristina Schlosser**

Kristina Schlosser, proclaimed work-a-holic currently holding down two jobs as a produce clerk and art gallery assistant, when finding free time, likes to cook for friends and family, take naps, go shopping for the umpteenth pair of shoes, go view exhibits in the region, and enjoy her dad's homemade wine. She put herself through college and graduated in Spring 2006

with one of the first BA's in art history from CSU Sacramento as *cume laude*. After working at an art gallery and taking two years off from school, Kristina realized she missed academia and theorizing about, appreciating, loving, and talking about art. Kristina was awarded the Jarena Wright Fellowship as well as a block grant so going to UC Davis suddenly became a reality. She is extremely interested in contemporary art and is particularly interested in emerging art movements such as Chinese contemporary art. Kristina plans on graduating in 2010 and pursuing either a teaching or curatorial museum position.



**Natalie Mann**

Natalie graduated from UC Davis in 2007 with a BA in Art History and a minor in Art Studio. During her year off she job hopped for a few months, but finally settled at an art education company in Sacramento where she taught drawing to elementary schoolers. Last year she learned a lot about teaching, kids, and the working world, but just couldn't get enough of UC Davis so she's back working on her Master's degree in Art History. She is interested in studying 20th century American art

and architecture, but isn't ruling out any area of emphasis at this point. She is excited to be back in the art building and is enjoying using her brain again!