Tech Incubator, First of its Kind in the Borough, Opens on Campus

With state-of-the-art labs, wireless access, and more undergraduate computer science majors than any institution in the metropolitan New York area, Queens College has a demonstrable commitment to technology. Now, after the opening of a tech incubator on campus, the college is extending its influence beyond the classroom.

“It is a very exciting time to be an entrepreneur in Queens,” noted President Félix Matos Rodríguez at the September 29 opening of the college’s Tech Incubator, which is located in a newly renovated building near the Student Union. “The incubator will help them build successful technology companies, which will of course promote innovation and development here in our borough and expand job opportunities. Members of the incubator also will have easy access to the college’s excellent faculty, students, and staff, who have the knowledge and skills to help tech companies develop and thrive.”

Developed with city support and directed by Ted Brown (Computer Science), the incubator has rooms with flexible configurations that can accommodate 4 to 12 people, for a maximum total of 70. Shared amenities include a kitchen, conference rooms, a recreation room with a foosball game, dartboard challenge, and an electronic drum set, and a server where members will be able to back up files and run applications. Members will also have access to QC faculty and will be able to take advantage of the college’s gym, swimming pool, dining areas, and other facilities.

“This incubator is part of a city-wide initiative,” says its sponsor, City Council Member and Tech Committee Chairman James Vacca ’01, who represents the Bronx but knows QC well—he earned a master’s in urban studies here. “We want to encourage students to use technology to move ahead in their careers. Incubators are already running at Lehman College and the College of Staten Island, and we’re going to be expanding to other CUNY campuses. Every college has different uses; Lehman, for example, focuses on women- and minority-owned businesses.”

QC’s incubator is designed for entrepreneurs in Queens and Long Island, particularly those from eastern and southeastern Queens, including immigrant business owners.

The college plans to integrate student interns wherever possible in the incubator’s operations, says Jose Orengo, a consultant for this project. “Accounting students can help these start-ups,” he notes. “Pre-law students can do research into intellectual property issues.”

To fill the incubator’s seats, Brown and Orengo are casting a wide net—reaching out to the Queens Chamber of Commerce, the Queens Economic Development Corporation, and the Greater Flushing Chamber of Commerce, working with Asian, Hispanic, and other ethnic media, and sending an email blast to alumni. One local company, founded by a team of former and current QC students, is already interested in moving in. Foreign entrepreneurs are also eligible to set up shop on the QC campus, reports Brown. “We’ve got 25 applicants,” he says. “We’ll be choosing a few very soon.”
Serving Those Who Served

Dennis Torres’ mission is to see that no veteran of the armed services at QC gets left behind while making the difficult transition back to civilian life. A 10-year veteran of the Marine Corps Reserve with deployments to Iraq in 2006 and 2009, Torres experienced firsthand the life-changing effect that service in a theater of combat can have. “I was in Fallujah in 2006 during the height of the surge,” he recalls. “I was doing foot patrols every other day: constant fire, very stressful, high impact, high tempo . . .”

When he completed his service, Torres thought he had emerged unscathed. However, he soon realized he was exhibiting symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and eventually sought counseling through the Veterans Administration. “You’re going through so many things,” he says. “You think it’s just the norm: ‘Marines are tough guys. We can drink ten beers and be fine.’ Yeah, but all of these maladaptive behaviors we learn as ways of coping with things aren’t normal.”

Being able to share his experiences, Torres believes, makes it easier for vets who come to the college’s Veteran Support Services (VSS) Office to accept his recommendation to seek help. “They’re not aware of why they can’t concentrate in class, why they’re not sleeping, why they’re fighting with their significant others, or aren’t able to maintain relationships. I’ve been able to say to them, ‘This is exactly what happened to me when I came back from Iraq.’” After speaking with Torres, most veterans agree to seek counseling.

VSS provides other assistance as well, such as helping veterans find work. For many other questions, they are directed to Lorraine Rosenfeld, QC’s school-certifying official, who provides full assistance with the paperwork required for obtaining VA educational benefits and certification, including in-depth one-on-one analysis.

Helping QC veterans are (l–r) Lorraine Rosenfeld (School Certifying Official), Gullit Etienne (VA Work Study), Andrea Toral (VA Work Study), Dennis Torres, Janette Ezquivel (QC Veterans Club Secretary; previous VA Work Study), Juan Colon (CERRU Fellow/VA Work Study; previous QC Veterans Club president), James Marone (QC Veterans Club president/VA Work Study). Veterans in VA Work Study positions provide student veterans information about VA benefits and services.

The college’s support of veterans has been applauded by several publishers concerned with connecting the military and civilian worlds. Victoria Media designated QC a 2016 Military-Friendly® School, and Military Advanced Education & Transition (MAE&T) Guide to Colleges & Universities approved QC. MAE&T utilizes its list, seen in veterans and service member publications, to publicize institutions that have programs to help transitioning military personnel.

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$5.6M Grant to Encourage Jobs in STEM Fields

Queens College has received a grant to partner with Queensborough Community College on a new program to help students from traditionally under-represented populations prepare for careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—fields collectively referred to as STEM—where there is a dramatic need nationally for skilled professionals with college degrees. With $5.6 million in funding over five years, STEM Bridges Across Eastern Queens will serve approximately 24,000 students as part of the U.S. Department of Education’s Hispanic-Serving Institutions—Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics and Articulation Program.

The key goals of the project are to graduate more Hispanic and low-income students with STEM bachelor’s degrees and to smooth students’ transition from two-year to four-year colleges.

CUNY Offers Tuition-Free Coding Bootcamp for Alumni

A tuition-free, industry-aligned coding boot camp—exclusively for CUNY graduates—will make its debut on campus this November, thanks to a partnership between CUNY and Revature, a technology talent-development company. During the 12-week program alumni learn the latest technology skills at absolutely no cost. Once training is completed, they will be hired by Revature and receive industry certification and continuing education. The goal of the program is to train and hire more than 2,000 CUNY graduates over the next five years.

All CUNY students and alumni can also take advantage of Revature’s custom online course training, RevaturePro. Courses are designed for both nontechnical and advanced students. They will learn enterprise-level programming skills at their own pace while receiving support from Revature’s industry mentors. Students can learn Java, Microsoft.NET, and other front-end development languages. For more information, visit www.revature.com/cunya.
The college held a memorable Welcome Day on August 24, when—to mark the opening of QC’s Year of Korea—Korean Farmers and Royal Guards Dancers led administrators and incoming students in a march from the Quad to Kissena Boulevard and back. Upcoming Year of Korea events include a two-day Thanksgiving and Folklore Festival, featuring performances and authentic Korean cuisine; and a number of lectures. Launched in 2010, each “Year” explores the history and culture of a single country through multidisciplinary programming. To learn more about the Year of Korea, visit korea.qc.cuny.edu.

Performers drum up excitement for the Year of Korea on Welcome Day.

**Students Shine at Geological Society Meeting**

“The thing I hear time and again from colleagues,” says Stephen Pekar ’86 (Earth & Env. Studies), “is, ‘I can’t believe these are undergraduate students. The level of their understanding is amazing.’”

His colleagues said this again last spring when Pekar brought Layton Neil, Victor Pincay, and Anna Turetcaia to the 51st Annual Meeting of the Geological Society of America Northeastern Section in Albany. Here they presented posters of their research on climate change, handily fielding questions from professionals in the field.

“As an alumus,” says Pekar, whose climate change research in Antarctica has received global recognition, “I can say to my students, ‘Guys, I was here in these very seats, and look where I am now. I’ve gone to the Arctic. You can do this, too.’” But there’s a way in which the students who joined him in Albany are quite different: Unlike Pekar, who proudly boasts he’s been a “Queens boy” all his life, these students, like so many of their QC peers, are foreign-born.

“I’ve only been here a short while,” says LAYTON NEIL, who was 22 when he arrived from Jamaica in 2010. A year later he enrolled in earth and planetary science studies at Kingsborough Community College, developing an interest in geology that he brought with him when he transferred to QC in 2014.

The research he presented at the GSA conference touched upon a time 56 million years ago when Earth underwent a warming trend much like we’re experiencing today. “There was believed to be a runaway greenhouse effect; carbon

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Layton Neil

**Year of Korea Bows on Campus**

Images of Fame

John Nici (Art) had written three editions of a Barron’s art history book when he decided to explore the iconic status of some of the world’s best-known paintings, sculpture, photographs, and architecture. The result, Famous Works of Art and How They Got That Way (Rowman & Littlefield), is a hit. Since its publication in September 2015, reviewers ranging from Publishers Weekly to college professors have praised the book as both informative and readable, a tall order given that the topics include the Great Sphinx, the Mona Lisa, and the Thinker.

“The American public is possessed by celebrity,” says Nici, who devoted about eight years to this project. “These 20 works are the celebrities of the art world” (list of works at end of next column). Of course, fame is not synonymous with quality. “I picked the ones that had the most interesting story,” Nici continues. “I didn’t want to get 20 sound-alike chapters, so I looked at different angles, such as sale price or who owned the piece. Tours and newspapers made a few of them famous. Admittedly, some are not great works of art—I don’t think Washington Crossing the Delaware is ever studied in a college classroom.”

Nici’s background and experience uniquely equipped him to produce Famous Works of Art. A Queens native, he graduated from QC in 1974 with majors in art history and English and a minor in education. “I always wanted to be a teacher, and QC was the best fit for me,” he observes. Unfortunately, due to New York City’s financial crisis, Nici entered a tough job market. “I didn’t realize that the city was going belly up,” he says. “Thousands of teachers were laid off just as I was coming into the workforce. I was lucky to find a job at a Catholic high school.”

When the city’s public school system began hiring again, Nici—who completed an MSEd in English and an MA in art history, also from QC—joined the staff of Forest Hills High School, where he stayed for 21 years. Then he spent another dozen years teaching in Lawrence, Long Island, before retiring in 2013. Meanwhile, Nici had become an adjunct in QC’s art history program. As it happens, half of the chapters in Famous Works of Art are based on lessons he presented at QC; he dedicated the book to his former professors Bill Clark, who is still teaching at QC, and emerita Carol Lewine.

“When I was a student, half the buildings that are on the QC campus now weren’t here,” Nici recalls. “There were many more students in a smaller institution. There was no room to eat in the cafeteria; you prayed for good weather so you could eat outside. But going to Queens was very beneficial, both for my education and my employment. I had world-renowned professors—excellent teachers. It’s still a great place to go to school.”

The Great Sphinx
Tomb of Tutankhamen
The Parthenon Sculptures
The Apollo Belvedere
Nike of Samothrace
Birth of Venus by Botticelli
Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci
Sistine Madonna by Raphael
The Burial of Count Orgaz by El Greco
Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer by Rembrandt
Washington Crossing the Delaware by Emanuel Leutze
Luncheon on the Grass by Edouard Manet
The Thinker by Auguste Rodin
Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh
The Scream by Edvard Munch
American Gothic by Grant Wood
Migrant Mother by Dorothea Lange
Guernica by Pablo Picasso
Campbell’s Soup by Andy Warhol
The Vietnam Veterans Memorial by Maya Lin

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A Campus Walk on the Wild Side

Queens College’s celebrated diversity isn’t limited to homo sapiens; we harbor plenty of flora and fauna, too. David Jakim, program specialist with GLOBE NY Metro—the innovative K-12 science education program based at QC—has spent several years documenting his discoveries within and around our gates. Here are some of the findings he shared on a recent tour of campus, where he did his graduate work.

In an echo of the borough’s demographic trends, some of our full-time residents, such as the Italian wall lizards—commonly seen on large stone structures that are near vegetation and get a lot of sunlight—have foreign origins. “Supposedly, a professor released them on campus, saying, ‘Let my lizards go,’” Jakim explains. Other, more iconic species, like QC’s red-tailed hawks, are native New Yorkers. They’re thriving on a menu of small mammals and birds.

Snack options for humans start with fruit from ginkgo trees, on Campbell Plaza, south of Colden Auditorium, and mulberry trees at the southern end of the track. Next to Rosenthal Library, Jakim pauses before a redbud tree, “a member of the bean family,” he says. “Its flowers are edible.”

So are many of the weeds on the Quad. “Young dandelion leaves are great in salad,” observes Jakim, pulling a leaf off a plant; he says that the milky fluid oozing at the break indicates dandelion’s kinship to lettuce—both are in the aster family. Another one of his favorite wild greens is common chickweed, which has round leaves, small white flowers, and fine hairs on only one side of its stem.

There’s no shortage of natural flavor enhancers, either. On the south side of many buildings on campus, Jakim points out pepperweed, part of the mustard family; its pods contain seeds that, ground up, taste like onion grass, a substitute for chives.

Flower petals from ginkgo trees, on Campbell Plaza, south of Colden Auditorium, and mulberry trees at the southern end of the track. Next to Rosenthal Library, Jakim pauses before a redbud tree, “a member of the bean family,” he says. “Its flowers are edible.”

Nearly as ubiquitous as onion grass is wood sorrel, with yellow flowers and delicate little heart-shaped leaves that evoke St. Patrick’s Day. “Some types of sorrel are known as false shamrock,” says Jakim. Although adventurous diners eat wood sorrel raw—the leaves taste agreeably sour—most sources recommend cooking it to remove the oxalic acid, which can be toxic if consumed regularly or in large amounts. The same advice applies to lambs’ quarters, known as wild spinach. It has dusty-looking leaves shaped like ancient arrowheads.

Wherever you go on campus, you’re also likely to see mugwort, or Artemisia vulgaris, an invasive plant that resembles ragweed. When crushed, mugwort leaves release a pleasant herbal scent. This plant has multiple applications in traditional medicine and yields a highly regarded bedtime beverage. “After drinking arte misia tea, you supposedly have good dreams,” says Jakim. That’s brewed for thought.

Jakim leads nature walks on campus and at Alley Pond Park, in Little Neck Bay. To join a tour, contact him at David.Jakim@qc.cuny.edu.
qualified candidates to job opportunities. The position proved serendipitous, he notes, in that “I actually found the posting for my job here at Queens while doing employment research for another veteran.”

Among those veterans Torres worked with is 33-year-old Christian Valencia ‘16, a former U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant. Valencia served 14 years both in active and reserve duty, which included two tours in Iraq. “After traveling all over the world—which I loved—I wanted to return to my roots,” says the Fresh Meadows resident. “College is a completely different environment, and at first I didn’t know what to expect.” Valencia credits Torres with building a sense of community among veteran students.

Essential to that sense of community, Torres stresses, is the veterans lounge in the Student Union. “I want to be sure that the vets have a place where they can come together and talk to each other about the things they’re experiencing,” he notes. QC recently received grants from the Student Veterans of America and Home Depot to fix up the lounge, which now includes new computers and shelving for a textbook exchange.

Torres also cites the importance of veteran-themed campus events he helps arrange, such as an inspirational appearance by retired Army Col. Gregory Gadson, a wheelchair-bound double amputee who spoke about overcoming the injuries he suffered in Iraq when his vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device.

“When the vets come to those events and talk to each other, that’s when they create important relationships,” says Torres.

### Madame President

After years of board experience, she was an obvious candidate for higher office. So no one was surprised when the Poetry Society of America—the organization responsible for the Poetry in Motion poems appearing on transit systems across the country—elected Kimiko Hahn (English) to its presidency. Her three-year unpaid term began in April; instead of being sworn in at her inauguration, she read a poem.

“I’ve been a PSA board member since 2007,” says Hahn, a CUNY distinguished professor and the author of nine books, the most recent being Brain Fever (W.W. Norton). “I have a sabbatical coming up in 2017, and I plan to spend a lot of it in the trenches for poetry,” she adds, with a laugh. In particular, she’d like to highlight PSA’s translation events, widening an interest that was begun with the QC MFA literary translation track.

“People say—and it’s true—that Americans are known to be bilingual,” Hahn observes. “We have a great many immigrants who do speak foreign languages in addition to English. One of the PSA’s missions is to expand and diversify the audiences for poetry, and we naturally do that on campus.”

### Butterfly Effective

Over nine months, thousands of miles, and several generations, monarch butterflies complete an annual migration from central Mexico to Canada and back.

Like other travelers, they need to rest and refuel on their journey. The Metropolitan Monarch Alliance, a federally funded program launched by QC environmentalist Peter Schmidt, is training concerned citizens to establish pit stops for the iconic species.

“Three years ago, the monarch’s numbers were so low that many biologists feared the species was facing an extinction event,” says Schmidt, associate director of the Consolidated Edison, GLOBE NY Metro program, a science education initiative based at QC. In particular, the butterflies are endangered by the loss of habitat and their primary food source: milkweed. Now, with the support of a two-year, $100,000 environmental education award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, QC’s five program partners—Alley Pond Environmental Center, Bronx River Alliance, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, and Queens County Farm Museum—are leading hands-on workshops in monarch care. The workshops include programming enhancements to educate school groups and general public visitors about the threats to monarchs, and tips on how to help.

Some one-day sessions, which started in June, are open to elementary school teachers; others are designed for members of the general community. Whichever they attend, all participants learn about the fascinating natural history of monarchs and are shown how to create monarch way stations as well as collect, rear, and release the butterflies in time for their annual multigenerational migration. Everyone gets books about the butterflies to take home; additionally, teachers are given guides to help them integrate butterfly-related activities into the curriculum. “When a fourth grade teacher takes on this project, he or she rarely does it alone,” observes Schmidt. “Basically, every fourth grade in the school gets involved.”

At the end of each session, everyone receives six native milkweed plants, which are well suited to New York City’s climate. Attendees also get a voucher for live caterpillars, redeemable July through September, and a nylon net enclosure, to protect those caterpillars while they turn into butterflies.

Schmidt’s efforts extend to QC itself. He wants to plant milkweed on campus, to make the college more monarch friendly. John Bowne High School may follow suit—its assistant principal, Steve Perry, is on the board of the Queens County Farm Museum. Schmidt will be delighted to see his project take wing. “Amid all the stories of environmental doom that are seemingly beyond our capacity to influence, this is a real and concrete positive contribution that people can do tomorrow,” he says. Visit www.qc.cuny.edu/mma to learn more.
dioxide levels in the atmosphere were approximately 2,000 parts per million,” Neil explains.

Called the PETM (Paleocene Eocene Thermal Maximum), it lasted 200,000 years, during which global temperatures rose by 9 degrees centigrade. “That’s very hot,” he says.

Analyzing records produced from the study of core samples drilled from one of the deepest parts of the Indian Ocean, Neil believes that bottom water temperatures began to rise about a million years earlier than previously thought.

On track to graduate next spring, Neil plans to pursue graduate work in hydrogeology.

**VICTOR PINCAY** came to the U.S. from Ecuador in 2002 at age 14, and completed high school at age 16. After a few years at LaGuardia Community College, unsure of what he wanted to study, “I went back and looked at all my high school notes,” he recalls. “Then I re-read my earth sciences textbook and decided, ‘Yeah, why don’t I do this?’”

Pincay transferred to QC and took Pekar’s Geology 101 and 102 classes, and began working in the professor’s lab, assisting a PhD student.

At the GSA conference Pincay presented his research on what can be learned by studying the size of glaciers during the Early Oligocene period 33-30 million years ago relative to the climate of that period. “The interesting part of this period,” he explains, “is that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was similar to what is projected for the coming century. Before we can understand how the ice sheet reacted to this increase, we need to know how big it was.

“Since this greatly ties in to one of the biggest problems we are facing, I am strongly considering studying paleo-climates as a career,” says Pincay, who graduated this summer and plans to pursue graduate studies.

**ANNA TURETCAIA** had a degree in finance from the Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova when in 2008 she immigrated to the U.S. In 2012, on a honeymoon trip to Yellowstone National Park, she had an epiphany: “I was fascinated by it all—and particularly by the park rangers who were giving educational tours and explaining the hydrology of the Yellowstone caldera,” she recalls. “I decided I too wanted to do something meaningful and began my journey to pursue an environmental science degree.”

An earlier event factored in her choice of where to study. While still dating her husband Pawel Wojtowicz, a QC alum (Media Studies ’07), he suggested a visit to his alma mater. “The beauty and the openness of the campus along with its diversity and facilities dedicated to science played a large part in my college selection process,” she says. Strolling through the Science Building, she was transfixed by the minerals and rocks in the hallway display cabinets. “I was like, ‘Wow!’”

Turetcaia joined the research of one of Pekar’s PhD students, who was working on mechanisms that might cause dramatic carbonate dissolutions (crashes) in the Caribbean Basin during the Late Miocene period 12.0–9.5 million years ago. Calcium carbonate is the main component in the shells of marine organisms (snails, clams, oysters) and the eggs we eat. Among other factors, the dissolution of carbonate occurs in the presence of colder water temperatures. Analyzing samples of foraminifera—small creatures that make their shells out of calcium carbonate—in her poster, Turetcaia, under Pekar’s supervision, concluded that there were many more dissolution events than indicated by prior research, and speculated that they were tied to climactic changes produced by changes in the movement of the Earth in its orbit.

Turetcaia credits Pekar for the depth of knowledge she and her fellow students have achieved. “The way he conducts his classes is very engaging because he is passionate about what he is teaching,” she says. “And he loves questions from the class—he really makes sure that you get it.”

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**IMAGES OF FAME – from page 3**

Art is in the eye of the beholder. Here are some notable responses to the works of art highlighted in John Nici’s book. What they were beholding is revealed on page 8.

1. “The nude hasn’t a good figure, unfortunately, and one can’t think of anything uglier than the man stretched out next to her.”—Théophile Thoré, critic

2. “What he did well, none did better. And what he did poorly, none did worse.”—Antonio Palomino, painter

3. “...based on formal arrangements, intellectual and emotional response, one finds favorites. Mine is Onion.”—Henry Hopkins, art historian

4. “It seems to me perfect.”—Ward Just, art critic

5. “It was quite possible [he] was fascinated by the smile...because it had awakened something in him which had slumbered in his soul for a long time, in all probability an old memory.”—Sigmund Freud, psychoanalyst

6. “We were embarrassed by that picture.”—Katherine McIntosh, daughter of the subject

7. “I thought it was someone about to take a bite out of something that’s just out of view. Until I realized it’s a painting of a woman at sunset who has lost her earrings.”—Dame Edna Everage (alter ego of comic Barry Humphries)

8. “What we see here is epilepsy.”—Théophile Thoré, critic

9. “From the right lateral tracing of the statue’s worn profile a pattern of bimaxillary prognathism is clearly detectable.”—Sheldon Peck, orthodontist

10. “How can you put a price-tag on a thing like that?”—Anonymous observer quoted in the New York Times; the painting sold for $2.3 million in 1961.
STEM GRANT – from page 2

rewarded, as over a third of our current undergraduates major in these important fields, and of those students, over half are minority students.”

“We designed this project as a vehicle for strengthening the STEM pipeline in our community,” says Assistant Provost Eva Fernández, who is co-director of the project along with Dean Martin Klotz (Division of Mathematics and Natural Sciences). “We’re situated in one of the world’s most diverse urban centers with a growing population of Hispanics. We also actively contribute to the vibrant tech, biomedical/allied health, and finance sectors in the NYC metro area. All of these areas need well-prepared college graduates with STEM degrees.”

The grant will fund a faculty-driven approach to improve access and learning, as well as create a bridge between schools. Introductory courses that “land” students in STEM majors will be redesigned at both institutions, and a peer tutoring and mentoring infrastructure will be developed to improve learning and foster intellectual growth outside of the classroom. A group of faculty members and administrators from QC and QCC will dedicate itself to improving programs, policies, and practices in STEM education, with the goal of increased collaboration between STEM faculty at both schools. Another goal is to create a model that the college can use in its collaborations with other community colleges.

With this project, QC has officially become a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). The U.S. Department of Education determines HSI eligibility based on a number of criteria, including the percentage of Hispanic students served by the institution.

Choice Exhibition

Queens Collects: 60 Years from the GTM will run through December 21 at the Godwin-Ternbach Museum. Selections from the best of the over 6,000 works in the collection will celebrate the GTM’s sixtieth anniversary by revisiting the creation of the collection, exploring the museum’s founders, featuring donations from the past decade, and examining art collecting today. Highlights include a triptych sculpture by Louise Nevelson, Indonesian ikat textiles, and fifth-century ceramics from Nazca, Peru. There will also be curator-led tours and discussions on art collecting as an individual, as a museum, and as an artist.

Effigy vessel
Guatemala, Early Classic period, Uaxactun 100–600 AD
Terracotta, 18 ½ x 16 inches
Bequest of Anna Ternbach, 96.2.10

QC Authors

AMY CHAZKEL (History) co-edited The Rio de Janeiro Reader: History, Culture, Politics (Duke University Press) with fellow specialists on Brazil, Daryle Williams and Paulo Knauss. Taking as its theme Rio’s famous moniker as the “Marvelous City,” the book offers a treasure trove of written and visual primary sources spanning the 450 years from colonial settlement up to the present, many of them published in English for the first time. Representing an appealing and extremely broad diversity of social viewpoints, these sources reveal to the reader a wide range of local and foreign, official, intellectual, popular, and imaginative perspectives on the city, its natural beauty, its residents, its local neighborhoods and festivals, its many cultural movements and styles, and its cosmopolitan ties throughout the Atlantic world. The significance of race, class, ethnicity, indigeneity, and sexuality pervade these sources. Readers can explore historical and social dimensions of the city ranging from its foundations in conquest and slavery to its role today as a world city experiencing modern political, racial, and economic progress and conflict. The book is the culmination of years of international archival research by the editors. Readers will find in it an engaging selection of material on a fascinating city.

In Black Ops Advertising (OR Books), MARA EINSTEIN (Media Studies) highlights the world of misleading texts and images in which readers and viewers unwittingly become purveyors of corporate communications, subjects for marketing research experiments, and fodder for data sets. A former executive at NBC, MTV Networks, and major advertising agencies, Einstein walks us through the numerous ways in which “native advertising” and “content marketing” disguise ads as news stories, entertaining videos, even blogs and tweets—content, she explains, that “grabs our attention while hiding its corporate sales pitch.” The tactics have grown much more sophisticated than the long-familiar use of product placement (such as placing a branded soft drink in the frame of a feature film) or advertorials in magazines. This is because our friends and family unknowingly send advertising messages that we will more readily read or watch, and because the content is overwhelmingly written by out-of-work journalists—writers who can easily replicate the editorial form even while not presenting an unbiased perspective. Given this, we come to encounter a fabricated reality in which the lines between editorial, entertainment, and advertising content are fuzzy. Advertisers claim that consumers are aware of these commercial messages, but that’s not so. Fewer than 20% of consumers recognize this content advertising. Often we don’t even see the “sponsored content” bug that identifies material as a set-up for a product; instead, we accept a narrative (say, from a digital newspaper or educational cable channel) in the trusting belief that we are simply becoming more informed about the news of the day or engaging with fun material. Einstein shows that “As we increasingly live online, we give ever more power to the players behind its workings. . . . We are lost in a corporate Neverland populated with pretty pictures and entertaining videos . . . and increasingly, we don’t even know it.”
QC AUTHORS — from page 7

If you had access to a radio or newspaper this past year, chances are good that you know about ANDREW HACKER’S newest book, The Math Myth and Other STEM Delusions (New Press). In it he punctures “an ideology, an industry, even a secular religion”—increasingly popular at all levels of education—whose adherents insist that every student needs advanced mathematics in order to compete in the 21st-century marketplace. Compared with STEM subjects, the arts, humanities, and social sciences have come to seem unimportant and of little intellectual or practical value. Moreover, math grades and standardized test scores have become institutionalized roadblocks to even non-quantitative disciplines, erecting unnecessary, irrelevant barriers to students’ ability to develop their aptitudes and pursue their chosen professions. Excessive math requirements also are the main academic reason for students’ failure to graduate: they have cost many talented teenagers their high school diplomas while barring others from college and graduate school admission. Hacker has collected data, reports, and personal testimonies for the past twenty years awaiting the pleasure of robo-assistants—read the latest by DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF (Media Studies), Throwing Rocks at the Google Bus: How Growth Became the Enemy of Prosperity (Portfolio). In his new book he analyzes the failed marriage of digital technology to an industrial paradigm of constant growth. Digital technology, with the empowering potential of distributed networks, could both invigorate innovation and distribute power and wealth widely. However, the industrial paradigm, with its tendency toward centralized power, seeks “growth at all costs,” and those costs are often corporate collapse, job loss, cutthroat competition, even faux measures of growth that mislead investors. Behemoth corporations like Google and Amazon try to grow ever larger, following the “faulty economic code” of our society to use technology aggressively as merely a new twist on an old-fashioned growth engine—for instance, by using automation to cut employees’ hours and even externalize customer service, essentially turning consumers into an unpaid labor force. Rushkoff urges the use of economic paradigms that will be better suited to a liberatory, ecologically responsible, wired economy and society. New practices might include worker-owned co-ops, local currencies, and valuing “a prosperous commons” in which we can all become “participants in the solution” to today’s mismatch of human needs, ideals, our 21st-century technological potential, and an outdated economic paradigm.

That we are not constricting—not to say contorting—our conception of excellence.”

If you’ve ever wondered why you the customer/patient/depositor should be the one left hanging on the corporate phone—awaiting the pleasure of robo-assistants—read the latest by DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF (Media Studies), Throwing Rocks at the Google Bus: How Growth Became the Enemy of Prosperity (Portfolio). In his new book he analyzes the failed marriage of digital technology to an industrial paradigm of constant growth. Digital technology, with the empowering potential of distributed networks, could both invigorate innovation and distribute power and wealth widely. However, the industrial paradigm, with its tendency toward centralized power, seeks “growth at all costs,” and those costs are often corporate collapse, job loss, cutthroat competition, even faux measures of growth that mislead investors. Behemoth corporations like Google and Amazon try to grow ever larger, following the “faulty economic code” of our society to use technology aggressively as merely a new twist on an old-fashioned growth engine—for instance, by using automation to cut employees’ hours and even externalize customer service, essentially turning consumers into an unpaid labor force. Rushkoff urges the use of economic paradigms that will be better suited to a liberatory, ecologically responsible, wired economy and society. New practices might include worker-owned co-ops, local currencies, and valuing “a prosperous commons” in which we can all become “participants in the solution” to today’s mismatch of human needs, ideals, our 21st-century technological potential, and an outdated economic paradigm.

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Answers to quiz: