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Hip-Hop Inspired Poet John Murillo's Visit to Fredonia

Article by Madelein Smith

On Thursday, February 24th, hip-hop inspired poet John Murillo visited SUNY Fredonia for a craft talk and reading from his book of poetry entitled *Up Jump the Boogie*. The first poet of the semester for the Mary Louise White Visiting Writer's series, he was a huge success and connected fantastically with the students. As an intern for the program, I was given the chance to chat with him outside of his talk, and he seemed to be a very cool character who had an easy time discussing both his poetry and his life.

Before he jumped right into reading his poetry, he took some time to talk with the packed McEwen lecture hall, telling them about his dinner of "cranch" flavored wings from Wing City. He was quick to joke and comfortable with the students. He kicked off his craft talk by reading "Ode to the Crossfader," a lyrical poem that he performed with effortless musicality, rapping the words with a strong, clear voice. He then read

"Trouble Man,"
"Practicing Fade Aways,"
"The Corner," "Enter the Dragon," and "How to Split a Cold One."



Photo by John Manko

He was not afraid of getting personal, and upon reading "Enter the Dragon," a poem about realizing how racism affected both himself and his father, he began to divulge some bittersweet stories about their relationship. He made sure to intersperse plenty of casual talk between poems. After "How to Split a Cold One", a poem about drinking coronas with his uncle, he said "A corona sounds really good right now.." quickly following with "Not that I condone alcohol!"

He commented that imagery is his focus when writing poetry, not

form or rhythm. Rather, he said these things come naturally to him given his background in hip-hop. He commented that the inspiration for his images can come from anywhere, from a woman he sees on the subway to a snowman outside his car window. Many in the crowd were surprised to hear that his narratives don't always come from truth, and some of his raw images and stories are actually fiction.

Murillo discussed freestyling during the craft talk and how it was something he would often do, in groups and in the privacy of his living room. When someone asked him to freestyle for the audience he laughed and said "absolutely not", stating that with freestyle you never know what you might say, and that he didn't want to let anything too inappropriate slip. He did, however, encourage everyone to try it sometime. He called upon his experience in freestyling during his craft talk writing prompt—having students free write

Murillo Continued



Photo by John Manko
Murillo delivered
his craft talk and
reading to a full
house in McEwen
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as he called out random words to incorporate into our pieces.

He also touched upon his highly successful choreoplay “Trigger” which recently opened in Washington. Murillo confessed that he feels more like a playwright than a poet, even if he doesn’t consider himself a very good playwright.

At the end he thanked everyone for being a “really dope audience” and then signed books and took pictures with his many fans. When he went to sign my book, he relayed a story about getting a book signed for an ex-girlfriend whose nickname was “Donny” and how the author mistakenly

signed it “good to meet ya, brother.” I really enjoyed that tale, and now I have my own personal copy of *Up Jump the Boogie* signed with a “good to meet you, brother!” from one of the only hip-hop inspired poets to visit SUNY Fredonia, John Murillo.

Tabbi Lectures on William Gaddis

Article by Amber John

On February 8th, we were lucky enough to have internationally renowned scholar, Professor Joseph Tabbi (University of Illinois), come to campus to speak of the biography of William Gaddis that he is currently working on. Although he moved away many years ago, Tabbi is a native of Silver Creek and the author of “Postmodern Sublime: Technology in American Writing from Mailer to Cyberpunk” and “Cognitive Fictions.” The biography he is working on will be the first ever written on the author Gaddis. Tabbi began his talk with an overview of Gaddis’ life as well as the works he has written. He explained that music and art were two fundamental parts of the Gaddis family and both had a huge influence on the works produced by the author. One specific novel Tabbi touched on was *J R*, which was based upon Gaddis’ own family history. Gaddis wrote this novel entirely in dialogue, essentially removing himself from the text and immersing the reader into the narration. This style of writing, common to Gaddis’ works, can at first be quite challenging for the reader. As Tabbi explained, Gaddis’ novels create a demand on attention to detail and to the text itself. He recommends to those reading or interested in reading any of his novels, to try to “find out everything that’s in your power to know.” He emphasized paying close attention to the words Gaddis chooses to use throughout the entire piece and why he might have chosen certain words or phrases. Overall, the talk was very informative and hopefully brought some attention to one of the most important figures in American postmodern literature. Many thanks to Joseph Tabbi for providing an inspirational look on William Gaddis, as well as to the English department and Professor Birger Vanwesenbeeck for making it possible.

Dr. Joseph Tabbi



The Arts & Humanities Brown Bag Lecture Event on Appropriation: From the Intern's Prospective

Article by Lauren Kuss

I came into my internship for the Arts & Humanities Brown Bag Lecture Series not really sure what to expect. I used to attend other lectures in the past that sounded interesting ("2012: Ancient Mayan Prophecy or New-Age Hysteria?" was my favorite) which is how I learned about this internship and thought about applying for it. I began as soon as the spring semester started and realized pretty fast how much work goes into organizing the series.

The first lecture for 2011 was "Creative Reuse or Copyright Infringement? The Art and Ethics of Appropriation" included faculty speakers from three departments: Visual Arts & New Media, Sound Recording Technology and Philosophy. This was the first event that I helped work on and attended as an intern. Even though we (the other intern Eliza Muench and I) didn't do as many of the tasks for this event because they needed to be done before students came back in January we were busy enough preparing for the future events. I worked on tasks like drafting a grant to apply for funds for the series, creating spreadsheets, emailing lists, drafting flyers, brainstorming ideas for the library case, delivering posters to be mailed out as well as weekly

meetings with my internship professor. So much time and work is devoted to make these lectures possible that I had never realized before.

One of the goals of my internship was to get public speaking experience, and this event was the first one I was able to introduce. I wasn't as well prepared to do this as I wish I was but it still went okay and it turned out to be a tremendous learning experience. I think I wasn't prepared mostly for how many people came to this, which was staggering. No one really knew what the turnout for this was going to be, but over 120 people were packed into the room to hear the speakers. I was surprised but excited that I saw so many students there and it made me realize how we need to gear the series more towards student interests like these. I strongly believe the success of this event was due largely to the fact that it was a real concern that applied to students majoring in art and music as well as from other majors like English and Philosophy. Art and music students should know the rules about copyrighting images or songs especially since it's a topic they need to be aware of if it were to come up in their future careers. Even as an English major I found the lecture interesting, especially about how vague and circumstantial the laws are about copyrighting. There was a panel discussion

after the professors did their power points where the audience could ask questions and it was great to see how invested the students particularly were in the discussion and asking questions.

The experience as an intern for the series has been amazing; I'm learning things I never knew I would. Not only am I learning how to write things for public relations like press releases and apply for grants, but also about how to communicate with people. I'm learning how to tell my professor and co-intern that sometimes I just have too much to do and that they will need to step in. I'm going to meetings to collaborate with people who work with technology to make sure events are documented. I'm learning that revisions are important to any sort of work, the more people that see something the better it can be. The lectures for me are so much more than going to listen to people speak and discuss. They are products of weeks and months of preparation with contributions from over a dozen faculty, staff and students who all want the same thing. To learn.

"I strongly believe the success of this event was due to the fact that it was a real concern that applied to students."

Grad Student Profile: Heidi Frame

Article by Molly Gutschow

Last week I had the pleasure of meeting up with Heidi Frame, one of the current English graduate students here at Fredonia. Heidi was enthusiastic to tell me about the program and her personal involvement with it—including her own extracurricular activities and future plans.

Heidi describes the grad program as small, but close and cozy with students often meeting up for lunch or coffee with one another. At the same time, the grad students all bring a myriad of interests and passions to the program and are constantly exposing one another to new ideas. Heidi calls her classes fun, but assured me that they all require intense work—with a lot of reading and researching to be done. She believes one of the most beneficial aspects of the grad program is its focus on research and that honing her writing and critical thinking skills has been one of the most worthwhile benefits of doing grad work.

Dramatic and environmental literature as well as the Renaissance are among Frame's biggest passions. Her favorite classes include Modern Drama, Marlowe, Agrarian Literature, Classics and Their Knockoffs, as well as an independent study focused on Shakespeare. Apart from her research, Heidi is very involved hands-on within the classroom; this semester she is teaching a freshmen level English Composition course and instructing a Liberal Arts seminar for undergrads seeking majors.

On top of all of this, Heidi has had major involvement in events around campus. Last semester, she worked with the library to plan and promote the "Mars and Venus" reading on pre-Modern works. She will be participating in

a public speaking workshop for grad students on March 25th. This workshop is intended to help English grad students feel comfortable speaking and teaching in professional environments. Finally, she will be presenting her paper entitled "Golden Cords of Love: Marlowe's Dido and No Man's Elizabeth" at the Fredonia Women's Studies Student Research Conference on Gender on March 29th.

Outside of school Heidi works as the Fredonia Farmers' Market coordinator. In this position, she handles publicity and promotional writing for the market. With her background in Environmental Literature, she describes the job as a great way to do hands-on research through communicating with local farmers.

This summer Heidi will be attending the department's study abroad trip, "Literary London". After that, she's excited to take a year off from school and focus on her position at the Farmer's Market. At the same time, she will be applying to PhD programs and hopefully teaching courses in area schools.

When thinking back on her time as a grad student in the English department, Heidi emphasized a great feeling of accomplishment in her work. She felt that the heavy workload and intense study was fulfilling, and told me she did not take one class in her time as a grad student that she didn't enjoy. Heidi recommends the program to any English student who has a passion for reading or is unsure of their specific career goals; being in that position herself, Heidi feels the program truly helped her to realize her passions and mold her own professional future.

Sigma Tau Delta Column

Article by Joseph Moynihan

Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honors Society, is currently accepting applications for membership. Application forms are available in the English Department office, and the deadline to apply is March 21. The induction ceremony will be held on Friday, May 6. We look forward to welcoming new members to our organization.

We will be hosting several events throughout this semester. We encourage all members of the academic community, not only members of Sigma Tau Delta, to participate in these events. These activities will be a great opportunity for prospective members to acclimate him/herself to the organization and community as a whole.

On Thursday, March 24, Sigma Tau Delta will be hosting its annual Bedtime Stories, located in the Japanese Garden Room in Reed Library from six to seven o'clock. This event, with co-sponsorship by Reed Library, is free and open to the public, and it combines professionals in the academic community and children in a comfortable and lighthearted reading experience. It has been our pleasure to host this event for the past few years, and we look forward to its continued success.

Sigma Tau Delta will also be hosting our signature Coffee Talk on April 11, in the English Reading Room. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Gerber. Snacks and refreshments will be served. This is a great opportunity to talk with English professors, ask questions, and interact with peers in your discipline. We encourage everyone, English major or not, to come enjoy themselves at this established, highly anticipated event.

We will also be hosting our second English Mixer this April. Details on this event will be forthcoming. We also encourage everyone to attend the Al Dunn Day of Poetry and Prose on April 26. Stop in to the English Department for more details and a pledge form.

Sigma Tau Delta has been a longstanding mainstay of the English Department. What makes our organization successful is the selfless volunteering and participation from members of the community. We look forward to accepting new members into the organization and the advancing of the community we call home.

Important Upcoming Dates:

Deadline for New Membership Applications: March 21

Bedtime Stories: March 24, Japanese Garden Room Reed Library, 6:00-7:00

Coffee Talk: April 11, English Reading Room, 12:00-1:00

Al Dunn Day of Poetry and Prose: April 26

Induction Ceremony: Friday, May 6

English Mixer: TBA

Open Mic Night: TBA