Notes From the Director

Susan Shillinglaw

The National Steinbeck Center has enjoyed a busy, productive fall: a successful National Endowment for the Arts Big Read of Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen*; a delightful staged reading of *Over the River and Through the Woods* in the museum gallery as part of our Performing Arts Series, produced by The Listening Place; a robust dinner at the Corral de Tierra Country Club, the 12th annual Valley of the World fundraiser celebrating agricultural leaders in the Salinas Valley; and the upcoming 4th annual Salinas Valley Comic Con, co-sponsored by the Salinas Public Library and held at Hartnell College in December—“We are Not Alone.” All are covered in this issue.

It may be well to consider Steinbeck’s role in each of these NSC programs—all of which can be linked to his fertile imagination and expansive, restless curiosity. John Steinbeck was a reader of comics, noting that “Comic books might be the real literature of our time.” He was passionate about theater—*Of Mice and Men*, written in 1937, was a play/novelette, an experiment in writing a novel that could also be performed exactly as written on stage (he would go on to write two more play/novelettes). He wrote often and thoughtfully about American’s racial legacy, and Rankine’s hybrid text—part poetry, part nonfiction, part image, part video links—would no doubt intrigue a writer who insisted that every work of prose he wrote was an experiment: “I like experiments. They keep the thing alive,” he wrote in 1936. And although he tried to dodge awards and refused honorary degrees (he didn’t get his Stanford... Continued page 3
Festival 2018 celebrates the women Steinbeck created, those he knew, and those who influenced mid-century American culture.

Ma Joad inspired this theme. Late in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Ma consoles Pa, who feels defeated by their losses: “Man, he lives in jerks—baby born an’ a man dies, an’ that’s a jerk—gets a farm an’ loses his farm, an’ that’s a jerk. Woman, it’s all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on. Woman looks at it like that. We ain’t gonna die out. People is goin’ on—changin’ a little, maybe, but goin’ right on.”

Join us in Monterey on Friday and Salinas on Saturday and Sunday for this year’s Festival. Visit steinbeck.org for updated details and to purchase tickets online!

*Leading Up to the Festival*

**April 29:** “History Slam” at Japanese American Citizen League Hall, Monterey. Cash prizes! By April 15, submit 10-15 minute presentations on Monterey History to Susan@Steinbeck.org. We will accept essays, films, photos. Submissions accepted in six categories: Women, Ag, Fishing, Culture, Bandits, Science. Cash awards for best and meatiest presentations! See Steinbeck.org for details.

**March 26-April 30:** Women in Film Festival
Maya Cinemas, Salinas (tentative schedule)

March 26: *Tortilla Flat*, (1942) Introduction TBA, Hedy Lamarr
April 2: *Harlan County USA* (1976). Introduction, TBA, women and strikes
April 9: *The Ascent* (1977) Introduction TBA, women and war
April 23: *Twentieth Century Women* (2016), Introduction TBA, feminism
April 30: *East of Eden* (1955) Introduction by Susan Shillinglaw: “Jo Van Fleet and Julie Harris: Kate, Abra and Prostitution in Monterey County”
May 3: “Farms to Incubators: Telling the stories of minority women entrepreneurs in agtech in the Salinas Valley and beyond” a film on women in Ag Tech by Amy Wu. Reception and discussion to follow screening at Maya Cinemas

**May 4-6: Festival Weekend**

**PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE**

**Friday:** Seminars at Hopkins Marine Station 1-5


*Beer milkshakes at Ricketts’s Lab,* 5:15-6:45

*Cannery Row Banquet,* Intercontinental The Clement, Monterey. Speaker TBA

*Stuart Chase,* Executive Director, Monterey Museum of Art, “Year of the Woman, 2018”

**Saturday:** Steinbeck’s Home Brew Fest and and Festival speakers/tours at National Steinbeck Center and Salinas, 10-5

*Brian Duchaney,* PhD candidate,”Two can play at that game...”: Steinbeck’s Wartime Women and the Creation of the Literary Mistress”

*Mimi Gladstein,* Professor of English at University of Texas, El Paso, “Maiden, mother, crone: Steinbeck’s Tripartite Female.”

*Susan Shillinglaw,* NSC Director, “Steinbeck’s Sisters”


*Anthony Newfield,* Actor, “Curley’s Wife Sings: The background of the musical version of *Of Mice and Men*”

**Saturday night** at The Western Stage, Hartnell College WEST COAST PREMIERE (a staged reading) of Ira Bilowit’s 1958 musical of *Of Mice and Men*, adapted by Jon Selover, Western Stage

**Sunday:** Red Pony Ranch and Monterey Tours + Education forum at Palma High school, focused on Dorothy Day
Steinbeck biographer
Jack Benson in the Sierras

In early August, my husband and I stopped to see Jack and Sue Ellen Benson at their cabin near Truckee. It’s an idyllic place, and Jack’s western sensibilities—open, hearty, honest, warm—have always seemed most at home in this tight cabin, shadowed by pines, protected by sharp peaks. We ate taco salad on the back porch, caught up on all things Steinbeck and watched our dog Charley nose up to their dog Rufus. In a roundabout way, I tried to interview Jack, a man who has been so vital to my career since 1989, when I first met him at a University of Alabama conference; whose work is woven into my own; whose love of western writers became my own—he once took me to meet Wallace Stegner at his Los Altos home. That home and man were also one and the same. I think of Tortilla Flat: “when you speak of Danny’s house you are understood to mean a unit of which the parts are men.” Those who live in place create units with the walls that surround them.

All I really got from my “interview” with Jack that day was one sentence about his biography, “I typed that manuscript over and over again, hundreds of times.” Instead we caught up with family news and watched the light play in the pine trees. Well-rounded friendships, like stream-rounded pebbles, are like that—physical proximity is enough.

Festival highlight! Of Mice and Men, the musical

Sixty years ago, in 1958, the musical Of Mice and Men opened off Broadway at the Provincetown Playhouse, “a new form, with new freshness” announced the New York Times. A “New Smash Hit Musical,” roared the headline. Steinbeck heartily approved this adaptation: “I think the musical play can have stature as well as uniqueness,” he wrote. The Daily News weighed in, “This one is worth a visit!”; a “Warm and Compelling Musical,” wrote another journalist.

See what all the fuss was about on May 5, 2018 at the West Coast Premiere of this musical, which has not been staged since 1958. Western Stage at Hartnell College mounts a musical reading of the play at 7:30. It will be free for all Festival ticket holders. A reception will be held before the musical.

Steinbeck touched chords that still vibrate: living in place, ecological sensibilities, social justice, patriotism, global awareness—hope: “…I do believe and see a constant improvement (in the long view) a constant and consistent struggle toward a better, kinder life, and I do see that the struggle and the impulse comes invariably from the common people,” Steinbeck wrote in 1937, as he was polishing the draft of Of Mice and Men for the Broadway stage.

Steinbeck’s empathy strikes an evergreen note in the human symphony. I’m currently reading Bruce Springsteen’s Born to Run—actually listening to Springsteen read his own story in his rough, passionate voice. In 1996, when I was Director of the San Jose State Steinbeck Center, we awarded Springsteen the first “in the souls of the people” award, an honor that Elaine Steinbeck helped orchestrate and that Ted Cady, Event Director of the SJSU Events Center, and I coordinated. We intended to honor Springsteen—and later other artists and writers—for embodying Steinbeck’s vision of equity and compassion. We knew then—and it’s ever more apparent—that Springsteen and Steinbeck’s visions are in sync, resonant in 1996 and equally so in 2018. Both started with a place: “there on the streets of my hometown,” writes Springsteen, “was the beginning of my purpose, my reason, my passion…home, roots, blood, community, responsibility, stay hard, stay hungry, stay alive.” Springsteen’s place-based art is as elemental as Steinbeck’s; Springsteen was born to run and Steinbeck born restless, as he admits in the opening pages of Travels with Charley: Springsteen’s mix of unflinching confidence in his art coupled with inner darkness was Steinbeck’s as well (“the horrors,” Steinbeck admitted). Basic human decency mattered to Steinbeck, matters to Springsteen, must matter to all of us.

At the 1996 SJSU Springsteen concert, featuring “The Ghost of Tom Joad,” Elaine Steinbeck said to the audience, “If my husband were alive, he would have wanted every word Bruce sang tonight included in a prologue of The Grapes of Wrath.”
Eric Mora, Marketing and Membership Coordinator

Recently John Wood, an 11th grade English teacher at Everett Alvarez High School in Salinas, asked me to participate in a panel discussion in his class focusing on racial profiling. Mr. Wood participated in this year’s NEA Big Read, teaching parts of Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric*. November’s panel discussion was a component of a larger project in which his students would ultimately write an essay discussing their thoughts on racial profiling after reading *Citizen*, news articles, and materials drawn from independent research.

Three of us sat on the panel: Kenya Burton, a high school senior at Alvarez who won second place in our NEA Big Read poetry slam; Jose Gavazan, an English teacher at Alvarez who shared his own experiences being racially profiled; and me. Ms. Burton recited “The Way I Was Made,” the poem that earned her a second-place prize in our poetry slam, the Kick Off event for the Big Read, held at the National Steinbeck Center on September 7. Her poem was inspired by one of the three prompts for the poetry slam, a quote from *Citizen*: “The worst injury is feeling you don’t belong so much to you.” Her poem reads, in part:

My little sister doesn’t like to wear her hair down
Says the kids at school say it’s nappy and rough
so she wears it up
Decorates it with a bow or two and changes herself to reach their views
She cries in a shopping cart at Wal-Mart because she says she doesn’t feel pretty
I console her and tell her what she needs to hear and I wonder if she can tell that my voice is shaking
That I just cannot form the correct words with the correct punctuation that my tongue feels heavy with lies
As I watch history unfold itself in front of me
I empty myself in front of her, searching through clutter for a Band-Aid to heal the wounds deeper than flesh.
The same Wounds that have left scars on myself
Carved insecurities and false prodigies
That have made me unrecognizable when I look in the mirror

Oh my god nothing has changed.
So how could I say that things get better.
That it won’t hurt so much in the morning.
Ignore them, you matter, I love you, I tell her but in my head I pray to god to help her.
The loneliness that was created inside of me claws up to my chest, creeping towards my lips.
There’s no pain when it comes to loneliness there is only emptiness.
There’s no pain when it comes to loneliness there is only emptiness.
Not belonging in a world you thought was yours is the worst punishment.
You’re trapped within the realms of discrimination and bigotry.
Until you discover words are the best therapy.
You’re going to be ok, I tell her and wonder if I’ll ever be.

Reflections on the continued impact of Salinas’s NEA Big Read of Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen*

Eric Mora, Marketing and Membership Coordinator

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Our NEA Big Read film series showing different movies that deal with race at Maya Cinemas gave people additional perspectives through film to contrast the experiences Claudia Rankine detailed in *Citizen*. The film series drew a robust audience every week, from August 28th showing of *Lifeboat* (a full house) through Monday, October 16th’s *Do the Right Thing*. Our lecture series, though catering to a leaner audience than the movie series, had a wonderful energy to it.

The Kick off on September 8, coordinated by Stanford summer intern Jenna Garden, was a Poetry Slam where over 50 community members recited their own original poems inspired by Claudia Rankine’s words. Jenna visited area high schools and handed out a Poetry Slam flyer, where she’d selected three prompts from the book for poets to consider. A crowd of over 150 stayed for over 3 hours of poetry.

One of the reasons I love the NEA Big Read program so much is because it funds projects to bring communities together around a book. When we applied for the NEA Big Read grant with *Citizen*, I had a very simple goal: to give people a platform to discuss topics related to race.

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On the Road with the Big Read: Citizen in Monterey County

Jennifer Langdon

John Steinbeck’s Travels with Charley has long been a touchstone for me, giving my personal wanderlust the imprimatur of a great literary and historical quest. Last year I bought and rehabbed a 1965 Avion camper, and have been traveling with my canine companion, Fiona the Wonder Pug. As a writer and cultural historian myself, I wanted to undertake my own “search for America,” investigating the many changes in this country in the half century since Steinbeck and Charley set out from Maine in Rocinante.

So when I discovered that the National Steinbeck Center had chosen Claudia Rankine’s prose poem Citizen for a county-wide Big Read, I was intrigued (to say the least). Citizen is not an easy text, in terms of style or content but it speaks with great insight and urgency to long-simmering questions of race, gender, and justice in this country. Looking at the NSC’s schedule of Big Read events—film screenings, roundtables, lectures, book discussion groups—I knew I had to check it out in person.

I spent a week and a day on the road with the Big Read, starting in Salinas with a screening of To Kill A Mockingbird, and attending all the public events scheduled for that week: a fascinating and frank community conversation on white privilege and micro-aggression at the Monterey Public Library; NSC director Susan Shillinglaw’s wide-ranging talk on the cultural history of banned books; a screening of Fruitvale Station at the King City Public Library; then back to Salinas for a panel discussion with three community activists highlighting the importance of gender in anti-racist work, and a powerful staged reading of selections from Citizen by young actors and their mentors from Hartnell College’s Western Stage theater.

My week in Monterey County with Citizen and the Big Read reminded me that we live in a deeply polarized world. But it also convinced me of the power of culture and community to fuel change—in ourselves, in each other, in the world. One of my favorite quotes is Margaret Mead’s “Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that can.”

So many things about The Big Read impressed and moved me, but my biggest take-away was this: The folks of Monterey County didn’t just show up. They stepped up. They embraced this challenging book and the tough issues it raises, they asked questions, they shared thoughts and experiences. They listened and they responded, sometimes with laughter, sometimes with tears. They came prepared to think and to care and to do the hard work that their community needs to do. And that gives me hope for the rest of America.

Follow Jennifer on Facebook @TravelswithFiona.
The 4th Annual Salinas Valley Comic Con is shaping up to be an excellent, family-oriented and interactive experience. With the help of our new administrative assistant, Tara Spada, as well as a committee from the Salinas Public Library, we have tracked down new speakers and created new activities for SVCC2017.

We’re excited to be welcoming James Burks to the Salinas Valley Comic Con family. As an author and illustrator of children’s books—the popular Bird and Squirrel series—he will talk about children’s books as well as his work as an illustrator for numerous films, including The Emperor’s New Groove, Treasure Planet, Space Jam, and The Iron Giant. He is also scheduled to join artists from Latino Comics Expo, an SVCC veteran, and Jimmie Robinson of Image Comics to talk about what informs their art and the process of bringing ideas to fruition and completion.

We welcome back Chunky Girl Comics, this year pairing up with a friend of theirs, new to SVCC, Mike Wietecha. Mike is an artist, actor, and medaled sumo wrestler. Along with Chunky Girl Comics, he’ll be adding his experiences about weight and body norms, especially in the sports world and acting—both of which have strong norms and stereotypes. Mike will also be giving Sumo wrestling demonstrations. Mike is also a big fan of hip-hop and dancing, so he’ll tell us how dance and Sumo go hand-in-hand.

The Walt Disney Family Museum is new to Comic Con in 2017. Their mission to provide educational experiences that honor Walt Disney’s legacy and spark of creativity and innovation fits well with Comic Con as a place for creativity in literature. A kids’ workshop will focus on favorite female comic book leads like Squirrel Girl, Moon Girl, Captain Marvel, and other favorites. With Wonder Woman as such a hit in the box office, we’re looking forward to seeing that excitement and energy for female superheroes come to SVCC2017.

There will also be a game room at the Salinas Valley Comic Con, Santa Cruz Gamers will put on a display of playable video game consoles from across several decades. Additional, a representative from Santa Cruz Gamers will be giving a short talk on ethical media consumption, with video games as a primary example of the media available. Video games are interactive stories that place the main character’s achievement in the hands of the player, letting them act out the struggle to reach the completion of the story.

In searching out guests and vendors to participate in the 2018 Salinas Valley Comic Con, I have been exposed to a wide variety of artistic styles and interpretations of old classics, like Wonder Woman and Superman. Comic Con will feature art from the realistic to impressionistic and classic to ultramodern.

Despite comics’ relatively recent arrival on the literary scene, the draw to pair words and pictures is as old as literature itself. From Renaissance masters depicting biblical stories on every available surface to March, a graphic novel trilogy about Congressman John Lewis’ participation in the Civil Rights Movement, artists have interpreted and enlivened important stories with visual art.

Steinbeck’s work is no exception. Wesley Dennis illustrated Steinbeck’s 1945 edition of The Red Pony along with over 150 other children’s books in his lifetime. His art for The Red Pony, like much of his other work, are richly colored watercolors. Marguerite Henry, author of Misty of Chincoteague, said that Dennis “...saw beyond hide and hair and bone. You could see that he understood and loved animals, that he was trying to capture their spirit, personality and expression.” Dennis’ illustrations bring Gabilan the pony to life. Steinbeck’s description of Gabilan’s personality and spirit pairs well with the artist’s precision of movement.
In contrast, Ruth Gannett and José Clemente Orozco—illustrators of *Tortilla Flat* and *The Pearl*, respectively—pare visual art down to its most basic form: black lines. Though their styles differ, both of their contributions to Steinbeck’s work leaves more to the readers’ imaginations. Gannett’s illustrations are far more detailed than Orozco’s, but still focus on a single, central image with minimal background.

Ruth Gannett was born in Santa Ana, CA and attended UC Berkeley. Her work includes illustrating the books of her husband, Lewis Stiles Gannett, and her stepdaughter, Ruth Stiles Gannett. They collaborated on three children’s books about dragons. The elder Ruth Gannett went on to win the Caldecott Award for her work on *My Mother is the Most Beautiful Woman in the World*, based on a Russian folktale.

José Clemente Orozco, unlike Gannett and Dennis, was one of “Los tres grandes” (The Three Greats) of Mexican Muralists, along with David Siqueiros and Diego Rivera. Unlike his contemporaries, he openly criticized the Mexican Revolution and post-revolution government in his work. By the time he illustrated *The Pearl* in 1947, he was at the end of a long career as a muralist, working in Mexico and in several sites in the United States, including Pomona College in California. Orozco’s was the first fresco painted outside of Mexico by a painter of the Contemporary Mexican School. His art blends Renaissance themes and composition with modernism and cubism. He tackled important social issues of the day.

I am fascinated by the variety of backgrounds, influences, and interpretations each artist brought to Steinbeck’s works. Dennis’ rich, expressive watercolors capture the richness and intensity of childhood experiences. Gannett’s whimsical illustrations of *Tortilla Flat* capture their simple pleasures and raucous joys. And Orozco’s line drawings emphasize the highs and lows that Kina and Juana experience in finding and losing of the pearl.

The collaborative nature of illustrated works and the participation of the reader in interpreting both words and visuals makes for a richer experience of both forms of art than either separately.
Dr. Susan Shillinglaw and Dr. William Gilly, Stanford University, have been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to direct a 3-week summer Institute for secondary school teachers, “John Steinbeck: Social Critic and Ecologist.”

Deadline for application: March 1, 2018

Dates: July 1 - 20 (3 weeks)

Project Director(s): Susan Shillinglaw; William Gilly

Visiting Faculty: Mary Adler; Pete Barraza; Robert DeMott; Chris Fink; Scot Guenter; Persis Karim; Anthony Newfield; Gavin Jones; Matthew Spangler; Craig Strang

Location: Stanford University’s Hopkins Marine Station, Pacific Grove CA

See steinbeckinstitute.org for more information. OR contact Steinbeck Institute coordinator Brett Navin at brettnavin@yahoo.com

At the third annual Educational Leadership Summit at Pebble Beach on November 16, Francisco Jimenez, author of engaging memoirs about his migrant experience in California (The Circuit, Breaking Through, Reaching Out), was the keynote speaker. Claudia Melendez Salinas covered his talk for the Monterey Herald:

As a child in a migrant Mexican family, Francisco Jimenez had a hard time learning English in California schools as he needed to travel with his family to follow the crops. But there were two teachers who made a difference for him. Mr. Lema, his sixth grade teacher in Santa Maria helped him with grammar and reading during lunch. And in his sophomore year in high school, Ms. Bell assigned him to read “The Grapes of Wrath,” a book that made him realize the story of his migrant family, much like the Joads’, was an American story too.

“Once I started reading the novel, I could not put it down even though it was a difficult work to read,” he said Thursday before a group of about 100 educators. “In the story of the Joad family, I felt the power of literature to express common themes of human experiences. Even though they were not Mexican and spoke only in English, they had many of the same experiences as my family.”

As schools debate classroom texts, Common Core, and best-practices in writing, it’s good to tune into discussions—this from England:

Of Mice and Men was scrapped from [England’s] GCSE English syllabus in 2014, and Naomi Grant responded, noting how much her students had enjoyed reading Of Mice and Men: “I once asked a group of pupils to produce mock Facebook profile pages for the characters. Some who struggled to express themselves in writing produced illustrations of the fantasies that sustains the characters, with ‘likes’ including rabbits, puppies and alfalfa. Lennie’s page showed that he had only one friend but had been poked by Curley’s wife. One pupil took particular delight in drawing and then censoring the posts of the brothel keeper, Old Suzy; another pointed out that Slim would have been too cool for the social network and refused to complete the assignment.”

www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2017/08/23/naomi-grant/best-laid-schemes
London Review of Books Blog
Best Laid Schemes
Naomi Grant 23 August 2017
Steinbeck Young Authors, a middle school writing program now in its 15th year, seeks community members to serve as volunteer writing coaches on Monday, March 5 and Wednesday, March 7, 2018, SYA Days of Writing. Over the past years the success of the Days of Writing results from the 125 writing coaches who spend three hours with a student finalist, assisting them with revisions on their draft essay, sharing lunch together in the Exhibition Hall, and talking about strong writing skills throughout school and life.

Volunteer writing coaches arrive about 10:45 A.M. and meet with other members of the community who have volunteered and participate in a 45-minute workshop that covers their duties as a coach, reviews the student writing prompts, and suggests various writing issues coaches might discuss with students.

After the workshop, writing coaches meet their student have their picture taken together. These photos as well as the revised student essays are collected in the annual Gabilan Journal.

Responses from last year’s student evaluations included rave reviews: “My writing coach helped me find better evidence for my essay.” Another student shared, “My writing coach helped me better compose my ideas and understand the best way to organize my writing.”

Louisito Celestial, who coached two students from two different middle schools, exclaimed, “I had a wonderful and rewarding learning experience participating as a writing coach. The best part of my experience was developing a connection with the two students about writing.” Another coach, Jeyun Bae, shared that “The best thing was when I got an email that my student won an award.”

Please visit the NEW Steinbeck website and look for the writing coach letter and application and return the completed application at your earliest convenience. If you have questions, please call Julie Minnis at 831.345.6200 or email programs@steinbeck.org.

The Western Flyer Foundation

I wrote this piece for the Western Flyer Foundation Newsletter. Please help support the foundation and the restoration of the boat that Steinbeck and Ricketts chartered to the Sea of Cortez in 1940. See www.WesternFlyer.org.

Whitman, Ricketts and Steinbeck
Susan Shillinglaw

In my American literature class, I recently taught Walt Whitman, Ed Ricketts’s favorite poet from childhood. Certainly Whitman himself, perhaps Ricketts as well, would wish that *Leaves of Grass* remain open on all American coffee tables, daily inspiring an inclusive and expansive and democratic vista. And surely Whitman’s is the ur-text for Steinbeck and Ricketts’s ecological holism: “Hurrah for positive science! Long live exact demonstration!” crows Whitman, listing the lexicographer, the chemist, the mariner, the geologist and the mathematician. “Gentleman, to you the first honors always! Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling, I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.”

And that dwelling is? Spiritual awareness. The whole. The soul. Breaking through from the physical to the metaphysical.

For Whitman, as for Steinbeck and Ricketts, vision must be expansive and inclusive, enveloping physical matter and spiritual inquiry. One phrase—“From the tidepool to the stars”—distills the essence of *Sea of Cortez*, the essential holistic embrace. “I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,” Whitman writes—a line that surely inspired Steinbeck’s and Ricketts’s own visionary arc.

In July, 1940, Ed Ricketts was in Mexico City working in two “fine biological library[ies]” on the phyletic catalogue for *Sea of Cortez*. At the same time, he was revising “perhaps for the last time” his essay, “The Philosophy of Breaking Through” about spiritual awareness, about his Whitmanesque “dwelling.” Joseph Campbell had made suggestions for revision, and Ricketts incorporated those suggestions, “all apropos, significant and practical.”

In short, in the summer of 1940, ensconced in a scientific library, Ed’s mind was daily moving from the tide pool to the stars. “And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels,” is one of my favorite lines in *Leaves of Grass*. One of Ricketts’s “little beasties,” as he called his invertebrate friends, could do the same.
The Arts and Cultural Gallery has been refurbished with a new ceiling and recessed lighting, new paint and state of the art hardware for mounting exhibits. The exhibit currently on display is titled “Women’s Works,” which highlights quilts and other creations by local artists. The exhibit emphasizes how our physical locations and the places in which we live and work inform our passions, how we cope with life, and how we interact with each other. Artwork incorporated into this space includes quilts, stitch work, sculpture and illustrations. The NSC thanks Janet Taillon, Gail Abeloe, Gloria Hatton, Regina Liske, Joan Costello, Pat Tillson, Shirley Steele, Claudia Cano, and Sherril Ash for loaning their quilts to us. The Ventana Wildlife Society allowed us to show their California Condor quilt, which will be auctioned by the Big Sur Land trust to raise money for Condor conservation.

On January 5th, at 5:00 PM, the NSC will host an artists’ reception and grand opening of the gallery.

We are so enthusiastic about this exhibit that we came up with a new idea for the exhibit hall, which we will be “refreshing” throughout 2018, the 20th anniversary of the NSC. We would like to commission a quilt for Doc’s bed in the exhibit, drawing from Dora’s girls’ contribution to Ed Ricketts’s birthday party in Cannery Row:

“They were just seated formally, sipping delicately at the whiskey, when Dora and the girls came in. They presented the quilt. Doc laid it over his bed and it was beautiful.”

Contest Details: We encourage quilting groups to submit a proposal detailing plans for a silken quilt, modeled on the one Dora’s girls stitched. One page proposals, due February 14, 2018, must include a summary of the colors and design of the quilt, a rough sketch, and a timeline of completion. The selected group will be given funds for materials and a $750 stipend.

Proposals are due by February 14. Email Tara Spada with questions. Submit proposals to Tara@Steinbeck.org or call her at (831) 775-4728.
As a psychology major at California State University, Monterey Bay, I did not expect my work with the National Steinbeck Center to be quite so rewarding, nor did I anticipate the breadth of community impact the experience would grant me. While I have been with the Steinbeck Center, I have helped the archivist, Lisa Josephs, in taking down an exhibit and replacing it with “Women’s Work,” a display of quilts and other creative work by women. I assisted the Event Coordinator, Tara Spada, to promote and organize the various events in which the National Steinbeck Center participates, such as, the NEA Big Read and Salinas Valley Comic Con. Before volunteering here, I knew very little about the inner workings and needs of museums and nonprofits. As I reflect on my conversations with museum director, Susan Shillinglaw, I realize the necessity of community engagement to continue the infinite journey for knowledge and the importance of compassion when facilitating meaningful conversation in a public and academic setting. Only as my time with the Steinbeck Center draws to a close am I able to articulate how edifying the experience as a whole has been, and I am forever appreciative to the National Steinbeck Center for opportunity to volunteer alongside them.

My passion is museums and their capacity to be transformative entities—places that gather knowledge, ideas, and people. Exhibits, and the buildings that encapsulate them, are not just about static displays to me. I think the whole museum organism is an opportunity to change stereotypes, to spark visitors’ passions, and to tell unheard stories. I have worked in education and museums for the last five years. My nomadic life has allowed me to work at the Laguna Art Museum, The San Diego Museum of Man, and even on the decks of a 19th century wooden brigantine as a science and history instructor at the Ocean Institute.

I am starting my journey here with heart full of gratitude and (probably) an annoying amount of enthusiasm. So much of Steinbeck’s work is transformative itself, which is why I am excited to be at a center which preserves and keeps it alive. Not only do I have the chance to learn about a beloved author and the landscapes that informed his writing, but I am able to become a part of this place myself. How cool is that?

I look forward to working with my awesome team members at the Center and the rest of the community it serves. I cut my teeth here on our Big Read program which ran in September. Next is Comic Con in December. And of course, planning for the refurbishing of the exhibit for the Center’s 20th Anniversary next summer. Hope to meet you soon!

As a psychology major at California State University, Monterey Bay, I did not expect my work with the National Steinbeck Center to be quite so rewarding, nor did I anticipate the breadth of community impact the experience would grant me. While I have been with the Steinbeck Center, I have helped the archivist, Lisa Josephs, in taking down an exhibit and replacing it with “Women’s Work,” a display of quilts and other creative work by women. I assisted the Event Coordinator, Tara Spada, to promote and organize the various events in which the National Steinbeck Center participates, such as, the NEA Big Read and Salinas Valley Comic Con. Before volunteering here, I knew very little about the inner workings and needs of museums and nonprofits. As I reflect on my conversations with museum director, Susan Shillinglaw, I realize the necessity of community engagement to continue the infinite journey for knowledge and the importance of compassion when facilitating meaningful conversation in a public and academic setting. Only as my time with the Steinbeck Center draws to a close am I able to articulate how edifying the experience as a whole has been, and I am forever appreciative to the National Steinbeck Center for opportunity to volunteer alongside them.

My passion is museums and their capacity to be transformative entities—places that gather knowledge, ideas, and people. Exhibits, and the buildings that encapsulate them, are not just about static displays to me. I think the whole museum organism is an opportunity to change stereotypes, to spark visitors’ passions, and to tell unheard stories. I have worked in education and museums for the last five years. My nomadic life has allowed me to work at the Laguna Art Museum, The San Diego Museum of Man, and even on the decks of a 19th century wooden brigantine as a science and history instructor at the Ocean Institute.

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Upcoming at the National Steinbeck Center
Ag Forum, March 16, 9-1

From Braceros to H2A’s: Discussing the History, Present and Future of Agricultural Guestworker Programs in California

This event will bring together leading scholars, journalists, and students on the Bracero Program with leaders in the agricultural industry as well as elected officials to discuss the legacies of the Bracero Program 1942-1964, and the current workings of the H2-A guest worker program, or “New Bracero Program.” This forum will create space for dialogue among researchers, agricultural employers, elected officials, students and community members.

After the event, participants will produce a white paper on best practices and policies.

Participants: David Montejano, Professor, Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley.
Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, visiting research fellow, Center for Latino Policy Research, University of California, Berkeley. Lead Organizer and expert on Bracero Program and current H2-A Program.

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NATIONAL STEINBECK CENTER
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2018 CALENDAR

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January 2-8, 2018 Free Week at NSC kicking off Center’s 20th anniversary!
Walking tours, archival highlights, bookstore discounts, museum tours

February 3, 2:00 PM Performing Arts Series presents The Listening Place, “Art” by Yasmina Reza; Directed by Peter DeBono
February 24, 10:30-3:00 PM Steinbeck Birthday Celebration: Children’s book author; squid dissection; creative projects for kids!
March 5 & 7, 8-3:00 PM Steinbeck Young Authors Days of Writing, National Steinbeck Center
March 16, 9 AM & 1:00 PM Ag Forum: “From Braceros to H2A’s: Discussing the History, Present and Future of Agricultural Guestworker Programs in California”
March 26-April 30 Women in Film Festival at Maya Cinemas.
April 21, 2:00 PM Performing Arts Series presents The Listening Place, “The Skin of Our Teeth” by Thornton Wilder, Directed by Michael Bond
April 28, 1:00 PM Steinbeck Young Authors Awards Ceremony
April 29, 10 AM-4:00 PM History Slam at the Japanese American Citizens League. 15 minute presentations (images, video, talks) on the history of Monterey County
May 4-6 Steinbeck Festival “The Women of Steinbeck’s World” (See page 2)

Visit our NEW WEBSITE at www.steinbeck.org!
We welcome your input!