

# QUEST Q NEWS

A Quest Publication

December 2019



## A Note From the President



As we approach the half-way point of our 25th anniversary year, Quest has much to be proud of and celebrate.

Through the efforts of our fellow members, we have the opportunity to learn so much in so many diverse courses. Our days are filled with learning, being entertained, and interacting with our fellow Questers. At our recent General Meeting, we learned about the six new courses to be offered in the

Spring, the Friday Culture trips, our guest lecturers, and trips being planned by our Travel Committee. In order for Quest to continue to thrive, we need our members, especially our new members, to step-up by volunteering to present, and to coordinate new courses.

As I write this message on Veterans Day, we have four weeks left this semester. Time has really passed quickly. Looking back, we can rejoice in the addition of many new members; we currently have 268 members. We still have our holiday luncheon to anticipate. This year the festivities will take place at Amata Restaurant, 209 East 56th Street, just east

of 3rd Avenue on Friday December 6th at 12:30 pm. Please pick up your menu in the Quest office, and return it with your selections, and a check of \$40 for members, and \$60 for guests. Please note that the Quest Curriculum Catalogue indicates that the Spring semester will start on February 3, observance of Lincoln's Birthday will be on Tuesday February 12, President's Day on February 17, Spring break from April 13–16, and the final day of the semester will be May 14th. Our 25th anniversary party will be held the following afternoon. I wish all Quest members a happy holiday season, and a joyous new year.

– Bob Gottfried

### Guest Lecturers for Spring

- Feb 26** Daniel Mendelsohn, editor-at-large of the *New York Review of Books* and author.
- March 11** Deborah Goldberg, art historian, MOMA docent & expert on the legendary sculptor Isamu Noguchi.
- March 25** Eleanor Randolph, former member of *The New York Times* editorial board and author of *The Many Lives Of Michael Bloomberg*.
- April 8** Nina Khrushcheva, granddaughter of Nikita Khrushchev, Professor of International Affairs at the New School, & author of *In Putin's Footsteps*.
- May 13** Lizabeth Cohen, Professor of American Studies at Harvard, & author of *Saving America's Cities*.

### CultureQuest Events for Spring

- Feb 27** Skyscraper Museum Tour of Midtown *High Rises* exhibition and general tour of the museum
- Mar 13** Louis Armstrong House Museum & Archives Tour of Louis's longtime home including audio clips and an exhibit on his life and legacy
- Mar 27** Museum of Modern Art Tour at the new MoMA of an extraordinary collection, *Remixed*
- April 10** American Museum of Natural History: *The Rise of Life* tour

Additional events planned TBD

## We Remember David Abrahams

**D**avid Abrahams went out of his way to be kind. He lacked pretension and had an unusually gener-

ous nature. He always greeted people with a smile and warmth. Those in the acting class consider themselves lucky to have shared the stage with him. He developed his role, never shying away from any challenge. In daily encounters, he was also a star, extending warmth, offering a kind word, and signaling acceptance. David could have taught a course on how to be a human being, and for those who knew him, he did. Many at Quest acknowledge that they loved him. We will remember David with great fondness and do our best to emulate him. Condolences to his lovely wife, Carole.



## Daniel Mendelsohn to be the Second Kenneth Leedom/ Peter Cott Memorial Distinguished Guest Lecturer

by Arlynn Greenbaum

**O**n February 26, 2020, we will host bestselling author, critic and translator Daniel Mendelsohn as our second Kenneth Leedom/Peter Cott Memorial Guest Lecturer. Mendelsohn is the Editor-at-Large of the New York Review of Books and the author of eight books. His best selling book, *An Odyssey: A Father, A Son And An Epic* recounts his travels around the Mediterranean with his late father while reading the *Odyssey*. Bob Reiss, a member of the Quest Guest Lecturer committee, knew Daniel's father and had tried unsuccessfully to get Daniel as a speaker for us. With the additional funding from Kenneth and Peter, we are finally able to do so.



Another best seller of his was *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*, his 2006 account of searching for information about six relatives who perished in the Holocaust. It won many awards including the National Book Critics Circle Award and the National Jewish Book Award. His most recent books are *The Bad Boy Of Athens* and a book of essays entitled *Ecstasy and Terror*, published in October.

On February 26, his topic will be "Literature Lost and Found." He will discuss what becomes a classic and how literary canons are formed. He is a brilliant lecturer and we are in for another treat.

## Travel Update

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*A Quest Publication*

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### Editor's Note

At this time I would like to thank all Questers who have contributed to the various issues of QNEWS. It is due to your input that we have an enjoyable newsletter. I thank you all. – Carolyn

**A**s we wind down this semester and move through the holidays on to our Winter break, it's time for us to let you know what's going on and what we are planning for the Quest Travel Program next year.

There is still room to sign up for our **Royal Caribbean eleven-day cruise to the Caribbean**, leaving from nearby Bayonne, NJ, on January 16th. There are flyers in the office with the phone numbers that you can call to sign up.

Then in late May a group of about twenty Questers will be flying off to the **Puglia region of Italy**, for ten days of sightseeing, relaxing, and cooking! This trip will include two half-day cooking classes, and we expect all those who go to return as Italian chefs (watch out Frank Montaturo!). If you might like to join us, please see Michael or Karen Levin. Flyers with detailed information are available in the office.

Moving along to August 17th, we will again join the Road Scholar five-day trip to the **Shaw Festival, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario**. Quest members have joined this trip during each of the past two summers, and loved it. If you'd like to go, let us know, and call Road Scholar directly (1-800-454-5768) and tell them you want to join the QUEST trip #10396RJ. Flyers will be available in the office.

For a short trip of 5 days in September (either Sept. 13th or Sept. 27th), we're looking at a Collette Tours five day trip to **Nashville**, which features four nights in the center of the city, two live shows, including visits to the Grand Ole Opry and the Wildhorse Saloon, a chance to learn about the city's history, and experience good ol' southern hospitality.

And finally, we are thinking about a nine-day river cruise in **Portugal**, on the increasingly popular **Douro River**, in May of 2021. This is a relatively relaxing way to see this charming country, which many of us may not have visited. Details are still being finalized, but let us know if this appeals to you.

Please e-mail Carolyn (carolyn8912@aol.com) or Michael (captmike46@aol.com, or Karen (karenlevin19@gmail.com) with your thoughts, or any other suggestions you might have. Thanks and Happy Travels!

## Who's Doing What



Denise Seigel and Shoshi Kagan celebrated **Lilian Scheinblum's** Birthday the New York way; a movie, a nice dinner and a Subway ride.

**Stan and Nannette Lieblein** spent three weeks in Japan, touring with Odyssey Tours, starting in Tokyo and ending in Hiroshima. Friends suggested they visit Naoshima, an island town in Japan's Seto Inland Sea,

and this turned out to be the highlight of their trip. It is an *Art Island* founded in the early 1990s by a Japanese business man. The Liebleins reached it by traveling on four trains from Hiroshima, including a bullet train to Uno Port at the ferry to the island. They stayed at a small Japanese hotel near the ferry for three nights, taking the 20-minute ferry ride back and forth to Naoshima. The island features two major museums with indoor, underground, and outdoor sculptures and stunning architecture by Tasso Ando. A site not to be missed is Yayoi Kusama's Kabocha (Pumpkin) sculpture.

## Course Changes for Spring 2020

The Following Courses Will be Leaving:

- **The Roaring Twenties**
- **Between Faith & Reason: Reading The Bible**
- **South of the Border Before Columbus**
- **From Grunts to Tweets: Exploring How We've Communicated Through The Ages**
- **Managing Money & Investments in Retirement**

And We Are Gaining The Following Courses:

- **Election 2020: America's Search For Our Next Leader**  
*Coordinators: Phil Gisser, Sandra Abramson, Wayne Cotter, Patricia Stryker*  
**A Week/Wed 1:00pm to 2:30pm**
- **Contemporary Challenges to Sea & Island People**  
*Coordinators: Steve Baker, Pete Weis*  
**A Week/Thurs 1:00pm to 2:30pm**
- **Why Does New York Look the Way It Does?**  
*Coordinators: Ethel Sheffer, Michael Wellner*  
**A Week/Thurs 1:00pm to 2:30pm**
- **Russian History: From the 10th Century Up To The Russian Revolution**  
*Coordinators: Caroline Thompson, Steve Allen*  
**B Week/Mon 10:30am to 12:00pm**
- **Great Journalists & Publishers**  
*Coordinators: Wayne Cotter, Leslie Goldman, Michael Wellner*  
**B Week/Wed 10:30am to 12:00pm**
- **Modern Hispanic Playwrights**  
*Coordinators: Ruth Ward, Donna Basile*  
**B Week/Thurs 10:30am to 12:00pm**

## Culture Quest Tour to Dia:Beacon *by Linda Downs*



**N**ine Questers took the train from Grand Central Station to Beacon, New York on Friday, October 25th to see the Dia: Beacon Museum's collection of quintessential modern minimalist art works. The fall colors from the train were magnificent!

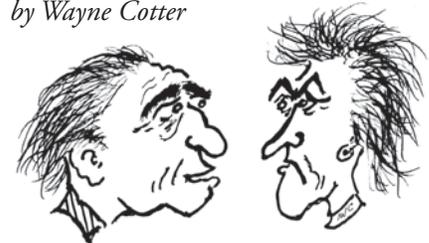
We entered the museum before it opened in order to go beyond the glass barriers surrounding, Michael Heizer's four deeply inverted Cor-Ten steel sculptures, *North, South, East, West*. We were careful not to let sunglasses or cell phones drop into the sculptures because the museum then has to call the local fire department to retrieve them.

On the tour we saw the colorful crushed car sculptures of John Chamberlain reminiscent of American car culture; the *Today Series*, part of one million paintings donated to Dia by On Kawara in which he marked time by creating one painting every day in the same style except for changing the language according to the place in which he travelled; the jagged glass sculpture of Robert Smithson, most well-known for his *Spiral Jetty* in The Great Salt Lake; the giant Kor-Ten steel sculptures of Richard Serra including *Union of the Torus and the Sphere* that looks like a ship tilting off a launch pad; Andy Warhol's disaster paintings; and the colorful hanging canvases of the Washington, D.C. artist, Sam Gilliam (*see photo*).

Our docent, Heather, was exceptional at presenting the works to us throughout the museum. After a delicious lunch we boarded the train back to NYC. It was a lovely day for art in the country.

## Q-Toon

*by Wayne Cotter*



*I hate when those damn cell phones ring during class—especially when I am sleeping”*

## Crossing the Rubicon to Newark

by Frank Montaturo



Well we did it! We crossed the Rubicon on a brilliant November day, and it was good. Once through passport control we took Newark's Ironbound like a phalanx. First to fall to rapturous gaze was the multistory rusted gantry and then the fading mural of the province's industrial past. We then commanded Ferry Street with quickened gait our chosen *marisqueira* hungrily in sight. Wrapped in the warmth of anticipation and the seductive aroma of garlic, we feasted like Lucullus on a panoply of Lusitanian seafood dishes...ameijoas, lulas, berbigão, polvo, camarão, sardinhas, açorda...and it was very good. A strong Portuguese bica with sweet custard pastry to bring the afternoon to closure and sated we sang our new theme song: "Ain't no mountain high enough, ain't no river wide enough to keep us from...foo...ood!" Amen.



## Auschwitz: Not Long Ago, Not Far Away

by Madeleine Brecher

On October 11th, 28 Questers arrived at the Museum of Jewish Heritage to take part in a docent-led tour of this fine but harrowing installation. The sealed boxcar, used to haul freight and cattle before the war, was standing outside the front door of the Museum as we entered, a chilling foreshadowing of what was to come. It was these boxcars that brought hundreds of thousands of Jews and other prisoners to Auschwitz from all over Europe during WWII.

Inside the Museum, we divided into two groups, each with a docent. One of the docents was Ann Barandes, our own Quest member. We had three floors to cover, including more than 700 objects and 400 photos and drawings, in our 90-minute tour. The docents, wary of time constraints, selected those items and stories that resonated most with them.

Some of the artifacts that I remember include the huge wheel from a freight train locomotive, a woman's single scarlet party shoe, a prisoner's uniform with a red triangle attached (to show he was a political prisoner), a metal container that contained the zyklon B gas for the extermination chamber where up to 6,000 victims were gassed each day, the three-tiered bunk beds where sick and starving prisoners slept two, three and four to a bunk, and a single child's shoe with a sock stuffed inside.

We also heard many uplifting stories of resistance: Siegfried Fedrid was a young Viennese tailor who was one of thousands forced to evacuate Auschwitz on a death march as the Red Army approached. He grabbed a blanket and shared it with four other prisoners, saving their lives.

From the reports I received, it was a very meaningful experience for all who attended, and with so few survivors left to tell their story, we can tell our children and grandchildren what we saw and bear witness to the horrific genocide that took place at Auschwitz. We have been taught that we must remember!



## Frick Collection Tour

by Bob Reiss



On Friday, November 9, nineteen Questers marveled at the wonders of the Frick Collection. In addition to their spectacular permanent collection, we were treated to: three Manet canvases from the collection of the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California; the Renaissance sculpture of Bertoldo di Giovanni; the work of sculptor Edmund de Waal; and Henry Arnhold's Meissen Palace, showcasing wares from the famed Meissen manufactory. After this feast for the eyes, several in the group enjoyed lunch at the Asia Society Garden Court Café.