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Faculty and Graduate Research: An Evening of Pecha Kucha Presentations

by Cole Wilson

AMS :: ATX is a blog dedicated to representing the many activities and interests of the department of American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Together with the department's Twitter feed, this blog exists to serve the AMS and Austin communities by acting as a hub for up-to-date information on events and opportunities at UT and beyond.



PechaKucha

20 X 20
IMAGES SECONDS

by Cole Wilson

The American Studies Department tried out a new style of presentation this Friday the 6th, a PechaKucha Night. Designed by “Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham of **Klein Dytham architecture**” The first PechaKucha Night was held in Tokyo February, 2003 and consisted of seven minute presentations consisting of 20 slides lasting for 20 seconds each. [1] The Austin adaptation took place on the fourth floor of Burdine Hall in the American Studies conference room and featured seven varying, thought-provoking, and engaging presentations by AMS faculty, Ph.D. candidates and masters students. Like the original invented in Japan, UT Austin’s PechaKucha Night presentations were limited to 20 slides, lasting for 20 seconds each. The topics varied from American students in Vienna, Austria to modern day interpretations of Tiki drinks and its allusions to cannibalism. Every presentation was jam packed with information that both captivated the attending audience and propagated a lively

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discussion following the event. Here's a recap:

Masters student Kerry Knerr connected the contemporary constructs of tiki with cannibalism through her argument that “consumption [of the contents of the iconic tiki cup] inhabits the being of the cannibal” while also carrying out the act of “consume[ing] the cannibal” itself. Knerr offered a glimpse into the history of Tiki as a physical artifact and as a romantic notion constructed by western entrepreneurs “Trader Vic” and “Don the Beach Comber.”

Following Knerr was Department Chair, Dr. Steve Holescher who presented on his bi-annual **maymester course in Vienna**. Dr. Hoelscher outlined his course objectives: understanding memory, the city's adaptive reuse, and the cultural norms that have grown out of Vienna complicated past. He went on to discuss how he goes about reaching these objectives. Dr. Holscher pointed to Nazi era anti-aircraft towers standing stories above the tallest buildings in the city's center, which are impossible to remove due to the dense urban landscape, and poses the question: how does the city of Vienna deal with this permanent reminder of the past? During his class students visit sites like the Jewish Monument against fascism, the **Nameless Library**, [2] and Mauthausen Gestapo camp. As a former participant of Dr. Holescher's Viennese course I can safely say each and every day is filled with impactful and insightful lessons all revolving around the

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city and its concept-of-self. Dr. Holesher states that students in his course are constantly prompted to answer the question: how is Viennese memory displayed and interpreted at these location.

Ph.D. candidate Andrew Gansky presented a portion of his dissertation titled “Apple helps those that help themselves” next. He opens with a provocative question: “why do teachers love Apple?” Gansky goes on to argue that the answer lies somewhere in Apple-funded educational grants, a teacher-centric acknowledgement campaign, and a business model that made “people feel good consuming.” Gansky states that Apple continued their marketing techniques from the early 1970s through the 1990s, each year gaining more clout in the world of educators through their marketing grant-based, publicity-driven, education-focused business model.

Next, Dr. Lauren Gutterman presented on the case of Jeannance Freeman, a lesbian woman who charged with the murder of her two children in 1960, with the aid of her lover, and mother of the children, Gertrude Nunez Jackson. Freeman was the first woman sentenced to death in the history of Oregon’s penal system; however, the sentence was reduced to life in prison four years later. Dr. Gutterman argues that Freeman was considered a villain but later became a victim in the public’s eye. Dr. Gutterman touched on Freeman’s transition from villain to victim and how that change relates to her sexual

Mandell named UEPS scholar for 2015-2016 school year!

- Alumni Voices: Dr. John Gronbeck-Tedesco, Asst. Prof. of American Studies, Ramapo College
- Announcement: Workshop with media artist Samuel Cepeda this Friday

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orientation. She also explored how capital punishment was distributed unto the LGBTQ community in the 60s and sheds light on Oregon's LGBTQ population's progress throughout the decade. For more information check out [Gutterman's synopsis through the University of Michigan here](#). [3]

Dr. Jeff Meikle was next to present, and he did so on G.I. Pitchford's iconic 4x6 inch portraits of the American southwest. Dr. Meikle explains that Pitchford sold (in bulk), captured, colored, and altered the post cards that would later create Americas notions of the "open road," perhaps anticipating Jack Kerouac's widely read *On the Road*. From his iconic, almost generic, sunset, to his incorporation of blossoming American technology like the automobile, highway, city center, or, in one famous instance, Hoover Dam, Pichford's work has captivated the American imagination and instilled a picturesque romanticism of the continental southwest unlike any other artist before him or scene.

Masters student Josh Kopin presented on portions of his thesis concerning Charles M. Schulz's Peanuts gang and their allegorical ode to adulthood. Kopin argues that Charlie Brown counters the American nuclear family by presenting an allusion to the American worker, similar to Charlie Chaplin's "Industrial Man." By becoming consumers, fulfilling parental roles, and their acknowledgement of finite American cultural minutia (as evident in the gangs

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interest in works like “War and Hate”) the Peanuts are both children, and adults, possibly more so than Chaplin’s Industrial Man.

Lastly, Dr. Randy Lewis’ centered his presentation around the artistic interpretation of modern day surveillance. Dr. Lewis remarked on how artist action is at its heart a cultural barometer and went on to discuss how contemporary artists like Zach Blas[4], Karin Krommes[5], and Josh Kline^[6] have thus expressed an uneasiness surrounding the practice. From drones to street cameras, artists have taken on the task of digesting and presenting these surveillance practices.

If you missed out, that’s alright! There is a PechaKuch Night planned for the Spring you can catch next semester. Keep in touch with the blog, the UT AMS website, our Facebook page, twitter feed, or wherever you get your UT Austin AMS news for more info on the next PechaKucha Night.

[1] PechaKucha.org. “PechaKucha About” Klein Dytham Architecture.

<http://www.pechakucha.org/faq>

[2] “*Holocaust Monument a.k.a. Nameless Library (2000)*” University of Florida school of Art and Art History, <http://art-tech.arts.ufl.edu/~kecipes/whiteread/holocaust.html>.

[3] Gutterman, Lauren “Saving Jeannace

June Freeman: Capital Punishment and the Transformation of Homophobia in Oregon, 1961-1964.” University of Michigan.

<https://lsa.umich.edu/women/news-events/all-events/archived-events/2015/03/saving-jeannace-june-freeman-capital-punishment-and-the-transfo.html>

[4] Blas, Zach. “Facial Weponization Suit”

<http://www.zachblas.info/projects/facial-weaponization-suit>.

[5] Facebook. “Karin Krommes”

<https://www.facebook.com/karinsabinekrommes/>

[6] Kline, Josh.

<http://47canal.us/main.php?1=jk&2=pics>

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