

Spring 2019

Kahn Chronicle: Spring 2019

Smith College, Kahn Liberal Arts Institute

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Recommended Citation

Smith College, Kahn Liberal Arts Institute, "Kahn Chronicle: Spring 2019" (2019). *Kahn Chronicle*, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

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LOUISE W. AND EDMUND J. KAHN LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTE

Kahn Chronicle

Volume 20, Issue 2 • Spring 2019

The Distinct Nature of British Art A Q&A with Spring 2019 Neilson Professor Frédéric Ogée

Frédéric Ogée, the spring 2019 William Allan Neilson Professor, is a professor of English Literature and Art History at Université Paris Diderot. His main period of research is the long 18th century, and his publications include two collections of essays on William Hogarth. Ogée recently responded to questions for the Kahn Chronicle.

Kahn Chronicle: What are your primary goals for your Neilson Professorship this spring?

Frédéric Ogée: To share some of my current research interests with the whole community at Smith, students and faculty, and to strengthen the ties between Smith College and Université Paris Diderot, whose partnership has grown remarkably over the years.



Chronicle: What are some messages that you hope audience members might come away with from your spring lecture series?

Ogée: That the study of images and of histories of art can really help us understand some of the issues and questionings of our modernity, like the definitions of identity or our relationship to the natural world.

Chronicle: You've talked in the past about how Britain's insularity impacts its art. Can you point out some of the ways that that insularity distinguishes British art visually and conceptually? How has the nation's geographical separation and unique history impacted its artists' choices?

Ogée: The rise of the British nation and that of its school of art occurred simultaneously in the period between 1650 and 1850. It is a unique story in Western art, and this intertwining of history and art is what I try to study.

Chronicle: Would you say that American art—like British art, though in a different way—shares a distinctness at least partly based on its insularity? If so, does modern American art, like modern British art, you might argue, similarly share derivational tendencies with its own past?

Ogée: It is true that images, artistic or otherwise, have played a crucial part in the shaping and promoting of the U.S. national identity, at home as much as abroad. On the other hand, the vastness and diversity of this country, and the federal organization of its political and social life have had different consequences on the way art is made, displayed or collected.

Neilson Professor Lectures, Spring 2019

- **Tuesday, March 19**
"Performing the Self in Enlightenment England: William Hogarth, Laurence Sterne and Modern identity"
5 p.m., Graham Hall, Hillyer
- **Monday, March 25**
"Truth, Nature and Nation in British Art"
5 p.m., Graham Hall, Hillyer

2020-21 Kahn Yearlong Projects on Technology, Climate Change

Faculty and staff will be invited this fall to apply for two Kahn Institute yearlong projects taking place in 2020-21, both of which address topics of current and emerging impact. Watch for calls from the Kahn in the fall inviting all Smith faculty and staff, as well as Five College faculty, to attend Information Sessions and to apply.

Technophilia//Techno-skepticism: Innovation, Virtue and Transgression

This project will invite discussions about privacy, creativity, data, knowledge and other topics related to technological innovation.



Climate Change: From Slow Violence to Fast Hope

Following the campuswide thematic focus on climate change in 2019-2020, the Kahn will invite continued multidisciplinary investigations into the central wicked problem of our age.



Spring Lectures Hosted by the Kahn

The following are free and open to the public.

Thursday, March 21, 5 p.m.

Seelye Hall 201

“Responsibility-sharing and the Global Compact on Refugees: Where Do We Go From Here?”

Andrew Painter, Fellow, Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility, The New School



In December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Global Compact on Refugees, which includes an ambitious agenda to strengthen international responsibility-sharing. Join a discussion on what needs to be done by all actors to make the promises of the Global Compact on Refugees a reality.

Monday, April 1, 5 p.m.

Seelye Hall 106

“Disaster Refuge: U.S. Refugee Policy in an Era of Accelerated Climate Change”

Maria Cristina Garcia, Howard A. Newman Professor of American Studies, Cornell University.



Migration experts forecast that over the next 50 years, hundreds of millions of people will be forced from their homes because of climate change-related phenomena. This talk will address the legal, political, and humanitarian implications of this migration and the possibilities for creating a climate refugee policy in the U.S.

Tuesday, April 23, 3:30 p.m.

Seelye Hall 201

“On Food and Fascism”

Karima Moyer-Nocchi, culinary historian, Siena University, and author of *Chewing the Fat: An Oral History of Italian Foodways from Fascism to Dolce Vita*, will discuss themes outlined in her critically acclaimed book. Moyer-Nocchi is also the author, with Giancarlo Rolandi, of *The Eternal Table: A Cultural History of Food in Rome*.



Moyer-Nocchi will speak as part of the Kahn yearlong project *Food*.

Kahn Student Fellows for 2018-19 Projects

The following Smith students have been awarded fellowships in connection with the Kahn Institute's 2018-19 yearlong projects

Refugees

Fellows in the yearlong project *Refugees*, organized by Darcy Buerkle, History, and Greg White, Government, explore complexities and tragedies that accompany present-day refugee and forced migration crises around the world. Refugee crises are considered not only through the lenses of historians and contemporary policy scholars, but also from the perspectives of economists, social workers, psychologists, education theorists, and artists (see page 3 for mid-year project report).



Student Fellows in *Refugees* are:

- Zoya Alam '19, Government
- Isabel Cordova '19, Studio Art
- Khulood Fahim '19, Government
- Vivian Nguyen '20, Government

Food

Fellows in the yearlong project *Food*, organized by Nancy Sternbach, Spanish and Portuguese, and Paul Wetzel, Center for the Environment, Ecological Design, and Sustainability (CEEDS), study the subject of food from multiple perspectives, examining connections among food and agriculture, economics, human health and culture, and considering impacts of food, both in abundance and scarcity, on climate change and border disputes, vanishing cultures, indigenous and local commerce, and other topics.



Student Fellows in *Food* are:

- Susannah Howard '19, Geosciences
- Noa Randall '19, Engineering
- Elsa Weintraub '19, Environmental Science and Policy
- Emily Whittier '19, Study of Women and Gender
- Lark Wicinas '19, Environmental Science and Policy

At the Kahn Institute, 2018-19

Mid-Year Project Reports

Refugees

Organizers: Darcy Buerkle, *History*; Greg White, *Government*

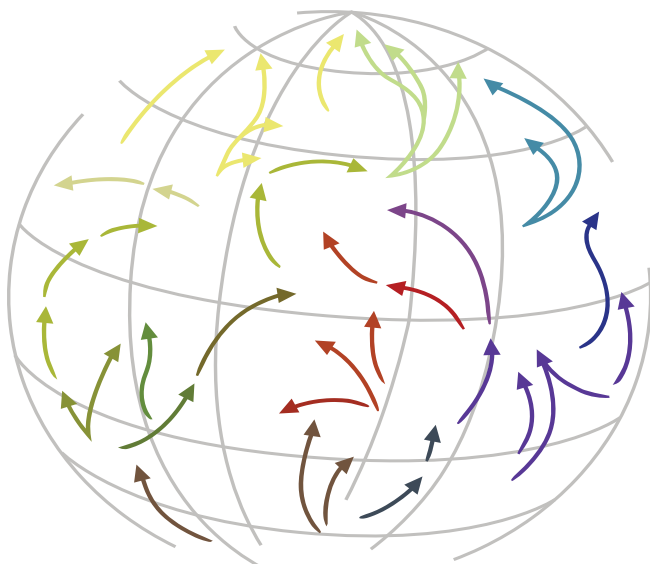
The *Refugee* Project has had a very rewarding and busy year thus far. We spent the summer and early fall engaging texts such as Jenny Erpenbeck's novel *Go Went Gone* and Reese Jones' *Violent Borders*. We screened and discussed documentary films such as Gianfranco Rosi's *Fire at Sea* and we read classic texts by scholars such as Hannah Arendt and new ones, including Christina Sharpe's *In the Wake of Blackness and Being* (2016).

In October we joined with the *Food* Project to enjoy a marvelous Ethiopian meal prepared by Valley resident and extraordinary chef Gerumnesh Melessie, with the able assistance of Susannah Croluis. In addition, we took a field trip to Boston's MFA to see Candice Breitz's installation *Love Story*, which explores the refugee experience in tension with celebrity appeal. Thanks to Kahn magic, we were also lucky to attend a special event hosted by the museum in the company of the artist and her collaborators. Finally, we had the privilege of spending an evening in conversation with Syrian journalist and photographer Bassam Khabieh.

In the new year, we have continued our busy schedule. Miriam Ticktin of the New School gave an engaging lecture followed by a seminar with us on February 11. And we are planning a robust schedule this spring that will include visits by Andrew Painter of UNHCR and Maria Cristina Garcia of Cornell.

In addition to welcoming scholars, we have also emphasized the presentation and examination of our own scholarly work. Project fellows have presented and sought constructive feedback on project proposals, works in progress, and finished works.

The topic of "refugees" is exceedingly complicated, of course. But we have valued this opportunity to explore it in depth together.



REFUGEES

Food

Organizers: Nancy Sternbach, *Spanish and Portuguese*; Paul Wetzel, *CEEDS*

It is for FOOD! There is no aspect of human life that is not touched by food, and as a group this year's *Food* Kahn participants addressed the complexity of food from multiple vantage points—agriculture, economics, human health and culture.

Being a good cook was not a requirement for joining the *Food* Kahn, but there are many accomplished cooks in the group. For our second meeting in September, we planned, shopped for, cooked and ate a group dinner, a multi-faceted meal prepared in teams of three, representing the various parts of the country and world where we have personal or research interests.



Meanwhile, the *Food* Kahn has remained very busy outside of project hours with outings and activities, including attending a film about Cuban food at Academy of Music; talking with sustainable food vendors that sell food to Smith; meeting with alumna Chef Alice del Court '99 to hear about her career and restaurant. In October we joined with the *Refugee* project for an ethnic meal prepared by local Ethiopian refugees.

The study of food cannot help but create a global perspective. *Food* fellows are studying: economic marketing of a Peruvian national cuisine; using food as a platform to teach Jewish Studies; the rise of Ramen in post-World War II Japan with its subsequent global spread; the planetary diet that will healthily feed 10 billion people and not destroy the environment; and many other topics. One of our fellows is writing a book to introduce chemistry principals through cooking. Another conducts research on cookbooks for the European upper class from the Italian Renaissance to early modern times. Yet another has established a small "farming the forest" demonstration project at Smith College's MacLeish Field Station.

Among our visitors was Master Baker Jonathan Stevens, of Hungry Ghost Bread, who educated us about flour, baking and his philosophy on baking and business. For him the secret of good bread is to use flour ground within a week. One of the only ways to get such freshly ground flour is to buy it locally. To do that, Mr. Stevens has had to advocate and promote both the growth and grinding of grain locally.

Food brings people together and our group is the lucky recipient of that philosophy. Everyone eats—an act that is at once common and sacred, an act that binds humans together and provides an entry point for discovery and understanding among cultures. Sharing a meal and sharing our interests in food is a natural bridge to one another, creating a close-knit group that regularly bestows small food gifts upon each other. We invite you to view pictures and more tales of good eating at the Kahn *Food* Instagram Page, #kahnfoodgroup.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

On the Doorstep of Spring

It was a happily busy fall at the Kahn. Our projects left the building at 21 Henshaw quite a lot. *Food* in particular seemed to be everywhere at once, including an organic compost service in New York City, and a dairy farm closer to home. Food has also come to the project, not least in the form of a visit from the owner of Hungry Ghost Bread, just down the hill. I accompanied the *Refugees* fellows to a panel at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts discussing Candice Breitz's work *Love Story*, which explores the complexities of understanding refugee crises in a mediatized age. The artist and three of her collaborators (Venezuelan political dissident Luis Ernesto Nava Molero, Indian transgender activist Shabeena Francis Saveri, and actor Julianne Moore) offered a wide-ranging, and often deeply personal contemplation.

Both of this year's projects continued what is becoming a Kahn tradition of project fellows joining together for a common event. Last year's projects came together at the end of the year. *Food* and *Refugees* fellows decided to do so sooner, coordinating a joint dinner cooked by an Ethiopian refugee in October. Such intersections keep the channels of communication open long after the meal is over.

Our short-term schedule has been likewise packed. *Drones: Power, Policy, Play and Pedagogy* started the short-term calendar in September by flying drones, not just talking about it. *Toward a Global Liberal Arts* evolved into a monthly lunch session with curricular implications coming soon to a course catalog near you. *Data, Knowledge, Pedagogy: The Age of Machine Learning* offered a chunky exploration into the existential crisis we find ourselves in, especially in academia, when traditional categories of data, information, knowledge and wisdom appear to blur. *Putting Pen to Palm Leaf: Buddhism and Contemporary Literature*, a four-part project, seems to have taken up permanent residence (a lovely thing indeed) as it returns for its final session of the year this spring. *Creativity and the Creature: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein at 200* was the single most ambitious short-term project the Kahn has ever mounted—and with 200 or so attendees across two days, probably also the one with the greatest number of “fellows.” It seemed important for an historically women's college to think about the implications of a young woman writing such a transformational text, and to commemorate it accordingly. I was especially impressed with the consistently high level of questioning



from the students in the audience, who pushed the conversations in directions it might not otherwise have gone.

The chill of winter has been magnified by the chill of the destabilization of Hampshire College, and even the cozy spaces of the Kahn are not protected. Though the Institute serves the faculty development of Smith faculty first and foremost, that development is often best served by the fellowship of faculty from the other campuses. This year we have Hampshire faculty fellows in long and short-term projects. We are profoundly aware of the importance of their scholarship and the community they bring. To point to one example, Jim Wald, professor of history at Hampshire, moderated a public faculty panel at Smith on antisemitism connected to a short-term Kahn project on the same topic (which was itself attended by fellows across the consortium). This panel was a model of the generosity of our faculty. Wald, Darcy Buerkle (History), Justin Cammy (Jewish Studies), and Lois Dubin (Religion), offered rigorous considerations of antisemitism over time and place, and answered questions forthrightly and with great care. If the mass murders at the Tree of Life in Pittsburgh stand as one of the most shocking antisemitic acts in U.S. history, it is nevertheless an event that takes its place in a longer line of injustices that are often very difficult to discuss productively. This panel allowed Smith and the larger community to engage in such a productive conversation. These exchanges are not merely intellectual work; they are also affective labor of the highest order. In these moments, I am profoundly touched by what my colleagues offer that is so far beyond what they must, and the Kahn is grateful to support such work. It is such faculty who support and make possible what the Kahn does and is.

So, as the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute turns 20 this year, we have much to celebrate. I hope you will join me on the porch on May 3 to raise a glass to your colleagues, who make this unusual place as special and important as it is.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Alex", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Read the *Kahn Chronicle* Online:

www.smith.edu/kahninstitute/chronicle