Prism

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Inside this issue

2 *Alumni, Fellows, and Student News*
3 *Fellows*
4 *Faculty and Staff News*
6 *MAVCOR News*
8 *Back-to-Back Bach*
9 *Suzuki Honored*
10 *From Shape to Form*
13 *Publications*
14 *Greek Study Trip*

Photos by Stephen Gamboa-Diaz

From the Director's Desk

Martin Jean

Befores and Afters

I recently came across an article noting the blessings and banes of "Before and After" pictures in social media. You've no doubt seen these juxtapositions of two photos side-by-side of a person before and after some major transition in their life: weight loss, plastic surgery, life passages, to name a few. These images may celebrate transformation or acknowledge adversities overcome — and sometimes their only purpose is to market face creams.

The ISM's new home of Miller Hall will doubtless have a gallery of its own "before and after" images on display one day. There have certainly been setbacks along our road to this transformation. With each phase of demolition, workers peeled back plaster and removed walls and floor covering only to reveal termite damage, water decay, dry rot, and building fatigue. They have even uncovered a tunnel made by some critters boring holes laterally through a series of cross beams in the first-floor ceiling.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Alumni, Fellows, and Student News

ALUMNI NEWS

Kate (Kennedy) Steiner (M.A.R. '07) accepted a position as assistant professor of musicology at Conrad Grebel University College in the University of Waterloo, beginning in the fall of 2018.

In December of 2017, **Andrew Schaeffer** (M.M. organ '18), was appointed editor-at-large of *The Diapason*, one of the oldest and largest international journals dedicated to the organ, the harpsichord, the carillon, and church music.

The February 2017 issue of *The Diapason* was **Stephen Schnurr**'s (M.M. organ '89, M.M.A. '90, D.M.A. '95) first as editorial director and publisher.

Kristian Kohler (M.Div. '16) was ordained on February 3 at his home congregation of Reformation Evangelical Lutheran Church in Reading, PA. Kristian will serve as pastor at the congregation of Faith Lutheran Church in East Hartford, Connecticut He looks forward to partnering in ministry with faith and the Greater Hartford Conference of the New England Synod.

In January 2018, **Nate Widelitz** (M.M. choral conducting '14) joined the adjunct faculty at California State University, Los Angeles.

Paul Jacobs (M.M. organ '02; A.D. '03) was the soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra in the East Coast premiere performances of Sir James MacMillan's *A Scotch Bestiary* in January (2018). A review of the concert can be found at Philly.com.

Tyler David Ray (M.M. voice '16) and **Edmund J. Milly** (M.M. voice '15) shared the stage with Madonna during her surprise performance at the 2018 Met Gala, "Heavenly Bodies."

Composer **Michael Gilbertson** (D.M.A. composition '17) was a finalist for the 2018 Pulitzer Prize in Music. His work "Quartet" gained him the nomination. You can listen to the first movement at the Pulitzer Prize website.

Emily Floyd (M.A.R. '12) was appointed lecturer (equivalent to assistant professor) in visual culture and art before 1700 at University College, London.

Nicholas Quardokus (M.M. organ '18) will join St. Paul's Parish, K Street (Washington, D.C.) as organ scholar for 2018–2019.

FELLOWS NEWS

Hugo Mendez (2014–2015) has joined the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill as a tenure-track assistant professor of Religion.

STUDENT NEWS

Students **Joseph Kemper** (M.M. choral conducting '18) and **James Reese** (M.M. voice '18) coordinated a concert on May 1st in Marquand Chapel to benefit Everytown for Gun Safety.

Join us! @yaleism

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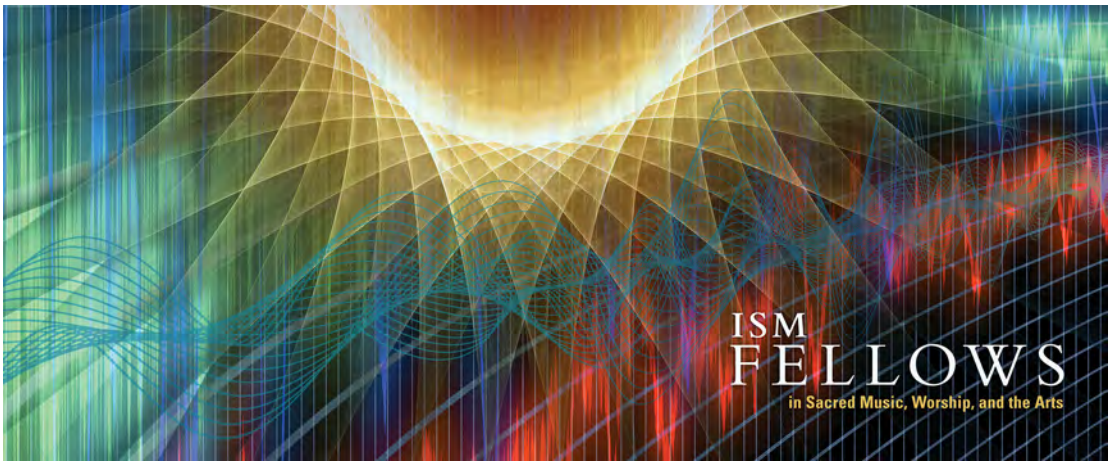


2018-2019 Fellows Announced

Martin Jean, director of the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, has announced that seven fellows will be joining its interdisciplinary community for the 2018–2019 year.

ISM Fellows in Sacred Music, Worship, and the Arts are scholars, religious leaders, or artists at all career stages whose work is in or is turning toward the fields of sacred music, liturgical/ritual studies, or religion and the arts. The fellows have numerous opportunities to share their work with the community and to teach, as well as to work on their individual projects using Yale's vast resources. Following in the footsteps of previous classes of ISM fellows, the 2018–2019 group represents a cross-section of cultures and disciplines.

Ireri Chávez-Bárcenas received her Ph.D. in musicology and certificate in Latin American Studies from Princeton University in May 2018. During her fellowship year, she will expand and revise her dissertation, "Singing in the City of Angels: Race, Identity, and Devotion in Early Modern Puebla de los Ángeles," for publication. Her work analyzes the performance of *villancicos* within the institutional and social fabric of Puebla, and develops a new methodology for the study of function, meaning, and transmission of the vernacular song tradition in the Spanish empire. Following her fellowship year, she will join the faculty of Bowdoin College as assistant professor of music.

Matthew Isaac Cohen is professor of international theatre and the director of the Centre for Asian Theatre and Dance at Royal Holloway, University of London. With a Ph.D. in anthropology from Yale and having recently worked as a visiting senior fellow to research and curate the Dr. Walter Angst and Sir Henry Angest Collection of Indonesian Puppets at the Yale University Art Gallery, he is no stranger. During his fellowship year, Cohen will build on earlier work on the collection to produce a book to function as a catalogue of the collection and a visual history of the art form.

Ashon Crawley, assistant professor of religious studies and African American and African Studies at the University of Virginia, will work on a book project entitled "Made Instrument: Polyphonic Intention," which will consider the ways the Hammond B-3 organ model provides noise, vibration, and resonance for Black Christian communities. The work will place the instrument in the genealogy and tradition of Black sacred music practices, and explore how the usage of the Hammond organ has become a sonic foundation for liturgical performance and knowledge transmission.

Ephrem Aboud Ishac will spend 2018–2019 working on a project called "Searching for a Syriac Liturgical Identity," which aims to construct a unified systematic liturgical methodology to provide currently lacking academic tools for the scholarly study of West Syriac liturgical documents and present a vision towards a proper liturgical reform in the Syrian Churches. He joins the ISM as a postdoctoral associate in liturgical studies from the University of Graz (Austria), where he is a senior postdoctoral researcher at the VESTIGIA Manuscript Research Center, working on Syriac liturgical Anaphoras in manuscripts. He is also a lecturer on Syriac Liturgical Theology at Salzburg University (Austria) in addition to his current senior postdoctoral fellowship at the Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII – Bologna (Italy).

Michelle Karnes is associate professor of English at the University of Notre Dame. She will spend the fellowship year finishing a book that studies medieval writings about marvels such as the evil eye and telekinesis. Exploring marvels in both natural philosophy and romance, in medieval Christianity and in medieval Islam, she argues that marvels define a space between truth and falsehood that is the distinctive home of both nature and fiction.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Kelsey Seymour will receive her Ph.D. in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from the University of Pennsylvania in June 2018. At Yale, she will expand her dissertation, "The Buddha's Voice: Ritual Sound and Sensory Experience in Medieval Chinese Religious Practice," and prepare it for publication. The project explores chanting practices surrounding Chinese Buddhist texts during the Six Dynasties and Tang periods, and how these sonic activities and aural experiences affected not only people's religious lives in a ritual context, but also the larger role of chant in the lives of medieval Chinese Buddhists, both lay and monastic.

David Sperber is an art historian, art critic, and independent curator who is currently a research fellow at the David Hartman Center for Intellectual Leadership at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Gender Studies at Bar-Ilan University in May 2018. At Yale his book project, entitled "Liberating Body, Earth, and God: Helène Aylon's Jewish-Feminist Art in the United States, 1970–2017," will explore the links between contemporary art, feminist thought and activism, and Judaism through an analysis of the social and cultural significance of Aylon's feminist art, and the charting of a broad theoretical framework for understanding a branch of contemporary art offering a feminist critique of the Jewish world including its rituals and institutions.

The Institute is delighted to welcome these newest members of the community," said Martin Jean. "We look forward to a rich and fruitful dialogue that reflects the breadth and diversity of our mission."

Faculty and Staff News

FACULTY NEWS

Markus Rathey, president of the American Bach Society, hosted its biennial conference, held this year at Yale. During the conference, he presented Masaaki Suzuki with an honorary membership (see story on page 9).

Melanie Ross has been promoted to associate professor of liturgical studies, effective July 1. In announcing the appointment, Martin Jean wrote, "Prof. Ross' work on worship in American Protestant and Evangelical churches is considered by many to be path-breaking. One reviewer listed her book *Evangelical versus Liturgical* as one of the top ten most important books in liturgical studies in the last ten years. Another reviewer writes that Melanie is "one of the best liturgical scholars of her generation" and yet another that she "has the potential to offer the most significant long-term contributions to the field" among scholars in her immediate cohort. Finally, all you need to do is talk to students who have studied with her to know how positively she has contributed to and helped to shape their thinking and their lives. She is a beloved and skilled teacher."

In January 2018, Krista Tippett inteviewed **Christian Wiman** for *On Being*. The interview is available on the *On Being* site.

STAFF NEWS

Stephen Gamboa-Diaz was recently appointed director of music at Bethesda Lutheran Church in New Haven. This spring he was also busy performing as harpsichord soloist in J. S. Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*. In February he played Brandenburg 5 with Chamber Music Silicon Valley in San Jose, CA, and in May he performed the same in four concerts in and around Denver, CO as part of the Baroque Chamber Orchestra of Colorado's "Young Artist Spotlight."

Faculty and staff relax after a day of planning meetings.

From the Director's Desk continued from page 1

Leave it to a closet Medievalist like me to find allegories around every corner, but as we now see signs of new purpose taking shape in the space (offices being formed, our common area expanding), we begin to see how our new home will function, and its potential for enriching our program.

Our twentieth-century alums will recall the old and well-used student lounge in the back buildings of the Sterling Divinity Quadrangle. That intimate space was home to midnight theological debates that brought students together in meaningful ways. Miller Hall has been designed with just such a purpose in mind, not only to bring our own students together, but also to welcome students, staff, faculty, and fellows from all parts of campus.

Programs shape space, to be sure, but the reverse is perhaps even more true. Miller Hall will truly be a crossroads for ministers and musicians; for scholars and practitioners — a lively place where we collaborate across the borders of discipline, methodology, practice, and faith.

We are proud of the work we do at the ISM. Our students leave here to make major contributions in churches, the academy, in the concert halls, and in public life. If this is the "before" of the Institute, I am confident it is a good "before." I am equally confident that the Institute "after" this transition will be even more vibrant, reaching out to communities we have yet to meet, and giving Yale students access to knowledge and practices that are available nowhere else at Yale.

Buildings seem static compared to the streams of people that live in and visit them, but the talented architects of Apicella + Bunton, working with a team from Yale Facilities, are giving us a space that can animate new and expanding interdisciplinary ideas and outreach. We look forward to realizing our new potential as we say to our community and to colleagues old and new, "Welcome home!" A hopeful "after" picture indeed!

Photos by Stephen Gamboa-Diaz

360° interior panorama of the Church of Huaro, Peru

Center for the Study of Material & Visual Cultures of Religion

Spring 2018 Update

Emily Floyd (M.A.R. '12) and Sally Promey

MAVCOR editor and curator Emily Floyd (center) with medieval art historians James Cameron and Meg Bernstein in Lincolnshire, England

This past year has been a productive one at The Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion (MAVCOR), with the first convening of our new multi-year project cycle, "Material Economies of Religion in the Americas: Arts, Objects, Spaces, Mediations" (MERA); the launch of the MAVCOR Digital Spaces Project (featuring high resolution giga-pixel photography, 360-degree panoramas, and drone photography of spaces of religious practice); and the publication of our first "Collection" in collaboration with a university press. In April we also launched "Galleries" in order to provide visitors with increased opportunities for interaction with the MAVCOR site.

The Digital Spaces Project offers an innovative approach for documenting and viewing religious monuments and spaces. The idea is to focus our energies, for the most part, on spaces that are otherwise under-documented and on spaces that various constituencies might wish to incorporate in teaching or research. In shaping the Digital Spaces Project, MAVCOR collaborates with scholars to develop virtual tours and other publicly available interpretative information about the sites we photograph. In March 2017 MAVCOR commissioned Cuzco photographer Raúl Montero Quispe to photograph the first group of spaces, a group of seven churches administered by the Jesuits in the area in and around Cuzco, Peru. Then, in November 2017 MAVCOR collaborated with art historians Meg Bernstein (M.A.R. '13) and James Alexander Cameron to photograph a group of medieval parish churches in the Lincolnshire Fens. The 360-degree panoramas and drone

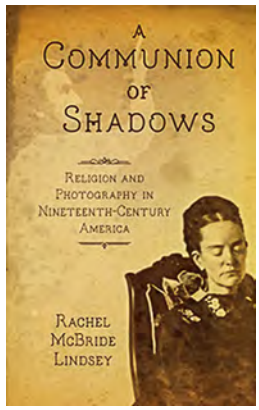
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

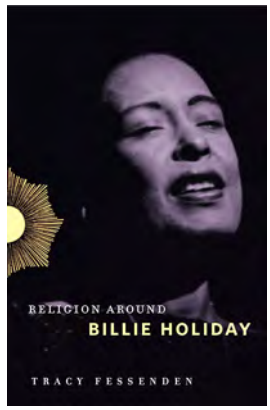
Drone photo of the Church of Huaro, Peru

footage from our work in England and Peru are available on the MAVCOR Digital Spaces Project page. MAVCOR has also begun working with Bernstein and Cameron to produce textual content interpreting the drone and 360-degree photography for eventual publication on the MAVCOR site. In the near future, religious studies scholar Kambiz GhaneaBassiri will advise and guide a similar effort to photograph a series of important mosques in the United States and to offer scholarship about them, along with this new photography, on the MAVCOR site.

In October we published our first Collection in collaboration with University of Chapel Hill Press. Rachel McBride Lindsey's "A Communion of Shadows: Religion and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America" accompanies her book of the same title. Collections are large groups of related objects curated by a single individual, potentially divided into smaller sections, and accompanied by discursive text. This first collaboration with UNC press has been enthusiastically received and other authors have communicated with us about similar projects to accompany their books. Later this year, we will publish a Collection to complement Tracy Fessenden's new book, *Religion Around Billie Holiday* (Penn State University Press, 2018). In 2019 we plan a second Collection in collaboration with the University of Chapel Hill Press to coincide with the publication of Alex Seggerman's monograph *Reawakening Modernism,* on Egyptian art movements, Islam, and the construction of Middle Eastern modernity.

This April, MAVCOR announced the launch of Galleries. Designed in response to feedback from site users wishing to teach with MAVCOR materials, Galleries allows visitors a customized way of engaging with the site. After creating a user account, individuals and groups can compile assemblies of articles, material objects, and MAVCOR Digital Spaces Project 360s and Zooms. Users can choose to designate their Galleries public or private and can include notes and commentary both on the Gallery as a whole and on the items included within the





Gallery. We envision Galleries as a tool for scholars as well as the general public; we have particularly in mind audiences of teachers in the academy, in religious communities, and in civic organizations. These individuals might, for example, construct an assignment inviting students to create Galleries for class; these Galleries could be conceived of as mini-exhibitions curated by students. Teachers might also themselves create Galleries for students to read and view as part of, or in preparation for, classroom conversation.

MAVCOR has begun to receive widespread attention in the academy and beyond. Recently the journal *Religion* invited MAVCOR editor and curator Emily Floyd and director Sally Promey, to contribute an article on MAVCOR to a special thematic forum, edited by James Bielo, on Digital Scholarship and the Critical Study of Religion. Floyd's and Promey's article, "Collaborative Scholarly Communities and Access in the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion," can be viewed and downloaded along with the rest of the forum. Floyd and Promey have also contributed to *Introduction to Digital Humanities: Research Methods for the Study of Religion,* edited by Christopher D. Cantwell and Kristian Petersen, and set to be published by DeGruyter as part of their new series, Digital Humanities: Religion.

Drone photo of the Church of Algarkirk, Lincolnshire, England

Photos courtesy Emily Floyd

Back-to-Back Bach

The Yale Institute of Sacred Music produced an exciting weekend of performances on April 26, 27, and 28 in conjunction with the American Bach Society Conference. On Thursday, April 26, ISM Director Martin Jean and graduate students from the organ department presented a recital including works of Bach and more. On Friday, April 27, the Yale Schola Cantorum, joined by the Elm City Girls' Choir and under the baton of principal conductor **David Hill**, performed with period-instrument orchestra in Johann Sebastian Bach's *St. John Passion*, as arranged by Robert Schumann.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Photo by Laurie Ongley

Photo courtesy of Elm City Girls' Choir

Photo by Robert A. Lisak

BACK-TOBACK BACH CONTINUED

Saturday, April 28, a special choir composed of ISM alumni performed J. S. Bach's iconic *Mass in B minor* with Juilliard415 under the direction of Masaaki Suzuki. Alumni soloists included **Sherezade Panthaki** (A.D. '11), **Mindy Ella Chu** (M.M. '15), **Virginia Warnken** (M.M. '13), **Sara Yanovitch** (M.M. '15), **Gene Stenger** (M.M. '15), **Sarah Couden** (M.M. '14), **Dashon Burton** (M.M. '11), **Nola Richardson** (M.M. '16), **Daniel Moody** (M.M. '16), **Paul Tipton** (M.M. '10), **Dann Coakwell** (M.M. '11), and **Jay Carter** (M.M. '08), many of whom are pictured at right.

From the iPhone of Sherezade Panthaki

Photo by Stephen Gamboa-Diaz

Suzuki Honored by Bach Society

During its biennial meeting held at Yale in April, the American Bach Society awarded **Masaaki Suzuki** an honorary membership for his storied accomplishments as a performer and champion of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach. In presenting the award, Society president **Markus Rathey**, Robert S. Tangeman of Music History at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, noted Suzuki's impact on the performance of Baroque music not only in the U.S. and his native Japan, but all over the world.

"As a conductor, harpsichordist, and organist, Suzuki has been one of the most prolific performers of Bach's music for more than two decades," Rathey said in making the presentation in Woolsey Hall. Following the ceremony, Suzuki, who is principal guest conductor of Yale Schola Cantorum, conducted the period orchestra Juilliard415 and a chorus, composed mainly of ISM and Schola alumni, in a magnificent performance of Bach's Mass in B minor.

Photo by Stephen Gamboa-Diaz

From Shape to Form: Exhibition on Display through June

Timothy Cahill (M.A.R. '16)

In the language of art, a shape is a two-dimensional outline of an area or figure. Circle, square, rectangle, triangle—take a line out for a walk, and these are the basics from which everything is drawn. As universal as these shapes are, though, it doesn't take long to discover that they are limiting. They don't get you far past stick figures or cartoons. To express life in its rich detail, you need modeling and perspective, techniques to indicate volume, dimension, mass, and proportion. Thus shapes become forms—sphere, cube, cylinder, cone—raw materials to render the complex world.

Learning to draw depends on crossing the frontier from shape to form. So too the art of understanding people. Like shapes, the labels we use to define others are two-dimensional. Black and white, gay and straight, young and old, Christian and Muslim. We can't get far with them. Only when we begin to see with perspective and proportion can reality become rounded, complex, three-dimensional. Strangers become neighbors; the Other, a brother. It's a necessary movement beyond the self to the world.

This is the subject of *From Shape to Form*, the current exhibition at Yale Divinity School. On its face, the show appears to be a familiar exploration of "identity," the concept encompassing the ways contemporary artists challenge cultural stereotypes and explore issues of gender, sexuality, race, heritage, and diversity. Curator Jon Seals (M.A.R. '15) declares this intention in the first sentence of the exhibition's description. "*From Shape to Form*," he writes, "highlights a selection of contemporary Latinx artists working through varied materials and processes to explore a range of topics including communal/individual memory and progress/regress."

The opportunity to hear the voices of underrepresented artists is, decidedly, one of the fruits of this collection of six emerging painters, sculptors, photographers, and mixed-media artists whose roots are in Latin America, from Mexico to Chile to Suriname.

José Delgado Zúñiga, "Shape Up," 2015

But Seals's ambitions for the exhibition run deeper. His curator's statement continues, "*From Shape to Form* enters into conversation with these artists in rejecting flattened notions of sameness and difference. The art assembled here embraces a more nuanced and dimensional approach filled with depressions, reliefs, and fantastic textures."

In this, Seals is describing more than surface smoothness and roughness, visual peaks and valleys. The "depressions, reliefs, and ... textures" he alludes to are as psychological as they are formal, philosophical as much as physical. While revealing something of what it means to be Latinx in the United States, the show also

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Curator Jon Seals and assistant curator Laura Worden

Photo by Timothy Cahill.

meditates on what it means to be human in this place at this moment in history. The artworks are autobiographical, memoiristic, confessional, rich with childhood memories of family, faith, loss, migration, displacement, and fear.

The six artists represented are Gaby Collins-Fernandez, Xavier Robles de Medina, José Delgado Zúñiga, Saredt Franco, Rocío Olivares, and Carmen Flores. They live and work in the U.S., but were born south of the border upon which Donald Trump would build his wall. The dissonance created by Trump's election incited Seals's 2017 ISM/YDS exhibition *The Complexities of Unity*. While he wants firmly to move this new exhibition beyond overt political readings, the curator allows that the president's divisive presence ripples through these artworks as well.

As a Christian artist and educator, Seals struggles with much of Trump's worldview. "We are called to serve the oppressed, the hungry, the needy, to include, to incorporate, to reach out, to share," he says. A spirit of inclusivity guides *From Shape to Form,* and reflects Christian doctrines that guide us "to invest in the lives of others. That's what Christ did. He saw the full person."

Seals travelled from his home in Florida to Yale in early March to install the exhibition, where he worked with assistant curator Laura Worden (M.A.R. '19), an ISM student in the fourth semester of an extended degree program in religion and visual culture. They moved artworks up and down the ramped corridors of the school's north wing as they arranged the show.

The exhibition begins in the Sarah Smith gallery, just off the YDS main entrance, and holds the walls the length of the building. As it descends to the ISM, the work grows darker, moving from swirling relief sculptures and velvet abstractions to grim visions of mayhem and death.

"That needs to be shown," Seals says of the unflinching memories of murder victims by Carmen Flores that conclude the exhibition. "This is an exploration of artists working though concepts and realities of their own lives. These are stories that need to be told."

The starkness of Flores's work, Seals notes, is counterbalanced by the light touch of Xavier Robles de Medina, a young sculptor from Paramiribo, Suriname, a former Dutch colony in South America. His polymer reliefs eddy, billow, and surge with luxuriant waves and curves. They look like flames, river rapids, even the stiff peaks of meringues. In fact, the sculptures are derived from the elaborate hairdos and hair-product ads Robles de Medina saw growing up around his mother's beauty shop. He reinterprets the haute coiffure in polyurethane forms, casting abstractions he finishes with, among other tools, curved dental picks.

"I was presented with concepts of aesthetics at an early age," he writes, referring not only to his mother, but to his dentist father and a grandfather who was an artist. "To me, all three professions

Xavier Robles de Medina, "A Freeze is Coming," 2013

involve a practical attitude toward personal aesthetics as well as varying degrees of conceptual engagement.... I transform [my] materials by caressing, massaging, pulling, and pushing skin-like surfaces and forms."

Stylized haircuts also inform the work of José Delgado Zúñiga, whose paintings appropriate the "lineups, tapers, and fades ... popular among Latino men." These hair fashions, he notes in his artist's statement, "have enabled [young Latinos] to express themselves as an individual or as a collective." In a pair of works titled *Shapeless* and *Shape up,* Delgado Zúñiga presents large, faceless portraits whose carefully trimmed hairlines assert themselves against vibrant decorative surfaces.

The painter names bilingualism, socio-political influences, and the musical and visual bricolage of his Mexican-American upbringing as source material. His consciousness was formed by "traces of the past that have been written and recorded in song, melody, and rhythms," where "images invigorate me; color is the trace of my memory, the stream of sensation, feeling, experience, and gesture." Delgado Zúñiga's work crisscrosses between figure and ground, shape and form, style and self. His large collage, *Frankenstein*, casts a grotesque figure adrift in a cacophony of pattern and color—a metaphor, the artist observes, of the "negligence" of White America that "haunts our present."

Gaby Collins-Fernandez (M.F.A. '12) studied painting and printmaking at Yale, where she developed an "interest in [the] intersection of material and image." Her paintings are vivid, sometimes jolting in their chromatic juxtapositions, marked by her use of crushed velvet. Her *Blue Velvet SKIN DEEP* painting is typical. Its sheeny electric-blue fabric is gathered and draped on the frame like a half-skinned pelt, revealing part of a painted canvas below. Across the disrupted surface in capital letters read the words "SKIN DEEP." Similar solid-cap inscriptions mark all the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Saredt Franco, "Altar," 2017

works, declaiming "MOM," "YOU OR NOTHING," "GENTLE TERROR"— fragments, the artist says, "overheard within the urban clutter and movement of New York."

Saredt Franco has memories of going with her mother to Mass in a cathedral in Mexico City, where she lived until age 10, when the family moved to West Palm Beach, Florida. In her artist's statement, she writes of herself in the third person: "Her interest in the political and the absurd originated from her own experience as an immigrant, constantly trying to reconcile two worlds, which were ever more parallel."

A sense of straddling boundaries, of sitting between chairs, infuses her deadpan urban landscapes. There are walls, fences, rooftops, cemeteries. Her pictures appear empty at first, set pieces waiting for someone to appear. The absence quivers with a Waiting-for-Godot presence. In one photo, it's the shade of whoever bashed the doorway-shaped opening in a cinderblock and razor-wire wall; in another, the soul who set up a white-draped altar before a brick wall. In a third, its whoever built the chain-link fence thinking they could confine the wandering clouds behind it.

Man proposes, God disposes, Franco exposes. The irony of her photos is leavened by a sense of desire, of a spirit striving to transcend physical limits.

Her sensitivity to the symbolic potential of the world is a vestige of her religious childhood. "I think of Catholicism as an ethnicity more than a belief system," she says, but its gravitas adheres.

"I grew up Mexican, so super-Catholic," she said in an interview. "I feel that I cannot not have symbols that mean a lot. I loved to go to church because it was this beautiful experience. The stained glass. The murals. For me, Catholicism [is] a visual language. My friends, my fellow-artists, when I went to school, just did not have that immediacy of symbolism and meaning."

Gaby Collins-Fernandez, Blue Velvet SKIN DEEP," 2014

Rocío Olivares, "Cattle Egrets," 2017 (still from video)

Rocío Olivares received her B.F.A. from the *Universidad Catholica de Chile* in Santiago, Chile, then came to New York for an M.F.A. at Columbia University. Layered meanings are the subject of her video, *Cattle Egrets*, a sly exercise in subverting surface expectations. The film, which plays in a loop with a second short video, appears at first to be a placid nature documentary about a heron-like bird. But it slowly comes unhinged as the content of the narration diverges from the subtitles that had originally matched it. Soon, the titles at the bottom of the screen are describing something banal—migratory habits, for example—while the voice-over grows ever more lurid, relating brutal acts of egret aggression against other birds, even their own chicks in the nest.

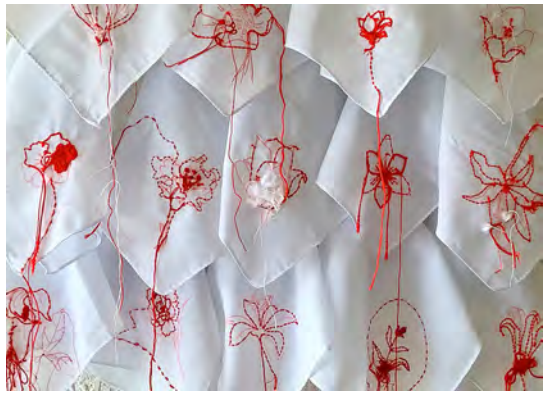
CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

FROM SHAPE TO FORM CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

This all happens while you are dreamily distracted by footage of the handsome white birds with their dusky orange plumes. As you struggle to catch up with the text, disorientation renders the images all but impossible to focus on. The video has become a kind of anti-visual artifact, and you, no longer a viewer, the object of a savvy perceptual ambush on information, awareness, and the fragility of attention.

Carmen Flores's biographical drawings have a similar element of ambush. Flores was born in Culiacan, capital of the Mexican state of Sinaloa, a place rampant with drug violence. Seals met her while both were MFA students at Savannah College of Art and Design, where, he recalls, "she had a gripping fear of being killed by a stray bullet."

Flores's large graphite and chalk narratives are elegies to the victims of violent death. They confront the viewer with horror, dread, and, ultimately, pathos. "I select incidents that shock me because of their brutality and/or impunity," she writes. *Bad Dream* depicts a screaming girl waking from a nightmare; *Portrait of 50 Missing Girls* superimposes the faces of departed children like fugitive memories; *Playing* presents a grim tableau of a dog-pack nuzzling and chewing human body parts. Flores annotates her drawings with a form of embroidery called "redwork," a red-thread technique typically found in folk patterns. She uses it to indicate gunshots, bullet wounds, life blood. Her *Did not come back* pays homage to souls lost to violence, while meditating on her own existential displacement and the meaning of her name. In



Carmen Flores, "Did not come back," 2018

the large wall sculpture, the dead are remembered in descending rows of snowy handkerchiefs embroidered with red floral blooms (*flores* is Spanish for flowers), each one bleeding a trail of carmine thread.

Carmen Flores reminds us that "shape" and "form" are also verbs, that what we experience shapes us, and that we are formed by what we make. The artists in *From Shape to Form* define themselves by themselves and by the world they inhabit. In the process, they leave their mark on us.

Timothy Cahill (M.A.R. '16) writes on religion and art. This article was commissioned by Yale Divinity School and is reprinted with permission.

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Ancient Greek Festivals Greece Trip

Ed. note: *Building on the success of the travel seminars offered by ISM faculty in previous years (most recently to England in April of 2017, led by Bryan Spinks and Henry Parkes — see story here), the ISM has expanded the travel seminar model, inviting applications from other team-taught, interdisciplinary graduate seminars elsewhere at Yale for travel funding to be able to offer the travel/study experience to a wider cross-section of graduate students at the University. This fall, the first of these was offered:*

The Ancient Greek Festivals Travel Seminar, taught by Jessica Lamont (assistant professor of classics) and Carolyn Laferrière (Archaia Postdoctoral Associate in Ancient and Premodern Cultures and Civilizations and Lecturer in History of Art and Classics), embarked for Athens, Attica (Eleusis, Brauron), the Peloponnese (Olympia, Isthmia), and Delphi over the Thanksgiving break. Three students representing three different disciplines offered their reflections on the experience.

Student Reflection

Danielle Meghan Poplacean, Ph.D. Student in Classics

As a student of ancient history, I have long read about the sanctuaries and temples of Greece. Delphi, the site of the most important oracle of Apollo in antiquity, is nestled high up on Mt. Parnassos. I had read about the droves of visitors to the site, spanning nearly a millennium; from humble farmers and sick mothers to Theban kings and Roman Emperors, all seeking prophetic answers to their troubles. A council of priest-politicians governed the site and the Pythian Games, a large festival-competition that would see athletes, musicians, and playwrights from the world over, compete for *kleos aphthiton*, eternal glory. Virtually no wars could be waged, no cities could be built or destroyed without first consulting the oracle at Delphi. The sanctuary then was a central node through which much of the ancient Mediterranean, personal and political, functioned. I thought I had understood this, and therefore, Delphi.

Photo by Meghan Poplacean

Temple of Apollo at Corinth

Photo by Meghan Poplacean

Temple of Apollo at Delphi

But having seen the site itself, I was immediately struck by the naivety of my former understanding. Many historians stress the religious and spiritual importance of the site, yet it cannot be fully comprehended until you climb up the winding Sacred Way yourself. Standing on the platform next to the ruins of the Temple of Apollo, overlooking the pearlescent Sanctuary to Athena Pronaia below and the sacred olive groves reaching down to the azure-blue sea, you immediately understand the sanctity of the site. This was a palpable, bodily experience almost impossible to put into words. This was a seat of a god, and that the sanctuary had to be located *here*, not on any other peak, but here, where the feeling—whatever it is—is most powerful. *This* was Delphi.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

STUDY TOUR CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

As we were arriving, the sun broke through the clouds and we were welcomed by the "glittering rocks" of Parnassos after a rainfall, described by many ancient poets. Although the colors, the music, the densely packed treasures, and people had long faded from the site, Parnassos' glittering face remained. I had never experienced a closer, more visceral connection to the people I have dedicated my adult life to studying. This experience—and my new understanding of sanctity inscribed in landscape—will doubtlessly resonate through my work as a student of ancient religion.

Student Reflection

Anna Thurston, M.A.R. '19, Joint Degree in Religion and Ecology, Yale Divinity School and Yale School of Forestry

This Ancient Greek Festivals course was the first time I've personally experienced a travel seminar promoted and funded by the Institute of Sacred Music. In Greece, I witnessed the classroom conversations of the preceding months come to life as I learned from the context of what I saw, felt, heard, and smelled around me. To apply what I learned so immediately, and so intimately, was an incomparable benefit found only in this travel seminar.

I also appreciated that the course was designed to attract a diverse cohort of Yale graduate and undergraduate students. Even as a joint-degree candidate in Religion and Ecology this class provided the amazing opportunity to connect and collaborate with art historians, scholars of Roman history, and those fluent in the Greek language (both ancient and modern).

I enjoy immensely the interdisciplinary dialogue from the weekly ISM Colloquia, so this course was like experiencing "ISM 2.0." Expanding beyond the boundaries of what the ISM offers (with its unique blend of musicians, artists, authors, and religious scholars), it situated me in a real-life paradigm with application outside of the university walls.

Photo by Anna Thurston

Temple of Zeus, Olympia, Greece

Photo by Anna Thurston

Olive Grove of Amfissa, the oldest olive forest in Europe, as seen from Mount Parnassus. Delphi, Greece

This travel seminar was the ideal environment to explore the visual, theological, and ecological implications found in ancient olive harvesting practices. The trip to Greece coincided with the olive harvest and my academic pursuits came alive with historical retrospection and contemporary application. As a result of the insightful readings, on-site materials, and contributions from my professors and my peers, for my final class project I focused on ancient arboricultural and harvesting practices of sacred olive trees, the oil of which was an award for athletic victors in the ancient festival of Panathenaia.

What would our modern Olympic games look like if, instead of for gold medals, victors competed for olive oil made from sacred trees? This question (among many) fueled my drive to thrive in this course and inspired me with even more questions to answer as I continue my time here at Yale.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

STUDY TOUR CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Student Reflection

Kristina Potuckova, Ph.D. Student, History of Art

It is a very particular experience to visit a country for the first time as a part of an ISM-sponsored travel seminar. It was doubly so for me on the trip to Greece, a lone medievalist exploring the sites of the ancient Greek festivals, their art, architecture, and sacred landscape.

After a quick but thrilling trip to the Byzantine monastery of Hosios Loukas, I found myself immersed in the art of ancient Greece. Examining works of art I had previously only seen in textbooks and slideshows, I got a chance to briefly experience my own field of art history as something new and unknown. I could appreciate the firm lines and the scale of the archaic *kouroi*, representing nude male youths at the height of their physical power. In the Acropolis Museum, I followed as a procession of statues marched along the walls once inside the Parthenon, reflecting the movement of people and animals during the Panathenaic procession in honor of the goddess Athena. The Acropolis itself was a revelation.

Photo by Kristina Potuckova

The Acropolis, Athens, View of the Erechtheion

Photo by Kristina Potuckova

Presentation at Pleuron

Comfortably familiar from a myriad of images, it nonetheless turned out to be much more spectacular when experienced first-hand. The majesty of the architectural remnants in the stark November sunlight was overpowering, supplying just a fleeting impression of the once-colorful and bustling ancient city.

Remembering the play of light and clouds at Delphi, it was easy to grow lyrical in my description of Greece. That tendency speaks primarily to the power of exploring objects and places in their materiality and physical setting, however much remains of it. This, along with being guided through these museums and sites by knowledgeable colleagues and professors, enhanced my understanding of the material of the course tremendously. The Greece trip combined the best of both worlds: the opportunity to learn in depth the various facets of ancient Greek culture while coming face-to-face with the objects and the monuments it left behind.

Coming Soon...Late Summer PRISM: The Travel Issue

... *with* Commencement farewells, Reflections on the ISM Study Tour to Spain, Art and Architecture Tour, Schola Tour, Organ Tour, Travel Seminar to China — and more!

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