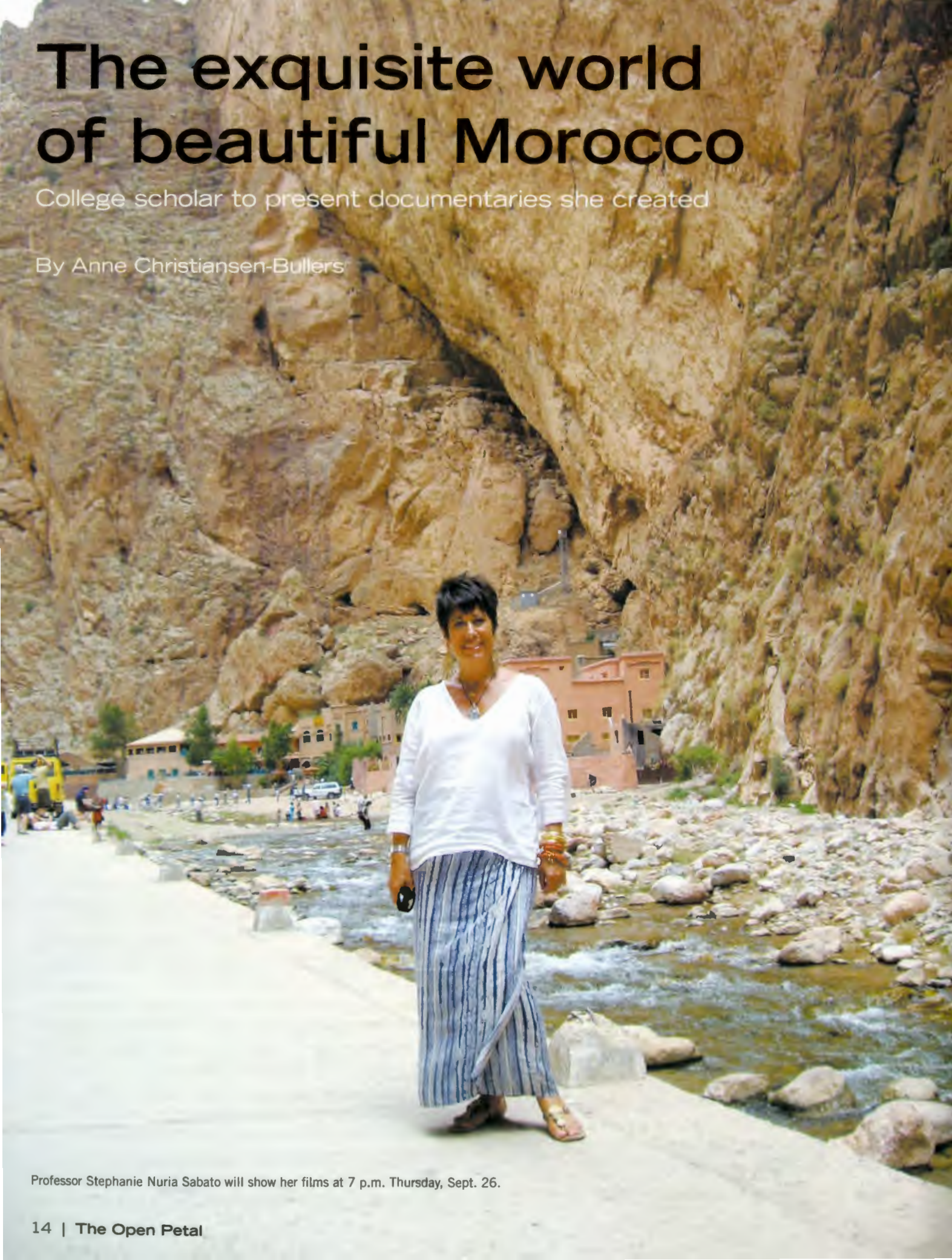


The exquisite world of beautiful Morocco

College scholar to present documentaries she created

By Anne Christiansen-Bullers



Professor Stephanie Nuria Sabato will show her films at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 26.



Morocco's beauty and culture will be the focus of the first College Scholar presentation for 2013 at Johnson County Community College.

Morocco! The Exquisite and the Challenged will include short films and a brief lecture by Stephanie Nuria Sabato, professor of graphic design at JCCC who was a Fulbright Scholar to Morocco.

The public presentation will be at 7 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 26, in Hudson Auditorium in the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art. A reception for Sabato will precede the event at 6:30 p.m. in the Atrium of the Regnier Center.

Describing her films as "crystalline moments in time and space," Sabato said she plans to show four documentaries. The films are set to Moroccan music acquired during her travels. Image and sound merge to transport the viewer into the world she experienced.

Three of the films will tell the story of a place, one each for the cities of Rabat, Essaouria and Fes, while the fourth, titled *On the Road: Morocco*, shares with the audience Sabato's overland journey throughout the country.

"I feel so fortunate to be given the opportunity to go on that Fulbright trip," Sabato said. "What a great gift to be included. Who wouldn't celebrate such an opportunity – to tour the country with a Moroccan host, to meet incredible people, to meet other scholars in Morocco whom I've become friends with and collaborate with to this day.

"The word I kept using, and it just keeps coming up, is 'exquisite,' in every way," she said, and hence the title of her presentation.

"I wanted to give these movies to the college as a gift, and share them. I don't think those moments are meant to just be grasped and held for oneself. They're meant to be shared," she said.

Sabato said she took thousands of photographs during that 2008 trip, using her eye for design in both the composition of the photos and the visual components of the film.

Even with that many source photos, Sabato said the films seemed to put themselves together based on the memories in her head.

"I see things in a certain way," she said. "It's very spacial, but there's more to it than that. There's a whole archetypal element where I feel the space, I hear the sounds, so for me I make visual connections along with music that results in visual storytelling."

She'll also be addressing the culture of Morocco and how it seeks to form its own unique identity. Due in part to its location on the coast of northwest Africa, Morocco has been influenced by Middle Eastern, African and European cultures as will be evidenced in the visual work presented.

"It's so beautiful. When we were there, the country had been in a 15-year drought. You could feel the thirst of the land. Yet the dryness of the landscape was powerful and primal. Then, an oasis would appear – like a mirage – and you ask yourself, 'Where did this come from?' It really is quite literary, like a tale in *1001 Arabian Nights*."

She presented three of the four films at an international conference in California in 2012.

"Moroccans who were there at the conference came up to me with tears in their eyes, saying 'Thank you so much for what you've shown of our country,'" Sabato said. "It was really touching ... I believe that everyone should know more about each other. Peace through the arts is possible."

Sabato has a master of fine arts in visual communications. She has lived overseas off and on the last 20 years, setting up homes in the Middle East, Europe and India. She also hosted two scholars from Morocco while they visited JCCC and worked with students.

The College Scholar program at JCCC showcases faculty excellence in research fields that go beyond the classroom to make scholarly contributions to knowledge within the professor's academic discipline. 