

The Pioneer

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CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION: GENDER IDENTITY THROUGH HISTORY AND HUMANITY

MARY DWYER (ChE '19)



Photo by Winter Leng (ChE '18)

A review of “Bring Your Own Body: Transgender Between Archives and Aesthetics.”

The 41 Cooper Gallery offers complicating, eye opening perspectives on the discussion of gender identity in its latest exhibit: Bring Your Own Body. Curated by Jeanne Vaccaro, a postdoctoral fellow in gender studies at Indiana University and a scholar at the Kinsey Institute, and Dean Stamatina Gregory, Associate Dean of the School of Art, the exhibit raises contemporary gender conversation on a campus that values what Gregory calls “the intersection of art making and social justice.”

The exhibit connects the scientific, biological, and legal aspects of gender definitions—archives—with the reality of gender experience—aesthetics. The links between the archive and the aesthetic complicate and provoke a novel understanding of gender identity and reveal some foundation for its tension in society. By juxtaposing the historical im-

PLICATIONS of gender identity and the overall human experience of gender identification, the exhibit traces the roots of the discourse about gender and provides an understanding of the gender conversation as it exists today.

To further incorporate dialogue into the exhibit, the gallery hosts various events. Some of the events are performances that are part of the exhibition itself. This includes a reading by Juliana Huxtable, which took place on October 29, and the DISCOTROPIC performance by niv Acosta, which was filmed on October 22 and will be on view at the exhibit after editing. Other events provide context to the exhibit’s archival work; these include Amos Mac’s discussion on Original Plumbing and the Visual AIDS event on the legacy of downtown artist Chloe Dzublio. Gregory comments, “All the events activate the works on view, bringing bodies, conversations, and energy into the space, and they situate the

exhibition in a necessarily broader historical and performative context.”

On October 29, Juliana Huxtable sat on a phallic couch in the basement of 41 Cooper Square dressed in all blue. The gallery was filled with people: the front row with members of the public: artists, followers and member of the transgender community, while Cooper students filed onto the floor in the back corners of the room. Huxtable twirled her curly hair and waited to for her introduction: “Juliana Huxtable is a poet, artist and DJ. Her multimedia work explores the fragmented, mutating and mutable nature of identity, utilizing race, gender, and queerness as mediums to explore the possibilities of a post-identity politics.” Once handed the microphone, Huxtable played with some sound equipment at her feet.

“Uhh, I am going to read some stuff I’ve been working on.” She stated humbly, simply—but played an effect over the microphone

so her voice echoed with every breath she took, every stutter she made, and every chew she took of her gum. She fumbled around with some papers before her, and then began to speak.

Huxtable coupled thought-provoking fragments with pauses and echoes that gave the audience time to digest the complexity of what she was saying. The fragments were complemented by run-ons that took her story to a new place, a new level of understanding. Her work showcased exactly what the exhibition represents: a comment on contemporary society through some reflection on society’s past.

Huxtable’s reading is one of many examples of the artistic demonstrations taking place in the 41 Cooper Gallery. The “Bring Your Own Body: Transgender Between Archives and Aesthetics” exhibition will be open every Tuesday through Saturday from 12pm to 7pm until November 14. Contribute to the important conversation by stopping by. ♦

PSC HIRES CONSULTANT

PRANAV JONEJA (ME '18)

A campus notice email on Monday October 26 announced that the Board of Trustees’ Presidential Search Committee (PSC) has hired consultant Paul Chou of Korn Ferry.

This is the first formal action taken by the newly formed PSC, which consists of 6 trustees and 3 faculty members.

A statement by PSC co-chairs Taylor and Hirschhorn’s shed light on how Paul Chou was selected: “In August, the PSC met to consider executive search firms it would invite to ‘pitch’ why they would be best-suited to manage the search. The PSC considered nearly twenty firms ranging from small/boutique firms to large/full-service firms to

higher education specialty search firms. Ultimately, we invited 4 firms to meet with the PSC in-person. The PSC unanimously selected Korn Ferry’s Paul Chou.”

Paul Chou, Co-Managing Director of Korn Ferry’s Global Education Practice, “brings a proven record of success and extensive knowledge about leadership

to a broad range of not-for-profit clients regarding executive level placements.” During meetings this week, Mr. Chou touted his reputation and “98% success rate” for executive placements.

Continued on page 2.

OPINION: WOMEN AT COOPER

PSC HIRES CONSULTANT

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE BSE MAJOR

WILD ABOUT BORING THINGS

FACES OF COOPER: TOCHILOVSKY AND RONAN

MIDTERM MIXTAPE

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EDITOR’S NOTE: The following op-eds are the product of several long discussions at *The Pioneer* on the topic of women at Cooper Union. The opinions presented are those of each writer respectively. The articles are not to be sidelined as ‘feminist rants’ or skipped over because they are long and you have work to do. The aim is to begin a conversation about a topic that is seldom discussed in detail. Please send your response to pioneer@cooper.edu to be included in the next issue. -PJ

WOMEN IN ART

CELESTE SOUSA (ART '18)

Everyone has been in a crit where a girl is showing her work, when suddenly someone latches onto something feminine they see in the piece—usually something they view as “soft” or “vulnerable”. From there, the conversation gets derailed into discussing the piece in terms of the stereotypes of femininity, with any and all synonyms for “motherly” and “subdued” thrown in. If you’re in a sculpture class, someone’s going to bring up Eva Hesse because that’s the only female artist students feel they know well enough to shoe horn a comparison in with your work. God help you if you’re a woman artist working with fabric. Even if you’re adamant that your work is not about femininity or your gender, I’ve seen other students insist that the association was too strong to ignore. In other words, we as woman artists do not have the agency to separate our work from the patriarchal lens it’s seen through.

One of the issues is that art made by men is considered politically and socially neutral by default. Beyond the art world too, the white man is seen as an accurate, unbiased representative for mankind. Because a woman is ‘other’ than the ‘neutral’ man, her stance in society is seen to influence and permeate everything she does. Therefore women artists are thought to bring ‘being a woman’ to their art in every single instance. It is really harmful to tell women artists who don’t want their work to be seen through their gender that their identity is too political to make neutral art. Moreover, it

prevents people from experiencing her art for anything other than preconceived notions of gender that are projected onto her work. The other side to this issue: women artists who actually do want their identity as a woman to be present in their work feel pressured not to explore those avenues. Many female art students fear even trying to touch femininity in their work because they are daunted by the mental exhaustion of sitting through a crit laced with sexist discussion. They are avoiding making artwork about themselves as women because of the negative views of feminism and feminist art. Feminism is an extremely polarizing subject and while in actuality it is complex it is often oversimplified for easier digestion. Feminist work is often read in crits as didactic because everyone thinks they know what feminism is and what being a woman is like. This leads to self-censorship within female artists in fear of being branded a feminist artist and being saddled with all the weight and history that comes with it. We become hyper self-conscious about our identity in relation in our art, and it begins to strain our relationships with other students, our teachers and our own art. It’s not fair to have the historical weight of being a woman imposed on our art when men’s art does not face the same scrutiny through their masculinity.

I want women artists to be able to make artwork about their body and identity without the fear of being pigeon-holed *and* I want women artists to be able to make art featuring any

subject/material they want and not have their work be read through their gender. It’s not unrealistic to want both of these.

There is no clear solution to this issue besides asking the entire student body to become more conscious of the way gender is brought up in discussion. Be aware of the gendered language you use! If another student explicitly states that her work has nothing to do with her gender, listen to her. Just because a woman attaches her body to her work does not make the piece inherently feminist. If a student does do work about being a woman, you don’t have to relate to it in order to empathize and digest what she’s saying. Question masculinity more in terms of art made by men, level the playing field, and realize that sometimes men’s art is also affected by their privileged status in society.

The issues women face in the art school are compounded with the experiences of those with differing gender and sexual identities. Anyone who is any combination of things other than the default white male knows it’s difficult enough to reconcile identity and art without the added judgment of our peers. By simply thinking about the prescribed stereotypes that are engrained in our thoughts and being conscious of it during critiques, we can relieve the institutional burdens of the patriarchy off of our peers. ♦

WOMEN IN ENGINEERING

MONICA CHEN (CE '18)

Being a woman doesn’t guarantee you any privileges. As a woman in engineering, I’ve heard all the stereotypes spoken about me or my female peers: “you got into Cooper Union because you’re a girl”; “you have an easier time getting help because your male peers are more willing to help you out”; “jobs are easier to attain for you”; and my personal favorite: “girls simply aren’t as good at math as boys are in general- nothing personal, it’s just the way everyone’s brains are wired.”

Although I do consider myself lucky to have a supportive family and friends to encourage my endeavors, I’ve also experienced what some may consider “unintentional” sexism from these same family members and friends. I’ve repeatedly heard comments such as “I don’t think engineering is a field that’s right for someone like you” or “Men are more inclined to be better at logical subjects like science and math and women are better at decision-making and common sense. It’s a natural and fundamental difference between men and women.” I consider these “unintentional” simply because the speaker is unaware of the sexist nature of their comment; however, these “innocent” opinions reflect more than simply being uninformed—it shows that on some subtle level, all women in engineering are still doubted and do not receive the respect they absolutely deserve. Trust me, I

am not here to be bitter about any of the comments above but am just pointing out that as girls, we hear a fair share of shit about being in a challenging male-dominated field.

But where does this leave us now? Do we deserve to place ourselves on a pedestal and use these difficulties we face to excuse ourselves from our responsibilities and complain about the work that every student has to suffer through and endure? Absolutely not.

In my own experience, I have noticed two qualities that group most women: those who allow the mental blocks to overshadow their potential and those who turn these difficulties into a factor of motivation. Of course, these separations are not in black and white; more common than not, it’s usually a combination of these two qualities. Don’t get me wrong, though—I respect and admire everyone at Cooper.

However, I will be the first to admit that it’s often a struggle to ignore these belittling comments. I have observed that women with a proclivity for giving in to their mental blocks will definitely try to compete on-par with their male peers at first; however, when a difficulty or failure presents itself, these women appear more pessimistic than the rest, blaming their failures on the unjust nature of a male-dominated field.

PSC HIRES CONSULTANT (...CONTINUED)

When asked how he plans to learn about the needs and values of the Cooper community, Mr. Chou responded, “We have started to and will continue to meet with a broad constituency of people. These meetings will allow us to tailor the needs of the school to our search.” *The Pioneer* has learned that these included meetings with the Faculty-Student Senate, as well as a selected group of students including some (but not all) of the student council representatives.

“the fee structure for Mr. Chou’s services is \$90,000 plus one-third of the future president’s salary”

Indeed, the consultant is backing up his word with action, making a strong effort to meet a variety of rep-

resentatives of the “broad constituency.” Andy Overton, art student council representative, was among the students invited to meet Mr. Chou.

Based on his first impression, Andy felt that the search consultant was already somewhat acquainted with the culture of Cooper Union, though it was clear that he was not yet aware of what it means to be a student here. Until now, various Trustees and administrators were the only people who had Mr. Chou’s

ear. It is yet to be seen exactly how effectively the meetings with students and faculty will feed into to the presidential search process.

The Pioneer has also learned that the fee structure for Mr. Chou’s services is a \$90,000 base fee plus a one-time payment equivalent to one-third of the future president’s annual salary.

According to Jessica Marshall, student Trustee, the PSC is making an honest effort to ensure that everyone is able to contribute his

or her ideas to the search process. To that end, Jessica revealed that anyone can email cooper-president@kornferry.com to be heard.

This article has been abridged for print. For the full story, including more detailed analysis, read *The Pioneer* online at <http://pioneer.cooper.edu>. ♦

LECTURE ON THE HUMBLE SUBWAY MAP

MATTHEW GRATTAN (ChE '19)



Photo by Yifei Simon Shao (ME '19)

The Subway Map: The Last 50 Years, the Next 50 was held in the Great Hall last Tuesday night. Peter Lloyd, a writer and subway map aficionado, hosted the event, which featured three presentations and a six member panel discussion.

The presentations highlighted the various approaches taken to map the one of the largest subway systems in the world. The specific approach to a map is quite the topic of contention: some cartographers are proponents of aesthetics and simplicity, while others strive for a “didactic” and accurate map.

Raleigh D’Adamo, winner of the MTA’s 1964 subway map contest, was the first to present. D’Adamo grew up close to New York’s public transportation system but pursued a career in law. After reading about the contest in the newspaper, D’Adamo proposed his concept of denoting each subway line by its own color. Previous subway maps used limited colors to show trivial information such as whether the track operated above or below ground. As D’Adamo observed in the proposal accompanying his map, “the conclusion is inescapable that maps of New York’s subway system are trying to make too few colors do too much work.” Despite having limited cartography experience, D’Adamo won the contest

and received a reward of \$4,000 (about \$30,000 today). D’Adamo later pursued a career in transportation, and his color coding concept is still found in today’s subway map.

Geographic accuracy in subway maps is sometimes sacrificed for clarity. For instance, the island of Manhattan is just too narrow on a true geographic map to feasibly accommodate all of the subway lines that run uptown and downtown. In 1972, the New York subway map took a bold step away from accuracy in exchange for aesthetics and simplicity. Designed by the Italian designer Massimo Vignelli, the 1972 map featured bold parallel subway lines and exchanged curves for 45 and 90 degree angles. The Vignelli map was hailed by some as a genius work of art, while others disapproved of its inaccurate depiction of New York and focus on looks.

John Tauranac, a graphic designer who helped develop maps in the 70s, shared some of his current concepts for subway maps. His maps strive to be “didactic” and provide the necessary information as efficiently as possible. As Tauranac puts is, “there are many ways to skin a map.”

Following Tauranac was Eddie Jabour, designer of the iOS app KickMaps with his son, Dan. KickMaps is a real-time subway map that

offers an alternative to the paper map and perhaps even Google Maps. Unlike paper and most electronic maps, KickMaps updates instantaneously removing the need for special maps on nights a weekends. The panel also included three others with various approaches to subway maps. Sarah M. Kaufman from the NYU Rudin Center for Transportation spoke briefly about the transfer of open transit data from the MTA to app developers. Joe Brennan is the creator of one of the first digital maps of the New York subway system and shared some of his new designs. Neysa Pranger, from the firm Intersection, presented her company’s work on the “On the Go” map kiosks found in some subway stations. Oree Livni (CE '19), a fan of maps and city planning, thought that the event “represented the dichotomy that is Cooper Union” because subway maps are the “intersection of science and art.”

The event was a bit lengthy, lasting almost three hours. The presentations began late and ran longer than expected, which left little time for the panel discussion and audience questions. Despite the technical difficulties, the event was undoubtedly interesting and time well spent for those who truly enjoy cartography.

NEW DORMS OPEN FORUM

RUCHI PATEL (ChE '18)

On Sunday, October 18, Director of Housing David Robbins hosted an open forum for Cooper Union students residing at 200 East 6th Street to discuss the 2015-2016 agreement with Marymount regarding Cooper Union’s occupancy of four floors of the building: floors 7-10. Robbins sought to receive feedback from the residents regarding their living experiences and to hear concerns that could be realistically addressed by the building management in the near future.

Many expressed dissatisfaction with the space, claiming that they were not getting enough for their money. Double rooms at the new dorms range from 120 to 140 sq. ft., while those at 29 Third Avenue are more consistent and average 156 sq. ft. Kitchens are squeezed into corridors, while bathrooms are luxuriously large for city standards. When it comes to costs, old dorm residents pay \$11,560 per year for a double room and \$12,600 for a single room, whereas new dorm residents pay \$15,500 for a double and no option for a single room.

Some suggested that building management install shelves on the walls to offer more communal storage, especially near

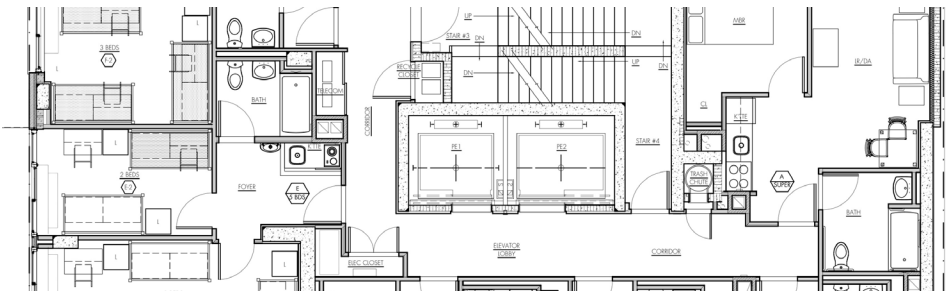
the kitchen area or in the bathroom, which has more than enough space for shelves that do not get in the way of basic bathroom use. Many complained about the fridge space, since the suites came with mini-fridges. Some complained about fridge even after having a mini-fridge and a three-fourths fridge installed in their room as Marymount’s response to fridge complaints. Floor 7 residents were especially troubled by the terrace area, which not only takes up living space that is otherwise available on other floors, but is also a nuisance when Marymount hosts events that are loud and interfere with busy and always-studying Cooper students. A suggestion made was to avoid leasing Floor 7 in future dealings with Marymount Manhattan.

But the new building did not receive only criticism. Catherine Wolfe (CE '17), from Washington state, expressed her preference for the Marymount dorms as a convenient option for students not originally from the tri-state area. For her, finding an apartment during the summer was a hassle, and not worth the effort. The dorms are, in contrast, ready for move-in at the start of the school

year. In fact, when Robbins asked if the agreement with Marymount should be continued for the 2016-2017 academic year, residents gave almost unanimous support, as long as future residents are shown the building prior to signing the lease. This was not possible this year due to ongoing construction of the building up until move-in day.

Robbins did mention that the old dorm could not accommodate the interest in housing from the freshman class this year, and that is unlikely to change next year. By leasing out floors of the building, Robbins is pressured to fill the floors with students, but he would rather have the floors as an option for first-year students than to deny housing to those who are not yet ready for off-campus housing or are unable to apartment-hunt prior to the academic year.

Whether the Marymount Manhattan building should be offered as an option to Cooper students next year is still in discussion and will depend largely on student input. ♦



THE PUTNAM COMPETITION

ROBERT GODKIN (ChE '18) | DANIEL GALPERIN (ChE '18)

The Putnam Mathematical Competition, founded in 1927 by Elizabeth Lowell Putnam in memory of her husband William Lowell Putnam, is considered one of the most prestigious mathematics competitions in the world.

Held every December, the competition consists of twelve problems of varying difficulty, with problems typically requiring creative, well-structured and well-defined solutions. Historically, the competition has had a special place at Cooper, with several of our professors having taken the exam as undergraduate students.

This semester, there have been meetings and study sessions to prepare for the upcoming 2015 exam. The preparation has largely been coordinated by Professor Smyth with the help of Professor Mintchev, along with several upperclassmen who have more recent experience with test questions and solving strategies.

Because questions can be confusing and challenging, Professor Smyth says that students should be proud of getting “a single point” on the exam. The average score is a 0 or a 1, out of a total of 120 points, showing that getting even a single question correct proves to be ever so difficult. Professor Smyth explains, “the graders are allowed to give partial credit out of 10 points, but they really only use the numbers 0, 1, 9 and 10, so it’s possible to get three quarters through a problem and only receive one point of credit.”

In the past, only one Cooper Union team has placed 3rd (1951), with Peter John Redmond ('51) being named a Putnam fellow after placing in the top 5 scores in that year. Some of the students that are preparing for the exam say they take the exam to become more confident in both their mathematics, and their test-taking abilities. Qing Xu (ME '18) says that “confidence is really important — especially in

exams; being able to not freak out when a hard problem is encountered will help in scoring [highly].”

Normally, close to 10-20 Cooper Union students will register to take the exam, however this year Professor Smyth noted, “there is a larger interest from younger students, first year students particularly.” He also mentioned that there are always a few ‘no-shows’ every year, however those that do take the exam are in for an all-day ordeal. The exam is given in 2 parts, each part lasting 3 hours with a 2-hour break in the middle, during which the students are treated to lunch with the professors.

Some of the highest scores to come from Cooper in recent years have been in the 20’s and 30’s range, which is certainly a feat worth admiring. On behalf of The Pioneer, we wish the students taking the exam in December the best of luck. Break a leg! ♦

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE BSE MAJOR

KAVYA UDUPA (BSE ‘19)

During the first couple of weeks of this year, the most common questions I, along with the entire freshmen class, received were “what’s your name?” and “what’s your major?” Students and professors alike were confused when I responded with my name followed by “General Engineering.” After all, General Engineering isn’t one of the four conventional engineering programs offered at Cooper. And I am being completely honest when I say that, until a couple days ago, I myself was pretty confused about what being the General Engineering major was.

The General Engineering program, or Bachelor of Science in Engineering (BSE), was created for students who want an education in engineering but plan to specialize in a non-engineering field, like mathematics, chemistry, finance or medicine. A lot of students confuse the BSE major with the famed “undecided major.” This is incorrect. In truth, the BSE major should be thought of as a major that students choose because what they want to study is not something Cooper currently offers. If a student desires to leave the BSE program, he or she would have to transfer into another department through the same process followed by students from any of the four traditional engineering majors.

Each BSE student is assigned an advisor based on the field the student wants to pursue. This advisor is part of a committee of professors, one from each of the four traditional engineering majors, who work to help the student plan his or her four years at Cooper. According to the Office of Admissions, for the class of 2019, 182 students applied to the BSE program, 30 were admitted, and 8 enrolled in the fall. But, if one were to look at the class of 2018, one would see that no BSE students were admitted.

About four or five years ago, the full time engineering faculty decided to dissolve the BSE program—making the BSE graduates of 2015 the last group of such students. According to Professor Ruben Savizky, former BSE advisor, the fact that Cooper’s BSE program was not accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) combined with the fact that it was not possible for

students who received a BSE degree to stay at Cooper and get a Master’s degree all contributed to the termination of the program.

Like with any other major, there is a spectrum of success for the BSE major. Some, according to Acting Dean Richard Stock, have “grabbed the ball and ran with it” whereas others “barely managed to get out with a degree.” As a result, many consider the program almost as a “dumping ground” for students who didn’t fit into the traditional curriculum or weren’t academically strong. Such students would take a smattering of courses and graduate, but were unable to find a job upon graduating as they weren’t trained in one specific field. According to Stock, the main problem with the BSE program is that students “learn about all the crazy and great stuff in engineering but don’t learn how to actually do it – it’s like the documentaries on Channel 13, you come away saying ‘wow that’s really terrific’ and you talk about it but you are unable to actually do it.” When asked to explain what he thinks are the flaws of the BSE program, Savizky responded, “In theory, it sounded great. You had all this flexibility to take whatever courses you wanted and the ability to combine engineering with a field of your choice. But, in practice, that’s not what really happened.” Students would try to take courses of their choice, but would wind up having conflicts with course schedules or would not meet the prerequisites. And by the time they met the prerequisites, they could have easily gotten a degree in one of the traditional majors.

So, why was the program brought back? According to Dean Stock, former engineering Dean Teresa Dahlberg brought up the idea of reinstating the program in a faculty meeting and stated that if the faculty were not in favor, it would not be brought back. On the one hand, faculty members felt that students are better off enrolling in one of the four traditional degrees because there is room for learning about fields outside of engineering in the form of electives and a minor. On the other hand, it was felt that if done properly, the BSE program could be of aid to students. As the staff was divided over the idea of bringing it back, an official decision was never made—until last year.

The admissions for the class of 2019 was controversial because a number of students were accepted to the Computer Science program, a separate attempt at creating a flagship program in a new design school spearheaded by former Dean Dahlberg—all without faculty approval. When the CS program ultimately failed to launch, the 31 students who had accepted placement in the CS program were instead offered admission in the four existing engineering majors or to the interdisciplinary BSE program that was quietly reinstated—once again, without faculty approval. Among all the other allegations raised over the CS program, this particular bait-and-switch of admitted students was especially egregious. Moreover, it was a matter of concern for the Attorney General, as evidenced by the cross petition in early September. This all contributes to the confusion associated with the revival of the BSE degree and there haven’t been any attempts to clarify it.

Will the program be continued in the foreseeable future? As of now, nothing is certain. Since there are students currently enrolled in the BSE program, it would have to be sustained at least until 2019. But, there is no certainty that the class of 2020 will even be offered the chance to apply to the General Engineering program. And, like Professor Savizky said, if the dean had the power to bring the program back without faculty approval, then subsequent deans can “activate or inactivate the program as they see fit.”

I don’t know if I, myself, am a believer in the program. On paper, it seems perfect—the idea that a student can receive an engineering education while pursuing a non-engineering field. But, there is a reason why the BSE program is offered in such a small number of institutions nationwide. To succeed as a BSE major requires having a legitimate plan for a student’s four years at Cooper which can seem, and is, daunting to a freshman. To this day, I still receive questions about the BSE major and though there is much confusion associated with the program, it is safe to say that ultimately, the program is designed to aid those who feel like they are unable to pursue an education in the four traditional majors and that if sought out carefully, can be one of the greatest assets to an individual’s career. ♦

NIXON & A NEW BOOK: TOPICS OF THE GREAT HALL

MATTHEW GRATTAN (ChE ‘19)

I don’t always go out on a Wednesday night but when I do, I go see a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist chat with an expert on the Watergate scandal. After a brief introduction by Acting President Bill Mea, Bob Woodward and Timothy Naftali took the stage of the Great Hall on October 14. Woodward—now an associate editor at the Washington Post—covered Watergate with Carl Bernstein for the Post. Naftali directed the Richard Nixon Library and Museum and is now a historian at nearby NYU.

The discussion and Q&A session promoted Woodward’s eighteenth book, *The Last of the President’s Men*, which detailed the story of Alex Butterfield. Butterfield, a close aide of President Nixon, is known for exposing Nixon’s taping system to the US Senate. For those (like me) who were hardly a thought in their parents’ minds when Watergate was breaking news, Woodward and Naftali brought to light a new dimension of Nixon seldom mentioned in history class.

To produce *The Last of the President’s Men*, Woodward worked with Butterfield and around 20 boxes of presidential documents in Butterfield’s possession. Butterfield’s proximity to Nixon allowed him access to daily presidential memos and even the infamous taping system in the Oval Office. Included in these documents was a January

1972 memo from Nixon to national security adviser Henry Kissinger claiming that the past 10 years of air superiority in South East Asia achieved “zilch.” The memo came a day after Nixon publicly stated that such air power was “very, very effective” yet before massive bombing campaigns later that year.

Woodward and Naftali observed that perhaps politics drove the Vietnam policy more than military strategy, especially considering Nixon’s campaign for reelection in 1972. In retrospect, Watergate tainted one of Nixon’s many ploys to vie for a second term. With regards to the upcoming 2016 Presidential Election, Woodward commented that the “moral capacity” of each candidate must be investigated. He added that part of the President’s job is get the country to the “next stage of good.”

Butterfield’s recounts included some odd stories such as a memo from Nixon to Butterfield, which ordered something to be done about the “infestation” of Kennedy pictures in the West Wing. The memo’s subject line referred to the “sanitization” of the executive office. Naftali was quick with witty remarks, offering welcome contrast to Nixon’s near vindictive personality. Woodward and Naftali both pondered why good people worked for Nixon in spite of Nixon’s almost illegal actions. Naftali

mused that “it is sometimes helpful to think of the inner circle of Nixon aides as abused children.” The event was open to the public but the audience included a small contingent of Cooper students and faculty. Humanities Prof. Sayres commented that the event was “a good lesson for the audience and young people” because it showed that “investigation means investigation.”

One topic that Prof. Sayres thought could have been discussed further was Nixon’s positive international image in comparison to his domestic one. Abroad, Nixon is perhaps better known for being the first US President to visit the People’s Republic of China and furthering the détente between the US and the USSR. Woodward’s new book offers a more complete picture of Nixon’s presidency through the personal accounts and presidential documents provided by Butterfield. According to Naftali, Butterfield was by no means a “footnote” in the history of Nixon’s presidency.

Over 40 years have passed since President Nixon’s time in office, yet details about the only American president to resign are still being uncovered. By now history is fairly sure of the “who,” “what,” and “when,” but the true motives behind the decisions that Nixon and other presidents have made can only be guessed.

ZETA PSI HALLOWEEN PARTY

GIOVANNI SANCHEZ (ME ‘18) | PHOTOS BY SAGE GU (CE ‘19)



To celebrate Halloween this past week and blow off steam from the horrible midterms we all endured, Cooper Union had the club go up, on a Tuesday. At this year’s Zeta Psi annual Halloween party, which was, yes, on a Tuesday, Cooper Union students threw down at the well-known nightclub, Webster Hall. I was glad to see that there were so many of you (a total attendance of roughly 90-100 people), despite the fact that it was a regular weekday and we all had stuff to do. While I was there I saw vampires, minions, angels, devils, koalas with trees, civil engineers, a wolverine and a lot of Taylor Swift’s bad blood girls. However, the award for best costume went to Nish Patel (CE ‘16) because of the aura of success he carried around with him as Donald Trump (Make America Great Again!™). The music was extra hype thanks to Cooper’s very own DJ DGav who kept everyone going until Webster Hall could no longer handle the fun, and Zeta Psi could no longer handle the cost. ♦



FACES OF COOPER: ALEXANDER TOCHILOVSKY

BRENDA SO (EE '18)



Photo by Kelsey Mitchell (Art '18)

The Pioneer sat down with Professor Alexander Tochilovsky, known to many students simply as Sasha, about his experience as a former Cooper student and his advice for students attending Cooper Union today.

What can you tell us about you?

I was born in Odessa, Soviet Union. When I left in 1989, it was still Soviet Union, so technically right now it is Ukraine. I was 12 when I left. And then I grew up in Brooklyn, went to high school in Murrow. And then got to Cooper in 1996 and graduated in 2000.

Tell us about your education and professional background.

I got my BFA at Cooper. I focused on design and photography, but mostly on design. I then worked for the Design Center in Cooper, which does most of the design work for the school. I also do a lot of work for pro-bono and non-profit clients out there. Once I graduated from Cooper Union in 2000, I continued to work in the Design Center for a few years and then went got my Master’s degree from Cranbrook Academy of Arts in Michigan. Within a year I came back to New York, I was asked to teach a course here in Cooper. I have been teaching in Cooper since 2007. And then about four, five years ago, a position at the Herb Lubalin Study Center of Design and Typography opened up. I applied and was selected to be the curator.

What classes do you teach at Cooper?

I teach two undergraduate courses: two-dimensional design, which is part of the foundation year, and typography, which is mostly geared towards sophomores in second semester and juniors. It is a co-requisite for advanced design courses.

When did you learn about the Cooper Union?

I think a lot of people have had similar experience. Cooper is such a small school with an amazing reputation that works through organic channels from people to people. I learnt about it from one of my high school teachers. During the summer between 11th and 12th grade, I got a flyer for Cooper Union’s Summer Outreach program for high school students, which sounded pretty interesting. In the first day of the program, Cooper just blew me away. It was a really magical moment. It was a great experience, just being part of the high school program, being part of the fabric of the Cooper Union. I applied to Cooper in 12th grade. I didn’t think I had a big shot — I knew how competitive it was. But I was really hoping that I could get to be here and I was fortunate enough to be admitted.

Can you talk about your role here as a professor and a curator?

I teach typography in the School of Art. Typography is fundamental to graphic

design. Without a good sense of typography, graphic design is very difficult to do well. What I try to do is to teach the mechanics of typography, on how to make good decisions when choosing types. Everything in design is communication, and communication happens predominantly through language. In a word, typography is the shaping of language.

What I try to do is make sure that students are considering things they weren’t previously aware of. The collection here has so many examples of really good typography, and very often I will bring work to class to show examples. Once in a while I would also have session in the Lubalin Center. Any time the Lubalin Center is open, Cooper students can come in and use the resources. This is a collection of graphic design with all sorts of media. Design is relevant to pretty much every industry, and so we have examples of a lot of material that covers different centuries, industries and cultures. For people who are interested in humanities and architecture, there are a lot of things here that are of potential use and potential interest.

I am trying to see how we could find ways to engage the other schools. We’ve been working with the architecture school for a bit, to try to get students there to be aware of what we have and see if it is useful. We are also trying to find ways that it might be interesting and relevant to the engineering department

and humanities department.

How did you interest in typography arise?

My interest in graphic design came from being in Cooper, specifically in the Lubalin Center. One year, I helped with the end of year show installation and part of that happened in the Lubalin Center. After the installation, I asked if there was a possibility for me to work during summer, and they said yes. However, I had just been through the foundational course, and design is something you start in sophomore year. I had no connection to design yet, except for being in the Lubalin Center and accessing this amazing design work, but something clicked.

I was really interested by the books and magazines that I kept seeing and their sensitivity and composition really spoke to me and made me want to do design. I worked in the Lubalin Center for two years. It really changed my perspective of graphic design. And that’s something I do as a curator here, trying to help students make this connection. There is so much to learn from this material and it really is a way to actualize design history. Design pieces have a timeline, of the people working on it, their contributions to the piece, and so on. There’s something really amazing about holding the actual object you’re studying. And we have so many of these famous pieces of graphic design. You can see what size they are, the paper they’re printed on, every decision that the designer made. There’s a huge paradigm shift when you can see that.

What do you love most about your job?

I love my job. It’s really nice to be surrounded by this stuff. It’s really inspirational. I like knowing more about the pieces we have in the collection. If I find out more information, it means that other people would find out more information. Design is very rarely a one-person task. Twenty or thirty years ago, there were

teams of people involved in making up the work, and it’s always very hard to know exactly who contributed. The famous names are the ones that people know, but there’s always a few other people involved. I enjoy identifying some of those people that were involved. And many of them were Cooper graduates and that’s a really great thing for me to find. That’s a very inspirational thing for me and it keeps me going.

“I think it’s important to look at history. As a designer, you’re looking forward and going forward, you’re going to make new work.”

Any advice to give to Cooper students, especially those who want to go into design?

A lot of times there’s a drive to make something different, and that’s simply inevitable. It’s a very natural feeling. I remember having the exact same thoughts when I was graduating from school.

When you look forward, I think it’s important to also realize you need to look back. There’s a less useful way of looking back by trying to copy or mimic things — that’s not what I’m recommending. Instead, there’s a more nuanced way of looking back, to find inspiration in how people make decisions. A lot of the Cooper graduates who changed the design field made those impacts due to a certain mindset that was imbibed here at Cooper. That’s the way that this institution is different from other institutions. It made them go about their craft in a slightly different

way and they made a name for themselves. There’s a lot to be learned from those people, especially here at Cooper.

It’s not only looking at work for the aesthetics but also researching what they did and how they did it. For instance, Herb Lubalin did a lot of work for clients who did not have any money. But he also maintained creative control over those projects. A lot of ethical choices he made are still really relevant and designers could start looking for those moments to help them make their career stronger. It’s not just about the money. It’s about the ethics and doing good work and making sure there’s healthy balance.

You mentioned that some designers’ efforts are not fully acknowledged after creating their pieces. Do you have any advice for students to avoid falling in this trap?

It has a lot to do with the politics in the design studio. Today, many design studios have changed and adapted - a good example is Pintagram. They publish a lot of the work online on their website and they credit everyone who is involved. If that culture is not part of that company, then it gets a little tricky.

With the internet, designers have their own personal website and are able to show their own work. Information dissemination is much more democratic than it used to be.

What are your hobbies?

I played soccer since childhood and I actually played for the Cooper soccer team all four years, and I pretty much stay active and I play soccer every week.

The other thing I am really interested in is music. I spend a lot of time collecting records, seeking out stuff. I don’t go to shows as much as I used to, but it’s definitely a big part for me since it helps me work. I cook a lot too, regardless whether or not it’s a hobby. ♦

ASK RUCHI

RUCHI PATEL (ChE '18)

How do I survive Cooper and not gain the freshman 50?! Frankie’s and Two Bros are plotting against me because at this rate, if I fail out, I can be a plus size model right now. What should I do?

Nothing! You have to do nothing! It’s a matter of time before you start studying for Wolf’s Mechanics class and/or eat pizza so delish that 2 Bros. makes you gag. Prepare for the freshman -50.

Seeing as how I have to fight 8 other guys to even talk to a girl here, what do you suggest I do to get some action over here? I mean, boys have needs.

HAHAHAHA. Every girl at Cooper Union is, deep deep down in her being, so far down that she doesn’t even notice, a guy. You could transfer to NYU, I guess. I hear they have more girls than boys. And as far as your needs go...well, we can discuss that one-on-one.

How come I never get matched on Tinder?

If you answer YES to any of the following questions, you’ll have your answer: 1.) Do you have other not-so-attractive people on your main Tinder photo? 2.) Are you wearing a football jersey? 3.) Is your main photo a Snapchat screenshot? 4.) Is it a selfie? 5.) Is it some type of anime or cartoon? 6.) Are you wearing plaid on plaid? 7.) Is your outfit different shades of the

same color? 8.) Are you wearing a labcoat or lab goggles? 9.) Do you work in the computer center? 10.) Are you Zhengqi? 11.) Do you have braces? 12.) Is your bio more than 4 lines? 13.) Did you try to make a joke? 14.) Did you say something nerdy? 15.) Did you mention you go to Cooper Union?

I’m scared because I might kidnap Bailyn and keep him hostage as a pseudo-grandfather. I’ve

never had violent tendencies before, but I don’t know what is happening to me! He’s just too precious!!

SO. TRUE. Take advantage of him. Don’t miss a single class. Just be there, and let him make you happy. Let him brighten up your day. Let him teach you something. Always ask questions. Greet him enthusiastically. Just be really really respectful because he is truly the cutest.

On a scale of 1 to America, how free are you tonight?

As free as air and water... both of which are not free.

To have your questions answered by Ruchi, write to pioneer@cooper.edu. ♦

FACES OF COOPER: RYAN RONAN

MATTHEW GRATTAN (ChE ‘19) | PRANAV JONEJA (ME ‘18)

Professor Ronan is an adjunct professor, a Cooper Union alumnus, and a Mathematics PhD student.

The Cooper Pioneer: Where are you from?

Ryan Ronan: I grew up in Levittown, in Long Island, and went to public high school there. Then I attended Cooper Union from 2008 to 2012. Sophomore year, I tried to commute from Levittown, but it was such a long commute. So for junior and senior year I moved to Astoria, Queens, with my girlfriend. I liked that a lot better, and I still live in Astoria now, just in a different apartment.

Did your girlfriend go to Cooper as well?

No, she went to the New School, which is nearby. We met actually towards the end of high school through a mutual friend. She’s a year younger than me, and we went to different schools.

Are you still together?

Yeah, still going strong. She was a philosophy major at the New School, which shares some similarities with math—more than you might think. A lot of the early mathematicians were also philosophers, explicitly in name even. The concept of building an idea through logic and reason is the underpin of both pure math and pure philosophy. In that sense, it can be easy for math people to talk to philosophy people.

Did you ever have conversations like this one with her?

Yeah so, at one point we realized that philosophy and math people use similar language and symbols. For example, I drew the “if and only if” symbol while I was writing something, and she knew what that was right away because that is something you’d say in philosophy. In philosophy and math you want to get to the heart of the logic and reason.

What do you do in addition to adjunct teaching?

I’m a Mathematics PhD student at the CUNY Graduate Center, but my time is spread out in a bunch of different places. I have one class that meets at the Graduate Center, and I also have seminars and meetings with professors there. In addition to teaching vector calculus at Cooper Union, I teach pre-calculus at Baruch College.

Are there any differences between teaching at Baruch and Cooper?

Baruch is mostly business people, not engineering people, so it’s a different mindset. I suppose some of the jokes I’d make here probably wouldn’t fly there—and vice versa. You

have to teach towards your audience.

During your time at Cooper, what classes you enjoyed in particular?

I graduated as an electrical engineer in 2012. I didn’t change majors, but by the end of my freshman year I was starting to become more interested in math. I really liked classes with theoretical elements. In my sophomore year I took



Photo by Winter Leng (ChE ‘18)

complex variables with Professor Smyth. It was one of my favorite courses I took here. It’s nothing you would guess to see a theorem statement, then to see the proof, and then to actually use the theorem in action, I really loved that. Basically after that course I had my eyes set on math rather than EE.

Did that class influence you career-wise?

Yes, I took almost every 300 level math course offered, even if it meant I was taking over 20 credits a semester. I still got the EE major, and I feel like I know the material well. However, I also made sure to take as many math electives as I could fit into my schedule, and it was worth it.

What did you do over the summers during your four years here?

One big thing I did between my junior and senior years was a research experience for undergrads (REU) at Williams College in probability and number theory. We got two results and one of them was published. That REU was really fun.

Did that help with your grad school applications?

Yeah, that helped a lot with grad school. Especially if you’re interested in math at Cooper, then I think the REU is very important—maybe more so than at other schools. There’s no math major at Cooper, so it’s helpful to

show grad schools that you’re really serious about math and math research.

Do you have advice for graduate students?

It depends a lot on your field. I will say in some sense, being a Cooper student was more stressful than being a graduate student now. Even though there might be more work, to me it feels like less work because I only have to focus on math courses.

Where do you see yourself going from here?

Right now I’m focused mostly on finishing my PhD in analytic number theory. After that I don’t know, but I do want to stay in academia and keep teaching. In particular, I really like teaching here, and I didn’t expect to enjoy teaching as much as I do.

How would you describe your transition from “Ryan” to “Prof. Ronan?”

There wasn’t too much of a transition for me. I think as a person I’m constant, even if people are calling me different things. I don’t feel like I’ve changed too much when I’m wearing different hats.

“For a grad student, I think I play way too much Super Smash Bros.”

In a lot of math classes we talk about putting new methods in our “math toolbox.” Do you have a “math professor toolbox?”

The most literal answer is my soap box, which I use to hold my colored chalk so the chalk doesn’t break. The colored chalk is very useful as well for illustrat-

ing a point. It’s worth every penny. I also like to illustrate by example as quickly as possible, since it’s easy to get lost in the abstract.

What kind of professor do you aim to be?

I would hope that I’m thorough and methodical. I would want my notes to be a good reference so that people could study from them. I also hope that I’m easy enough to approach.

The worst thing that could happen—especially at Cooper—is thinking, “I have a question, but this is CU and I’m afraid to ask it.”

What might be some things people don’t know you do outside of Cooper?

Well, I’m a complete night owl. I really like games in general, especially card games. The more I became a math person, the more I learned that math people are into games. It’s the way our minds think. Also, for a grad student I think I play way too much Super Smash Bros.

Do you have any advice to Cooper students?

A couple things: Try very hard not to burn out early. You have to rest between studying, so if your brain is not working, take an hour or a night off. The other thing I would say is to take courses that interest you. I didn’t have to take complex variables, for example, but it ended up being the stepping-stone to where I am now.

What about student life in NY?

It seems like a lot of students like to live in Manhattan. While that’s a good idea, I really enjoy living in Astoria, Queens. The rent is cheaper and the commute is not much longer. It’s productive time to be on the subway if you use it right. Since I’m not walking, I can do other things.

MIDTERM MIXTAPE!

BRANDON QUINERE (CE ‘19)

The Pioneer *polled everyone about their favorite tracks to listen to while they prepare for midterms. Based on your submissions, we have curated the ultimate study playlist to get you through.*

1. **“Circle of Life” (from *The Lion King Soundtrack*)** With this iconic tune on rotation, your GPA will rise just like Simba rose to the top of Pride Rock to lead the animal kingdom.

2. **David Bowie - “Life on Mars?”** Perhaps David Bowie’s critique of pop culture and the media will motivate you to close out of that Netflix tab and finally get crackin’ on those study guides.

3. **Bonobo - “Cirrus”** The bells on this track were basically made for timing your page turns perfectly to the beat.

4. **Jeremih - “Birthday Sex”** If you replace every mention of a girl in this song with a textbook, then you have Jeremih’s ultimate anthem to figuratively fornicating the very concept of knowledge itself.

5. **Britney Spears - “I’m a Slave 4 U”** The pop princess’ ode to fully understanding the exam material: “Get it get it, get it get it (WHOOOA) / Get it get it, get it get it (WHOOOOOA)”

6. **Gwen Stefani - “Hollaback Girl”** With this song ready on the queue, that “B-A-N-A-N-A-S” hook won’t be the only thing that’ll be stuck in your head! (Hint: it’s the proofs you need to remember for the exam.)

7. **Childish Gambino - “IV. Sweatpants”** Nothing pumps up a ruffled college student more than a good old-fashioned banger. This one definitely does the trick.

8. **Frank Ocean - “Pyramids”** This song is essentially made up of at least three different songs, leaving you with enough different soundscapes to surely fit your focus.

9. **Nas featuring Lauryn Hill - “If I Ruled the World (Imagine That)”** That moment when you finally understand that one theorem you stared at in confusion for hours? Let this collab be the background music for that cathartic moment.

10. **St. Vincent - “Strange Mercy”** In all honesty, Annie Clark’s voice alone is the ideal soundtrack for reviewing all those damn problem sets.

11. **Radiohead - “Everything in Its Right Place”** “Yesterday I woke up sucking a lemon,” Thom Yorke sings on this Kid A classic. But tomorrow, you’ll wake up ready to fill in those blue books!

12. **Smash Mouth - “All Star”** We should all aspire to be the sharpest tools in our respective sheds. Aspire for that goal with this quintessential jam.

13. **Lil B - “Im Paris Hilton”** Who better than the Based God himself to bless you during these hectic weeks?

14. **twenty one pilots - “Stressed Out”** If you feel those long hours studying at the library didn’t really do you any good, at least you have a good beat to shamefully walk back to your dorm to.

15. **Cole Porter - “Anything Goes”** It’s the day of the exam and you’re still cramming? This classic jazz standard is the definitive IDGAF anthem.

Check out a Spotify playlist of these songs at goo.gl/TCnLyg

Are there any interesting stories from your days at Cooper?

So my sophomore year around finals time a new Pokémon game came out, the one bundled with a pedometer. In a break between classes, there was a crowd of about 15 EE’s crowded around this pedometer trying to figure out how it works, how to

get as many steps onto it as possible, and basically trying to reverse-engineer this pedometer all to get a few extra level points for the Pokémon. I remember that visual summing up a lot of the things I like about Cooper, like the enthusiasm of everyone involved. ♦





WILD ABOUT BORING THINGS

Vanessa Ritz (Art '18)

I have realized that I am falling in love with microwaves. This is one of those unexpected things in life. I used to believe that microwaves were deadly inventions that I would never use. I was that person that would spend an hour convincing you that the radiation coming off of microwaves is basically killing humanity. There is always that person. Bitches.

I had this image of microwaves being household death rays. Just an easy way out. I don't trust things that are too easy. I feel like this has a lot to do with childhood. I never liked cartoons or kid shows but I really liked Emeril. For those of you who don't know, I'm talking about Emeril Lagasse. For obvious reasons there was no plush toy, so I had the apron. Emeril had a cooking show that I became hooked on. It's called Emeril Live and it came on Food Network.

Note: At the ripe age of eight, I got tickets to see the show live and I met Emeril. He held my hand and gave me a chipwich. You can bet I still have that wrapper.

This slight obsession led to many more cooking show addictions and I got a false idea of how food is made and microwaves really weren't how they did things. This explains why I didn't realize how useful they were sooner, but it only justifies some of my ignorance. The rest is on me.

It's kind of crazy that I deemed microwaves impractical because they are so practical. They embody practicality. I aspire to be as practical as a microwave is. It's the little things like its speedy sweet-potato-cooking and ability to steam all vegetables, even the tough ones such as broccoli. Microwaves are so much more than a way to heat up food. You can use microwaves to completely cook raw food and make dinner in less than ten minutes. Efficiency at its finest. Microwaves.