

Expressions

Volume 2

SJSU | COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND THE ARTS

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The Public Library: A Photographic Survey



"Robert Dawson's work is an irrefutable argument for the preservation of public libraries. His book is profound and heartbreakingly beautiful." —Toni Morrison

Over the last 18 years, photographer Robert Dawson has crisscrossed the United States documenting hundreds of public libraries—large and small, old and new, urban and rural, in poor communities and wealthy ones, from Alaska to Florida. The result of Dawson's evocative photography is an homage to a great American tradition. The collection also features essays on libraries from prominent American authors. Dawson writes: "A public library can mean different things to different people. For me, the library offers our best example of the public commons. For many, the library upholds the 19th-century belief that the future of democracy is contingent upon an educated citizenry. For others, the library simply means free access to the Internet, or a warm place to take shelter, a chance for an education, or the endless possibilities that jump to life in your imagination the moment you open the cover of a book."

"Public libraries are worth fighting for, and this book is my way of fighting."

Forthcoming from Princeton Architectural Press, April 2014.

www.robertdawson.com



75th Anniversary of The Grapes of Wrath



When it was published in 1939, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* earned him the Pulitzer Prize. This spring on the 75th anniversary of the novel's debut, San José State will come to life with celebrations to honor Steinbeck's masterpiece, a work seminal to the history of California and the region during the Great Depression, as the novel traces the path of the Joad family's search for a better life. One of SJSU's main attractions will be a stage production at the University Theatre featuring Frank Galati's adaptation. The April 16 performance will offer a talkback by Steinbeck scholar Professor Susan Shillinglaw discussing her new book *On Reading The Grapes of Wrath*, and a reception in the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies in King Library. An exhibit of 15 colorful book jackets selected from foreign editions of *The Grapes of Wrath* are on display at the Center—one-of-a-kind items destined for the Center's extensive archive of *The Grapes of Wrath* manuscripts and memorabilia. Also on April 16, the SJSU Campus Reading Program is sponsoring a readathon, where they will read the entire novel aloud. The triumphant finale of our tribute will be a production of Ricky Ian Gordon's opera based on the Steinbeck classic. Performances are held in the University Theatre May 9 and 11. (Ticket information.)

Iranian Diaspora Conference



Persian Studies at San José State University, with the generous support of the Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute, will host the first-ever Cultures of the Iranian Diaspora conference on April 11-12, 2014. The conference brings together visual artists, writers, filmmakers, and activists who depict the experiences of a diverse community of Iranians in the United States over the past three decades. Friday, April 11 also features the world-premiere of *Inja o Oonja: Stories from Iranian American Life*, a staged adaptation by Matthew Spangler, SJSU Professor of Theatre Arts; it's based on short stories by Jasmin Darznik and Professor Persis Karim from SJSU English and Comparative Literature. On Saturday, April 12, the conference highlights "Filmmaking in the Diaspora," featuring the films of Mo Gorjestani and SJSU Professor Babak Sarrafan; they will appear after the screening to discuss their work. These evening events are free and open to the public. Visit Persian Studies for more information.

Spartan Film Studios: Park Arcadia



<https://vimeo.com/69930287>

Park Arcadia from Spartan Film Studios on Vimeo.

After graduating from San José State's RTVF program, filmmakers Darren H. Rae and Shaan Aslam collaborated with our own Spartan Film Studios to produce their short, *Park Arcadia*. It tells the mesmerizing story of a girl who discovers a way to jump through dimensions to try and save her father's life.

Check out the [filmmakers' Facebook page](#) for an entertaining glimpse of the storyboarding process for production.

Profile: Cal and Vincent Seid



The Legacy of the Seid Brothers

The first day he didn't show up for work at Apple, his coworkers were concerned because they knew this wasn't like Calvin Seid. When he missed the second day, they called his brother and law enforcement. The police broke into Seid's home—where he lived alone—and discovered him lying on the floor, dead from a heart attack.

Vincent Seid was stunned to learn that his 46-year-old younger brother was gone, a brother 16 years his junior. There were more surprises to come as Vincent settled his brother's affairs. In Cal's Palo Alto home, Vincent discovered 30

small boxes full of plaques for patents Cal had earned as part of the industrial design team at Apple, where he had worked on the iPhone and iMac. His brother never had mentioned that he had been granted a single patent, let alone 30. Yet imagine Vincent's surprise when he enlisted the help of Cal's long-time associate, Lawrence Lam. He and Cal were friends from the years when they had majored in Industrial Design together at San José State University, and ten years later they were coworkers at Apple. On weekends, the two pals took road trips around the Bay Area, meandering aimlessly in Cal's vintage Porsche convertible, with no particular destination in mind except maybe a good meal.

At Vincent's request, Lam did some sleuthing and discovered that Cal was named on 329 patents at Apple!

Vincent Seid, a retired surgeon who lives in Los Gatos, searched for a way to honor his brother and decided to create a donation to SJSU in his name. Through the Vincent and Zenaida Seid Family Foundation, they made a pledge commitment for renovating and upgrading classroom space with state-of-the-art industrial design equipment. In recognition for their generosity, the space will be named the Calvin Seid Industrial Design Lab, a fitting bequest to acknowledge Cal's education, which would later place him at the forefront of technology.

The older brother speaks respectfully of his family's legacy of hard work, starting with their father, who ran a Chinese restaurant in Oregon City, Oregon for 25 years. It was in

this small town outside Portland where the siblings went to secondary school, and Vincent notes proudly that Cal was the high school valedictorian...yet he never mentioned this fact to anyone, either.

By Cathleen Miller

Profile: Casey Fedde



Wielder of the Trusty Red Pen

Casey Fedde's picture tells the story of a new Bostonian missing the California weather. Her blonde hair is tied back and she holds an apple that shimmers. "It's obviously not a recent picture since Boston is still a winter wonderland. I miss California weather," she notes. A native of San José, her father attended SJSU, so the choice to become a Spartan was not a difficult one.

Her major, on the other hand, was a puzzle that took a while for her to solve: "English wasn't my first, second, or even third choice as a major. For the first year or so of college, I

kept changing my major, bouncing from journalism to advertising to mass communications." She reminisced about each time she changed her major, she had to walk past the English Department. It served as a constant reminder of her love for reading and writing. So eventually, she decided to become an English major. Fedde's love for writing culminated in Professor Kate Evans's creative writing workshop: "Kate was so expressive both in her writing and in her passion for teaching writing. Not only did she have so much to teach us, but she instilled in us the desire to help others in the class. And this made for a rewarding workshop experience."

Proudly, Fedde exclaims that she has "found a way to use every aspect of my English background!" She goes on to note that: "A degree in English (and especially an MFA) goes a long way in the real world. Employers are always impressed by our written and spoken communication skills. I started at a small newspaper in Texas after graduating and then climbed the ladder to a bigger paper. The journey isn't easy, but it's so rewarding."

Today, Fedde works as a freelance editor, writer, and copy editor for the *Christian Science Monitor*, an international news organization in Boston. She observes that most of her days are spent with her trusty red pen in hand. However, when she isn't correcting errors, she is fact-checking, and she's grateful to her professors at SJSU for preparing her: "Part of copy editing is fact-checking stories, so general knowledge of just about everything comes in handy. And a lot of what I know comes from books. So I have all my professors to thank for having me read so many books."

Although Fedde has transported across the country because of the knowledge she acquired during her time at SJSU, she still thinks about the students working toward their dreams. "Be an informed reader—and writer," she wants to remind them, "and don't ever forget to be grateful. Gratitude goes a long way."

By Jessica Keaton

Profile: Gary Singh



A Writer Searches for San José

The café was dark. Brick walls, red and black floorboards, black and white portraits of music legends. The walking bass from the jazz quartet invited the crowd to lean in closer. Gary Singh was sitting at a small table in the back of the room, partially covered by shadow, a backlit plume of dark hair streaked with swirling gray streams settled on his shoulders. The atmosphere pooled with his gray on gray outfit and his serious demeanor to give our meeting all the basic elements of a hardboiled detective novel. This would be one of those places you would expect to find

him, either here in this moody café or out wandering the back streets on foot of the city that he calls home.

After receiving his Bachelor's in Music at San José State University and traveling around the world working for the International Computer Music Association, Singh chose Interdisciplinary Studies at San José State for his graduate program, allowing him to continue his exploration of music, as well as explore his wide range of interests: computer studies, art history, and creative writing. It was the perfect choice for a man that has always let creativity lead him, and it was during this graduate study that this creativity led him to a realization he had something unique to offer to the city of San José: his view of it.

The self-described "anti-man about town," Singh has the unique ability to weave the do-it-yourself attitude of his punk background with his disciplined training from SJSU. He carries the tranquil confidence to blend in anywhere and is as comfortable in a dive-bar as he is in a luxury box. His work shares this paradoxical sense of ease. Seeing the city through the lenses of his Eastern and Western background, he approaches his subjects

with that same sense of duality and an open mind. His first opportunity to blend these halves of himself came with a part-time job with the *Metro Newspaper Silicon Valley*, where he found that his ability to write about the hidden layers that form the city resonated with the people of San José. His part-time job turned full-time and now continues, almost thirteen years later, with his popular weekly column, *Silicon Alleys*. While he continues to write his column, Singh also works for various other publications doing travel writing and feature stories, as well as recently becoming a published poet. He also has had his paintings featured in various art shows and regularly displays his travel photography throughout the area.

With a background in music and computer science, a Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, his newfound passion for creating poetry and art, and his unique eye for photography, his varied interests and knowledge allow him a wide range of freelance writing work. They also find their ways into his weekly column, for which he wanders his hometown and tries to reveal the pulse hidden beneath the silicon veneer, the art and culture that forms the soul of the city, and the people that are fueling it. He wants to expose the passion of the city that people tend to miss from behind their car windows. "What I write about is the San José condition," he said, "as opposed to the human condition." In a city known for leading the future of technology, Gary Singh walks the streets and reminds us of the past that we are missing.

By Steven Suiter

It's a Dean's Life Vol. 2



2014 has continued to bring numerous successes and reasons for celebration to the College of Humanities and the Arts. In recognition of his distinguished artistic accomplishments, which most recently included winning a Grammy Award, Professor Aaron Lington was recognized in March by SJSU's Tower Foundation with a Presidential Medal of Honor, an award only ever given to one other person at SJSU in its entire 150-year history. As an added point of pride, the medal was designed and cast in our very own Department of Art and Art History.

Although we are in a terrible drought in California, spring has showered us with many awards thus far. At the Broadcast Education Association, our student Robert Krakower wrote and directed the film that won Best in Show. "Always Learning" is a touching, funny story about a home-schooled teenager. Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre Department professor Babak Sarrafan won Best Educational or Instructional Video for his Green Ninja Series installment called "Styrofoam Man." You can watch the video, but beware: you may never order take-out food again.

These student and faculty accomplishments in Television, Radio, Film, and Theatre were complemented by an uplifting and energizing visit by actor Kurtwood Smith, an alum who visited our campus in February and generously spent a full afternoon talking with students, faculty, and staff interested in television and acting. You can read a full interview with Mr. Smith and watch his new show, *Resurrection*, which is a co-production between ABC Studios and Plan B Entertainment.

I recently had the great pleasure of attending a literary reading by the Lurie Distinguished Author-in-Residence, Andrew Sean Greer. Through the generosity of the Lurie family, the author-in-residence program brings distinguished writers to the SJSU community and classroom every year. Greer's reading was a tour-de-force, and I look forward to reading more of his work soon. I also attended a beautiful evening of dance by the University Dance Theatre. The program included choreography by faculty and expressive, creative dance by our dance majors. Personal favorites included "Dance for Six" by Professor Gary Masters, who also just won an Isadora Duncan Award, and the gorgeous "Penguin March" choreographed by Professor Heather Cooper, a piece which was selected Gala Concert of the American College Dance Festival on March 14, 2014.

The March 6 inaugural event in the Kazuki Fukuda-Abe Lecture Series was a rousing success and formed part of a vibrant week of Foreign Language Week programming sponsored by the Department of World Languages and Literatures and other areas of the College. I very much look forward to hosting a **Donor Recognition Event** on April 22 to honor those who so generously support our students and our programs.

So many events are coming up at the end of this academic year that it is hard to know where to start. While I am only highlighting a few, please be sure to visit our events calendar and make plans to take in the incredible programming we offer as a College.

We all should be excited about the upcoming collaborations in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Mark your calendars for April 16, the date of a **gala** event that will kick off in the Martha Heasley Cox Center for Steinbeck Studies with a reception at 5:30pm to be followed by the theatre production at 7pm and a talkback with author and Steinbeck scholar Susan Shillinglaw. The event celebrates the theater and opera collaborations as well as Dr. Shillinglaw's new book, *On Reading The Grapes of Wrath*. The theatre production is put on by our TV, Radio, Film, and Theatre Department, and will be followed on May 9 (7pm) and May 11 (2pm) by the School of Music and Dance's Opera Workshop production of Ricky Ian Gordon's opera, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Tickets for the gala and for the play are available.

I always look forward to the season of graduation, so May will be an especially wonderful month, as it always is. This year we will see more than 1,000 students graduate from our College in diverse majors that have prepared them to be artists, teachers, writers, designers, animators, translators, and a wide diversity of other careers. As we reflect on the arc of the academic year and the work that we play at a large public institution, we should never lose sight of the great privilege we have to be engaged in meaningful educational preparation for more than 31,000 students in Silicon Valley. Spring is indeed a season of joy for these and many other reasons. Learn more about commencement.

In closing, I thank you to all who gave feedback. Please continue to help us spread the word about our amazing accomplishments and the role that we are privileged to play as humanities and arts educators in Silicon Valley. Please forward this newsletter, *Expressions*, to others who would be interested in knowing more about SJSU and our College. Anyone can subscribe by hitting the subscription button.

And don't forget: we have a growing audience on Facebook and Twitter, so please follow us and continue to help us promote the wonderful and numerous accomplishments of our students, faculty, staff, alumni, and emeriti.

Finally, please join our mailing list or share your stories with us. We would love to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Lisa Vollendorf, Dean