



NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART • BULLETIN • NUMBER 43 • FALL 2010

# CASVA

## Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts

### The Three Professors

The National Gallery of Art's Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA) offers a wide variety of competitive fellowships to scholars who apply from all over the world, but three endowed professorships are appointed directly, with the approval of the Board of Trustees. The expectation is that in their different ways these distinguished colleagues will bring to CASVA and the National Gallery renewed inspiration for creative research and the highest standards of curatorial practice.

This summer all three professors—the Samuel H. Kress Professor, the Andrew W. Mellon Professor, and the Edmond J. Safra Visiting Professor—left CASVA around the same time, a rather unusual concurrence offering an opportunity to reflect on the roles they played and the accomplishments of their time here.

#### The Samuel H. Kress Professor

The first professorship at the National Gallery of Art was established by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation as a result of the vision of Franklin D. Murphy, who served as president of both the Kress Foundation and the National Gallery. When CASVA was created in 1979, it inherited the professorship. At that time, former director J. Carter Brown expressed his hope that the Center, and the Kress Professor within it, would help to “narrow any perceived or actual chasm that occasionally seems to yawn between the worlds of academia and museums.” In his or her year at the Center, the Kress Professor has only one official responsibility, which is to take an interest in the work of the predoctoral fellows in residence.

This year Bert W. Meijer, emeritus professor, Utrecht University, and formerly director of the Istituto Universitario Olandese di Storia dell'Arte, Florence, was CASVA's Kress Professor. Meijer has dedicated many years to the investigation of both Italian and Northern art of the Renaissance and baroque periods. At CASVA he concentrated on his ambitious study of Venetian drawing, 1590–1630. Venetian artists and collectors prided themselves on their tradition of *colore* as opposed to Florentine *disegno*; few documented or attributable drawings exist for this period. Through his work at CASVA, Meijer was able to identify drawings by known masters from whose hand we previously had no drawings, to group others under the names of little-known artists, and to classify others awaiting identification (fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. Odoardo Fialetti, *Landscape with Daedalus and Icarus*, c. 1610, pen and ink, Curtis O. Baer Collection, on deposit at the National Gallery of Art**

#### The Andrew W. Mellon Professor

Whereas the Kress Professor is often near retirement, the Andrew W. Mellon Professor is more typically in midcareer and arrives with a large research agenda. The Mellon professorship was generously created by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of the Gallery and carries the single responsibility to engage in research in ways that enliven the whole community.

Miguel Falomir, head curator of the department of Italian Renaissance painting, Museo Nacional del Prado, and professor, University of Valencia, was CASVA's eighth Mellon Professor. After curating several ambitious exhibitions in Madrid, he looked forward to concentrating his energies in Washington on the systematic catalogue of the incomparable collection of works by Titian in the Prado. In his first year at CASVA he worked on introductory essays dealing with Titian's late style, the artist's relationship with the Habsburgs, and the reception of his works in Spain. In his second year Falomir focused on the catalogue itself, providing entries for the forty-two originals by Titian in the Prado plus twenty important early copies, some by such major painters as Peter Paul Rubens.

In preparing his catalogue, Falomir studied the materiality of the paintings as well as the aesthetic, social, and cultural circumstances that informed their production. The royal origins of the Prado's collection mean that an unusual amount of documentation exists concerning the shipment of Titian's paintings to Spain, their display, and the history of early restorations. Falomir also addressed Titian's impact on later artists



**Fig. 2.** Titian, *Philip II*, 1551, oil on canvas, x-radiograph with red lines showing earlier version under painting's surface, Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid

such as Rubens, Diego Velázquez, and Edouard Manet.

In keeping with new international standards for collections catalogues, restoration and technical analysis have been carried out for almost all the works associated with Titian at the Prado in connection with Falomir's catalogue raisonné. Many changes in attribution and dating have come about as a consequence, and much new information about Titian's working methods (fig. 2) has been generated: underdrawing, for instance, was much more frequent than had been realized. None of this information nor the techniques for investigation was available to Harold E. Wethey (Kress Professor, 1982–1983), author of the standard three-volume catalogue of Titian's entire oeuvre, published over the years 1969–1975.

### The Edmond J. Safra Visiting Professor

The third of CASVA's trio of professorships was established some eight years ago when the Edmond J. Safra Philanthropic Foundation provided a grant to bring a professor to the Center on an annual basis for four to six months. The terms of the professorship are that the

appointee should be working in a field in which the National Gallery has considerable interest and/or collections and that he or she invigorate relationships between the Gallery and CASVA. Safra Visiting Professors have worked in a number of different areas, including Renaissance bronzes, old master drawings, Italian panel painting, French nineteenth-century printmaking, and twentieth-century modernism. This year with the appointment of Roger Taylor of De Montfort University in England, the spotlight fell on photography.

Professor Taylor has previously contributed to two acclaimed exhibitions of nineteenth-century British photography seen at the Gallery. At CASVA he focused his research on the unforgettably named Linnaeus Tripe (1822–1902). After serving in the Twelfth Madras native infantry for eleven years, Tripe returned to Britain in early 1851, just in time to learn the new medium of photography, which was featured at the Great Exhibition. He returned to India in 1854, taking his camera with him. In 1855 the governor general of India appointed Tripe as "Artist in photography" to accompany his political delegation to the Burmese court; Tripe was made official photographer to the Madras presidency the following year (fig. 3).

Less is known about early photographers such as Tripe than about many Renaissance artists, and while at CASVA Taylor made great headway in establishing details of Tripe's education and the influence of his military career and training, with its emphasis on intelligence gathering and surveying. Much of this material is newly available online, but the important thing for Taylor was the chance to share his discoveries with members of the Center and the curatorial staff, and to do so often in the presence of original works of art.

Under CASVA's auspices, Safra Professors have usually designed a colloquy on their area of expertise, inviting a small group of emerging scholars and curators from all over the world to participate, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation or the Robert

H. Smith Grant. This year's three-day meeting included curators, conservators, and historians of photography and focused on the work of Tripe, Roger Fenton, and Timothy O'Sullivan. It featured presentations by Taylor and members of the Gallery's curatorial staff as well as by colleagues from the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the National Archives, who all welcomed the group to view their collections.

CASVA is in a remarkable position to advance research in the visual arts, given the great resources of the National Gallery and of Washington, and given the support of enlightened benefactors. In turn, the trio of professorships contributes experience and knowledge of museums and scholarship from around the world. These distinguished colleagues are missed throughout the Gallery when the time comes to say goodbye. • Elizabeth Cropper, *Dean, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts*



**Fig. 3.** Captain Linnaeus Tripe, *Amerapoora: East Door of the Maha-thugea-yan-tee Pagoda*, 1855, print, National Gallery of Art, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation through Robert and Joyce Menschel