

THE EASTERN VOICE

From the Editor's Desk

Fall is here, and with it comes another exciting year of American studies in the Eastern region. This year promises to be a memorable one, as EASA will be working with La Salle University to plan what is sure to be a memorable conference. And with our theme revolving around health and the body, the conference promises to be timely as well. I want to offer special thanks to Lisa Jarvinen and Fran Ryan, both of whom teach American studies at La Salle, for serving as our hosts. We look forward to meeting old friends and making new ones in Philadelphia!

I would also like to (re)introduce our readers to Megan McGee Yinger. Those of you with good memories will remember meeting Megan back in 2008 when she edited this newsletter and organized the annual conference. Well, Megan is back in the American studies saddle, working this time towards her Ph.D. The

best part is, she has also agreed to produce the newsletter again and serve on EASA's executive board! Welcome back to the EASA community, Megan. We missed you!

Now back to business. Please read and enjoy the newsletter, which offers outstanding feature articles on the subjects of coffee and ghostly hauntings. Also, pay close attention to the "Call for Papers" in this issue and consider sending in a proposal. And above else, never forget of fail to live by our motto and rallying cry: Enjoy Culture!

Dr. John Haddad

American Studies, Penn State Harrisburg



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FALL 2013

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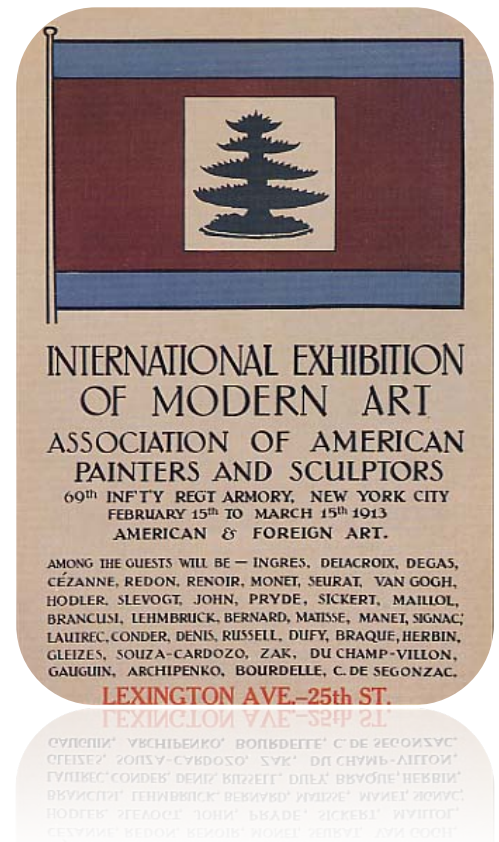
The Armory Show at 100

Just before the chaos of the First World War, the American art world experienced upheaval of its own. The Association of American Painters and Sculptors, who had broken away from the National Academy of Design, sought to bring the American art community into the 20th century. They achieved this with the 1913 Armory Show.

From the moment the show opened, art in America changed. After the Civil War, Americans found comfort and familiarity in realism. European art, on the other hand, fragmented and moved into the eras of Impressionism and Cubism, introducing modern art to the United States.

Inspired by a number of European shows, the Armory Show was controversial, to say the least. Many of the attendees hadn't a clue as to what to make of the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and Cubist art they saw. Some were seen fleeing the Cubism exhibit in fright! When former President Theodore Roosevelt came to view the show, he proclaimed, "This is not art!" However, the Armory Show finally brought modern art to American shores, preparing the nation for the advancements in art that were to come, as well as providing artists with a way to grapple with the terrors of the 20th century.

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Bryant Simon Talks Starbucks and American Culture



Bryant Simon, Temple professor and author of *Everything But the Coffee* (2009), has spent a lot of time in coffee houses all over the country studying the cultural effects of Starbucks on America. He sat down with *The Eastern Voice* to talk suburbia, Thorstein Veblen, and, the endless search for quality coffee.

(Eastern Voice): Starting the interview on a light note, what is your typical Starbucks order? Or are you more of a Wawa or Dunkin' Donuts person?

(B. Simon): I'd prefer not to go to Starbucks! If I do go, I just get a basic coffee. When I was doing my research, I went with my wife, and she got a "froofy" drink. I like stronger coffee, so I would

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2013's Undergraduate Roundtable Participants with Dr. Francis Ryan

Undergraduates at EASA: An Errand of Possibilities

In 2005, Dr. Francis J. Ryan of La Salle University had a brainstorm. What if the participating EASA (then MAASA) schools sent an exceptional undergraduate to present at a roundtable? He posed the question to then-President Charles Kupfer, and from that point forward, EASA has distinguished itself through its support of undergraduate scholars. Since the roundtable's inception, undergraduate participation has grown into an honor society and starting this year, a journal dedicated to the future of the discipline.

Undergraduate Roundtable

Ryan, as the Director of the American Studies Program at La Salle, has long been an advocate of undergraduate excellence and recognition in the discipline. In 2003, his program published the inaugural edition of *The Eagle's Eye: La Salle American Studies Student Review*, which featured

the best papers from the undergraduate capstone seminars. In many ways, the journal inspired the roundtable. Ryan posed the idea to his counterparts at other core EASA schools (Penn State Harrisburg, Rutgers, Franklin and Marshall), and at the 2005 annual conference (Rutgers), the roundtable was born. The following year, Kupfer proposed an award, named for Ryan, that would reward the top roundtable paper. Over the last nine years, word has spread among American studies programs about the roundtable, and schools such as Villanova and University of Pennsylvania have sent students.

Epsilon Alpha Kappa

Another brainchild of the Eastern American Studies Association was the creation of an undergraduate honor society for American studies. Even on the

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(Undergraduates, cont. from 3)

national level. The American Studies Association approved the measure in 2011, and allowed EASA to create Epsilon Alpha Kappa as a test balloon of sorts. So far, in the two years of existence, EAK has welcomed over 50 new members.

New Errands

Dr. Anthony Buccitelli of Penn State Harrisburg is heading up the newest addition to EASA: an undergraduate journal. Buccitelli sees the publication has having two goals. First, it will provide a much-needed outlet for the undergraduate writer, allowing them to take an active role in the discipline (or non-discipline) of American studies. Second, the journal will provide undergraduate American studies instructors with examples of exceptional writing to share with their students. Some EASA schools, such as La Salle, already have an undergraduate journal, but the opportunity to contribute to a regional publication is a unique honor for an undergraduate student.

As is evidenced here, EASA is at the forefront of undergraduate education in American studies. Through these programs and events, EASA is helping to encourage new scholars in the field and to encourage their future success.

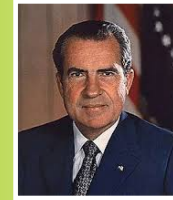
Thank you to Anthony Buccitelli and Fran Ryan for their insights and assistance with this article!

(Armory Show, cont. from 2)**Armory Show Legacy**

With the Armory Show celebrating its centennial, many galleries are putting forth exhibits to celebrate the advent of modern art. The New York Historical Society is celebrating the city's contribution to this great leap forward in American art, while the Phillips Collection in Washington D.C.

commemorates its status as the first American modern art collection by featuring artists of the Armory Show.

While the art world recognizes the importance of the Armory Show, many mainstream museum visitors still grapple with Cubism, Fauvism, and their descendants. It is still quite common to overhear patrons exclaiming that "My two-year old could paint that" and "Is it even hanging right side up?" A continued emphasis on the importance of art education, both at the K-12 and university levels may one day create more appreciation for these pivotal works of art.

**PRESIDENTS AT 100****Richard Nixon**

Our 37th President served from 1968 until his resignation in 1974. Watergate tarnished his legacy, but there is a lighter side to Nixon: he was an accomplished violinist and pianist, skills that he frequently displayed to White House guests.

**Gerald Ford**

Our 38th President served from 1974 until 1977, taking over the remainder of Nixon's second term. Although he was portrayed on *Saturday Night Live* as clumsy, he was actually an excellent athlete, playing football at the University of Michigan.

(Bryant Simon, cont. from 2)

prefer Starbucks, but I try to go to independent coffee shops and drink better coffee if I can. Places like Joe, Intelligentsia, and Stumptown all buy great beans and know what they are doing. Starbucks has the worst of the best beans.

Do you feel that Starbucks has started a trend of “coffee as religion?” To which beverage-based group do you belong?

Starbucks really made coffee into an easy-to-read fashion statement, which responds to all of the associations that goes along with Starbucks. It became a way to represent yourself, which is an amazing thing for an everyday item to do. Starbucks is more important than other similar debates because it’s a widely understood form of categorization, and people categorize themselves on both ends of the spectrum (Wawa v. Starbucks).

You have referred to patronizing Starbucks as “affordable conspicuous consumption,” borrowing from Thorstein Veblen. Can you expand on that concept? Where else do we see this phenomenon in American culture?

Veblen talks about cycles of emulation, in which the lower classes imitate the elite, and as a result, the elite drop those aspects of their culture. This concept explains the Starbucks phenomenon; it’s a case study. Starbucks became the 1990s drink that Yuppies drank, and those who wanted to be like them drank it too. The per capita income of Starbucks customer declined. Beers are now doing the same thing; the cultural elites move on when others join in. It’s communicating that you can waste money on coffee, and it’s easier than dragging around a BMW. People don’t purchase Starbucks for the same reason anymore. Status doesn’t stand still, and we’re on the other side of the cycle now.

What sorts of issues within suburbanization does Starbucks address?

Starbucks started as an urban thing, then moved into the wealthy suburbs. It expressed the desire for a public gathering place. People moved to the suburbs for complex reasons, but it disconnected them, and they weren’t happy about that, so Starbucks provided the illusion of a gathering place. Suburbanites use it to meet up and to make up for

the dearth of social opportunities. Women in particular use it to gather during the day, since being alone in public is better than being home alone. Teens are also lacking places to hang out, since libraries and schools close earlier. Collective life is falling apart.

Considering the large role that corporations have played in American culture, do you believe that American studies scholars will start paying increased attention to the influences of these institutions?

Yes, absolutely. People need to write about business more often in creative and interesting ways. We should pay increasing attention to consumer culture. Businesses haven’t duped us; companies studied what we wanted and tapped into it. It’s a parallel movement to studying capitalism in post-WWII American life.

In your book Everything But the Coffee, you discussed the decision for Starbucks to carry The New York Times over USA Today in their stores, citing the type of consumer that goes for each paper. What other institutions fall in the same category as Starbucks and The New York Times?

One example is the music played and sold at Starbucks. They want to be associated with urban hipness without going too far. They want to be vaguely hip without overthrowing the world order, so things like jazz and singer-songwriter genres. The music is re-edited when needed. Paul Simon’s *Graceland* is an album that fits this mold.

To end again on a light note, what is the craziest or most complicated drink order you overheard during your Starbucks research?

I was more struck by the emotions surrounding a person’s order. I witnessed people practicing their very complicated orders in line, being afraid to make an error. Some customers feel they have made real life progress by figuring out the perfect order. In my experience, the most elaborate orders come from the neediest customers.

Thank you to Bryant Simon for speaking with us on this fascinating topic!

Supernatural American Studies

In October, our thoughts turn to all things spooky and scary, and here in the Eastern and Mid-Atlantic portions of the United States, we have good reason! Between Eastern State Penitentiary and the lurking Jersey Devil, it is no wonder that we feel especially jumpy as the month draws to a close. All things supernatural fascinate Americans, a trait that can be traced back to our Puritan forefathers. The *Eastern Voice* spoke with Dr.

Libby Tucker of Binghamton University, and author of *Haunted Halls: Ghostlore of American College Campuses* (2007) about what lies at the center of all this scary stuff.

First, according to Tucker, the fascination with the haunted and supernatural is nothing new. Aside from the Puritan interest in things like “spectral evidence” during the Salem Witch Trials, the Native American emphasis on the spiritual has also intrigued Americans. Salem continues to be a major tourist attraction over 300 years after the trials occurred.

Haunted houses and the joy of the scare are also not uniquely American, but more of a human fascination. Blockbuster films such as *Jaws* and *Poltergeist* do quite well overseas, as do most scary films. The emotions stirred by these movies translate well into places like Japan and China. In fact, Tucker stated that one of the scariest movies she has ever seen is Japan’s *The Grudge*. She has noticed that Europeans do not seem to be as enamored with scary movies as the United States and Asia.

If you are looking for a spooky, scary fix, there



are lots of places in the region meant to frighten! One of the most famous is Philadelphia’s Eastern State Penitentiary, created as one of the most innovative prisons in the 19th century; it now sends brave participants into its dank walls to be terrified by skilled actors. Gettysburg is also a popular spot for ghost-seekers, especially the Cashtown Inn and the

battlefield. While July is the peak of Gettysburg’s Civil War tourism, October also attracts tourists from all over.

The Eastern Voice asked Tucker what sites she feels are overlooked, since certain spots are so popular. She feels that there are tiers to the sites, with some being cultivated into popular spots by adults, and others being fueled by teenage curiosity and urban legends. For example, in Tucker’s town of Binghamton, the Roberson Mansion is well staffed and quite popular in the traditional sense, while a “haunted slaughterhouse” in town was more popular among teenagers who wanted to explore the site solo, while remaining virtually unknown to the public-at-large. Finally, Tucker notes, other sites are less inclined to cash-in on their haunted status because they are still functioning places of business. The Binghamton Health Center is thought to be haunted, being the Binghamton Inebriate Asylum in a past life. However, the staff discourages curious visitors, since the building is still a working hospital with recovering patients.

Thank you to Libby Tucker for all of her assistance!

Call For Papers: The Body of America, the Health of America: Taking the Pulse of American Culture

The Eastern American Studies Association will hold its 2014 annual conference at the campus of La Salle University in Philadelphia. America's "First City" has a historic tradition of leadership in health care as the home to the nation's first public hospital and to the Mutter Museum, devoted to the history of medicine. Thomas Eakins painted his famous work of medical students in an operating theater, "The Gross Clinic," in Philadelphia. The city has also faced devastating epidemics, from yellow fever in 1792 to the influenza of 1918.

Philadelphia played a key role in the metaphorical creation of the body of the nation as the home to the Continental Congress that adopted the Declaration of Independence and later, the convention that drafted the Constitution. We often use the body or corpus as metaphors for the national community as a means of talking about our collective welfare. The theme of our conference is an invitation for papers and panels that broadly address the notion -

literal or figurative - of the health of America.

Submission Guidelines:

Individual Papers: Send a 500-word abstract and a brief CV.

Full Panels: Send a cover sheet with the title of the panel, the names of each participant (3 - 4 papers) and the titles of their presentations. Include a 500-word abstract of each paper as well as a resume no longer than two pages for each panel participant and for the moderator and / or commentator if appropriate.

All materials should be sent to EasternASA2014@gmail.com before January 10, 2014.

Graduate students whose proposals are accepted will be encouraged to submit their final papers electronically several weeks prior to the conference if they wish to be considered for the Simon J. Bronner Award for the outstanding graduate paper in American Studies.



EASA member programs will also be contacted a month or two before the conference and each may then nominate one undergraduate to present at the Undergraduate Roundtable and compete for the Francis J. Ryan Award for Undergraduate Research.

Both awards will be presented during the closing session of the conference.

Title: The 2014 Annual Conference of the Eastern American Studies Association

Theme: The Body of America, the Health of America: Taking the Pulse of American Culture

Date: March 28-29, 2014

Venue: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania