

Research Grant – CoTA Faculty Research Grant Fall 2015

Faculty Member: Wendy Babcox

Unit: School of Art & Art History

Proposal Title: Every Olive Tree in the Garden of Gethsemane

A. Abstract:

I seek support for the purchase of frames for a significant project, Every Olive Tree in the Garden of Gethsemane that will be exhibited at Anderson Ranch Workshops Gallery in Snowmass, Colorado in the Spring of 2016. This solo exhibition is the culmination of two and a half years work on a suite of twenty-three photogravure images of each olive tree in the garden, some of which date back one thousand years. Situated on the Mount of Olives facing the Old City of Jerusalem, the trees have witnessed countless conflicts unfold for control over this most contested city.

B. Proposal:

I seek funds to support the cost of framing of my project Every Olive Tree in the Garden of Gethsemane for exhibition. In 2013 while on sabbatical I traveled to Israel and the West Bank. Unlike previous collaborative projects, I pursued a solo work, and was given permission to photograph the ancient olive trees in the Garden. The roots of the oldest trees in the garden are believed to be more than 2000 years old. The oldest of the trees have in fact been dated to within five years of the first of the Crusades and therefore trace an arc through history concurrent with western military intervention in Holy Land. The Garden is situated at the base of the Mount of Olives (directly facing the Old City of Jerusalem). From this vantage point the olive trees (twenty-three in all) have witnessed countless conflicts unfold for control over this most contested city. Younger saplings will no doubt witness contests unfold into the future.

After two years of painstaking work in the studio, in the summer of 2015 I received a Summer Research Grant to purchase the necessary materials to produce the photogravures. In recent months I have been working with Tim Baker from Graphicstudio to produce the etched plates for photogravures (a photographic etching technique). Now that the process of producing the plates and printing is nearing completion, I aim to frame the works for a solo exhibit next Spring at the renowned Anderson Ranch Gallery. Anderson Ranch is an internationally acclaimed artist workshop and residency center in Snowmass, Colorado. Framing is the critical final step toward disseminating this work.

This work has already gained attention despite the fact that it is not yet complete. I was invited to submit an essay on the project to the journal *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research*, published by the University of California Press last year. I also presented this work at the College Art Association Conference in February this year. Additionally, I have taken part in a series of studio visits and conversations with curators and gallery directors who appear to be enthusiastic about

the exhibition. This first exhibition in a national venue will in all likelihood be followed by an exhibition in London at P21Gallery. I have a letter of interest from the director and am now looking to secure an appropriate curator for the project. It is my expectation that the work will continue to find its way into national and international venues in the months and years to come. This work is of global significance and I therefore hope and expect to secure additional national and international venues in which to exhibit it.

This project supports the mission of my unit and the college in that it embodies a critically engaged exploration of historic and contemporary image making methodologies to examine an issue of significant concern in contemporary culture. It is both national and international in terms of its scope of reference and in the possibilities for its dissemination.