by Alissa Kaplan Michaels

Five Columbia faculty members were recently awarded Guggenheim Fellowships, to be used to pursue endeavors ranging from works of nonfiction to mathematical research.

The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation appoints fellows based on past distinguished achievement and exceptional promise for future accomplishment. Fellowships are generally for periods of two to a year, with a block of time—usually six months—to work on their creative endeavors.

This year, the winners include a total of 185 artists, scholars and scientists selected from more than 3,200 applicants across the United States and Canada for awards totaling $6.9 million.

Bill Berkeley, an adjunct professor of international affairs, is an esteemed writer. He is a former investigative reporter and editorial writer for The New York Times and the author of The Graves Are Not Yet Full; Race, Tribe and Power in the Heart of Africa.

The Guggenheim Fellowship is in support of his current book project, a re-examination of the Iran hostage crisis as seen a generation later. He is focusing on the surviving Iranian hostages-takers, some of whom have emerged in middle-age as leading figures in Iran's reformist movement. The book will also illuminate the complex dynamics of contemporary Iran through the prism of the hostage crisis.


Pana Daskalopoulos is a professor of mathematics whose areas of expertise are partial differential equations, differential geometry and harmonic analysis.

She will use the Guggenheim award to devote more time to her research and to complete her book, which is titled Mathematics and Biology with whom she studied at the University of Chicago, titled Porous Medium Equation and Related Topics. Before joining the Columbia faculty in 2001, she taught at the University of Minnesota and the University of California at Irvine. Daskalopoulos has received numerous awards, including the prestigious Alfred P. Sloan Research Fellowship in 1998, and has presented her research at institutions worldwide.

Sarah McPhee is a visiting associate professor of art history who received her A.B. in 1982 from Harvard University, and her master's in 1988 and doctorate in 1997 in art history from Columbia University.

Moore's previous works include two books of poetry, Memoir and Darling, a finalist for the James Laughlin Award, as well as the book, The White Blackbird, A Life of the Painter Margaret Sargent by Her Granddaughter. She also edited The New Women's Theatre: Ten Plays by Contemporary American Women.

Moore has taught at Columbia since 2001. In addition, Moore is currently a member of the creative nonfiction core faculty at the New School.

Gwendolyn Wright is a professor of architecture, planning and preservation who has taught at Columbia for two decades. The Guggenheim Fellowship will support her upcoming book, The Bishop's Daughter, a memoir about her relationship with her father, Paul Moore Jr., the late Episcopal bishop of New York. She will use the time to complete a new book of poems titled Red Shoes.

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Kristin Baldwin, left, associate research scientist at Columbia's Center for Neurobiology, and technician Laurie Moring.

A move that bears more than a passing similarity to Woody Allen's movie Sleeper, in which scientists try to clone a dead dictator from his nose, researchers at the Columbia University Medical Center and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have cloned a mouse from its olfactory neurons.

It's the first time that post-mitotic cells—highly specialized cells that no longer divide—have been used to produce a clone.

The study was the result of a collaboration between the laboratories of Columbia's Richard Axel, University Professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology and Pathology in the Center for Neurobiology and Behavior, and Rudolf Jaenisch of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research at MIT, who realized that two different neurons in a cloned mouse could divide. The failures with post-mitotic cells led scientists to believe that non-dividing cells have irreversible changes in their chromosomes that cannot be erased by the egg.

Irreversible changes may be caused by additions to chromosomes or by DNA rearrangements that remove or scramble parts of chromosomes.

The new experiments show that those suppositions were mistaken. By successfully cloning mice from nondividing cells, the researchers demonstrated that any changes to chromosomes in highly specialized, post-mitotic cells are reversible or do not interfere with development of a live mouse.

The findings will now allow researchers to focus on how the egg reprograms the genetic material during cloning, said Jaenisch.

Insights from those studies could be applied to the study of cancer cells, which also reprogram genetic material to turn immature cells into undifferentiated ones.

The findings also answer a question posed by Axel about how an organism makes a wide variety of neurons. Some scientists have suggested that neuron precursors generate diversity in the same way the immune system creates billions of different antibodies: by rearranging pieces of DNA.

The shuffling mechanism is particularly appealing as an explanation for the diversity of olfactory neurons. Each olfacc-

In a First, Columbia and MIT Researchers Clone Mice from Olfactory Neurons

The Sir Charles Thompson Trio, featuring pianist Sir Charles Thompson, drummer Eddie Locke and bassist Earl May, along with tap legend Jimmy Slyde, performed on April 27 at “Bebo’s Dance,” an event sponsored by the Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia University. Jimmy Slyde is considered “one of the greatest dancers of our century.” Saul O’Meally, Zoru Neale-Harston Professor of English and director of the Center for Jazz Studies. “He can use the floor as a bebop drum, but he also can float and slide – hence his name.”

By Susan Conover

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Columbia Boasts Five 2004 John Simon Guggenheim Fellows

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