



El Anatsui
Roman Lar
Inspired Gifts
17th-century
Springfield
Ways of Seeing



John Stomberg
 Florence Finch Abbott Director
 Mount Holyoke College
 Art Museum
 Photograph Jim Gipe

Engaging the Contemporary at MHCAM

A FEW WEEKS AGO, during that moment just after a gallery talk had ended—while the speaker answered a few last questions and the audience began to disperse—a visitor approached me with the most encouraging comment. She confessed to being somewhat suspicious of contemporary art, adding that she had found the recent flurry of exhibitions and acquisitions of new art at the Museum challenging. Lately, though, she had become increasingly excited by the art of our time and was beginning to savor these challenges as part of the experience. She concluded her comments with a sentiment common around the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum these days: “I can’t wait to see the El Anatsui show!”

This spring the Ghanaian-born artist considered by critics around the globe to be one of the most acclaimed artists working today will present six large-scale works at the Museum. El Anatsui has had two major retrospectives crisscrossing the United States during the last few years, and his work is on display in museums and galleries across Europe, Africa, and Asia, as well as the Americas. Anatsui indisputably resonates deeply with contemporary world culture for reasons beautifully articulated in the essay in this newsletter, written by Amanda Gilvin, exhibition co-curator and Five College Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in African Art and Architecture. From using discarded materials and elevating them to the status of fine art to employing a corps of individuals reminiscent of Andy Warhol’s “Factory,” Anatsui personifies the ideal of a truly globally engaged contemporary artist.

We are honored to be presenting his work in South Hadley.

At the same time, we will have the opportunity to explore our collection afresh with thoughts of El Anatsui’s practice informing our backward glance through time. How many other humble materials have been recast into great art through the intervention of the brilliant and talented individuals we identify as artists? The mud that was clay spun into urns 6,000 years ago in Egypt. The marble quarried and carved to represent an Empress 2,000 years ago in the Roman Empire. The wooden log cut in China about 1,000 years ago to reveal the bodhisattva Guanyin. The magazine photos Jess converted to collage about 60 years ago. And the simple metal contemporary Iranian artist Afruz Amighi used last year to create a dazzling hanging piece.

These all share with El Anatsui’s aluminum liquor bottle caps and copper wire a transformation reminiscent of, and metaphorically identical to, the idea of alchemy. Anatsui takes base material, literally detritus, and makes work that embodies values of the greatest importance to an art museum dedicated to a liberal arts mission—creativity, ingenuity, beauty, intelligence, and a sense of humanity. We look forward to sharing with you this amazing artwork and the rich and challenging learning opportunities it offers.

COVER:

El Anatsui (Ghanaian, b. 1944)
New World Map (detail)
 Aluminum and copper wire,
 2009
 Private Collection
 Courtesy of Jack Shainman
 Gallery, New York

We are excited to see our collection from new vantage points.

None of this would ever be possible without the aggregate support of myriad remarkable supporters of the Museum who have stood steadfast in their encouragement of our mission and worked diligently year after year to reinforce the excellence that has long characterized both the collection and the Museum at Mount Holyoke. This season, we take a moment to draw special attention to two such people. Both alumnae, they represent the best in inspired philanthropy. Each has focused on a different area of our enterprise and made it possible for us to continue our work in perpetuity. We wish to highlight these remarkable women as quintessential examples of the passion that makes the Museum possible.

As you will read in these pages, we've recently received an endowment to support our education outreach position dedicated to engaging faculty in teaching with our collections. The Weatherbie Curator of Academic Programs has been made possible by Susan (Class of 1972) and Matt Weatherbies' inspired decision to join the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in permanently establishing this role. The individual currently holding the Weatherbie Curatorship is a seasoned museum professional who represents the best in academic practice and happens (perhaps not so coincidentally) to be an alumna of Mount Holyoke herself. At the same time, Art Museum Advisory Board member Patricia Falkenberg (Class of 1964) and her husband Edward have endowed a lecture series in art history. The Falkenberg Lecture, to be held each spring, joins the Weiser Lecture featured every fall in anchoring the Museum's public programs.

We are humbled by the generosity of our supporters.

The spring of 2014 promises the energy of the new, the comfort of the familiar, and the thrill of finding the congruities between them. We look forward to seeing you around the galleries.

JOHN STOMBERG

Florence Finch Abbott Director

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El Anatsui: New Worlds
21 January–8 June 2014

Amanda Gilvin,
Five College Mellon
Postdoctoral Fellow in
African Art and Architecture
Mount Holyoke College
and Smith College

Every human being is an artist. There is an artist in everyone. —El Anatsui

El Anatsui: New Worlds invites visitors to stretch their own imaginations by actively engaging with six abstract sculptures made from recycled liquor bottle caps. From a distance, the Ghanaian artist's *New World Map* (2009) shimmers like gold, and its other bright colors recall equally precious substances. We may seek geographical cues, but in this abstract sculpture, the boundaries demarcate ideas, not places. The title evokes historical, colonial fantasies of a "New World" in the Americas. The work also might suggest a cautionary new map for the mercurial twenty-first-century globe, where the "gold" proves to be the refuse of industrial consumption. A longtime studio art professor, Anatsui expects creative work and rigorous thinking from those who encounter his works of art.

El Anatsui: New Worlds explores humanity's transformations of the world as we move ineluctably through time. A second sculpture on view, *They Finally Broke the Pot of Wisdom* (2011) refers to a Ghanaian story about Anansi the Spider, a trickster who wanted to keep all of the world's wisdom to himself in a ceramic pot. While trying to hide the pot high in a tree, he dropped it. The wisdom quickly spread around the world—and, afterward, no one person or people could have all of it. In *Blema* (2006), a work commissioned to honor the bicentennial anniversary of the United Kingdom's ban on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, gold coins seem to cascade down the wall—reminders of profits won through violence and represented through blood-red bottle caps. From *Blema's* meditation on the past, *Harbinger* (2012) locates us in the present, where we struggle to identify and interpret signs for a future still to come. Upon first glance of *Alter Ego* (2012), a green topographic model seems to overtake a solid black support. In fact, most of the green in *Alter Ego* results from an optical trick of viewing the bottle caps' thin blue and yellow stripes from an angle. An immense sculpture that spreads in ripples around the gallery floor, *Tiled Flower Garden* (2012) completes the metamorphosis of the gallery space and heralds spring while there is still snow outside. Folded into round flower forms, the sculpture's bright white bottle caps radiate upward to remind us of other flower gardens visited. *El Anatsui: New Worlds* points to a transformed future still saturated with the distorted memories, histories, and wisdom we carry with us.

Organizing this rare installation of El Anatsui's sculptures on a college campus signals the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum's commitment to encouraging discourses about globalization, power, and aesthetics in contemporary art. After a breakout presence at the 2007 Venice Biennale, Anatsui's star in the global art world quickly rose. At the exhibition, in monumental works like *Dusasa I*, Anatsui reoriented art world expectations about African art, contemporary artistic media, and aesthetic quality. His massive sculptures glitter with the promise of luxury—at a distance. Up close, the discarded liquor bottle caps from which they were made suggest a layered history that addresses whiskey that was consumed last year as well as whiskey that arrived in Africa during the colonial era.

Much of the international press about Anatsui since 2007 has heralded him as an “overnight sensation.” In actuality, Anatsui attended art school in the 1960s and taught sculpture in the well-known art department of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, for 35 years. He exhibited consistently throughout the 1980s and first participated in the



Venice Biennale in 1990. Two of his works now hang on permanent view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and two major exhibitions have recently traveled the United States, to broad acclaim. For about half a century, Anatsui’s work has been included in conversations with that of other contemporary artists, as well as with African visual cultures and the Western art historical canon. Casting Anatsui as an overnight sensation or restricting his work to a single medium obscures the conceptual rigor and full contributions of his oeuvre. This exhibition at the MHCAM adds important nuances to the interpretation of his wall sculptures and examines them with an interdisciplinary mindset that is unique to academic communities.

El Anatsui: New Worlds builds on a vibrant history of African art scholarship and display among the Five Colleges and provides numerous opportunities for teaching. For my fall 2013 course, “Contemporary Art of Africa and the Diaspora,” students enjoyed a private viewing of El Anatsui’s sculptures during a Museum-sponsored trip to New York City and then wrote essays comparing works in *New Worlds* with others as diverse as a monumental sculpture by Anish Kapoor and an installation by Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons. Available on the Museum’s website, these essays contextualize Anatsui’s sculpture within important art historical narratives.

Students in my spring 2014 introductory course on African art at Smith College also will visit the Museum to study and write on the installation, but it is not only the students of art history and African studies who find themselves immersed in Africa’s contemporary art this semester. The Museum also hosted in December a seminar for Mount Holyoke faculty members, to encourage literary theorists, economists, biologists, and others to incorporate the exhibition into their courses. One result of this workshop will be a richly interdisciplinary exhibition catalogue, written by scholars from across campus. Because of the wide-ranging issues that El Anatsui addresses, students and faculty members alike will find points of entry into these complex New Worlds.

El Anatsui (Ghanaian, b. 1944)
New World Map
Aluminum and copper wire,
2009
Private Collection
Courtesy of Jack Shainman
Gallery, New York

Rachel Beaupré,
Assistant Curator

Inspired Gifts

TODAY'S COLLEGE ART MUSEUM sits at the heart of the campus community, welcoming faculty, students, and neighbors to pass through its doors. Visitors are encouraged not only to experience the rich creative output of 6,000 years of mankind by browsing the galleries, but also to participate in the active programming that energizes these institutions. The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum's breadth of offerings—from lunch-time gallery talks to classroom workshops, dance performances, and in-depth conversations with visiting scholars—enable individuals to find unique personal points of access. This year the Museum has received two major gifts that will enhance the quality of these experiences and ensure that future generations of visitors will find their own voices in our galleries.

Weatherbie Curator of Academic Programs

We are proud to announce the establishment of the Weatherbie Curator of Academic Programs, a position created through the generosity of Susan Weatherbie (Class of 1972) and her husband, Matt, who have matched a challenge grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This act of philanthropy completes an effort many years in the making. In 2008, a representative of the Mellon Foundation visited the Museum. Astonished by the breadth and depth of the collection, as compared to the relatively small staff available to encourage the academic use of these myriad works of art, the Foundation invited the MHCAM to apply for funding to start a new outreach program to the College community.

Under the skillful direction of a grant-supported coordinator, the resulting Teaching with Art program has been a resounding success. Through hosting faculty seminars, mounting collaboratively curated student and faculty exhibitions, and launching an initiative aimed at enhancing observational skills among biology students, the Museum has witnessed a remarkable surge in attendance. Class visitation has nearly tripled during just the first three years of the project (2009–2012) as compared with the 2007–2008 academic year when the MHCAM first expanded its efforts to engage the campus. We are now finding innovative and exciting ways to provide faculty from not only the creative arts but also from such unexpected disciplines as chemistry and international relations with a rare and powerful teaching resource.

During this next chapter of Museum outreach, the Weatherbie Curator of Academic Programs, Ellen Alvord, will work to create



Susan (Class of 1972) and
Matt Weatherbie
Photograph Jim Gipe

meaningful experiences with art that will cultivate visual literacy, creativity, and important transferrable life skills. A Mount Holyoke alumna and a devoted past member of both the Museum's Art Advisory Board and the College's Board of Trustees, Susan Weatherbie is joined by her husband Matt in recognizing the importance of this position in making the Museum's remarkable holdings an integral element of the college curriculum: "Matt and I are delighted to endow this exciting integration of object-based teaching using the Museum's collection with a diverse and growing complement of academic courses."

We look forward to watching this program flourish as an active component of the Mount Holyoke College liberal arts experience.

Patricia and Edward Falkenberg Lecture

Each year individually tailored class sessions provide over 2,500 students with memorable encounters with original works of art at the Museum. Behind the doors of the Carson Teaching Gallery, they might hold a Greek coin in their hands and discover its surprising weight and deeply sculpted relief decoration, or look with a magnifying glass at the difference between an original Albrecht Dürer engraving and a mechanically etched heliogravure. These activities can be transformative for Mount Holyoke students, but they are especially extraordinary when combined with the opportunity to speak one-on-one with a renowned scholar.

Thanks to a significant gift from Patricia and Edward Falkenberg, the Museum is pleased to announce a new lecture series that will expand these opportunities and broaden the Museum's spectrum of programs.



The Patricia and Edward Falkenberg Lecture, to be presented each spring, will join the fall semester Louise R. Weiser Lecture as a defining pillar to the academic year and bring distinguished individuals to speak on topics relevant to the broader campus. This prominent lecture series will augment the Museum's public offerings and create an annual attraction that will appeal to the Five College community and beyond.

Patricia Falkenberg (Class of 1962) and director John Stomberg

A current Art Museum Advisory Board member and professional designer, Patricia Falkenberg (Class of 1964) values the impact of arts education and the energy that can come from personal contact with the stars of the field. The Falkenberg lecturer will be invited to participate in a related class or join a select group of students for an in-depth discussion following the public event. These rare experiences have the power to spark inspiration in each student and visitor, opening the doors of Mount Holyoke's campus to important voices from the global community. From the micro to the macro, the Museum can ignite in its visitors a desire for more knowledge and aid students to think about what that tiny ancient object cupped in their hands might mean in the world beyond.

Please join us Thursday, April 3 for the inaugural Falkenberg Lecture featuring the artist El Anatsui.

Wendy M. Watson,
Curator

Safeguarding the Roman Household:
Museum Acquires Statuette of Domestic Deity

FROM THE TIME of Rome's founding up to the triumph of Christianity (during the reign of Constantine, r. 306–337 CE), Roman religion was a complex and constantly evolving amalgam of different traditions. Under the Empire, the cults of the gods—inherited from Greek tradition—existed alongside the cult of the emperor and his family, and thriving domestic religious practices were also present and reflected in home shrines like those discovered in the ruins of Pompeii. In spring 2013, art history professor Bettina Bergmann offered a seminar, “The Unearthed Cities of Vesuvius,” focusing on these excavated urban areas and what we have learned about daily life there during the late Republic and early Empire. The Art Museum's striking and well-preserved set of wall-paintings from Pompeii provided Bergmann and her students with direct evidence about Roman house decoration. An array of domestic artifacts in the collection, ranging from pottery and glass to jewelry and writing implements, also helped students to fill out the picture of daily life.

The Museum's monumental portrait of Faustina the Elder, wife of the emperor Antoninus Pius (r. 138–161 CE) demonstrates how imperial family members served as the focus of the Roman state religion; after her death in 141 CE, the empress was honored with the title “diva,” or goddess. Republican and Imperial coins bearing images of emperors, their wives, and mythological figures installed in the galleries, along with the wall-paintings and sculpture give additional evidence about contemporary religion and politics. A notable lacuna in the Museum's collection, however, has been any concrete evidence of the domestic religious traditions that were so prevalent in ancient Rome. The Art Museum had been looking to acquire such an object for a long time and in June of 2013 a very fine and well-provenanced first-century Roman *lar*, or household guardian-spirit, appeared on the market.

As I began to study this exciting potential acquisition, I discovered that summer museum intern Emily Carduff ('14) had not only participated in



Artist unknown (Roman;
Imperial)
*Lar holding a libation bowl and
cornucopia*
Bronze, 1st–2nd century CE
4 1/4 x 2 3/16 x 1 1/4 inches
(Illustrated at actual size)
Purchase with the Susan and
Bernard Schilling (Susan
Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund
Photograph Laura Shea
2013.31

Bergmann's "Vesuvius" class but had also focused her class research on *lares* and *lararia* (the shrines in which these small statuettes were displayed). Emily's investigations deepened over the summer and helped to support the acquisition of the bronze and contribute to our knowledge about it.

Our enthusiasm about this acquisition was shared by Bergmann, one of several faculty members who have already incorporated this rare find into their classes: "The lar is more than just an exquisite object in itself. Dancing on tiptoes with an offering plate in one hand and an overflowing horn of plenty in the other, he invites us into the numinous realm of the Roman house, whose interior—including many of the domestic objects in our collection, such as frescoes, mosaics, glassware, and lamps—was overseen by spirits of family ancestors (the *penates*, guardians of the larder) and the *lares*. Although housed in his own shrine, this lar might have been present at family events and presided at meals. If only he could talk—the stories he would tell! The acquisition thus opens up a whole new world for students of Roman antiquity and reminds us that many ancient objects in the Museum were far from secular collectibles."

In Roman tradition, *lares* were originally spirits associated with a particular place who helped to protect farmland and promote abundant harvests. Household *lares*, or *lares familiares*, functioned as domestic deities who, as fertility spirits, helped ensure the continuation of the family, keeping watch from small *lararia*.

Lararia were an aspect of the private side of Roman architecture and domestic ritual and took pride of place in the heart of the home, most often in the atrium or the kitchen near the household's hearth. The *lares* shared the family altar with small painted or sculpted likenesses of ancestors and favorite deities like Jupiter, Mercury, and Bacchus.

Usually made in pairs and cast in bronze from molds, *lares* were invoked by family members especially during rites of passage like births, marriages, and deaths. When a boy came of age, for instance, he removed his *bullā* (apotropaic amulet) and placed it on the *lararium* as an indication of his gratitude for the spirits' protection throughout his childhood. The boy would then don his *toga virilis*, or man's toga. Family *lares* were regularly the focus of prayers and sacrifices given by the head of household, or *paterfamilias*, and could include offerings of food, wine, incense, garlands of grain, or even blood sacrifices.

Curatorial coincidences abound at the Museum, and this acquisition was no exception. While researching the new lar, Emily Carduff discovered in the 1920 *American Journal of Archaeology* a seminal article on these fascinating sculptures by Margaret C. Waites. Not only had Professor Waites signed the article with the name of the institution where she taught from 1914–1923, "Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts," but she also provided a line drawing of a lar nearly identical to our new acquisition.



Artist unknown (Roman; Imperial)
Lararium in the House of the Vettii, Pompeii
Fresco, 63–79 CE
Photograph Wikimedia Commons



Drawing of a lar illustrated in Margaret C. Waites, "The Nature of the Lares and Their Representation in Roman Art," *American Journal of Archaeology* (Jul.–Sep., 1920): 252.

Cultural Contact in 17th-Century Springfield, Massachusetts

Aaron F. Miller,
Joseph Allen Skinner
Assistant Curator

EVER SINCE colonial farmers first began turning New England fields, and their children explored riverbanks and ravines, Native American artifacts have stirred the collective imagination and conjured images of North America's past. Out of this fascination, a collecting trend focused on Native American relics emerged during the 19th and early-20th centuries. The Joseph Allen Skinner Museum is filled with hundreds of arrowheads, spear points, and knife blades, thoughtfully arranged in frames by collectors and avocational archaeologists. Unfortunately, many early collections of Native American artifacts offer very little, if any, contextual information. Although we can often date or identify the source of the lithic material, without site provenience and acquisition provenance, minimal additional information can be gleaned.

One group of Skinner objects has more of a story to tell. A small assemblage of artifacts can be traced to an important 17th-century Native American village in Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1650 John Pynchon, the merchant founder of Springfield, established a Native American settlement on Fort Hill (also called Long Hill) in order to form a strong trading relationship with the Algonquian-speaking inhabitants of the region. The site was occupied until the mid-1670s when King Philip's War (1675–1678) severed the precarious relationship between the Anglo-European colonists and many of the region's Native peoples.

Almost 250 years later, Harry Andrew Wright carried out one of the first systematic archaeological excavations in North America. During the 1890s, Wright and his colleagues methodically uncovered evidence of the 17th-century Springfield settlement, revealing postholes that represented its palisade, as well as trash pits and burials. The artifacts they unearthed represent a complicated period in American history that reveal the confluence of Native American and European lifeways.

The Fort Hill site offered numerous examples of arrow points—some made of locally available quartz and others fashioned of chert from distant New York State. One of the most fascinating objects recovered during the excavation and now at the Skinner Museum is a European-manufactured copper-alloy arrowhead, one of only two found at the site. This object demonstrates the Native American use of European goods to complement traditional practices and the types of objects that the Puritan traders were exchanging for furs and other items.

A second captivating group of artifacts in the Skinner Museum's Fort Hill collection is of tobacco pipes. Native peoples of the Americas cultivated and smoked tobacco for thousands of years prior to European contact. European mariners brought the dried leaves back to Europe and triggered an addictive relationship that persists today. The Skinner collection provides



Maker Unknown (Native American and English)
Arrowhead
Copper alloy, 1650–1675
Joseph Allen Skinner Museum,
Mount Holyoke College
Photograph Laura Shea
SK K.170

Maker Unknown (Native American)
Tobacco pipe
Steatite (soapstone),
17th century
Joseph Allen Skinner Museum,
Mount Holyoke College
Photograph Laura Shea
SK K.186





evidence of Native-made stone tobacco pipes being used in Springfield alongside European-made kaolin clay examples, both dating from as early as the mid-17th century. The existence of these two pipe varieties on Fort Hill reveals a fascinating interchange of material culture, whereby a Native practice was adopted by Europeans and then the European product was in turn embraced by Native Americans.

The 17th century was a complex period of interaction between diverse groups of Native Americans and European settlers.

Revelations through artifacts about how the groups interacted, how their societies changed, and how they stayed the same reveal important clues about this significant and intriguing phase in the history of New England, the Americas, and the globe. The artifacts—physical manifestations of everyday life—are often the only tangible record of the people who made and used them. Although the names and narratives of these individuals may be lost, the significance of these links to 17th-century human experience endures.

Maker Unknown (Native American and Dutch or English)
Tobacco pipe
Kaolin clay, 1650–1675
Joseph Allen Skinner Museum,
Mount Holyoke College
Photograph Laura Shea
SK K.188

On the Road

A recent exhibition at the William Benton Museum of Art, *Framing Photography: New Additions to the Benton Collection in Context*, featured one of the many curiosities from the Joseph Allen Skinner Museum. On view from 26 October through 15 December, the borrowed object is known by many names, including zograscope, perspective mirror, peep-show de luxe, and optical diagonal machine. This early 19th-century device used a magnifying lens and angled mirror to amplify depth and perspective when a flat print was observed through the viewing lens.

The mechanism was manufactured by the Liverpool, England firm Egerton & Wm. Smith & Co., “Opticians, Mathematical Instrument Makers, Chart-Sellers, Printers, and Stationers.” This very example graced the pages of *The Magazine Antiques* in 1933 and was acquired by Skinner a few years later, around 1938. When not in use, the rectangular-shaped device appears to be a large, leather-bound volume with the title *Perspective Mirror*. When new, it was likely an entertaining curiosity in a gentleman’s library.

Along with Skinner’s magic lanterns, the zograscope was a centerpiece of the Museum’s collection of optical amusements dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. This unusual object reveals a fascinating chapter in the evolution of photography and motion pictures.



Egerton &
Wm. Smith & Co. (British;
English)
Zograscope
Wood, glass, paper, and paint,
early 19th century
Joseph Allen Skinner
Museum, Mount Holyoke
College
Photograph Laura Shea
SK 2006.1957.1.INV

Ways of Seeing

Ellen Alvord, Weatherbie
Curator of Academic
Programs

REFLECTING ON the past four years of reaching out across the curriculum in a more concentrated way, Museum staff members have found themselves inspired by their partnerships with Mount Holyoke and Five College faculty. Teaching is a highly prized calling at Mount Holyoke, so it is no wonder that faculty members bring an impressive range of pedagogical practice as well as an innovative spirit to their work with students.

With “The Museum as Catalyst for the Creative Campus” initiative started last year (funded by a three-year matching grant from the Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation), the Museum has been able to support faculty in their experimentation with new pedagogical approaches. Working in close collaboration with professors, staff members have discovered a variety of effective ways that original works of art and artifacts can be integrated into teaching. These active sessions not only promote deeper understanding of course material but also foster transferrable skill sets that are essential for linking a liberal arts education to purposeful engagement in the world beyond Mary Lyon’s gates. Students develop observational acuity, learn how to identify and question assumptions, integrate critical feedback, and work collaboratively with others to create new knowledge.

The following three faculty members recently developed customized sessions in the Museum that illustrate the rich potential of engaging with original works of art. While these individuals approached teaching with art in three distinct ways, each envisioned the Museum session as a laboratory experience for students, as well as a way to generate new insights about specific course texts, themes, and discussions.

Two students from the English class “Shakespeare and Film” closely examine the geometric composition of an Albrecht Dürer print.



Formal Analysis

Last spring, Assistant Professor of English Amy Rodgers approached the Museum with the idea of crafting a “workshop” for her “Shakespeare and Film” class, to give her students experience reading visual media. She hoped to provide them with a greater understanding of “how visual media can create and communicate meaning.” As she explained further, “Rather than any sort of crash course on film analysis, however, I would be interested in getting their receptors attuned to visual detail and perhaps give them some basic vocabulary about perspective, depth, space, and lighting choices.”

Professor Rodgers worked with Museum staff to select eight works of art from an impressive array of artists—including Albrecht Dürer, Maurice Prendergast, Cindy Sherman, and Kara Walker—which she arranged into evocative pairings. She divided her students into four small groups and assigned each one to a group of objects. To guide their looking, Rodgers prepared



A small group of students in Gail Hornstein's psychology class study the gestures and facial expressions in a Julia Komissaroff photograph.

a “visual analysis” handout and asked each team to work collaboratively by comparing and contrasting their images according to one of four formal artistic elements: dimension, lighting, geometry, and *mise-en-scène* (the arrangement of all the properties in a scene). Following this in-depth study, the students shared their observations with the larger class. The session at the Museum became a warm-up exercise for the students' next paper assignment, which asked them to craft an analysis of a film via its structural and visual components. Reflecting on the visit, Rodgers commented that her class experience “reminded me of everything collaborative learning can be: fun, invigorating, highly creative, and deeply satisfying.”

Visual Data

Similar to Amy Rodgers' approach, Professor of Psychology Gail Hornstein had the idea of developing a session at the Museum that would give her advanced-level laboratory students the opportunity to sharpen their skills of observation, but for a different purpose. As someone who has come to understand the power of material objects for psychological analysis from her own groundbreaking research (particularly for her recent book *Agnes's Jacket: A Psychologist's Search for the Meanings of Madness*), Hornstein encourages her students to seek data from a variety of potentially rich resources that extend beyond the traditional quantitative options—including visual sources.

In support of this learning goal, Professor Hornstein designed an interactive visit to the Museum for her “Laboratory in Qualitative Research” course. The session began with a close-looking activity led by a Museum staff member to model techniques for gathering visual data. Students were encouraged not to make assumptions or jump to conclusions too early in the process. Students then worked in small groups to continue fine-tuning their observational skills by looking at additional images, both photographs and paintings, from a range of cultural and historical contexts. Professor Hornstein deliberately selected these works to give students practice navigating ambiguous and unfamiliar territory with an open mind, a key skill in clinical and developmental psychology.

“My students were thrilled by the class session at the Museum,” Professor Hornstein

TEACHING WITH ART

remarked, “since this was a whole way of conceiving psychological data they had never previously encountered. Their already well-honed skills of observing complex human actions could be extended to a new kind of setting, and several students now plan to conduct individual research projects using Museum materials. I’ll be incorporating such sessions into many of my classes in the future; it’s a wonderful resource!”



Inspired by a 1930s Lisette Model photograph, Talya Sahler ('15 FP) reads her monologue to fellow theatre students.

Creative Response

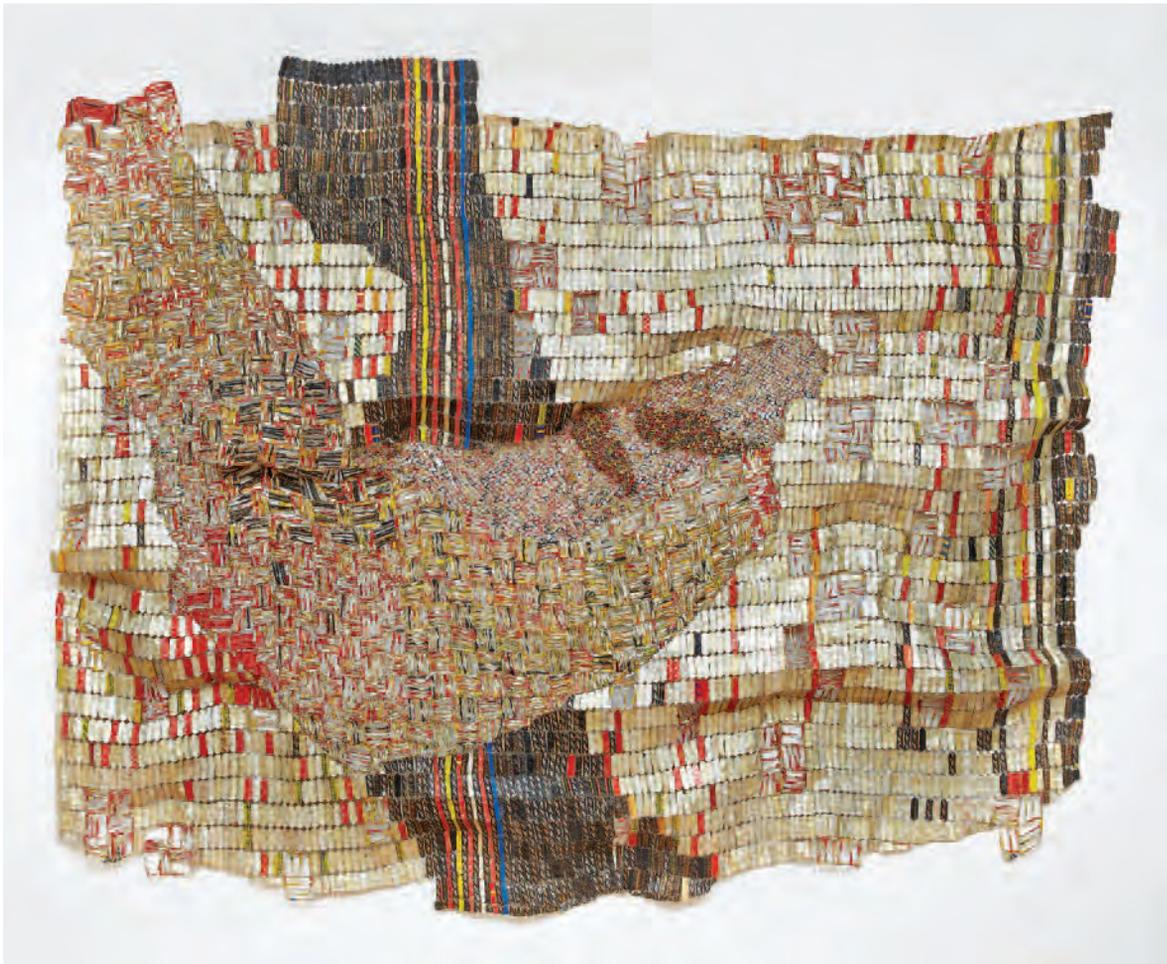
Also intrigued with the learning opportunities that teaching in the Museum could offer, Susan Daniels, Chair of the Theatre Arts Department, is one of several theatre arts faculty members who have recently designed creative exercises asking students to respond to works of art. For her fall advanced acting class, Daniels came up with the compelling idea of using visual art as a tool for introducing the monologue, which is often a difficult

dramatic form for students to master. Daniels worked with Museum staff to select a diverse assortment of female portraits on which her students could base their first monologue. Works included paintings, prints, and photographs by artists such as Robert Henri, Käthe Kollwitz, Lisette Model, Larry Fink, and Annie Leibovitz.

The students each selected a work that spoke to them and then spent 45 to 60 minutes observing it closely and writing the narrative they imagined unfolding before their eyes. As Daniels explains, “An artist painting a picture can be likened to a playwright writing a play. They both create ‘clues’ for the viewer or for the actor—visual details that provide a ‘way in’ for an actor creating a character. These clues help us as viewers of art to imagine the story that is being told in the painting, and it helps the actor create the character’s backstory.”

Each student pared down the many pages of text she had written to one key moment in the story and then created a 60-second monologue to be performed during the next class. The students’ sensitivity to the finer details of their selected images was evident in their final monologues. For example, one student actor, Talya, noticed the peculiar way fingers were spread apart on the cheek of the woman she chose to portray in Lisette Model’s photograph, *Two Women Having Cocktails*, from the 1930s. In her performance, Talya used this distinctive physical gesture as a sense-memory clue during a particularly emotional part of the narrative. Through the close observation of an individual work of art, the students were motivated to develop these types of creative acting choices, drawing their directives straight from the visual information before them.

Focusing on a range of hands-on learning approaches from visual analysis to creative response, faculty members are discovering exciting new ways to expand their students’ learning experiences at the Art Museum. Each visit described above resulted from an active collaboration between faculty and Museum staff members to customize the session and select unique works of art with the power to transform their students’ ways of seeing—both inside the classroom and beyond.



For more information, call 413.538.2245 or visit www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum

CALENDAR

Fall Events

Friday, 24 January 2014, 5:30 p.m.

Exhibition Opening and Lecture
"El Anatsui and the Reinvention of Sculpture"
Chika Okeke-Agulu, Associate Professor,
Department of Art and Archaeology and
Center for African American Studies,
Princeton University
Gamble Auditorium
Reception to follow

Thursday, 3 April 2014, 5:30 p.m.

Inaugural Patricia and Edward Falkenberg
Lecture
"El Anatsui: A Conversation with the Artist"
Gamble Auditorium
Reception to follow

Art à la Carte Gallery Talk Series

**Thursday, 13 February 2014,
12:20–12:50 p.m.**

"Paintings through the Eyes of a Costume
Designer"
Gallery talk by Jessica Ford,
Visiting Artist in Costume Design,
Theatre Arts Department

Thursday, 6 March 2014, 12:20–12:50 p.m.

"Looking at Chinese Fan Paintings"
Gallery talk by Yingxi (Lucy) Gong,
Art Museum Advisory Board Fellow

Thursday, 10 April 2014, 12:20–12:50 p.m.

"Mr. Skinner's Curiosities of the Natural World"
Gallery talk by Aaron Miller,
Joseph Allen Skinner Assistant Curator

Above: El Anatsui (Ghanaian, b. 1944), *Harbinger*, 2012, found aluminum and copper wire, Private Collection, New York

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ABOVE: Minted under Hormizd II (Sasanian, r. 303-309 CE), *Drachm of Hormizd II*, silver (AR), 303-309 CE, purchase in honor of Emily Wood (Class of 2009), photograph Laura Shea, 2013.23

Museum Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and weekends, 1-5 p.m. Admission is free. Donations are welcome. Fully accessible. 413-538-2245 · www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum

To sign up for *MHCAM News* and receive exhibition and event announcements, go to www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum.

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- I would like information on bequests, life insurance annuities, endowed funds, gifts of art, and other planned giving opportunities.

Please send form and check, payable to *MHCAM Friends of Art*, to Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Lower Lake Road, South Hadley, MA 01075-1499. Questions? Call 413-538-2245 or email artmuseum@mtholyoke.edu.