HIDDEN POMONA
(Saahil Desai '16 and Kevin Tidmarsh '16 set out to plumb the hidden depths of Pomona history.) p. 28

OCELOT COUNTRY
(The endangered little cat has a new best friend—Hilary Swarts '94.) p. 36

THE MAGICAL BRIDGE
(For Olenka Villarreal '85, building an accessible playground was only the first step.) p. 44

ZOOT SUIT REBOOT
(Rose Portillo '75 relives her Zoot Suit dream-come-true 40 years later.) p. 42

Spring 2017
HIDDEN POMONA
Little-known chapters in Pomona College history
FACT OR MYTH

Some of these old tales about Pomona are actually true. Others are sheer fabrications or exaggerations. Still others remain mysteries. Can you tell which ones are fact, which are fiction, and which are unknown? (Answers on page 5.)

Huns to Hens

Legend has it that Pomona got its unique mascot, the Sagehen, because of a bit of century-old political correctness and some creative cost-avoidance. The original Pomona mascot was far more war-like than the current flightless bird—the Huns. However, that name lost its luster when the U.S. entered World War I in 1917 and the popular epithet for the enemy became you-know-what. The teams had already invested in uniforms bearing the word “HUNS,” so to save money, the “U” was changed to an “E” and they became the “HENS.”

The Shakespeare Garden

Almost every student has heard the story that the border of Marston Quad is home to a garden containing plants mentioned in Shakespeare’s plays—pansies, fennel, willows and rosemary from Hamlet, violets and thyme from A Midsummer Night’s Dream, daffodils from A Winter’s Tale, daisies from Love’s Labour’s Lost, and so on. According to the tale, every plant mentioned in the Bard’s body of work is to be found somewhere in the garden.
Things That Go Bump

There are several persistent tales of ghosts on the Pomona campus. There’s Walter, the worker who fell off the roof of Bridges Auditorium during its construction and has haunted the place ever since, playing pranks with the lights and appearing in shadowy passageways. There’s Gwendolyn, who died in the old Claremont Hotel before it became Summer Hall and occasionally can be seen or heard in its lower level or bell tower. And there’s Nila, the ghost of a young woman who reportedly wanders the attic and hallways of Seaver House.

The Flying Sailboat

A classic prank that has become Pomona legend happened in 1978. The place was Frary Hall, or rather, the rafters of Frary Hall. In a scene worthy of a Magritte painting, students arriving for breakfast one morning found a 13-foot sailboat suspended in space high above the tables, with sails set and framed in Pomona blue.

The Duke and the Madonna

Is that Little Bridges behind John Wayne and Charles Coburn in the movie Trouble Along the Way? That, at least, is the story, which includes Wayne coming to campus in 1952 as Pomona played the role of a small Catholic college in the film. That visit is also remembered for a double-take moment when the sculpture of the flutist in the fountain in Lebus Court was covered by a fake statue of the Madonna.
The Borg and the Borg
The story goes that the Borg of TV fame—the swarming, half-cybernetic zombies from Star Trek: The Next Generation who lived in a cube with warrens of maze-like hallways—got its name from Pomona’s Borg—otherwise known as the Oldenborg Center for Modern Languages and International Relations, also known for its warrens of maze-like hallways.

Winner and Still Champion...
The Men’s Glee Club of 1932 took first place in the Pacific Southwest Glee Club Championship in San Diego, then traveled to St. Louis to compete in the National Glee Club Championship in 1933. Arriving at the Claremont train station, Roosevelt was transported by carriage to campus where he spoke to a throng of 7,000 to 8,000 people from a rostrum in front of Pearsons, later planted the tree, which survives to this day.

The Roosevelt Shovel and Oak
According to legend, the shovel that Pomona presidents bring out to break ground for new buildings was used by President Theodore Roosevelt to plant a California live oak on campus during his visit in 1903. Arriving at the Claremont train station, Roosevelt was transported by carriage to campus where he spoke to a throng of 7,000 to 8,000 people from a rostrum in front of Pearsons, later planting the tree, which survives to this day.

All Numbers Equal 47
The 47 craze at Pomona started in 1964 when Donald Bentley, then Professor of Statistics, presented a paradoxical proof with the title, “Why all numbers are equal to 47.”

Myth
 Probably. But there are those who say they’ve experienced strange things in these buildings and become reluctant believers, so let’s brand it unknown. Some of the facts behind the stories, at least, might be true. We have been told that a record exists in Big Bridges’ archives mentioning an unnamed worker who was killed during construction, and that the L.A. Times reported a death at the old hotel that became Summer. However, we’ve been unable to confirm either claim.

Answers

1. This is at least partly a myth. The nickname “Sage Hen” appeared in The Student Life as early as 1913, when sports editor E.H. Spoor ’15 wrote, “Once again the Oxy Tiger wanders from his lair and comes to peaceful, peaceful Claremont with intent to murder. The Sage Hen will fight—on the field. On the campus she is entirely amicable.” “Hen” and “Hun” were used interchangeably until around 1918, when the latter disappeared, possibly because of its wartime connotations.

2. This is a great story, but it’s also a complete fabrication. Students have passed the story down to other students for many years, but there has never been a Shakespeare Garden on Pomona’s campus. No one knows how the myth got started.

3. Myth! Probably. But there are those who say they’ve experienced strange things in these buildings and become reluctant believers, so let’s brand it unknown. Some of the facts behind the stories, at least, might be true. We have been told that a record exists in Big Bridges’ archives mentioning an unnamed worker who was killed during construction, and that the L.A. Times reported a death at the old hotel that became Summer. However, we’ve been unable to confirm either claim.

4. This story is factual and describes one of the most inventive and challenging pranks ever performed on the Pomona campus. Michael Brazil ’79, who was interviewed by PCM in 2002, was one of a group of friends who conceived the daring plan and carried it out.

5. All of this is true, including the Madonna, for which there is also photographic evidence.

6. Only one person really knows if this is true, and he isn’t talking, so let’s call it unknown. Joe Mavray ’79 reportedly lived in Oldenborg during his college years and played a role in creating the Borg as a writer for Star Trek: The Next Generation. To our knowledge, however, he has never confirmed or denied this claim.

7. This is all true, though the “reigning champion” part is a humorous take on an odd situation, not a serious claim.

8. The story about the shovel, so far as we can tell, is completely factual. The shovel has an inscription on the front of the handle noting that it was a gift from the Class of 1898, and another on the back noting that it was used by President Roosevelt on May 3, 1903. However, the tree part is false. The original Roosevelt tree died shortly after planting and was quietly replaced.

9. Professor Bentley was, indeed, known on campus for this tongue-in-cheek, fallacious proof that all numbers equal 47 (or any other number), and Mets and Elgin did start the 47 hunt that has continued to this day.
The Right Side of History

History can be complicated, and institutions that span centuries are lucky if they don’t find themselves on the wrong side of it on occasion. So I suppose it should come as no surprise that a lot of American colleges and universities are struggling today with the moral implications of their complicated pasts.

In 1838, the priests who ran the Jesuit college that eventually became Georgetown University sold 272 slaves to sugar plantations in Louisiana for the modern equivalent of $3.3 million. That now-infamous sale—which saved the institution at the cost of condemning 272 enslaved men, women and children to even greater suffering—illustrates the tremendous institutional leadership failure in a time when their predecessors failed to rise above the ethical blind spots and moral outrages of their times.

The history of institutional involvement in slavery is, perhaps, the most extreme example of this. In his 2013 book, Elerson and Jay Craig Steen Winkle argues that in addition to church and state, America’s early colleges were “the third pillar of a civilization based on bondage.” In recent years, institutions like Harvard, Brown, Princeton and Emory have also investigated and publicly acknowledged their own historic ties to the slave trade.

Craig Steven Wilder argues that in addition to the immediate reparations, including a monument to the slaves who were sold, preferential admissions for their descendants and the renaming of buildings in their honor. Similarly, Yale recently decided to rename the residential college that has been, since its construction in 1933, named for John Calhoun, known as slavery’s most forceful political advocate.

If there’s a lesson to be learned from all of this, it’s probably that it would be far better to avoid such situations to begin with. But how do you do that? It’s tempting to say: Just do the right thing, even when it’s hard. And in the final analysis, there’s probably no better advice to be found. But at the same time, you only have to look at today’s heated debates over a range of questions to see that culture and self-interest cloud our ethical vision, and that a lot of American colleges and universities are struggling today with the moral implications of their complicated pasts.

So what are the divisive issues of our own time, that at some point in the distant future, will seem so ethically obvious that people will wonder how on earth anyone could have got them wrong? And what will be the final verdict of history, once time has peeled away the layers of self-interest, politicalanimosity and cultural bias that trouble our ethical sight today? These are questions we probably should all ask ourselves from time to time.

For my part, I think climate change is likely to top the list. Someday, I believe, when the disruptive realities of a warmer world are indisputable facts on the ground, the denial and inaction of many of today’s leaders will be viewed as criminal acts of willful blindness.

Disruptive realities of a warmer world are indisputable facts on the ground, the denial and inaction of many of today’s leaders will be viewed as criminal acts of willful blindness.

In all of these issues, I’m proud to say that the college that employs me to create this magazine puts its money and its power where its values are. I feel confident that Pomona’s efforts to do the right things—including its commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030, its sustained efforts on behalf of the LGBT community on our campus, and its leadership in the fight for the undocumented students known as “Dreamers”—will, on these issues, at least, put it very much on the right side of history.
When our daughter Beatrice [Schraa ’06] was applying to college, she received a brochure saying Pomona professors often formed lifelong friendships with students. That was certainly true of Virginia. I took French 51 from her in the fall of 1968 and several classes after that, including a wonderful seminar on the French Revolution, conducted with Bordeleau Polanski [Schraa ’72], remember her as one of the friendliest and accessible professors any­one knew. We took in touch after graduation, and there appeared the first in a series of tiny but exquisite and wonderful located areas. We saw her regularly after retirement. Initially in Paris and then when we lived in Brussels. For Beatrice, Virginia was a lifelong friend. Virginia was at her christening in Paris and although she couldn’t attend Beatrice’s wed­ding earlier last year, we had lots of interested emails and calls with great wishes and requests for details and pictures. When she was only 95, I was working in Paris when she moved down. As I was leaving after the sec­ond day, her husband told me that she had met her friend and me to her home in Padias to play and we spent a wonderful afternoon. Around 1970, Zita Chi Sigma voted Mme. Crosby as a member. Not a faculty advisory member. (At this time, we also voted sev­eral women students as members.) All of this was against the rules, but in the spirit of the times, we didn’t ask. Did she share with you her story of how she got into writing radio soap operas while living in a Chicago apartment with “a prostitute in the apartment above and an abscission in the building below?” I tried looking her up when I was in Clare­mont a few years ago, but was told that she was no longer doing so. Let me end with some verses from a poem she wrote in her class (Rinsd: “A Cassandra”).

Last voyage comme en passe d’espace, Maginone, elle a deussa to do. L’as de beste lovas choisi? O voyiment marane Nature, Pas on un reflex de mem. Que de matin jaques au sor.

Thank you for your article, and thanks for letting me share.

—Howard Hogan ’71

Owings, Md.

Anghusned Father

Thank you to Mary Schmich ’75 for her article on Virginia Crosby, which I enjoyed and will share with the students.

In the fall of 1967, I tested into Mme. Crosby’s fourth-semester French (French 62), which I survived with a generous B. However, I then had the audacity to sign up for her “Renaissance French Literature” class the next semester (spring ’68). Here I was: (1) the only boy (or, at last, 18-year-old), I wouldn’t say “weird,” (2) the boy who didn’t even do economics (math), (3) the least prepared student. It was obvious that I wasn’t enjoying the love of the subject, so again, she was generous with her grade.

Towards the end of the semester, an older stu­dent (I was only 18) helped me buy a bottle of red wine, “a Bourgeac de Couronne.” I had a silver chalice, so to celebrate, we brought this to class, quite against the rules. Mme. Crosby took us off campus across Harvard Ave. and we celebrated: one bottle for about $8! I didn’t need glasses, and she got a chuckle out of the silver chalice. A couple of years later, she invited my girl­friend and me to her home in Padias to play and for a very pleasant afternoon on her deck and in the garden:

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Thank you for your article, and thanks for letting me share.

—David Schraa ’72

New York, N.Y.

Shining Example

Thank you for the inspiring story in the summer 2016 POM of Judge Helen Dandridge, who has steadfastly exhibited the courage to promote the values and enforce the laws of our country in the face of the prejudice and fear engendered by the 9/11 attack on WTC. I’m sure I would not have continued to do the same. Her shining example of the virtues and vision we be­lieve Pomona in all its gradole is. His life (or should be an inspiration to us all and

—Mike Hogan ’69

Black Forest, Colo.

Another Cane

“The Cane Mystery,” article in the POM summer 2016 issue was interesting and reminded me of an anecdote that happened to me in gradole.

I had a silver chalice; so to celebrate Rabelais, qualified friendship that holds much of the world

Andrus Remembered

I was saddened to learn that my senior thesis advisor, Professor William Detlev Andrus, had passed away (POM Fall 2014). Under his direct­ion, my thesis topic was a study of a un­qualified friendship that holds much of the world

Thank You

Last year a note in POM suggested that we in the community could use a review of the quality and afflatus that this amazing publication delivers can say “Amo, Amo, Amo, Amo!”

The latest example, featuring the Oxtoby Al­umni, is such a stunning keeper that I am finally about the time she saw Hitler, about her one and

—Josephine King ’26

Alpine, Calif.

Correction:

Alumni, parents, and friends are invited to email letters, quotes, and memories to Pomona College Magazine, 510 North College, Claremont, Calif. Letters may be edited for length, style, and clarity.

PCM
There’s a new Cecil in town. Since he’s at least the third in a direct line of Sagehen costume evolution, let’s call him Cecil 3.0.

The old mascot costume—Cecil 2.0—familiar to generations of Sagehens for its round head and dangling ribbon of tonge, has been chipping around campus since 1997 and, after a couple of decades of hard use and washings, was seriously starting to crack, tear and mold. (Not to mention the accumulated—ahem—aroma of years of sweaty occupants that wearers had to cope with when they put on the head.)

Senior Associate Dean of Campus Life Frank Redoya, in whose closet Cecil 2.0 resided for many years, still has the head of what may have been the original Cecil—call him Cecil 1.0. We were unable to determine when or why that Cecil was designed and built, but Redoya says by the 1990s it was falling apart. “Bill Almquist ’98 designed and built, but Bedoya says by the early 2000s, the original idea for an app to let users know when laundry machines were available came from the group’s first-year student, Sophia Richards ’20. “We found it very cool because it would involve both hardware and software,” says Xiong.

Kent Shikama ’18, another member of the team, said he enjoyed the process of “thinking of ways to overcome constraints and executing it.” He cited three memorable hours in the laundry room of Walker Hall, experimenting with an empty dryer and a scientific sensor Unlike Xiong and Shikama, two good friends and fellow computer science majors who had partnered in several previous Hackathons, Sonia Granwald ’18 and Peter Cowal ’19, who took top honors for best design, had never worked together before. “Two days or so before the event I was standing around in the CS lab complaining that I didn’t know how to instrument a washing machine,” Granwald said. “Peter happened to be working in the room and heard me. He said that sounded like a fun idea.” The two-person team was formed, and the result was their winning 3D space game, titled “Tiny Forever.”

What do a 3D space game, an English-Morse code translation app and an app that monitors the machines in a dormitory laundry have in common? They were all among the award-winning entries created in a single night of furious work during the 10th Semiannual 5C Hackathon, held at Pomona in November.

Billed as a collaborative night filled with “awesome swag, food and mentorship,” the fall 2016 Hackathon covered a span of 12 hours, from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. the following day, during which student competitors worked in groups to come up with novel ideas and put them into action.

Zoë Xiong ’17, a member of the seven-person team that created Laundry Master, which took second place in the advanced group, said the original idea for an app to let users know when laundry machines were available came from the group’s only female student, Sophia Richards ’20. “We found it very cool because it would involve both hardware and software,” says Xiong.

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### Spaceships and Laundry

**The Full Fulbright**

Pomona College is the No. 2 producer of Fulbright recipients in the nation among all four-year undergraduate institutions, tying for the position with neighboring Pitzer College. For 2016-17, there were 15 Pomona students who garnered Fulbrights. In the previous award year, 14 Pomona students received the coveted awards, and the College was ranked sixth. This year, Smith College was No. 1 on the list. Among this year’s Sagehen projects were a Silk Road expedition to study the syncretism of Sino-Islamic identity in China; epidemiological research at the Pasteur Institute’s Extracellular Pathogens Unit in Paris, France; and teaching positions in Indonesia, Vietnam and Colombia.

**Marine Zoology Program Ends**

Pomona’s summer marine zoology program, which dated back, with a few interruptions, to the early part of the 1900s, ended in 1967. In 1967, “Professor Kaye” Haisong ’43 transferred there. The next day, President Lyon, Dean of Men William Nicholl and a crowd of Pomona students accompanied her and her brother, Kaye “Casey” Haisong ’42—who would be allowed to graduate in May despite his April departure—to the train station, where the College band played for them. “Everybody cried,” says a student who later told Dean of Women Jessie Gibson. After completing her work at Oberlin, Sue was awarded her degree from Pomona in absalthough during Oberlin’s commencement. “See Farwell to Pomona” on page 35.

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JASON ALEXANDER ON LIFE AND ART

“There is no bad opportunity. There is no wasted effort. There is no wrong turn. Your worst day, when the boyfriend or the girlfriend leaves you, and your parents don’t believe in you, and the teachers flunk you out of a course, and you don’t have enough money to pay for the semester, and you have that sick, horrible feeling in your gut of disaster and failure and no self-worth—you’re gonna use the crap outta that one day.

So sit with it, suck it in, enjoy it, and go, ‘Yeah, this is gonna be so good 10 years from now.’”


LOST HOLMES

Along the back wall of the Pomona College Archives stands an overlapping row of heavy bronze plaques. Some are from buildings or spaces that no longer exist; others have simply been replaced by newer plaques. The plaque at right is one of the largest and heaviest and dates from around 1916, when it was installed in Holmes Hall, the first campus building constructed after the founding of the College in 1887. (The only older building is Sumner Hall, which was built as a hotel before Pomona College was established.)

Holmes Hall was constructed in 1892 as a three-story, kerosene-lit Queen Anne Victorian, but a total renovation in 1916 left it unrecognizable, converting it into a two-story, stuccoed Mission Revival structure to match its neighbors—Bridges Hall of Music and Rembrandt Hall. This plaque was apparently created to celebrate that “rebuilt” incarnation of Holmes.

Originally a mixed-use building housing everything from a chapel to a chemistry lab, Holmes was later associated mainly with theatre. Two years before its centennial, deemed unsafe and impractical to renovate, the building was demolished in 1990 to make room for the current Alexander Hall.

ITEM: Holmes Hall plaque
COLLECTION: Pomona College Artifact Collection
DESCRIPTION: Bronze plaque, 23.5” wide X 35.5” high
DATE: circa 1916

If you have an item from Pomona’s history that you would like to see preserved in the Pomona College Archives, please call 909-621-8138.

Pomona College Magazine
As he retires from the Board of Trustees this spring after a tenure of almost 30 years, including nine years as chair, Stewart Smith ‘68 has found himself doing a few calculations. Between his father, the late H. Russell Smith ‘36, and himself, he estimates that the Smiths have been active members of the College family—as students, engaged alumni and trustees—for roughly two-thirds of the College’s 130-year existence, including more than half a century with at least gaged alumni and trustees—for roughly two-thirds of the College’s late H. Russell Smith ‘36, and himself, he estimates that the Smiths has found himself doing a few calculations. Between his father, the

Dad

He doesn’t recall who asked him to join Pomona’s Board of

Students.

Foundation.

Professor of Politics Hans

Harding.

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WHETHER WORKING WITH STUDENTS OR ADVISING THE PRESIDENT, SEFA AINA IS FOCUSED ON MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

STAYING INSPIRED

Sefa Aina is unable to sit still. When he thinks, he taps his fingers on his leg, when he listens, he nods along intently; when he speaks, his face breaks open in a smile as his hands paint vivid pictures in the air around him. Being around him is invigorating, but he asserts just the opposite: for Aina, being here, at Pomona College and surrounded by “students who actively work to take leftovers during hall food and feed it to people, or go mentor low-income kids, or spend their summer working for the PAYS program” is how he stays inspired.

A prominent activist and educator in the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, Aina came to Pomona from his alma mater, UCLA, where he obtained a bachelor’s degree in history and went on to serve as both a counselor and instructor at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. He recalls his time at UCLA fondly, when he became Pomona’s director of the Asian American Resource Center (AARC), and that he continues to work against as the interim director of the Draper Center for Community Partnerships. Aina deputies him, “You wonder whether or not you belong. These universities are beautiful, wonderful places, but some people aren’t going to feel comfortable or adjusted to the space. There’s privilege.”

“It’s these sorts of things that make you feel a little awkward,” he explains. “You try to unlearn how you fit. You’re surrounded by food and proliferation of squirrels.

“It’s this feeling of not belonging that Aina sought to alleviate when he became Pomona’s director of the Asian American Resource Center (AARC), and that he continues to work against as the interim director of the Draper Center for Community Partnerships. Aina describes the space he sets out to create for students as one where they can step back from the pressures of school and society and just take a deep breath. “However, it’s important to me that we always become proactive,” he stresses.

Taking identity struggles and turning them into concrete action is at the core of Aina’s activism. During his time at UCLA, the AARC, and now the Draper Center, Aina has established and overseen countless outreach programs in the communities of both Los Angeles and the Inland Empire. In addition to his full-time work at the Draper Center, he also serves as the executive director of the research and advocacy nonprofit Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC), which breaks down the “AAPI” category and focuses on supporting Pacific Islanders specifically.

“This may sound like a lot for one activist and educator to juggle, but it’s nothing for Aina. After all, he was selected from a pool of 25,000 candidates as one of 20 appointees to President Obama’s Advisory Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islanders, on which he served from 2010-2014. The experience, he says “was surreal. I’ve always considered myself someone who would not stand inside the White House with a picket sign, and there I was eating the snacks,” he laughs.

At the same time as he was working with the AARC to support AAPI students and advance local social justice activism, Aina was also advising President Barack Obama on the ways his policies were impacting AAPI communities and how his administration could do better. “You have to be able to sustain yourself,” he admits—something he often reminds the budding student activists on Pomona’s campus.

Now that Donald Trump is in the White House, Aina asserts that our collective responsibility is to stay vigilant and active. “We need to understand that the things we do here impact the lives of people around the world,” he says with a firm gesture to the room at large. “We need to understand that the connectedness of things, so that when policies come out, and you say, ‘Oh, that’s not relevant to me,’ you understand that it is. It’s you. It’s your neighbor. We have to always feel empathy and connection to people.”

And for Aina, there’s no better place to start than at home, in the communities that surround Pomona’s campus.

“I have always believed in the power and necessary of engagement, especially for college students. A lot of people applied to get into these desks and these seats,” he says.

Grinning, but eyes serious, he extends a pointing finger. “You got a seat. How are you going to make your seat matter for other people?”

— Feather Flores ’17
Satpute, that emotion perception is actually changed when we’re perceiving emotions. And according to research, emotion perception helps inform our decisions and actions. And according to Satpute, that emotion perception is actually changed when we’re perceiving if you are feeling good or bad. In one experiment, participants were asked to judge photographs of facial expressions that were morphed from calm to fearful in two ways. In one set of trials, participants had to choose either “calm” or “fearful” to describe each facial expression. In the second set of trials, participants had a continuous range, with “calm” to “fearful” anchored on a graded scale. Results indicated that categorical thinking (either calm or fearful) shifted the threshold for perceiving fear or calm. In essence, when a person has to think about something categorically it changes how they feel about it—pushing them over the threshold, as if they didn’t have strong feelings about it beforehand. These shifts correlated with neural activity in the amygdala and the insula, parts of the brain that are considered important for orienting attention to emotionally salient information and responding accordingly. “While these findings were observed when judging others’ emotions, they were reproduced in a second study in which participants judged their own feelings in turn shift when judged extreme emotions, closest to the threshold. The research has implications for the entire system from the daily to systemically social interactions.”

To function in society, it is important for people to be able to perceive and understand emotional experiences—both internally (for example perceiving if you are feeling good or bad) and externally (perceiving if someone else is feeling calm or angry). This emotion perception helps inform our decisions and actions. And according to Satpute, that emotion perception is actually changed when we’re perceiving emotions. And according to research, emotion perception helps inform our decisions and actions. And according to Satpute, that emotion perception is actually changed when we’re perceiving if you are feeling good or bad. In one experiment, participants were asked to judge photographs of facial expressions that were morphed from calm to fearful in two ways. In one set of trials, participants had to choose either “calm” or “fearful” to describe each facial expression. In the second set of trials, participants had a continuous range, with “calm” to “fearful” anchored on a graded scale. Results indicated that categorical thinking (either calm or fearful) shifted the threshold for perceiving fear or calm. In essence, when a person has to think about something categorically it changes how they feel about it—pushing them over the threshold, as if they didn’t have strong feelings about it beforehand. These shifts correlated with neural activity in the amygdala and the insula, parts of the brain that are considered important for orienting attention to emotionally salient information and responding accordingly. “While these findings were observed when judging others’ emotions, they were reproduced in a second study in which participants judged their own feelings in turn shift when judged extreme emotions, closest to the threshold. The research has implications for the entire system from the daily to systemically social interactions.”

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For a lighter example, consider the 2015 computer-animated movie Inside Out. In the film, each emotion is personified into a character: Joy, Sadness, Anger, Fear and Disgust. There is little room for gray areas—each emotion is extreme such as fear or happiness. A long-term partner of his work is to see people use the film. He adds, “Our results suggest that if you say that the glass is half empty, the water may actually lower, so to speak.” He explains further in his paper, “Our findings suggest that cate­gory judgments—especially when people believe they have options that fall in the gray zone—may change our perception and mental representation of these targets to be consistent with the cate­gory selected.”

Consider a juror who must decide whether a police officer on trial is telling the truth or lying during an oath. If a juror makes a judgment involves thinking about emotions in “black and white” terms rather than in shades of gray. Evidence presented in a trial will lead the juror to make a determination: Did the officer act out of anger or objec­tively reasonable fear? (Fear of imminent threat to life or their others lives or serious bodily harm)? The categorical nature of the decision helps determine if they are guilty or not.

Or think of faces. They move in gradations, says Satpute, but people typically talk about these expressions in categorical terms, calling them expressions of “fear” or “calm,” for instance. Similarly, when people perceive their own emotions, their bodily signals may vary continuously, but they often talk about feeling “good” or “bad.”

Vietnam Veterans

Pomona College Associate Professor of History and Chicana/o/Chicano Studies Tomás Summers Sandoval has worked on the topic of Latinos and the Vietnam War since 2011 and is currently working on a book that delves into the social history of the “brown baby boom” and how the war in Vietnam serves as a prism into the experiences of Latinx veter­ans in the 20th-century U.S. “This project is based on that work, an opportunity for me to connect people to this history in an accessible way as well as a deeply personal one,” he says.

The project “Vietnam Veterans” will also draw from the expert­ise and support of Rose Portillo ’75, lecturer in theatre and dance at Pomona (see story on page 42). As a collaborator on the project, Portillo will draw from her experience translating oral histories into theatrical form. “My father is a Vietnamese veteran,” she says. “His brother, my uncle, are Vietnam veterans. Most of the males I knew growing up were also Vietnam veterans. This work is deeply personal for me. In many ways, it’s a way for me to bring my skills as a historian to better understand not only why Latinxs made up such a significant share of the combat troops in Southeast Asia but, as important, how the war framed a long-term impact on their lives and the communities of their own lives.”

At a moment when political leaders portray Latinx in the United States as criminals, and as economic and cultural threats, he hopes that people will view their struggles and contributions differently. “If my work presents this generation in this way, as human beings seeking lives of dignity. Perhaps more importantly, Latinx and Latinas represent the future majority demographic of the United States. Because of that, I think it’s vital for us to recognize and better understand the enduring impacts of both military service and war’s influence on these beings.”

In the past five years, Summers Sandoval has collected more than 50 interviews with Latino veterans and their families. Two years ago, he received a $10,000 grant from the Cal Humanities California Documentary Project for a youth-centered, community history project in partnership with The dA Center for the Arts in downtown Pomona, Calif. The project trained local youth and Pomona College students to conduct oral histories of local Latino veterans and their families. A free field trip that earlier year, “Vietnamese Veterans: Mexican America and the Legacy of Vietnam 1970,” was run from March 11 through April 15 at The dA Center for the Arts in downtown Pomona.

—Carla M. Guererro

"Vietnam Veterans: Latinx Testimonies of the War" takes root from Summers Sandoval’s previous research documenting the oral histories of local Latino veterans who saw action in the Vietnam War. This new project centers on the oral histories of these veterans that have been curated by Summers Sandoval. The oral histories will be presented as a staged performance read by some of the veterans themselves as individual historical monologues, also known as “testi­monios” in Spanish. It’s a way for me to bring my skills as a historian to better understand not only why Latinxs made up such a significant share of the combat troops in Southeast Asia but, as important, how the war framed a long-term impact on their lives and the communities of their own complex lives, filled with hopes and desires as well as struggles and conflicts.”

I feel honored to receive the support of the Whiting Foundation. It’s a humbling thing for me to be part of a cohort of such amazing and engaged scholars,” he says.

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Lucy Ferriss ’75 is the author of 10 books, most recently A Sister to Honor, a novel about Afia Sultan, the daughter of a landholding family in northern Pakistan who attends an American college. Over and against Pashtun tradition and family dictates, Afia loves an American boy. Photos of the two of them together surface online, and her brother, entrusted by the family to be her guardian, is commanded to scrub to stanch the stain she left in the book, Ferriss explores two contrasting worlds and entangled questions of love, power, tradition, family, honor and betrayal. Ferriss talked to PCM’s Sneha Abraham about the conception of the book, cultural stereotypes and risk taking in the writing life.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity and space.

PCM: How did you get the idea for A Sister to Honor?

FERRISS: Well, Trinity College, where I work, has the best squash team in the collegiate game. Nobody in the United States plays squash, so if you're going to have the best squash team in the world you have to have people from Catholic cultures and Hindu cultures and Muslim cultures, and they all come to this little college in Connecticut.

Virginia Woolf explores the notion of “What if Shakespeare had a sister?” So I sort of applied that to my interest in the squash team. I thought: “What if one of these guys, particularly one of these countries with fairly rigid social mores, had a sister who came here?” I googled “Where do the best squash players in the world come from?” and they came from the Pashtun area of Pakistan. Which is also where the Taliban comes from.

So people always ask me, “How did you get interested in Pakistan?” I wasn’t interested in Pakistan. I was interested in something much closer to home. But it occurred to me that that would be a really pretty interesting situation for a young woman to be coming into. And so I read everything that I could read about that culture. But I continued for a long time just to be kind of looking at it from the American point of view. Looking at it in terms of: How would you come to understand somebody who is coming from this other place, and so forth? So the coach in the novel was originally my only point of view, and it wasn’t going anywhere. I called my literary agent and I said, “You keep telling me that I should write it from the point of view of the young man and the young woman, but I can’t do that unless I go to Pakistan.” And he said, “Well, you have to go to Pakistan then.” So I went to Pakistan. And then the story kind of came to life.

POC: Sounds like it was a series of what questions that led you.

FERRISS: Yeah, very much so. What if she came here? She’s 19, 20 years old. What if she falls in love? What if she falls in love with a Jew? And then I was also trying to understand. As the mother of an athlete, I was interested in the question of honor. I spent a lot of time with coaches. And I noticed that they would talk always about being a good sport and behaving honorably and calling the shots honestly and so forth. Only one thing that they wanted more than all that, and that was to win.

When I started looking into this in other cultures, I noticed basially lay between a woman’s legs. And that was sort of a two-sided question, too. So then I had to think: “What if we thought we were in the country in honor violence, but what if that really is what it masking? What else would be going on behind the scenes? So those questions kind of drove me.

POC: It’s an interesting side-by-side when you look at interests in the squash team. I thought: “What if one of these guys, particularly one of these countries with fairly rigid social mores, had a sister who came here?” I googled “Where do the best squash players in the world come from?” and they came from the Pashtun area of Pakistan. Which is also where the Taliban comes from.

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POC: How do you see places where honor plays a role in Western culture besides athletics?

FERRISS: I absolutely do. In fact, the way I came to understand honor violence was—I looked at a lot of the court cases, and I spoke with a wonderful woman named Hina Jilani in Lahore, who is on the Supreme Court in Pakistan and is also on the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. She and her husband, both well known, are the two people in Pakistan who are really reaching out to help young women who feel the risk of honor violence. So she talked about how, by calling a crime a crime of honor, then you can almost always get the perpetrator of that crime either off the hook entirely or with a lighter sentence. And so, I tried to think, “Well, what's the similar thing in the United States?” And of course, we have what we call crimes of passion. If a crime of honor is deeply killing your daughter or your son or your sister, a crime of passion is murder your partner or your spouse. And crimes of passion are usually there because someone's honor or sense of, usually, himself is threatened and because someone has betrayed him—we loved somebody else or whatever—and he can't hold his head up. He's been cuckolded. And so we call these things crimes of passion. And if somebody says it's a crime of passion, it’s not so bad as a brutal murder. But then, when you call it a crime of honor, it's one of the things that our culture doesn't want people to see as honorable people. We want to live with honor. We want to do things right. And I'm trying to write about individuals—I'm trying to write about characters—but they're going to be seen as representative and I did not want my Pakistani friends and contacts to feel that I had exploited them or represented anything falsely, given how generous they had been with me.

I have no doubt that I got some things wrong. I’ve gotten interesting reactions from my Pakistani friends, but they did not object to me engaging in stereotypes. There was one guy in London who said what he couldn’t find credible about the book was that the Pashtuns would do these things, and I was so ignorant of the kind of family values and points of honor that would be important to them. He said, “That’s just ridiculous. I’m here in London, and I know all about it.” It was a broad perspective. “Yeah, well, but you’re not in Western Massachusetts. You may know about it in London, but in Western Massachusetts, we still have these more stereotypical already in place.” So it is a fine line. You have to expect that you’re going to get some things wrong, and all you can say is that you did your damnedest to get it right.

POC: In regards to issues over immigration in general and attitudes toward Muslims from the Middle East or Pakistan, we’re in a particular cultural and historical moment in our country. What do you think is the significance of stories like A Sister to Honor at this time?

FERRISS: I can say for sure, but what I would hope is that first of all people would come to understand the meaning of family...
Because it seems to me that one of the troubles that we have is we think of family so differently in this country from the way it’s thought of in other parts of the world—the absolute importance of belonging to a family, of being reunited with your family, of being truly cosmopolitan, and not having a very individualistic culture. And I’ve brought up that culture. I tend to think in terms of the notions of the individual. But there are a lot of cultures that don’t. They think in terms of how important it is to belong to a family. And so, feel I’ve got a little bit of that across them, then. I might have chipped away at some of the misunderstandings that we have about the people who we come here. For instance, nobody could have been allowed to stay a minute longer. It was only there for three weeks. I went to the Pashawar area, where the capital of that province in Pakistan, Peshawar. There are two million people. And Peshawar was once the crossroads of the Silk Road. It was once the center of that culture. There is a people who know where it was and everybody went there. The level of culture was really high and so forth. Now, of course, it’s just fallen on its knees in the dirt. So even for the people in other parts of the world, if you were to go to Pakistan and say, “Peshawar? You’re going to Peshawar? Why?” It’s considered sort of the edge of the frontier because if you go from there you’ll show up in the frontier provinces, which is where the Pakistani government doesn’t even have any control. It’s a big city, and there was a moment when this guy came running up to me and told me that he recognized me. I thought he was going to set up a suicide bomb because he came at me so intently. But he told me that he was the first Westerner he had seen in that city in five years. So, ironically, a woman, a woman you can imagine how Western a woman would have been there for me to be there. It’s a very good website, but I found a department of language and literature. And I wrote to them and said just that I was an American and would like to do some research in their area. Was there anybody that they could put me in touch with to help me? Shazia was there. This is rice to me, because there are women who teach at the university, though many fewer than there used to be, and with not very good working conditions for them. But she was teaching there, and she happened to be a women’s studies chair as the secretary was looking at this email, having to say where she should send it. And Shazia looked at it and said, “Tell you what—why don’t you send that to me?” The next thing I knew she was telling me that I had to stay with the family. She wanted me to learn about my book, that her family would take me all around, etc. POM: You open the book with the proverb, “Give the honor of the family to the family.” What does that mean to you? FERRISS: Well, it ties in with another thing that’s there in all of these. There are all of these quiet signals that we give ourselves all the time, and so we don’t go there. That’s too tricky to write about; you don’t know if you could pull it off, somebody will be offended—that kind of thing. So you have to learn. You have to be very careful with your language, because your book, that her family would have that tension in them. PCM: Do you have any trepidation or a moment of fear before something goes public because you’re taking such risks? Or do you feel like that’s just ingrained in who you are by now? FERRISS: No, I always have trepidation. I actually don’t believe any writers who say that they don’t. The book before this was based on the news in the 1990s about young people of good families. When they got into the line to get to Harlan County, it was a mist. I opened the book with an account of a teenage girl and boy basically being a child. It’s quite graphic. And I thought that, on the one hand, everybody is going to hate this, and on the other hand, well, you know, maybe it’s going to surprise some people. And I guess if people get past it, then they’re kind of readers who want to read the rest of the book. And I guess they just don’t like me. So I always feel some trepidation. PCM: Why does your favorite team have an outstanding season and then struggle to replicate its previous success? You’ll look for all sorts of reasons, but it’s likely just a matter of chance. According to Professor of Economics Gary Smith, we are hardwired to make sense of the world by looking for patterns in random data. His research focuses on recognizing when the role of chance is the dominant force. What The Luck? The Surprising Role of Chance in Everyday Lives, Smith argues that understanding the role of luck through the statistical concept of regression to the mean is the key to understanding exceptional success and failure. “When there is uncertainty, there is regression. It happens in parenting, education, sports, medicine, investing and more. Don’t be misled by chance and surprised by regression,” says Smith. Smith’s vision for the book began with an academic paper that he wrote 20 years ago. He noticed that sports commentators tend to believe that outstanding performances will continue season after season. When they don’t, the commentators attribute the fall-off to laziness, a lack of focus or a sophomore slump. Along with Teddi Schall ’99, Smith showed that basketball performance regression, in the top players in any season tend to do not as well as the season before or the season after. What The Luck? 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Adrian Frazier
Noted biographer

W.B. Yeats’s love poetry, who was also a charismatic but unfaithful inspiration for romanticized figures, Maud Gonne, the leading figure in the Irish republican movement.

Adrian Frazier’s new novel, A Gambler’s Anatomy, is the story of a James Bond-esque international backgammon hustler who believes he is psychic but is sidetracked by the discovery of a tumor in his face. He is then forced to grapple with existential questions, like: Are gamblers being played by life? What if you’re telepathic, but it doesn’t do you any good?

Which raises another question: Why did Lethem, a critically acclaimed novelist and essayist, choose to write about backgammon and gambling?

“I always lean forward when someone in a story or a movie goes to the casino or steps up to the pool table or goes to the online poker game. So, I began by thinking in the simplest way, ‘I want to do that. I want to write a gambling story,’” says Lethem.

Given the high stakes, gambling serves as a rich metaphor for life, he says, “The backgammon board or any kind of gambling arena is a kind of microcosmic world, it intensifies your relationship to life. But it’s also an escape; it’s a bubble you go into; it’s outside of life. While you’re there, everything else disappears,” he says.

And ultimately, life—the house—always wins, he says.

Lethem, whose nine previous books include Mother’s Brooklyn and The Fortress of Solitude, is known for his genre mixing and experimentation. He says this book is a more deliberate engagement with genre, classifying A Gambler’s Anatomy as a horror novel, though it doesn’t have the traditional scares.

Lethem says he wanted to write a book where the reader can’t take his or her eyes off of the character’s nightmarish descent, which is set in Berlin, Singapore and Berkeley.

Lethem’s writing process starts with what he calls “bluebearding around” and moves to dogged intention. Once he finds a voice that he likes, he works every day. But he says he is not concerned with hours or pages, so much as with touching the project consistently. When Lethem gets stopped at a crossroads, he says, he will just sit there “staring at the page and tolerating the anxiety.”

While so many other writers toss out material and create alternate scenes that don’t end up in their books, Lethem treads carefully. “I try not to put a foot wrong. People sometimes ask you afterwards for the outtake, asking, ‘Could we publish the deleted scenes?’ And I say, ‘I’m sorry. I don’t really generate those.’ If I’m turning in the wrong direction and it doesn’t please me to write in that mode, I’d rather sit and wait,” he says.

Born into a creative family, as a child Lethem thought about becoming a painter like his father, or a filmmaker or cartoonist. But his mother gave him a typewriter, “which was like, ‘Oh,’” he says. By the age of 14, the voracious reader announced he wanted to be a writer. His enjoyment of the craft hasn’t dimmed.

“When you begin to break down all the variations that are possible and all the implications of the decisions you’re making at a subconscious level when you write sentences, even in that very basic mode, you can never stop being fascinated by it. I like trying to stay an apprentice to the task.”

Lethem, the College’s Ritz E. Dinsey Professor of Creative Writing, says he finds conversations in the classroom stimulating. “Seeing people trying to conjure what they’re dreaming up, that’s the most exciting thing to do. The difference between what you visualize or what you hope your reader will experience and what actually lands on the page—is a very rich and very mysterious area of instability,” Lethem says.

—Shonda Abraham

[BOOKMARKS]

American Enlightenments Pursuing Happiness in the Age of Reason In her groundbreaking new book, Caroline Winterer ’88, a professor of humanities at Stanford University, explores the national mythology surrounding the American Enlightenment, tracing the complex interconnections between America and Europe that gave it birth.

[BOOKMARKS]
WINTER SUNSET
Evening falls over Carnegie and Hahn halls and the City of Claremont
—PHOTO BY JEFF HENG
SAAHIL DESAI '16 AND KEVIN TIDMARSH '16 SET OUT TO SHINE A LIGHT ON SOME IMPORTANT BUT LITTLE-KNOWN CHAPTERS IN POMONA COLLEGE'S PAST. THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HISTORY.

HIDDEN POMONA

STORY BY MARK WOOD
I. Strangers in a Strange Land

Desai: "...For the next three months, we'll be investigating the questions about our school that we've never had opportunities to ask. What were relations like between the College's founders and the original inhabitants of the land? How exactly did this decidedly New England-style liberal arts college get founded in the middle of Southern California? And what are the stories of the early students of color at the school?..."

Tidmarsh: "Let's start with that last one. Right now we're going to focus on the period between 1887, when Pomona was founded, and 1958, when the College was almost entirely white. That's not to say that some students of color didn't attend or even thrive at Pomona, however.

"Winston M. C. Dickson arrived in Claremont in 1900 at a time when there probably weren't any other African Americans in the inland Empire, and only about 2,000 in the entire city of L.A. He was born into two freed slaves in 1872 in a farming community close to Crockett, Texas, which means he actually would have been about 25 years old at Pomona. There basically wasn't any public education for Blacks in the South at the time, so it makes sense that it took him some time to get to Pomona. I'm really curious as to how Winston Dickson could have ended up here in 1900, considering that Claremont is more than 1,000 miles away from Houston and that Pomona was pretty much unknown at that point and had fewer than 100 students.

"So there's a ton of photos of Winston Dickson from his time at Pomona, and he really seemed to be an integral member of his class. In some pictures, he's standing off to the side, and while he's a member of an early team on campus, he's not pictured in most of their photos, for some reason."

Tidmarsh: "It's not hard to imagine why.

Desai: "What's really amazing to me is that Winston Dickson was the Class Day speaker for the Class of 1904, and a L.A. Times reporter who made the trek to Claremont for the event wrote that he had, quote, 'the magnetic voice and manner of a trained orator.' He was actually the first Black graduate of any college or university in Southern California. Then he got law degrees from Harvard and Boston University, and for the next half-century, he established himself as one of the most well-respected Black attorneys in Houston, Texas. In 1913, there were just 19 Black attorneys in all of Houston, serving a Black population that had swelled to 30,000 people.

"Most of the cases he litigated were in the divorce or probate courts, which seemed kind of strange to me, but then I talked to a professor who studies his life to learn more about him, and he said that basically, this was all the work that Black lawyers could do at that point. It was such a difficult profession that many Black attorneys decided to leave it entirely. Over the course of his career, he became the president of the city's Colored Bar Association and then later helped found the Houston Lawyers Association, a mentoring organization for Black attorneys that still exists today. From a son of freed slaves to a Pomona

EXCERPT FROM EPISODE 1:

Top: Pomona's 1919 Debate Club, including Arthur Tillotson and Richard Williams. Bottom: Williams's College's second Black graduate, Williams would go on to become a deputy with the Inland County Sheriff's office. Williams's daughter, Susan Williams 60, her first Black woman to graduate from Pomona College.

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and Harvard-educated lawyer in Houston, it's hard not to think that Winston Dickson lived an absolutely remarkable life."

Tidmarsh: "But to this day there's nothing named after him on the campus—not yet, at least."

Desai: "Right. Other schools have buildings and scholarships named after their first Black graduates, but I think it's pretty surprising that Pomona doesn't have anything, especially since he was the first Black grad of any college in Southern California. Anyway, after Winston Dickson graduated in 1904, it's not like Black students suddenly became a frequent presence on campus. There wasn't another Black student in Claremont for the next 11 years, when Arthur Williams enrolled at Pomona in 1913.

"Born in Houston in 1897 to an influential columnist for the Houston Informer, a powerful Black newspaper of the time, Arthur Williams grew up in Houston's fourth ward, just a few miles southwest of where Winston Dickson lived in Houston. There weren't that many African Americans in Houston in the early 1900s, so I have a hunch that it must have been Dickson who introduced Arthur Williams to Pomona, then played a role in his coming to the school."

This entire episode is available for download at soundcloud.com, Itunes or Google Play.

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**EXCERPT FROM EPISODE 2:**

**When Carnegie Was Bombed**

Tidmarsh: “... The bomb was placed in Government Professor Lee [48] McDonald’s mailbox, which led some to question whether the bomber was targeting him directly. Claire McDonald, Lee’s wife and a Pomona alum from 1947, remembers how scary of a time it was for them. Claire McDonald: ‘Lee called me and said there was bombing going on at his office, and I was to be careful and stay put. And the kids were to stay in the house. So we were immediately scared. And I called up my daughter, and she and her husband joined us, and we had a very bad night. Every cell phone that they were going to throw a bomb at us.’”

**EXCERPT FROM EPISODE 3:**

**The Place Below Snowy Mountain**

Desai: “... By the time some of the early founders of Pomona College came to Claremont, much of the Tongva population had been decimated by a massive smallpox outbreak in 1862, a generation before the College’s founding. After the outbreak, the population of the Tongva in the area fell to around 4,000, a fraction of what it once was. When the founders of the College actually came to Claremont, there was barely a trace of the original people.”

Tidmarsh: “That being said, though, he and Brackett got a number of facts wrong. For one, they interpreted the Cahuilla dance as warlike, and the lyrics reference ‘Indian maidens and warriors.’ But they were just completely off base with their interpretation.”

Barrows spoke the Cahuilla language at the time, wrote that, in 1913, quote, ‘a party of wild Indians, including women and children, went up there to observe the native people, and they heard what they could remember of the chant they’d half-remembered, but it was a huge hit. Someone wrote words, and another person a melody. The finished product was titled ‘Ghost Dance,’ and before anyone knew it, Barrows’ and Brackett’s trip to the mountains was memorialized, and it passed from generation to generation among Pomona students at the time. The line about the Apache women from Brackett’s dissertation was penned by students of Pomona’s Club Gym performing the song dressed in white robes, dancing around a mock-up of a ritual fire.”

Desai: “This entire episode is available for download at soundcloud.com, iTunes or Google Play.
“That was great,” Tidmarsh remarks. “I never would’ve thought as a first year I would’ve been named-matched by Mufti before I graduated.”

That burger may have been the biggest bit of feedback they received, but it was not the only one. They wanted to know how many people on campus, how many students would be interested in it. “So it was satisfying that there were a lot of students interested, and that they really enjoyed listening to it, which was a nice thing to hear.”

And that feedback wasn’t just from people on campus. “My senior year, things had really rela-want to get bigger and bigger with each episode,” Tidmarsh says. “I think the biggest one was probably the Mufti episode.”
In the endangered ocelot’s struggle for survival, the little cat’s best friend may be Hilary Swarts ’94

Ocelot Country

Story by Margaret Shakespeare | Photos by Crystal Kelly

Survival

when you get squeezed out of your rightful home. When your food supply dwindles. When you are small and cute and easy to run down. Even though you are standoffish and try to keep to yourself.

In 22 countries, from Uruguay to south Texas, the ocelot (Leopardus pardalis), one of smallest and most secretive of all wild cat species, is facing this sad plight. Its habitat—thorn scrub, coastal marshes, tropical and pine-oak forests—has shrunk alarmingly, swaths destroyed by building and farming and other human activity. With diminished space in which to establish territories, find secure denning sites and forage for rodents, birds, snakes, lizards and other prey—plus the increased threat of becoming road kill as highway construction boomed in the 20th century—the ocelot has been in the fight of its life.
There are few rays of sunshine in this grim picture, but one of the brightest landed at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge a little over three years ago in the form of wildlife biologist Hilary Swarts ’94.

CHARMED BY THE PROMISE

of year-round Southern California sunshine, Swarts arrived at Pomona in 1990 from the four seasons of Greenwich, Conn., expecting college to be “a safe way to have an adventure.” She had no idea what that adventure would be or where it might lead, but she knew one thing for sure: “I always liked animals like crazy,” she says. “But it was two professors at Pomona who gave me the idea that you could have this kind of career—that jobs (with animals) other than veterinarian or zookeeper were possible.

It was Anthropology Professor James McKenna’s courses on biological anthropology and primate behavior that she first encountered the area of study that would become her path into the world. “Animal behavior!” she says, “I was hooked.”

In her senior year, Swarts threw herself straight into fieldwork, flying to Tanzania to spend her study-abroad semester in a wildlife conservation program there. However, midway through the semester, her plan to be immersed in chimpanzee communities took a bad turn: “I broke my ankle, had surgery in Nairobi [Kenya] and spent four weeks at Lake Manyara National Park recovering exhibits for the Arusha Natural History Museum.” Instead of taking a planned hike up Mt. Kilimanjaro, she hobbled around on crutches for the rest of her stay.

Despite these disappointments, she returned to Pomona and forged ahead. Since the College had no major in animal behavior, Swarts designed her own, combining the fields of her mentors to create a major in “biological anthropology.”

After graduation, she spent seven years project-hopping—from black howler monkeys in Belize to the famous mountain gorillas in Rwanda’s Parc National des Volcans. “Each work experience was confirmation that I’m doing the right thing,” she says. “I’d see something shiny and think, ‘That’s worth checking out.’ I’ve stumbled into some pretty amazing situations.”

If she had to pick a favorite, she says, it would be the time she spent in Suriname, monitoring a troop of capuchin and squirrel monkeys. “I lived in a hut with no electricity. The wildlife was mind-blowing. You’d stand still for five minutes, and all around you would come alive. Life was work and reading books and planning what to have for dinner and socializing with the locals.” She built up her explorer skill set by wielding a machete to cut trails and map sections of unexplored rain forest.

But eventually, despite all the “cool stuff” she was doing, Swarts began to wonder if she was missing the bigger picture. As an undergraduate, she had felt certain about two things: “I would not go to graduate school, and I would never work for the government.”

“Regulatory work is so important,” she emphasizes. But after a while, she had no idea what that adventure would be or where it might lead, but she knew one thing for sure: “I always liked animals like crazy,” she says. “But it was two professors at Pomona who gave me the idea that you could have this kind of career—that jobs (with animals) other than veterinarian or zookeeper were possible.

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If she had to pick a favorite, she says, it would be the time she spent in Suriname, monitoring a troop of capuchin and squirrel monkeys. “I lived in a hut with the day-to-day responsibilities of what she terms “desk biology” began to wear. “It’s soul-crushing work,” she explains. “You know exactly what each day, a month ahead, will be.”

So, when a job opening in the wildlife of south Texas popped up in her email for a wildlife biologist charged with leading the hands-on effort to save the ocelot in the U.S., she leapt at the challenge.

THE LAGUNA ATASCOSA

National Wildlife Refuge is a flat, sunbaked remnant of coastal prairie mixed with thorn bush, bordering on a vast hypersaline lagoon across from South Padre Island. Its dense thicket of low scrub is home to—at last count—15 of the remaining ocelots still living in the U.S., and for Swarts, it’s where the fight to save them from extinction is being waged.

Meeting with her here can feel like a bracing seminar in All Things Ocelot. For starters, she’ll whip her refinery pickup into her driveway (on Ocelot Road, of course) and say, pointing at the license plate: “Back in the 1960s and early 70s, ocelots were nearly loved to death. Laws then did not prohibit taking them for exotic pets or hunting them for their beautifully, dramatically marked fur. Babou, Salvador Dalí’s frequent sidekick, may have been the most famous of these import, reaching a peak of 140,000 pelts from Central and South American countries in 1970. Toward the end of the century, all these laws made sense, only 55 or so known individual ocelots remain in the U.S.

The fight to save them from extinction is being waged.
More important, it quickly becomes clear that she’s a walking compendium of information about the species she’s working to rescue. “We think that these Texas ocelots may have developed great fidelity to thick underbrush because of pursuit by hunters back in the 1960s,” she explains. More facts come tumbling out. Two-thirds of births are single, after a gestation of 79 to 82 days. Kittens stay with their mothers, to learn survival and hunting skills, for up to two years. “Although,” she adds, “I’m beginning to think it may be closer to a year and a half, if the teaching goes well and there is a reliable prey base. And the past two winters have been super wet, so there’s been prey out the wazoo.”

Working with ocelots, because they stay so well hidden, is different from her previous fieldwork, when she could watch the animals she was studying in their own environment (such as following gorillas, but it’s the only way she can keep tabs on the elusive little creatures she’s trying to save).

However, she has begun to see encouraging signs. The refuge has cracked up an aggressive habitat restoration project—planting ocelot corridors, extensions of the habitat that ocelots are known to use, with the low-growing, bushy native species they prefer. As a precaution against vehicular mortality, the refuge has closed some of its roads and plans to relocate its entrance. Most heartening, the Texas Department of Transportation is installing 12 new underpasses specifically designed for ocelots at known hot spots on two highways where there have been multiple incidents of road kill. “And now it seems likely they will put wildlife crossings into new road design from the start,” she adds. “This is a sea change—and for this state agency to come around bodies so well for the state and its environmental future.”

The work is hard, sometimes tricky and frequently thankless. However, it also has its rewards. “I love the element of variety in my job,” she says. “The nuts and bolts. Speaking the legalese. Ocelot outreach. Hearing people’s questions. I get fired up; they get fired up.”

Best of all, there are the little discoveries, the aha moments that move her work forward. That den discovered in April? “It was a surprise to find it in an open area, not in super dense brush,” she explains. It’s new ocelot information, the kind that can drive new policy and practice. In this case, it may lead to a new prescribed burn protocol designed to leave a protective margin outside the brush.

For Swarts, as always, it’s about rethinking the ongoing help this little cat needs, using clues from her ongoing research, then doing whatever it takes. “I want to do everything I can to give these cats the best chance to survive.”

Left: Swarts yields to wildlife underpasses under construction on a highway in Willacy County. It will be the third of ten expected. Center: The first confirmed ocelot kitten at the refuge in 25 years. Right: Ocelot. (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service photo)
In 1978, a young actor fresh out of college got the role of her dreams. Rose Portillo ’75 was cast as Della Barrios in the then-new Chicano play Zoot Suit, written by one of her heroes, the father of Chicano theatre and founder of El Teatro Campesino, Luis Valdez.

Nearly four decades after her first audition for Zoot Suit, Portillo, now a lecturer in Pomona’s Theatre Department, found herself auditioning before Valdez one more time last year for the revival of this now-classic Chicano play, which ran from January to mid-March at the Mark Taper Forum.

“I auditioned in the same room I auditioned in 40 years ago with the same person I auditioned for 40 years ago and with the same person across the table from me from 40 years ago,” says Portillo. “So, you know, when I walked in the room, we just looked at each other and I said, ‘OK, I need to take a moment’—it’s very surreal.”

The play, written by Valdez, is based on the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial and the Zoot Suit Riots that occurred in early 1940s Los Angeles. The play tells the story of Henry Reyna and the 38th Street gang, who were tried and found guilty of murder, and their subsequent journey to freedom.

Zoot Suit premiered at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles in April 1978, and sold out in two days. The play debuted on Broadway the following year, and was turned into a feature film in 1983. Portillo, who played Della Barrios, Reyna’s girlfriend, was in every production.

In this current run of Zoot Suit, Portillo will play the role of Dolores, Reyna’s mother.

Portillo was first introduced to Chicano theatre as a theatre major here in the early 1970s. “While I was at Pomona, I saw ‘La Gran Carpa de los Ranquichis’ that had a weekend performance at the Mark Taper Forum. It was a Teatro Campesino play and it resonated so deeply with me—it was one of those moments that you don’t know what you’re missing until you see it. So, I got on a committee to bring Luis Valdez—to bring El Teatro Campesino—to campus.” Luckily for Portillo, the committee’s efforts were successful and Valdez paid a visit to Pomona soon after.

Portillo, who is also the director of Theatre for Young Audiences, a program of Pomona College’s Draper Center for Community Partnerships, started writing and performing plays while still in elementary school. She was cast in everything that was produced on campus—dramas by Tennessee Williams to the Shakespeare canon. And Portillo’s parents, who lived in L.A.’s Silver Lake neighborhood, came to see all of her performances.

“It was at Pomona that Portillo first came to identify as a Chicana—a term her parents balked at in an era when the word had negative connotations for older generations like her parents, who rarely talked in-depth about their heritage. “Our Parents Day, the Chicano Studies Department had a program and they read the poem ‘Yo Soy Josapin’ and other Chicano poetry. I turned to my father, and he was weeping, and it was never an issue after that.”

Reclaiming her identity and finding her love for Chicano theatre helped Portillo as she built her career—giving her a voice when the roles for Latinas were nothing more than one-dimensional stereotypes.

When Portillo was cast for the role of Della in Zoot Suit, her agent let her know she wouldn’t be able to take the role because she had already committed to another project, a film. Portillo’s response to her agent: “I told her, ‘That movie is a dream, and this is a dream. You’re not stepping on my dream. This is my dream. Make it happen.’ And she did.”

And her parents were right there beside her. Once the play moved to Broadway, her parents went to New York to accompany her, with her mother staying longer to soak in the city.

Fast forward to 2017, and Portillo’s mother will be there on opening night of the revival of Zoot Suit, nearly four decades after it first premiered in the same theatre in Los Angeles. “She’s 84. A lot of our parents are gone, but she’s still around. I think she would’ve killed Luis [Valdez] if I didn’t get the role.”

For Portillo, the opportunity to be part of Zoot Suit in 2017 is just as special as it was in 1978. “It’s very rare that you get to live a full circle within a play, but with such a piece of history—to be able to be part of that history again, there are just no words for it,” she says. “It was timely when it happened. To see Mexicans on stage in original theatre doing a play about a Mexican-American story was earth-shattering and groundbreaking. We sold out before we opened, and to come back in this particular moment of our national history makes it all the more important.”

“And personally, it’s so historic for me, to be able to be this age and, at this point in my career, to be able to physically and viscerally revisit this—wearing different shoes and being older and wiser, it’s just… It was a dream the first time; it’s a dream the second time.”

—Carla Guzmán ’06

ROSE PORTILLO ’75 RELIVES HER ZOOT SUIT DREAM 40 YEARS LATER.
For Olenka Villarreal ’85, creating an accessible, socially inclusive playground for her own child and her own community was only the first step.

The Magical Bridge

Story by Vanessa Hua | Photos by Robert Durell
On a sunny winter morning, Olenka Villarreal ‘85 is appointing kindness ambassadors, handing out smiley-face stickers to children taking a break from spinning on a giant dish at the sprawling Magical Bridge in Palo Alto, the accessible, socially inclusive playground that she founded.

Boys and girls reach out their hands, exclaiming “I want blue!” “I want red!”

“Will you be extra kind on the playground today?” asks Villarreal. They nod, promising yes, yes. After weeks of rain and chill, the playground is packed with visitors of all ages: a beaming Asian grandmother swings on a disc, and a father shouts “3-2-1, blast-off!” and sends his son in a cardboard box down a slide.

When Villarreal’s 14-year-old daughter Ava arrives, she skips and claps. Though non-verbal, her joy and excitement are clear. Villarreal hugs her daughter, who stands taller than her, and strokes her soft, fine blonde hair.

Magical Bridge, which opened in 2015 at a cost of $4 million, is the only local playground where Ava can run—elsewhere, she trips over the sand or is too big to get onto the equipment sized for younger children. She loves dashing across the bridges that connect the playhouse to the slide mound. “At any other park, she towers over everybody, but when you design for everybody, no one stands out,” Villarreal says.

Now, after hearing from people in Taipei, Greece, and from across the country, she has her sights set on creating Magical Bridges around the world through her new foundation. “I was ready to take a break, but then I received an avalanche of emails and calls. I can’t physically get to everyone who asks questions, so my goal is to create a model that is far less expensive and easily replicable.”

Villarreal’s project has now become her calling, one that began when her daughter was born in 2003. As a baby, Ava struggled to sit up and stand and did not start walking until she was three years old. Eventually, at the advice of doctors, Villarreal started taking her daughter to expensive indoor occupational therapy sessions at a center located 45 minutes away, where Ava could work on improving her balance and coordination. “The center was so booked she could only schedule a session for her daughter once a week, and she wanted to go somewhere daily where they lived, in her hometown of Palo Alto.

At local playgrounds, she searched for swings, with their therapeutic vestibular...
Ava lacked the strength to sit up in bucket seats or hold onto the swing chains. Frustrated, she met with the city’s director of parks and recreation, hoping he might be able to direct her to a playground that met the needs of Ava and children like her. She learned that the city’s playgrounds were all ADA compliant, but that the guidelines center around access for individuals in wheelchairs and other mobility issues, with ramps and paved walkways, they aren’t designed for children with impaired hearing and vision, developmental, sensory, cognitive or autism spectrum disorders.

One in five Americans has a disability, and one in 45 is on the autism spectrum, which has led to a growing push for playgrounds designed for people of all abilities.

As Villarreal soon discovered, parents have often led the charge, motivated by their child: Tatum’s Garden in Gilroy, Matteo’s Dream in Concord, and Shane’s Inspiration in Los Angeles.

The city struck a deal with Villarreal. If she raised money for the playground’s design and construction, the city would donate almost an acre of land in Mitchell Park. “I was grateful for the land. Around the playground’s design and construction, the city would donate almost $600,000,” she says—and it’s huge! How hard can it be to raise money? I didn’t know how much it would cost, or what it would entail.”

She launched her grassroots campaign, recruiting co-founders Jill Asher, to work on public and media relations, and Kris Loew, who designed the logo, flyers and other marketing materials. She also drew upon the support of her family: her husband, Robert, donated wines from his collection for her volunteer meetings—“You have to keep the board happy!” she says—and their older daughter, Emma, came up with the playground’s name while sitting in the back seat of the car, scrawling down ideas in her notebook.

At times someone crosses over the bridge leading into the playground, they would find themselves in a magical place where barriers to play no longer existed, thus bridging the gap between those living with and without disabilities.

Because Villarreal knew donors might hesitate to write checks to a brand-new group, she joined the board of the Friends of the Palo Alto Parks, a trusted local nonprofit that acted as a fiscal sponsor to coordinate the contributions. “When the board saw the magnitude of my project, they thought I was a cockeyed optimist,” Villarreal says with a laugh. “But they were willing to stick it out, to see how far I could get.”

After a career in sales and marketing in Silicon Valley, she was returning to an interest in civic engagement first kindled at Pomona, where she had studied public policy and economics. As she embarked on fundraising, she deepened her research into inclusive playgrounds to incorporate into the design. Physical access allows children to get around the playground and get into close proximity to play activities, while social access emphasizes how children can play together. “From a very young age, so much of play is a social experience,” says Keith Christensen, a play and accessibility specialist who advised Villarreal. “When you are participating equally, you are able to use your abilities and strengths without the need for assistance or adaptations that might draw attention to differences rather than to similarities.”

Within two years, Villarreal and her volunteers raised about $600,000, but they lacked a detailed set of plans to win over bigger donors. When she despaired, she pictured returning the hundreds of individual donations if she gave up. She also knew people were counting on her. “As my husband said, ‘If we don’t get this park, we’ll have to move out of Palo Alto!’”

She was also dealing with the challenges of caring for Ava, who sometimes had seizures at school while Villarreal was hosting volunteer meetings. “I’d have to rush her to the ER, and I’d tell them to just to continue,” she recalls. “You know that stage when your child is one year old, when they’re getting up once or twice a night, they’re in diapers, and you’re feeling them? I’m still in that.”

Palo Alto stepped up with money to pay for plans and assigned a landscape architect, Peter Jensen, to help shepherd and advocate for the project. “That was a huge leap forward,” she says. After that, they hit their fundraising goal within a year and a half.

Villarreal brought a personal, passionate touch to her pitches, according to Asher, a co-founder. She asked a mother of a child with special needs to make chocolate chip cookies that they brought to every donor meeting.

Above: Families take advantage of a beautiful day at the Magical Bridge in Palo Alto.

Right: Olenka Villarreal ’85 with her two daughters, Ava (center) and Emma, at the playground.
“We leave them munching on cookies,” she told Asher. “Every time they put a cookie in their mouth, they’ll think of us.”

Added Loez, the other co-founder: “She’s hard to say ‘no’ to—she finds a job for you, and it feels really good to help. She makes everyone feel special.”

At the Magical Bridge, Villarreal makes visitors feel special, too, charting with the helpful, bustling air of an innkeeper. “You like it here? Do you know the story of this place?” she asks a curly-haired boy chatting with the helpful, bustling air of an innkeeper. “You like it here?” she asks. “She finds a job for you, and it feels really good to help. She makes everyone feel special.”

The playground is divided into seven play zones: swing and sway, slides, spin, music, tots, a kindness corner picnic area, and playhouse/ stage. Grouping the activities together helps visitors of all abilities navigate the Magical Bridge, which also stands apart from other play-grounds because of how it showcases innovative ideas.

Jen Lewin’s interactive laser harp sculptures have been featured in the Magical Bridge, bringing artists together. “It’s my first time here,” he says. “I read a little bit about it because not every family can get to the Magical Bridge, Villarreal offers Sageshens friends who could not attend a peek into the magic of Magical Bridge. “This has been a transformative journey. Doing this type of work is so fulfilling,” she says. “We’re doing something for families.”

In late February, the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voted to set aside $10 million to go toward at least five inclusive, accessible playgrounds. Groups such as the Rotary Club and the Magical Bridge Foundation would raise matching funds. “It’s great not only for Santa Clara kids and families, but it also demonstrates to other parts of the nation that this is something people can do,” said Supervisor Joe Simitian, who co-sponsored the proposal. “If we each take a little piece of responsibility, we can do something extraordinary. That fits very well with the Magical Bridge approach.”

Villarreal says she wants to involve the community in the process. “If it’s approachable to everyone, then it’s successful,” Lewin says. “My mission has been to make public art that engages the community.”

George Zisadis’s motion sensors trigger audio recordings: the squishy suck of mud, the slosh of puddles, crunch of autumn leaves, children to the playground. A mother takes her 35-year-old son; in the past, she had to wait until night fell to bring him to playgrounds so he wouldn’t scare and ask questions. A girl in a sara and wheel-chair—dubbed by Villarreal as the “Princess of the Playground”—is welcome routine. Every week, a van transports medically-fragile children to the playground. A mother takes her 35-year-old son; in the past, she had to wait until night fell to bring him to playgrounds so people wouldn’t stare and ask questions. A girl in a sara and wheel-chair—dubbed by Villarreal as the “Princess of the Playground”—is another regular.

Villarreal realises her way through the Magical Bridge, she greets friends and newcomers alike. “Many years from now, when we’re no longer here, I hope that people will know Ava’s story, and will say hello to her,” she says. “She loves when people say hello.”

For many families like Villarreal’s, the Magical Bridge has become a welcome routine. Every week, a van transports medically-fragile children to the playground. A mother takes her 35-year-old son; in the past, she had to wait until night fell to bring him to playgrounds so people wouldn’t stare and ask questions. A girl in a sara and wheel-chair—dubbed by Villarreal as the “Princess of the Playground”—is another regular.

Because not every family can get to the Magical Bridge, Villarreal is trying to bring it to them. She and her co-founders formed a non-profit foundation to replicate two Magical Playgrounds in neighboring cities. If the city makes a financial commitment, the foundation will help raise the rest. Redwood City was the first to join forces with the foundation, and if fundraising stays on track, the next Magical Bridge will break ground late this year or in early 2018.

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With each playground, they gain expertise, Villarreal says, learning how to bring down costs, and exploring different equipment options. By the time the foundation finishes its third playground, she aims to sell packages of construction drawings and components that can be customized to work in a variety of terrains, spaces and budgets at parks and schools, spreading the magic of Magical Bridge. “This has been a transformative journey,” says a recent Pomona alumna. “I discovered that many Pomona alumna had moved into the same building where we held the party three to 10 years ago. It was a highlight of the evening.”

To be sure you hear about Winter Break Parties and other alumni events, you can update your contact information at pomona.edu/alumniupdate.
Hundreds of Sagehens Rally in Support of DACA-mented and Undocumented Students

Since President Oxtoby published his “Statement in Support of the DACA Program and our Undocumented Immigrant Students” in November, hundreds of Sagehen alumni and families have reached out to the College to support Pomona’s own DACA-mented and undocumented students.

Here are two ways you can make a difference in the lives of these students right now:

• Make a contribution to the Student Emergency Grant Fund. Every dollar you donate goes directly to students who request funds, including students with emergency needs associated with immigration (immigration fees or legal resources, responding to family emergencies, etc.). To join the 296 members of the Pomona community who have supported this critical fund since November, visit pomona.edu/give.

• Sign up to host a pro-bono legal services network, email RSVPStudentAffairs@pomona.edu for more information and current company/organization information, (2) your legal specialty or focus and (3) your availability.

Happy 50th Birthday to Oldenborg!

When Oldenborg Center was built in 1966, it was believed to be the first facility of its kind to combine a language center, international house and residential residence in a single building. And with its conditioning, its own dining hall, two-person suites and a great immersion-like environment, the Oldenborg Center is known for being, in part, what made Pomona the college it is today. Originally called the Center for International Education, the Oldenborg center has been the perfect context for exploring "holy violence" in the Middle Ages and its implications for the 21st century.

Join John Sutton Miner Professor of History and Professor of Classics Ken Wolf on May 30–June 10, 2017 in Burgundy: The Cradle of the Crusades

On February 1, more than 30 Sagehens gathered at the Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator (LACI) to think collectively and creatively about the challenges presented by climate change. A distinguished panel of alumni and faculty experts included Bowman Cutter, associate professor of economics at Pomona; Andrew Meyer ’94, associate professor of political science at Michigan Technical University; Amanda Sablier ’99, the professor of Michigan Technical University.

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Slow art isn’t a collection of aesthetic objects, as you might perhaps suppose; rather, it is a dynamic interaction between observer and observed. Artists can create the conditions for slow looking—thinks of James Turrell ‘68’s Skyspaces like Pomona’s “Dividing Light.” But what about viewers? How do you do our share?

In a given year, more American visit art museums than attend any one professional sporting event. Running behind music for color, our pleasure, learn and share positive experiences with each other and perhaps with their children. Too often the result is otherwise. Despite massive arts education programs, many visitors still arrive at a museum feeling confused or disadvantaged about how to navigate the place—where to go first, what to look at in any given gallery, how to connect with the experiences looking at art—ought to feel enfranchised. Everybody, I believe, can have under, on whom museums will increasingly rely for support.) As a to go first, what to look at in any given gallery, how to connect with arts education programs, many visitors still arrive at a museum feeling our painting under slow thatched widespread remain follow I neither need—or dark spots unrelated to the artwork? Let yourself wonder about squint. Notice the surround: does the installation lighting create hot when you pick is not among the post—second, say you’re in a gallery with many objects clustered together and another given its own vine. Choose the latter. Finally, whatever the guards say, you have to get up close.” I would add: start by scanning the room to see if anything calls out to you. Don’t even think about pausing before every object. One or two items in a gallery will be enough or more than enough. Don’t worry if your pick is not among the post—cards, trust your taste.

4/ Grant your chosen object time—how much is tricky. I acknowledge, if, after a spell, nothing clicks, move on. This is a no fault game. You are nobody’s student; there are no should’s. Eventually you and your companion will find something that you agree is intriguing, striking, ravishing, perplexing, disturbingly unfamiliar—what that thing is hardly matters.

5/ Now let yourself go. Get close, back up, shift from side to side, squat. Notice the surround: does the installation lighting create hot or cold spots unrelated to the artwork? Let yourself wonder about what might seem trivial. Why do Cézanne’s tables tilt up? Why do mountains look stylized in medieval depictions of desert? What is that strange detail on the curving side of a glass vase, in a still life painting of flowers? Might it be light reflected from a four-paned window in the imaginary room? And why is a caterpillar munching on that leaf? Why does one window in an Edward Hopper painting behave differently from its neighbor? There is no telling where seemingly naive questions may carry you. Remember that frustration is part and parcel of engaged looking; an artwork that doesn’t offer resistance may not offer much at all.

6/ Let images “tell” you how they are to be seen. In my experience, they will do so if “listen to them” with patience.

7/ Don’t be in a hurry to speak. Start by letting your eyes wander freely. Then zero in on what seems meaningful, or looks to be part of a pattern, or perhaps is an anomaly. Toggle between focused and untroubled looking. Test what you’ve registered by closing your eyes and asking yourself who you recollect. Then look again to compare.

8/ Don’t screw yourself to the spot. A surefire recipe for distraction is a slide lecture sandwiched in with a hundred other images. The trick is to be patient; at Pomona’s “Dividing Light,” I was seated. I still feel that strange detail on the curving side of a glass vase, in a still life painting of flowers? Might it be light reflected from a four-paned window in the imaginary room? And why is a caterpillar munching on that leaf? Why does one window in an Edward Hopper painting behave differently from its neighbor? There is no telling where seemingly naive questions may carry you. Remember that frustration is part and parcel of engaged looking; an artwork that doesn’t offer resistance may not offer much at all.

1 / Believe that you already come equipped with everything you need to see art and that life experience. Trust that something surprising can come of the encounter, or simply that the experience might be fun.

2/ Don’t go alone. In another’s company you’ll have more stamina to stay with the art, and will be more likely to ask a fellow art lover what they think of the piece, or to find another fellow. Don’t worry if your pick is not among the postcards, trust your taste.

3/ Remember that museums are like libraries. Why do people assume that they need to look at everything on display in a gallery when they would never pull every book off a shelf? Be selective. Once Turrell interviewed the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s longtime director, Philippe de Montebello. I asked him about navigating art spaces. “My wife loves going to museums with me because I tell her: “In this room, we will look at X and Z.” “If we happen not to be your spot,” I asked. “Head first to the museum postcard. The postcard will tell you which works the place prizes most highly. Second, say you’re in a gallery with many objects clustered together and another given its own vine. Choose the latter. Finally, whatever the guards say, you have to get up close.” I would add: start by scanning the room to see if anything calls out to you. Don’t even think about pausing before every object. One or two items in a gallery will be enough or more than enough. Don’t worry if your pick is not among the postcards, trust your taste.

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