Gülru Çakmak, Assistant Professor of 19th Century European Art, Joins the Faculty

What did you find especially appealing about coming to Art History at UMass?

As I brought my dissertation to a close and started looking for jobs, I decided that it was very important for me to become part of a research university, of a department that took teaching and research equally seriously. I knew that UMass Amherst was a serious and competitive R1 university. I knew about its resources as well as its very advantageous location, its proximity to a number of museums, collections and colleges in the area. I had heard wonderful things about various humanities departments, and was familiar with the work of faculty in the art history program. When I saw the job posting, my heart skipped a beat! The campus visit convinced me Amherst was where I wanted to be when I had a chance to meet with the fellow faculty as well as with some of the students. The fact that Amherst is located in one of the most stunning regions of the country made the offer even more attractive! One thing I did not know at the beginning, and have come to realize only after I started teaching, was how bright, involved and dedicated the students were, which makes each such a gratifying experience on an everyday level.

How would you describe your particular research interests in 19th c. European art?

The reason I became an art historian was because of Paul Cézanne. I discovered him when I was about 15, and was obsessed with him for a very long time, an obsession that was partially cured when I wrote my M.Phil thesis on his so-called Grand Bathers series. I wrote my PhD dissertation not on Cézanne though, but on a French academic painter considered to be at the other end of the spectrum, Jean-Léon Gérôme, and I focused on his attempts to modernize painting in the mid-19th century. I should add that I probably would not have considered Gérôme as a fruitful and serious research topic had I not had the chance to have close and egular encounters with a number of his paintings at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore as a curatorial fellow in 2006-2007. There I realized the strangeness and complexity of his paintings, and was driven to find out more. This experience also taught me that book reproductions can never take the place of a real encounter with the actual work itself. When we think of innovations in 19th-century painting, we immediately think of Courbet, Manet and the Impressionists, but in fact there were very many other artists, academic and independent, who tackled the problem of the demise of traditional painting and the transformation of the modern viewer. In order to have an accurate historical understanding of the emergence of modernism in the 19th century, its depth and complexity, I am convinced that we need to learn more about these other mostly unknown, completely forgotten, or in Gérôme’s case, fundamentally misunderstood artists as well.

Most recently, I have started exploring the problem of color in 19th-century sculpture, which emerged out of my initial perplexity about Gérôme’s turn to polychromatic sculpture after the age of 65. Further research has revealed an entire field of experimentation throughout the century in France, Britain, Germany and Italy, in which Gérôme was just one of the actors. At the moment I am conducting a grad seminar on this topic, and exploring this overlooked aspect of 19th-century modernity with my brilliant students.

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Another line of interest is a group of non-European artistic artists of the period, such as Orientalist, Russian and American artists, and their response to this urgent need to modernize academic conventions. How did these ambitious artists, who were trained in France and eventually returned to their home countries, negotiate French Academic principles and avant-garde practices? This open-ended, complex panorama of alternative modernities in the 19th century, which I find fascinating.

You gave your job talk on a lost painting of Gérôme. Can you tell us briefly some of the challenges you've faced with Cézanne?  

I find it hard to understand a painting I have not seen in person. This was even trickier in the case of Cézanne, because in this painting Gérôme attempted to establish a highly embodied relation between the viewer and the image. I was lucky to have a black and white photograph from the archives of the Corcoran Gallery, which was taken before the painting was de-accessioned sometime in 1951. I studied the black and white photograph thoroughly, spent lots of time looking at the image through a digital projector, blowing it up to a size that approximated the original canvas, which gave me a chance to study the effects of its bizarre composition.

We know that the lost painting is closely related to another canvas, which is today in the Walters Art Museum. Close study of the Walters painting, together with an extensive research on critical reviews of the painting when it was exhibited in Paris in 1895, gave me a sense of its color scheme, and allowed me to reconstruct the painting in my mind, and hopefully convincingly enough for my reader. It was fun. It was like detective work.

You have four Masters degrees in addition to your PhD from Johns Hopkins: how did that happen?

As I mentioned earlier, I had in my mind to become an art historian at the age of 15. I received a liberal arts education as an undergraduate in Turkey. After graduation, I studied briefly in Moscow, and returned to Turkey when I found out that I had received a fellowship to study at the Bilkeren University's Institute of Fine Arts in Ankara, well-known for its ambitious graduate program in critical theory and visual studies. There I wrote my master's thesis on the work of a modern Turkish sculptor, Kaan Gok, and a series of amazing theater masks he had welded out of scrap metal for a production of a Brecht play in Paris in the late 1970s. I approached this work through Sigmund Freud's concept of the Uncanny. It was during this period that I became deeply interested in understanding art history through critical methodologies offered by the expanded field of visual studies. I applied to two very innovative programs, one in the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis, and the other in the Gender Studies Department at the Central European University in Budapest. I was accepted to both, and did not want to give up either, so I attended both of them, two years in a row. It was a very intensive learning period, with fully loaded coursework and thesis writing. At the Central European University, I faced an intensive curriculum of feminist methodology and I wrote my thesis on a series of fascinating drawings in the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. I clearly made use of other than display in a museum setting, should be reflected in their contextualized display and respectful treatment. This was a primary motivation involved in archaeology and museums. The book serves not only to provide an overview of the laws, policies, and procedural recommendations for title review of potential acquisitions, but also seeks to identify cases in which museums have gone beyond these fundamental steps to incorporate strategies that furthered the cause of education and preservation, as well as cross-cultural respect and collaboration.

To further her goal of educating the public regarding the value of archaeological resources, Aimée coordinated the Archaeology Week educational programs while working at the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and volunteered on several archaeological investigations. With a background and interest in both archaeology and art history, she understands both the value of accessing and displaying archaeology within the museum setting, as well as the need for scientific study and increased protection of archaeological sites. Aimée has passionately pursued the topics of archaeology, fine arts, historic preservation, and cultural property law, both academically and professionally. She serves on the board of the Archaeological Preservation Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, and is the co-chair of the Board of Trustees for the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum in Arlington, Massachusetts. She is a strong supporter of preservation and conservation initiatives, both for cultural and environmental resources. Her problem-solving and project management skills are well utilized at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design where she directs course planning and cross-departmental academic initiatives. While a pragmatic problem-solver by profession, she is at heart an idealist who firmly believes in the positive role that all humanity can play in achieving a better world through collaboration, compassion, and communication. She hopes her publication makes a modest contribution to this broader goal and is of assistance to those working with those precious, nonrenewable resources that are, or may someday be, within museum collections.

2011 Undergraduate Awards

Iris Cheney Award

A group of UMass Art History alumnae decided to start an annual award in honor of the late Iris Cheney, long-time Professor of Renaissance Art. The first recipient of this award was Rachel Young (pictured below) who worked with Associate Professor of Renaissance Art Mozia Schmitt.

Rachel Young '11 winner of the Iris Cheney Award in Renaissance Studies

Rachel's paper examined a series of enigmatic half-length images by the Venetian painter Giorgione (c. 1478 - 1510) that have long puzzled art historians because they do not fit comfortably within the category of either portrait or genre scene. Through her extensive and innovative visual analysis, Rachel showed how Giorgione used these compositions to develop themes of desire and transience expressed through the relationship between subject and viewer.
Faculty News

During the 2010-2011 year Walter Denny continued his full schedule of teaching on the Arts Center campus, as well as his one-day-a-week consulting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where the newly remodeled Islamic galleries reopened in early November, 2011. New articles have appeared in print, others are in press, and the Metropolitan's new commemorative volume debuted in November. Walter continues his busy schedule of consulting and commitments to various institutions; and new projects are underway for, among others, ARTStor, Swazi Aramco World, the Hartman Arts Museum, the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, and The Textile Museum in Washington, where a fall 2012 exhibition is in preparation. Two weeks in Istanbul in July resulted in the arrival in Amherst of large numbers of books for which there is very limited shelf space. Walter hopes to take a full-year sabbatical leave in 2012-13.


Laetitia La Follette again testified before the State Department's Cultural Property Advisory Committee, this time in October 2010 in support of Greece's request for a Memorandum of Understanding to help curb the flow of unprovenanced antiquities into the U.S. In April 2011, she was named Chair of the Archaeological Institute of America's Cultural Heritage Policy Committee for her work on international cultural property issues. Her French paper on the dress of Rome's Vestal Virgins as a tight-rope act finally appeared in the collection Femmes de la Grèce antique (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011), while her article "Pax, Pax, and the Sacred Life in Roman relief sculpture," was accepted for the 2011 volume of the Memoires of the American Academy in Rome. Laeti-
tie was her second year as director of Undergraduate Studies and this fall took over from Kristine Haney as Director of the Art History Program.

Bill Oedel is enjoying his second three-year term as Chair of the Department of Art, Architecture, and Art History.

This fall Mario Onorato had his current essay, "Painting Diagonally: An Archive of Resistance and 'a sensibility of unanswerable questions' published in the Los Angeles County Museum’s Art exhibition, Aside: Elude of the Obvious, the first survey of the Chicana/Chicano group’s work. He also completed the proposal for his book on critical art practices since 1960, which will be submitted to publishers this fall. Other publishing opportunities included his work as Art Editor for the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s annually appearing special section, "Casualty," in which he selected a collection of projects by contemporary artists Faith Wilding, Michelle Dixon and Anna Schuleit, among others.

Mario was invited by several colleges to present his current research, most notably by Boston University’s Department of Art History and the Chicago Scholar Lecture Series as well as the Art Department at the University of Montevallo, Alabama. Along with working on several Independent Study projects with our MA students, he continued his support of graduate students across campus by serving on four MFA Studio Art Thesis Committees, a PhD Dissertation committee, a Fulbright mini-grant for a Comparative Literature student specializing in Mexican and Latin American visual literary culture, and an Independent Study project focusing on the artist Elizabeth Catlett with a Fulbright mini-grant for the WGBH’s Doris Duke Department of Afro-American Studies.

In terms of teaching, Mario developed two new courses. He redesigned and broadened his "Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation in Contemporary Art (1968 – 1993)" to stand as the first of a two-part course. Next fall he intends to teach the second part: "Identity Formation: Diaspora, Exile, and Art in the Early 21st Century." During the spring semester he taught a new MA/MFA graduate seminar "2011 to the Past: A "Diasporic" History of Contemporary Art." Finally, he spent part of the summer preparing for this fall’s new contemporary art course: "Chicana/Chicano Aesthetics.

Mario continues to work with the university at large. He has played a central role in coordinating the curatorial committee in support of an exhibition of contemporary art to support the University’s upcoming campus-wide project "W.E.B. Dubois in Our Time." For the Class of 1961 St. Regis Gift Committee, Mario – along with director Loretta Yallop (University Museum of Contemporary Art) and Professor Young Min Moon (Sensible Art) – have been finalizing the first year component of the Artists Residency Program, which will provide a residency to nationally and internationally recognized artists living and working in the greater campus community. Last year, he also served on several additional yard-long committees:

the Art History Program’s Nineteenth Century Search committee; the University Public Art Committee (UPAC); and the Chancellor’s Faculty Fellows meetings.

Timothy M. Rohan continues to serve as Graduate Program Director and was pleased to see the majority of the class admitted during his term, graduating in 2011. He taught his surveys about nineteenth and twentieth century architecture. Enrollment in his General Education introductory survey grew markedly and the Faculty Senate accepted him as a permanent addition to the course catalog. Tim served as chair of the search for a historian of nineteenth century European art, successfully resulting in the selection of Professor Cakmak to the art history faculty. Tim gave a talk about Paul Ro-
dolphs’s pedagogy for a seminar at Princeton and lectured on Kevin Roche for a symposium about the architect at Yale. Tim continued working on his book manuscript about Randolph and reviewed an exhibition about Randolph’s Manhat-
тан magnificence for Curators, the magazine of the Yale School of Architecture.

Monika Schmitter’s article "The Quadro da Avare in Sixteenth-Century Venetian Art" appeared in the Fall 2011 issue of Renaissance Quarterly. She also wrote a review of Blake de Micia’s "Becoming Venetian: Imagining the Art and Architecture of Early Modern Venice" for the same journal (Summer 2011). She will be on sab-

datical leave this coming year, enjoying a Visiting Senior Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Humanities at the National Gallery, Washington D.C. Grants from the Renaissance Society of America and the Gisela Kebel Delmas Foundation will support her research in Venetian libraries and archives, as well as various important collections in Europe.

Alumni News Undergraduate

Daniele Davis (BA 2008) has recently transitioned from the Fine Arts, Boston as the Group Sales Coordinator where she is responsible for planning a group’s visit to the museum and ensui-

ing that when they arrive they enter with smiles. It’s been exciting experiencing the opening of the new American wing. Danielle began her museum career at the Springfield Museum in Springfield, MA where she held a vari-

ty of positions from 2006 - 2010. Over those past 7 years Danielle worked in a multitude of departments; education, development, marketing, group sales, re-
tal and member and visitor services, all of which have helped her achieve a vast understanding of museums and how they operate. She loves working among the world’s most precious treasures!

Kira DeVaul (BA 2008) Since March 2011 Kira has been serving as the Re-

tal Supervisor at the Harvard Mu-

seum of Natural History. In addi-
tion she was a community arts inter-

n at the Cambridge Art Council.

Lillian Dignan (BA 2006) is employed as a project manager at Earthtime, a media agency. Lillian is also the creator, designer and project manager of The Bright Stu-
da, a creative design company that caters to small businesses and sustainable living.

Suzie Garber (BA 2008) works as a planning marketing coordinator for Goody Clancy, an architectural firm in the greater Boston area. Before that she was employed as an image collection library assistant in the Image Collection Library here at UMass.

Sadbhí Smyth, Népal ’11

Carrying the flag of Nepal in the UMass Commons program this past May
Mark Mitchell (BA 1997) currently heads the Center for American Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. His research on the Philadelphia Museum of Art's "Twilight on the Campagna by George Inness" was discovered in its archives and recently displayed with nine other paintings by Inness in an exhibition which ran from February through March of 2020.

Erin Web (BA 2008) completed her MA in art history at the University of Connecticut in May 2010. She is currently both the Membership and Visitor Services Assistant at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA.

Graduate

Meg Bernstein (MA 2011) is currently studying for a second Master's in religion and visual arts at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, and is doing collections research and cataloging at the Yale Center for British Art.

Lloyd DeWitt (MA 1993) has 8 years' experience at the Johnson Collection at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Lloyd accepted the position as Curator of European Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto in June of 2010. He returned, in late July, to the Philadelphia Museum of Art to work on the "Impression: The Birth of a Movement" exhibition at "The Face of Jesus," the Museum's first ever collaboration with the Louvre.

Jara Dundas (MA 2010) is attending Duke University where she is working on her PhD studying the art and architecture of early modern France and Italy with a special interest on ephemeral architecture and cross-cultural exchanges across the Alps. Jara is also proud to announce that her paper, "Permanent Devotion: Carlo Rainaldi and the Quarrenote as Precursor to the Church of Santa Maria in Campus" was recently published in Ateneo XXIX, which came out in August 2011.

Kristina Durocher (MA 1999) moved in June to the position of director of the Museum of Art at the University of New Hampshire at Durham. Before joining the Museum of Art, Kristina previously held the position of curator, photography and design at the International Center of Photography in New York. Before that she was at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. In 1997, Kristina co-founded ARTISTORY, a communications consulting company.

Elisabeth (Swannon) Gallerani (MA 2005) This past year Liz worked on the reinstallation project at Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA), culminating in ten galleries; she also curated a Label talk exhibition on ancient art. She joined the Williams ARTH 101 team this fall, teaching three sections a week. June was a delight for Elizabeth and her husband, Rob, celebrating their six-year anniversary and their daughter's second birthday.

Andreas Geier (MA 1993) published an article in July in the Dresdner Kunstwelt, a scholarly journal of the Dresden Art Galley. The collection holds three portraits painted by Velázquez, including an Unknown Knight of Santiago. In his article, Andreas suggests that the sitter might possibly be identified as Francisco de Andrade, a captain of a leading Portuguese vessel and knight of the Portuguese Order of Christ, who visited Madrid in 1638. He bases the identification on engravings held by the historical sources and context. In March 2011 Andreas returned to Madrid to work on the Elagga, the Death of Prince Baltasar Carlos by Velázquez at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Montreal. Andreas is currently studying for his PhD degree in art history, with a specialization in the Spanish Renaissance.

Stevan Steven (MA 2005) is very busy as a student attorney with the Immigration Law Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law. He earned his JD from the University of Texas where he was involved in legal aid work for refugees and asylees. During his time at the University of California, Berkeley, he was editor-in-chief of the Berkeley Journal of International Law. He is currently an attorney with the Firearms Policy Coalition. He also taught and worked on a paper on the "Future of the king Philip III in Lisbon 1619 as part of a conference on ancient views of Lisbon. Andreas and his family of five live in the Taurus hills just above Frank- furt, Germany. Andreas is the founder of Gehlert GmbH, a financial translation firm he founded 15 years ago in Frankfurt and which takes up most of his time.

Emily Greenwood (MA 1999) finished her California Single Subject Credential and International Baccalaureate Visual Arts Program. She has been appointed the director of the arts department at Ibn Khaldoon National School, an International Baccalaureate K-12 school in Bahrain. Before moving to Bahrain, Emily married her fiancé, Dave Relf, in San Diego this past August.

Anna Guernsey (MA 2005) continues to work at the Cooperstown Collegiate Soci- ety where she is Manager of Institutional Advancement. Over the years, she has developed an evaluation program to better understand the Society's audience and currently serves as a co-chair of a growing evaluation affinity group through the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH). This spring, she par- ticipated in the Museums Association Conference where she participated in an entrepreneurship for Museum Leaders at the Cooperstown Graduate Program. In her spare time, Anna continues to teach art history courses (both in person and online) while working in the admissions office of her alma mater.

Rachel Lafo (MA 1974) moved to Van- couver, BC in August 2009 and is now working as an independent curator, writer and lecturer. Rachel has been writ- ing articles and reviews for publications such as Public Art Review, Canadian Art, Art in America, Sculpture West, and Mouse Magazine. She teaches courses in the family University Center of Vancouver's Continuing Studies program, and is guest curating 3 exhibitions in the next year. In addition, Rachel is also Vice- President of Vancouver's Public Art Commis- sion and President of the Board of the Contemporary Art Society of Vancouver.

Zoë Newell (MA 2003) recently re- ceived a Fullbright Scholarship for graduate study in Alexandria, Egypt for six months this spring. She will be working with the Arts and Multimedia li- brary at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina to conduct seminars and lectures. Zoe is happy to report that he is still putting his art history degree to good use!

Stephanie Peterson (MA 2011) presently works as a teaching assistant at a bilingual pre-school in Brooklyn to support herself while she applies for PhD programs.

Debra Petke (MA 1983) has entered her fourth year as President of the Academy of Fine Arts and was recently appointed to the board of the Robert Stobart Foundation. Her husband, Raymond Petke, continues to focus on his responsibilities as Vice President of the Maxwell Shepherd Memorial Arts Fund.

Vael Rice (MA 2004) is the Assist- ant Curator of Indian and Himala- yan Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in Philadelphia. Vael is currently working on a carpentry workshop program she will be giving there next year.

Stacy Rodenberger (MA 1996) continues her work in the Education Department of the Portland Museum of Art, Maine, specifically on teacher development programs related to the Weekend Homers Studio at Prout's Neck, Maine. We look forward to the conclusion of the 2012 summer internship program next year.
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