

In This Issue:

- Welcome** to Great Books, Great Art 1
- Overview** of the Website 2
- Workshop** at Shimer College in March 3



This is a detail from *Las Meninas*, Diego de Velazquez' famously complex portrait of Spain's royal family and their intimates, among whom the artist included himself (on the left). The cross on his left breast, which indicated his knighthood in the Order of Santiago, was added sometime after he finished the painting in 1656. *Las Meninas* is the subject of one of the Toolkit pages on **Great Books, Great Art**, at: http://www.shimer.edu/greatbooks_greatart/ or visit Shimer College's homepage at www.shimer.edu and follow the link to the site there. You can find out more on the site here in the Overview starting on page 2.

Welcome!

Barbara Stone, *Professor of German and Humanities*

As Project Director for Shimer College's "Great Books, Great Art: Integrating Art History into the Liberal Arts Core Curriculum," a curriculum development project funded generously by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), I welcome you to the first issue of our website newsletter. The "Great Books, Great Art" website and newsletter together represent the culminating stage in three years of consultation and study among Shimer's faculty. Our guiding aim has been to expand the role the visual arts play in our core curriculum of primary texts in the Western tradition, a course of study originally designed by Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago. Through the website and newsletter, we intend to continue this project and I am pleased to invite you to join us in a dialogue about great books and great art.

Consultations in Art History

Our course of study for Great Books, Great Art has taken place in a variety of contexts. Beginning in 2005, we held three summer seminars for Shimer faculty with scholars of art history: James Elkins of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; Paul Barolsky of the University of Virginia (in 2006); and Elizabeth Helsinger of the University of Chicago (in 2007). All three led us through a rich series of discussions on a wide array of topics in art history, focusing largely on how we might combine the study of visual arts with texts to enrich students' appreciation of both. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of them for the stimulating range of materials they offered for our consideration, the creative possibilities they proposed for our work, and the time and care they took for us in the midst of their busy

Great Books, Great Art?

A Brief Overview

Stuart Patterson, *Associate Professor of Liberal Arts*

For those of you wondering why you received this - our first - newsletter, we offer it as an invitation to those we think might be able not only to benefit from what it has to offer, but to help us expand it and make it more useful beyond our classrooms at Shimer College. In that spirit, Barbara's welcome provides some background on why and how the site came to be developed. Here, I will brief newcomers to Great Books, Great Art on what the site currently has to offer and where we want to take it - again, along with your interest and input. To that end, please consider joining the Listserv for the site, linked to on the Great Books, Great Art homepage (the address for which see the link in the box on page 1).

"Toolkits"

The major component of the Great Books, Great Art website is its Toolkits. Each Toolkit, of which there are currently thirty-four on the site, offers "teachable" materials on a major work of art - under which heading we include books, buildings, sculptures, and prints as well as paintings. There is historical information on each work and the artists who made them, along with short bibliographies of related print and web-based materials. Most important for our purposes, however, are the "Tools" we have authored as prompts either for discussions about the works in question, or for practical activities designed to lead students more deeply into their appreciation of a work's formal qualities.

Other Resources

In addition to the Toolkit pages, Great Books Great Art contains a Glossary page with definitions of hundreds of terms dealing with topics in art history and practice, philosophy, literary studies, history, and similarly broadly related issues that arise when studying the liberal arts alongside the visual arts. Also, we list the Secondary Sources (print and web-based) that we have used to date in compiling and writing up our Toolkits and their components. Further, you will find pages listing the complete set of Shimer's Core Curriculum

schedules.

Core Texts and Courses

As our study progressed, we began testing various new texts and images in selected courses in our curriculum, notably in "Art and Music" and "Critical Evaluation in the Humanities," our first and fourth semesters in our Humanities sequence, and in two semesters of a senior capstone course on "The History and Philosophy of Western Civilization." All of the materials currently on the site have in fact been used in our classrooms, (albeit not always in the form they have ultimately taken here on the website). After a year of such experimentation, we presented papers on our experiences at the annual conferences of the Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC), getting valuable feedback from our audiences there on our curricular project. And indeed, J. Scott Lee, the Executive Director of the ACTC, served as our external evaluator in the summer of 2007 as the major work of the NEH grant wound up. Let me take this opportunity to thank him for his careful and insightful comments, in person and in writing, on our work.

Shimer on the Move

Along with all the activity generated by the study for the Great Books, Great Art grant, Shimer College underwent another momentous change during 2006: we moved the entire college from Waukegan, Illinois - our home since 1978 - to Chicago, where the college now resides on the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology (still as an independent school). Much of the impetus and leadership that went into both this move and the Great Books Great Art grant came from William Craig Rice, Shimer's President from 2004 to 2007. So, as Shimer and its curriculum enter a new era, we want to thank him for his contributions to the school and wish him well in his own new role as Director of Education Programs at the NEH.

Many Thanks

In addition to all the other staff, students and faculty at Shimer who brought their energy and ideas to the project, I'd also like to thank our Project Director at the NEH, Judith Jeffrey Howard and her staff for their supportive oversight of our process. Further, we should note the great assistance we got in the final stages of our website production from the design team at NI Solutions, along with Dr. Emil Krèn of The Web Gallery of Art and Mark Harden of Artchive, who have

courses in Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Integrative Studies, along with links to those Toolkits that apply to texts and subjects in those courses. Finally, you may get a more detailed introduction to the website through our FAQ/Documents page, where we detail the site content and present documentation on the activities that went into its planning overall. Finally, you will find a page archiving this and future newsletters, along with a page inviting you to join our Listserv. That way, you can begin helping us plan and refine the site, helping us tailor it to your interests as they connect with our plans for the site at Shimer.

generously allowed us to use images of artworks from their sites on Great Books, Great Art.

Join Us

I'll end this brief welcome with an invitation to all to join the ongoing development of our website – and thus Shimer's project for integrating art into a liberal education – by joining the Great Books, Great Art Listserv (through the link on the website's Home page). I am particularly pleased to announce the Workshop we will be holding for Chicago-area teachers in March, about which you can read more below. And thanks in advance to those who visit the site, and Shimer itself, for whatever insights and ideas you can offer us as we take our project into new and wider venues.



Shimer
The Great Books
College of Chicago

Great Books, Great Art Workshop for Teachers

On Saturday, March 29 on Shimer's campus (at the corner of 35th and State Streets) we will be convening a day of discussions on our website and how to refine it and thus help fulfill its chief purpose – to bring “the best of what has been thought and said,” along with the best that has been made – to our own and others classrooms. We will begin by using the site itself as we do currently at Shimer, discussing one or more Toolkits in the small-seminar format we follow for all of our core curriculum classes. We will use the balance of our time, however, to discuss ways in which the site may be developed to make it helpful to teachers and students in other contexts, from specialized public school Art or World History programs to home schools and extra-curricular study.

If you are employed in an educational organization in Chicago, or involved in teaching in the liberal or visual arts in any way, please consider joining our workshop. You might also recommend someone you think would be interested in this opportunity to help create a lasting educational resource. Shimer College's Hutchins Institute has made a generous grant to cover much of the workshop costs. This allows us to offer places to those who register by March 15 to \$25 (after this \$30), which cost will cover a catered lunch and all program materials.

To inquire for details, you may call Stuart Patterson, Associate Professor of Liberal Arts at (312)-235-3529 or write him at s.patterson@shimer.edu. Additionally or alternatively, consider joining our Listserv, where all the information concerning this event will be posted as we go forward.