

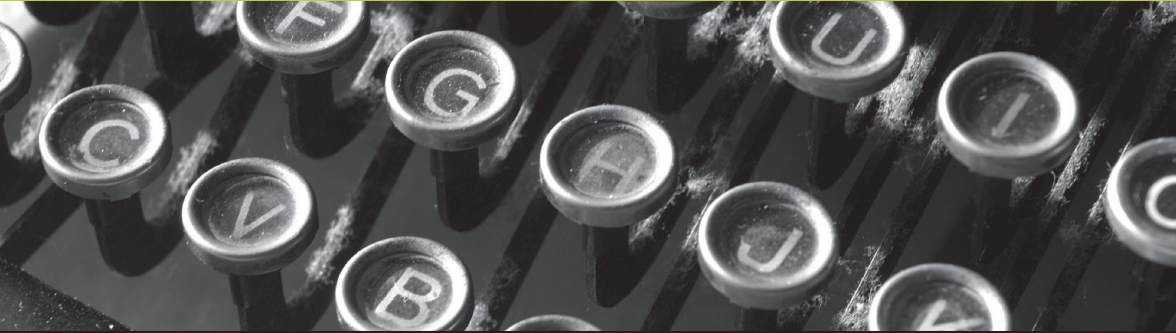


THE HOUSTON SEMINAR
SPRING 2010



THE HOUSTON SEMINAR

THE HOUSTON SEMINAR WAS FOUNDED IN 1977 FOR THE PURPOSE OF STIMULATING LEARNING AND CULTURAL AWARENESS. EACH SPRING AND FALL, THE NON-PROFIT GROUP OFFERS LECTURES AND STUDY TOURS FOCUSED ON VARIED TOPICS THAT MAY INCLUDE ART, ARCHITECTURE, LITERATURE, MUSIC, THEATER, HISTORY, POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY, RELIGION, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND CURRENT TRENDS AND EVENTS.



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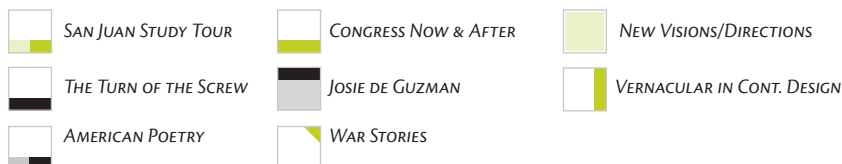
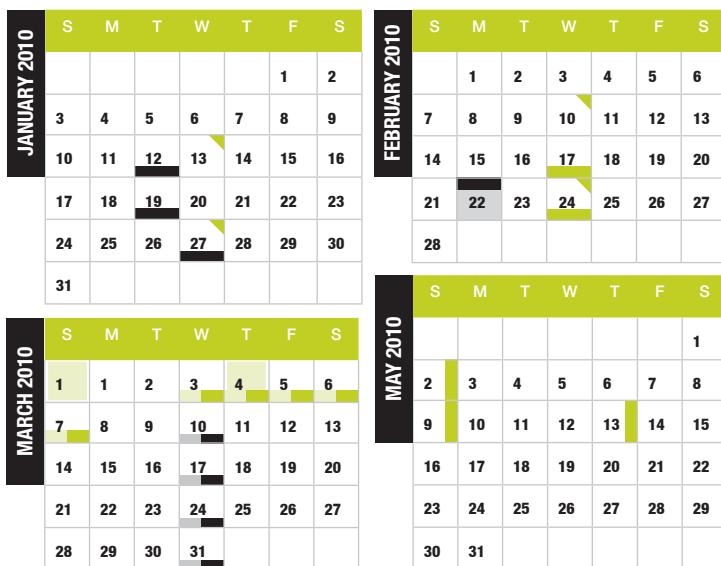
The Houston Seminar is grateful for the support of Continental Airlines, which generously provides transportation for many of our distinguished speakers.

spring 2010

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spring 2010 calendar





AN ART AND ARCHITECTURE ADVENTURE IN OLD SAN JUAN

A STUDY TOUR IN PUERTO RICO

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3 – SUNDAY, MARCH 7

LIMITED ENROLLMENT

High above the glittering Caribbean and still enveloped by the thick, curved walls of Spanish fortresses built to deter English buccaneers in the 16th century, Old San Juan sits at the end of a 2 ½ mile limestone outcropping, separated from the noisy sprawl of the modern capital of Puerto Rico. The second-oldest European colony in The New World and the oldest settlement within the territory of the United States, Old San Juan was established by Juan Ponce de Leon in 1508 and has been continuously inhabited for over 500 years. Although pillaged by pirates for centuries, burned by the Dutch in 1625, and bombarded by the American Navy during the Spanish American War, the old colonial city remains remarkably intact. When the Treaty of Paris gave the island to the United States in 1898, San Juan was described as “one of the most attractive cities in Latin America, with stately marble-tiled public buildings,” but economic and political malaise during the 20th century left the old city in decline and nearly empty—its historic forts crumbling in the sea breezes like huge sandcastles before the tide.

Since being declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983, Old San Juan is returning to the refined grandeur of its former glory. In the June 2009 *Conde Nast Traveler*, Amy Engeler avers, “It’s hard to imagine a more beautifully preserved and lovely walled colonial city.” The narrow, deep blue cobblestone streets (made from bricks cast out of iron slag from Spanish foundries and brought over as ballast in ships,) vein quaint city blocks of lovingly restored pastel-stuccoed houses from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, their heavy wooden beams framing glimpses of sparkling San Juan Bay. Youthful new restaurants and night spots abound, providing enticing regional cuisine and the lively Latin beat of island music. Galleries and studios flourish in one of the most vibrant artist communities in the Caribbean.

MARI CARMEN RAMIREZ, Wortham Curator of Latin American Art and director of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts-Houston, has participated in planning private tours of art museums, galleries and private collections, and studio visits with distinguished Puerto Rican artists. We will stay in the heart of the old city, at the four-star **Hotel El Convento**, an elegantly restored 350-year-old Carmelite convent and Small Luxury Hotel of the World, and the oldest member of Historic Hotels of America (a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.) We will dine in exciting restaurants showcasing Puerto Rican culinary art, including a memorable evening at chef Dayn Smith’s **Perla**, the stunning seashell-shaped restaurant in the newly renovated waterfront Hotel La Concha (featured in *Architectural Digest*, August, 2009)—a dazzling tropical Modernist icon of the 50’s, featuring Murano glass, polished wood and white marble. Other trip highlights include a walking tour of the architecture of the old city; private tours of San Felipe del Morro, La Fortaleza, and Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico; lecture on Puerto Rican history and politics; and visits to Espacio 1414 and other private collections. We will take a day trip to Caguas to visit the ceramics artist Toni Hambleton, and then to Ponce where we will meet artist Antonio Martorell, and have a behind-the-scenes tour guided by Agustin Arteaga, director of the newly renovated Museo de Arte de Ponce.



DISCOVER “...THE HIDDEN LIFE THAT STIRS WHEN THE CANDLE IS OUT”

THE TURN OF THE SCREW – WRITTEN BY JAMES, INTERPRETED BY BRITTEN

TWO TUESDAYS, JANUARY 12 AND 19, 6:00 – 7:30 P.M.

Private residences, addresses will be provided to subscribers

ONE WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 6:30 P.M.

Brown Theater, Wortham Center

LIMITED ENROLLMENT

Henry James himself referred to *The Turn of the Screw* as “a fairy tale pure and simple.” This archetypal conflict between the universal realities of good versus evil and natural versus supernatural in James’s novella attracted the attention of the composer most prepared to set such psychic storms to music: Benjamin Britten. The story lends itself to Britten’s gift for apt and distinctive musical characterization—the relatively pure, uncomplicated music for the opera’s mere mortals, and the other-worldly music composed for the ghosts.

January 12: Caroline Levander, professor of English at Rice University, will discuss this controversial and hotly debated novella published in 1898.

January 19: Colin Ure, dramaturg of the Houston Grand Opera, will examine the creative process behind Benjamin Britten’s opera and describe the transformation of Henry James’s novella to the modern operatic stage.

January 27: Participants will attend a working dress rehearsal of HGO’s production of *The Turn of the Screw*, the penultimate practice before the opera opens at the Wortham Theater. Following the rehearsal, we will be invited for an exclusive onstage and backstage tour of the set, designed especially for this HGO production.

Caroline Levander is the Carlson Professor in the Humanities, Professor of English, and Director of the Humanities Research Center at Rice University. She is currently writing *Laying Claim: Imagining Empire on the U.S. Mexico Border* (under contract, Oxford University Press) and *Where Is American Literature?* (for Wiley-Blackwell’s Manifesto Series), and co-editing *Teaching and Studying the Americas* (Palgrave Macmillan) and *A Companion to American Literary Studies* (Blackwell). She is author of *Cradle of Liberty: Race, the Child and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W.E.B. Du Bois* (Duke University, 2006) and *Voices of the Nation: Women and Public Speech in Nineteenth-Century American Culture and Literature* (Cambridge University Press 1998 and reprinted 2009) as well as co-editor of *Hemispheric American Studies* (Rutgers University Press, 2008) and *The American Child: A Cultural Studies Reader* (Rutgers University Press, 2003). Professor Levander is co-editor of a book series, *Imagining the Americas*, co-founder of the Americas Colloquium at Rice University and developed the Rice Americas Archive.

Scottish-born **Colin Ure** studied singing at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. Following graduation he studied in Aldeburgh with the tenor Peter Pears, the life-long partner of Benjamin Britten. Prior to his appointment as Houston Grand Opera’s dramaturg in 2006, Mr. Ure was a classical singer and artist manager with several classical agencies in the United Kingdom.



WAR STORIES

IS EVERY WAR NOVEL AN ANTI-WAR NOVEL?

FOUR WEDNESDAYS, JANUARY 13, 27, AND FEBRUARY 10, 24, 1:00 – 2:30 P.M.
Compass Bank Building, Second Floor, 2001 Kirby at San Felipe

This has been a century of wars. These wars, as always, have inspired stories that record the great suffering they cause. Every war novel, someone once said, is an anti-war novel. Almost every war novel is an experiment of some kind as writers look for new ways to explore unprecedented experience. Erich Maria Remarque's inter-war period novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and Tim O'Brien's Vietnam novel, *The Things They Carried*, have both entered the canon. Both were written by combatants. Irene Nemirovsky's *Suite Française*, a historical novel of the 1940s, and Pat Barker's WWI novel, *Life Class*, were written by women who experienced war from the homefront. They are significant entries in the new category of women war novelists, evidence of women's emerging voice.

Terrence Doody is a professor of English at Rice University, where he teaches courses in the modernist period, the novel and narrative theory, and contemporary literature. He is the author of *Confession and Community in the Novel* (Louisiana State University Press, 1980) and *Among Other Things: A Description of the Novel* (Louisiana State University Press, 1998) as well as essays on Susan Sontag, Norman Mailer, and the poets Eavan Boland and Robert Hass. He is the recipient of grants from the Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities and is an eight-time winner of the George R. Brown Award for Superior Teaching. He was voted Outstanding Associate of Lovett College in 1997 and was awarded the Allison Sarofim Distinguished Teaching Professor for 2002-2003.



WHO'S UP? WHO'S DOWN? CONGRESS NOW AND AFTER NOVEMBER

TWO WEDNESDAYS, FEBRUARY 17 AND 24, 6:30 – 8:00 P.M.

Compass Bank Building, Second Floor, 2001 Kirby at San Felipe

February 17: Our Current Congress—Champions, Challenges, Achievements and Choices

The Democrats regained control of Congress in the 2006 elections. Two years later, Obama decisively won the Presidency. How has policymaking changed with Democratic control and an ally in the White House? Has Speaker Pelosi's leadership transformed congressional policymaking? Did Democrats ever *really* have a filibuster proof majority in the Senate, or is Lieberman *too* wild a wild card? How does Congressional leadership conform to game theory models of conflict like "The Game of Chicken" and "The Prisoners' Dilemma"?

February 24: Midterms 2010—What Can We Expect?

Congress's legislative agenda is crammed with a host of issues including tax reform, additional health care proposals, debates about the funding and fighting of the Afghan War and the withdrawal strategy from Iraq, and attempts to stimulate employment to reinforce the recovering economy. But congressional midterm elections are just around the corner! Who's up? Who's down? Do Republican gubernatorial victories in New Jersey and Virginia on Election Day 2009 predict problems for the Democrats in congressional races on Election Day 2010? What can the history of elections teach us about future elections? What will lawmaking look like after the dust settles in November 2010?

Sean M. Theriault, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Texas, Austin. In 2009, he was nominated by students and awarded the Friar Centennial Teaching Fellowship, the university's most prestigious award for undergraduate teaching excellence. He is the author of numerous articles and two books: *Party Polarization in Congress* (2008) and *Power to the People* (2005).



COCKTAIL HOUR PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS JOSIE DE GUZMAN

MUSIC IN MOTION—PUERTO RICAN SONG ACROSS CULTURES

ONE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 6:00 A.M. – 8:00 P.M.

Private residence, address will be provided to subscribers

LIMITED ENROLLMENT

This special “salon” evening will begin with cocktails and hors d’oeuvres followed by an intimate conversation and performance by two-time Tony nominee, **Josie de Guzman**. Addressing issues of cultural displacement, racism, and the search for home, Ms. De Guzman, born in New York City and raised in Puerto Rico, will explore her personal experience of living between two cultures through selections from the American musicals *West Side Story*, *Capeman*, and *In the Heights*, and the Puerto Rican works *Fela* and *Quien Mato a Hector Lavoe*, and the Spanish language musical based on Kurt Weill’s *Three Penny Opera: Pedro Navaja*.

Music moved across oceans as Spanish colonizers brought popular ballads from Andalusia and courtly dances from Madrid to the New World while West African slaves contributed music for voice and percussion of great rhythmic complexity – each addition enriching the mix of music and cultures. Later, when Puerto Ricans came to New York City with that distinctive brew, they mixed it with the Cuban Son and Mambo to create an entirely new form – the immensely popular Salsa.

Josie de Guzman, handpicked by Leonard Bernstein for the role of Maria in the 1980 Broadway revival of *West Side Story*, is a versatile and critically acclaimed actor/singer. She has performed a wide range of major roles on and off Broadway, The Public Theatre, and BAM in New York City, Hartford Stage in Connecticut, and the Alley Theatre in Houston.

Music director and pianist **Larry Yurman** will accompany Ms. De Guzman. Most recently, Mr. Yurman music-directed and conducted the Broadway production of *Grey Gardens*. His numerous credits include Broadway, Off Broadway, and regional theater. He has arranged and music-directed Ms. De Guzman’s club act and has completed a recording of Noel Coward songs with Christine Ebersole.



AMERICAN POETRY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

CLIFF NOTES FOR THE INTERESTED AMATEUR

FOUR WEDNESDAYS, MARCH 10, 17, 24, AND 31, 6:30 – 8:00 P.M.

Private Residences, addresses will be provided to subscribers

LIMITED ENROLLMENT

This series will offer an overview of the four main stages in twentieth century poetry. If you feel ignorant about American contemporary poetry--its aesthetic history, its major schools, and its major figures—and aren’t sure where to start, this course will give you a road map, and introduce you to the delightful characters and vivid experiences found on the uniquely American journey through this national art form.

February 24: Slam I - Modernism: The Twenties

Battle of the Titans!

TS Eliot versus William Carlos Williams with a supporting cast

March 17: Slam II - Loose Women, Beatniks and Flaneurs: The Fifties

Ann Sexton has sex in the kitchen!

Sylvia Plath cuts off her thumb!

Allen Ginsberg sweet talks a Sunflower!

Frank O’Hara goes to the Movies!

Robert Bly makes Surrealism American!

March 24: Slam III – The Narrative and Meditative Humanists: The Seventies and Eighties

CK Williams, Sharon Olds, Stephen Dunn, Louise Gluck

March 31: Slam IV – From the Narrative to the Postmodern: The Nineties

Lyn Hejinian, Language Poetry, and John Ashbery

Tony Hoagland is the author of three volumes of poetry: *Sweet Ruin* (winner of the Brittingham Prize in Poetry), *Donkey Gospel* (winner of the James Laughlin Award of The Academy of American Poets), and *What Narcissism Means to Me*, and a collection of essays about poetry, *Real Sofistikashun*. His poems and critical essays have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Poetry Magazine*, and *Ploughshares*. Mr. Hoagland has received many awards and prizes, including the 2005 O.B. Hardison, Jr. Prize awarded by the Folger Shakespeare Library, the only national prize to recognize a poet's teaching as well as his art; the 2005 Mark Twain Award, given by the Poetry Foundation in recognition of a poet's contribution to humor in American poetry; and in 2007 he was the first recipient of the Jackson Poetry Prize. Mr. Hoagland teaches in the University of Houston graduate writing program and in the Warren Wilson College low residency MFA program in North Carolina. His new collection of poems, *Unincorporated Persons in the Late Honda Dynasty*, will be issued in January 2010.



NEW VISIONS/NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS

ALFRED HITCHCOCK: A NEW PROFILE

THE CLASSIC 1935 FILM "THE 39 STEPS" REIMAGINED AS A 21ST-CENTURY THEATRICAL TOUR DE FORCE

ONE MONDAY, MARCH 1, 6:00 – 8:00 P.M.

Boardroom, Alley Theatre (*Light Dinner*)

ONE THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 7:00 P.M.

Hubbard Stage, Alley Theatre (*Champagne Reception*)


LIMITED ENROLLMENT

To inaugurate our series designed to introduce new leaders in Houston arts organizations, "New Visions/New Directions in the Performing and Visual Arts", THE HOUSTON SEMINAR welcomes **Mark Bly**, newly-installed Senior Dramaturg and Director of New Play Development at the Alley Theatre.

"The 39 Steps", two-time Tony and Drama Desk Award-winning play, is the longest-running production on Broadway in the last seven years. In this adaptation of John Buchan's 1915 novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and Alfred Hitchcock's 1935 film, four actors expertly manipulate the classic thriller – transforming it into a comic joyride by using an astounding collection of theatrical "tricks of the trade."

March 1: Genres and narrative conventions have changed to meet the experiences and expectations of modern audiences. Professor Bly will discuss the evolution of "The 39 Steps" from its roots in Commedia dell'Arte through British music hall and American vaudeville to the flash editing and comedic shorthand of today's fractured, frenzied, and media-marinated environment. **Josh Friedman**, Alley Theatre production manager, will conduct a guided tour of the stage set and the Alley's world-class Production Center.

March 4: We will attend the final technical and dress rehearsal of "The 39 Steps", where Professor Bly will "set the stage" before the working rehearsal, and then join us afterwards for champagne and conversation about the play and the process.



In a joint conservatory appointment with the Alley, **Mark Bly** is a Distinguished Professor of Theater at the University of Houston, where he teaches Playwriting and Dramaturgy. He has dramaturged over 70 productions at major regional theatres and on Broadway, including the premiere of Suzan-Lori Parks's *The America Play* at the Yale Rep and Public Theater, the premiere of Moises Kaufman's *33 Variations* at the Arena Stage and La Jolla Playhouse, and (as the first production dramaturg to be credited on a Broadway production) *Execution of Justice*, written and directed by Emily Mann. In early 2009, Professor Bly again served as production dramaturg for Kaufman, who directed the highly acclaimed *33 Variations* starring Jane Fonda, which opened on March 9 at the Eugene O'Neill Theater on Broadway.

Before joining the Alley, Professor Bly worked as Senior Dramaturg and Director of the New Play Development Series at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., after serving 12 years as Chair of the Playwriting Program at the Yale School of Drama and as Associate Artistic Director of the Yale Repertory Theatre.



THE COMMONPLACE TRANSFORMED

THE VERNACULAR IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

TWO SUNDAYS, MAY 2 AND 9, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.

ONE THURSDAY, MAY 13, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.

MFAH American General Conference Room, Beck Building,
Mezzanine Level

Throughout the twentieth century, professionally trained artists, designers, and architects found inspiration in the beauty and practicality of common objects and buildings manufactured by non-trained artisans and craftspeople.

In this series, **Michelangelo Sabatino** draws upon the extensive research for his two recently published books to explore the process of appropriation and its impact on the meaning and materiality of modern and contemporary design. Selecting from a range of chronologically and geographically diverse examples from the Vienna Secession to Italian and American postwar design, Professor Sabatino will illustrate how material culture and high design merged during the twentieth century to create a new synthesis of urban and pre-industrial design.

In the first lecture, Professor Sabatino will focus on the vernacular of 1890s European design through World War II. The appropriation of ordinary objects to extraordinary design in the postwar period of 1945 to the present will be the subject of the second lecture. The final lecture will offer participants a rare opportunity to view objects from the Contemporary Design collection at the Museum of Fine Arts. These examples, experienced in an intimate setting and selected by **Cindi Strauss**, Curator, will illustrate the phenomenon of adoption and transformation of the commonplace by modern designers.

Michelangelo Sabatino, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture, University of Houston. He was trained as an architect and architectural historian in Venice and Toronto. His articles on European and North-American architecture and urbanism have been published in journals such as "Casabella," "Cite," "Harvard Design Magazine," "JAE," "JOA," "JSSAC," "JSAH," "Places," and "Rotunda." He has contributed an essay to *Foro Italico* (2003) and co-edited *Il nuovo e il moderno in architettura* (2001). Professor Sabatino co-edited a book with Jean-Françoise Lejeune entitled *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean – Vernacular Dialogues and Contested Identities* (Routledge 2009). His first sole-authored book is entitled: *Pride in Modesty: Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition in Italy* (University of Toronto Press, 2010).

Cindi Strauss is Curator for Modern and Contemporary Decorative Arts and Design at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. She holds a BA with honors in Art History from Hamilton College and an MA in the History of Decorative Arts from the Cooper-Hewitt/Parsons School of Design. Ms. Strauss is responsible for post-1900 decorative arts, design, and craft at the MFAH. Recent exhibitions include the traveling show *Ornament as Art: Avant-Garde Jewelry from the Helen Williams Drutt Collection*; *The Past Made Present: Contemporary Art and Memory*; and *Designed by Architects: Metalwork from the Margo Grant Walsh Collection*. In addition to the *Ornament as Art* exhibition catalogue, recent publications include *Pioneers of Contemporary Glass: Highlights from the Barbara and Dennis DuBois Collection* and articles for *Neue Keramik*, the *Journal of Decorative Arts*, and *Metal-smith* magazine. Cindi is currently working on a major exhibition and catalogue of the Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio Collection of modern and contemporary ceramics, scheduled to open at the MFAH in 2012 and travel thereafter.

Enrollment: All classes are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Confirmation of enrollment will be sent by return mail. It is possible to attend a single session of multi-session courses for a pro-rated fee. You may enroll by mail, fax, or online.

Discounts: Any individual or couple signing up for more than three courses on the same registration form may discount the total fee by 10 percent. However, calculations of total costs eligible for the discount cannot include out-of-town trips or excursions. Students and teachers may attend classes for a fee of \$5.00.

Refunds: You will receive a partial refund if you cancel at least two weeks before a course begins; a cancellation fee will be charged. If your enrollment has caused others to be turned away from a limited-enrollment class, no refund will be issued unless your place can be filled. Refund policies for courses involving travel may differ.

Gift certificates: These are available for a single session, a specific course, or a dollar amount, which the recipient may apply toward any course(s). Notification will be mailed to the donor and the designated recipient. Please call for more information, or send request and payment with this form.

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**AN ART AND ARCHITECTURE ADVENTURE IN OLD SAN JUAN
A STUDY TOUR IN PUERTO RICO**
Wednesday, March 3 – Sunday, March 7

For price and info,
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THE TURN OF THE SCREW: WRITTEN BY JAMES, INTERPRETED BY BRITTEN
Two Tuesdays, January 12 and 19, 6:00 – 7:30 P.M.
One Wednesday, January 27, 6:30 P.M.

\$100/3 sessions
 \$40/1 session

WAR STORIES
Four Wednesdays, January 13, 27,
and February 10, 24, 1:00 – 2:30 P.M.

\$120/4 sessions
 \$35/1 session

WHO'S UP? WHO'S DOWN? CONGRESS NOW AND AFTER NOVEMBER
Two Wednesdays, February 17 and 24, 6:30 – 8:00 P.M.

\$60/2 sessions
 \$35/1 session

COCKTAIL HOUR PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS JOSIE DE GUZMAN
One Monday, February 22, 6:00 – 8:00 P.M.

\$75/1 session

AMERICAN POETRY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
Four Wednesdays, March 10, 17, 24 and 31, 6:30 – 8:00 P.M.

\$120/4 sessions
 \$35/1 session

NEW VISIONS/NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS
One Monday, March 1, 6:00 – 8:00 P.M.
One Thursday, March 4, 7:00 P.M.

\$80/2 sessions
 \$45/1 session

THE VERNACULAR IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGN
Two Sundays, May 2 and 9, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.
One Thursday, May 13, 5:30 – 7:00 P.M.

\$90/3 sessions
 \$85/3 MFAH Mem.
 \$35/1 session
 \$30/1 MFAH Mem.

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SCHEDULE AND ENROLLMENT

AN ART AND ARCHITECTURE ADVENTURE IN OLD SAN JUAN:
A STUDY TOUR IN PUERTO RICO

THE TURN OF THE SCREW:
WRITTEN BY JAMES, INTERPRETED BY BRITTEN
WAR STORIES

WHO'S UP? WHO'S DOWN?
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AND CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

