From Hunter to Hollywood!

Orange Is the New Black Star

DASCHA POLANCO

Inspires Our Freshmen With Her Success Story
Welcome to this, our newest edition of At Hunter, in which we chronicle—and celebrate—the achievements of our students, present and past, and our brilliant, groundbreaking faculty. It goes without saying (but won’t!) that I have a special place in my heart for our alumni. Every time one of them hits a high note in his or her chosen field, I think, “Well done, Hunter graduate! I am so proud!”

I had just such a special moment at our Convocation on September 7, as Dascha Polanco ’08, who took her Hunter psychology degree to Hollywood and a regular role in Orange is the New Black (she plays Dayanara Diaz), took the stage to inspire the incoming students with her story. What really moved me was that Dascha, reading from her own handwritten notes, chose not to speak about her acting career and the glamorous life everyone in the audience assumed she’s living. Instead, she spoke simply and movingly of her years at Hunter.

In many ways, Dascha (who also recently co-starred with Jennifer Lawrence in Joy) epitomizes the very best of this generation of Hunter students—and the graduates they become. Most students have to juggle work, family, and school—and they still scale the heights.

Born in the Dominican Republic, the daughter of a mechanic and a cosmetologist, Dascha grew up in the Bronx and was already a single working mother when she enrolled at Hunter. Bradley Cooper on Joy, with Jennifer Lawrence in Joy, with programming.

“Nobody, it turns out. While majoring in psychology, Dascha also took theatre courses—and that turned out to be the path she would follow, all the way to Hollywood. After four years at Hunter, she’s part of another multiculti- tural cast of characters. I’m very proud,” she tells At Hunter, “to be part of such a diverse cast on Orange that has changed the way people stay in tune with programming.”

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I walked down the aisle with my diploma, I said to myself: ‘Who is going to stop me from what I decide to do next?’”

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And if Dascha’s story now sets her apart from her peers, her advice to the new students is something they can connect to their lives—and their hopes for their own futures. “Possibilities are endless,” she told them. “Let you be the one to make the right decisions for you. Only you understand you.”
T heir's still a whiff of that new building smell, but the Belfer Research Building, opened more than a year ago, is up and running—humming with the excitement of brilliant scientific minds working together to solve enduring medical mysteries—and confirming the foresight of Hunter’s purchase of the fourth floor of the $650 million facility built by the Weill Cornell Medical Center on East 69th Street.

The new building is drawing rave reviews from the Hunter scientists who occupy its labs and offices and mingle with their peers from Weill Cornell, who occupy the rest of the building. “It’s so well designed, it makes science easy,” says Brian Zeglis, a Hunter professor of chemistry, “and it makes collaboration with the other people in the building easy.”

Indeed, Belfer is an unprecedented collaboration between a public university and an Ivy League giant. And in its labs and conference rooms, scientists and students, from juniors to post-docs, and from all genders and ethnic backgrounds, work together to create the medicine of the future.

In an editorial in April 2015 hailing the acquisition of the floor in Belfer, the New York Daily News hit the nail on the head. Hunter, the university that Belfer students, into exotic areas of medical research.

MANDE HOLFDA: A Killer in the Ocean Could Be a Lifesaver on Land

n the group that Mandë Holford calls the killer snails, there’s no nastier piece of work than the Cone Sea Snail. Every year, dozens of people, exploring a coral reef or wandering barefoot in shallow water, come to grief in accidental encounters with Conus Geographus. Its venomous harpoon-like tooth can penetrate human flesh, and there’s no known antidote for its toxins. The fish that are its natural prey stand no chance; instantly immobilized, they are ingested whole.

Holford, associate professor of chemistry and biochemistry, lights up when she talks about the Cone Sea Snail. Every year, the so-called venom peptides can only be taken via spinal tap. This is all in the service of developing powerful lifesaving drugs. “Drugs developed from sea snail venom,” says Professor Holford, “can be very specific and very potent, targeting pain, cancer, and epilpsy.” There’s already one such drug on the market—Prialt, which is used to alleviate pain in HIV and cancer patients—and several more in the pipeline. The drawback is that, for now, the so-called venom peptides can only be taken via spinal tap. Holford’s research is aimed at coming up with a way to deliver them in a noninvasive way. “We are working,” she says, “on a Trojan horse strategy.”
Unlocking Secrets of Proteins to Combat Breast Cancer

Jill Bargonetti: unlocking secrets of proteins to combat breast cancer. Professor Jill Bargonetti has become one of the nation’s preeminent breast cancer researchers. A professor of biological sciences, she’s part of Belfer’s team of translational scientists, focusing on the molecular genetics of the deadly disease, specifically the roles played by two proteins—p53 and MDM2. The laboratory work performed by Bargonetti and her team is painstaking, precise, and complicated. "Molecularly," Bargonetti says, "we study the genes and the gene products in a cancer. We genetically engineer the cancer to get rid of the genes and proteins we study, so we can see what happens when we get rid of them." Understanding p53 and MDM2 is crucial to understanding breast cancer. In their normal state, the two proteins work together to prevent the spread of damaged cells; when cancer strikes, however, the proteins actually promote tumor growth. Mutated p53 is associated with triple negative breast cancers; MDM2 is a driver of estrogen-receptive breast cancers.

For Bargonetti, the Holy Grail of cancer treatment is precision medicine, treatment that targets the cancer and doesn’t damage any other aspects of a patient’s DNA. Ideally, she says, “After patients have treatment, they’re the same person they were before they had the cancer.”

Biomolecular Technology Enables Big Advances to Go Small

Hiroshi Matsui: biomolecular technology enables big advances to go small. Professor Hiroshi Matsui takes the battle against cancer to a level so minuscule it’s almost invisible. His specialty, at the intersection of biology and nanotechnology, is the relatively new—and very exciting—field of biomolecular-receptive breast cancers.

Matsui’s research is aimed at other forms of the dreaded disease—gastric, colon, lung, pancreatic, and renal cancers. Oleocanthal works because lysosomes, the parts of a cell where waste is stored—Professor calls them “the recycling centers”—are larger and more fragile in cancer cells than in healthy cells. They’re vulnerable to anything that can penetrate, which oleocanthal does, crossing the barrier and causing necrosis—cell death. The adjacent healthy cells are unaffected—and that’s a mystery that needs to be solved. “We need to understand why cancerous cells are more sensitive to oleocanthal than noncancerous cells,” says Foster, who with Paul Brunlin, professor of nutritional sciences in the journal Molecular and Cellular Oncology. “The published work involved studies with cultured cancer cells in the lab,” says Foster. “However, we have now begun to investigate the effect of oleocanthal on a genetically engineered mouse model for pancreatic cancers in collaboration with Dr. Nancy Du of Weill Cornell Medicine—and the initial study yielded promising results.”

Creating a Puzzle To Make Radiation Safer

Brian Zeglis: creating a puzzle to make radiation safer. The goal of this microscopic molecular mapping is to make Positron Emission Tomography (PET) safer for patients. Attaching radiotopes to antibodies is one of the best ways to deliver radioactivity to cancer cells to act as a tracer for PET scans. But it can take several days for the injected isotope to degrade. During that time its radioactivity can harm healthy tissue. Zeglis’s technique would cut that exposure significantly.

Zeglis came to Belfer from Sloan Kettering, where he holds a concurrent affiliate appointment in the Department of Radiology. He began his research there, as a postdoctoral fellow, then moved into the brand-new Belfer, funded by a grant from the National Institutes of Health; he says, “allows me to keep up the pace of the research.” At Belfer, he says, “We’re very much into translational science. We admire scientists who study fundamental science or fundamental biology, but I learned very early in my career that to galvanize my research I require the relation to human health and the potential for immediate impact, or at least a major impact on human health in a couple of years.”

Creating new approaches to cancer treatment involves the interplay of the medical sciences in the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences at Hunter College. Professor Foster (with students) is taking aim at numerous cancers.
In Giant's Footsteps

Hunter Students Go South to Meet Veterans of the Civil Rights Struggle

Chayanne Marcano didn’t expect to cry. But every day, she says, “I just went back to my hotel room totally overcome with emotion; it was truly life-changing for me.” Chayanne joined eleven of her Hunter classmates on an eight-day spring-break tour that took them to Atlanta, Birmingham, Little Rock, and Memphis, tracing the footsteps of the Civil Rights Movement, hearing firsthand accounts of the long-ago struggles, and sitting face-to-face with people whose names they had only encountered in history books.

The trip, long planned by Professor David Julian Hodos, was an exercise in “urgent anthropology,” the study of endangered cultures. As they move into old age, the veterans of the Civil Rights movement—the men and women who risked their lives for racial equality—are fast becoming such an endangered species. As they move into old age, the veterans of the Civil Rights movement—the men and women who risked their lives for racial equality—are fast becoming such an endangered species.

The group’s experiences were documented in a short film by Crystal Waterton, a graduate student in Integrated Media Arts. It can be viewed at https://vimeo.com/137209744. Professor Hodos says he is thrilled with the success of the trip, a complement to his popular Anthropology of the Civil Rights Movement class. “In anthropology,” he says, “one stock in trade is participatory exploration. I wanted them to have spectacular experiences."

The group meets with Andrew Young, former U.S. Ambassador to the UN.

Kezena Brown
MSEd (Adeleate Literacy), June 2014
Assistant Principal, New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities II, Bronx

“I am most proud of the trust that I help foster among parents, teachers, students, and within this community. That’s more empowering for kids than anything I do alone.”

Brian Romero
MSW, June 2015
Social Worker, High School of Excellence and Innovation, Inwood

“I really enjoy the position because it allows me to blend my passion for healing and social justice. At Silberman, I could discuss these issues with my professors and my peers; those conversations prepared me for this work.”

Samantha Roche
NS (Nursing), January 2016
Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, Well Cornell Collaborative Care Center

“It’s incredibly fulfilling to make a connection with someone and help them achieve their wellness goals. Thanks to the Hunter School of Nursing, I’m well-prepared for this position.”

At the Pettus Bridge, scene of 1965’s Bloody Sunday.

Rocking the Real World

With Hunter Graduate Degrees

School of Education

Ryan Olsen
Master’s in Music Education, Spring 2012
Music Teacher, PS 124, Chinatown

“I love being able to work with a diverse group of students. For many of them, it’s the first exposure to classical music as well as musical theatre. And I’m really proud of the accomplishments of our theatre club, one of the highest rated elementary schools at the Junior Theatre Festival in Atlanta every year.”

Lara Wahlberg
DNP, May 2015
Nurse Practitioner, Palliative Care, Bellevue Hospital

“I feel privileged to work with these vulnerable patients and help them, and I’m honored to work with such a diverse group.”

School of Nursing

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Amal Elbakhar ‘11
Award to continue working toward her JD at Harvard Law School

Ergeniy Kim ‘10
Award to support her work toward an MBA at the Yale School of Management

Julie Zhu, MFA ’17
Award to support her work toward an MFA in painting at Hunter

Every year, the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowships for New Americans award graduate school fellowships to 30 young scholars from immigrant families. The recipients, selected from a pool of 1,200 applicants, are picked because of their potential contributions to U.S. society or culture, or their academic field. In 2015, three from Hunter won the coveted fellowship.
INTO A DIFFERENT WORLD
To forge a new life, valedictorian Deena Chanowitz had to leave her old one

one; she became homeless. But she fought back, and by 17, was managing a restaurant. By 20, she co-founded one. By 25, she had become a private chef and enrolled at Hunter, with the support of the Footsteps program. Founded by Hunter alumna Malka Schwartz ’04, Footsteps helps young men and women who grew up in strict Orthodox households pursue a secular education.

With her background—cooking for her 10 brothers and sisters since she was a young girl—Chanowitz began pursuing a nutrition degree. But then she became interested in how the human body works—and realized she had to become a doctor. When Chanowitz was a pre-med student, her organic chemistry professor was so impressed with her that she asked her to be her teaching assistant. She went on to do research on cancer, to shadow a psychiatrist, and even to volunteer in Ghana. There was something unusual about this young woman once expected to keep house for the rest of her life; she was attending the Drexel University College of Medicine.

FINALLY, IT’S HIS TURN
At 71, Mariano Laboy gets his cap and gown

Growing up in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, the ninth of 12 children, Mariano Laboy was smart enough to skip more than one grade—but too poor to go to college. So, in 1962, he came to New York City and went to work in a factory that manufactured garment bags; he also enrolled in English classes. And every month, he sent money home to his family. His contributions helped three of his younger siblings attend college and get well-paying jobs.

Laboy, 71, continued to work, always moving up and taking on extra work to help his family. He became a back-office manager for Merrill Lynch and then a foreign exchange consultant for Bank of New York. When he retired, he decided it was time to achieve his long-deferred dream of a college education. On the advice of friends, he enrolled at Hunter. He majored in African/Puerto Rican/Latino studies, and received his degree at January Commencement. “It’s never too late,” he says. Indeed it isn’t—and Laboy isn’t finished with his education. This fall he’ll be attending Hunter’s Silverman School of Social Work to pursue a master’s in community organizing.

TRIAL AND TRIUMPH
For Maya Leggat, the road to graduation took a painful detour

The numbers tell a tale: 1,296 graduate degrees and 2,576 undergraduate degrees granted to Hunter students; thousands of friends and family members in attendance. But behind every name called out, every diploma awarded, there’s a human story—an individual triumph, or a family’s pride, or a struggle overcome.

There is, for instance, the story of Maya Leggat. Some of the loudest applause at Hunter’s Spring 2015 Commencement erupted when President Jennifer J. Raab told Maya’s story, and the three police officers who helped save her life bounded onto the stage at Madison Square Garden to share her great moment.

Leggat, then 22, was reading her Kindle at Metro-North’s White Plains station in September 2013 when a derailed man sliced her in front of a train. According to The New York Post, the force of the train “sent her flying underneath the platform, rather than crushing her.” But she lost a finger, broke both legs, and severed an artery in her thigh.

Thanks to the timely actions of MTA Officer Uzzle, Maya made it to the hospital, where her condition was stabilized, by the next day the English major, still in her hospital bed, was asking for her homework. While she endured her long recuperation, Leggat’s teachers communicated with her via Skype—and Hunter waived her tuition.

At graduation, as she embraced Officer Uzzle, who’s now retired, and his partners on that day, Officers Daniel Krum and Victor Pastrana, Maya allowed all of her emotions to burst forth. “I’m so happy,” she said, fighting back tears of joy. “It just reminds me how lucky I am to be here today with people I love, and people who care about me.”
At the midsummer production of Madama Butterfly at the Kaye Playhouse: Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor (left) and opera star and Hunter College Foundation trustee emerita Martina Arroyo ’56, whose foundation sponsored the production.

Co-authors Melanne Verveer (2nd right) and Kim Azzarelli (2nd left) discussed their book Fast Forward: How Women Can Achieve Power and Purpose with CBS’s Norah O’Donnell (left) and fashion icon Diane Von Furstenberg at Roosevelt House.

At the midsummer production of Madama Butterfly at the Kaye Playhouse: Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor (left) and opera star and Hunter College Foundation trustee emerita Martina Arroyo ’56, whose foundation sponsored the production.

Historians Geoffrey Ward (left) and Ken Burns visited Roosevelt House to unveil their companion book to The Roosevelts: An intimate History, their PBS documentary series.

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Author Phil Klay (MFA ’11), right, joined The Aspen Institute’s Damian Woetzel (left) and Wounded Warrior Band singer Tim Donley to discuss “Art in the Aftermath of War” at Lang Recital Hall.

The subject was “The Future of The New York Times,” as Roosevelt House’s Jack Rosenthal (center) interviewed Times executive editor Dean Baquet (left) and publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. in June.

President Jennifer J. Raab presenting Frayda Lindemann ’60 with an honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters at Hunter’s 2015 Commencement.

Celebrating the Writing Center’s sixth anniversary at the Sherry-Netherland Hotel: Director Lewis Frumkes with guest of honor Elizabeth Strotz (right) and Elizabeth Strong Cuevas.

Narrator Paula Zahn with Joan Finkelstein of the Harkness Foundation for Dance, at a screening of PS Dance!, a film about public school dance education, whose executive producer is Hunter College Foundation Board member Jody Arnould.
THE MELODY LINGERS ON
Lin-Manuel Miranda and His Classmates
Put on a Show for a Beloved Teacher

Barbara Ames doesn’t remember exactly when she wrote the stirring words and music to “Martin Luther King.” Her gospel-style tribute to the late civil rights giant. She thinks it might have been when she taught public school in Bedford-Stuyvesant in the late 1970s. “Most of the children there were of color,” she says, “and I wanted to introduce them to their heritage and culture.”

Ames brought “Martin Luther King” with her when she started teaching music at Hunter College Elementary School in 1985. Singing it became a January tradition for a generation of students—among them Lin-Manuel Miranda (HCHS ’98) never forgot Ames—“our amazing elementary school teacher”—and her inspiring song. So, for Martin Luther King Day this year, he quietly enlisted 50 of his former classmates to sing in his honor. Miranda organized the performance—videotaped by Ames’s daughter Alysson—as a stealth operation; he even blocked Ames from his Facebook page so she wouldn’t get wind of it.

Then, the day before Martin Luther King Day, he and his former classmates filmed their toe-tapping performance. When Ames was told by her daughter that something special awaited her on the Internet, she was apprehensive. “Whatever it is,” she said, “I’m not going to like it.” But then she viewed the video. Watching it, she now recalls, “I could hardly breathe. There were my dear beloved students singing the song I taught them so long ago.” It was, she says, “the greatest gift ever.”

To see the performance: bit.ly/lin_manuelMLK_song

PERFECT HARMONY
A Love of Music Took Elham Fanoos
From War-Torn Kabul to Hunter

Three days after a Taliban suicide bombing that almost killed the principal of his school in Kabul, Elham Fanoos knew what he had to do. “I want to come to the U.S. to pursue my music studies in peace and freedom,” he wrote in a Facebook message.

That was in December 2014. Nine months later, at Hunter’s Convocation, Fanoos sat down at the piano and played Rachmaninoff’s Opus 3, No. 2 for his enraptured new classmates. How he got from there to here is a tale of courage, persistence, and a love of music that transcends boundaries. And it’s a story that resonates: Fanoos has been the subject of profiles on both NPR and ABC News. At 18, he toured the United States with the Afghan National Youth Orchestra, performing solo at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center in Washington. That’s when he met Lesley Rosenthal. Her mother, Hunter alumna Nancy Merblum Fadem ’56, a retired teacher of English as a foreign language, tutored him—and gave him a full scholarship package to Hunter. Before that, Elham was scheduled to perform at Carnegie Hall. But then a bomb exploded. Realizing it was time to leave Kabul, Fanoos contacted Lesley Rosenthal. Her mother, Hunter alumna Nancy Merblum Fadem ’56, a retired teacher of English as a foreign language, tutored him via Skype to bring him up to speed for the CUNY assessment test. Then Hunter accepted him—and gave him a full scholarship package that includes a Mother’s Day Scholarship funded by Dr. Fayida Lindemann ’60, who shares his passion for music.

Barbara Ames

Elham Fanoos with mentor Dr. Ahmad Sarmast and NPR's Renee Montagne.

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To hear Fanoos play: http://www.wnyc.org/story/a-young-afghan-pianist-plays-for-his-countrys-future/

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TO OUR HEALTH

Chronicling the Battle Against the City’s Killers

A newspaper from New York City’s Department of Homeless Services dispatches more than 3,000 volunteers—called enumerators—to conduct a census of the homeless. And on the same night, Hunter’s Silberman School of Social Work, partnering with DHS, sends out 200 trained decoys, who pose as Silberman School of Social Work, partnering with interviewees—called enumerators—to conduct a census—was not for the fainthearted. Between midnight and 4 a.m.—the hours the city due to a snowstorm, this year’s census was postponed until February 9. Temperatures were expected. On the other hand, the indoor air of assuring that the city’s count is accurate. Of the volunteers are making many funny decoys, the assumption is they may also be missing many genuinely homeless persons,” says Silberman. Dean Mary Cavanaugh. Due to a snowstorm, this year’s census was postponed until February 9. Temperatures were in the 20s, and standing or sitting in the open air between midnight and 4 a.m.—the hours the city’s counts its conduct—was not for the faint of heart.

The decoys are recruited in the months before the census and trained under the supervision of Training and Continuing Education Coordinator Christine Kim. Their training covers not only the importance of what they’re doing, but how to stay safe on the streets and in the parks. They go forth in teams of two, maintaining contact with each other at all times—and with their team captain like grad student Dustin Chien. A team’s night ends just as soon as an official enumerator approaches them. It could be 10 minutes, it could be all four freezing hours.

Silberman student Julius Flower’s assignment took him to a bus stop on East 16th Street, where he waited three hours before the enumerators spotted him. “My partner said, ‘It’s crazy that there are actually people out here in this weather,’” he says. “And I said, ‘What does it say that they d rather be out here freezing than in a city shelter?’”

\[\text{Laurie Tisch, left, Dr. Tom Farley, and Ann-Marie Louison, 2012 Tisch Community Health Prize winner.} \]

\[\text{A team of city enumerators approaches a homeless person during the city's annual census.} \]

\[\text{A SPECTACULAR NEW HOME} \]

\[\text{THEATRE AT HUNTER GETS A SPECTACULAR NEW HOME} \]

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\[\text{ince just after the Civil War, Hunter College and the building at 151 East 67th Street have co-existed as neighbors while the upper East Side changed around them. Now, however, No. 151, the newly named Patty and Jay Baker Hall, will make history of a different kind as the home of Hunter’s Department of Theatre. The transformation came as a result of a generous gift from the Bakers—they originally pledged $10 million, then added another $5 million. The building, just east of Lexington Avenue, next to the 19th Precinct stationhouse, started out in 1870 as a residence for the owner of Mount Sinai Hospital, just across the street. The hospital moved to Fifth Avenue in 1904, and the residence went through a series of occupants and uses. It was most recently the Kennedy Child Study School, founded in 1938 by Joseph and Rose Kennedy in memory of their son Joseph Jr., who was killed in World War II. Because the building was owned by the Archdiocese of New York, its sale required Vatican approval. Thanks to the Baker gift, Hunter acquired it in October 2015. The new acquisition is already in the throes of a major interior renovation; the exterior is landmarked and can’t be altered. Theatre students found 11 classrooms ready for them for the spring semester, and there are plans for eight rehearsal rooms, a faculty lounge, and a student area. Also planned is a Dance Education Program, including Introduction to Theatre, Play Analysis, and Playwriting, as well as graduate seminars. The new home, says Claudia Orenstein, chair of the Theatre Department, “gives our department a physical presence in the city, with room to build new educational and creative possibilities for our students. We are excited to explore all the paths this new building opens up to us.”} \]

\[\text{Jay and Patty Baker lead the official banner-raising. Patty Baker ’82 is a Hunter College Foundation board member and a Hunter Hall of Fame member.} \]

\[\text{Laurie Tisch (center), with Stephen Weinroth and wife Cathy Weinroth ’76, a Hunter College Foundation board member, unveiled her newest dance piece (top picture).} \]

\[\text{THARPSICORE!} \]

\[\text{50 Years Later, a Dance Legend Returns} \]

\[\text{It was a long time ago, and it took just 10 minutes, but Twyla Tharp’s performance of Tank Dive, her very first piece, was the start of something big—a half-century cascade of creative energy that changed the face of contemporary dance. So on the 50th anniversary of Tank Dive, Tharp returned to Hunter, the place where it all began. Addressing a room full of students, alumni, and audience members, Tharp recalled the moment her 22-year-old self stepped on stage in Room 1604 of the Art Department, twirled a yo-yo, encircled her back, and, weighted down by a pair of wooden shoes, brought herself up to an extended relevé. At the time, all she had was her creative vision. “I had no money,” she said, “but I had an idea, and I was allowed to go for it. Thank you, Hunter. It’s truly a phenomenal thing for a kid to get this opportunity.” Tharp’s return—coupled with the unveiling of her newest piece, based on Beethoven’s String Quartet No. 130—comes at a time when dance is flourishing at Hunter, with the establishment of a fully fledged Department of Dance, the first in a public college. And the Arnhold Graduate Dance Education Program—enhanced by a recent partnership with Lincoln Center—prepares students to become dance teachers in the city’s public schools, where they can help a new generation of boys and girls embark on the same journey Tharp Tharp did when she stepped into Room 1604 50 years ago.} \]

\[\text{Tharp (center), with Stephen Weinroth and wife Cathy Weinroth ’76, a Hunter College Foundation board member, unveiled her newest dance piece (top picture).} \]
TRIBUTE TO A TITAN
Honoring a Giant of Art—and Hunter Trailblazer

It’s almost impossible now, more than a half-century after their heydays, to imagine the explosive impact the Abstract Expressionists of the New York School had on the art world. Coming of age during World War II, they smashed conventions, discovered something that not all critics, and made New York City the center of the art world. Nowadays, their names—de Kooning, Pollock, Motherwell—are household words, but they contributed to the production of new knowledge. For the exhibition, the 11 Hunter MA and MFA students conducted research on artists who were in many cases totally unknown. They wrote texts, which were published in the related book, proposed an exhibition plan, and even gave tours of the show once it was up.

A NEW WORLD, A NEW VISION

For, or nearly so, after centuries of European colonization, the brand-new nations of Central and South America became irresistible magnets for North Americans and Europeans who arrived in droves to trade, to mine, to exploit—and, sometimes, to try to capture the beauty of the newly accessible, still mysterious, continent.

Boundless Reality: Traveler Artists’ Landscapes of Latin America, an exhibition of the works of those painters, part of the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, ran at the Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Gallery all winter. Curated by Harper Montgomery, the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros professor of Latin American Art at Hunter College, and students from her master’s course, it included works from the late 17th century, although most date from the mid-1900s. “This project not only allowed Hunter students to experience the process of designing and executing a scholarly exhibition,” says Montgomery, “it also taught them how exhibitions contribute to the production of new knowledge. For the exhibition, the 11 Hunter MA and MFA students conducted research on artists who were in many cases totally unknown. They wrote texts, which were published in the related book, proposed an exhibition plan, and even gave tours of the show once it was up.”

FOLLOWING LINCOLN’S FOOTSTEPS TO ROOSEVELT’S HOUSE

When Harold Holzer was in fifth grade as Queens, he took a bus through a bunch of dentists and asked each child to pick one, go to the library, find a book, and write a composition. “I got Lincoln,” says Holzer, who then selected the portraits by Adolph M. Busfield, by Richard Current. “That,” he says, “was the epiphany.” Holzer’s discovery of the 16th president led to a lifelong fascination and literary specialty: over 42 years, he wrote, co-wrote, edited, or co-edited 52 books about the Great Emancipator. His latest, Lincoln and the Power of the Press, won the 2013 Goldsmith Book Prize, awarded by the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School, among other awards. Holzer did all this while holding down a day job as director of public affairs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. “The retirement may not last,” he said. “I love the real story when young people are here. Then, in the evening, the community comes in for our vibrant public programs. I really want to see more interaction between those two groups: I plan to set up programs where the students, many of them immigrants hungry to learn about America, can meet and learn from the older, more established constituents of Manhattan and the Upper East Side. I think they could gain so much from the older, more established residents of Manhattan and the Upper East Side. I think they could gain so much from the older, more established residents of Manhattan and the Upper East Side.”

TONGUE AND HOME

Contrary to some image, not every New Yorker lives in a gilded penthouse. More than a million and a half of us own or rent apartments developed under various affordable-housing programs.

An exhibition at Hunter, Footnoted History (Third Avenue at 119th Street) traces the story of affordable housing in the city through photographs, archival material, and comprehensive, historical material. Titled Affordable Housing in New York: The People, Places, and Policies that Transformed it, the exhibition complements the newly published book of the same name by Matthew Gordon Laser and Nicholas Dagen Bloom.

WOMEN’S WORDS

With the Vote at Stake

There’s not a hashtag in sight, but the quotes—pithy, concise, and precisely targeted at an audience of men—were the early 20th-century feminist equivalent of Twitter. Now framed and covering the walls of Roosevelt House, the posters were the center-piece of Women Take the Lead. From Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Eleanor Roosevelt, Suffrage to Human Rights, RH’s first public exhibition since reopening as an Institute of Public Policy.

The exhibit unearthed rare artifacts—some unseen for more than a century—from the suffrage movement, presenting a perspective-shifting portrait of women’s history in the United States. The initiative for the exhibit, which ran through May 27, came from Hunter Foundation trustee Ellen Kimmel Skaife. “It’s perfect—there’s a progressive continuity,” said Ruth Messinger, RH’s first public exhibition since reopening as an Institute of Public Policy.

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It was a math, math world!


by the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Intervention.

1960s

Rosemarie Birri D’ Alessandro ’53, an activist for child protection and victims’ rights, recently received the Woman of Distinction Award from her high school alma mater, St. Catharine Academy in the Bronx.

Beverly Bonaparte (MSW ’51) has been appointed president of Chamberlain College of Nursing’s Jacksonville, FL, campus.

Herbert Landman ’53 retired as executive director of the Lancaster (PA) Public Library in July 2015.

Leon Cooperman (’54), chairman and CEO of Omega Advisors, received the 2015 Graham & Dodd Award. He was also inducted into the Craft & Hobby Association of New York State. Lang is the subject of Joy Davidman, ‘59 has written a presentation celebrating neglected American studies and Jewish Culture of the Lower East Side, at the New York Public Library in July 2015.


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During Women’s History Month at the Italian American Museum in New York City, Louise Barrella ’70 participated in a presentation celebrating neglected Italian Renaissance painter Sofonisba Anguissola.

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Bonnie Durham ’14 was selected as a featured artist by ARTnews 2015, an international art competition in Grand Rapids, MI.
Mark Howell (MFA ’14) is the executive director of Tusculum Hill Ministries in Clifton, KY.
Molva Miller (MSW ’94) is deputy borough president of Queens. She

Continued
Millennials, like the Gen-Xers, and the Baby Boomers, and the World War II "Greatest Generation," have their own cultural touchstones, their own way of existing in society, and, says Kelle Jacob, their own style of philanthropy. When they give, she says, "they care about being part of something." That’s why Jacob, appointed to the Hunter Foundation Board just last year, has her sights set on forging Hunter’s bonds with those alums who, like her, came of age after 2000.

Her own pathway to Hunter was a circuitous one. At first, she decided not to go to college. Instead, to market an online art gallery she founded, she competed on America’s Next Top Model, in the season that began in September 2004. “I did amazing things for my gallery, visiting colleges and speaking,” she says. “I was invited to speak at Hunter about how I had set up my business.”

Then came her epiphany: “I was going there to inspire the students—and I wound up being inspired.” She enrolled at Hunter, where she majored in media studies and minored in English. Her goal was to become a journalist. “My biggest thrill,” she says, “was when I collaborated on a Village Voice story about gentrification in Brooklyn.”

Jacob also became involved in the life of Hunter, serving on the Senate—and galvanizing the campaign to renovate the library. “Her leadership in that campaign was extraordinary,” says President Raab. “She would show up at my door and say, ‘Here’s what I think we should do.’—and then she would do it. She deserves so much credit for the modernization of our library.”

In the midst of this came the invitation that changed her career plans. Recommended by Hunter, Jacob embarked on an internship at Estée Lauder. “I thought they wanted me to work at a counter,” she laughs. “Instead I was involved in strategy, product development. I was using the same skills I would have used as a reporter—using insights, really understanding and investigating what people need, and developing a product based on that.” Today, she’s at Estée Lauder, as manager for North American strategy, working on global product development. And she’s bringing the analytical skills she learned there to her work at the Hunter Foundation Board, where, as the youngest woman member, she’s in the advance guard of a trend to involve more recent grads. “It’s all about understanding the millennial dynamic,” she says.

Her idea, presented to the Foundation Board on December 15: Support the recent alums now, as they start their careers, in the hopes of establishing lifelong bonds.

"The board," says Jacob, “is very supportive to our new ideas and understands that we have to continually evolve.”