

Fall 2016

# Kahn Chronicle: Fall 2016

Smith College, Kahn Liberal Arts Institute

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## Faculty, Staff Invited to Apply for 2017-18 Yearlong Projects

### Information Sessions for *War and Destroy, Then Restore*, Sept. 19, 22

In 2017-18, the Kahn Institute will host two yearlong projects, both of which will take a multi-faceted look at seemingly intractable human problems, perhaps, the most daunting challenges to our species' long-range survival.

And while *War and Destroy, Then Restore: Transforming our Lands and Waters* may both explore gloomy subjects, the projects will seek to consider multiple perspectives, including the potentially positive changes and discoveries—scientific, social and artistic—that emerge from conflict and destruction.

The Kahn Institute invites all faculty and staff, as well as Five

College faculty, to attend upcoming Information Sessions on *War and Destroy, Then Restore*, as follows:

**War Information Session, Monday, Sept. 19, 5-6 p.m., Kahn Institute**

**Destroy, Then Restore Information Session, Thursday, Sept. 22, 5-6 p.m., Kahn Institute**

Smith faculty and staff, and Five College faculty, are also invited to apply online for a fellowship in the projects, as described below (students will be invited to apply for the projects in January 2017).

### *Destroy, Then Restore: Transforming our Lands and Waters* (2017-18)

Organized by Ann Leone, *French Studies and Landscape Studies*; and Drew Guswa, *Engineering*

In Tar Creek, Oklahoma, clouds of lead dust waft through the streets; toxic ponds and lakes glow rusty with zinc waste and sludge left behind by mining companies that abandoned the community years ago.



How to restore this place? Since the mid-nineteenth century, humans have destroyed 95 percent of California's wetlands. Conservation groups now create pop-up habitats for 350 species of waterfowl and wading birds by leasing and flooding agricultural lands during critical migratory periods. This project will explore the dynamic interaction between human societies and natural processes, waters, and landscapes. Faculty are invited from across the curriculum to engage on topics that emerge from a consider-

ation of impaired and repaired lands and waters.

Apply for *Destroy, Then Restore*: [https://www.smith.edu/kahn-institute/2017-18\\_DestroyAPP.php](https://www.smith.edu/kahn-institute/2017-18_DestroyAPP.php)

### *War* (2017-18)

Organized by Cornelia Pearsall, *English Language and Literature*; and Mlada Bukovansky, *Government*



Despite efforts to outlaw it and undermine its legitimacy, war remains with us; it is a persistent human institution. War has both shaped and destroyed peoples, nations and states; devastated and also inspired great works of art and architecture; deeply altered demographics, economies, landscapes and ecosystems; given birth to social movements and migration flows; and given shape to legal and moral ecologies even as its conduct has violated laws and ethical codes. This year-long project seeks to provide a forum for the multidisciplinary study of war: its waging, its representations, its implications, its aftermath (which can include peace)—the myriad causes and consequences of war in its complex and varied forms.

Apply for *War*: [https://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/2017-18\\_WarAPP.php](https://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/2017-18_WarAPP.php)

#### *Inside this Edition:*

- Short-term projects now accepting applications
- Fall lectures at the Kahn
- Outcomes from recent Kahn projects
- and more

# Apply for Kahn Short-term Projects This Fall

The Kahn Institute invites faculty and staff to apply for short-term projects taking place this fall, as described below. Read more at <http://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/current.php>.

## 1. Practice

Organized by Judith Gordon, *Music*, this one-day project explores the subject of practice, as an art, a science, and an essential part of ourselves as human beings. Practice, in all its complexity, is an aspect of many of our lives and endeavors. But what does it really mean to “practice something,” and how are various forms of practice different and related? The project will begin with a talk and presentation by Lisa Leizman, choreographer and yoga teacher, whose work extends across several kinds of practice. **September 30-October 1, 2016**

Apply online: [https://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/2016\\_PracticeAPP.php](https://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/2016_PracticeAPP.php)

## 2. Robed Warriors: How Ordained Buddhist Clerics are Transforming Contemporary Culture

Organized by Jay Garfield, *Philosophy*, this project, taking place during four Saturdays through the fall and spring, will explore the impact of Buddhist monastics on health care and hospice services, the design of charitable NGOs, cognitive science, val-

ues education, feminism and on the envisioning of religious life. On each Saturday of the project—**October 15, 2016, and February 11, March 4 and April 8, 2017**—participants will meet with a prominent Buddhist monastic whose work has transformed both contemporary Buddhist practice and the world beyond, beginning with the ven Professor Carola Roloff (Jampa Tsedron), Hamburg University.

Apply online: [https://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/2016\\_RobedWarriorsAPP.php](https://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/2016_RobedWarriorsAPP.php)

## 3. Student Activism/ Faculty Response

Organized by Fernando Armstrong-Fumero, *Anthropology*, this project will focus on the uncertain and contested role of faculty as mediators and mentors to student activists. Recent protests at Smith and other nearby campuses have brought this issue into our lives in an immediate way, raising questions for many of us about how and when to advise student activists, how to talk about issues in a nuanced and useful way, and how to help students understand their own responsibilities as political agents for change. We hope to bring forward a range of opinions on this subject, and to consider these questions through the lens of different disciplines, different political affiliations, and different understandings of the role of faculty in the face of 21st-century student activism. **November 4-5, 2016**

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## A Brief Introduction to the Kahn Institute Staff

### Elizabeth Hait, Administrative Coordinator



Liz has been a member of the Smith staff since 2000. She first joined Smith in the Student Affairs Office, eventually becoming the housing coordinator with Residence Life, from 2007 to 2012.

As Administrative Coordinator at the Kahn Institute since 2012, Liz manages the center's budgets, administers student stipends and faculty grants, and oversees catering for the institute's long- and short-term projects throughout the year.

A resident of Easthampton, Liz spends her off hours working out, painting (a novice, she insists) and drawing, and checking out live music whenever she can. Liz's daughter and 6-year-old grandson live in Holyoke.

### Eric Weld, Publicity and Program Administrator



Eric has been a member of the Smith staff for 20 years, serving as Assistant Director of College Relations, then Assistant Director of Media Relations, from 1996 to 2014, when he joined the Kahn Institute.

At the Kahn, Eric produces and coordinates all publicity for public events and for Kahn projects, oversees logistics and other details for visiting speakers and guests, and provides support and

consultation for project organizers.

Eric is the father of two: Elliot, a sophomore at Keene State College (Go Owls!); and Olivia (Livvy), a first-year Smithie, Class of 2020! He recently moved from Amherst to Easthampton. When not at Smith, Eric spends time with family, and enjoys running, hiking and biking, and playing or performing music around the Valley and beyond.

# 2016-17 Long-Term Projects

## Student Fellowships Awarded

The following Smith students have been awarded fellowships in connection with the Kahn Institute's 2016-17 long-term projects

### Shaping Perception

Fellows in the yearlong project *Shaping Perception*, organized by Chris Aiken, *Dance*, and Daphne Lamothe, *Africana Studies*, explore concepts of perception as an essential form of human experience, an aspect of ourselves that defines who we are and how we relate to the world, shaped by all that we have learned and all that we can imagine.



Student Fellows in *Shaping Perception* are:

- Marianna Apostolakis '18, *English Language and Literature*
- Rahma Haji '17, *Africana Studies*
- Sushmitha Ram '18, *Economics and History*
- Jessica Ryan '17, *Philosophy*
- Mariah Wood '17, *Psychology*

### Modes and Models of Making

Fellows in this yearlong project, organized by Alex Keller, *Film Studies*, and Dana Leibsohn, *Art*, reflect on what kinds of things have been, or are now worth making, and how models for thinking about creativity and craftsmanship shape why certain things (and not others) get made, re-made, and un-made. Fundamental to daily life, and especially intellectual life, are our ideas about, practices of, and dream for making things, be they material, ephemeral, "real" or imagined.



Student Fellows in *Modes and Models of Making* are:

- Susannah Davis '18, *Engineering*
- Kayla Foney '17, *Africana Studies*
- Suroor Gandhi '18, *Physics and Art*
- Laura Krok-Horton '17, *Architecture*
- Kylie Power-Sullivan '17, *Studio Art*
- Hui Yan '17, *History and Philosophy*

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## Fall Lectures Hosted by the Kahn

The following events are free and open to the public.

### Friday, September 30

5 p.m.

Neilson Browsing Room

#### "Practice. Practice. Practice."

Lisa Leizman, choreographer, yoga instructor



What is practice? Regular preparation for some future event? The application of thoroughly proficient training? A method or discipline? Is "practice" a set of customs, traditions or observations?

Or is it a common yet elusive experience in human life and activity? Of the many dimensions and purposes of practice, what do you practice and why?

### Monday, November 7

5 p.m.

Neilson Browsing Room

Spencer Finch, artist, will give a presentation in conjunction with the Kahn long-term project *Shaping Perception*



Spencer Finch produces works of art in multiple media, including photography, watercolor, video, fluorescent light, glass and electronics, often exploring ideas around perception and memory.

Finch created the only work of art commissioned for the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, titled *Trying to Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning*.

# OUTCOMES FROM KAHN PROJECTS

## Though Not Required, Publications Abound from Kahn Fellowships

One of the most unique—and appealing—aspects of participating in a Kahn long-term project is the lack of a requirement to produce a tangible product as part of the fellowship. Rare is it that scholars take part in academic research colloquia—as fellows in humanities institutes, for example, or as visiting scholars—without the expectation that culminating work would result as part of their participation.

The Kahn Institute, however, was founded with, among other important tenets, a conviction that project fellows must be free to interact, collaborate and explore within their respective research topics without the distraction of producing a material work reflecting their experience, at

ters and armed conflict” helped inform several published works.

Two of Miller’s recent works were particularly affected by his research within the *Evil* project: one, in which he worked with trauma survivors of devastation by the Lords Resistance Army in Northern Uganda; and a book chapter citing the mass shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn., as a case study in how human service professionals can help in the wake of tragedy.

“I often think about what is ‘evil’ and how it is part of the human condition,” Miller recently explained, “and also how



any time during the project. This freedom allows Kahn participants to venture beyond their comfort zones and stretch their academic ligaments without concern for establishing authority or the responsibilities that accompany publication.

As more than one Kahn alumnae have put it (to paraphrase): “Participating in a Kahn project is like ‘play’ for academics. This is what we became academics *for*: the simple act of exploring ideas, and thinking deeply without constraint.”

### A Range of Published Works

While no policy exists at the Kahn Institute requiring outcomes from project participation, an extensive record of outcomes has resulted nonetheless (as one might expect at Smith College). Numerous articles and chapters in a range of publications and books, as well as plays and films, panel participation and academic leadership roles have emerged directly and in part from faculty fellowships in Kahn projects during the institute’s 17 years.

For Josh Miller, professor of social work in the Smith College School for Social Work, who was a Faculty Fellow in *Evil* (2011-12), his focus on “how evil manifests itself in disas-

we can transmute its impact and transcend its influence on people who encounter and survive it.”

While the content of projects works its way into fellows’ subsequent writings and creative works, many Kahn participants also note that the collaborative experience influences their research methodology.

“I became aware of how to better hone my scholarly arguments in order to anticipate and take into account questions and issues that I wasn’t fully addressing,” said Marsha Pruett, a fellow in *Mothers and Others* (2012-13). “*Mothers and Others* provided an opportunity for me to take a topic I knew so much about and examine it from multiple perspectives, as if I were turning a prism around to look at it from different angles. These angles were inspired by colleagues who infused their interdisciplinary scholarship into my thinking, moving it forward and in broader directions than I had previously contemplated.”

Intellectual discourse, free from the expectation to write about or report on the experience, is a cornerstone of the Kahn Institute. Perhaps partly because of that freedom, Kahn fellowships result in countless outcomes, both intangible and material.

# A Brief Record of Works by Recent Kahn Fellows

The following is a sample of published works and activities incubated in Kahn projects from 2009 to 2015

## **Shannon Audley-Piotrowski, Assistant Professor of Education and Child Study**

Project Fellow in *Placing Space*, 2013-14

- “The Role of the Teacher in Children’s Peer Relations: Making the Invisible Hand Intentional,” *Transnational Issues in Psychology*, 2015

## **John Burk, Elsie Damon Simonds Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences**

Project Fellow in *The Power of Disappearance*, 2014-15

- “Audubon’s Maine Woods,” *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, 2014

## **Craig Davis, Professor of English Language & Literature**

Project Fellow in *Evil*, 2011-12

- “A Mother from Hell: Love and Vengeance in *Beowulf*,” in *Vox Germanica: Essays in Germanic Languages and Literature in Honor of James E. Cathey*, 2012

## **Mary Harrington, Tippit Professor in Life Sciences (Psychology)**

Project Fellow in *Wellness and Disease*, 2009-10

- “Circadian Rhythm Disruption in Chronic Fatigue Syndrome,” *Advances in Neuroimmune Biology*, 2013

## **Benita Jackson, Associate Professor of Psychology**

Project Fellow in *Wellness and Disease*, 2009-10

- “Low Social Status Promotes Ruminative Coping,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 2011

## **James Miller, Associate Professor of Economics**

Project Fellow in *Altering Bodies and Minds*, Spring 2013

- Book: *Singularity Rising: Surviving and Thriving in a*

*Smarter, Richer, and More Dangerous World*, BenBella Books Inc., 2012

## **Joshua Miller, Professor of Social Work**

Project Fellow in *Evil*, 2011-12

- Book: *Psychosocial Capacity Building in Response to Disasters*, Columbia University Press, 2012

## **Marsha Pruett, Maconda Brown O’Connor Professor, School for Social Work**

Project Fellow in *Mothers and Others*, 2012-13

- “More than One Way to Get There: Pathways of Change in Co-parenting Conflict After a Preventive Intervention,” *Family Process*, 2015

## **Marjorie Senechal, Louise Wolff Kahn Professor Emerita in Math & History of Science**

Project Fellow in *Altering Bodies and Minds*, Fall 2012

- Book: *I Died for Beauty: Dorothy Wrinch and the Cultures of Science*, Oxford University Press, 2012

## **Michele Wick, Lecturer in Psychology**

Project Fellow in *Regarding Images*, Spring 2014

- Exhibit: *So It Goes: Drawings by Kurt Vonnegut*, Johnson Art Museum, Cornell University, 2015

## **Sujane Wu, Associate Professor of East Asian Languages & Literature**

Project Fellow in *Regarding Images*, Spring 2014

- “Creating an Effective Learning Environment in an Advanced Chinese Language Course Through Film, Poster Presentations, and Multiliteracies,” *Multiliteracies in World Language Education*, 2015

## Introducing the New Look *Voices & Visions*

*Voices & Visions*, an online journal of creative work by women students at colleges and universities around the globe, now has a new look.

The literary journal, which is published bi-annually (in fall and spring) by the Kahn Institute, was launched in 2013, emerging from the Women’s Education Worldwide (WEW) Conference in Dubai. The original publication was produced by Smith students in partnership with Lady Shri Ram University in New Delhi.



Submissions are now being accepted for the *Voices & Visions* fall 2016 edition, slated for publication in October. The theme for the fall issue is “Traditions Old and New.”

To submit a work for consideration, go online to: [voicesandvisionsjournal.com/submit](http://voicesandvisionsjournal.com/submit).

Meanwhile, check out the new look at [voicesandvisionsjournal.com](http://voicesandvisionsjournal.com)

# A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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## Safe Spaces

A welcome letter sent to University of Chicago freshmen went viral last month when the University announced its policies on academic freedom. “Our commitment to academic freedom,” it read in part, “means we do not support so-called trigger warnings, we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual ‘safe spaces’ where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own...It is not the proper role of the university to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive...”

Those of us who have followed this news story know that the responses were swift and varied. Many noted that Hillel House or a university chapel have long existed on campus with engendering controversy. Aren’t both of these also a kind of safe space? Others have argued that a “trigger warning” is merely an opportunity to pause, to give oneself a moment to mentally prepare for something that will require a strong emotional response. Northwestern University’s president quoted the research of some psychologists that students “don’t embrace uncomfortable learning unless they are themselves comfortable.”

There were, of course, equally strong voices on the other side: The AAUP, for example, asserted that discomfort is inevitable in learning; “indeed,” they stated, “it is critical for students to feel uncomfortable if they are to learn to question beliefs they have taken for granted or ethical problems they have not considered.” “Trigger warnings suggest that classrooms should offer protection and comfort, rather than an intellectually challenging education,” wrote the AAUP Board. “[Such strategies] reduce students to vulnerable victims rather than full participants in the intellectual process of education.”

To my mind, the Kahn Institute, in its very format and mission, manages to embrace and enact both sides of this debate. The Institute is certainly a ‘safe space.’ We remind faculty and students of this again and again. Here is a place where you can take risks and privately fail; a place where you can work out an unpopular opinion, egged on and contradicted by people who have grown to like and admire you over weeks and months of scholarly discussions and socializing. At the same time, it is a space where people are often not “comfortable.” Over the four years I have



been director, I have witnessed or heard about all kinds of tension and discomfort within projects. Someone’s passion becomes strident; someone’s opinion is off-putting or even offensive to others. What is continuously amazing to me is the way in which these moments, or even extended periods of difficulty, ultimately resolve themselves in understanding. Participants say things like “I’ll never agree with him, but he is very lovable,” or “I’m glad she was in the group, despite the discomfort.” The model of the Kahn—to break down ideological and intellectual barriers through familiarity and

friendship—seems more and more profound to me the longer I watch projects close-up.

As teachers, many of us still grapple with the difficulty of encouraging contrary points of view in our classes. For this reason alone, the Kahn Institute is critically important in that it reminds us of the value and importance of debate, and the strategies that can make possible real risk-taking and difficult dialogues. The balance of faculty to students, the emphasis on human relations through shared meals, and the fearlessness of participants to persist in the face of discomfort—these characteristics make the Kahn model unique, precious and very, very necessary.

This year’s long-term projects, on Perception and Models of Making, lend themselves perfectly to themes of diversity, subjectivity, and intersectionality—among, of course, many other things. We also have upcoming short-term projects that address issues crucial to higher education—on the complicated nature of “practice,” for example, and the right role of faculty in student activism. There is much to learn—from each other and about ourselves—and there is no better place to do it than at the Kahn Institute. I hope you will join us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosetta".

**Rosetta Marantz Cohen**, *Director, Professor of Education and Child Study*

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Read the *Kahn Chronicle* Online:

[www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/chronicle](http://www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/chronicle)