

# TABLEAU



THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | SPRING 2018

IN THIS ISSUE | MONUMENTS | MEDIA STUDIES | VIVIAN MAIER

2 ALUMNI PROFILE

## Regarding Television

Horace Newcomb, AM'65, PhD'69

4 IDEAS

## Sights Now Seen

Vivian Maier's life's work on display

6 IDEAS

## Two Perspectives on Monuments

With W. J. T. Mitchell and James Osborne

8 GRADUATE STUDENTS

## Productive Struggle

Emily Yoon reckons with language.

10 YOUNG FACULTY FOCUS

## Analysis and Synthesis

Spanning composition, history, and ethnomusicology

12 ON CAMPUS

13 PHILANTHROPY

*Tableau* (Spring 2018, Volume 19, Number 2) is published biannually by the Division of the Humanities at the University of Chicago for alumni and friends. Editor: Jeanie Chung. Contributing Editors: Courtney C. W. Guerra, AB'05; Denice Contag; Joyce Kuechler; Tom Popelka. Proofreader: Rhonda L. Smith. Designers: Guido Mendez; Michael Vendiola. Contact: Division of the Humanities, 1115 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL, 60637, [tableau.uchicago.edu](http://tableau.uchicago.edu).

*The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national or ethnic origin, age, status as an individual with a disability, protected veteran status, genetic information, or other protected classes under the law. For additional information, please see [equalopportunity.uchicago.edu](http://equalopportunity.uchicago.edu).*

### ON THE COVER

Vintage prints by the photographer Vivian Maier will serve as a scholarly resource for faculty and students. Story on page 4. Unpublished work © 2017 The Estate of Vivian Maier. All rights reserved.



## Dear Alumni and Friends,

*When Georgiana Simpson, AB 1911, AM'20, PhD'21, received her doctorate in German philology, she became the first African American woman to earn a PhD from the University of Chicago, and one of the first in the nation. She was recognized with a bust installed in the Reynolds Club last November.*

As most of you already know, we are in the midst of the University of Chicago Campaign: Inquiry and Impact, an ambitious fundraising effort concluding in 2019.

Campaigns help us raise crucial funds that underwrite present and future initiatives. But they do more: they help focus our thinking. Campaigns urge faculty and leadership to articulate what is critical to our mission. They create a structure through which we can share that mission with alumni and friends. They help us review, enhance, and expand our idea of what makes the humanities at UChicago great.

The Division has aimed high in the campaign. With a fundraising goal of \$140 million, we are closing in on \$120 million in gifts to date. Our progress toward this impressive target owes much to the hard work and dedicated support of donors, faculty, and students. Among other initiatives, their efforts help to support:

- **Faculty research.** The outstanding scholarship of our faculty drives new knowledge through innovative interpretations and landmark discoveries. Our faculty members regularly criss-cross six continents, hunting down documents held in elusive archives and immersing themselves in cities and villages around the globe.
- **Conferences, visiting professorships, and lecture series.** Humanities scholarship is changing at a breathtaking pace. Digital resources and equipment make it possible for faculty to collaborate with scholars everywhere, to search and process data rapidly, and to better comprehend the very structure of learning. Support for our faculty and students allows them to meet face-to-face with collaborators through conferences, visit-



Anne Walters Robertson

ing professorships, and lecture series that contribute to a deeper understanding of the human condition.

- **Full funding for graduate student education and postdoctoral study.** Our master's and PhD students are the future of humanities scholarship, developing research that will one day transform philosophy, literature, music, languages, and other fields. We need to ensure that this new generation of young scholars will be able to pursue their studies and launch their careers without the burden of debt—whether they continue in academia or apply their talents in other sectors, such as government or nonprofit organizations.

Likewise, support for our postdoctoral Teaching Fellows in the Humanities allows recent graduates to emerge from the deep dive of their dissertations and gain experience articulating the importance of their research, both in the classroom and through scholarly publications.

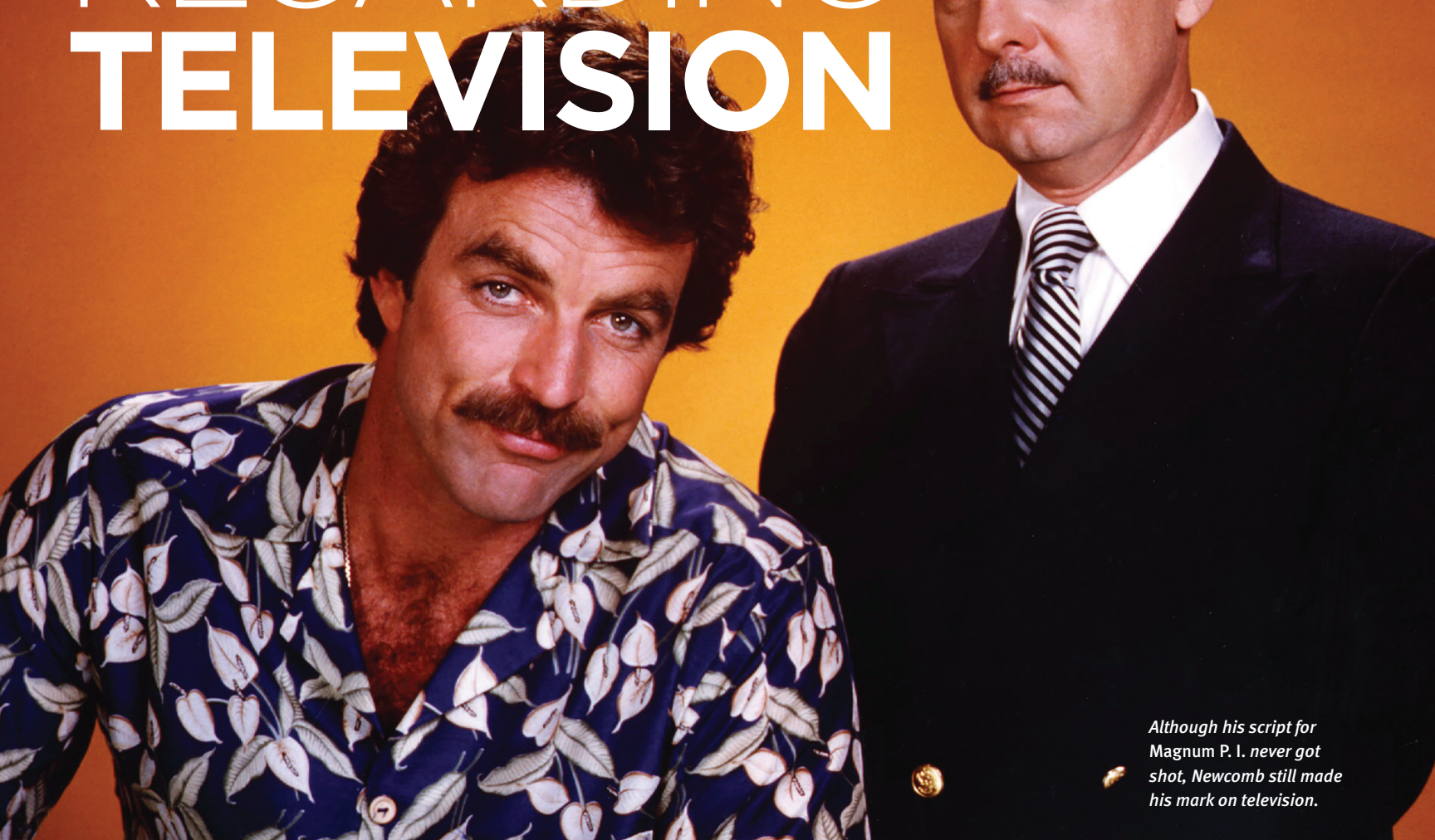
In my role as dean, I've been privileged to interact with those of you who have given so generously to our division. Because of you, our faculty and students can ask bigger questions, aim to solve more complex problems, and work together to share the fruits of their scholarship. Your support of the University of Chicago Campaign helps realize the highest aims of the Humanities Division in a changing world.

*Anne W. Robertson*

Anne Walters Robertson  
Dean, Division of the Humanities  
Claire Dux Swift Distinguished Service  
Professor, Department of Music

FROM LEFT: PHOTOGRAPHY BY NANCY WONG; PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ZICH

# REGARDING TELEVISION



*Although his script for Magnum P. I. never got shot, Newcomb still made his mark on television.*

BY CARRIE GOLUS, AB'91, AM'93

## In the 1970s, Horace Newcomb made us look at TV in a new way.

When **Horace Newcomb**, AM'65, PhD'69, published *TV: The Most Popular Art* (Anchor Press/Doubleday) in 1974, it was one of the first books to apply humanistic analysis to television—sitcoms, Westerns, adventure shows, even soap operas. “Television remains the most neglected, the most unexamined” of all the popular arts, Newcomb wrote. He blamed “the social stigma attached very early to television by the cultural elite.”

The book challenged readers to set aside this elitism and look more carefully at network televi-

sion. In the chapter “Soap Opera: Approaching the Real World,” for example, Newcomb argued that despite the low production values and stereotypical plots of daytime drama, “letting stories grow and develop over periods of months and years brings them closer to experiential reality than any other form of video art.” He saw more potential for “what television art can be” in soap operas than in any other genre of programming at the time, a claim confirmed by present-day television’s reliance on sophisticated serial narratives.

The book came out three years before the home VCR was sold in the United States. Newcomb had to rely on his memory of television programs—whether seen recently or decades before—to write his close analysis.

Newcomb grew up in Clinton, Mississippi, in the years leading up to the civil rights movement. His family watched television every night. “It was the TV that most expanded my perspective,” he told an interviewer for *E-media Studies*. “There was a lot going on regarding race in the 60s on TV, even on shows like *The Beverly*

FROM LEFT: PHOTO COURTESY UNITED ARCHIVES / IMPRESS; PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLES RAMÍREZ BERG

*Hillbillies.*” Decades later, he realized that television’s powerful, early influence on his worldview was the reason he had dedicated his life to studying it.

After graduating from Mississippi College in his hometown, he came to UChicago as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow, with the encouragement of **Norman Maclean**, PhD’40. He earned a master’s in the Committee for General Studies in the Humanities and a PhD in English. As a graduate student, he had a circle of friends who shared his fascination with popular culture; they talked



and with two young children at home. He never missed a deadline.

Although *The Most Popular Art* was published by a mainstream publisher, it mostly appealed to academics. “Popular culture studies was just beginning to be taken seriously and spreading in colleges and universities,” says Newcomb. He had grander plans for the readership of the book: “I was hoping somebody would read it in New York and hire me at a network,” he says. “They didn’t call.”

Newcomb did come heartbreakingly close to a career in the industry a couple of times. A fan of the

with television producers. The book posited the producers—today’s showrunners—as the artists of television, similar to the role of directors in film.

Newcomb took a leave of absence from UT–Austin from 1994 to 1996 to serve as curator at Chicago’s Museum of Broadcast Communications. He remained in Austin, where he edited *The Encyclopedia of Television* (1997), published by the museum. The reference book included entries on more than 1,000 television-related subjects.

In 2001 Newcomb was appointed director of the Peabody Awards, the broadcasting equiva-

It was the TV that most expanded my perspective.

—Horace Newcomb, AM’65, PhD’69, quoted in the journal *E-media Studies*, on his perceptions of civil rights as a child.

about transferring to Northwestern, where there was a film program, but never did.

Newcomb did sit in on the first popular culture course at UChicago—an undergraduate class taught by **John Cawelti**, who directed Newcomb’s dissertation on nineteenth-century American literature. As he recalls, when Cawelti proposed the course to **Gwin Kolb**, AM’46, PhD’49, the chair of the English department, Kolb’s response was, “Can’t you at least call it Literature and Popular Culture?”

After graduation, Newcomb taught briefly at a number of institutions—Cornell College in Iowa, Saginaw Valley College in Michigan, and the University of Maryland Baltimore County. At UMBC he taught popular culture in the American studies department, including his first courses on television. “I taught at night,” he says. “I would roll a TV set in, we would see a TV program, then do critical analysis of it.”

In Baltimore he “lucked into” a job as television critic for the *Baltimore Sun*. He had to turn in 600 words five days a week—while teaching full time and writing *TV: The Most Popular Art*,

1980s detective show *Magnum, P.I.*, he published an article, “*Magnum*, The Champagne of TV.” The article introduced the term “cumulative narrative” for shows that have a longer story arc as well as plots that wrap up in each episode. When Newcomb had the chance to meet *Magnum*’s producers, he pitched some story ideas. One story was accepted, “very nicely paid,” and scheduled to shoot in the spring—and then the show was canceled.

Thus, Newcomb continued to make his mark studying television rather than creating it. His second book, the anthology *Television: The Critical View* (Oxford University Press, 1976), helped launch the field of television studies; the book is now in its seventh edition and still widely taught. Two years later he accepted a position in the English department at the University of Texas, Austin. Newcomb was brought in to develop a pop culture curriculum for the freshman composition course, and eventually moved over to the radio–television–film department.

In 1983 he coauthored *The Producer’s Medium* (Oxford University Press), a collection of interviews

lent of the Pulitzer Prize. Originally given to honor excellence in radio, the award later expanded to television and online programming. Newcomb considers the 12 years he spent there to be the most rewarding period of his varied career.

Now retired, Newcomb tries not to watch television more than a couple hours of a day. He and his wife, Sara, have always watched together: “Come June it’ll be 55 years,” he says. Shows they have enjoyed recently include *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* and a British show called *The Detectorists* (“about two guys who walk around with metal detectors”).

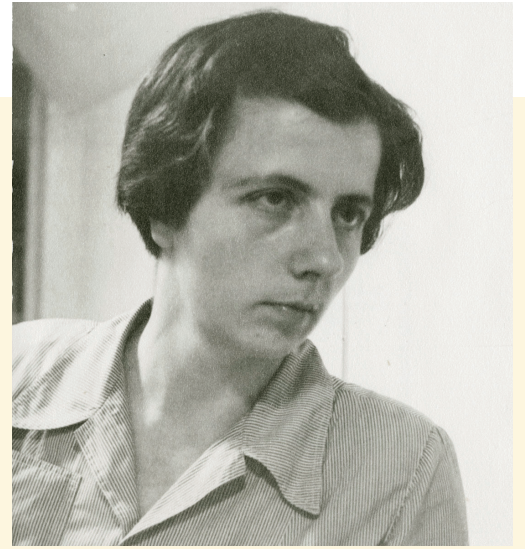
Since Newcomb published *TV: The Most Popular Art*, the academic study of television has become commonplace: “a robust growth industry,” according to a 2017 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Occasionally Newcomb will happen across a rerun of one of the early shows he wrote about in his groundbreaking book. He enjoys “how basic and undeveloped in technique and look they are,” he says. “You see a Western done on a soundstage, it looks very different, but is still fascinating.” ■

READ NEWCOMB’S THOUGHTS ABOUT CLASSIC EARLY TV SHOWS at [tableau.uchicago.edu/television](http://tableau.uchicago.edu/television).

# SIGHTS NOW

*Vivian Maier's photos included self-portraits (top, left), but the majority captured ordinary people in their daily lives.*



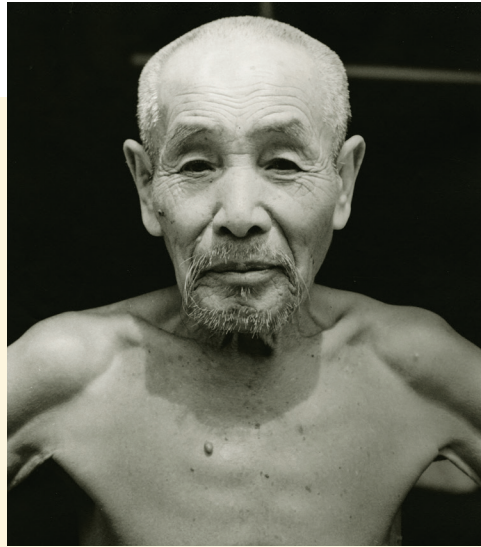
## SEEN

BY INGRID GONÇALVES, AB'08

Vivian Maier's photographs become a resource for scholars.

To truly study photography is to study original prints, experts say. Reproductions offer an adequate view of the subject, composition, and other surface characteristics of an image. But to understand the artist's thinking behind the lens, scholars must consider how an exposure was taken as well as how it was crafted into the physical object in front of the viewer.

"It's important to get students back to prints to show them what the experience of looking at a photograph was," says **Joel Snyder**, professor in the Department of Art History.



There are so many different ways this touches on important issues in contemporary art.  
—Laura Letinsky, professor of Visual Arts

A print reflects a work's intended size: a small, intimate frame that draws you in or an expansive scene that engulfs your field of vision. Materials, blemishes, and chemical composition also reveal details about artistic technique and historical context.

Prints are particularly important when it comes to Vivian Maier (1926–2009): a New Yorker turned Chicagoan who worked as a nanny to finance her obscure life as a world-class street photographer. And now UChicago students and scholars can study Maier's handiwork up close at the University of Chicago Library.

Last summer, as an investment in Maier's legacy, filmmaker John Maloof donated 500 vintage prints—made by the artist herself, either in her own darkroom or by commercial photo labs at her direction—to the Library's Special Collections Research Center. The prints will be preserved and made available for research by current and future faculty and students.

"It's amazing," says **Laura Letinsky**, professor in the Department of Visual Arts. "The work that she produced is quite important and has been heralded as being on par with other photographers who had received much more attention at the time."

Maier's career spanned from the 1950s to the 1980s, from rolling rural landscapes to close-up portraits of diners, commuters, and beachgoers immersed in their daily lives. John F. Kennedy, Eleanor Roosevelt, Pope John Paul II, Eva Marie Saint, and Frank Sinatra are just a few of the famous faces captured in her body of work—which she apparently never showed to anyone.

The spotlight found Maier at an auction in Chicago in 2009, when Maloof discovered several storage lockers with more than 100,000 of her photographs. Inspired by this hidden treasure, Maloof cowrote and directed the Academy Award-nominated documentary *Finding Vivian Maier* (2013), piecing together the mysterious photographer's life and travels.

**Daniel Meyer**, director of Special Collections, told the *Chicago Tribune* he sees the collection gifted to the University as "an important part of the legacy of the graphic arts and photography in Chicago and America." Students and scholars, he said, "will be very surprised to see [Maier's] full range of work."

Most exhibitions of Maier's photography have featured large-format prints produced from her negatives by collectors. The University's vintage prints are the only group of Maier originals to be made available for research in a library, and have never before been published or displayed.

"A lot of the work in this collection has [Maier's] process visible. She's printing in different ways, she's cropping in different ways, and you can see her hand in the process," Maloof says, describing the eclectic mix of prints, in both color and black and white, that he selected from his extensive archive.

The insightful, prolific, yet hidden nature of Maier's work "speaks also to class and history and being a woman in a way that is quite important," says Letinsky. As the collection is gradually processed (a years-long project) and made available for exploration, Letinsky looks forward to bringing her students to Regenstein Library "to talk about intentionality, about artistry versus some notion of originality.

"There are so many different ways this touches on important issues in contemporary art."

The volume of this collection makes it a significant addition to the University's growing assembly of art objects. Because it includes a broad sample of pieces from earlier and later in Maier's life, it reflects the evolution of her work, adding her still-fresh commentary to ongoing academic discussion about her twentieth-century contemporaries.

Letinsky says Maier's work, taken as a whole rather than as a series of stand-alone snapshots, reflects an "accumulation of ideas and approaches" that provides an important resource for photography and art history scholarship. "There's no one person that we have this kind of depth of information about," Letinsky says. The volume and range of the Maier collection enables students and scholars "to investigate fully a body of work."

Particularly compared to digital images, Letinsky says, original prints provide a closer glimpse at an artist's intentions. "It's going to be really important for us to be able to get in there, look at the work, lay out the prints, compare them to other [artwork] that we see" in Special Collections.

Maier joins a growing number of women photographers represented in the Library's Special Collections, including American Photo-Secessionist Eva Watson Schütze, anthropologist Joan Eggan, urban documentary photographer Mildred Mead, and literary photographer Layle Silbert. ■

SEE MORE MAIER PHOTOGRAPHS at [alumni.uchicago.edu/maiergallery](http://alumni.uchicago.edu/maiergallery).



# TWO PERSPECTIVES ON MONUMENTS

A monument can be a memorial, a work of art, a physical object, or something else entirely. Its meaning shifts depending on the audience and era. English and art history scholar **W. J. T. Mitchell** and archaeologist **James Osborne** take a look at monuments from present-day United States back to ancient city-states in modern-day Turkey.

*Monuments of revered ancestral figures frequently adopt a tendency quite opposite from that intended by their creators, according to Osborne.*





**W. J. T. Mitchell** is the Gaylord Donnelley Distinguished Service Professor in English Language and Literature, Art History, and Visual Arts, and editor in chief of the journal *Critical Inquiry*. His interview has been edited and condensed.

Monuments are born at a certain moment, and then they live through history—they try to recall something from history, and then they have a history of their own. Sometimes they don’t start out as monuments. Walls are particularly vulnerable to this. Think of the Great Wall of China: a monument to the grandeur of the Chinese empire. Think of the Berlin Wall. Or a monument in the making: the security wall on the West Bank.

*Critical Inquiry* has published a number of essays over the years on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It was highly controversial at the beginning, and then the public relationship to it evolved. Particularly when people started to bring their own memorials to it, in these gifts and testimonies. Over time it became so powerful and effective because it did not compel one kind of response: “You have to admire this. You have to look up to it.” People could do dozens of different things with it.

One of the most important things about the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: because it is a big mirror, you can see yourself in it. You’re looking at these 50,000 names, in the order they died, but the names are carved in this reflective black granite, so you seem to be looking into a parallel space with a veil of names over it.

It succeeds on both sides: doing what a monument at its best can do, which is to evoke public memory without settling its meaning, but leaving it open for reinterpretation and new experience.

That monument is a contrast to the hero on the horse, which is one of the monumental clichés. In those statues, it’s almost always a man, a “great” man. When it’s a woman, it’s usually an abstraction, like the Statue of Liberty. It’s not a singular figure unless maybe it’s Joan of Arc.

There’s also the question of the material and the immaterial monument. In the film *Do the Right Thing*, there are two contrary monuments. One is the pizzeria owner’s Wall of Fame, a photo montage of all of the great stars in Italian American culture. Down the street is Señor Love Daddy, who has a little low-wattage radio station. And he is playing all the monumental tunes of the black community as sung by Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, Billie Holiday.

This idea that the real monument is not material is important. In the great Athenian funeral oration in 400 BC, Pericles talks about the fallen heroes of Athenian democracy and the Athenian empire. He’s talking about the Parthenon and all the statues around, and saying: These things are not the real monuments. What we have to remember is what these all stand for. There’s something more important than this piece of rock. ■



**James Osborne** is assistant professor of Anatolian Archaeology in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. This essay is adapted from remarks he gave at the Franke Institute for the Humanities, which were also edited for an article in the *Journal of Social Archaeology*.

As an archaeologist who is anthropologically oriented, I couldn’t help but notice how recent events taking place at Confederate monuments echo the treatment of monuments in the 3,000-year-old city I excavate in southeastern Turkey. Just as Confederate monuments are being taken down, defaced, and transplanted, statues that stood 3,000 years ago or more were likewise being constantly reevaluated, often with highly destructive results.

One of the most recognizable features of capital cities in the Syro-Anatolian city-states of 900–700 BCE was their colossal statues. Most are standing figures of a king, with bases in the form of striding lions or bulls. They are frequently placed in monumental buildings associated with royal power, and associated with ceremonial treatment, such as cup marks for libations.

But such associations describe the significance of the statues’ context only at the time of their installation and intended use. Their subsequent treatment, it turns out, includes counter-monumental practices that complicate the traditional interpretation of these statues strictly as representations of royal power.

Of the seventeen monumental statues that I have examined, ten were discovered in various states of destruction, ranging from a few large chunks of statue to many dozen small fragments.

Seven of the statues with relatively complete bodies and heads nevertheless had their noses removed—too great a number to be an issue of preservation—while hands, eyes, and eye inlays were also frequently removed. These removals were intended, possibly, to rob the ancestor of his or her sensory capabilities, such that it was no longer able to “smell,” “see,” or “touch.”

The usual culprits invoked for such acts of destruction are the invading Assyrians at the time of their conquest. But equally plausible is the likelihood that some of the broken statues were destroyed by citizens of their own kingdoms.

Either way, damaging the face of these statues was a clear act of resistance to the message of royal power presented by the monuments. Particularly intriguing are the cases showing both nose removal and total statue destruction. Because there are statues that have had their noses removed but were not otherwise destroyed, it seems that several of these statues were alternately venerated and reviled as their reception moved back and forth between different communities of people over time.

The unusual status of monuments as existing in social contexts long removed from their period of formation requires us to acknowledge that the meaning of monuments lies not in the objects themselves, nor strictly speaking in the eyes of their beholders, but in the fluid relationship between them. This viewpoint leads to the realization that although monuments may be physically stable, their associated memories are highly mutable. ■

FROM LEFT: PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO; PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOMENICO ARNICA; PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN ZICH

READ THESE SCHOLARS’ THOUGHTS ON UCHICAGO’S GEORGIANA SIMPSON MONUMENT at [tableau.uchicago.edu/simpson](http://tableau.uchicago.edu/simpson).

# PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE

BY SUSIE ALLEN, AB'09

Reckoning with language fuels Emily Yoon's creative and academic work.

**Emily Yoon** started writing poetry in high school, a few years after her family arrived in Canada from her native Korea in 2002. She'd always loved writing—at seven she dashed off a novel in Korean with “uncanny resemblances to *Harry Potter*,” she recalls jokingly—but poetry offered an especially important refuge as she navigated adolescence in a new country and language.

“Poetry is a space where different ways of using language are celebrated and embraced,” Yoon says. “That’s one of the reasons I could really turn to poetry—I could manipulate language and no one saw it as broken or wrong.”

Today Yoon is a third-year graduate student in East Asian Languages and Civilizations, with plans to focus on contemporary women’s literature in Korea, and the author of two collections of poetry, *Ordinary Misfortunes* (Tupelo Press, 2017) and the forthcoming *A Cruelty to Our Species* (Ecco). Her work has appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Poetry magazine*, and elsewhere. She is also the poetry editor for *The Margins*, the literary magazine of the Asian American Writers’ Workshop.

Yoon’s poetry incorporates contemporary and historical social issues, such as immigration and the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, alongside her own history. That broad focus is important to her, Yoon says: “As a poet who shares my work, I have responsibilities beyond my own personal sentiments and experiences.”

*How has your poetry changed from when you first started writing?*

In high school, poetry functioned as a way for me to come to understand my own identity and write in a way that other people thought was beautiful and accessible. It was a kind of kaleidoscopic mirror that I created for myself and I could always have. So that sense of personal attachment to the art form was important to me. Now I feel that poetry really has the power to amplify voices that are not just mine—other people, other experiences. And it’s become more difficult for me, because I also don’t want to appropriate, and I don’t want to pretend like I know everything about everyone else. So that emotional and philosophical struggle has come to haunt me. Every year I realize that poetry is really difficult—back when I was 15, it was purely enjoyment.

*Why did you decide to start a PhD program?*

I had always wanted to do an academic program in literature. When I was in the MFA program at NYU, and even before that, I knew my writing was invested in meditations on my heritage and Korean language. My family is

*Emily Yoon thinks poetry is headed in a friendlier, more accessible direction—which is a good thing.*



*From an untitled poem by Emily Yoon that first appeared in Pinwheel, Fall/Winter 2015:*

The trouble with trees is that their bodies and limbs are too capable, capable of burning, of living, capable of leaves, of leaving, charcoal, ash, and we think we have power.

still in Korea, and I use poetry as a way to bridge that physical gap. The idea of going to graduate school started with this maybe inane thought that I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the things I wanted to talk about and the things that are important to me. I thought that my poetry would be in conversation with what I learned here, and that maybe I could gain inspiration from all of this.

*How have you balanced your graduate work and your poetry?*

When I started graduate school, I was hoping that my poetry and my academic work would be in conversation. It turned out that was really hard work! But as time went on I realized that academic and creative writing are not that different in the way that they both try to rearticulate the mechanics of the real world and theorize our existence, and to throw the audience into a productive struggle. Now that I'm in my qualifying exam stage and reading about feminist theory and Korean literary history, hopefully the insights I gain from those readings will throw me into a more philosophical meditation on what it means to be a feminist writer and what these Korean feminist writers did in their literature—and how I can connect that to my own writing.

*How do you think bilingualism has shaped your work?*

I still feel comfortable speaking Korean, but I feel more comfortable writing in English for both poetry and academic work, because I think I'm more attuned to the poetic and academic vocabulary and rhythm in English. But I try to incorporate Korean sometimes if I think the sound of a word is particularly beautiful or there's an idiom that doesn't translate. So even though my poems are in English, sometimes it's a way for me to think more about my intimacy with Korean.

*What's the best advice you've ever gotten about poetry?*

I've gotten a lot of good advice. I'm remembering something the poet Jericho Brown said: When you're writing a poem, be your ultra-self. What would a better, improved, super version of you say? You have to be yourself, but also look at yourself from somewhere else in the room and have that kind of confidence going into the line. And I think that's really good advice for someone as timid as I am about sharing my poems.

Another good piece of advice from my peers and professors is that it's OK to be patient. Your work or your worth as a poet is not measured by your productivity or how many poems you generate. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEAN LAGHAT

READ MORE FROM EMILY YOON at [tableau.uchicago.edu/yoon](http://tableau.uchicago.edu/yoon).

# ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

BY LUCAS MCGRANAHAN

Music junior faculty span composition, ethnomusicology, and theory.

*Assistant professors Anthony Cheung, Jennifer Iverson, Jessica Swanston Baker, and Sam Pluta work in different areas but are strong collaborators.*

My work is to set up a studio where students can come in and achieve their dreams.

—Assistant professor Sam Pluta, on the CHIME studio

The University's Department of Music has long been a leader in music history, music theory, and ethnomusicology, along with composition. In recent years, as the department has expanded its programs in music theory and ethnomusicology and launched the Chicago Center for Contemporary Composition, it has continued to develop a richly collaborative culture. "Inasmuch as there is subdisciplinary diversification," says department chair **Berthold Hoeckner**, "there's also a strong integration that is unique to Chicago."

This sense of unity in diversity is reflected in the department's junior faculty: two composers, an ethnomusicologist, and a music theorist with a strong historical bent.

### The composers

Assistant professor **Sam Pluta** works on the cutting edge of electronic music, a journey that began in the late 1990s when one of his instructors at Santa Clara University put him in a room with Pro Tools software. The digital audio workstation held no apparent interest to his teacher or fellow students, so the instructor told him, "You figure it out."

Pluta did figure it out, developing his own electronic music software and becoming adept at wielding the laptop as a live performance instrument that complements, interprets, and transforms the sounds of acoustic instruments on stage. Pluta has toured internationally with Rocket Science, the Evan Parker Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, and the Peter Evans Quintet, and since 2009 has been technical director and composing member of the new music collaborative Wet Ink Ensemble.

At UChicago, Pluta directs the Chicago Integrated Media Experimental (CHIME) Studio, where he also teaches classes in electronic composing and sound design. "My work," he says, "is to set up a studio where students can come in and achieve their dreams."

While assistant professor **Anthony Cheung** sometimes ventures into electronic music as well, he writes mainly for acoustic instruments. Incorporating a range of jazz and classical influences, Cheung's music is primarily

notated but channels some of jazz improvisation's rhythmic and harmonic syntax. Cheung's work has been widely programmed and performed internationally, including commissions by the Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Intercontemporain, New York Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Scharoun Ensemble Berlin.

Cheung was also a founding member of Talea Ensemble, now a staple of the New York contemporary music scene, serving as its pianist and artistic director from 2007 to 2017. Talea Ensemble performs on Cheung's latest release, *Dystemporal* (Wergo, 2016), which showcases pieces he wrote over seven years.

### The ethnomusicologist

Assistant professor **Jessica Swanston Baker**'s current book project, "Too Fast: Music, Coloniality, and Time in St. Kitts and Nevis," is an examination of speech as performance in the small-island Caribbean. Contextualizing speech acts within four centuries of colonization, Baker explores the way people talk about music, sound, and musicianship in the twin-island nation in the Eastern Caribbean's Leeward archipelago.

Speech in the Caribbean contains multiple layers of meaning that are rooted in a complex local history. Baker notes, for instance, that when a Kittitian local decries the popular carnival music known as "wilders" as "too fast," the remark functions simultaneously as a comment on the frenetic tempo, a judgment about suggestive dancing, and a declaration of bewilderment about the state of music production and consumption. Those who prize a "long-simmered approach" to musicianship, Baker says, are uncomfortable about the fact that we can now program beats on our phones.

### The music theorist

Assistant professor **Jennifer Iverson**, a music theorist and historian, is examining the cultural significance of electronic music after World War II. For her book, *Electronic Inspirations: Technologies of the Cold War Musical Avant-Garde* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press), she focuses on a studio in the WDR radio station in Cologne, West Germany. Composers and technicians worked closely together in the studio, repurposing wartime innovations such as cryptographical theory and magnetic tape with the aim of creating new worlds of sound unfettered by traditional instruments and movements—an avant-garde response to the classical sensibilities of both right- and left-wing totalitarian regimes.

Iverson demonstrates how the new genre challenged established ideas about artistic production. "The earliest piece produced at this studio," Iverson was thrilled to discover, "was never premiered," at least not in its original form. Created by a technician but later spliced and cannibalized in works claimed by the composers, the studio's "Piece Zero" is emblematic of its laboratory-style collaboration, which refuted traditional notions of the artist as solitary genius.

### A productive synthesis

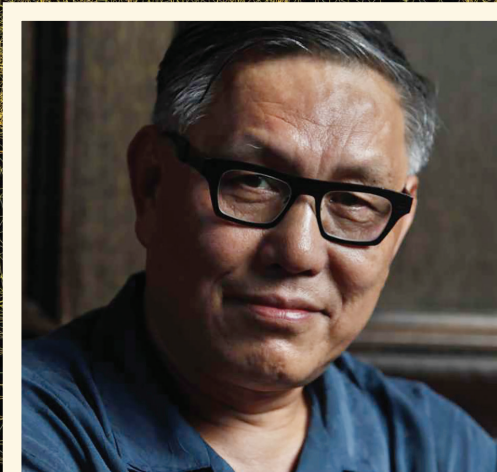
Cheung notes that the faculty "have a very healthy balance and genuine interest in each other's work." They also collaborate, as in the two-day symposium this past March on the work of twentieth-century composer György Ligeti that was coorganized by Cheung, Pluta, Iverson, and associate professor **Seth Brodsky**. Appropriately, Ligeti himself—a subject of Cheung's and Iverson's research—was an eclectic composer known for bringing together disparate traditions. ■

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT COMPOSITION AT UCHICAGO at [tableau.uchicago.edu/composition](http://tableau.uchicago.edu/composition).

*By creating images like this digital model of the altars of a cave at Xiangtangshan, Wu Hung's Cave Project reunites statues with their original locations—virtually, at least.*

# UNIFICATION

Wu Hung, who helped to establish contemporary Chinese art history, works toward a global approach.



**Wu Hung**, the *Harrie A. Vanderstappen Distinguished Service Professor of Art History and East Asian Languages and Civilizations*, has spent a large part of his career shaping the field of Chinese art history and establishing contemporary Chinese art as a field for academic inquiry. In February the College Art Association recognized his work by naming him its 2018 Distinguished Scholar—the discipline's highest honor.

The CAA award followed the announcement that Wu Hung, founder and director of the Center for the Art of East Asia at UChicago, will deliver the National Gallery of Art's Mellon Lectures in 2019.

## *How did you become interested in art history?*

After university at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing, I worked as a curator in the Palace Museum located in the Forbidden City. I actually lived inside the Forbidden City for eight years and was surrounded by ancient art. I had this intimate contact with history, which was extremely rare at that time during the Cultural Revolution. I

returned to CAFA for graduate school and then moved to Harvard to get a PhD. Only after I came to the United States did this notion—that art history is a larger humanistic discipline—become clear.

## *How did your work with 3D scanning in the Center for the Art of East Asia arise?*

My predecessor, **Harrie Vanderstappen**, AM'51, PhD'55, began to study broken Buddhist statues from an architectural complex in China. The pieces were in different museums. He began to pay attention to the separation of the body and site. We now scan the site as well as the missing pieces and enter those scans into a database, available to scholars and students. Technology offers us the ability to digitally reconstruct these pillaged sites and the possibility to mend historical tragedy.

When I founded the Center for the Art of East Asia in 2002, I believed it should be cutting-edge, should indicate future directions. Just like contemporary art, it should be experimental, not just something everybody has been doing but future-oriented. So we turned toward technology.

One project focuses on two Buddhist cave complexes at Xiangtangshan and Tianlongshan in China, developed with center deputy director **Katherine Tsiang**, PhD'96, and now working with another professor, **Wei-Cheng Lin**, AM'99, PhD'06.

## *What new directions do you see art history taking?*

One thing I'm committed to is asking: How do we talk about art history beyond national narrative? Current art historical narratives are linear histories based on particular countries or regions. Most art historians are experts on specific regions. We should find ways to talk about art historical issues on a higher level.

A few years ago, several professors in my department established a group called Global Ancient Art, initially consisting of historians studying ancient Greek, early Christian, Mayan, and Chinese art. We're developing this conversation on how to find horizontal connections. We won't abandon the notion of national or regional art history, but global art history is clearly part of the future for our discipline. —Maureen Searcy

READ MORE FROM WU HUNG at [tableau.uchicago.edu/wuhung](http://tableau.uchicago.edu/wuhung).

# CREATING CONNECTIONS

Newly named Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies honors longtime supporter.

**Joyce Zeger Greenberg**, AB'52, was an early champion of the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Chicago. "I was thrilled when [then-dean] **Martha Roth** informed me enthusiastically that the Humanities faculty recommended establishing the center," she says of its 2009 founding. Roth is the Chauncey S. Boucher Distinguished Service Professor of Assyriology in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Greenberg started sending annual checks for \$3,000 to the center's inaugural director, **Josef Stern**, now the William H. Colvin Professor Emeritus of Philosophy.

Roth, Stern, and Greenberg kept in close contact—"He wrote me these wonderful letters," she says—and a few years later she made the center's first major endowment: \$2 million to create the Joyce Zeger Greenberg Visiting Professorship in Jewish Studies, which brings senior scholars from around the world to teach and conduct research at UChicago.

Last October UChicago named the center in honor of Greenberg and her late husband, and in recognition of her \$10 million gift, through a bequest, to support the expansion of activities at the center.

A partnership between the Divisions of the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Divinity School, the Joyce Z. and Jacob Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies has become the University's home for research and dialogue on Judaism and Jewish civilization. Faculty from departments including anthropology, music, philosophy, and theater and



*A pioneering female stockbroker in Houston, Joyce Z. Greenberg creates a legacy through the Center for Jewish Studies.*

performance studies work to promote greater understanding of the historical, cultural, and religious aspects of Jewish life and history. The center has sponsored conferences with organizations across the University and to date has brought eight internationally esteemed Joyce Z. Greenberg Visiting Professors to teach, study, and speak on campus.

"The center has allowed me to create collaborations with people in other areas of the University," says **Na'ama Rokem**, associate professor in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. In July she becomes the Greenberg Center's new director. "Joyce's gift will amplify those collaborations and give the center more stability and continuity."

"There's no doubt," says Dean of the Division of the Humanities **Anne Walters Robertson**, "that the new fund and the naming of the center will help in those connections across campus and raise the University's profile even higher as a destination for Jewish studies."

Greenberg attended the College during the Hutchins era, when it was common for 16-year-olds like her to soak up the Great Books curriculum. "I found it very challenging," she says. "I was very happy that I graduated," she adds with a laugh.

In 1969 Greenberg became the third female stockbroker—and "the first Jewish woman," she notes—in Houston, Texas. Later, when she met businessman Jacob Greenberg, they bonded over German expressionist art, which he collected. "My first encounter with German expressionism," Greenberg says, "was at the University of Chicago."

In 2015 she created the Jacob Greenberg Fellowship in Jewish Studies to support graduate students writing their dissertations through the center and to honor her husband, who died in 1995. She is delighted that her new gift links both their names to the center's burgeoning future. "I am sure," she says, "that he would be very pleased with what I've done."—*Sean Carr, AB'90*

LOOK BACK AT GREENBERG'S EARLIER GIFT at [tableau.uchicago.edu/lectures](http://tableau.uchicago.edu/lectures).

1115 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL 60637



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Chicago, IL  
Permit #4176

Follow the Division on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Visit [humanities.uchicago.edu](http://humanities.uchicago.edu) to connect.



# UCHICAGO ALUMNI WEEKEND

**May 31–June 3, 2018**

**To register and learn more:**

**VISIT** [aw.uchicago.edu](http://aw.uchicago.edu)

**EMAIL** [alumniweekend@uchicago.edu](mailto:alumniweekend@uchicago.edu)

**CALL** 800.955.0065

.....  
SAVE THE DATE

## **Humanities Day 2018** **Saturday, October 20**

Mark your calendar for UChicago's annual Humanities Day celebration featuring faculty members from the Division of the Humanities. All events—lectures, tours, and exhibits—are free and open to the public. Registration opens in mid-August. Visit [humanitiesday.uchicago.edu](http://humanitiesday.uchicago.edu) to sign up for email alerts and program updates.

