

FIRST WORD: FROM THE DIRECTOR Salah M. Hassan

n behalf of my colleagues in the Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM), I welcome the opportunity of our first newsletter to introduce the ICM, its mission, goals and program of activities. Many Cornell faculty and students are now familiar with the ICM's activities, which we launched during this past (2007-2008) academic year. Many at Cornell or the larger Ithaca community and beyond attended our Fall 2007 inaugural lecture series that featured a group of leading scholars whose work engaged the study of modernity comparatively and in global contexts. The group included Cornell's emeritus Professor Benedict Anderson, Professors Sibylle Fischer of NYU, and David Scott and Timothy Mitchell of Columbia University. We are in the process of working to make sure that these talks will be published as part of an annual publication series sponsored by

Many Cornellians, among other invited guests, have also participated or attended the conference organized by our colleague Iftikhar Dadi (History of Art and Visual Studies) on Informalization and Representation in South Asia, which brought together a wonderful group of scholars from a variety of disciplines to examine the trope of the "informal" in relation to South Asia. Through comparative

studies of economy and labor, borders and piracy, new publics and political protest, and the role of media and aesthetics in their enactment and visibility, the speakers and the engaged audience had a significant encounter. The papers from this conference will be edited by Iftikhar and published this coming year, we hope, as part of a series on Comparative Modernities to be published by the ICM.

For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the work of the ICM, I would like to introduce the ICM's mission, goals and vision. The Institute is dedicated to the study of modernity in transnational and comparative perspective. It also hopes to galvanize work in this direction by encouraging cross-disciplinary collaborative research that is empirically faithful to geographical and historical

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specificity within a wider transnational context. The Institute brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars from the humanities and the social sciences, who are interested in the issue of comparative/global modernities. While the Institute's programming will, on the whole, engage the entire Cornell community, the Institute has also developed more focused initiatives directed toward two constituencies in particular—faculty at an early stage of their careers at Cornell, and graduate students. Moreover, the Institute will host international scholars and artists in an effort to foster greater international intel-

lectual and artistic exchange. Scholars and artists will be brought to campus to engage with the Cornell community either as part of an in-residence program, or as participants in conferences, workshops, collaborative projects, or formal and informal interactions with students. Our website is up and running, and we invite everyone to explore it and to learn more about our goals and activities; please bookmark http://icm.arts.cornell.edu/

More recently, we launched our Fall 2008 lecture series with an outstanding talk given by Susan Buck-Morss, the Jan Rock Zubrow '77 Professor in the Social Sciences, and professor of political philosophy and social theory in the Department of Government at Cornell University, who is also a member of our Advisory Board. On October 28, 2008, we presented our second lecture in the Fall 2008 series. Asef Bayat, the Netherlands-based Iranian American scholar and Director of the Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, gave a brilliant and insightful talk entitled "Islam, Democracy and Modernity." In addition, our brochure and newsletter should be on their way to the mail boxes of many our colleagues and students at Cornell or outside of it. We plan to conclude this academic year with a major workshop on "The Space-Time of Modernity and Global Hierarchies," to be organized by our colleague and board member Fouad Makki, Assistant Professor in the Department of Development Sociology.

We wish to extend a warm welcome and an open invitation to everyone to attend our launching reception on February 27, 2009, and the other activities and programs this year and in the years to come.

Salah M. Hassan Director

knowingly repeat colonialism's ideological divisions between "them" and "us," with inscrutable backwardness all on one side and enlightened modernity all on the other. This results in ghettoized scholarship, deleterious to all. The usual equation of the modern with the West needs to be problematized and opened up to comparative examination.

This Institute hopes to galvanize further work in this direction by encouraging cross-disciplinary collaborative research that is empirically faithful to geographic and historical specificity, yet also situated in relation to comparative methodological frameworks. By bringing attention to less frequently studied aesthetic and social practices from non-Western and immigrant communities, the Institute hopes to correct existing standard accounts of modernity as primarily Western in origin and effects.

Institutional Mission

The Institute has begun to bring together groups of interdisciplinary scholars from different fields, including the humanities and the social sciences, proceedings of the seminars, lecture series, or conferences put together by the Institute's

The Institute plans to host scholar-in-residence and artist-in-residence programs to foster international intellectual and artistic exchange. These would take a variety of forms: in-residence, or invited for conference, workshops, collaborative work, and interaction with students.

The **Executive Board members** and founders of the Institute for Comparative Modernities are

- · Salah M. Hassan, Director (Director, Africana Studies and Research Center; History of Art)
- **Iftikhar Dadi** (History of Art)
- Fouad Makki (Development Sociology)
- · Barry Maxwell, Resident Director 2008-2009 (Comparative Literature and American Studies)
- Natalie Melas (Comparative Literature)
- · Viranjini Munasinghe (Anthropology and Director, Asian American Studies)
- · Sunn Shelley Wong (English and Asian American Studies)

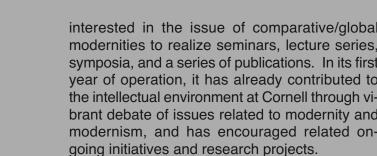
WHAT IS THE ICM?

Intellectual Vision and Objectives

The Institute of Comparative Modernities (ICM) addresses a key problem in the study of modern culture and society: the transnational history of modernity and its global scope. A broad range of scholarship over the last few decades has contested and complicated the two primary dimensions of the received narrative of modernity in its broadest sense: 1) that it arose strictly within the confines of Europe; and 2) that its extension outside Europe was a matter of simple diffusion and imitation. What is emerging instead is an account of modernity in which deep and multifarious interconnections are seen to have created complementary cultural formations. The study of modern culture and society cannot be limited to a single geographical area or a singular history; it must develop comparative cross-cultural

frameworks, which can trace the links between particular forms of culture, power, and history and a global network of forces and relations.

This Institute is dedicated to the study of modernity in such a comparative context. Its primary emphasis falls on neglected or under-studied articulations of modernity outside of or marginal to the dominant paradigms of Europe and the United States, but it also gives serious attention to conflicts and complexities within Western modernity and its entanglement with other cultures. The Institute aims to make important contributions to a genuinely global analysis of modernity, a task of particular urgency in our time. Inadequate understanding of the complex history of modernity across the world has lead to simplistic and untenable positions, which un-



The Institute provides a space for Cornell faculty and graduate students to organize crossdisciplinary research working groups; these may run for one or two years and will culminate in a conference and/or publication. The Institute will commit to providing seed money for the establishment of a number of collaborative research working groups.

The Institute provides intellectual and institutional support for scholars early in their careers at Cornell. Each year one of the ICM Executive Board or Advisory Board members will develop a theme for a project and lead its implementation.

The Institute is in the process of developing a



- · Benedict Anderson (International Studies, Government and Asian Studies, Cornell)
- · Susan Buck-Morss (Government and History of Art and Visual Studies, Cornell)
- Brett de Bary (Asian Studies and Comparative Literature, Cornell)
- Manthia Diawara (Film and Comparative Literature, and Director of the Institute of African American Affairs, New York University)
- Okwui Enwezor (Dean of Academic Affairs and Senior Vice President, San Francisco Art Institute)
- George E. Lewis (Music, Columbia University)
- Lisa Lowe (Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, University of California, San Diego)
- Timothy Mitchell (Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University)
- Naoki Sakai (Asian Studies and Comparative Literature, Cornell)
- · Shirley Samuels (English, and Chair, History of Art, Cornell)

For more informations about us, please see our website (http://icm.arts.cornell.edu/).

interested in the issue of comparative/global modernities to realize seminars, lecture series, symposia, and a series of publications. In its first year of operation, it has already contributed to the intellectual environment at Cornell through vibrant debate of issues related to modernity and modernism, and has encouraged related on-

series of publications (special series, a periodical) with an academic publisher. This will be the venue to publish a series of books based on the

LECTURE SERIES

2007-2008

Benedict Anderson, "Cutting History Off at the Pass: Time and Space on the fringes of the late 19th C world-system."

September 27, 2007

Anderson's lecture was an exploration of José Rizal's astonishing last novel, El Filibusterismo, situated in the transnational space/time of the late nineteenth-century global landscape. Imperial power, anarchist bombings, and anti-colonial insurrections were transformed to explosive effect by the gifted young Filipino novelist, and make possible a new understanding of the literary and political interactions between world capital and colonial periphery in the fin-de-siècle. Noting that Rizal's novel, peculiarly enough for the nineteenth century, was set in a time yet to come "in the near future", Anderson went on to speak more generally about pasts/futures/presents anchored in different spaces.

Timothy Mitchell, "The Fabrication of Modernity: Economy, Energy, Empire." November 2, 2007 Timothy Mitchell's presentation focused on what he called "carbon democracy," and how different ways of organizing the flow and concentration of energy shaped its possibilities These possibilities were en-

INSTITUTE FOR COMPARATIVE MODERNITIES

BENEDICT ANDERSON

Cutting History Off at the Pass:

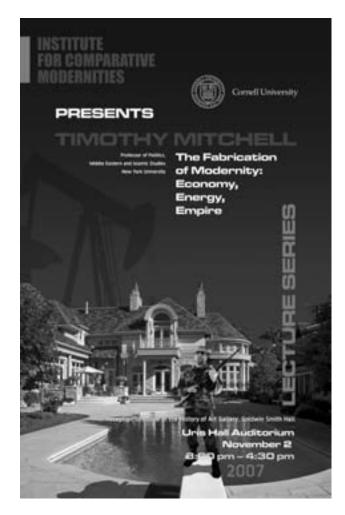
Type and Space
Type and Space
on the trivings of the late 19th Century
world-systems.

Lewis Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall September 27, 4:30pm hanced or limited by the arrangements of people, finance, expertise, and violence that were assembled in relationship to the distribution and control of energy. In this context, democratic politics developed with a peculiar orientation towards the future: the future understood as a limitless horizon of growth. This horizon was not some natural reflection of a time of plenty, but was the result of a particular way of organizing expert knowledge and its objects, in terms of a novel and bounded world called "the economy."

David Scott, "Norms of Self-Determination." February 12, 2008

The third lecture for the 2007-2008 academic year for the Institute for Comparative Modernities was delivered by Professor David Scott of the anthropology department at Columbia University. Professor Scott's most recent books include *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) and *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). He is the founding editor of the journal Small Axe.

Professor Scott is currently working on the question of Third World sovereignty which was the subject of his presentation entitled "Norms of Self-Determination." In his presentation, Scott systematically and critically examined the conditions stipulated for Third World sovereignty from the time of Empire to the post cold war context. He asked if sovereignty was irrelevant to the Third World given the present political order or if sovereignty was still an unfinished project; Scott traced how the ideological terms for the privilege of sovereignty had dramatically shifted from the decolonization period to the post cold war context.



While the normative conditions for self-determination during the decolonization period rested on a moral imperative that granted a toleration of plurality of political forms, the post cold war period, Scott argued, has witness the meteoric rise of the concept of democracy where all debate around political possibilities are foreclosed by the "blackmail of democracy." Detached now from the anti-colonialist narrative marking the dusk of Empire, democracy has become the new global standard of the post cold war international system. Ironically, democracy as a new normative standard is highly intolerant because it endorses only a single form and ethos of political identity. As such, the dominance of democracy marks a triumphalist narrative of the West whereby "democracy is the new political name of an old civilizing project."

Sibylle Fischer, "When Things Don't Add Up: The Consequences of Enslaved Enlightenment."

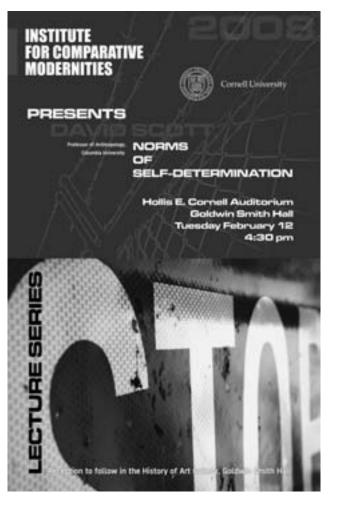
March 27-28, 2008

Sibylle Fischer is Associate Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Comparative Literature, and Africana Studies at New York University. She is the author of *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Duke University Press, 2004), a groundbreaking study which has received four major awards to date. As the first full account of the ramifications of the Haitian revolution in 1804 for the culture of the Hispanophone Caribbean islands during the nineteenth-century, the book is an important contribution to the study of Caribbean history and culture. It also develops a very innovative interdisciplinary methodology combining literary analysis with archival research in order to study the traces of an incompletely recorded history.

Most apposite for the project of the Institute for Comparative Modernities, *Modernity Disavowed* also develops a new concept of modernity to account for the peculiarities of the experience of modernity in this particular non-European region. Fischer argues that the historical and cultural rupture represented by the Haitian revolution had to be actively disavowed in order to maintain existing hierarchies and that therefore the promulgation of European modernity in the islands is shadowed by the willful disavowal of the local revolution and its claims on modernity.

The lecture, consisting entirely of new work, essentially extended some of the main arguments about disavowal in Modernity Disavowed to the domain of political theory and offered an original resolution of a much discussed central contradiction in the work of the seminal philosopher of liberalism, John Locke (1632-1704), whose ideas were particularly central to the American Constitution. The contradiction concerns Atlantic slavery. Fischer outlined Locke's economic and political connections to slavery during his time: He was an investor in the English slave trade through the Royal Africa Company and he also contributed to the drafting of the constitution of the Carolinas which codified the master's absolute power over his slaves. This and other texts appear to be in direct contradiction with the main tenets of Locke's philosophy, namely the absolute freedom and equality of men in a state of nature. Scholars have largely sidestepped the contradiction by suggesting either that the support of slavery was in some sense a worldly fault or error with no intrinsic bearing on Locke's philosophy or that fundamental racism made him implicitly exclude Africans from the category of humanity, and hence from the human right to freedom and equality.





Through a rigorous textual analysis of key passages in Locke's writing, Fischer argued that, on the contrary, the question of slavery is central to Locke's writing and that in the end it boils down not so much to a contradiction but to the complex disavowal involving the double negative encapsulated in the formulation: The African is not not human// the African is not not a beast. The ramifications of this argument for what is perhaps the fundamental tenet of philosophical (and political) modernity are potentially very great, for the argument suggests that the exclusion or demotion of non-Europeans and slaves from full humanity—and hence from freedom and from the autonomy of reason—is not introduced ex post facto, or fundamentally subsidiary to the major philosophies of the enlightenment, but rather intrinsic to them from the very start. The lecture was well-attended—with between 30-40 people in attendance—and drew a genuinely interdisciplinary crowd including students and faculty from History, Art History, Development Sociology, Government, Anthropology, Comparative Literature, English, Romance Studies and Africana.

We organized a follow-up seminar the following morning loosely organized around a reading of the introduction to Modernity Disavowed. Despite the unappealing time—9:30 Friday morning—and a freak snow storm, we had 10 people in attendance, two faculty members (Melas and Wong), six graduate students (Government, English, Romance Studies) and two undergraduates. We started with a general consideration of the text but the discussion really took off when students began articulating how the questions addressed there related to their own research. Had there not been a bus to catch the discussion could easily have continued another hour. As it was we had to break it off at 11:30.

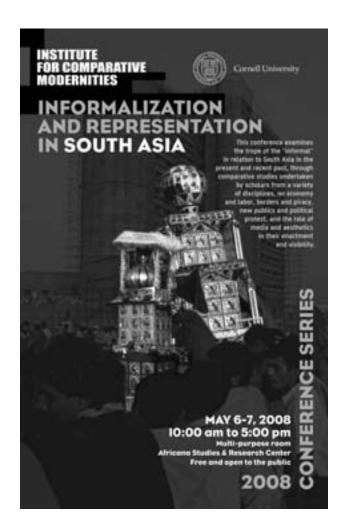
ICM ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2008

Informalization and Representation in South Asia

May 6 and 7, 2008. Organized by Iftikhar Dadi.

Synopsis

In the last decade, there has been a growing recognition of the growth of new civic cultures and greatly enhanced participation of various non-state actors in the public spheres in South Asia. Scholars have recognized that this phenomenon is characteristically urban, deeply implicated in social modernity and enabled by modern communications and media technologies. This civil sphere also bears a complex relationship with the state, which may range from col-



laboration to indifference to antagonism, but which cannot in any case be delimited to the actions of the state. And while the participation of non-state actors in constructing social movements has a genealogy that extends back into the early years of the twentieth century, the "emerging public sphere" has greatly expanded in significance during the last two decades, as the domain of the state has been increasingly seen as "in retreat" since its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s.

While scholarly literature has been salutary in bringing attention to the salience of this development, contributors have largely stressed its socio-political and religious dimensions. There have been few attempts by humanists to understand the aesthetic strategies of mediation in the South Asia. In particular, the articulated relationship between modernity and representation has resulted in a great flowering of representations of "everyday life." The relationship between popular (folk) culture and mass media in urban South Asia and Middle East is mutually constitutive and complex, and allows for various groups and agents to exploit the aesthetic potential available in both realms. If popular culture allows aura and charisma to retain potency in the modern urban site, the reproductive potential of mass media, based on seriality and repetition of cultural codes, makes for malleable and widely recognizable representational languages for production and consumption in response to new social and political developments. Mass-mediated popular culture also allows for much greater participation by numerous nonstate bodies, political organizations, religious parties, artists and others, producing the city as an extremely rich and dense palimpsest of visual and representational references.

The rise of this visual popular culture and its associated informal politics has not received sufficient attention. Precisely because the path towards smooth and formal participation in official public life is blocked or impeded for diverse groups, their concerns are expressed obliquely by images, specters, shadows, and silhouettes. Thus a fuller account of civic and political activity will need to come to terms with these popular activities of non-state urban actors, including those of artists as they increasingly venture beyond the museum/gallery circuit. A wider conception of the public sphere, beyond rationalized and legalized debate, needs to encompass the symbolic and fantastic dimensions of the increasingly aestheticized and spectacularized character of urban popular culture in contemporary South Asia and Middle East. This research project examines informal activities since the beginning of the twentieth century, by historical and comparative studies undertaken by scholars in a variety of disciplines.

Organized by **Iftikhar Dadi**, this two day conference held at the Multi-purpose Room of the Africana Studies and Research Center examined the trope of the "informal" in relation to South Asia in the present and recent past, through comparative studies undertaken by scholars from a variety of disciplines. These included studies on economy and labor, borders and piracy, new publics and political protest, and the role of media and aesthetics in their enactment and visibility. The participants were mostly younger scholars, who brought new perspectives to the emergent visual cultures in contemporary India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. The conference was well attended and drew a highly engaged audience from faculty and graduate students from across Cornell.

Itty Abraham is Associate Professor of Government and Asian Studies, and Director of South Asia Institute at University of Texas at Austin. In his presentation, "The New Borderland: Security Aesthetics and Illicit Spaces," he discussed the emergence of new modes of security apparatus in India as evidenced by bodyguards constantly accompanying political figures in the public. Abraham argued for a distinction between the categories of the illicit and the illegal in understanding the crisis of the nation-state in contemporary South Asia.

Kamran Asdar Ali, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas, Austin, presented a paper titled "Women Works and Public Spaces: Conflict and Co-Existence among Karachi's Poor." He analyzed the problems and accommodations in everyday life faced by two ethnic groups in a large informal settlement in Karachi, which has witnessed sustained ethnic violence since the 1970s. Deftly combining fieldwork with readings of works by local poets, Asdar showed how life in this settlement continues to play out under the shadow of gendered violence.

Kaushik Basu is Carl Marks Professor in the Department of Economics, and Director, Center for Analytic Economics, Cornell University. In his paper, "The Informal in South Asia: Notes from the Field," he argued that in economics a sharp line is often drawn between the formal and the informal. The labor market has a formal sector, the one that is analyzed, modeled and dissected, but across its boundaries lie the "informal"—unregulated, murky, ill-understood. Economists treat the law as well-defined, structured and with clear implications for how an economy functions, but just beneath and beyond its shadows stretches the terrain of social norms, collective beliefs and culture, which are treated as informal, having fuzzy origins and no clear structure. His lecture reported on how the formal and the informal sectors interact and how some of the clues to an economy's success and failures lie in the "informal."

Arindam Dutta is Associate Professor, History, Theory and Criticism at MIT. In "On the Way to the Thousand-Pillared Mandapam: The Follies of Debt," he analyzed how neoliberal refashioning of India's economy has spawned resistance in marginal and tribal areas in much of the northeast of the country. Analyzing the monuments to resistance figures killed in encounters with the government, Dutta argued for their status as memorials to a conflict in which subaltern figures face increasingly intrusive state and capitalist penetration into the periphery.

Jamal J. Elias is the Class of 1965 Term Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies as well as Interim Chair of the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. In his presentation, "An Economy of Signs in the Decoration of





Vehicles in Pakistan," he showed how the last three decades have witnessed a dramatic, qualitative increase in the level of vehicle decoration. More recently, the Pakistani Anglophone bourgeoisie (and an international art community) has appropriated truck decoration as a national pop art form in which vehicle decoration is detached from the significance it holds among the section of society that produces it and constitutes its primary audience. For the Anglophone bourgeoisie, vehicle decoration is kitsch art through the appreciation of which they participate in an imagined national popular culture.

Shelley Feldman is Professor of Development Sociology and former Director of the South Asia Program and the Program on Gender and Global Change and currently the Director of Feminist, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Her paper was entitled "Claiming a Past, Making a Future: In Honor of the Liberation War Museum, Dhaka, Bangladesh." Twenty-four years after an anti-colonial struggle against the British, the war in East Pakistan was a struggle for a second independence, this time from Pakistan. It took another twenty-five years for a constituency of public citizens to build a national war museum demanding recognition of this genocidal war and its freedom fighters. Focusing on the Mukktijoddah Jadughar (Liberation War Museum) as a site of recuperation and contestation, she offered a reading of Bangladeshi history that acknowledges the centrality of independence in constructing national citizenship, particularly salient given the resurgence of political Islam.

Kajri Jain is Assistant Professor at Center for Visual and Media Culture at the University of Toronto. Her paper, "'I have Nothing to Hide': Icons, Publics, and the Vectors of Porous Legality in Postcolonial India," discussed monumental religious statues springing up all over India and in the South Asian diaspora since the early 1990s, that is, directly in tandem with economic liberalization. Jain situated them in a broader historical view of the ways in which the market has been and is being produced as an entity that articulates with the state in India, and what that has meant for the category of culture, and for the contexts of production, circulation and reception of images, as well as the kinds of subjects and subjectivities that they bring into play.

Genevieve Lakier is currently a fellow at the Weatherhead Center for International and Area Studies at Harvard University. Her paper, "The Syndicate and the Chakka Jam: Protest and the Extralegal in Nepal," discussed the modalities by which a cartel of public transport syndicates shut down all public and private transportation on the highways of Nepal for a period of thirteen days "wheel stop" or "chakka jam" in 2003. She examined the chakka jam in the context of the ongoing struggles by the government in Nepal to reform the transportation industry, as part of a broader neoliberal push against anti-competitive market practices. The ultimate failure of the government to implement these reforms in the face of the syndicate's chakka jam

makes visible, she argued, the limits of the state's power in Nepal, and the alternative, often extralegal means by which political authorities like the transport syndicates order and discipline Nepal's roads.

Ravi Sundaram is a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi and an initiator of the Sarai program on media and urban culture. In his presentation, "The Pirate Kingdom," Sundaram analyzed how Indian cities saw unending waves of new, commodified technological objects entering markets, homes, and offices in globalization. Pirate production and circulation was a publicly perceived sphere of this new world of things. This included most consumer products but was particularly significant in media goods whose surfaces spread in every part of the city. These goods took on life as counterfeits, fakes or copies, or in popular language – the "pirated," the "local" or "duplicate." As with early modern print culture, piracy is again the centre of the debate over access and authenticity; low cost digital reproduction in the late 20th century both recalled and radically expanded early modern conflicts.

LECTURE SERIES 2008-2009

Susan Buck-Morss (Professor of Political Philosophy and Social Theory, Department of Government, Cornell).

"Who Owns Time? Picturing the Apocalypse After the Hijra."

October 9, 2008.

The Liébana Beatus, a series of illuminated manuscripts of the last book of the Bible (Revelation) produced in Umayyad Spain (8th-13th centuries), has been interpreted solely within the European art-historical tradition, an approach that blunts the punctuality of the Beatus endeavor. What explains the significance of the Apocalypse for Christian monks at this time, and in this political context (the largely peaceful Muslim role of Spain)? Tracing a stylistic, and hence substantive connection to the non-European epistemic and iconic economies of Syria, Egypt, and North Africa, this presentation challenges the whole conception of separate civilizations. The evidence suggests a common attempt by all of those affected by the historical appearance of Islam to understand the world-historical event of the new Prophecy within the textual tradition of Jewish and Christian cosmologies **Asef Bayat** (ISIM Director and Professor at Leiden University, The Netherlands).

"Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn."

October 29, 2008.

Asef Bayat delivered a thoughtful talk comparing developments in contemporary Iran and Egypt. Bayat argued that debates about a "democratic deficit" in Muslim societies are currently dominated by a focus on Islam as a hindering factor, Islam being incompatible with democracy. Arguing that this framework was misguided, as it assumes an idealized and singular "Islam," Bayat stressed seeing "Islam" as a social process in which diverse segments of the faithful (women, men, the old, young, the poor, the powerful, clerics and laymen) struggle to define the "truth" of their creed and the core values of their society. Thus the question is not whether Islam is or is not compatible with democracy, but rather how and under what conditions living Muslims make (or unmake) their religion to embrace a democratic ethos. Islamism and "post-Islamism" represent two broad movements that pull Islam into two different (exclusive/authoritarian vs. inclusive/democratic) directions. The challenge for social movements today is not just how to hegemonize a democratic, post-Islamist, narrative of Islam, but how to translate this narrative into political power.

Asef Bayat has taught sociology and Middle East studies at the American University in Cairo, and held visiting positions at the University of California, Berkeley, Columbia University, and the University of Oxford. His academic interests range from Political Sociology, Social Movements, to Urban Space and Politics, International Development, Contemporary Mid-

dle East, and Islam and the Modern World. He has conducted ethnographic research in the areas of popular mobilization in the Iranian Revolution; labor movements; politics of the urban poor; development NGOs; everyday cosmopolitanism; comparative Islamisms; and Muslim youth cultural politics, primarily in Iran and Egypt. He is the author of *Workers and Revolution in Iran* (London, 1987); *Work, Politics and Power* (New York, 1991), and *Street Politics* (New York, 1998). Most recently, he has written *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford, 2007).

Asef Bayat's visit was co-sponsored by the Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Elizabeth Povinelli (Professor of Anthropology and the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Columbia University).

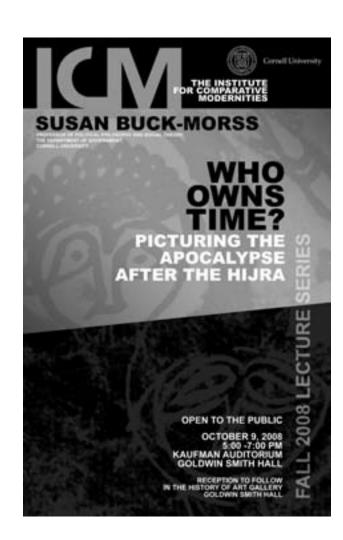
" Road Kill: Giving Up, Giving In and Getting Even in Late Liberalism."

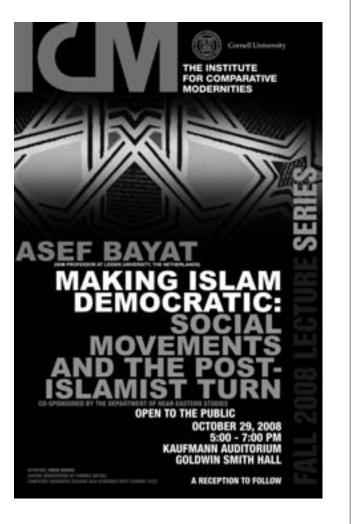
February 26, 2009. 4:30 – 6 p.m.

Kaufmann Auditorium

Goldwin Smith Hall

Elizabeth A. Povinelli is a former editor of the journal *Public Culture* and is currently senior editor of that publication. She has written three books, *Labor's Lot* (Chicago, 1994), *The Cunning of Recognition* (Duke, 2002), and *The Empire of Love* (Duke, 2006). She is currently completing her fourth book, provisionally titled *The Tense of the Other: Economies of Abandonment in Late Liberalism*.





Biodun Jeyifo (Professor of African and African American Studies and of Literature and Comparative Literature, Harvard University)

"Afropessimism and Afrofuturism and Postmodernity"

March 30, 2009. 4:30 – 6 p.m.

Kaufmann Auditorium

Goldwin Smith Hall

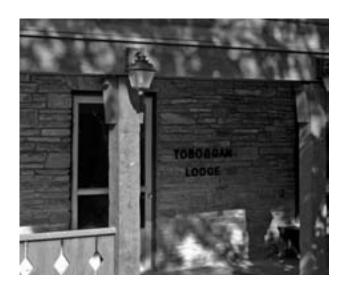
Biodun Jeyifo taught at Cornell University as Professor of English for eighteen years before departing for Harvard in July 2006. He had previously taught at Oberlin College and at the University of Ibadan and the University of Ife in his native Nigeria. Between 1980 and 1982, he served as the National President of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the country's professional association of teaching and research faculty; in this position, he helped to shape state policy in the direction of consolidation of academic autonomy and adequate funding of tertiary education in Nigeria. Professor Jevifo works on the complex connections between literature, critical theory, radical humanities scholarship and twentieth century progressive and revolutionary social philosophy. His most recent book-length publication, Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics, and Postcolonialism (Cambridge University Press, 2004), won one of the American Library Association's Outstanding Academic Texts (OATS) awards

SPRING 2009 EVENT ICM OPEN HOUSE

2/26, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.,

Institute for Comparative Modernities open house reception. Alumni, students, faculty, staff, and the public are welcome. Our inaugural reception will be a time to eat, drink, converse, and learn about the ICM. Toboggan Lodge, 38 Forest Home Drive.

For location and parking, see http://www.icm.arts.cor-nell.edu/contact.html



ICM ANNUAL CONFERENCE

May 12-14, 2009 Working Group The Space-Time of Modernity and Global Hierarchies

2009

Participants: Gurminder Bhambra, Sudipta Kaviraj, Michael Löwy, Fouad Makki, Kamran Matin, Justin Rosenberg, Naoki Sakai, Robbie Shilliam, Göran Therborn, Eleni Varikas, David Washbrook, and Shelley Wong.

Contemporary debates about alternative or multiple modernities can be situated among a number of new ways of understanding the relationship between historical time and global social hierarchies. This relationship has conventionally been understood in terms of a growing antagonism between an abstract world-time of capitalist modernity, and differential spaces and times not yet drawn into that world, and hence defined as different. Abstracted from nature and emptied of cultural meaning, world time was elaborated into an overarching temporal ideology of Progress and in the context of the colonial experience superimposed on the infinite plurality of local times and places, distributing them into a hierarchy that legitimated capitalist modernity's geopolitical dominance

Recent years have witnessed a virtual paradigm shift that has begun to displace this predominantly unilinear and Eurocentric understanding of the origins and dynamics of modernity as a historical process. The extension of globalization studies back into the past has uncovered causal patterns of interconnectedness reaching back well beyond the era of capitalist industrialization. Simultaneously, a major revival of World History studies has significantly revised our understanding of the "rise of the West" itself, relocating it in a wider interactive narrative of the birth of the modern world. In addition, postcolonial theory has sought to recover both the active agency of subaltern subjects at the height of European imperialism, and the "alternative" and "multiple modernities" which have subsequently come to hybridize the nature of the contemporary world.

Yet while all these approaches illuminate the play of difference, polarity, and inequality *across* the political multiplicity of modern social development, arguably none has yet constituted that multiplicity itself as an explicit object of theory. The intention of this workshop is to bring these various approaches together for a critical reconceptualization of the space-time of modernity, one that offers a way of rearticulating a range of issues that have become locked into a series of

unhelpful binaries: internal/external, modern/traditional, West/non-West.

EVENT IN PLANNING



Mahmoud Darwish Memorial

The Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, born 1941, died on August 9, 2008. In September, 2009, with the passage of a year, we plan to remember his work and its significance in an informal setting. For information on the planning of the event, please contact Reem Fadda, rf292@cornell.edu and Salah Hassan, sh40@cornell.edu.

Monday: Muwashah

I pass by your name when I'm alone Like a Damascene passing through Andalusia Here lemon lit up for you the salt of my blood

And here a wind fell from a mare

I pass by your name. No army or country Encircles me. As if I were the last of the guards Or a poet strolling within his thoughts . . .

Mahmoud Darwish (Trans. Jeffrey Sacks)

الإثنين، مُؤشِّح

أَمْرُ بِالسَّمِكِ، إِذْ أَخَلُو إِلَى نَفْسِي كَمَا يُرُّ وَمُشْفِقُ بِأَنْفُلُس

هُنَا أَضَاءَ لِكِ اللَّمُونُ مِلْحَ وَمِي وهَهُنَا، وتَعَثَّ رِيخٌ عَنِ القَرْسِ

أَمْرُ بَاشِمِكِ، لا جَنْشُ تَحَاصِرْتِي ولا بِلادٌ، كَأْنِي أَخْرُ الْحُرْسُ أَوْ شَاعَرُ بِغُمِشِي فِي هُواجِسِهِ...

RECENT PUBLICATIONS BY ICM MEMBERS

Viranjini Munasinghe

- (2005) "Narrating the Nation through Mixed Bloods," in Social Analysis Vol. 49 (3):155-163. Reprinted in George Baca edited, *Nationalism's Bloody Terrain: Racism, Class Inequality, and the Politics of Recognition*. New York and London: Berghahn Press, 2006
- (2006, November) "Theorizing World Culture through the New World: East Indians and Creolization," in *American Ethnologist* Vol. 33 (4) 549-562.
- (2006, November) "Claims to purity in theory and culture: Pitfalls and promises (commentary)," in *American Ethnologist* Vol. 33 (4) 588-592.
- (2007) "Dougla logics and nation building in Trinidad," in *South Asian Review*. Special issue on "Empire and Racial Hybridity." Edited by Deepika Bhari. Vol: 27 (1): 182- 204. Reprinted in Rethinking Diaspora Studies: Multi-Locality and Globalization. Edited by R. Radhakrishnan and Susan Koshy. Oxford. Oxford Unniversity Press, 2008.
- (2008) "Reclaiming theory in the face of epistemological collapse" in *Knowing How to Know: Fieldwork and the Ethnographic Present*. Edited by Narmala Halstead, Eric Hirsch and Judith Okely. Oxford. Berghahn Books, EASA series.

Barry Maxwell

- "Chromatic Shadows, So What: Notes toward Clearer Reception of David Hammons's Signals." *Diaspora Memory Place. David Hammons/ Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons/ Pamela Z.* Edited by Cheryl Finley and Salah M. Hassan, the book was published this year in Munich by Prestel.
- Forthcoming (he hopes) from the University of Michigan Press, *Recognition at the Crossroads*, the selected prose of the African American poet and scholar Lorenzo Thomas, edited by Barry Maxwell.

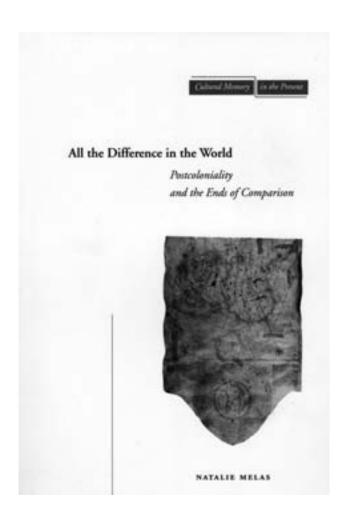
Iftikhar Dadi

- "Shirin Neshat's Photographs as Postcolonial Allegories," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. Vol. 34, No. 1 (Autumn 2008).
- Book review of Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde*, 1922-1947. London: Reaktion Books, 2007. *The Art Bulletin* (December 2008).
- "Investigating Tradition, Interrogating the Popular: Contemporary Art from Pakistan." Invited catalog essay for Indian Highway exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, London, December 2008.

"Body and Shelter: On Lida Abdul's Videos." Invited catalog essay, *The Architecture of Desire*, Edith Kinney Gaylord Cornerstone Arts Center, Colorado College (2008).

Natalie Melas

All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison. Stanford University Press, 2007



This book argues that inclusiveness is not a sufficient response to postcolonial and multiculturalist challenges to comparative approaches because it leaves the basis of equivalence unquestioned. What is needed is a concerted examination of the process of comparison itself. In readings of important novelists (Joseph Conrad, Simone Schwartz-Bart), poets (Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott), and theorists (Edouard Glissant, Jean-Luc Nancy), All the Difference in the World elaborates the idea of "incommensurability" to account for modes of cultural comparison in which there is a ground for comparison but no basis of equivalence.

- "Untimeliness, or, Négritude and the Poetics of Contra-modernity" in *South Atlantic Quarterly* (Spring 2009)
- "Dreamland, Real Land: Créolité and Its Diasporas" in *Aftermaths: Exile, Migration and Diaspora* edited by Marcus Bullock and Peter Paik (Rutgers University Press, 2008)

Salah M. Hassan and Cheryl Finley

Diaspora Memory Place. David Hammons/ Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons/ Pamela Z, Prestel Publishing, 2008

A presentation and an in-depth analysis of the work of three of the most exciting African diaspora artists of our time—David Hammons, Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, and Pamela Z. The volume includes a series of essays by leading scholars and critics examining three site-specific installations and performances originally conceived by these artists for Dak'Art 2004, the Biennale of Contemporary African Art in Dakar, Senegal.

The book includes two interrelated sets of critical essays, with the first set focusing on the African diaspora and its articulation in the context of art and memory, and in relationship to time and space, and the second one extending the same critical attention to the work of the three artists.

Taken together, the volume's fourteen essays and two interviews represent some of the most exciting and innovative scholarship on contemporary African diaspora art, conceptual art, and new media. They affirm the importance of a diasporic framework, not only as the most central paradigm for the understanding of contemporary African diaspora art and visual culture, but also as a key element in revisiting established accounts of Western art and visual culture.

Contributors: Sally Berger, Manthia Diawara, Brent Hayes Edwards, Okwui Enwezor, Maria Fernandez, Cheryl Finley, Salah M. Hassan, Kellie Jones, George Lewis, Derek Conrad Murray, Soraya Murray, Hudita Nura Mustafa, Barry Maxwell, Tavia Nyong'o, Claire Tancons, and Selene Wendt.

Diaspora
Memory
Place
David Hammons
Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons
Pamela Z

Edited by
Salah M. Hassan
Cheryl Finley

GRADUATE READING GROUPS

"Colonial Encounters"

Group Members: Lily Cui, English Sinja Graf, Government Onur Ulas Ince, Government Pinar Kemerli, Government Anthony Reed, English Aaron Phillip Tate, Classics Faculty Sponsor: Barry Maxwell

Any account of modernity's present that does not inquire into the traces colonial encounters have left upon it would be incomplete. The concept of colonial encounter, as we understand it, does not refer to a time-bound, specific historical occasion that has been completed and left behind, but rather refers to a recurring mutual exposure to alterity in the form of material practices, bodies of knowledge, and ways of relating to and imagining the world that must be negotiated. Through the concept of colonial encounter, we intend to problematize the privileged notion of modernity as a continuous, progressive process predicated upon the notion of a transhistorical (Western) subject on one hand and the developmental unfolding from a single, uncontaminated origin, on the other. Notions of "progress" have justified the forcible imposition of Western schemes of thinking, acting and being in the world in the form of enslavement, assimilation, the obfuscation of histories, and the eradication of peoples. In our view, "progress" implies an extrinsic standard against which one understands some prior instance in relation to a current one in order to judge the latter as "better," because more "advanced," than the former. Such judgments are underpinned by an unacknowledged metaphysics of perfectibility that depends, tautologically, upon the fulfillment of a modern essence.

Broadly speaking, our concerns coalesce around questions of continuity and origin, which rest upon the violent suppression of those concrete modes of civilization that challenge the legitimacy of Western practices and knowledges. We will follow an itinerary that visits such historical moments as the emergence of political liberalism and the formation of private property as informed by British colonialism in America, India and the Caribbean; the inflection of Enlightenment ideology by the experience of the Haitian Revolution; and the mutual articulation of antiquity and the modern nation. We will particularly emphasize those processes and strategies of aesthetic manipulation that obscure, contain or depoliticize such contaminations in order to produce the semblance of continuity. Aesthetics, we believe, brings into sharp focus such politically urgent questions as the unequal

allocation of the capacity or right to speak or represent, conditions of intelligibility and unintelligibility, and the limits of representation. To this end, we will primarily engage texts from the domains of history, classical and contemporary political thought, literature and literary theory. Through this project, we hope to gain new insight into the political conditions of modernity, finding new productive ways to dislocate and denaturalize it.

"Contact Zones in Transnational Space"

Group Members:
Tina Shrestha, Anthropology
Ivan Small, Anthropology
Reighan Gillam, Anthropology
Bernardo Brown, Anthropology
Josh Kirshner, City and Regional Planning
Berk Esen, Government
Faculty Sponsor: Viranjini Munasinghe

The focus of this reading and discussion group is to explore situated notions of modernity through the lenses of diaspora and transnationalism. To do this, we draw particular attention not to the way in which monolithic cultural apparatuses conflict and collide, but rather to the everyday interactions and exchanges that take place where they intersect. Cultural encounters do not have to be seen as unavoidably leading to antagonistic confrontation and/or synthetic merging. Rather, these encounters should be explored as sites of social, cultural, and commercial exchanges and negotiations that constantly influence, incorporate, and transform culture. This does not imply that relations of power are absent; quite the contrary, power and domination are ubiquitous and define the character and form these exchanges take.

The forefront of these negotiations is located near margins and borders - at the cultural frontiers of society, where dynamic transnational spaces emerge. Its protagonists are people on the move - migrants, refugees, transnational workers, and other diasporic subjects who shift back and forth enabling such processes of exchange. By locating these populations on the margins, we do not consider them as hybrids that conflate binaries of modern/backward, north/south or cosmopolitan/provincial. Transnational spaces are not the breeding ground for cultural mongrels and hybrid identities but spaces where familiarity with and apprehension of the foreign is achieved.

People located on the edges of different cultures enable and facilitate knowledge of the foreign, attempting to translate difference on familiar terms. These contact zones are spaces of cultural and knowledge production in which the practices of modernity emerge. Negotiating the frontiers of culture, migrants inhabit multiple yet simultaneous worlds, rather than constructing a mediatory, hybrid version that is neither one nor the other. By investigating peripheries rather than centers, we examine these spaces of transnationality through the lenses of anthropology, political science, and geography, and how they are tra-

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versed by flows of remittances, workers, goods, and cultural exchanges.

"Embodied Modernities"

Group Members:

Amanda Gilvin, History of Art and Visual Studies Brinda Kumar, History of Art and Visual Studies John Duong Phan, Asian Studies, East Asian Literature

Mario J. Roman, Fiber Science and Apparel Design Kavita Singh, Comparative Literature Meredith Ramirez Talusan, Comparative Literature Faculty Sponsor: Iftikhar Dadi

"Embodied Modernities" will consider global experiences of modernity through material and sensory culture, while examining concepts crucial to each of our individual research projects: race, diaspora, representation, cosmopolitanism, and exchange. Through these lenses, we will examine economies, identities, nationalism and modernity, as well as transformations of these in the wake of globalization. "Embodied Modernities" advocates destabilizing static, delimited portrayals of a uniform, Eurocentric modernity. Our shared effort will emphasize interdisciplinary explorations.

The wide range of our research sites and subject orientations offer a rich opportunity to do comparative work in line with the mission of the Institute for Comparative Modernities. The geographic reaches of our

collective research interests include Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, North America, the Middle East, Oceania, South America, South Asia and Southeast Asia. We thus see this reading group as a forum from which to learn from our peers outside of formal classroom or lecture environments. The comparative ranges of our individual projects are no less complex—each involves at least two sites and analyzes the long- and short-term travels of people, objects, motifs, and ideas.

Our bibliography attempts to grapple with people, places and objects in movement, and the texts chosen are potentially provocative across the varied disciplines. We anticipate a final collaborative written project, but as representation and display are entwined across our projects in various ways, we will debate an exhibition as a vehicle to illustrate modernity in material and sensory culture.

In our readings and discussions, we will emphasize the following themes which, while not discrete subjects, represent common threads in our respective research projects:

- 1) Comparative theories of cosmopolitanism.
- 2) Race and ethnicity: how do the bodily experiences of these constructions, experiences which change through time and movement, fit into the globalized travel and immigration of modernity?
- 3) The geographies of contemporary diasporas, their transformation of discourses of modernity, and the material cultures which they engender.

4) Representation: in our study of Oceanic art exhibitions, Indian art collections, West African museums, American fashion shows, Asian language and script, and Caribbean, Filipino and Palestinian novels, we seek to interrogate our own methodological practices of scholarly representation.

5) Exchange, not only of aesthetic influences and intellectual production, but also the movement of objects, artistic and otherwise, in an ever-evolving global capitalism.

"Nature & Modernity"

Group Members:
Daniel Ahlquist, Development Sociology
Elisa Da Via, Development Sociology
Daegan Miller, History
David Rojas, Anthropology
Melissa Rosario, Anthropology
Djahane Salehabadi, Development Sociology
Faculty Sponsor: Fouad Makki

A specter is haunting our planet – the specter of ecocide. All the powers of the world – from Porto Alegre to Davos – have apparently entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this specter. Barely a day passes without some form of intervention in nature being decried as destructive or unsustainable. From global warming to the Human Genome Project, nature it seems has become a subject of millennial angst and a site of impassioned political and ideological contestations. Until the last years of the eighteenth century, the tension between nature and society was barely perceived and the path of human progress was seen as in accord with nature. It was not until the onset of industrialization that the alliance between reason and nature was shattered, and the resulting polarity has been with us ever since. The modern structures of knowledge have developed within the confines of this antinomy, creating two discreet domains of knowledge with their own ontological assumptions and epistemological procedures. And this deep divide has beset attempts to provide a theory and politics that incorporates the dialectics of social nature.

The Nature & Modernity reading group brings together a group of 8 graduate students and 1-2 faculty interested in exploring theses juxtapositions from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives.

The group will run for two years starting October 2008. We will meet once a month for the academic year 2008-2009 to discuss selected readings. In addition, we will have an intensive two-day workshop session at the end of this academic year (date and time TBA).

The objective of the group is to foster interdisciplinary thinking on the theme of nature and modernity and ultimately to publish a book of collected essays on this topic. As such, the second year will be devoted to writing. Rather than meet once a month, we will meet for twice for a 3-4 day workshops (date and time TBA). We will discuss our papers during these meetings. We hope to organize a conference at the end of the second year.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR



The ICM has recently hired Julie Tabbitas Moore as Program Coordinator. She will be responsible for overall coordination of the Institute's events, graduate reading groups, publications, finances, and building use. Julie comes to the Institute with a background in program development in the arts.

Julie previously was the Program Coordinator for The Arts Guild of Old Forge, Inc., an arts organization located in the Adirondack Mountains. While working at the Arts Guild, Julie founded The Northeast National Pastel Exhibition, the first national pastel exhibition featured in the northeastern United States.

She moved to Ithaca in 2005 and began working for the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning as the Department of Architecture's Archivist and Special Projects Coordinator. She coordinated the department's accreditation; maintained an electronic archive of student coursework; and coordinated communications for the department.

Julie received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Rochester Institute of Technology with a focus in painting and sculpture. After graduation Julie had the opportunity to study in Cortona, Italy where she learned the skills of traditional fresco and egg tempera painting, silver casting, and further developed her techniques in transparent watercolor painting. She also worked for Dejan Pejovic's Bronze Studio assisting sculptor Pejovic on a commission for the University of Rochester.





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