Contemplating Edges

When this issue of SAR News was drafted some months ago, our President’s Message focused on SAR’s interest in the places “where edges meet,” to steal a phrase from the writer Anne Fadiman. Little did I imagine that we would soon be battling a crisis that has taken us beyond the realm of most living people’s experience in the developed world: a pandemic that tests the strength of every institution in our society.

Speaking as an anthropologist, I find that the arrival of COVID-19 has led me to understand more viscerally the experience of people caught in a collision of social worlds. Indigenous peoples throughout history have been confronted by wave after wave of diseases borne by colonists and other incoming populations. Medical historians have estimated that these epidemics cumulatively produced Indigenous mortality in the range of 90–95 percent. The human loss is so horrifying that one easily forgets the parallel loss of knowledge and sophisticated institutions that had served people well for millennia.

During my years working with the Awajún, an Amazonian people as proud and courageous as any in the world, I was constantly struck by their intense fear of infectious disease. This was doubtless a cultural memory of the experiences of their parents and grandparents, many of whom perished during epidemics of measles, tuberculosis, and influenza. An effect of this was enthusiastic compliance when Peruvian vaccination teams visited Awajún settlements.

A number of SAR alumni have written trenchantly about the social impact of epidemics throughout the world, and I’ll be inviting them to share their knowledge with you in the coming weeks and months. This is an expression of SAR’s commitment to making the expertise of our scholars and artists available to members by electronic means during this time of social distancing. Our recent turn to livestreaming is just one example of making our programs accessible via technology in this uncertain time.

Continuing to be a resource for our members and the community is central to SAR’s mission of promoting creative thought and innovative artistic expression. We’re rising to the challenges of the moment but also looking forward to the day when we will again be able to serve our members face to face. I hope you’ll join us in our continuing efforts to engage and educate the public by bringing the insights of the nation’s best social scientists to Santa Fe.

Michael F. Brown
President

BeyondBorders: Addressing the Global Refugee Crisis and Ongoing US/Mexico Immigration Issues through the Lens of the Arts and Social Sciences

“I have probably done some of my best thinking at SAR, taking long walks around campus while communing with the landscape and the occasional coyote. . . . The intellectual environment at SAR coupled with the amazing Santa Fe community is like no other place on earth.” — Jason De León

In 2013 SAR hosted anthropologist Jason De León as a Weatherhead fellow. During his nine months on campus, De León completed much of his 2015 publication _The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail_. Based on ethnographic, archaeological, and forensic research along the US/Mexico border, De León takes readers on a journey through the Sonoran desert, following the lives and deaths of undocumented migrants.

The book received the 2016 Margaret Mead Award and SAR’s 2017 J. I. Staley Prize, but De León refuses to rest. “I have always worried about getting stale,” he says, “so I find that I am constantly trying to reinvent myself.” De León and his team at the Undocumented Migration Project located in Los Angeles have spent the last two years developing an exhibition to bring their research to a new public. “The scale and approach of our new exhibit, Hostile Terrain 94, is completely outside of any project that I have ever undertaken. I have loved the challenge of trying to realize a global exhibition across 150 locations simultaneously that has the potential to directly connect with (and educate) thousands of people on five continents.”

To honor this work and further the conversation, SAR, in partnership with the Center for Contemporary Arts Santa Fe (CCA) and SITE Santa Fe, has organized Beyond Borders, a series of exhibits and public programs addressing the global refugee crisis and ongoing US/Mexico immigration issues through the lens of the arts and social sciences. A Santa Fe installation of Hostile Terrain 94 at CCA (July 2020) launches the international initiative with other versions of the exhibit to appear through October in locations as diverse as Des Moines, Iowa; São Paulo, Brazil; and Berlin, Germany. “Santa Fe is where I wrote my first book on immigration,” De León notes, “and it is a place that has continuously inspired me. Moreover, New Mexico is a border state that has increasingly been pulled into the discussion about undocumented migration from Mexico and we see it as a natural location to start new conversations.”

Central to the installation is a twenty-foot-long map of the Arizona/Mexico border articulated with approximately 3,200 handwritten toe tags that represent recovered bodies of people who have died crossing the US/Mexico border through the Sonoran Desert between the mid-1990s and 2020. SAR and CCA are working with local partners, including student groups from New Mexico School for the Arts, to install the exhibit. De León describes how the interactive aspect is part of the message. “I want visitors to bear witness to a global migration crisis that has claimed the lives of thousands of people while also allowing them to stand in solidarity with migrants. By writing out the names of the dead, we want visitors to feel like they are collaborating with us while also breathing momentary life into the toe tags that represent those who have died while seeking a better life.”

To emphasize the importance of the social sciences within this ongoing discussion, the partners of Beyond Borders are offering several ways to explore a range of perspectives, including “MacArthur Fellows in Conversation” (July 18, 2020) with Jason De León and Steven Feld (SAR senior scholar). The two will discuss how scholars can bring social science research to new audiences. On August 21, 2020, SAR presents a Beyond Borders symposium with four prominent scholars exploring topics from the experiences of youth in the immigration system to the ethical and legal responsibilities of first responders working along the border.

Bridging the arts and social sciences through Beyond Borders continues SAR’s dedication to pushing intellectual and creative boundaries.

Generous support provided by the Beyond Borders partner and the MacArthur Foundation.

Learn more about the Beyond Borders program at sarweb.org/beyond-borders-2020
On the Delhi Metro: Urban Landscape, Transport Infrastructure, and Social Mobility

Current resident scholar Rashmi Sadana says that she probably would not have considered writing about Delhi, the third largest metropolis in the world, if not for the Delhi Metro, an ultra-modern, high-tech, and highly surveilled urban rail system and South Asia’s first major multiline metro.

Dr. Rashmi Sadana is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at George Mason University and one of this year’s Weatherhead fellows at SAR. Her project, “Gender, Urban Space, and Everyday Life in the Age of the Delhi Metro, 2002–2018,” asks how the metro affects the nearly three million people who use it and how women and men of different classes interact in its newly created spaces.

About 75 percent of the Delhi Metro is above ground; this uniqueness stimulated Sadana’s imagination. “When you’re riding the metro, she says, “you’re seeing the city in a completely new way.” After observing Delhi from the trains and interviewing architects, urban planners, and fellow passengers, Sadana came to understand the metro as an example of “aspirational planning” that not only represents people’s ideas about “middle-class modernity”, but also translates those ideas into experiences. The metro’s blue line, for example, came to be associated with the students and middle-class families it served. Advertising promoted the metro as safer for women, and “ladies’ coaches” were set aside for their use. People of all classes ride the metro, says Sadana, and its effects on the neighborhoods it joins are not uncomplicated, but “for a lot of people who may not have access to other forms of global modernity and middle-class mobility, the metro is something that they can actually step into” every day. By showing how a megaproject like the Delhi Metro changes ordinary people’s lives and aspirations, Sadana’s work highlights the contradictions of middle-class modernity in India and around the world.

Watch Sadana’s presentation on SAR’s YouTube channel, sarsinfoyoutube

RISE: Cultural Preservation in the 21st Century

Each spring the Indian Arts Research Center (IARC) hosts a series of presentations exploring an important trend or theme in Native American arts and culture. This year, the series invited attendees on a journey beyond local Pueblo communities to shed light on the many remarkable ways Indigenous-based cultural preservation, promotion, and revival are happening nationally. From Indigenous language revitalization efforts to the changing contemporary art scene in Hawai‘i, “RISE: Cultural Preservation in the 21st Century” asked how Indigenous communities are working to ensure that their history, cultural heritage, and current artistic practices are represented with respect, and how they are able to thrive and grow for future generations.

Both events were filmed and are now available online at sarsinfoyoutube

2020 J. I. Staley Prize Awarded to a Powerful Examination of Life, Death, and Care among Inuit Communities

“This courageous humanistic work is well worth a close and critical read, for the simple reason that its author, Lisa Stevenson, addresses one of the most important contemporary healthcare issues in the Canadian North—that of suicide—and along the way challenges the reader through what has been termed welfare colonialism and the continued struggles with a bureaucratic legacy determined by historical state structure and policy.” —American Anthropologist

Lisa Stevenson’s Life Beside Itself examines two historical moments among the Inuit of northern Canada: a tuberculous epidemic in the mid-twentieth century and an epidemic of suicides among Inuit youth today. Stevenson demonstrates how the Canadian state’s approach to care is in both cases shaped by a biomedical model inattentive to the realities of Inuit life in a settler colonial context. Although well-meaning and carried out by dedicated professionals, conventional biomedical care that seeks to extend life at all costs ignores the kind of life being preserved. Through richly textured analysis, Stevenson shows how suicide prevention programs disregard what makes life worthwhile to Inuit people. Her evocative prose takes risks, asking readers to dwell alongside the author as she slowly reveals how to listen differently to her interlocutors. Life Beside Itself deftly weaves together ethnography, archival voice recordings, and images to raise new questions about life, death, and care.

Lisa Stevenson is an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at McGill University, where she teaches courses on medical and psychological anthropology, violence and subjectivity, narrative and anthropology, social and political theory, ethnographic film, the Inuit, and the Canadian Arctic. She received a PhD in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley (2005). Since 1988, SAR has presented the annual J. I. Staley Prize to a living author for a book that exemplifies outstanding scholarship and writing in anthropology. The award recognizes innovative works that go beyond traditional frontiers and dominant schools of thought in anthropology and add new dimensions to our understanding of the human species. It honors books that cross disciplinary boundaries within anthropology and reach out in new and expanded interdisciplinary directions.

By recognizing groundbreaking books and their authors through the J. I. Staley Prize, SAR seeks to stimulate the best in anthropological research and writing. Authors other than anthropologists are eligible to receive the prize if their work has had a significant impact on scholars and practitioners in the field of anthropology.

Purchase Life Beside Itself and explore all of our Staley Prize winners at sarsinfo/staley.
Two weeks later, the 1918 flu claimed its first victim in Santa Fe. Within a few days, cases there skyrocketed to 175. Albuquerque physicians, who had previously claimed that the greatest danger from the flu was the panic it caused, changed their tune when cases began to multiply in their city. Doctors warned the public to “avoid crowds, wash your hands frequently, and cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze.” Sound familiar?

On October 18, Governor Washington Lindsay ordered the immediate closure of all courts, public schools, and churches. Public assemblies were forbidden. For the “First Time in Centuries, the City of the Holy Faith will say its Prayers at Home,” announced the 2020 Dobkin Native Artist Fellow Explores Climate Change Impacts on Source Materials

SAR welcomes Leah Mata Fragua as the 2020 Eric and Barbara Dobkin Native artist fellow.

While at SAR Mata Fragua is constructing a Northern Chumash dress: “I envisioned doing a dress because we use so many resources and because the resources are in danger. I want the work to have a visceral reaction, to cue viewers to think about how serious these issues are.” Mata Fragua, whose work often involves foraging and other ways of sourcing materials from nature, says that she has seen issues are. “Mata Fragua, whose work often

In this time of social distancing, we are presenting a wide range of programs that can be enjoyed remotely. Along with lectures and artist talks, SAR will be offering a selection of webinars and scholar-led online conversations as the season evolves. Head to sarweb.org to see the most up-to-date offerings and to stay involved from home.

Date: May 6, Noon
Location: Join us online.
Cost: Free

MacArthur Fellows in Conversation with Jason De León and Steven Feld

MacArthur Fellows in Conversation with Jason De León and Steven Feld

Sonya Dyer in Conversation with the Resident Curator

Visit sarweb.org for more information.

Cost: $75 not-yet-members

Beyond Borders Symposium

Cost: $50 SAR members

Beyond Borders Symposium

Cost: Free

For detailed event information & registration visit sarweb.org

SANTA FE’S ST. VINCENT SANATORIUM, WHICH TREATED PATIENTS DURING THE 1918 FLU

Distressed by the lack of health care for local residents, Governor Lindsey appealed to US Surgeon-General Rupert Blue, who sent Dr. John W. Kerr from the US Public Health Service to conduct a statewide survey. He arrived on September 16, 1918. Five days later, the first flu case was reported at the Army Sanatorium at Fort Bayard, northeast of Silver City, New Mexico. The flu also swept through the US Public Health Service Sanatorium at Fort Stanton, west of Lincoln, New Mexico, infecting nearly half of its three hundred patients. Dr. Kerr took a break from his survey to coordinate relief efforts. By December 2, the epidemic had

Two years earlier, the American Medical Association had published the results of a nationwide assessment of public health. Out of one thousand points, New Mexico was the only state to receive a score of zero. As one Chicago physician commented, “New Mexico sells health, but does not know whether she herself is healthy or not.” The state would soon find out.

Just prior to the fall outbreak, during the summer of 1918, several hundred New Mexico men, about to enter the military, had tested positive for tuberculosis. In an effort to find treatment for them, Governor Lindsey contacted sanatoriums throughout the state, but the beds were full.

Records department. It was also the only state to receive a zero score in a nationwide assessment of public health. "As for today's coronavirus outbreak," says Painey Owen Lewis, SAR scholar-in-residence and author of Chasing the Cure in New Mexico: Tuberculosis and the Quest for Health, "I am thankful we have a public health department. Like the 1918 flu, this pandemic shall pass."
Volunteering has always been a part of Donna Berg’s life. She jokes that as a young girl growing up in eastern Tennessee, “It was sort of like if you hadn’t been volunteering at the hospital for the last hundred years, well then we’re not speaking to you.” She adds, “It was just part of the family, being involved in the community and choosing what part of the community you think is interesting and supporting that area.”

When the her and her husband moved to northern New Mexico in 1980, Donna Berg knew she had found a community she could support. She got to know SAR through a friend who suggested she attend some of the school’s well-respected field trips. “I remember we went to the White Sands Missile Range with archaeologist Karl Laumbach. People were calling from all over the United States to get on that trip because you just couldn’t get in there in those days. SAR could go places that no one else had access to because of their reputation and because of the people who were guiding the tours. And Leslie Shipman (now SAR’s director of guest services) packed homemade meals for everyone. Her lemon bars were the coveted prize at each lunch.”

The joy of learning about cultural heritage in situ has continued to drive Donna’s interest in Southwest archaeology, anthropology, and history. “I have kind of an addiction to learning. I had to have new shelves built for all my Southwest archaeology books. I have hundreds of them now. And I go to talks, professional meetings, and classes. Sometimes people tell me things and I think, why didn’t someone tell me that forty years ago?”

When she retired from her thirty-six-year career at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Donna discovered the Indian Arts Research Center docent training. Now she does double duty: she leads public tours of the nearly twelve thousand works of Native American art at the IARC, and she guides visitors on tours of SAR’s historic estate. “I love taking people into the administration building and showing them the historic images of the zaguan before they put the glass doors in the hallway. I like to imagine coming out of that living room, maybe a little tipsy during one of the White sisters’ well-known parties, and stumbling down those steps and into that beautiful garden. I think there were a lot of things that happened here that we don’t even know about. For me, the spirit of the place is sort of embodied in that living room area [now SAR’s boardroom].”

What excites Donna about SAR now? “I love seeing all the work being done to preserve the historic estate. We are so lucky to have these grounds, and people really notice. They notice the brickwork and the stonework and how areas are manicured. It is expensive to keep a historic property intact, and SAR is working hard to maintain and honor it.”

Donna won’t be slowing down anytime soon. “I still love starting IARC tours. Standing at the entrance of the IARC, with the vault behind you, you can see this wonderful view of all of those shelves with all those pots. There is something about that moment that people feel like they are getting to witness something special. Really, with the vaults and all of the collection, there is magic in experiencing works of art in person. When you first go in the vaults there is a wow factor that you don’t get with other museum tours, and then you go in, and it is full of these amazing stories.”

Gift family and friends an IARC collections tour or SAR historic estate tour. Gift cards available at 505-954-7205 or iarc@sarpress.org

Contributors: Michael F. Brown, Nancy Owen Lewis, Elyssa Pott, Meredith Schweizer, Sarah Soliz. PHOTO: page 1: Undocumented Migration Project; Michael Wells; page 2: Rashmi Sadana; courtesy of Marques Houlkie Marzon; Garret P. Vreeland; Jason S. Ordaz; book cover courtesy of the publisher; page 3: Ward Hicks, Albuquerque Museum, image no. PA 1982.181.435; Jesse Nusbaum, Palace of the Governors, Photo Archives, Neg. No. 061373; Courtesy of Leah Mata Fragua; page 4: Garret P. Vreeland; Courtesy of the Indian Arts Research Center; book cover provided by SAR Press; Laura McAtackney.