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Published by the Boston University College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences

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Boston University Photography, unless otherwise noted

Produced by Boston University Creative Services

Printed on paper containing post-consumer recycled material.

WRITE TO US
We welcome your letters, which will be edited for clarity and length for this publication. Letters will appear in full online on the Arts & Sciences website at www.bu.edu/cas/magazine. We also welcome your story ideas. Please write to the Editor, arts@bc.edu, Boston University, 800 Commonwealth Avenue, Room 145, Boston, MA 02215, or e-mail KeithJoanne@bu.edu. Please include your name, address, and BU school(s) and class year(s).

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from the dean

Oh, the places they go!

As I travel around the country meeting CAS alumni, I am often struck by what fascinating and diverse paths they take. So often when I ask them how they journeyed from their undergraduate days to their current lives in their astounding range of different careers and situations, they smile and say, “Well, that’s an interesting story.” And it usually is interesting because as liberal arts and sciences alumni, they have had a college experience that didn’t point them narrowly to one particular job or career. It was designed to be a platform from which they could launch their lives and careers in almost any direction.

In this issue we share some of those interesting stories. You will meet the co-creator of MassSail, an educational program that promotes awareness and stewardship of our coastal waters; an avalanche expert who founded a safety program in Europe on how to ski safely “off-piste” (off-trail); and the international programs director for the nonprofit Bikes Not Bombs, which distributes thousands of bicycles to low-income people around the world as a means of empowerment and environmental stewardship. You will meet a successful entrepreneur who has specialized in fascinating and influential technology projects, and learn about the owner of a leading New York art gallery.

Parents of prospective students sometimes ask whether a liberal arts and sciences education is the best path for their child. My answer is easy. Today more than ever, employers are looking for applicants with a broad base of knowledge and superior critical thinking, writing, and analytical skills, as well as a depth of understanding in a particular field. We also can’t know exactly what world our entering Class of 2014 will encounter ten, twenty, or thirty years after graduation. What will the economy look like? What jobs will be the most interesting, what will be the new opportunities, what situations will they face? The liberal arts and sciences degree provides the foundation for continued learning and development that enables our graduates to find success in those unknown tomorrows.

Our students go to amazing places even while still in school, and they move quickly when they know they can make a difference. See the stories of Jeff Stein (CAS’11), who traveled to Haiti to do disaster relief work, at www.bu.edu/cas/magazine/spring10/Haiti, and of the graduate students in Geography & Environment who quickly assembled much-needed maps of the Haitian disaster, on page 2. I recommend the new International Programs website (www.bu.edu/abroad/), where you can see videos of our students in BU study abroad locations all over the world.

continued on page 5
It took under a minute for a 7.0 earthquake to devastate Haiti’s capital of Port-au-Prince, wiping out hundreds of thousands of lives, destroying countless homes and roads and leaving millions homeless—under a minute to alter the landscape forever. Rebuilding the country will take years, and BU’s Center for Remote Sensing has stepped in to help, not with doctors or supplies, but with maps.

Center professors and graduate students had worked on a sustainable redevelopment plan for the island nation for much of 2009. During that year, the interdisciplinary team collected reams of data on Haitian topography and established ties with local officials. When disaster struck on January 12 and older maps of Haiti were rendered useless, the team spent three days nonstop amassing geographic data of the altered terrain and creating maps from that information to then send to Haiti. The maps, critical to damage-appraisal efforts in Port-au-Prince, also continue to play a role in rebuilding efforts.

The center has investigated and refined remote sensing techniques for more than 20 years, making it the perfect place to go for compiling data to aid Haiti. Creating maps is just one aspect of what remote sensing can do. At a fundamental level, remote sensing is a method of information collection by means of devices that are not in contact with the object being studied. BU’s center uses satellite images combined with aerial and ground-level sensors to accrue data that they can then utilize in many different ways, from counting the number of people at President Barack Obama’s inauguration to studying the effects of climate change over time.

Professor of Geography & Environment Curtis Woodcock, who helped establish the center at the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences in 1985, says the wider world is more aware of remote sensing now than it was 25 years ago. “Google Earth sort of overnight transformed peoples’ understanding of what you can see and do and use from space, in terms of studying the Earth,” he says. “At the University, we have a wider variety of courses that use remote sensing now, and our students come out much better trained in remote sensing than they did back in the early days of the center.” He sees the center as a place to engage in both pure scientific research and also where students can investigate solutions to looming problems.

Currently, one of the center’s main initiatives, says Director of the Center Farouk El-Baz, is using satellite images of traditionally well-developed areas to locate groundwater, which he and his research team have done in Egypt and other countries. A former NASA scientist, El-Baz has teamed up with the United Nations in the “1,001 Wells for Darfur” initiative to search for groundwater in the war-ravaged area of Sudan. He says that water shortage will be the major crisis of the 21st century and water itself will be a “precious commodity” because more countries are becoming economically well-developed—as standards of living increase, so too does water consumption.

The center’s investigations will be crucial to finding more water and solving this worldwide problem. El-Baz sees the center’s research as something to be shared with the world—with countries like Haiti—and asserts that scientific knowledge should be used to break cultural barriers. For his commitment to international cooperation in science and technology among other contributions, he was recently honored with an appointment to the Board of Directors of the U.S. Civilian Research & Development Foundation, a nonprofit that sponsors global scientific collaboration. He says, “There is no question that the language of science is international and the benefit from scientific knowledge is international. Scientific research can help in international understanding.” By working with and helping other countries like Haiti, the center is one piece of a worldwide educational community.—Rachel Johnson

International Scope

The Center for Remote Sensing Studies the Planet and Changes the World.

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A People’s Professor

Howard Zinn, 87, College of Arts & Sciences Professor Emeritus of Political Science, author, historian, and political activist, died on January 27, 2010.

“The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

—Howard Zinn, The Optimism of Uncertainty

Sizing Up Carbon Emissions

BU Researchers Get Grant to Study Area’s Footprint

Calculating your carbon footprint online involves nothing more than a couple of mouse clicks. Measuring the carbon footprint of a city? That takes more detective work.

Boston University researchers are on the case. Nathan Phillips, an associate professor of geography and environment and director of the Center for Energy & Environmental Studies, and his colleagues received a $300,000 grant in September from the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service to study the flow of carbon in and out of Boston. Beyond learning how to quantify and predict carbon levels, they want to inform policy decisions on carbon emissions and urban sustainability.

Taking baby steps first, with a focus on measuring carbon activity above Commonwealth Avenue, Phillips and his team must prove over the next two years that their “urban metabolism” project has legs.

“I plan it to time trials for the Olympics,” Phillips says. Should his team make the cut, the center could receive money to expand research from its BU hub to all of Boston.

The researchers want to explore all aspects of carbon exchange, from measuring breath and photosynthesis to measuring emissions and energy consumption. Doing so requires gadgets. On the fourth floor of 675 Commonwealth Avenue, the whirring sound of a pump fills the room. A clear tube snakes from one end, out a window, and up to the roof. Another tube leads to something called a Picarro analyzer, which looks like a cable box on steroids. A graph on a nearby computer screen displays a wave of scribbles.

“The Picarro measures carbon dioxide; its signature suggests where it could be coming from—car exhaust, for example, or simply human breath. The $60,000 machine on loan from the U.S. Forest Service, takes readings every seven seconds and plots them on a graph. One weekday morning, it read at 404 parts per million, slightly above the global average of 385 parts per million, Phillips says.

Another Picarro, also a Forest Service loan, is located at Harvard Forest, in Petersham, Massachusetts, to see how carbon dioxide levels vary from urban to rural areas.

Phillips is finding that carbon dioxide levels are higher during weekdays and peak around high commuting hours. Not surprisingly, readings at Harvard Forest are consistently lower than those at BU.

“It’s like a home energy audit, but we’re doing it on a much larger scale,” Phillips says.

One goal is to create a high-resolution map of Boston. Red spots would indicate carbon emission zones, Phillips explains, and green spots would reveal carbon uptake zones. Color intensity might show ongoing carbon hot spots. The graphic could predict how human activity or policy changes affect carbon concentrations. Boston officials have pledged to reduce carbon emissions to 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and to increase tree canopy cover from 29 percent to 35 percent by 2030; trees reduce carbon and add oxygen.
Though smaller than the state of Nevada, Ecuador is among the most ecologically diverse countries in the world. Within its borders lie portions of untouched Amazonian rainforest, snow-capped peaks and lush valleys of the Andes, coastal swamps, white sand beaches—and the Galápagos Islands, the world’s most famous nature reserve.

“From an ecological point of view, Ecuador is an extraordinary place,” says Professor Thomas Kunz, director of the Arts & Sciences Center for Ecology & Conservation Biology, who chose the country for the semester-long study abroad program he began developing in the early 1990s. Launched in 1996, the BU Tropical Ecology Program (TEP) has since become extremely popular—many biology students say that the highly competitive program strongly influenced their decision to attend BU.

Twice a year, TEP gives approximately 15 high-achieving students an opportunity to perfect their Spanish and explore the biodiversity of Ecuador while earning 18 credits through Boston University and its partner institution, the Universidad San Francisco de Quito. The highlights of each semester are a visit to the Tiputini Biodiversity Station—with its canopy tower providing 360-degree views of acres of pristine Amazonian rainforest—and a weeklong expedition to the Galápagos, the islands made famous by Charles Darwin and still prized for their extraordinary number of endemic species that exist nowhere else in the world.

Students in the Tropical Ecology Program discover the unique flora and fauna of the Galápagos—biology’s most famous archipelago.

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Blue-footed boobies engage in elaborate courtship displays that result in seasonal pair bonding. The male begins his display by, of course, flaunting his brilliant blue feet. Although the sexes are quite similar looking among all booby species, certain details can be used to distinguish them. For example, males are smaller than females and have more yellow in their irises.

WHERE THE BLUE-FOOTED BOOBIES DANCE

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR KELLY SWING, THE ON-SITE DIRECTOR FOR THE TROPICAL ECOLOGY PROGRAM, OFFERS A GUIDED TOUR OF THE GALÁPAGOS AND A SMALL TASTE OF THE ECOLOGICAL INSIGHTS HE SHARES WITH STUDENTS WHO VENTURE THERE.

By Corinne Steinbrener
Due to a diet that consists entirely of seaweed, marine iguanas ingest large amounts of salt and are presented with special challenges for osmoregulation—controlling levels of water and mineral salts in the body. A gland connected to the iguanas’ nostrils allows them to “sneeze” out extra salt. Most marine iguanas are rather plain and dark in coloration, but the ones on the island of Española are truly exceptional.

Amid the waves, the marine iguanas of the Galápagos—the only seagoing lizards in the world—show off their great swimming skills, but on land they are so inarticulate that visitors may have to make special efforts to avoid stepping on them.

The swallow-tailed gull is the only fully nocturnal gull in the world and one of the most beautiful of all the seabirds.

Among the waves, the marine iguanas of the Galápagos—the only seagoing lizards in the world—show off their great swimming skills, but on land they are so inarticulate that visitors may have to make special efforts to avoid stepping on them.

While sea lion mothers go to sea to feed, their pups are left on beaches in a crèche—a sea lion day care of sorts, where adult care for the young communally—and the pups have lots of chances to play in the sand.

Everyone who visits the “Enchantadas”—enchanted isles—has to take home memories of the wildlife. One of the most important roles of the Darwin Station is the conservation of giant tortoises through management in the wild, combined with an extensive captive breeding program.

The Charles Darwin Research Station works closely with the Galápagos National Park Service to protect the islands and their wildlife. One of the most important roles of the Darwin Station is the conservation of giant tortoises through management in the wild, combined with an extensive captive breeding program.

Four years ago, Jaclyn Aliperti (CAS’10) chose Boston University because it offered her a chance to get off Long Island and out of New York. She had no idea how far out she’d eventually go.

This spring, Aliperti temporarily traded Amazonian bats for African baboons. Thanks to a program offered by The School for Field Studies—an environmental education institute founded by BU Trustee Emerita Terry Andreas (COM’64) and accredited through BU—she’s been in southern Africa taking lessons in Swahili and studying the wildlife management methods used in Kenya and neighboring Tanzania. She’s also conducting field research that may benefit wildlife managers in the region. “This land is a natural migratory path for a lot of wild animals—elephants and giraffes and so forth—but at the same time, the locals want to use the land for tourism and agriculture,” she says. “They’re trying to find a proper balance, and I’m really looking forward to helping them.”

Aliperti hasn’t yet decided what she’ll do between her BU graduation and her eventual enrollment in graduate school. Fieldwork with Professor Thomas Kunz, CAS’s resident bat expert? A job in a biodiversity station back in Ecuador? A stint as a national park ranger in the western United States? They’re all appealing, and they’re all strong possibilities. When she enrolled at BU, Aliperti thought she wanted to become a veterinarian, but her studies have broadened her interests beyond dogs and cats, she says. “I’ve figured out so much about myself—and half of that is just that I’ve realized I want to explore everything.”

“Visiting the Galápagos, she says, was a magical experience. “The Galápagos is like a Mecca for biology students. To see a blue-footed booby lift up his blue foot and start a mating dance—it sounds corny, but it’s a dream come true.”

The Tiputini Biodiversity Station in the Amazon offered its own brand of magic. “In the Galápagos, you can be standing right in front of the animals, and they’ll just go about their business. They don’t seem to mind that you’re right there,” she says. “But the rainforest is an adventure. You walk the trails, and you never know what you’re going to see. I spent a lot of time by myself in the rainforest because it’s the perfect place to take walks by yourself and explore and come back dirty.”

The rainforest is also where Aliperti began a love affair with bats. Throughout her time there, she assisted an Ecuadoran bat specialist with his research—netting, processing, and releasing the bats he was studying.

“When I left Ecuador, I was crying in the cab,” she says. “I had so many emotions mixed together. I was excited to go home, I was so sad to leave, and I was also really sad because I didn’t know when I was going to work with bats again.”

To see a blue-footed booby lift up his blue foot and start a mating dance—it sounds corny, but it’s a dream come true.”

The swallow-tailed gull is the only fully nocturnal gull in the world and one of the most beautiful of all the seabirds.

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The swallow-tailed gull is the only fully nocturnal gull in the world and one of the most beautiful of all the seabirds.

Next Stop Tanzania
OUT THERE

THEY ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT THEIR WORK AND EXCITED BY POSSIBILITIES BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES. THEIR UNDERGRAD STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY, MARINE BIOLOGY, AND FRENCH/GEOLGY LED THESE THREE ALUMS TO UNCONVENTIONAL CAREERS IN UNUSUAL PLACES. THEY BRING THEIR SPECIAL BRAND OF KNOWLEDGE TO THE WORLD, RESPECTIVELY, IN GLOBAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARINE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION IN THE WATERS OFF CAPE COD, AND AVALANCHE RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE THRILLING “OFF-PISTE” TERRAIN OF THE FRENCH ALPS.

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WE ALL COULD USE A LITTLE PEDAL POWER

DAVID BRANIGAN HOPES THE VERSATILE UTILITY OF TWO WHEELS CAN BRING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY TO COMMUNITIES IN NEED

So much for the fancy job title. When I meet the International Programs Director for nonprofit Bikes Not Bombs (BNB), he’s dismantling a greasy handlebar stem, his hands speckled with oil.

Before David Branigan (CAS’02) can send donated bikes to communities in Africa, Central America, and beyond, he first needs to help break them down for shipping. On this midwinter night, he’s teaching volunteers at BNB’s Boston headquarters how to pack used bicycles or strip them for parts. He’ll then arrange for the bikes to go overseas in support of sustainable community development projects—some go to locally owned bike stores and youth training centers, others to orphaned children, and (with a little re-engineering) some will even find new life powering washing machines and corn grinders. In backing such projects, BNB hopes to reduce conflict by engaging people in their communities and improving standards of living.

(Continued on the next page.)
As Branigan tells me about his life and career, I start to work on a blue-and-white Pacific Rocket BMX that’s tricked out for street stunts with steel axle pegs on each wheel. The pegs are the first to go—they put out too much for shipping—but they don’t last, so I lower the seat post, fold down the handlebars, and reverse the pedals so they face in rather than out. Within minutes, my office-fresh hands are caked in grease and oil. Branigan tells me the bike will likely find a new home in Ghana or Nevis, the charity’s next shipping destination, helping a child commute to school. Every year bikes Not Bombs ships close to 5,000 used bicycles—which are brought in by individuals and organizations across eastern Massachusetts—and puts hundreds more to use in Boston-based youth programs.

“A bicycle helps more children go to school and be more productive in their studies and in Massachusetts—and puts hundreds more to school. Every year Bikes Not Bombs ships close to 5,000 used bicycles—which are brought in by individuals and organizations across eastern Massachusetts—and puts hundreds more to use in Boston-based youth programs.

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keeping your edge in avalanche country

Henny Schniewind knows avalanches and what it takes to stay on top “off-piste.”

Each year, grim headlines tell of skiers and other winter sports enthusiasts who venture off-trail in high mountains and are swept up in avalanches. Victims—or someone in their group or in a group skiing above them—trigger 90 percent of avalanche accidents, and nearly 20 percent of those caught in avalanches die, amounting to more than 150 fatalities annually worldwide—and that number is rising.

The Alps top the list for these fatalities. Unlike the ski areas in the western United States, where avalanche risk is managed by blasting the entire area to release unstable snow slabs, in Europe blasting occurs only on the slopes above the “pistes” (ski runs) to protect them. Based in the world-class French Alpine ski resort Val d’Isère, Henry (Hank) Schniewind (CGS’86, CAS’89) is an avalanche and snow expert and “off-piste” (off-trail) guide who knows what it takes to ski safely on the steep, snowy slopes in avalanche territory.

He describes a slab avalanche as a “piece of cake on top of a layer of frosting, or a stronger layer of snow on a weaker one.” The power of an avalanche is tremendous,” he says. “If you are skiing where a slab releases, you will be taken.”

Extreme adventure is a growing industry. Schniewind says, with more tourists now heading into the wilderness, whether or not they have the necessary skills, knowledge, or experience to handle the conditions. “Off-piste skiing has become trendy,” he says, “and lots of people are pushing the envelope. Some in seemingly tame areas don’t even realize that they’re endangering themselves or others.” Skiing off-piste requires training, and with the high number of deaths and injuries caused by mostly medium- and even small-sized avalanches each year, Schniewind has developed a program to meet this need.

In 2001 he created Henry’s Avalanche Talk (HAT), one of only a few private safety and risk management programs in the world dedicated to off-piste winter recreation. He and his team of ski professionals and guides train the intrepid, and sometimes foolhardy, how to venture off-trail for big-snow thrills without setting off avalanches, and if they do get caught in one, how to maximize their survival.

Why risk it? What’s the allure beyond the thrills?

With the sunny glow of an outdoorsman, Schniewind, an American whose German name loosely translates to “snow wind,” describes the glory of off-piste skiing. “A sense of autonomy and adventure, freedom from being shepherded,” and being surrounded by fresh powder, open sky, and the soaring mountains, he says, is simply “the best. Especially just after a storm, when the snow hasn’t settled or bonded yet; skiing in light snow gives the sensation of grace, smoothness, weightlessness—you feel like you’re floating.” But he quickly adds, “This is often when it’s unstable, so choosing where you go is so important.”

He knows what he’s talking about. In 1984, while taking a pre-freshman semester with BU’s new Study Abroad program in Grenoble, France, he discovered the magic of skiing the majestic mountains of Val d’Isère and triggered an avalanche that nearly overtook him. Although an excellent skier, who as a youngster trained at the Green Mountain Valley School for skiers in Vermont and was a nationally ranked ski racer by age 15, Schniewind had a “high standard of skiing but no mountain knowledge.” He realized. After his close encounter, he set about filling that gap.

He calls his experience at Val d’Isère “key,” inspiring him to make a career in the mountains. Schniewind entered the College of General Studies (then called the College of Basic Studies) and soon began to shine as a student. Next, with a French major and geology minor at the College of Arts & Sciences, he took a junior year “abroad” to study avalanche forecasting and snow science at Montana State University. He says BU gave him the latitude “to combine a sport with an intellectual endeavor with a business.” Right after graduation, he headed to Europe to shape his “dream career.”

In France, he saw that skiers were getting caught in avalanches and dying right next to pistes, but that nothing was being done to educate them on how to avoid the perils. With advice from his former professors at MSU, he gave his first off-piste skiing safety slide show and talk in 1989. Now boasting eight branches in France and the United Kingdom, HAT offers avalanche risk management and ski training, including Schniewind’s “Ride Hard, Ride Safe” talks. He envisions a worldwide HAT franchise, he says, “wherever there is deep snow—South America, Europe, the U.S., China, all over.”

Henny Schniewind

To keep up with HAT as it expands, log on to www.henrysavalanchetalk.com.
So Cronin-Golomb’s team, led by then-BU postdoctoral fellow and current Senior Lecturer in Psychology Tracy Dunee (GRS’92, ’99), tested advanced Alzheimer’s patients’ level of food intake with standard white plates and with bright red ones. What they found was astonishing—patients eating from red plates consumed 25 percent more food than those eating from white plates.

Since these findings were published in 2004, some nursing homes have made red plates the norm. A private company has even marketed special red plates for seniors with visual impairment.

The researchers’ approach to the problem of decreased functioning was what led to their breakthrough. Whereas many scientists look for drugs to treat degenerative cognitive diseases like Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s, Cronin-Golomb and her team focus instead on finding visual aids that can improve patients’ quality of life. By assisting Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s patients with their visual perception, the researchers actually are able to improve the subjects’ mental functioning.

“If the information getting into their brain through their eyes is already degraded, how can you expect them to do much with that?” asks Cronin-Golomb.

“If we can enhance how fast they are getting information in, then they can have a better shot at remembering it. For instance, we can improve their reading speed just by enhancing what they see.”

It is generally known that memory problems are associated with Alzheimer’s disease, but many people don’t realize that vision problems can plague these patients as much as their mental challenges do.

Cronin-Golomb and her team put subjects through a battery of tests to determine their visual capabilities—visual psychophysics tests to look at contrast sensitivity, color discrimination, and depth perception; neuropsychological tests to examine object recognition, word reading, facial recognition, and pattern completion; and, finally, tests to determine whether the subjects perform better using visual aids, such as measuring cups with larger lettering. Once researchers understand each subject’s abilities, they can then assess how various visual aids improve a patient’s visual perception.

One experiment the team conducted was to test which shades of gray pills were easiest for subjects to pick out. Seniors commonly take multiple daily medications, but pill manufacturers often don’t take into account patients’ vision problems when choosing pill colors. The researchers found that with the right shade of gray, they could help patients more easily locate their medications.

Cronin-Golomb also studies other behaviors caused at least in part by visual impairment. In Parkinson’s patients, for instance, her research suggests that walking through a doorway or experiencing other visual triggers may precipitate a patient’s “freezing,” or being unable to move.

The team’s research lends itself to immediate practical applications, and team members are eager to share their knowledge. They collaborate with colleagues at BU Sargent College, the Boston University Alzheimer’s Disease Center, and the Department of Neurology at the School of Medicine. They also educate local caregivers for the elderly about how to use visual aids to improve patients’ functioning. Many of these caregivers are family members taking care of loved ones. Others are professional caregivers at day programs for Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s patients, as well as architects designing living spaces for older adults.

Team member and PhD candidate Tom Laudate recalls an encounter following his talk to a local caregiver support group.

“A woman came up to me and said that just the week before, her mother had been in the kitchen trying to pour milk into a mug. The mug was white, the milk was white, and the countertop was white. She poured milk all over the place, and it wasn’t until the daughter heard me talk that it clicked in her mind and she understood her mother’s vision problem. It’s a great feeling to be able to give some information to someone that can make a difference. It’s not huge; we are not solving Alzheimer’s, but we are helping people in their daily lives.”

Laudate is one of many students entering the field of neuroscience today who will help define its future direction.

“If the information getting into their brain through their eyes is already degraded, how can you expect them to do much with that?”

“This is a field where a lot of the research hasn’t been done yet,” notes Cronin-Golomb. “Sometimes students ask me questions and I have to offer them my best guess at the answer. I tell them, ‘You could do that research.’”

The study of neuroscience at CAS has grown dramatically over the past two decades. When Cronin-Golomb joined the BU faculty in 1989, after getting her PhD from the California Institute of Technology, there were few students in the field of what was then called biopsychology. She played an instrumental role in cultivating the growing student interest in neuroscience. She developed the undergraduate neuroscience course, which has become a barometer of the growing student interest in the field. Each year enrollment in the course grew until there were 60 students and a waiting list.

The steady growth of interest in this and related courses led CAS to establish a neuroscience major in 2008. Mentoring the next generation of neuroscientists is a top priority for Cronin-Golomb and her fellow CAS professors connected with the neuroscience major. In the Vision & Cognition Lab, graduate and undergraduate students participate in the leading-edge research.

“The grad students mentor the under-grads,” says Cronin-Golomb. “I love that, and I love the idea of undergraduates doing research.”

Cronin-Golomb’s goal is not only to train others; she is also driven by a personal connection to, and respect for, the elderly. While some people stigmatize Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases and approach them with a sense of dread, she recognizes that the elderly, including some of her test subjects, are full of vitality.

“I love working with Parkinson’s patients,” she says. “It’s probably from my background. My grandma lived upstairs from me. She had all these brothers, sisters, and cousins, and they’d play these really competitive games of pinball. So they weren’t doting old people. This gave me the idea of old people as very vivacious, and only later did I come across the attitude that old people are slow and frail.”

If you couldn’t see your mashed potatoes, you probably wouldn’t eat them.

That was the premise that BU biopsychologist Alice Cronin-Golomb and her research partners adopted when they designed the “red plate study.” Their idea was to see whether senior citizens with advanced Alzheimer’s disease would eat more food from red plates than they did from white ones.

The researchers in the Vision & Cognition Lab of the Center for Clinical Biopsychology, which Cronin-Golomb directs, had reason to hope that their experiment would succeed. Nursing home staff often complain that Alzheimer’s patients do not finish the food on their plates even when staff encourages them to do so. Forty percent of individuals with severe Alzheimer’s lose an unhealthy amount of weight. Previous explanations for this phenomenon included depression, inability to concentrate on more than one food at a time, and inability to eat unassisted. Cronin-Golomb and her colleagues took a different approach. They believed this behavior might be explained by the visual-cognitive deficiencies caused by Alzheimer’s. Patients with the disease cannot process visual data—like contrast and depth perception—as well as most other seniors.
AMERICAN
PORTRAIT

BY TRICIA BRICK

Gallerist and art historian Warren Adelson’s love affair with America’s paintings

It was 1964, in the days when ladies wore hats and white gloves as they strolled past the venerable art galleries of Boston’s Newbury Street. Alongside the established showrooms of Vose, Childs, and Castano, 22-year-old Warren Adelson founded his own salon, Adelson Galleries, in a walk-down storefront at 167 Newbury Street where paintings by Boston impressionists like John J. Enneking and Charles Woodbury could be bought for $100 or so.

Most American painters were still considered the poor relations of the European artists who occupied the museum walls and art history textbooks of the time, but Adelson, a newly minted graduate of BU’s natural-sciences department, from which he’d earned a master’s degree, found in their work a lodestar for his young career. “My time at Boston University taught me about art history and drew me to the areas of art that I found to be the most interesting, which were really Renaissance and Baroque painting,” says Adelson (CAS’63, GRS’64). “But I went into American art because it’s all about America,” he says. “Art isn’t just about paintings on walls; it’s about the people who made them and the history of the places he went—and to get such a folk artist, as such,” Adelson says. “But I think his work is so evocative, and he’s so charismatic, and it’s just a great story—one that I think should be shown and told.”

The new show is a step in the ongoing evolution of Adelson Galleries, to be sure. But it is less than a departure, in the fundamental sense that Rembert is an American artist—like Sargent and Cassatt, like Winslow Homer and Georgia O’Keeffe, like Jamie Wyeth and his father, Andrew. American art history continues to captivate and inspire Adelson “because it’s all about America,” he says. “Art isn’t just about paintings on walls; it’s about who painted them, and why they painted them, and what they were painting, and within what fabric they’re woven.”

And after more than forty years in the field, Adelson continues to explore, as he seeks out the work and stories of artists who are new to him. This spring, his gallery presents an exhibition on the work of the contemporary American folk artist Winfred Rembert, whose vibrant paintings on tooled leather are autobiographical vignettes of growing up and coming of age among Georgia sharecroppers in the ’50s and ’60s. “It’s a departure in a sense; I’ve never done

For more than three decades Adelson has been working with Richard Ormond, a distinguished art historian as well as John Singer Sargent’s great-nephew, on Sargent’s catalogue raisonné—a comprehensive tome detailing all of the artist’s known works. The sixth volume of the planned nine-volume series is to be published by Yale University Press this fall. “It’s allowed me to follow in Sargent’s footsteps and meet some of the descendants of people he knew, and to go to some of the places he went—and to get such a folk artist, as such,” Adelson says. “But I think his work is so evocative, and he’s so charismatic, and it’s just a great story—one that I think should be shown and told.”

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A l U M N I  P R O F I L E

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The Evolving World of Art

In his role as chair of the CAS Dean’s Leadership Advisory Board, Warren Adelson asked his fellow board members to “look into their hearts and see what most interests them, and to talk about how that interest could align with the curriculum at Boston University.” He was speaking from personal experience. In 1996, he endowed the Beaze and Harry Adelson Research Fellowship to support doctoral students’ research for their dissertations on topics of American art; the Ian and Warren Adelson Curatorial Fellowship in American Art, established in 2000, provides three years of tuition and a stipend to a student pursuing a PhD in American art history. He has also given to the Patricia Hills Endowed Graduate Fellowship Fund in Art History, and contributed a modest subsidy to the University of California Press for the publication of Hill’s new book, Painting Harlem Modern: The Art of Jacob Lawrence.

“My interest is to strengthen the American part of the art history curriculum, though the department as a whole has a global focus,” says Adelson, whose son, Adam (CGS’10), is a sophomore at BU.

“Over the last decade, our department has been transformed to reflect the increasingly international nature of art history,” says Professor Fred Kleiner, chair of the Art History Department. The international focus doesn’t mean that Western art is being set aside. Indeed, a new study-abroad program at London’s venerable Courtauld Institute of Art offers BU students the opportunity to spend a semester at one of the world’s foremost institutions for the study of European art.

And at home, students can get hands-on experience in mounting exhibitions—from planning shows and writing catalog essays to designing lighting—at the Boston University Art Gallery, “the art history equivalent of a lab for a natural-sciences department,” Kleiner says. As the curriculum adapts to an evolving field, students are empowered to pursue their individual interests, whether that be in art of the Renaissance or Islamic art; whether they dream of becoming museum curators specializing in Japanese prints or dealers of American art.
Jacked to the Future

BRINGING YOU THE NEXT BIG THING

ALUMNI PROFILE

Jacked to the Future

By Patrick L. Kennedy

The crowd roars and sways to your rendition of Guns N’ Roses’ “Sweet Child O’ Mine.” Sweating, shedding hot licks, you nail every note of the guitar solo. Your spouse croons the outro. “Shredding hot licks, you nail your 10-year-old cousin. And your Mom. Biniak follows, many Americans were watching the news.”

Bryan Biniak (CAS’90) was then when Harmonix, the games’ maker, consisted of two guys in a dorm room at MIT. Biniak’s most recent venture, Jacked, might change the way we watch TV. “The idea is to reinvigorate television from a theatrical or linear, passive experience, to an interactive, participatory, social experience,” says Biniak. His goal is to make Jacked the standard “second screen” application, the way Google is the standard search engine.

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150 executives in eight offices around the globe, he grew the business from zero to $28 million in revenues. “I partnered with Unvision and we created Unvision Mobile, offering wireless content to the Hispanic market in the U.S. We partnered with [rap producer] Russell Simmons and created Def Jam Mobile, and worked with Sports Illustrated to create SI Mobile.”

Biniak has been my greatest success.”

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Mathematicians see beauty in complex equations and chaotic patterns, a symmetry that can elude the rest of us. Some professors, however, can both see this beauty and teach others to see it as well. Creating wonder out of numbers is Arts & Sciences Professor of Mathematics Robert Devaney. Devaney, a Robt. H. Lawrie Professor of Mathematics, directs the Center for Dynamical Systems and Fractals, which was founded by Benoît Mandelbrot in 1983. Devaney’s specialty is the visual, geometric representation of complex equations and chaotic patterns, a fragmented geometric shapes of these systems.

To spread the excitement, Devaney created the Dynamical Systems and Technology Project at Boston University, a website aimed at making complex computer-generated fractals like Sierpinski triangles, Julia sets, and Mandelbrot sets accessible to high school teachers and engaging for their students. “He is the epitome of what a teacher should be,” says one of his former students. “He loves his subject and inspires others to pursue that love and make it their own.”

The Feld Family Professorship is the latest in a long list of accolades Devaney has earned over 30 years at CAS, including BU’s 2003 Metcalf Award for Excellence in Teaching and his in 2009 in the Massachusetts Mathematics Educators Hall of Fame.

The Feld family has long supported Boston University, having established SMG’s Feld Family Career Center and Agenis Arena’s Feld Family Skating Center. Kenneth Feld (SMG ’70), chair and CEO of Feld Entertainment, is a BU trustee and chair of the Trustees’ Development & Alumni Committee. The Feld Family Foundation’s recent $10 million pledge to BU establishes professorships in three schools—supported by members of the family—the College of Arts & Sciences (Bennie Feld, CAS ’73), College of Communication (Alana Feld, COM ’02), and School of Management—and will also support other areas of the University.

The CAS Feld Family Professorship is awarded for an initial term of five years, honoring previous achievements as well as continued scholarship of teaching by the Feld Professor. Says Dean of Arts & Sciences Virginia Sapiro, “I am delighted that this professorship allows us to underscore the visual impact on marine environments—and how we can protect and restore these vulnerable ecosystems.

Take a look at issues that matter through the Arts & Sciences Discoveries Lecture Series. Hear distinguished faculty offer their insights into the issues of the day, engage in a lively discussion forum, and meet fellow alumni during a post-lecture reception. —JS

For more information, visit www.bu.edu/cas/alumni/discoveries.
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Curriculum vitae

Dahlia (Rosenbaum) Evans (CA'97) of Oceanside, N.Y., welcomed Gila Rose Evans into the world on May 27, 2009. E-mail Dahlia at dahfia37@hotmail.com.

Barbara (Uhr) eichenholz (CA s'96) and Chip Emdon married on May 24, 2009, in Babylon, L.I. Chip is a cardio-nurse on Long Island.

The wedding took place at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Norwalk, Va. The bride is a mortgage and loan counselor at Navy Federal Credit Union; the groom is a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy.

The wedding was in attendance. Vincent Napolitano (CA'96) and Pamela (Lattuschek) Napoli (CA'02) were married on May 30, 2009, in Babylon, N.Y. Michael Lawton (CA'05) was best man and contact Amanda at ACapps194@gmail.com.

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Victoria Cataldo (CA’05) was a bridesmaid. Also in attendance were Rita Asial (CA’05), Emily Quinn (CA’05, GR’08), and Nina Quinn (CA’05). The couple will live in San Francisco.

Tessa Taylor (GR’05), a graduate in creative writing, will be moving back to Massachusetts this fall, as she has been awarded the 2010-2011 Amy Clappitt Fellowship in Literature. Contact Barbara at barbara_eichenholz@hotmail.com.

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