Queneau News is Good News

The Harry Ransom Center recently acquired the archive of French author Raymond Queneau, and it is already receiving lots of attention. With the archive barely out of its packing boxes, plans are afoot for an international conference in 2005, celebrating, in the Quenellien spirit of diversity and playfulness, the author and his work. The archive, rich in original material, includes manuscripts of Queneau’s influential first novel *Le Chiendent* (*The Bark Tree*) as well as his masterpiece—the complex, allegorical comedy *Les Enfants du limon* (*Children of Clay*). It also comes with a complete library of first editions of Queneau’s works and presentation copies of books given to him by such authors as Georges Bataille, Albert Camus, René Char, Marguerite Duras, Jean-Paul Sartre, and others. It joins a significant unpublished correspondence between Queneau and Henry Miller in the Carlton Lake Collection and takes its place alongside the Center’s prestigious Samuel Beckett and James Joyce collections to offer scholars multiple insights into the modern zeitgeist.

Along with Samuel Beckett—though in a decidedly more humorous and lighter vein—Raymond Queneau (1903-1976) is considered one of the most original French writers of the twentieth century. He was, like Beckett, a poet, novelist, critic, editor, translator, playwright, filmmaker, philosopher, mathematician, and lover of puns and wordplay. Both artists acknowledge a profound debt to James Joyce. (The Ransom Center’s new acquisition is the *Manuscript for Les Enfants du limon*, 1938, Raymond Queneau.)

The Ransom Center has gone through a number of material transformations over the past few years, and in keeping with that dynamic, the Center announces a major restructuring of the administrative staff.

The loss of two associate directors and the expansion of services at the Center over the course of the last year brought about a need to reexamine and redeploy resources to keep up with the changing demands of a greater public presence. As a result, Director Thomas Staley has appointed one new Associate Director and promoted three existing Ransom Center staff members to the position of Associate Director, each receiving a lion’s share of new expectations.

Rich Oram, the Center’s Chief Librarian, will now oversee the curatorial and public services functions of all of the Ransom Center’s literary and visual collections. Jim Stroud, our Chief Conservation Officer, will serve as Associate Director for Conservation & Building Management, overseeing conservation, exhibition services, and all aspects of building management. As Associate Director for Technical & Digital Services, Kris Kiesling manages book, archival & visual materials cataloging, photographic services, and digital activities throughout the Center.

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**PROMOTIONS SECURE CENTER’S FUTURE**

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known chiefly as a novelist whose works critics say “span a host of Ulysses.” Queneau preferred to remain distant from literary movements. Although he had a brief flirtation with the Surrealists, he eschewed categorization. Consequently, he has not been literarily preferred to remain distant from literary movements. Although he had a brief flirtation which had been published by his new employer. All the while he researched his 1907) but founded as an existing entity in 1949. The is present in the collection in various manuscript formats ranging from to a 1200-page manuscript and nearly 600-page typescript.

In 1950, Queneau joined the Collège de Pataphysique, conceived by Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) but founded as an existing entity in 1949. The Collège brought together intellectuals and writers in an absurdist-scientific pursuit of imaginary solutions. While a member of this group, Queneau was appointed Director of the Encyclopédie de la Pléiade, an editorial position eminently suited to Queneau’s own encyclopedic approach to life.

In 1960, Queneau and François Le Lionnais founded Oulipo (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle, or Workshop of Potential Literature), whose literary projects were largely the result of Queneau’s love of mathematics. His Cent mille milliards de poèmes and Exercices de style grew out of this group’s passion for abstract mathematical structures and patterns. Although Oulipo, with its linguistic games and mathematical challenges, ended up producing myriad texts, the function of the group was to create new literary forms and revitalize old ones. As one critic wrote, “[t]he Oulipo project generated a lucid reconstruction of the poetic language.”

Queneau’s love of mathematics also grew out of his personal passion for abstract mathematical structures and patterns. Although Oulipo, with its linguistic games and mathematical challenges, ended up producing myriad texts, the function of the group was to create new literary forms and revitalize old ones. As one critic wrote, “[t]he Oulipo project generated a lucid reconstruction of the poetic language.”

For his achievements, Queneau was elected to the Académie Goncourt in 1951 and the Académie de l’Humour in 1952; he became a member of the Société Mathématique de France in 1948 and the American Mathematical Society in 1965. —Linda Ashton

Excerpt from *Le Chiendent (The Bark Tree, 1953)*

At midday, you have to go and have lunch; not too far away, because you have to hurry back to work, and it mustn’t be too expensive either, of course. A net, cast no one could say quite how, hauled a thousand human beings into these premises and here, in exchange for cash, they were fed. The silhouette is one of them, it’s been caught. It eats: a magnificent rancid sardine, a very thin piece of flesh garnished with bits of wood and, when a delectable moment comes for it to sample the banana with jam, its fastidious neighbor is eating cod. The silhouette was used to it, it was the same every day. One anonymous individual, who had been caught in the first cast of the net, rapidly absorbed the muck bestowed upon him and was quickly replaced by the fastidious fish-lover, who later started to raise hell when, having himself arrived at the yogurt or dried fruit stage, a latecomer started stuffing himself with tripe, and this by means of a fork which the day before had served to shatter the mirror of two already ancient eggs, as witness the golden yellow of its prongs. Around 2 o’clock, in the deserted, but still stinking, restaurant, a few fat waitresses were mopping their armpits.
The past year was marked by change, including the retirement of Associate Director Sally Leach and the departure of Associate Director for Development Sue Murphy. These senior administrators made great contributions to the Center. Sally Leach, after her stalwart performance with the building renovation, has moved to Australia, not to be at a greater distance from our transformed building, but to be closer to her grandchildren. Sue Murphy accepted a position at the Library of Congress in conservation, her first love.

To accommodate these departures, we have instituted major changes in our organizational structure. Mary Beth Bigger, our remaining Associate Director, has been elevated to Executive Associate Director and second in the administrative line. We have appointed four new Associate Directors, three of them new positions. Rich Oram has been named Associate Director of the Library and the Photography and Visual Collections. Kris Kiesling has been appointed Associate Director of Technical and Digital Services. Jim Stroud has become Associate Director of Conservation and Building Management. We are pleased that Jeff Melton has joined us to take over as Associate Director for Development. These changes reflect the evolution of the Center and will allow us to better deploy our resources and communicate more effectively within our organization. They also place leadership closer to the daily activities of staff.

Because research is central to our mission, one of our primary goals is the acquisition of major archives. Last fall was an active period of acquisition, highlighted by the purchase of the archive of Raymond Queneau, an important French poet, novelist, and publisher. This archive enhances the prestigious French collections already housed at the Ransom Center; indeed, it will be regarded as an important research link between the Surrealists and Beckett.

Other significant acquisitions include the archive of British writer Iain Sinclair. The papers of actor and director Peter Glenville were added to our Performing Arts collection. We also acquired a small archive of a notable writer, Kay Dick, whose papers are significant for their depth, rich associations with other writers, and diversity. These archives bring considerable research value to the Ransom Center.

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The Board of Directors of The American Institute of Architects (AIA) has named the Texas firm Lake/Flato Architects, Inc. (Lake/Flato) as recipient of the 2004 AIA Architecture Firm Award.

Annually, the AIA bestows its highest honor on an architectural firm to recognize a practice that has consistently produced prominent architecture for at least 10 years. Based in San Antonio, Lake/Flato has undertaken projects in a broad range of places, types, and scales. From residential to civil, corporate and commercial to educational, Lake/Flato exercises an enriching approach to architecture, evident from the more than 90 regional and national architectural awards the firm has received over the last 20 years.

As architect on the recent renovation of the Ransom Center, Lake/Flato worked closely with staff and administration to realize a new vision for the Center’s public areas. Their attention to the inherent needs of a world-renowned public facility, the limitations of completing a project in an operational institution, and innovation in functional design combined to make the renovation an unequivocal success. The Ransom Center wishes to congratulate Lake/Flato Architects on this highly-esteemed and much deserved award.

Lake/Flato partner David Lake comments on the AIA award, The University of Texas at Austin, and the renovation project: "It is a remarkable honor to receive the 2004 AIA National Firm Award. To be recognized by our peers as contributing to the profession places Lake/Flato in remarkable company with many other fine firm award recipients, such as I.M. Pei, Cesar Pelli, and Skidman Owings Merrill. "I am so proud of our entire firm and delighted that 22 members of our staff graduated from UT Austin Architecture School; this award recognizes the strength of the UT Austin Architecture Program."

NEW IMPRINT FUNDED BY PRIVATE DONORS, TEXAS COMMISSION ON THE ARTS

In October 2004, the Ransom Center will open Miguel Covarrubias: A Certain Clairvoyance, a commemorative exhibition recognizing the achievements of Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias. Drawn from the Ransom Center’s Nickolas Muray Collection of Mexican Art, the exhibit will focus on the artist’s caricature drawings, paintings, and books. In conjunction with the exhibition, a book for the Imprint Series entitled The Covarrubias Circle: Nickolas Muray’s Collection of Mexican Art will be published. The generosity of Rick Hardin and Jack & Janet Roberts provided the funding to publish the book, while the Texas Commission on the Arts will support the authors’ honoraria.

HIGH HONORS FOR RANSOM CENTER ARCHITECTS

Attendees of the Ralph and Mary John Spence Lobby Dedication. (l to r) Judy Tate, Mary John Spence, Tom Staley, Ralph Spence, Jr., Louise Spence Griffeth. 2003.

The Ralph and Mary John Spence Lobby Dedication

On November 15, 2003, the Ransom Center officially dedicated the Ralph and Mary John Spence Lobby with over 120 family and friends attending. After President Faulkner’s welcoming remarks, Tom Staley thanked Mrs. Spence and her family for their generosity to the Ransom Center and their many years of support.

Judy Spence Tate and Mary John Spence each spoke of Ralph Spence’s vast efforts to purchase the Gutenberg Bible and his love for his family, friends, and UT.

Following the ceremony the Spence family hosted a seated luncheon on the Center’s 2nd floor atrium overlooking the courtyard.

Fulbright & Jaworski’s Austin Office 25th Year Anniversary Event

The law firm of Fulbright & Jaworski celebrated its 25-year anniversary in Austin at the Ransom Center on November 21, 2003. The firm announced its donation of $250,000 to assist in the acquisition of the Woodward-Bernstein Archives (Watergate Papers).

The elegant event, which was held in the courtyard in front of the Center, was attended by approximately 300 well-wishers.

—Jean Townsend

Couple dancing on beach, with three percussionists in background. C. 1928.

Miguel Covarrubias. Painting (gouache).
The Center’s prodigal photographer is making news again. David Douglas Duncan has published Photo Nomad [W. W. Norton & Company; December 22, 2003; $29.95 cloth], a photo-autobiography that spans the twentieth century in a compact volume wonderfully interspersed with alternating text and imagery. Duncan traverses time through images rich with poetic captions, sidebars, letters, and mini-essays that capture and convey an impressionistic view of the events that shaped his work.

From his beginnings with a 39-cent plastic camera his sister gave him as an eighteenth birthday gift and continuing with his famous Leica with Nikon lens, Duncan captured the memorable images of soldiers, artists, actors, friends, and landscapes that graced the covers and pages of Life Magazine, National Geographic, and his twenty-four acclaimed books.

Photo Nomad documents Duncan’s unforgettable photos of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Here are his famous photos taken while fighting with Fijian guerrillas behind enemy lines on Bouganville and, later, his record of Japan’s surrender from aboard the USS Missouri. Here are his legendary Life covers of marines toughing it out in Korea. Here also are his heart-wrenching images of civilians, like a wounded Korean mother nursing a child whose father has just been killed, and a tortured Greek shepherd nearly blinded by his neighbors.

On other pages, Picasso grins gleefully from his bathtub or gazes piercingly, his two eyes taking up the whole page. Henri Cartier-Bresson becomes the subject, for once, posed with his own Leica before him; Ava Gardner and Robert Redford don or lift the mask of glamour; and the young Pat Metheny and the cast of “Jesus Christ, Superstar” let the photographer backstage.

In landscapes of breathtaking beauty, Duncan reveals the Hindu Kush Mountains of Afghanistan, the moors of Ireland, and the sunflowers of Provence bowing their heads before the setting sun.

Throughout 464 pages of vibrant color and arresting black and white, Photo Nomad presents us with the vivid mosaic of Duncan’s work, his distinctive vision of the world. We see ourselves at our best and worst, our ugliest and most beautiful, our most mundane and most spectacular. Photo Nomad is a sweeping record of the twentieth century and of a life in images—a fitting “birthday gift to myself” by an extraordinary artistic mind.

As a companion to its expansive exhibition on Modernism, Make It New: The Rise of Modernism, the Ransom Center has published Make It New, a catalog of materials presented in the exhibition with accompanying essays by a number of artists and scholars associated with the Center’s collections. The softbound edition is replete with full-color images and includes original essays by writers such as Julian Barnes, Russell Banks, Penelope Lively, Adrienne Kennedy, Arnold Wesker, Anita Desai, and David Douglas Duncan, among others. The 156-page catalog is edited by Ransom Center Executive Curator of Academic Affairs Kurt Heinzelman, and is available from the Ransom Center for $29.95 + tax. For more information, call 512.471.8944 or visit the website at http://www.rbc.utexas.edu.
UNSEEN CINEMA: EARLY AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE FILM 1893-1941

PHOTOGRAPHER, AUTHOR LAURA WILSON VISITS WITH A FRIEND

The Ransom Center received world-renowned photographer Richard Avedon and his former assistant Laura Wilson in promotion of the joint UT Press/Ransom Center publication of *Avedon at Work*, a documentary volume of Wilson’s images from Avedon’s work on *In the American West*.

Through *Avedon at Work: In the American West*, Wilson provides a unique photographic record of Avedon’s creation of this masterwork—the first time a major photographer has been documented in great depth over an extended period of time—combining images she made during the photographic sessions with entries from her journal to show Avedon’s working methods, his choice of subjects, his creative process, and even his experiments and failures.

On November 19, Avedon and Wilson shared an intimate discussion with a captivated overflow audience of 300 people in Jessen Auditorium. The photographers provided personal recollections from their trek across the American west in the early 1980s, and fielded questions from the crowd. The event culminated with a book signing.

Look for *Avedon at Work: In the American West* at your local bookstore.

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RANSOM CENTER HOSTS AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE FILM SERIES

From February 12 through March 11, 2004, the Harry Ransom Center presents *Unseen Cinema: Early American Avant-Garde Film 1893-1941*, the first-ever retrospective of the pre-WWII avant-garde film movement in America.

A series of 50- to 90-minute screenings featuring more than 100 rare but restored and preserved 35mm and 16mm films, *Unseen Cinema* surveys the singular but overlooked accomplishments of cinematic pioneers during the formative period of American film.

Since its world premiere at the 23rd Moscow International Film Festival and its U.S. premiere at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, *Unseen Cinema* has been screened at such venues as the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the Los Angeles Film Forum, showing internationally in cities such as London, Paris, Sydney, and Madrid as well. It has never been screened in Texas—until now.

Many of these films have not been presented since their creation over a century ago. Some had never before been screened in public and almost none have been available in pristine projection prints until now. Comprehensively, the series strongly reminds us of the history and the artistic triumphs that can be revealed through preservation, or lost through complacency.

A leader in film history and preservation in the region, the Ransom Center has extensive film holdings that are in dire need of conservation—like many film archives worldwide. As an accomplishment and celebration of film preservation itself, *Unseen Cinema* is also intended to raise awareness of the urgent need to save this important part of our cultural heritage for future generations.

A collaborative film preservation project, *Unseen Cinema* was organized by Anthology Film Archives, New York, and Deutsches Filmmuseum, Frankfurt am Main, and sponsored by Cineric, Inc.


—Oliver Franklin & Steve Wilson

MAKE IT SOON

If you haven’t had a chance to see the Ransom Center’s comprehensive exhibition *Make It New: The Rise of Modernism*, your time is running out.

The exhibition, which ends its run on March 7, 2004, has been described in the Austin American-Statesman as being “a second rendering” of Modernism “threaded together [by] dozens of sometimes paradoxical themes to create a unified whole.”

Featuring a stunning array of more than 400 objects from the dominant cultural movement of the 20th century, *Make It New: The Rise of Modernism* allows viewers to better shape their understanding of Modernism through interaction with a portion of the Ransom Center’s extensive collections.

For more information, please call 512.471.8944 or visit the website at http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/exhibitions/current/. Gallery hours are listed on the back page of Ransom News.

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PHOTOGRAPHER, AUTHOR LAURA WILSON VISITS WITH A FRIEND

Hugh Kenner passed away on November 24, 2003, at his home in Athens, Georgia. He was 80 years old. Kenner was regarded as America’s foremost commentator on literary modernism, especially the work of Ezra Pound and James Joyce. His archive resides at the Ransom Center.

Kenner’s eclectic interests are represented in the 25 books he penned, the 200 others he contributed to, and in the nearly 1,000 articles he composed, as well as in broadcasts and recordings. He covered such broad-ranging topics as Irish poetry, geodesic math, and the animation of Chuck Jones.

But it was for his work related to English-language literary modernism and for his books Dublin’s Joyce (1956), The Pound Era (1971), and Joyce’s Voices (1978) that Kenner was revered.

Los Angeles Times critic Richard Eder once wrote of Kenner: “[He] doesn’t write about literature; he jumps in, armed and thrashing. He crashes it, like a party-goer who refuses to hover near the door but goes right up to the guest of honor, plumps himself down, sniffs at the guest’s dinner, eats some and begins a one-to-one discussion. You could not say whether his talking or his listening is done with greater intensity.”

Kenner was born in Peterborough, Ontario on January 7, 1923, the son of Henry Rowe Hocking Kenner, the principal, instructor of Latin and Greek, and baseball coach of Peterborough Collegiate and Vocational Institute, and Mary Isabel (Williams) Kenner, a classics teacher. After graduating from the Peterborough institute, he attended the University of Toronto, where he studied under Marshall McLuhan.

Kenner completed his Ph.D. at Yale in 1950, and his thesis was published in 1951 as The Poetry of Ezra Pound. In it, he criticized Pound for having delivered propaganda speeches in Italy during World War II in support of that country’s fascist government, while at the same time he argued on behalf of the poet’s important literary achievement. The book received the Porter Prize in 1950.

Over time, his prose style grew increasingly graceful, witty and accessible, prompting C. K. Stead, writing in The Times Literary Supplement, to call him “the most readable of living critics.”

The Ransom Center is saddened by the death of novelist and short story writer Alma Stone, who died in New York City last October. Born in Jasper, Texas, in 1909, Alma Stone published five novels and numerous short stories in her lifetime. Always a dry wit, she described her last never-completed work-in-progress as “an in-depth comparison of the Open Road philosophy of Walt Whitman and the Campfire Girls…clarified by relevant footnotes from Henry James.” As a reviewer once noted about reading Alma Stone’s stories: “It’s as though you were expecting Eudora Welty and ran into Al Capp.”

—Cathy Henderson

This February 19–21, 2004, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center will host its biennial Fleur Cowles Flair Symposium, named in honor of her exuberant, famously innovative magazine. Coming at the culmination of our six-month long exhibition, Make it New: The Rise of Modernism, this year’s symposium is entitled THE STATE AND FATE OF MODERNISM. Panels will address issues such as the “Institutions and Political Contexts of Modernism,” as well as “Collecting, Marketing and Publishing Modernism.” Featured speakers come from a range of different fields—scholars, professional librarians and archivists, publishers, collectors and booksellers. The list of participants includes George Bornstein (Michigan), Morris Dickstein (CUNY Graduate Center), Stephen Ennis (Emory University Library), Glenn Horowitz (Bookseller), Breon Mitchell (Lilly Library), Michael North (UCLA), Joseph Parisi (Poetry Magazine), Marjorie Perloff (Stanford), Richard Poirier (Rutgers) and Max Rudin (Library of America). All sessions are plenary, so attendees will not have to worry about missing one talk in order to attend another. Registration is limited to 130 people, with a fee of $75 for early registration or $100 at the door. To see a complete schedule and list of speakers, and for registration, please see the Symposium Website at http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/Flair2004/ or, contact the Symposium Coordinator at (512) 471-9643 or via email at flair2004@hrc.utexas.edu. This Symposium offers a unique opportunity to hear and join in discussion with some of the leading figures in contemporary debates about modernism in an intimate and convivial setting.

—Hilary Edwards
Ransom Center Senior Book Conservator Olivia Primanis is taking part in the Bibliophiles Lecture and Workshop Series at the Bridwell Library at SMU on March 5, 2004. Recently renamed in honor of founding Bridwell director and past Ransom Center director Decherd Turner, the series combines lectures on the history of books and printing with hands-on workshops in the book arts. Primanis’s lecture and workshop is entitled “How Books Are Made, How They Deteriorate, and How To Fix Them,” and will acquaint participants with book structure, discuss common problems, and demonstrate repair techniques one can do at home.

New Interns Carry On Successful Ransom Center / UT Program

In the fall of 2002, the Ransom Center inaugurated a charter project to give undergraduates in The University of Texas at Austin’s Plan II program an internship at the Center. The success of the program achieved measure beyond our expectations, and after a successful first run, the Center wishes to announce the appointment of three new interns.

The Center welcomes Erin Baudo, Lindsay Peebles, and Gautam Ganeshan as the 2003-2004 undergraduate interns. As interns, Erin, Lindsay, and Gautam will have the opportunity to participate in a broad range of functions throughout the Center, from addressing research queries to supporting exhibition planning and assisting in the preservation of the collections. Having begun their term in earnest last fall, the interns have already had the chance to acclimate to their positions and form opinions about the work they have embarked upon. Says Erin Baudo of her experience thus far, “Everyone is so incredibly helpful and enthusiastic about our work at the Ransom Center. A huge highlight for me has been the opportunity to see and interact with the unbelievable artifacts housed at the Center. I think we all feel extremely privileged.”

Collections in Print

In a given year, the Ransom Center can claim roughly 100 publications containing material gleaned from the Center’s collections, the vast majority of which come directly from visiting scholars. During the past fiscal year alone, at least 27 books, 26 book chapters, 21 papers, and 8 other scholarly works can be directly or indirectly attributed to holdings from the Ransom Center’s collections. The following are some of the standouts.

> Rose Macauley by Sarah LeFanu
> Fear & Loathing in Fitzrovia (A Biography of Julian Macken-Ross) by Paul Willetts
> Wordsworth: A Life in Letters, Edited by Juliet Barker
> The Doves Press by Marianne Tidcombe
> The Complete Short Stories of Evelyn Waugh, Edited by Ann Pasternak Slater
> Sarah Bernhardt’s First American Theatrical Tour by Patricia Marks
> Anne Wickham: A Poet’s Daring Life by Jennifer Vaughan Jones
> Byron: Life and Legend by Fiona MacCarthy
> Elizabeth Gaskell: A Literary Life by Shirley Foster
> An Inward Necessity: The Writer’s Life of Lucas Malet by Patricia Lorimer Lundberg
> Rosamund Lehmann by Selina Hastings

Scholar Christopher Innes researching Norman Bel Geddes materials for an upcoming publication. 2004.
The first fall season of public programs at the Ransom Center started with a bang with the closing of the Ransom Center’s first major exhibition, In A New Light. Its last day, September 7, coincided with Austin Museum Day, a city-wide event, and the Ransom Center featured such family activities as creating cyanotypes and book-making. Entertainment included poetry readings and performances by Austin magician Peter the Adequate, much of whose deft trickery was based on historical examples from the Ransom Center’s magic holdings. At final count, a record 971 people visited that day. A similar agenda awaits visitors to Explore UT Day, coming this March 6.

In mid-October, Make It New: The Rise of Modernism programs began in earnest with the provocatively-titled “What Was Modernism (And Does It Still Matter)?” presented by the English Department’s Dr. Brian Bremen. Dr. Linda Henderson of the Department of Art History offered “Modern Art in Context,” the inaugural Amon Carter Foundation lecture, to a packed Prothro Theater. Several complementary programs followed, ranging on topics as varied as “Modern Death” (Dr. Alan Friedman), to “Ibsen, Brecht, and Beckett” (Dr. James Loehlin), complete with performed excerpts.

With the opening of Make It New, the Ransom Center launched its refurbished docent program. Managed and trained with assistance from graduate intern Tracy Fleischman, over 30 active docents, both community volunteers and graduate students, now work the Ransom Center’s galleries, providing tours to visitors, answering questions, and helping to interpret exhibitions for public and private groups. More information about the docent program can be obtained from docents or by calling the Center.

A full slate of programs awaits visitors this spring as well. Among the most unusual offerings this season is the amazing film series entitled Unseen Cinema: Early American Avant-Garde Film 1893-1941. The series, which features remarkable seminal works by America’s first filmmakers, will be screened at the Alamo Drafthouse Downtown, Austin’s highly regarded home of art cinema. A schedule of screenings can be found online at the Ransom Center’s website.

Other highlights include the February 9 appearance of Dr. Phillip Bobbitt from the School of Law, who will present “Modernism: War and Peace” based on his most recent book, The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History. On April 1, look for National Geographic magazine’s Senior Photographer Sam Abell, who will talk about “A Life in Photography.” Please consult the calendar in this issue or on the Ransom Center’s web page for details on these and other programs.

—Oliver Franklin

Newcomer Jeff Melton replaces Sue Murphy as Associate Director for Development, assuming responsibility for corporate, foundation, and individual resource development initiatives. Representing a broad range of expertise and experience, the four new Associate Directors enrich and strengthen the executive team of the Ransom Center as we continue to expand services and programs in our new spaces.
Dusan Stulik and Roy Flukinger congratulate one another on the success of “At First Light,” 2003.

In November, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center and the Getty Conservation Institute jointly hosted an international symposium, “At First Light: Niépce and the Dawn of Photography,” focusing on the world’s first photograph, “View from the Window at le Gras,” the work of its creator, Frenchman Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, and the beginnings of photography. During November 20-23, 2003, scores of international photography historians, conservators, and curators crowded the Prothro Theater at the Center to explore recent advancements in scientific, art historical, and conservation research relating to the famed first photograph and the beginnings of photography. During the symposium, results of extensive testing undertaken in 2003 on the world’s first photograph were released, and a new image of Niépce’s masterwork that more accurately reflects the original was unveiled. Participants were also introduced to the exhibition Make It New: The Rise of Modernism. Institute participants discussed the exhibition with Ransom Center curators and then developed curricular materials related to the exhibition’s contents and central themes. These materials are now available on the Ransom Center website to educational groups planning to tour the exhibition.

According to all involved, the Institute was a resounding success. Participants’ evaluations of the Institute were uniformly high. Several teachers noted that the program was the most meaningful, rigorous, and intellectually stimulating professional training workshop they had ever attended.

The Institute organizers—Curator of Public Programs Oliver Franklin, Educational Specialist Sally Partridge, and myself—are busy planning the next Institute, scheduled for June 14-17, 2004. Information and applications are available on the new “Educational Programs” node of the Ransom Center website.

—Eric Lupfer

In 1945, Joan Crawford (born Lucille Fay LeSueur on March 23, 1906, in San Antonio, Texas) starred in the Warner Brothers movie Mildred Pierce. Based on James M. Cain’s novel and directed by Michael Curtiz (who also directed Casablanca), Mildred Pierce is the story of a woman who rises from waitress to restaurateur to socialite to murder suspect, all the while loving and overindulging her spoiled daughter Veda (played by Ann Blyth). The cast also includes Zachary Scott (born February 24, 1917, in Austin, Texas, and a portion of whose papers reside at the Ransom Center) as playboy Monty Beragon, who sets Mildred up in the restaurant business. Joan Crawford earned an Academy Award for her portrayal of Mildred Pierce.

The beige-yellow and brown checkered waitress dress and movie still photograph are from the Ransom Center Film Collection.

—Darnelle Vanghel

In July of 2003, the Ransom Center held its first annual Summer Teacher Institute, a program that provides local primary and secondary teachers with a behind-the-scenes introduction to the Center and its holdings.

The Institute’s inaugural class included fifteen teachers from around central Texas. Over the course of the four-day program, teachers received guided tours of the Ransom Center’s photography and conservation departments, reading room, and new galleries. They were also introduced to the exhibition Make It New: The Rise of Modernism. Institute participants discussed the exhibition with Ransom Center curators and then developed curricular materials related to the exhibition’s contents and central themes. These materials are now available on the Ransom Center website to educational groups planning to tour the exhibition.

According to all involved, the Institute was a resounding success. Participants’ evaluations of the Institute were uniformly high. Several teachers noted that the program was the most meaningful, rigorous, and intellectually stimulating professional training workshop they had ever attended.

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In November, the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center and the Getty Conservation Institute jointly hosted an international symposium, “At First Light: Niépce and the Dawn of Photography,” focusing on the world’s first photograph, “View from the Window at le Gras,” the work of its creator, Frenchman Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, and the beginnings of photography. During November 20-23, 2003, scores of international photography historians, conservators, and curators crowded the Prothro Theater at the Center to explore recent advancements in scientific, art historical, and conservation research relating to the famed first photograph and the beginnings of photography. During the symposium, results of extensive testing undertaken in 2003 on the world’s first photograph were released, and a new image of Niépce’s masterwork that more accurately reflects the original was unveiled. Participants were also introduced to the exhibition Make It New: The Rise of Modernism. Institute participants discussed the exhibition with Ransom Center curators and then developed curricular materials related to the exhibition’s contents and central themes. These materials are now available on the Ransom Center website to educational groups planning to tour the exhibition.

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