



## Great Books, Fine Art and Marshall Field V

By Dr Harold Stone

It is with great pleasure that I inform you that all students enrolled in Humanities One have received an annual membership in the Art Institute of Chicago. This has been made possible by a generous grant of Marshall Field V. Those of you who have taken the course will appreciate the opportunity this will afford. Each student in Humanities One leads a discussion about a painting in the Institute and having a membership will make it possible to view it many times. And, since it is an annual membership, students will be able to visit after the semester is over.

Serendipitously I recently learned that Article 31 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that young people have the right "to participate freely in cultural life and the arts." To be sure the UN document's use of 'freely' certainly refers to access, not to an entrance fee. What a glorious affirmation of the claim of the young person to learn of their heritage, and the duty of the nation to sustain this interest. It is worth noting that this is not the first UN Declaration about children. That was in 1959; but in this as in many other things, the League of Nations was there first. In 1924 it issued the "Geneva Declaration of the Rights of a Child" and its spirit informs the 1989 document. For many years I had dismissed for the League, but the more I read about it, I have learned my view was shaped by a lazy ignorance rather than an energetic attention to the facts. The 1989 UN Convention was the first to deal explicitly with access to the arts and culture. The generosity of Marshall Field V has given us the opportunity to reflect upon the values of Shimer's Core Curriculum and how they interact with our commitment to active citizenship and with the principles of world government.



It is fitting that the memberships arrived just as Humanities One students were reading Tolstoy's *What is Art?*, a trenchant assault of the community of the fine arts. Tolstoy's essay is one of the best rants of modern times in which he manages to ridicule without being the bully. With a blithe indifference to the traditional pieties about artistic achievement, Tolstoy makes us reexamine why we value, preserve and study the best of the productions of the visual and the musical arts. As students in Integrative Studies 5 will tell you, Tolstoy is simply furthering a version of the cultural reformation presented by Socrates in *The Republic*. And versions of this argument are continued by Rousseau and Nietzsche.

What Marshall Field V has done for our students is to enable them to address this issue in their own terms and in their own way. This is patronage in its best sense: it does not tell what to think or do, but allows the beneficiary to make of the opportunity what he or she sees fit. Thank you Marshall Field V.

## Recent Events

### Orange Horse Spring 2009

By Brigid Strait ('12)

This semester's Orange Horse commenced when the three MCs called the crowd to order roundabouts 7:30 on February 28, 2009. They introduced themselves as the three parts of the Platonic soul: Spirit, Desire, and Reason. Spirit and Desire did all the talking, as Reason has no place at an event as ridiculous as Orange Horse.



"Just watch, your socks will be blown to pieces!" Spirit (David Brault) said excitedly. And, if I'd been wearing socks, they would have been.

The evening began with four freshmen singing a rewritten version of Dr. Horrible's Bad Horse chorus. The lyrics included "It flies across the nation, the YouTube vid of sin. It's had a million viewers, much to our chagrin! We need some more talent, so let the games begin. A heinous poem, an obscure song (a monologue is never wrong)." All three of those categories were ably represented.

David Shiner, the Academic Dean, played guitar and sang "Love Hurts" by Incubus with freshman Pat Long.

Sophomore Meg Nelson acrobatically re-told Denise's joke about the circus--the one that has been told for over twenty Orange Horses so far. (Before it the audience was warned that "delicate sensibility earmuffs" could be found in the bookstore.) Alumnus Eric Nicholson sang songs about incest, acronyms, and the night Mrs. Shimer died. David Brault reenacted an encounter with God he'd had on the Red Line.

There were impressive banjo sets, much recitation of poetry (both original and not), and readings of such wondrous stuff as "My Favorite Tipples" by Douglas Adams and excerpts from "The Vagina Monologues" by Eve Ensler.

The highlight of the evening came when an alumna named Evie played songs on her guitar; the songs' subjects varied widely and included the passing of time and 7th grade gym shorts. But the first song Evie sang was one she'd written about the move from the Waukegan campus to IIT. "I am not a nomad; I'm gonna dig in my heels. But I'll live in glass and steel if that's what it takes. If they won't give me any sky, I'll paint my own."

Several times this year there have been Shimer history days. Eileen and Don told us about the ill-fated orange grove, the antics of the young ladies who dropped the Dean in the basket down the side of the dormitory, and countless other delightful stories. But I've never felt so connected to Shimerians past as I did listening to Evie.

The move was a recent event, but one phrase she used made all of Shimer lore seem more vivid.

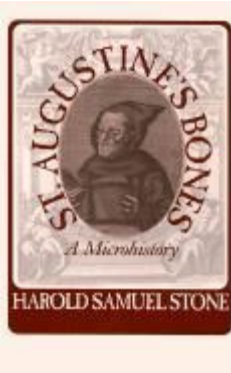


"If they won't give me any sky, I'll paint my own." That determination was true of Shimer in its earliest days, in the countless years we've avoided fiscal failure by grit and willpower alone, and presently in surviving on a campus filled with Van de Rohe's boxes. That determination is what convinces Shimerians to brave stage fright to sing, to buckle down and memorize something to perform, to practice our acts even though there's a bajillion pages of reading and two papers due within the next three days. That determination is why Shimer was made. That determination is why Shimer survives.

Orange Horse is a joyful event, and most importantly it is an event that brings Shimerians together. I sincerely hope Evie's song is sung at Orange Horses to come until it becomes as legendary as the circus joke and Eric's music.

## Augustine Beyond the Book

At the end of January, Professor Harold Stone was invited to attend a conference at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS). The Institute is modeled on the Institutes of Advanced Study of Princeton and Stanford. NIAS is housed in a large villa in a wooded residential area of the town of Wassenaar which is located between Amsterdam and The Hague near the North Sea. The Conference was sponsored by NIAS, the Leverhulme Trust, the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung and Brill Publishers of Leiden and titled "Augustine Beyond the Book: Intermediality, Transmediality and Reception". Participants included scholars from the Universities of Amsterdam, Bonn, Bristol, Copenhagen, Leiden, Maryland, Utrecht, Emory University and St. Andrew's in Scotland.



The papers presented focused on the many aspects of Augustine's thought and influence in the arts, music, and theology. While most of the papers concerned Augustine's influence on the intellectual and cultural life of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, there was also a paper on musical setting of Augustine's *Soliloquies* by the contemporary Swiss composer Klaus Huber. Harold spoke about the controversy that followed the 1695 discovery of the relics of St.

Augustine in 1695 in Pavia Italy. His paper was a study employing methods developed to study the history of the book, publishing and the origins of the reading public in the early Enlightenment.

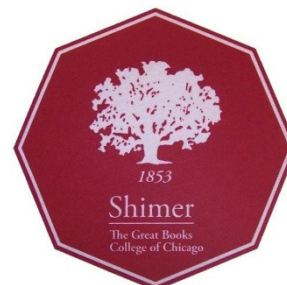
*Dr Harold Stone is the author of St. Augustine's Bones: A Microhistory published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 2002.*

## Submit a Class Note and Get Shimer Gear

We would love to know what's new in your life and so would your former classmates. Did you move? Get a new job? Start or finish graduate school? Get published? Get married? Have a baby? Let us know and we will publish these class notes in the spring issue of the *Symposium*.

You can [post a class note online](#). Just remember that you must be signed in to access this part of the online community. Alternatively you can send your note by email to [alumni@shimer.edu](mailto:alumni@shimer.edu). *Submitting pictures is strongly encouraged.*

**Deadline Extended:** Submit a class note by **March 30th, 2009** and be entered into a drawing for Shimer gear, including a \$25 gift certificate to the [Shimer Bookstore](#), a Shimer tote bag, and a Shimer pennant.



## David Schweickart speaks on Economic Democracy Wednesday, March 25, 2009 at 7pm Shimer College

Professor Schweickart from Loyola University is a leading theorist of what has come to be called "Economic Democracy," a form of market socialism featuring workplace democracy and social control of investment.

## One Book One Chicago Event: A Reading Saturday, April 04, 2009 at 7pm Shimer College

Shimer College students will present a dramatic reading of vignettes selected from Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, directed by Eileen Buchanan.

## Scenes from A Midsummer Night's Dream April 17, 18 & 19, 2009 Shimer College

Shimer College presents scenes from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Duncan Riddle. Performances are Friday April 17 at 8pm, Saturday and Sunday at 3pm.