

WORLD READY

Cate Muther, Kenyan children, and a pile of sand used to make bricks and tiles for a low-cost housing community that's being built by Jamii Bora, a microfinance institution in Kenya with which Muther works.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CATE MUTHER



The Practical Idealist

With the proliferation of hip websites like Kickstarter, it seems anyone can come up with an idea for changing the world, get funding, and see their idea become reality. Social entrepreneurship—applying business principles to a venture seeking social change—is a trendy term these days, and new projects intent on helping those less fortunate are cropping up in droves.

This was not the case in 1994, when Catherine Muther '69 (economics) decided to leave a lucrative senior position in marketing at Cisco Systems, determined to use her business acumen to realize greater social equity instead of just greater profits. Muther says she decided to “build on what I learned from building new companies in new industries to create an entrepreneurial foundation focused on change,” and she established the Three Guineas Fund (named after Virginia Woolf’s famous essay on war and women) with \$2 million of her own money. The organization is committed to establishing opportunities for women and girls in education and the economy, and Muther receives no salary.

Now Muther, who holds graduate degrees from Cambridge and Stanford, has brought her mover-and-shaker notions back to Sarah Lawrence, where last fall she taught an economics class titled “Social Entrepreneurship, Models for Intervention in Global Poverty.” Students worked on teams to prepare business cases and present them in front of the class (common practice for MBA students, but not undergraduates), which taught them to analyze and critique the underlying business models of social enterprises.

Many international students took the class, and applied their research to real-world problems close to home. Sachi Shah '15 examined how soap operas in her home country of India affect development and reinforce standards of morality, and Malawi-born Teresa Phiri '13 wrote about the problem of urbanization and growing slums. Ecuadorian Maria Munoz '13, whose mother is a nanny in Manhattan, wrote her conference paper on “Lower East Side Nannies: A Socioeconomic Analysis of Women in the Childcare Industry.”

Jackie Assar '14 appreciated Muther’s real-world connections; the teacher brought several social enterprise leaders to speak to the class. Muther also connected her students to competitions for budding entrepreneurs. In March, Munoz, Shah, Phiri, Assar, and Nyla Khan '14 made it to the regional finals for the 4th Annual Hult Prize, the world’s largest international business competition and start-up accelerator for social entrepreneurship, with a proposal to use aquaponics to produce fresh food in urban slums. —Katharine Reece MFA '12

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EXPLAIN THAT TITLE

Tagger’s Delight

Title: “What a Wall Wants, or How Graffiti Thinks: Nomad Grammarology in the French Banlieue”
Author: David Fieni (French)
Published: in the journal *diacritics* in December

To break down some terms: *grammarology* is the scientific study of writing systems or scripts—in this case, graffiti—and *banlieues* are the French equivalent of the projects. Fieni wanted to explore the “illegality, anonymity, and ephemerality” of graffiti in the banlieue, and how “the graffitist positions him or herself outside the law, while also writing on the very material surfaces of the law (property, the walls built by the state).”

MILITARY MATTERS

SLC Faculty Write About the Armed Forces ...



... **And military leadership:** Mark Shulman (history), who is probably the only SLC faculty member who has also taught at the US Air War College, published an article titled “Lead Me, Follow Me, Or Get Out Of My Way: Rethinking And Refining The Civil-Military Relationship” in *Army War College Monograph Series* in September. The title of his article comes from a wartime pep talk from General George Patton and represents what Shulman calls “a simple but very practical perspective on military leadership.” His paper goes on to explore different types of relationships between civilian and military leaders and how they can affect national security.



... **And PTSD:** In January, Adam Brown (psychology) received an \$800,000 Congressional Directed Medical Research grant to examine how cognition and neurobiology are altered among veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Working in NYU’s department of psychiatry, Brown will spend the next two years using techniques from experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience to better understand how events that are no longer happening continue to affect people for years afterward.



... **And stereotypes:** In 1890, the 7th Cavalry Regiment committed the infamous massacre at Wounded Knee. In 1894, the regiment spearheaded the suppression of the Pullman strike in Chicago, a conflict between the American Railway Union and the railroads that shut down much of the nation’s freight and passenger traffic. Priscilla Murolo '80 (women’s history) examined the connections between the two incidents in a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association in November. In “The Forces of Disorder: Indian Fighters Confront the Pullman Strike,” she analyzed the ways in which commanders and troops stereotyped the people they confronted, conflating strikers and unruly colonial subjects. —K.R.

ART & SOUL

Bus Stop Poetry

At the beginning of November, Marie Howe was meeting her daughter at a bus stop in Greenwich Village when she saw a big blue circle drawn on the sidewalk in chalk, along with the words, Happiness Here. “Kids were walking by and they would go, ‘Oh, look!’ and stand in the middle of the circle,” she explains. For Howe, this benign



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PHOTO BY BRAD FOWLER

graffito constitutes a poem of the loveliest order. In her new role as State Poet of New York, to which she was appointed by Governor Cuomo in August, she plans to follow the example of the blue circle and bring poetry to places it otherwise might not be found.

Howe didn’t take up writing poetry seriously until she was nearly 30. Prior to that, most of the poems she read were in the Bible (she was one of nine children in her Catholic family) or worn-out anthologies from the library of the small, rural high school where she taught English. But when she was 29, her father died, and her life changed:

“I thought, We do die, life is finite. I don’t want to do anything I don’t want to do anymore.”

So she didn’t. The following summer, on a fellowship for high school teachers Howe visited a writing workshop at Dartmouth College taught by Karen Pelz. When all the students had said what brought them to the poetry class, Pelz explained that she was writing her spiritual autobiography, Howe looked at her skeptically and asked, “Who are you to do that?” Pelz replied that she was a lyric poet, and Howe realized she wanted to do the same thing.

The State Poet’s term lasts two years, and though it doesn’t come with funding, Howe won’t let that diminish her intentions. She has lived in Manhattan for the last two decades, but she wants to think outside the city. “New York City kind of is a poem,” she explains, “It needs poetry too, but I think of Utica, Troy, Syracuse, Schenectady, Rochester, the places where my sisters—my brilliant, deep-feeling, lovely sisters—get up, get their kids to school, get in their car, go to their job, work all day, come home, and don’t find poetry.”

Given the serendipitous nature of her own path, Howe is perhaps ideally suited to recognize a poetry guerrilla wielding a stick of chalk, and to appreciate the value of an unexpected poem in everyday life. Even at a bus stop, a poem “allows us to drop down to the deeper layers of our being, so we’re not merely living off of surfaces, which we find so exhausting.”

Howe is currently soliciting ideas for unexpected ways to spread poetry around the state; if you have ideas to share, please e-mail them to magazine@sarahlawrence.edu and we’ll happily pass them along. —K.R.

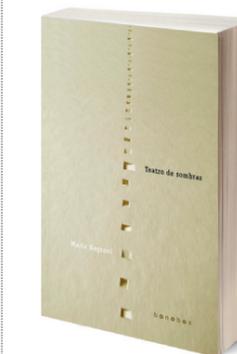
WELL SAID

“When I encountered my first colored water fountain, on Lookout Mountain, in Georgia, to my private-school mind it seemed absurd, two fountains to dispense the same water. What did Euros want to demonstrate? Did they fear they would contract Negroness? Yet, though nobody watched us, we did not drink from the whites-only fountain.”



William Melvin Kelley (history) in “Breeds of America: Coming of age and coming of race,” a memoir in the August 2012 issue of *Harper’s*

NEW BOOKS



Teatro de Sombras (Shadow Theater) Maria Negroni (SPANISH) BONOBOS, MEXICO, 2012

A new collection of poems in Spanish.



Borrowed Movements

In October, Peter Kyle premeired *100 Days*, a 60-minute solo dance, at Triskelion Arts in Brooklyn. Kyle studied the movements of 100 everyday people over 100 days in the summer and fall, and used these “borrowed movements” as the building blocks of the piece. The work featured original music by William Catanzaro (dance) and costume by East Village couture designer Garo Sparo. The bodysuit markings are designed to accentuate the “skeletal” nature of the movements and “to help audiences see what was happening in my body—a balance between flesh and structure/architecture,” Kyle says. He performs the piece again June 8-9 at Triskelion Arts. —S.G.