TOWNSEND CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES UC BERKELEY

FALL 2019

UNA’s Lecture Paul Chan The Bather’s Dilemma  EXHIBITION Ken Light American Stories  CONVERSATION Myra Melford Thinking about Composition
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Some years ago, the great art critic and fiction writer John Berger wrote an essay about poetry and violence. His argument was that poetry is the essential response to violence for the simple reason that violence tears things to pieces, whereas poetry takes things that are superficially unrelated and puts them together. Violence destroys; poetry builds.

Berger’s thoughts have come back to me repeatedly in the past few months, as I have witnessed our body politic being torn apart. Curiously, the disintegration of political communities — from Brazil to Hungary to the US — is being driven not by great economic shifts or financial crises, but by cultural war. The virtues of hospitality, the practice of listening, the cultivation of ideas and reasoned debate — out the window, it would seem.

The university struggles to keep up. And yet, given that it is a distortion of culture and community that is disrupting our national psyche, it necessarily must fall to the humanities to try to respond. This is the moment when traditions of humanistic work can speak most cogently, above the roar of drones and the rattle of tweets. This is where the Townsend Center’s tradition of bringing together students, scholars, and community members around shared concerns and pleasures offers opportunities for healing.

Against this backdrop, we have just completed the successful launch of a new program, the Townsend Honors Thesis Workshop, which brought together 18 seniors writing theses on topics from dance studies to German literature to art history. The students — who might otherwise have known nothing of one another’s work — met monthly to develop their research skills and receive guidance from faculty. The results were impressive beyond anything we anticipated.

The Townsend Center continues its work of bringing together people, ideas, and disciplines that might otherwise remain separate. Our upcoming programs include a visit by artist Paul Chan, this year’s Una’s Lecturer; more of our popular Berkeley Book Chats; and a conversation in the Thinking about Composition series inaugurated last year.

I look forward to seeing you at our events, and I always welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Timothy Hampton
Aldo Scaglione and Marie M. Burns Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and French
ARTIST PAUL CHAN is the 2019–20 Una’s Lec
turer. He is the winner of the 2014 Hugo Boss Prize, awarded biennially by the Guggenheim Foundation to an artist who has made a visionary contribution to contemporary art.

Solo exhibitions of Chan’s work have been held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, London’s Serpentine Gallery, and Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and he has been included in major group exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale and the Whitney Biennial. His art is held in numerous permanent collections, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Chan’s art takes many forms, including drawing, sculpture, collage, film, video animation, installation, and collaborative site-specific projects. He has worked simultaneously as political activist and artist, engaging with such topics as globalization, inequality, violence, and war.

In a major project that united activism and art, Chan spearheaded a series of public performances of “Waiting for Godot” in post-Katrina New Orleans in 2007. The play, which features two characters waiting for someone who never arrives, was staged outdoors in parts of the city still devastated — left waiting — two years after the hurricane. The performances were supplemented by a host of educational activities undertaken by Chan in New Orleans public schools and universities.

Chan is founder of the experimental press Badlands Unlimited, which publishes works by artists and writers in a variety of digital and print formats ranging from ebook to stone tablet. Publications include speeches on democracy by Saddam Hussein, an erotica series, and a translation of Plato.

Born in Hong Kong and raised in Omaha, Nebraska, Chan holds a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from Bard College. He was one of six artists invited to make selections for the 2019–20 exhibition Artistic License: Six Takes on the Guggenheim Collection, the first-ever artist-curated exhibition mounted at the Guggenheim Museum.

In his Una’s Lecture, Chan explores the figure of the bather — a visual trope with a rich history, and a prominent theme in the artist’s own work — as an embodiment of pleasure that is linked to the act of renewal.
THE TOWNSEND FELLOWSHIPS program supports the research of faculty, advanced graduate students, and other research professionals at UC Berkeley. Throughout the year, the fellows meet for regular discussion and peer review of their research in progress.

In her study of Japanese film and media, Hannah Airriess (Film & Media) focuses on the figure of the white-collar employee (or salaryman) during Japan’s High Growth Era (1955 – 1972).

Graduate Student Fellow
Jeffrey Berg Fellow

Ellen Feiss (History of Art) probes the role played by art and artists in President Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty.

Graduate Student Fellow
Albert Lepawsky Fellow

Jason Ferguson (Sociology) studies global contestations over the legal regulation of gender, sexuality, and the family from the mid-20th century to the present.

Graduate Student Fellow

Elena Kempf (History) studies the history of weapons prohibitions in international law between 1868 and 1925, focusing on the moral, medical, and political making of the legal boundary between acceptable and unacceptable violence in war.

Graduate Student Fellow

Priya Kothari (South & Southeast Asian Studies) examines preaching and public memory in a Hindu community of Western India and the United States.

Graduate Student Fellow

Elsa Russian (Italian Studies) examines twentieth- and twenty-first century French and Italian autobiographies that explore the social nature of personal identity.

Graduate Student Fellow
Professor Norman Jacobson Memorial Fellow

Desmond Sheehan’s (Music) research on German Protestant music in urban environments traces the aesthetic, media, and institutional transformations that musical harmony underwent in Berlin between 1760 and 1840.

Graduate Student Fellow
Townsend-Global Urban Humanities Joint Fellow

Jacob Gaboury (Film & Media) is beginning a project on queer histories of computation that explores the transformation of identity as a category of difference under contemporary digital media technologies.

Assistant Professor Fellow
Sophie Volpp (Comparative Literature and East Asian Languages & Cultures), a scholar of Chinese literature, is completing a project on the preservation of rare books in China during the second Sino-Japanese war (1937–45).

Eric Falci (English) studies modern and contemporary poetry, especially British and Irish poetry after 1945.

Christopher Kutz (Law) addresses problems of moral, legal, and political responsibility, with a current focus on the problem of responsibility for climate change.

Hans Sluga’s (Philosophy) current research is in the field of political philosophy.

In her research on culture, history, literature, and memory in Southeast Asia and diaspora, Penny Edwards (South & Southeast Asian Studies) grapples with the question of the historian as unreliable narrator.

A scholar of American legal history, Karen Tani (Law) is completing a book manuscript on the history of disability law in the late twentieth century.

Using India as a case study, Atreyee Gupta (History of Art) is completing a book project on the artistic and intellectual currents of the Non-Aligned Movement, which inaugurated the Third World project at the height of the Cold War.

Sarah Vaughn (Anthropology) works at the intersection of political thought and technoscience to explore the formation of climate adaptation projects, institutions, and expertise in the context of the Caribbean and Latin America.

C.D. Blanton (English), a scholar of modernist poetry and art, explores the reinvention of apparently abandoned logical and metaphysical systems during the interwar period (1919–1939).

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Seth Lerer

**EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE CROSSHATCH**

Towards a Creative History of the Early Modern Hand

Friday, September 27, 3 pm

Geballe Room, 220 Stephens Hall

The Townsend Center welcomes Seth Lerer, Distinguished Professor of Literature at UC San Diego and a scholar of medieval and Renaissance literature.

In a talk entitled “Epistemology of the Crosshatch: Towards a Creative History of the Early Modern Hand,” Lerer examines how hatching, or cross-hatching (the controlled marking of parallel lines), became the great technique through which visual artists of the early modern era discovered the representation of physical and emotional reality. With the development and perfection of the hatching technique, the two dimensions of a print or drawing could take on the three dimensions of a sculpture. Through his examination of crosshatching as an instance of the human hand making manifest what is not, Lerer explores issues of illusion and reality within the history of an emerging idiom of visual representation.
THE ART OF REWRITING

In 1942, despite delayed construction, uncertainty, and the largest war faced by London, a new bridge opens from the rubble of Strand Bridge. It is a precarious structure — beams have been forced into arches; the footway is supported by slabs of metal. Beneath it, the River Thames, the longest river in England, runs dangerously quickly. Yet, from the bridge, travelers can see London in all directions, can watch the way the river curves endlessly around the city. The new bridge is named after the victorious Battle of Waterloo, the battle in which the British ended the Napoleonic Wars. A few years later, it becomes the only Thames bridge to be hit by German bombers. Waterloo Bridge — fashioned from war, made into a casualty of its violence.

Four days of the week, I walk across Waterloo Bridge to reach the central campus of King’s College London. This is a newly familiar route. According to my passport, I am a six-month, short-term student. That is, I am a study abroad student. I am a visitor who can give directions to tourists. Every time I reenter the UK, I lug a folder to the passport control desk, checking to ensure it’s all printed inside: transcripts, letters of acceptance, bank statements, everything that proves I am only temporary.

No one makes eye contact on the bridge, reminding me of our British study abroad advisor’s warning: “For Heaven’s sake, don’t smile at strangers!” Unable to completely relinquish my American interest in interacting with strangers, I watch them instead: new couples taking photos, businesspeople walking with earphones fastened tightly, the occasional person wrapped in blankets who asks me for money.

There are so many people in London, and I know none of them. None of my friends from Berkeley studied abroad. I know no one in this country, and no one in the countries touching this one. Living abroad, everything becomes reduced to increments: carefully plotted phone calls between classes, work shifts, and meetings; hour-long coffee chats with people seen only in passing. I wonder if this is what being an adult is — loving people who are never close enough.

One day, I walk across Waterloo, and everything has changed. There are police vehicles clustered around the barriers; there are uniformed officers in bowler hats I still find charmingly ridiculous. There are no busses, no cars. I continue, and as I reach the middle of the bridge, I see that Waterloo is blocked with people. There are trees tied to the divider. There is a parked truck, opened to reveal a band strumming on the guitar. On one side of the bridge, I see a daycare in which children paint each other’s faces and sit on bales of hay. It’s an environmental protest, the Extinction Rebellion, and soon it will dominate headlines.

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Art of Writing is supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, funds from the Daniel E. Koshland, Jr. Distinguished Chair in Writing, and private donors.
I have come to realize that the photographer’s voice is small but important. It is through our photographs that we can inform and participate in the conversations that have helped to create social change and affect the direction of America and its people.

Documentary photographers since the birth of photography have worked to put a human face on our time and tell the American story — think of Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Dorothea Lange, Gordon Parks, W. Eugene Smith, Robert Frank. I share these artists’ passion for shedding light and attention on unseen communities and unreported stories. If we would leave this narrative only to historians or corporations, our vision of our time would be far from the truth.

Ken Light is the Reva and David Logan Professor of Photojournalism at UC Berkeley’s Graduate School of Journalism. He has worked for over five decades on in-depth visual reportage. Light’s work has appeared in over 200 exhibitions and is held in numerous permanent collections, including those of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, International Center of Photography, and the Smithsonian. Viewing hours are generally Monday–Friday 9 am to 4 pm. Contact the Townsend Center to confirm availability.

Ken Light
American Stories
August 28, 2019–May 15, 2020
at the Townsend Center

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Thinking About Composition: Creative Work, Scholarship, and the Art of Putting Things Together

Friday, October 25, 2019 | 3 pm
Gebbie Room, 220 Stephens Hall

The practice of composition is common to most creative and scholarly undertakings. Composition is where artistic or intellectual inspiration runs up against the everyday struggle of making. It comes from the Latin for “putting things together” — com ponere. It involves questions of unity and linkage, of transition, of beginning, of ending. Many artists struggle (some famously) with the questions of unity and linkage, of transition, of beginning, of ending. Some make it a theme of their practice. Others delight in it. It involves putting things together: it is where artistic or intellectual inspiration runs up against the everyday struggle of making. It comes from the Latin for “putting things together” — com ponere. It involves questions of unity and linkage, of transition, of beginning, of ending. Many artists struggle (some famously) with the questions of unity and linkage, of transition, of beginning, of ending. Some make it a theme of their practice. Others delight in it. It involves putting things together:

In the second of a series of conversations, we focus on the “how” of composition by bringing together a group of master practitioners working across a wide range of forms and media: acclaimed jazz flutist and composer Nicole Mitchell, who directs Jazz Studies at the University of Pittsburgh; cultural historian Josh Kun, who holds a PhD in Ethnic Studies from Berkeley and is director of USC’s Annenberg School of Communication; and poet and scholar Chiyuma Elliott, a faculty member in Berkeley’s African American Studies department and a former Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford University. In a conversation moderated by Berkeley professor and jazz pianist Myra Melford, panelists share their ideas about what it means to compose.

Composition No. 152

Maybe the song is a fluke, or maybe it means a dramatic view or it drinks from the lake, and tells something true during certain harvest festivals the pattern can be found inside geodes and tendons or it means I will be as the sky is blue to you during certain harvest festivals the pattern can be found inside June sun and April wind —

— Chiyuma Elliott
HANA MELNYSYN, research grants manager at the University of California Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI), hosts workshops for graduate students and faculty who want to learn more about UCHRI’s grant opportunities and tips for successful proposals.

**UCHRI Funding Workshops**  
**Friday, October 4, 2019**  
Geballe Room, 220 Stephens Hall  
11–11:45 am Graduate Student Workshop  
12–1:30 pm Faculty Workshop

**FALL 2019 DEADLINES**

- September 20, 2019  
  Conference & Lecture Grants
- September 27, 2019  
  Public Speaking for Graduate Students
- November 8, 2019  
  Townsend Dissertation Fellowships
  Townsend Fellowships for Assistant and Associate Professors
  Townsend Fellowship for Library and Museum Professionals

[townsendcenter.berkeley.edu/deadlines](http://townsendcenter.berkeley.edu/deadlines)