

I

Highlights

[Faculty Receive
Guggenheim Grants](#)

[Nation Columnist
To Lecture](#)

[More Stories](#)

Printable Version

Skidmore Intercom

Faculty & Staff Newsletter

Vol. 5, No. 6 - April 17, 2006



Artist Paul Sattler
wins Guggenheim. [Read more](#)



Author Steve Stern:
Guggenheim Fellow. [Read more](#)



Weeklong Perlow Series
on Holocaust. [Read more](#)

Welcome -- The Skidmore *Intercom* Faculty-Staff Newsletter is a production of the Office of College Relations. All members of the campus community are invited to submit story ideas or news items, using the contact information provided below. Department chairs and office directors are asked to please print a copy of this document to share with colleagues who do not have regular access to a computer.

We hope you enjoy this electronic newsletter and encourage you to share your impressions via email or telephone.

Skidmore Intercom

Skidmore College
815 North Broadway
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518.580.5000
intercom@skidmore.edu

I

Highlights

[Faculty Receive
Guggenheim Grants](#)
[Nation Columnist
To Lecture](#)
[More Stories](#)

Printable Version

Skidmore Intercom

Faculty & Staff Newsletter

Vol. 5, No. 6 - April 17, 2006

Two Faculty Receive Guggenheim Fellowships

Two Skidmore faculty members — Steve Stern, professor of English, and Paul Sattler, associate professor of art — received fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation this spring. Stern's grant will support continued development of a novel tentatively titled *The Frozen Rabbi*, while Sattler plans to employ new materials and methods in his ongoing work on the "Peale Variations," a series that explores his interpretation of themes presented in Charles Willson Peale's *The Exhumation of the Mastodon* (1806). Guggenheim awards are presented annually to people who have demonstrated exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts. The foundation in 2005 awarded 186 fellowships from an applicant pool totaling 3,008. The monetary component of individual awards is not made public, but they averaged \$38,236 in the past year.

Author Steven Stern

For Stern, the Guggenheim is the latest honor in a list that includes a Fulbright (2004), the National Jewish Book Award (2000), the Pushcart Prize (1997 and 1999), a Pushcart Writer's Choice Award (1994) an O. Henry Prize, and the Edward Lewis Wallant Award for Jewish-American fiction. A Skidmore faculty member since 1988, Stern is known for creating colorful characters that mine "the rich terrain of Eastern European Jewry," according to Fernanda Eberstadt of *The New York Times* (March 20, 2005). Stern's writing offers "a rollicking compendium of myth and historical tidbits, of dybbuks, wonder-working rebbes, and clandestine prayer houses where lapsed Talmud students meditate on the holy letters of God's name until they levitate," she added.

The Angel of Forgetfulness (Viking, 2005) "is Stern's most ambitious fictional creation to date," Eberstadt continued. The book interweaves three stories about characters who take flight from their ordinary lives and are plunged into extraordinary circumstances. At the center of the tale is an unfinished manuscript — an adventure about a fallen angel named Mocky and his half-mortal son Nachman, who both reside on the Lower East Side of New York around 1900. Stern uses interwoven narratives in *The Frozen Rabbi*, on which he will work during a leave next year. Comic on one level, but "deadly earnest" on another, the story "represents one author's efforts to locate the place of the sacred in these latter days," said Stern.

That book continues his romance with Jewish history and culture — a romance that has become more intense since Stern spent time in Israel as a Fulbright scholar. The Memphis native confesses, "I had no real Jewish content in my upbringing. I attended a reform congregation in Memphis in the 50s and the 60s. For all I knew I was a Methodist. It was fairly ecumenical." His knowledge of Jewish culture came through books, including Jewish-American fiction, Yiddish literature in translation, cultural history, mysticism, and folklore. Stern said, "It was a real revelation to me, having known a pasteurized version of Judaism, that there was this immense mystical literature and an enormous amount of folkloric material full of magical creatures, dybbuks, and saints, and what have you..."

The discovery was "something I could celebrate," he continued. "It was a tradition I wanted to lay claim to, even though my access was entirely second-hand. In my relationship to my heritage, I'll always be like a poacher, because I haven't had much Jewish ritual in my life." He traveled to Israel in 2004 to teach at Bar Ilan University. "I went," said Stern, "insecure in my identity as a writer and returned insecure about my identity as a human being." Israeli Jews impressed him. "They know who they are and where they belong and have total confidence in their right to be Jews in Israel. It was eye-opening for me."

Stern continued, "I never met anyone who wasn't struggling with the current situation. Men my age who'd seen so much more of life — surviving wars, living with a siege mentality, but living in history in a way that Americans seldom do. It was humbling." The experience "turned my head around," said Stern. "Israel as I knew it before going was a political conundrum. And then I go and see its people and hear their stories. I'm a sucker for people and stories."

Stern has characterized his fiction as "radical nostalgia," explaining, "I often invoke elements of folklore in order to subvert finite reality with the timelessness of myth." He pointed out that nostalgia "recalls the pain of remembering. If there's no pain involved, it is not so interesting to me. In *Angel of Forgetfulness*, my characters tend to chase the echoes of memory. Sometimes the echoes are louder than the original noise. It's both a painful and paradoxical kind of awareness because the memory of paradise can make life on earth by contrast look pretty grim."

Artist Paul Sattler

Memory is an essential component in the work of artist Paul Sattler, who draws on "memory and imagination" when creating art. He paints at night, and there are times when crazy memories are likely to influence a mind that's fueled by caffeine and fatigue during late hours. Says Sattler, "I am responsive and honest to absorbing those elements." With distance (and the light of a new day), however, he decides "if they are worthy to be included in the work. I may have a vague idea about a quality of light, landscape, or space and as I work, memories will arise to be woven into these rough and broad beginnings."

The resulting works can be ambiguous or astonishing, as Sattler balances elements of internal and external worlds or environments in paintings that have earned acclaim for their "novelistic dimensions" (*ArtNews*) and "innovative spatial devices and varied imagery" (artdaily.com). Sattler calls his works "fantastical and fabulist," adding, "they seem to gravitate toward more visionary worlds. There are rhythms, patterns, and colors that require you to look at them differently." A member of the Skidmore faculty since 1998, Sattler has shown his work in Boston, Chicago, and New York. In an interview (Fall 2005) with *Scope*, Sattler said that when he moved from city to country, nature so impressed him with its "outrageous, unending growth" that "it made my paintings more chaotic, unpredictable."

The focus of his current effort is a series called the "Peale Variations," influenced by a 19th-century oil painting titled *The Exhumation of the Mastodon*, by Charles Willson Peale. Set in Newburgh, N.Y., the painting depicts Peale and his entourage, after a storm, overseeing a crew removing water and debris from a pit that contains a nearly complete skeleton, the first of its kind discovered in America. Sattler's brother showed him the image in 2001, shortly after the events of Sept. 11. Explained Sattler, "Feeling in the aftermath a jarring mixture of profound grief, patriotism, and doubt, I became fixated on Peale's quintessentially American vision of crisis, discovery, family, labor, mystery, and enlightenment."

Said Sattler, "Striving to build an unwavering connection to the art of the past is one of my most rewarding and indispensable activities." He has thus far completed 12 different works of various sizes exploring these themes in wide range of media. "I keep seeing qualities, visual components" that compel continued exploration of themes connecting to the Peale work. The effort has helped him to expand his visual vocabulary and has led to more daring levels of abstraction, adventurous surfaces, and riots of color, he explained. "Sometimes the correlation is highly formal, and other times it is thematic integration. Recently I have been finding purposeful reasons to blend the influence into my own narrative ambition," said Sattler. "I don't know when I'll be done."

Sattler added, "I am not in the business of offering endless dedications to Peale and suggesting that every move I make has a mirrored allusion or match in the original *Exhumation*. I do, however, admit that my five-year infatuation with Peale's image seems to have, at least temporarily, infected many levels of my picture-making process. The more I work on these pictures, they seem to be merging personal elements with the Peale structure, but are less involved with the actual Peale composition." The Guggenheim is the first fellowship that Sattler has received. His reaction? "I am thrilled and overwhelmed. I entered the process as a trial run and I am ecstatic that I was chosen. It is a true honor and I am humbled by the company I share with past recipients."

Skidmore Intercom

Skidmore College
 815 North Broadway
 Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
 518.580.5000
intercom@skidmore.edu



Highlights

[Faculty Receive
Guggenheim Grants](#)

[Nation Columnist
To Lecture](#)

[More Stories](#)

Printable Version

Skidmore Intercom

Faculty & Staff Newsletter

Vol. 5, No. 6 - April 17, 2006

***Nation* Columnist to Discuss "Conservative Crack-Up"**



"The Conservative Crack-Up" is the title of this year's William E. Weiss Lecture in Economics, to be delivered Tuesday, May 2, by William Greider, national affairs correspondent for *The Nation*. Free and open to the public, the talk will begin at 5:30 p.m. in Davis Auditorium of Palamountain Hall.

According to Greider, "The marketplace doctrine inspired by Friedman and Hayek and brought to power by Republican ascendancy has failed to produce a stable, widely shared prosperity. Roughly speaking, it lifts only half the boats. It manages to sustain growth by piling up more debt. Republicans are in a corner and have no easy way out.

"As this great shift unfolds, the way is open for alternative ideas and eventually a new governing order. We cannot yet see the outlines of

what replaces the market ideology, but we can begin to talk about the ideas. Indeed, we have an obligation to do so. Reform's basic objective should be to restore this fundamental principle: the economy exists to support society and people, not the other way around."

In his most recent book, *The Soul of Capitalism: Opening Paths to A Moral Economy* (Simon & Schuster, 2003), Greider describes why American capitalism produces so much human discontent and social injury as well as abundance. He advocates that Americans exert influence to change the economic system's operating values and power structure, to disarm capitalism's destructive collisions and its collateral consequences for people and the nation.

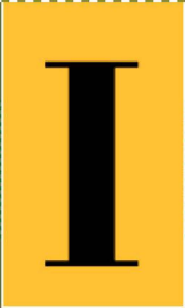
For more than 40 years, Greider has been a reporter (newspapers, magazines, TV) and author. He is a former assistant managing editor for national news at *The Washington Post*, where he also worked as a national correspondent and Sunday columnist. He started his journalism career at the *Wheaton Daily Journal* in Wheaton, Ill., and later worked at the *Louisville Times* in Louisville, Ky., before joining the *Post*, where he spent 15 years. From the early 1980s until 1999, he was a columnist and feature writer at *Rolling Stone*, which he left to join *The Nation*.

In addition to *The Soul of Capitalism*, Greider's books include *Fortress America: The American Military and the Consequences of Peace* (PublicAffairs, 1998); *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* (Simon & Schuster, 1997); *Who Will Tell the People: The Betrayal of American Democracy* (Simon & Schuster, 1991); *Secrets of the Temple: How the Federal Reserve Runs the Country* (Simon & Schuster, 1987); and *The Education of David Stockman and Other Americans* (Dutton, 1982).

The Weiss Lecture at Skidmore is made possible with the assistance of former Trustee Arturo Peralta-Ramos III, a member of the College's Class of 1974. Named in honor of Peralta-Ramos's stepfather, William Weiss, the lecture series brings to Skidmore speakers with special insight into contemporary economic issues.

Skidmore Intercom

Skidmore College
815 North Broadway
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518.580.5000
intercom@skidmore.edu



Highlights

[Faculty Receive
Guggenheim Grants](#)

[Nation Columnist
To Lecture](#)

[More Stories](#)

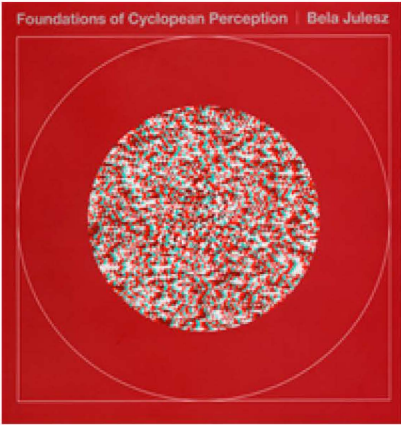
Printable Version

Skidmore Intercom

Faculty & Staff Newsletter

Vol. 5, No. 6 - April 17, 2006

Phillips Collaborates on New Version of Classic Perception Text



The image at left looks like it's out of focus, but it's actually a perfectly registered illustration from Bela Julesz's *Foundations of Cyclopean Perception*, a classic scientific work about visual perception recently republished by Skidmore psychologist Flip Phillips.

Look at the book's images through the cardboard 3-D glasses tucked into its back cover and something magical happens: The color dots turn sharply black and white, and distinct shapes — squares, diamonds, triangles — seem to emerge, lift off the pages and float above them. Working with early digital computers at Bell Labs, Julesz generated these random-dot images to serve as "novel tools" to analyze how the human

brain combines the separate images received from each of our two eyes (hence Cyclops-like) to produce depth perception. "This mode of visual stimulus became a paradigm for research in vision and perception," says Phillips.

Published in 1971, *Foundations* was named to a list of the most influential cognitive-science books of the 20th century and critically hailed for its "breadth, lucidity, technical virtuosity, and ... breathtaking beauty." But it was out of print and hard to find — used copies cost hundreds of dollars — when Phillips and Rutgers University colleague Thomas Papathomas decided to publish a facsimile edition, with the cooperation of Julesz, a Rutgers professor emeritus.

The project took six years — "longer than my dissertation," jokes Phillips — but this March, the small, square book was republished by MIT Press in its original award-winning design.

Getting it done was a Herculean task. For starters, Julesz's original artwork and manuscript were long lost, so Phillips digitally recreated the nearly 50 color images and some black-and-whites. To duplicate the text, he sliced up two mint copies of rare originals (at \$350 a pop) and scanned each page. When new cellophanes ordered for the glasses' red and green lenses didn't precisely match the originals, new inks had to be custom-mixed, and the images' colors tweaked to reproduce the original optical effects. Phillips met with ink-makers and commiserated with pressmen bemused, he says, by "the first job they've ever done where you don't want the colors to register." And because Julesz had developed the book while working at Bell Labs, the reprint had to be vetted by AT&T lawyers concerned with intellectual-property rights. Julesz died in 2003, before that two-year process was completed.

The reprinted *Foundations* sports a red cover, to distinguish it from the black-jacketed original. It sells for \$120, a price at which "libraries can reacquire the hardcover," says Phillips. But for Phillips and Papathomas, the book is primarily a labor of love; proceeds from its sales will help endow a Rutgers University speaker series in Julesz's memory.

Forché to Receive Creeley Poetry Award April 25



Professor of English Carolyn Forché will give a reading of her work Tuesday, April 25, at Acton (Mass.) Town Hall as part of a program celebrating the sixth awarding of the annual Robert Creeley Poetry Award, which she will receive that evening.

Creeley was a major contemporary poet who was born in Arlington, Mass., and grew up in West Acton. He attended Harvard University from 1943 to 1946, taking time out to work one year for the American Field Service in Burma and India. In 1946 he published his first poem, in the Harvard magazine *Wake*. Creeley eventually published more than 60

books of poetry in the United States and abroad.

A former New York State Poet Laureate (1989-91) Creeley received the Lannan Lifetime Achievement Award, the Frost Medal, the Shelley Memorial Award, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation. He was elected a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 1999. At his death in last March, Creeley was a distinguished professor of English at Brown University.

Currently director of creative writing at Skidmore, Forché is the author of four books of poetry and editor of the anthology *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*. Her articles and reviews have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and other national publications. Her honors include three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Lannan Foundation Literary Fellowship, *The Los Angeles Times* Book Award for *Angel of History*, and the Morris Hiroshima Foundation for Peace and Culture Award in recognition of her work on behalf of human rights and the preservation of memory and culture.

Sponsored by the Acton Memorial Library, the Creeley celebration honoring Forché begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Faulkner Room of the Acton Town Hall. Admission is free but tickets are required and available at Acton Memorial, Citizens and Sargent Libraries, Willow Books, the Concord Bookshop, West Acton Market, and Porter Square Books. Parking is limited.

Zankel Lecture April 18

In a departure from typical lecture etiquette, cell phones, BlackBerries and laptops will be welcome at a this year's Zankel Lecture Tuesday, April 18, when listeners will learn more about the new "Digital City." [More](#)

Coburn Lecture April 19

Anthropologist Sarah Hrdy will tell what factors contribute to maternal love when she gives this year's Karen Levin Coburn '63 Lecture in [Women's Studies](#) Wednesday, April 19.

Perlow Events to Consider Transformative Memorials to the Holocaust

A weeklong look at the power of art and music to transcend oppression will be explored and celebrated in an array of events starting April 23 on campus. Holocaust music scholar Mark Ludwig, a violist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Skidmore's 2005-06 Sterne Virtuoso Artist-in-Residence, will anchor the Jacob Perlow Series of events. [More](#)

Skidmore Intercom

Skidmore College
815 North Broadway
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518.580.5000
intercom@skidmore.edu



Highlights

[Faculty Receive
Guggenheim Grants](#)

[Nation Columnist
To Lecture](#)

[More Stories](#)

Printable Version

Skidmore Intercom

Faculty & Staff Newsletter

Vol. 5, No. 6 - April 17, 2006

Faculty/Staff Activities

Regina Janes, professor of English, delivered a paper titled "Over-sexing Herodias" at the annual meeting of the American Society for 18th-Century Studies March 30-April 2 in Montreal.

R. Parthasarathy, associate professor of English, was interviewed by the Poetry Foundation (Chicago) in March 2006 as part of its celebration of National Poetry Month. The interview appears in a podcast in which Parthasarathy reads the anonymous poem "The Sheets" in the original Sanskrit and talks about the problems of translating from one of the world's oldest languages into English. Parthasarathy's translation of the poem is read by the Broadway actor Ken Marks. To access the podcast, go to "<http://poetryfoundation.org/archive/audio.html>" and click on "April 7, 2006: Three Short Poems."

Bob Shorb, director, Student Aid and Family Finance, was a co-presenter (with Ned Jones, assistant vice president for admissions at Siena College) of "College Admissions Today the Enrollment Manager, or the Marriage between Financial Aid and Admissions" March 17 at the 2006 Adirondack Counseling Association Conference at Lake George.

Publications

Sandy Baum, professor of economics, was a source for the following stories: "Fairness for (and Among) Independent Students," April 12, [insidehigher ed.com](#); "The Rich-Poor Gap Widens for College Students," April 7, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; "Harvard lowers a tuition barrier: Waiver expanded for the unwealthy," March 31, [boston.com](#); "Harvard Eliminates Tuition for Lower-Income Families, March 30, [Bloomberg.com](#).

Christina Grassi, visiting assistant professor of anthropology and environmental studies, has co-authored the cover article in the April 13 volume of *Nature* titled "Independent evolution of bitter-taste sensitivity in humans and chimpanzees."

The article notes that the ability to taste bitter foods is important for appropriate diet choice as well as for detection and avoidance of potentially toxic foods. Grassi and her colleagues found that although both humans and chimpanzees can taste the bitter compound phenylthiocarbamide (PTC), the ability to do so is not a result of shared ancestry. Rather, this ability evolved separately in the chimpanzee and human lineages. They discovered this by locating and sequencing the genes that code for PTC taste sensitivity in captive populations of chimpanzees and comparing that to the chimpanzees' willingness to eat apples, a prized food source, that were soaked in PTC and therefore bitter. Their phenotypes, "taster" or "non-taster," measured by acceptance or rejection of the apples, correlated with their genotype for taste-ability.

Grassi, who a Ph.D. degree from the University of Texas at Austin, studies primate behavior and ecology, primate conservation, and captive primate well-being, and has conducted field research on lemurs in Madagascar.

Regina Janes, professor of English, had a review of *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics* by Isabel Rivers published in *The Scriblerian*, 37/38 (Spring, Autumn 2005). In addition, Peter Monaghan of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* interviewed Janes about her recent book, *Losing Our Heads*.

Kelly Dempsey-Little, training and documentation coordinator, CITS, created a documentary film based on her father's experience as a tail-gunner in a B-52 during World War II as part of a class, EN 105, "Making Documentaries," taught by Professor Tom Lewis. The class was told to "make something personal," and Dempsey-Little said she always wondered about her dad's untold war stories. Her 30-minute movie titled *Untold Stories: A Documentary Film about Sgt. James R. Dempsey, Army Air Corps, WWII*, was the subject of a feature story in the Nov. 24, 2005 issue of the Glens Falls *Post-Star*, and was screened for the public Nov. 25 at Crandall Library in Glens Falls. "I wanted to make a film about something meaningful and personal so I asked my father to sit down with me and his favorite cocktail and tell stories into the camera," Dempsey-Little told the newspaper. Her 87-year-old dad did just that, and the result is a priceless record in his own words.

R. Parthasarathy, associate professor of English, had a number of poems and translations published in 2005-06 as follows: *Poetry Magazine*, April 2006: Ghalib, "Twilight in Delhi" (Urdu) and Anon, "The Sheets"(Sanskrit); *Salmagundi*, Winter 2006: "The Stones of Bamian"; *Fulcrum*, Fall 2005: "Remembered Village," "The Concise Kamasutra 1 & 10," "East Window 1, 3, & 4," and "A House Divided 1 & 4."

Also, *Manushi* (New Delhi), July-August 2005: Vimala, "Tongues of Fire" (Pali); Kavarpentu, "The Tiger," Auvaiyar, "Empty Pools," Atimantiyar, "Lament for a Husband Swept Away in a Flood," Kakkaiapatiniyar Naccellaiyar, "The Battlefield," Nannakaiyar, "The Heron," Okkur Macattiyar, "A Tamil Mother Sends Her Only Son into Battle," Venmanipputi, "Under the Spreading Laurel Tree," Vellivitiyar, "The Search," and Pontaip Pacalaiyar, "Sand Houses" (Tamil).

In addition Vidya, "The Riverbank," Vikatanitamba, "The Bed," Bhavakadevi, "Heart of Stone," and Silabhattacharika, "Then and Now" (Sanskrit); and Mira, "When Will You Come, Beloved?" (Hindi).

Mary Zeiss Stange, associate professor of women's studies and religion, was interviewed for an article titled "Pope his own man: Benedict surprises left and right," published April 2 in *The Post-Star* (Glens Falls).

Skidmore Intercom

Skidmore College
815 North Broadway
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518.580.5000
intercom@skidmore.edu