

center for 21st century studies

a newsletter from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee ■ spring/summer 2007

SPRING PERFORMANCES

The Mammy Project and *Wonder Woman: The Musical*

During the spring 2007 semester the crowds at Center events were not only sizeable, as is usually the case, but they also were very diverse, with very significant representation from beyond the UWM campus. Partly responsible for this were two performances we organized in connection with our 2006-07 theme of “Autonomy, Gender, and Performance.” While very different, both projects could be seen as addressing all elements of our research theme in serious and thought-provoking ways. At the same time, it is clear that both Michelle Matlock (*The Mammy*



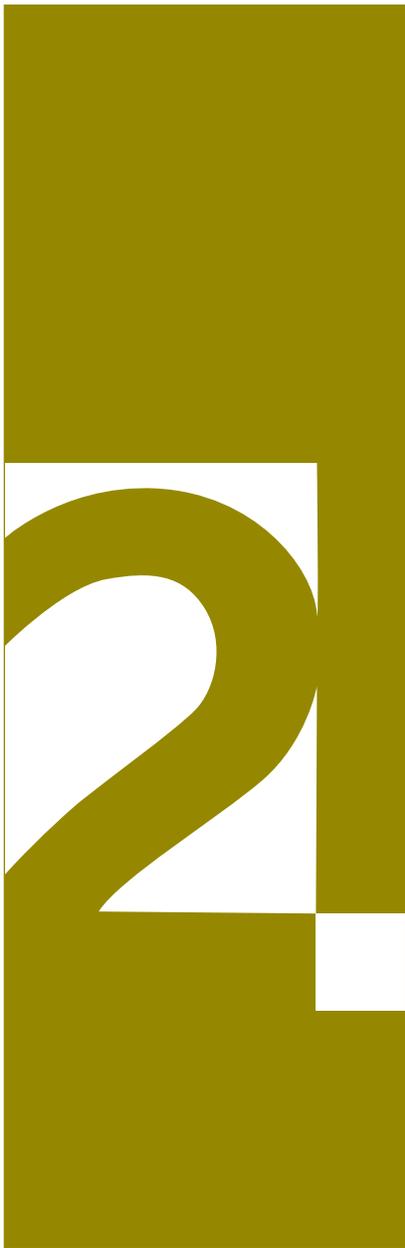
Performers Elizabeth Whitney (l) and Michelle Matlock (r)

Project) and Elizabeth Whitney (*Wonder Woman: The Musical*) appealed to a much wider audience than simply academics.

Organized in collaboration with the UWM Student Union’s Sociocultural Programming and presented as the keynote to the Second Annual Midwest Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference (organized in collaboration with the Center by UWM graduate students), *The Mammy Project* drew about 150 people to the Union Ballroom on Friday, February 23. On a warm spring evening two months later, Friday April 20, with two other theater events on campus and the popular Gallery Night underway in the city of Milwaukee, we were also very gratified by the 50-60 person crowd for *Wonder Woman: The Musical*.

Matlock, a graduate of the National Shakespeare Conservatory in New York City, explained that she seriously began developing *The Mammy Project* in 2001 after she was called by her agent to audition for an Aunt Jemima Pancake Mix radio commercial. Prior to that experience, she had strenuously resisted roles that purportedly “fit” her appearance. But the Aunt Jemima audition caused her to embrace the character as a way to confront the American stereotype of mammy as

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From the Director

Rueful comments on the swift passage of time are a standard feature of reaching a certain age, generally followed by eye-rolling from anyone significantly younger within hearing distance. I will risk eliciting this response, however, for my year as interim director of the Center has indeed sped by. In part this is because, as you can tell from the articles in this newsletter, the year has been very full. In the spring semester, we sponsored two speakers, a symposium, and two performances, and ended the year with a two-day conference, "In Terms of Gender." Each of these events involved the interdisciplinary collaboration that has been at the heart of the Center's mission since its founding, and all proved both professionally enriching and personally rewarding.

Our inclusion of "performance" as one part of this year's theme reflects a theoretical trend within humanities scholarship, as verbal and visual texts are increasingly understood to perform as well as to represent. Analysis of the performative nature of texts was at the heart of Lisa Nakamura's talk on facial recognition software, for example. Those of us in the audience who were fans of *24* responded with our own performance, as we sheepishly sought to distance ourselves from certain other fans of this central show in the Fox Network line-up, including Vice President Cheney. Performance was not simply a matter of scholarly analysis and audience response, however. The two actual performances, by Michele Matlock and Elizabeth Whitney, allowed us to reach out to audiences less familiar with the Center's programming, such as undergraduates and community members. They also gave us the opportunity to work with new and familiar partners across campus, including UWM Student Union Sociocultural Programming, the Multicultural Center, the Women's Resource Center, the Center for Women's Studies, Comparative Ethnic Studies, Africology, LGBT, and the Union Art Gallery.

The year has passed swiftly not simply because of special events, but also because of the regular meetings with Center fellows, whose interests and expertise led me to authors and issues that were completely new. Among these was Mat Rappaport's four channel video installation *span*, in which panel trucks traveled between the Port of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Art Museum, both sites of import and distribution. (For more on this, see Mat's website <http://www.meme01.com/projects/span.html>, although this does not show the cars driven by other fellows following alongside or behind the trucks.) We fans of *24* were not at all surprised to learn that the Art Museum was far more concerned about its security than was the Port, for whom, apparently, unmarked trucks carrying unmarked boxes back and forth are a common event.

Finally, the year has passed swiftly because I have worked with a wonderful staff, whose efficiency and thoroughness have made special events and regular Center business easy to oversee, and whose good humor and wit have made the office a pleasant place to hang out, as well as to work. Thus a special thank you to Kate, Ruud, Maria, Stella, and Scott.

—Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *History*, Interim Director

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*Performer Michelle Matlock in the opening sequence to
The Mammy Project, Friday, February 23*

Spring Performances

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a white man’s fantasy, a black woman’s history, and a country’s favorite product.

Focusing on the commercialization of mammy in the character of Aunt Jemima, *The Mammy Project* traveled from the life and times of Nancy Green (the first woman hired to play the part of Aunt Jemima for the R.T. Davis Mill Company at the 1893 World’s Exposition in Chicago), through the minstrel show era and silver-screen mummies, to the present day where Aunt Jemima is still bought and sold from her “pancake box prison.” With Matlock playing all the characters in the stories—including Nancy Green at various points in her life, and herself, often as commentator—the lively performance was able alternately to provoke and amuse, but always engage the audience.

During the “talk back” following the performance, many audience members joined a discussion that not only touched on the making of this particular project but also examined several of the larger issues raised by *The Mammy Project*. For example, Matlock and the audience discussed the continued use of racially stereotyped characters in advertising today and whether we can consider it progress that the “Uncle Ben” character will now be used as the CEO of his company, rather than a worker. The discussion continued in the more informal setting of a reception in the Union’s Fireside Lounge. Michelle Matlock’s performance was co-sponsored by the Department of Africology, the Union’s Women’s Resource Center,

the Union’s Multicultural Student Center, and UWM’s Comparative Ethnic Studies Program. We especially want to thank Alice Jackson and Brandon James of the UWM Student Union for their help in organizing the event.

Elizabeth Whitney, too, could be seen, to paraphrase a 2006-07 Center fellow, as a performer whose roles seem to be determined by the way she looks—to her disgruntlement. Just like Matlock, Whitney has used this to create performances that undermine, in her case, gender stereotypes. Just like, for example, her Barbie project, *Wonder Woman: The Musical* addresses issues of gender, sexuality, and popular



culture in post-World War II America.

An avid viewer of the original *Wonder Woman* television series in the 1970s, Whitney explains on her website that she conceived of this performance a few years ago, after watching the pilot episode of the show. She found herself “shocked at the excessively careful liberal feminist approach that the show took, where Wonder Woman herself seemed never to be claiming more than



reciprocal attention in the workforce—and as a secretary embarrassingly in love with and subservient to her (male) boss!” Ultimately, Whitney argues, the original *Wonder Woman* series relays a caution against radical feminism: whereas a little bit of independence is fine, ultimately women should take care with the amount of power they exercise, especially around men.

Wonder Woman: The Musical is Whitney’s attempt to make sense of 1970’s lesbian feminism, separatism, and superheroines as cultural icons. Performed in a campy narrative style characteristic of her work, the show opened with a narrative reflection (told by Whitney’s second grade self) on her adolescent adoration of Wonder Woman. The piece then transitioned into the “current tour,” with Whitney, now appearing as a nightclub/karaoke singer, performing cover songs such as Helen Reddy’s famous “I am Woman,” and Tammy Wynette’s “Stand by Your Man.” Whitney’s *Wonder Woman* reflected on her close friendship with Major Steve Trevor and the homophobia of the military, lessons in coalition building, gender essentialism, and subsequent alienation from Paradise Island. Regularly venturing off the stage to interact with the audience, Whitney also shared fan letters, and responded with eloquence to the inevitable questions concerning her cleavage, affairs, and the invisible plane.

This program, too, included a discussion session, followed by a reception at the Center. These additional gatherings first and foremost were

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Spring Performances

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opportunities for audience members to examine with Whitney aspects of



and ideas behind *Wonder Woman: The Musical*. In light of Whitney's time spent at UWM between 2002 and 2004, however, they also served as venues for several members of the Milwaukee and UWM communities to renew their friendships with the artist (and, we should add, her partner, Lea Robinson, former assistant UWM women's basketball coach).

Autonomy and the Pull of Convention: Colonial Efforts to Stop Female Circumcision in Sudan, 1920-1946:

A Lecture by Janice Boddy

Having had to cancel her much anticipated presentation in spring 2006, anthropologist Janice Boddy (Toronto) kicked off the Center's spring 2007 series of public events with her paper "Autonomy and the Pull of Convention: Colonial Efforts to Stop Female Circumcision in Sudan, 1920-1946." Based on her own fieldwork in Sudan in the 1990s and also on archival research, Boddy's talk explored how, in a non-Western context, autonomy can be revealed as a Western construct, not always in line with local practices and customs.

Professor Boddy began by reminding her audience that self-hood is not separate from the societal but instead is always performed in its context, and that in Islam there exists tension between the individual and the metaphysical, and between the collective and the quotidian. In colonial Sudan, female circumcision was not a process of individuals acting autonomously. This, Boddy went on to demonstrate, explains a great deal of why British efforts to counter the practice failed.

Following an explanation of female circumcision's embeddedness in local culture and tradition, Boddy traced British efforts to undermine it through the work of two sisters, who in the 1920s and 1930s together ran a midwife training school. Sensitive to the significance of the practice to the local population, they tried to teach a modified version, women's health being their main preoccupation. Because of discursive techniques they used to connect with their students, however, the sisters may unwittingly have reinforced the customs they were trying to change. Also, through their focus on midwives, and not the female population itself, they preserved women's status as passive and without agency.

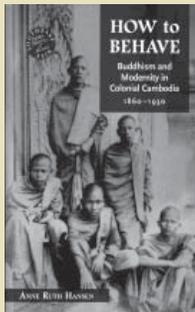
Confronted with, and horrified by, a continued, albeit modified, practice of female circumcision in Sudan, successors to the two sisters usually chose a more confrontational approach, often relying on state help. Local customs, however, proved more tenacious than Western models, and occasional rioting caused the British authorities to suspend their enforcement of anti-female-circumcision laws in 1947. The local population was equally successful in circumventing later British efforts to counter the practice through the schools.

At the end of her talk, the 25 person Center audience including faculty and students from History, Art History, Anthropology, Comparative Literature, and Women's Studies, eagerly engaged Professor Boddy in a discussion. This eventually continued during a busy reception at the Center.



EVENTS

Anne Hansen (History, Fellow in 2000-01; 2006-07) has published *How to Behave: Buddhism and Modernity in Colonial Cambodia, 1860–1930*



(University of Hawaii Press), an ambitious cross-disciplinary study of Buddhist modernism in colonial Cambodia that breaks new ground in understanding the history and development of religion and colonialism in Southeast Asia. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., University of Michigan, has welcomed Professor Hansen's study as follows: "In this fascinating study, Anne Hansen ... combin[es] extensive research with insightful analysis to both contextualize and complicate the category of modern Buddhism." Anne M. Blackburn, Cornell University, offers the following praise: "A remarkable characteristic of this book is the deftness with which the author moves between the intellectual currents of Buddhist studies and Southeast Asian history, drawing analyses of textual practice, regionalism, nation-building, and colonial experience into fruitful conversation."

Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music: A Lecture by Philip Auslander



On a snowy Friday, December 1, the Center conducted its final event of the Fall 2006 semester with a lecture by Philip Auslander (Literature, Communication and Culture, Georgia Tech; Theatre and Film Studies, Georgia). In spite of the exceptionally bad weather conditions that had led to the cancellation of all other UWM events and classes that day, the Center welcomed a large audience of faculty and students for "Suzi Quatro Wants to be Your Man: Female Masculinity in Glam Rock."

The lecture was based on Professor Auslander's book *Performing Glam Rock: Gender*

and Theatricality in Popular Music (Michigan, 2006), a work that received Suzi Quatro's own endorsement. Suzi Quatro has been criticized for trying to be "one of the boys." With the help of several video clips and audio files, Professor Auslander argued that Quatro's performances of gender and sexual identity contradict such characterization. Through close scrutiny of Quatro's performance strategies, including her repertoire, physical appearance, and vocal presence, Professor Auslander posited that the role of the female cock rocker, as she performs it, "destabilizes the gender codes from which it is constructed and celebrates the polymorphousness of identity."

By focusing on her ability to move through and across differently-gendered musical identities, Professor Auslander showed that Quatro did not simply personify the "female machisma" but created a new masculine female rocker image, not fully understandable either in terms of conventional femininity or as "one of the boys." Her new representation of sexually aggressive female subjects could be best understood as an instance of "female masculinity," a refusal on the part of masculine women to repress that aspect of themselves in favor of a more conventional femininity.

After Professor Auslander's multimedia presentation a lively discussion ensued with the Center audience. Questions ranged from gender issues as well as what Suzi Quatro has been doing more recently. In the end, most people who attended were thankful that they were able to attend, and, the blizzard conditions outside notwithstanding, enjoy a warm and intellectually stimulating atmosphere.

EVENTS

The Terrorist Look: Biometric Screens, Race, and the Digital Sublime: A Lecture by Lisa Nakamura

On Friday, March 30, a large Center audience followed guest speaker Lisa Nakamura (Speech Communication and Asian American Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) on a critical exploration of the use of digital technology in popular movies and television programs, especially the Fox show *24*.

In a talk entitled “The Terrorist Look: Biometric Screens, Race, and the Digital Sublime” (co-sponsored by the Department of English), Nakamura demonstrated how the combination of spectacle and technology can be strangely irresistible while at the same time obviously false. Focusing on biometrics and the viewing public’s apparently uncritical acceptance of their growing role and alleged accuracy, she argued that in a show like *24* “racialized detection” or racial profiling has been gradually and authoritatively introduced and made acceptable. With the help of a clip from *24*, Nakamura not only showed how popular culture stretches the image-processing prowess of the national security state far beyond what is technically possible, but also that an almost automatic, uncritical racial stereotyping underlies many of the story lines. Bad, grainy images always become good (and “true”) images; and the enemy is almost always non-white, while Central and East Asians are usually lumped together as potential hostile and dangerous “others.” In this last distortion, Nakamura pointed out, current popular culture resembles the anti-Japanese phobia of World War II, or the more recent persecution of Los Alamos National Laboratory scientist Wen Ho Lee.

In light of the fact that just down the hall another extra-curricular event was being held on a related topic, we were pleased to welcome a standing-room only crowd for Professor Nakamura’s presentation. As it turned out, several English department instructors were using Nakamura’s book *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet* (Routledge, 2002) with their undergraduate students, a good many of whom were in attendance. Earlier in the day, as part of the Center’s Curricular Project, English and Modern Studies graduate student Cara Ogburn—one of these instructors—was able to take advantage of Professor Nakamura’s visit to UWM through an extended one-on-one conversation over breakfast.

We also welcomed to the presentation Center fellows, and faculty and graduate students from Anthropology, Visual Art, English/Modern Studies, History, and Comparative Literature, among other disciplines. Following the talk, many audience members engaged Professor Nakamura with questions and comments, and quite a few also attended a small reception at the Center in Nakamura’s honor.



EVENTS

Performative Autonomy and the Embodied Past: A Symposium with Pamela Brown and Susan Cook

On Friday, March 9, the Center hosted its second symposium of 2006-07 in connection with its research theme, "Autonomy, Gender, and Performance." After last fall's "Conversion Tales: Missionaries, Mary Magdalene, and Catholic Culture," this symposium, co-sponsored by the departments of English, Geography, and Music, examined "Performative Autonomy and the Embodied Past." It consisted of two papers discussing depictions and assertions of identity and autonomy in European history, particularly through works of art.

The first speaker, Pamela Brown (English, Connecticut) presented work from a new project under the title "From 'Joke of Nature' to Woman as Wonder': Prodigies of Autonomy at the Early Modern Court." The paper focused on the extraordinary body, particularly dwarfs, and in particular "the strange and particular enjoyment" of the audience at the sight of the extraordinary body. Using contemporary paintings by way of illustration, Brown demonstrated how curiosity, horror, jest, and abuse were all part of the exhibition of dwarfs to the court or the public. But while dwarfs' relationship to their masters ranged from slave, pet, and, in a few cases, adviser, they were, Brown argued, also surprisingly like their monarchical masters. The example of Queen Elizabeth and her female dwarf, Tomasin, shows how both were objects of fascination, how they always had to "perform," and how they were "owned" by others who often ridiculed them and were preoccupied with their sex lives and reproductive abilities.



Pamela Brown

The second presentation was by Susan Cook (Musicology, UW–Madison) who discussed French composer Maurice Ravel and his post-World War I work *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, at once a memorial to the Great War and part of a (personal) attempt to move on from the war, even forget it. Ravel's position as a French musician par excellence, yet born of a Basque mother and a Swiss father, provides a means to explore identity, autonomy, memory and commemoration, Cook argued. In creating this work, Ravel's own experience and agenda reflected that of France as a whole. Having tried to serve in the war, but relegated to a non-combat task due to his small physique and weak health, Ravel in this work sought to create a memorial, the way the French built thousands of memorials at the time. His purposes were manifold: *Le Tombeau de Couperin* constructs and remembers bodies—those of his dead male comrades, their grieving kin, and an embodied past evoked through the use of French 17th-century dance forms. The composition also resembles a new beginning, for France at the end of the war, and for Ravel personally as his first work after the war. And because the dance element of the work actually failed to remind audiences of the war, purposely so for Ravel, Cook argued that Ravel also participated in the French attempt during the 1920s to forget the war.



Susan Cook

A diverse audience of faculty and graduate students from Art History, English, History, Journalism and Mass Communication, Modern Studies, and Music, among others, participated in a conversation with the presenters after the talks, an exchange that continued at a well-attended reception at the Center.

Current Center Fellows and Staff

Kristin Pitt (Comparative Literature) has presented: “‘No Corpse To Bury’: Narrating Duvalier’s Haiti from Brooklyn” at the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA) 2007 Meeting, Puebla, Mexico, April 19-22. She has also been awarded two grants: a Faculty Travel Award, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, UWM; and a Course Development Grant, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, UWM to develop a new course, Comparative Literature 365, “Literatures and Cultures of the Americas: Comparative Caribbeans.”

Mat Rappaport (Visual Art) was awarded one of twelve \$25,000 fellowships for 2007-08 by the George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation, administered by Brown University, Providence, RI. The twelve recipients, representing the fields of Visual Arts, Media Studies and the History of Art and Architecture, were selected from among 237 artists and scholars nominated by administrative officers of colleges, universities, and cultural institutions throughout the country. Mat’s project, in the category Visual Arts and Media Studies, is entitled “Office, A Multichannel Video Installation and Performance.”

Gillian Roger (Music) was invited by three institutions to give her lecture “Contextualizing Cross-dressing in Nineteenth-Century American Theater”: School of Music,

University of Minnesota, December 2006; Women’s Studies Colloquium, University of New Orleans, March; School of Music, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, April. She also completed three articles for the *Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World*: “Vaudeville,” “Burlesque,” and, as co-author, “Revue.”

Daniel J. Sherman (Director, on leave 2006-07) gave a talk on the former Musée des arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie and the new Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, at the inter-university doctoral seminar in art history at Concordia University in Montreal in March. In April he delivered a lecture, “Totemic Artists: Gaston Chaissac, Jean Dubuffet, and the French Primitive after 1945” at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

Tanya Tiffany (Art History) published “Velázquez’s Bodegones and the Art of Emulation,” *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte* 18 (2006). She also published a review of *Juan van der Hamen y León and the Court of Madrid*, by William B. Jordan, *caa reviews*. She was an invited speaker on the subject of “Velázquez’s *Supper at Emmaus* and African Slavery in Seventeenth-Century Seville,” at the National Gallery 1600-1800 Research Seminar, London, November, 2006; and on “Light, Darkness, and African Salvation in Seventeenth-Century Spain: Velázquez’s *Supper at Emmaus*,” for the Medieval and Early Modern Studies Group, Tulane University, New

Orleans, in May. She also presented her paper “Velázquez’s First Portrait of Philip IV and the Sources of Courtly Success,” at the College Art Association Annual Conference, New York, February.

2006-07 interim director, **Merry Wiesner-Hanks** (History) and former fellow **David Hoeveler** (History, 1980-81; 1988-89) have been appointed Distinguished Professor by the UW Board of Regents.

Former Center Speakers

Mary Louise Roberts (History, UW-Madison), a co-organizer of the Center’s spring 2007 conference “In Terms of Gender,” and **Daphne Berdahl** (Anthropology, University of Minnesota–Twin Cities), speaker at the spring 2005 Center mini-symposium “New European Frontiers,” have been named 2007 Guggenheim Fellows.

Engseng Ho (Anthropology and Social Studies, Harvard), a speaker at the Center’s spring 2005 conference “Routing Diasporas,” has been named 2007 Carnegie Scholar.

2002-03 Center speaker **Keller Easterling** (Architecture, Yale), has sent us a copy of her recent book, *Enduring Innocence* (MIT Press, 2005), which incorporates material from her Center lecture, “Pirates and Errors.” The book can be found on the new book shelf in the Center library.

Thank You!

We would like to express our thanks to the following people who in recent months have made financial donations to the Center, either in support of the Center's programming, or toward our envisioned endowment for the Tennesen Graduate Research Fellowship:

Debra Castillo; Deborah Gartenberg; Peter Goldberg; Gwynne Kennedy; Kenneth Kennedy; Lisa Moline; Kristin Pitt; Carol Quillen; Melvin Richter; the W.J. and J.K. Truettner Foundation; Katherine Wallingford; Hiroko Washizu; Robert Wolensky.

Fall 2007 Preliminary Calendar**FRI SEP 7**

Keith Hart (Anthropology, University of London)
3:30 pm CRT 118

FRI OCT 12***Past Knowing/Future Knowledge: Archaeology and Museums in the 21st Century***

a symposium organized by Jane Waldbaum (Professor Emerita Art History) and Daniel J. Sherman (History; Center director) including Patty Gerstenblith (Law, DePaul University), Carla Antonaccio (Classics, Duke University), Geoff Emberling (Oriental Institute, University of Chicago), and Virginia Fields (Curator, LACMA)

co-sponsored by Archaeological Institute of America–Milwaukee Society
1:30 pm CRT 175

FRI NOV 2***Fundamentalism, Violence, and Vision***

a symposium organized by Ihab Hassan (Vilas Professor Emeritus) and Peter Y. Paik (French, Italian, and Comparative Literature) with Alan Jacobs (Wheaton) and Klaus Stierstorfer (Muenster)

co-sponsored by College of Letters and Science, Comparative Study of Religion Program, Department of English, Department of French, Italian, and Comparative Literature, and UWM Foundation
10 am CRT 175

FRI NOV 16**Gwendolyn Wright** (Architecture, Columbia)

co-sponsored by School of Architecture and Urban Planning
4:30 pm AUP 170

Please check the calendar page on our website and the fall newsletter for a complete schedule.

Center Staff

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Vernessa Weatherall (Visual Imaging, UWM)

Center Welcomes Summer 2007 Graduate Research Fellows

Following the recommendation of its Advisory subcommittee on fellowships and programming, the Center has awarded a Tennesen Graduate Research Fellowship to UWM dissertator Ada Hyso (Political Science) for summer 2007. Her project is entitled "Ethnicity and Interstate War." David Kosalka (English) received an honorary mention, and he will have the use of a Center office for his research and writing. His project is entitled "Re-Writing History out of the Crisis of Modernity."

Center Staff Continues Tradition of Excellence

UWM photographer Vernessa Weatherall, project assistants Scott Canevit (2006-08) and Stella Lineri (2006-07), and Center office manager Maria Liesegang (pictured left to right) collaborated throughout 2006-07 to provide excellent program support for all Center activities, events, and receptions.

Additionally, building on work begun by 2004-06 project assistant Amity McGinnis, Stella and Maria completed the preparation of numerous materials from the Center's soon-to-be 40 year past for filing with the UWM Archive at the Golda Meir Library.

In addition to maintaining, designing, and developing the Center's web site, Scott will continue to work on the Center's photo archive of the past decades. Thanks to these efforts, anyone interested in tracing the history of Center activities beyond the archive



section of our website can also turn to the university's archive.

We wish a special farewell to Stella who will return to her hometown of Verona, Italy this summer.

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Audience in Curtin Hall 118, Friday, March 30th, for Lisa Nakamura's lecture *The Terrorist Look*

*"When something appears on a
computer screen, it must be true."
—Lisa Nakamura,
on the use of biometrics on 24*