

BENNINGTON

POSSIBLE

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Bennington College was founded by a group of people who believed against all odds that they could make the impossible possible. They recognized a need in the world—a need for a college that valued art as central to learning and creating; for a place that offered a more robust intellectual life for young women; and for a liberal arts degree that wove together classroom and experiential learning. There was no such college at the time and no evidence that such a place could thrive. And yet, within a few years Bennington had exceeded its founder’s grand vision.

That is what we are celebrating with this issue: the Bennington students, alumni, faculty, and friends who turn bold ideas into real things in the world. Bennington College began as an abstraction. It was brought to life by a dedicated group of early donors, the parents of courageous women who wanted more and believed this big idea was worth the investment. Such pioneering supporters can be found throughout the pages of this magazine—in the philanthropic gifts, grants, and public advocacy that made so many of these projects possible.

Every time we support something entirely new—whether it’s a scientific theory that contradicts old ways of thinking, a screenplay that defies conventions, or radical political and social reforms—we empower the impossible.

That’s the ethos that underpins all teaching and learning here at Bennington: that intellectual rigor, endurance, and permission to fail fortifies our students to create new and better things. With the freedom to imagine beyond the old rules of what’s possible, the Bennington community is helping to solve some of the world’s most urgent problems. Alumni are bringing us together in innovative ways and uplifting the world with challenging art. This issue is a celebration of that tradition, and of the generous visionaries who support it.

Around the globe and right here on campus, Bennington students, faculty, and alumni are always at work recognizing needs in the world, spotting the questions that demand answers. We relish the opportunity to do the impossible. It is as true today as it was in 1932: the world needs Bennington College.

Thank you for all that you do,

Isabel Roche

Isabel Roche
Interim President



**WHAT DID YOU ONCE THINK IMPOSSIBLE
THAT YOU NOW BELIEVE IS POSSIBLE?**

When I reflect on the impossible and the possible, I think about technology. I think about the smartphone. The iPad. Alexa. Google glass. Drone delivery and self-driving cars. I think about 3D printed houses and missions to Mars.

I think about the first time I heard about The Internet. I remember what it was to learn about something for which there was no context. I didn't know what "the Internet" meant or how it worked or even if the Internet was an "it" at all. I think about social media. I think about the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, #MeToo, and this president on Twitter. As recently as 10 years ago, I would hardly have believed these platforms and systems and realities possible, and yet they have changed society entirely.

And these changes are showing no signs of slowing. In these 72 pages alone I have read at least four things I would not have believed to be possible: that hallucinogenics might be a key to understanding what happens to us when we die (page 26); that we could memorialize our loved ones by integrating their DNA into organic material (page 23); that our architecture and space can and should respond to us (page 57); that a gender theorist would be a household name (page 20).

But technological and cultural evolution are not the only lessons in possibility I have taken away from this issue. Many of the essays in the pages that follow demonstrate how the aperture of possibility was opened with time. From reflections on lifelong friendships to essays on the evolved relationship to death to those that deal with our current political landscape to contributions on what art and age makes possible, the contributors in these pages go deep and illustrate how time can expand our imagination and develop our sense of possibility.

I hope you enjoy the read as much as I have enjoyed the ongoing conversations and connections the essays in this issue have inspired. If you have your own reflection or response, I invite you to share it with me by email or in an anonymous survey that will be distributed in January. And if you have not already had a contribution featured in our alumni-authored issues, I hope you'll consider submitting a piece that responds to our next issue's invitation to describe yourself.

With warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brie".

Brie Della Rocca
Editor & Art Director

BENNINGTON MAGAZINE

Briee Della Rocca
Editor & Art Director

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Katie Bramer-Hayes
Leanne Brown
Madeline Cole '18
Keegan Ead
Marie Leahy
Sara White
Production team

SUBMISSION FAQ

WHO SHOULD SUBMIT?

Alumni who have not already had their submission included should consider submitting a response to the next issue.

WHAT SHOULD I SUBMIT?

Captioned work samples, essays, interviews, op-eds, thought pieces, as well as other narrative structures well suited for a magazine format that describes yourself.

WILL ALL SUBMISSIONS BE ACCEPTED?

All complete submissions will be considered. Due to limited space in the magazine, we may not be able to publish all submissions. For submissions to be considered complete, they must clearly respond to the issue's question or prompt and text must be attached as a document or linked to a Google document; accompanying photos and artwork must be attached, labeled with your first and last name.

HOW DO I SUBMIT A NOTE?

Alumni and faculty who wish to submit news, updates, or callouts to keep in touch—unrelated to the prompt—should email a note to magazine@bennington.edu.

HOW DO I SUBMIT A HEADLINER?

Members of the Bennington community (alumni, students, faculty, and staff) who have had their work or life recently covered in a national media outlet are included in our Headliners section. If you would like to share news of your coverage or alert us to a member of the community who has had their work covered in major media outlets, email magazine@bennington.edu. Be sure to link to the story.

HOW DO I GET MY BOOK INTO THE NATIONAL REVIEWS SECTION?

If you have had your book recently published and reviewed by a major national media outlet, your book will be included in the National Review section of the magazine. We make every effort to find all national reviews that have appeared since the publication of the last *Bennington* magazine. We welcome links to your national reviews.

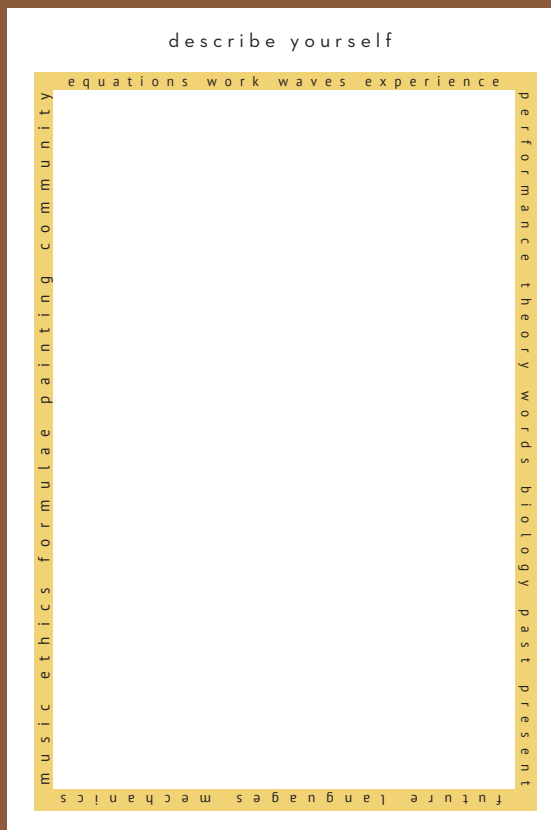
Direct correspondence to:
Bennington Magazine
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Bennington, VT 05201-6003

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Bennington magazine is the recipient of a University College Designer's Association (UCDA) Excellence Award and a Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) District I Publication Honorable Mention.

DESCRIBE YOURSELF

The next issue of the magazine will feature descriptions of YOU. For more than 20 years Bennington College has mailed the "Describe Yourself" brochure to prospective students. Their responses to the invitation are as vivid, inventive, diverse, and alive as the students who come to Bennington. The Office of Admissions has kept and displayed these cards for more than two decades. Many of you may even remember getting and responding to this card many years ago. For the next issue of the magazine, we hope all members of the Bennington community will respond to the invitation to "Describe Yourself"—on the card or on the page. We welcome your contributions and look forward to sharing them with readers.



magazine@bennington.edu

commons

AFTER YEARS OF PLANNING, four years of design, and two years of construction, a newly renovated Commons building opened in the fall. This holistic remaking of the historic and beloved center of campus community life combines dining, social, and academic areas within a collection of dynamic spaces. The building is animated by daylight, views, natural materials, and artwork. Like a Bennington education, Commons is a manifestation of learning by doing, of drawing on resources and inspiration from all around us, and is a building that embodies the merger of our work and social lives. Here the campus community can again eat and study in the same space, mentor, perform, and relax together. It is thrilling to be continuing an already rich and storied history in this breathtaking building.





VISIT

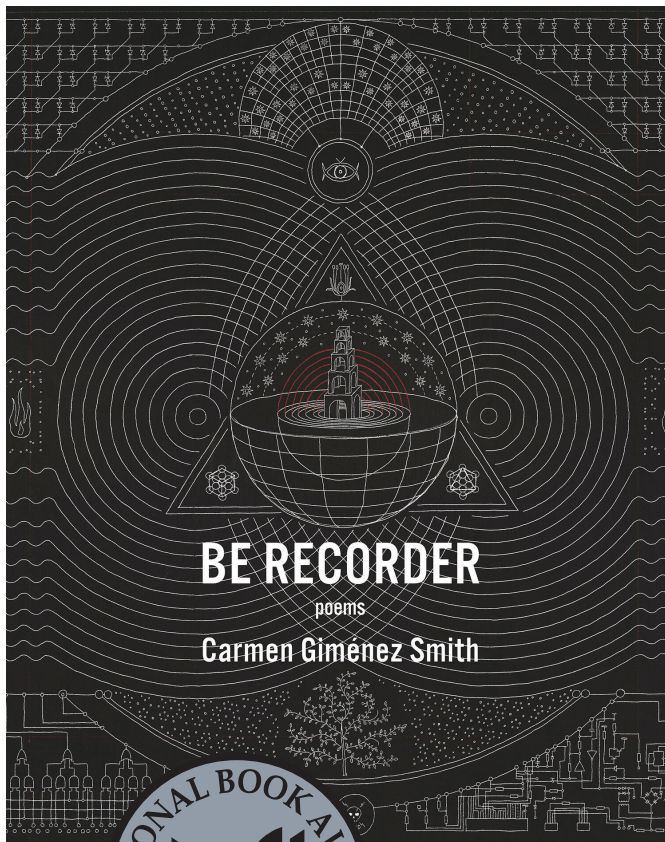
There has never been a better time to come back to campus than now. We invite alumni near and far to return and tour Commons to experience the space and the difference space makes. Or tour the difference online by visiting bennington.edu/commonsbuilding for a gallery of images, floor-by-floor tours, and for more information on the many new, interconnected spaces including Roz's Cafe; the Class of 1977 Lounge; **Signa Lynch Read '79** Bookstore; the **Carolyn Crossett Rowland '37** Forum; and the Atrium performance and lecture space below the cupola on the third floor.



From top to bottom: A view of north campus from the Classroom 302 • Looking into the kitchen from the west wing of the dining hall • The **Carolyn Crossett Rowland '37** Forum, a new peer-to-peer learning and study space on the third floor • A student looks out of the 14 foot tall dormer windows; facing east from the CCR'37 Forum **Pictured left:** The newly renovated north entrance of Commons.

We feature books that have been reviewed by major national publications. Find new releases and other publication news in Book Notes on page 52.

the national book awards



CARMEN GIMÉNEZ SMITH

Bennington Writing Seminars
faculty member

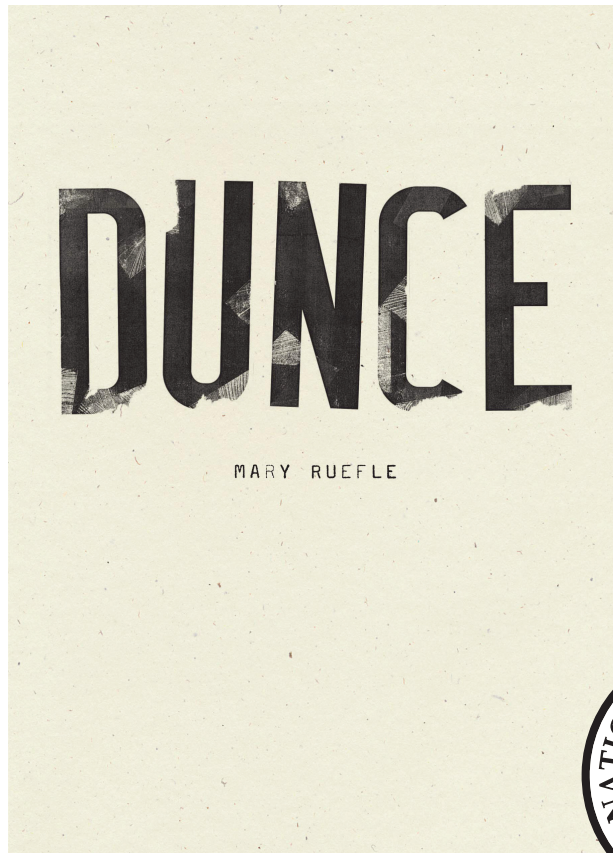
Be Recorder

Graywolf Press (August 6, 2019)

**Finalist for the National Book Award
for Poetry**

With an urgency propelled by largely unpunctuated language and nimble lines, Giménez Smith careens between devastating accounts of racial and xenophobic violence. . . . While taking on gentrification and border walls, white feminism and late capitalism, Giménez Smith manages to frame a queer, Latinx, immigrants' daughter, motherhood poetics that's entirely her own.

—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



MARY RUEFLE '74

Dunce

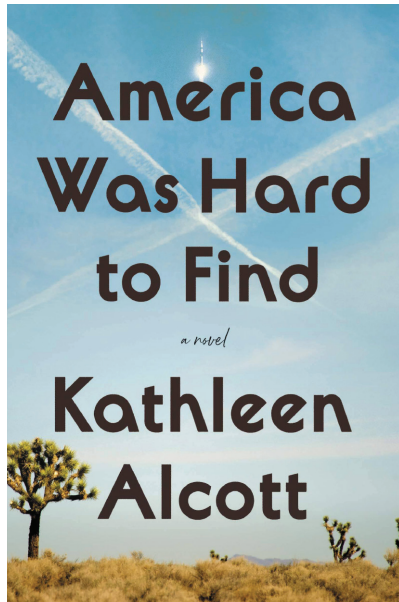
Wave Books (September 10, 2019)

Longlisted for the National Book Award for Poetry

In *Dunce*, her latest poetry collection, Ruefle confronts the extraordinary yet banal fact that all of us die. How do we reconcile the boringness of death in general with the shock of our own, specific death? ...Our own deaths, though certain, do not seem possible perhaps until our parents die—as though this were the true end of childhood, and so the end of youth. The presence of an older generation is a comfort, a weighted blanket, that makes us feel protected; its absence creates the inexorable sense that we're next. Ruefle's mother's death haunts this collection—it feels as if her death itself is the ghost, the event and not the person.

—*THE NEW YORK TIMES*

Mary Ruefle '74 was also named poet laureate of Vermont this past fall.

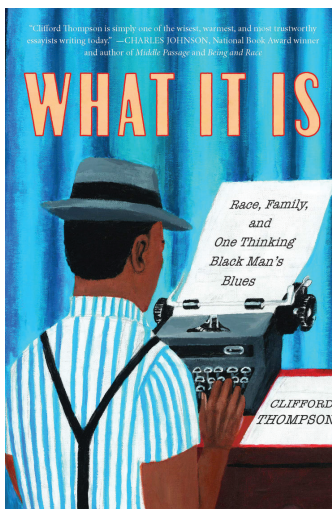


KATHLEEN ALCOTT

Bennington Writing Seminars visiting faculty member
America Was Hard to Find
 Ecco (May 14, 2019)

Sprawling but absorbing.... Ambitious.... Shimmering, knife-sharp descriptions of small and often devastating moments of individual experience within those larger histories.... The reader experiences the era's social upheavals and contests of values at their most intimate register.

—NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



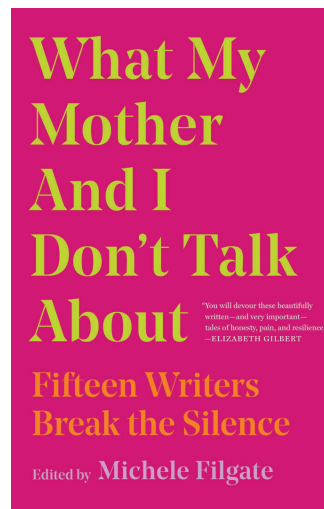
CLIFFORD THOMPSON

Bennington Writing Seminars faculty member
What It Is: Race, Family, and One Thinking Black Man's Blues
 Other Press (November 12, 2019)

Clifford Thompson was raised to firmly believe that every person is entitled to equality in America. But as a parent of biracial children in the Trump era, the author of *Love for Sale and Other Essays* finds himself having to reckon with a reality at odds with the expectations he has carried for most of his life. Thompson opens a dialogue with fellow citizens who see the state of American racism differently than he does, and shares those conversations in his book.

—TIME

Thomas' collection also appeared as part of *Time's* feature "Most Anticipated Books" collection.

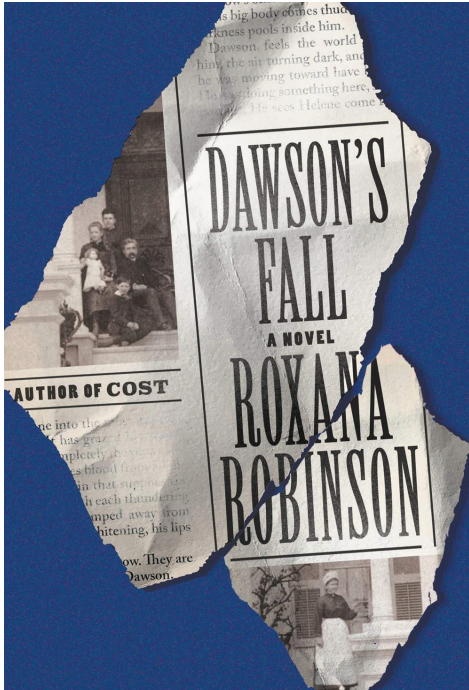


MELISSA FEBOS

Bennington Writing Seminars faculty member
 Contributing writer
What My Mother and I Don't Talk About: Fifteen Writers Break the Silence, edited by Michele Filgate
 Simon & Schuster (April 30, 2019)

At its broadest level, this book is about the soul-rattling realization that despite often having the astronomically best of intentions, our mothers still mess up—sometimes in life-altering ways. It's about how, despite our love or desperate need for them, we mess things up too. And it's also about the gut punch that happens when some children are forced to legitimately wonder just how good their mothers' intentions ever were.

—NPR



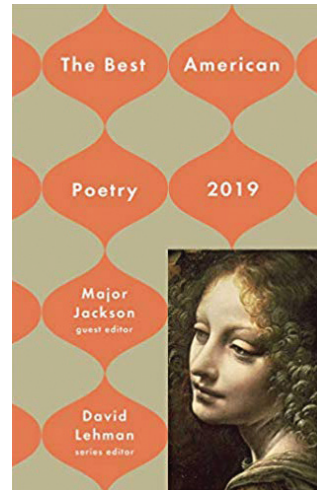
ROXANA ROBINSON '68

Dawson's Fall: A Novel

Sarah Crichton Books (May 14, 2019)

Dawson's Fall asks what truth means in an era when conviction matters more, and Roxana Robinson's answer—that morality is friable—should make us sit up and tremble.

—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



**AMY GERSTLER MFA '11
DIDI JACKSON MFA '14
CAMILLE GUTHRIE**

Faculty member; Director of Undergraduate Writing Initiatives

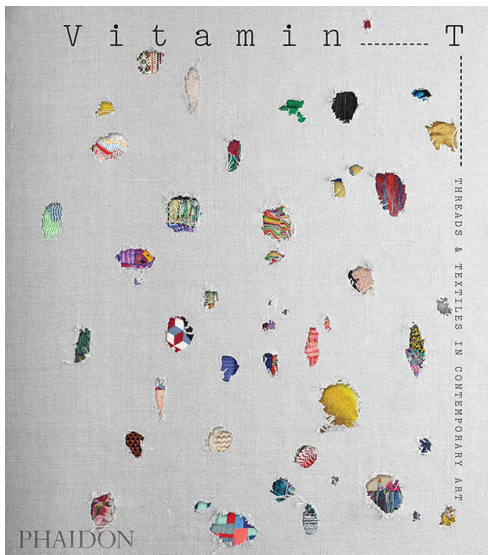
Selected poets

The Best American Poetry 2019

Scribner Books (September 10, 2019)

An essential purchase.

—THE WASHINGTON POST



J BLACKWELL '95

Faculty member

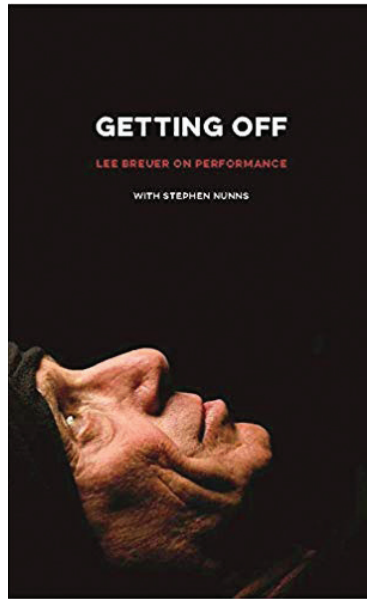
Featured artist

Vitamin T: Threads and Textiles in Contemporary Art

Phaidon Press (April 3, 2019)

Vitamin T: Threads and Textiles in Contemporary Art explores a different corner of the art world: fiber art, a medium the editors Louisa Elderton and Rebecca Morrill say has historically been undervalued because it is relegated to the realm of “craft.” It receives its due here, in a catalog of more than 100 artists working in textiles today.

—THE NEW YORK TIMES



STEPHEN NUNNS '85

Editor

Getting Off: Lee Breuer on Performance

Theatre Communications Group (July 9, 2019)

Since the 1960s and 1970s, New York's experimental-theatre scene has toned down its wild-man character, but Lee Breuer is the grand old man of the movement.

—*THE NEW YORKER*



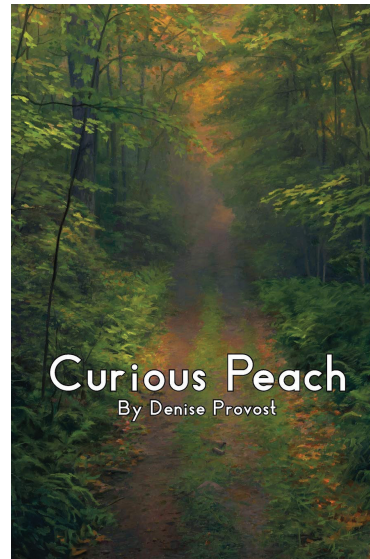
KURT CASWELL MFA '04

Laika's Window: The Legacy of a Soviet Space Dog

Trinity University Press (October 30, 2018)

In 1957 the Soviet Union sent its second satellite into orbit around Earth, this one carrying a dog named Laika. *Sputnik 2* made 2,570 revolutions over five months before its fiery reentry in our planet's atmosphere. Laika did not survive her journey—an outcome the space agency anticipated. Writer Caswell profiles the program that trained dozens of such “space dogs” as test subjects for early missions. She was the first animal to orbit Earth. The program was a “tipping point” for space exploration, Caswell writes, but Laika's treatment was undeniably cruel. The book is meant as a testament to her experience.

—*SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*



DENISE PROVOST '71

Curious Peach

lulu.com; null edition (June 6, 2019)

Somerville-based poet Denise Provost's new collection of poetry *Curious Peach*...is deeply lodged in the seasons of New England. Provost proves herself dialed into the subtleties and complexities of each season's personality.... Her poems express an exuberant hurrah for the natural world around us.

—*THE BOSTON GLOBE*

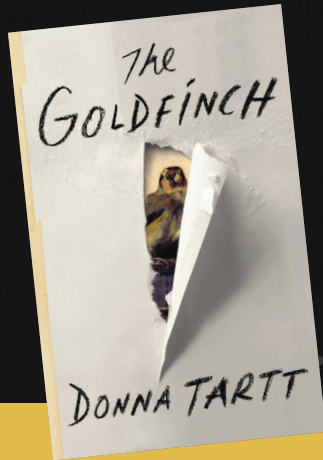
Based on the Pulitzer Prize Winning Book

ANSEL ELGORT
OAKES FEGLEY
ANEURIN BARNARD
FINN WOLFHARD
WITH SARAH PAULSON
LUKE WILSON
JEFFREY WRIGHT
AND NICOLE KIDMAN

The GOLDFINCH

THE STORY OF A STOLEN LIFE

ONLY IN THEATERS
SEPTEMBER 13

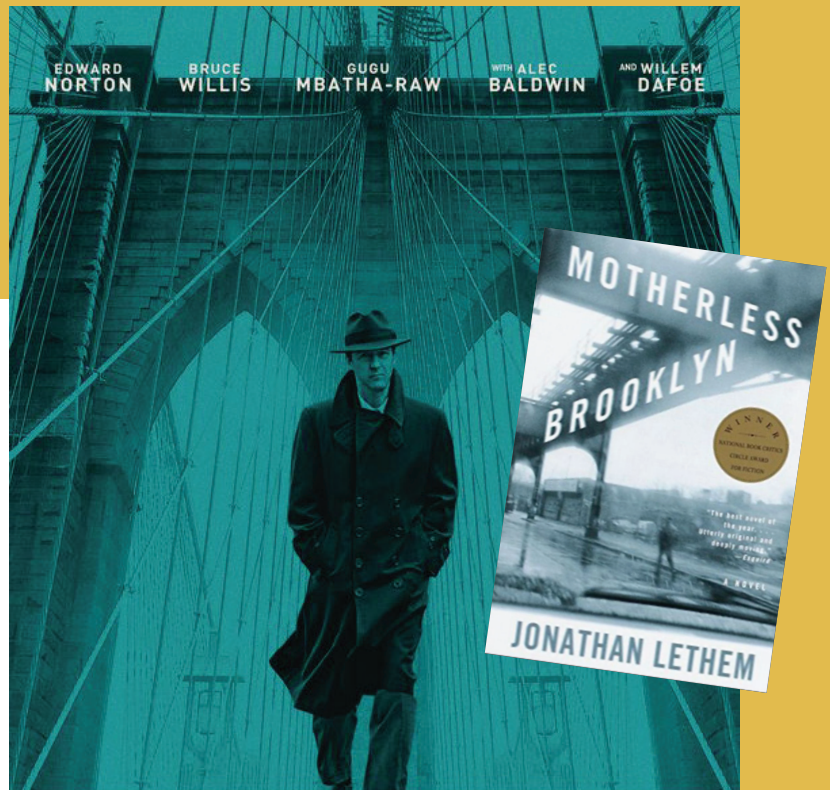


DONNA TARTT

The Goldfinch, Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by **Donna Tartt '86**, was adapted for the big screen and released in September 2019. It starred Ansel Elgort, Sarah Paulson, Luke Wilson, Jeffrey Wright, and Nicole Kidman. The much-anticipated release was met with mixed reviews. Most critics agreed about one thing: the book was better. *Vanity Fair* wrote, "Crowley [the film's director]...finds a melody fairly often, imbuing his film with a lyrical hush and sadness. It's gorgeously filmed, well-appointed New York spaces given the lacquered glow of an old painting. The film also manages two timelines with grace, drifting back and forth between youth and nascent adulthood. In that sense, the spirit of Tartt's book is honored—we feel the yawn of years, the weight of grief and accumulated formative experience."

JONATHAN LETHEM

Edward Norton directed and starred in the political detective drama based on **Jonathan Lethem's '86** novel, *Motherless Brooklyn*. Released in November 2019 to critical acclaim, Norton brought Lethem's detective novel to life-changing the time period from 1999 to the 1950s and the crime scene from a harvest operation of Japanese sea-urchins in Maine to the schemes of a powerful city official who was based on the portrait of Robert Moses as described in the Robert Caro's biography, *The Power Broker*. Reviewing the film, *Slate* wrote, "Norton himself plays the protagonist, Essrog, an orphan who slowly discovers his voice (quite literally, since he suffers from a crippling case of Tourette's syndrome) and emerges as the leader of the Dickensian group of fledgling detectives trying to solve the murder of their mentor. Norton has kept Lionel's voyage of self-discovery, which he plays with tender intelligence and an almost Chaplin-esque physicality."



MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN

R

ONLY IN THEATERS NOVEMBER 1

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headliners

FROM Emmy records to exhibitions

expanding the boundaries of art as we know

it to developing new media companies,

this section keeps you up to date on alums

making national and international news.

THE EMMY AWARDS

Alumni were well represented at the Emmys this year, garnering nominations and wins.

ALAN ARKIN

walk of fame

Alan Arkin '55—who has won an Academy Award, a Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild awards, among many other honors—was nominated for an Emmy and a Screen Actors Guild Award for his performance in the Netflix comedy, *The Kominsky Method*, in which he co-stars with Michael Douglas. In June, Arkin was inducted in the Hollywood Walk of Fame for his work in motion pictures. Ana Martinez, producer of the Hollywood Walk of Fame, said, "Alan Arkin is one of the most respected artists of the stage and screen. We are proud to add this legendary performer's name to the Hollywood Walk of Fame."

THE EMMY AWARDS

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PETER DINKLAGE sets emmy record

Peter Dinklage '91 broke records at the Emmys this year when he won his fourth Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series—the first and only actor to earn the honor. In his acceptance speech, Dinklage appreciated being a member of a community that values tolerance and diversity, noting there would be few other places he “would be standing on a stage like this.” In addition to the record-breaking number of Emmys earned for playing Tyrion Lannister in *Game of Thrones*, Dinklage also earned a Golden Globe award, as well as several Screen Actor Guild Award nominations. Moreover, Dinklage starred in another Emmy-nominated HBO production, *My Dinner with Hervé*, nominated for Best Television Movie this year.

Alumni were well represented at the Emmys this year, garnering nominations and wins.

A full-length photograph of Justin Theroux standing on a red carpet. He is wearing a black tuxedo jacket over a white dress shirt and a black necktie. He has a short beard and is looking slightly to his right. The background is a bright red wall.

JUSTIN THEROUX

all in the family

Live in Front of a Studio Audience: Norman Lear's All in the Family and The Jeffersons scored an Emmy for Outstanding Variety Special (Live). It was the first Emmy award for executive producer **Justin Theroux '93** who helped bring the star-studded special to life. Theroux's work on screen has also earned praise and attention this year. He starred in the American biographical drama, *On the Basis of Sex*, which was based on the life and early cases of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg; co-starred in the all-star Netflix drama mini-series, *Maniac*, which was met with rave reviews; and was the voice of Tramp in Disney's remake of *Lady and the Tramp* released in November 2019.



ASAD AYAZ

hollywood marketing mastermind

Asad Ayaz '00, president of marketing at The Walt Disney Studios, is on fire. *The Hollywood Reporter* named Ayaz as one of "Hollywood's Top 25 Marketing Masterminds of 2019." Ayaz and his team have made the marketing of anticipated Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Lucasfilm, and now 20th Century Fox films, as artful and successful as the films themselves. Ayaz sets new bars with each film and continues to build on his unprecedented success. This summer, *Entertainment Weekly* celebrated Pixar's *Onward* trailer writing, "The new footage sheds more light on the poignant story at the heart of this fairy tale." And after marketing the highly anticipated *Frozen 2*, it broke pre-sale records. CNBC reported that in the first day of advanced ticket sales, *Frozen 2* had sold more tickets than any other animated feature on Atom Tickets and Fandango. CNBC continued, "Additionally, *Frozen 2* outpaced first-day ticket sales of every Disney live-action remake." Opening remakes of live-action films were also in Ayaz's portfolio—something he spoke with *Bennington* magazine about in 2017. "Reaching viewers in the new media landscape requires more ingenuity and creativity than ever before. There's so much happening in the world and on all the different screens. To get attention you have to find a way to stand out. You have to eventize a movie."



BRYN MOOSER

xtr films

Founder of the virtual and augmented reality studio RYOT and two-time Academy Award nominee **Bryn Mooser '01** made headlines this past summer when he announced the launch of XTR Films—his new startup focused on producing documentaries, nonfiction television series, and branded content. Speaking with *Forbes*, Mooser pointed to the expansion of distribution opportunities for nonfiction films as a motivator for the new startup. Now, nonfiction films are widely available to viewers at home, where they were once limited to select audiences willing to head to indie theaters and movie rental shops. “There are more people watching, which means more people to talk about it—which means more studios will invest in the creation of it.”

AUDREY SHULMAN

hallmark movie premiere

Writer **Audrey Shulman '09** had her Hallmark movie, *Love, Fall & Order*, premiere in the fall. Ahead of the TV debut, *The International Business Times* called it a “perfect gift” and previewed the plot for eager viewers. This is the latest project for Shulman who released her book *Sitting in Bars with Cake* in 2015.





CALEEN SINNETTE JENNINGS

queen's girl

Queens Girl in the World;
Queens Girl in Africa; Queens Girl:
Black in the Green Mountains
Everyman Theatre (May 2019)

Following the restaging of two plays by **Caeleen Sinnette Jennings '72**—*Queens Girl in the World* and *Queens Girl in Africa*—*The Washington Post* ran a feature profile of the playwright whose first foray into memoir resulted in *Queens Girl in the World* in May 2020. They wrote, "Playwright Caeleen Sinnette Jennings has unexpectedly found herself with a trilogy of solo memoir plays, all told from young Jackie's precocious point of view. Baltimore's Everyman Theatre is remounting *Queens Girl in the World* and *Queens Girl in Africa* with the original actors; Ursula in the first play and Erika Rose in the second. Next spring, Everyman will premiere *Queens Girl: Black in the Green Mountains*, following Jackie through her Bennington College years from 1968–1972; that show will also christen Everyman's intimate new studio theater." The final installment of *Queens Girl* will be supported by a \$10,000 grant from The National Endowment for the Arts.

MAX WOLKOWITZ

indecent

Indecent

Arena Stage in Washington, DC
(November–December 2018)

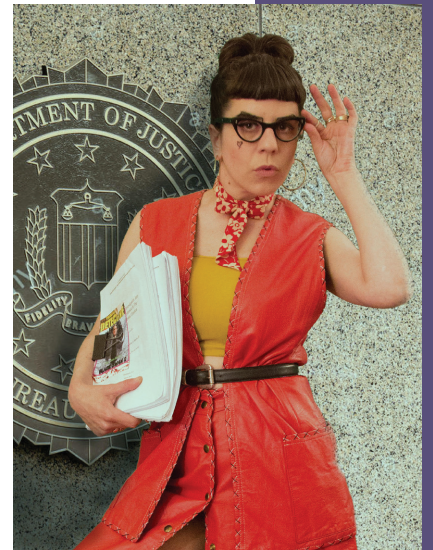
Max Wolkowitz '09 starred as Sholem Asch/Eugene O'Neill in the Helen Hayes Award-nominated production of Paula Vogel's *Indecent* at Arena Stage in Washington, DC, Kansas City Rep, and Baltimore Center Stage. Reviewing the play, *The Washington Post* wrote, "*Indecent* is Paula Vogel's eloquent account of art happening against all odds. By the time the portrait is complete, you can expect to have been stirred deeply by the moving facet of human aspiration it celebrates, to speak the truth in a time and place allergic to it. It's not a festive evening, mind you, in Arena Stage's Kreeger Theater. Director Eric Rosen has assembled a hauntingly absorbing incarnation of Vogel's Tony-nominated play, which had a too-short run on Broadway last year. *Indecent* may be too austere for a healthy commercial run these days, but it is still well suited to a home such as Arena, where a ready-made audience exists for a serious story exploring the consequences of illuminating love in all its permutations."

LIZ ZITO

the mueller report

Mueller Report Fan Fiction with Liz Zito
(and other political plot twists)
601 Artspace (June 2019)

According to polls, less than 5 percent of Americans have read the Mueller Report investigating President Trump, his administration, and Russian interference in the 2016 elections. Multimedia performance artist **Liz Zito '06** is one of the rare Americans who has read the report. After reading it, she took it to the stage, performing in venues throughout New England this past summer. Her work captured the attention of *The Washington Post*, NBC Nightly News, and *The Associated Press*. *The AP* wrote, "Liz Zito is a multimedia artist so immersed in the Mueller Report that she wrote fan fiction to fill in the parts that were redacted by the Justice Department. When she worried that other Americans didn't know about the findings of special counsel Robert Mueller, she found her own way to make them accessible: A 'performative reading' in downtown Manhattan. 'When you deliver a comedic performance, you want people to laugh at all the jokes, but a lot of positive feedback from that night came from people learning what was actually in the report and how manipulated we all were/are as world citizens,' Zito says."





JUDITH BUTLER

the force of nonviolence

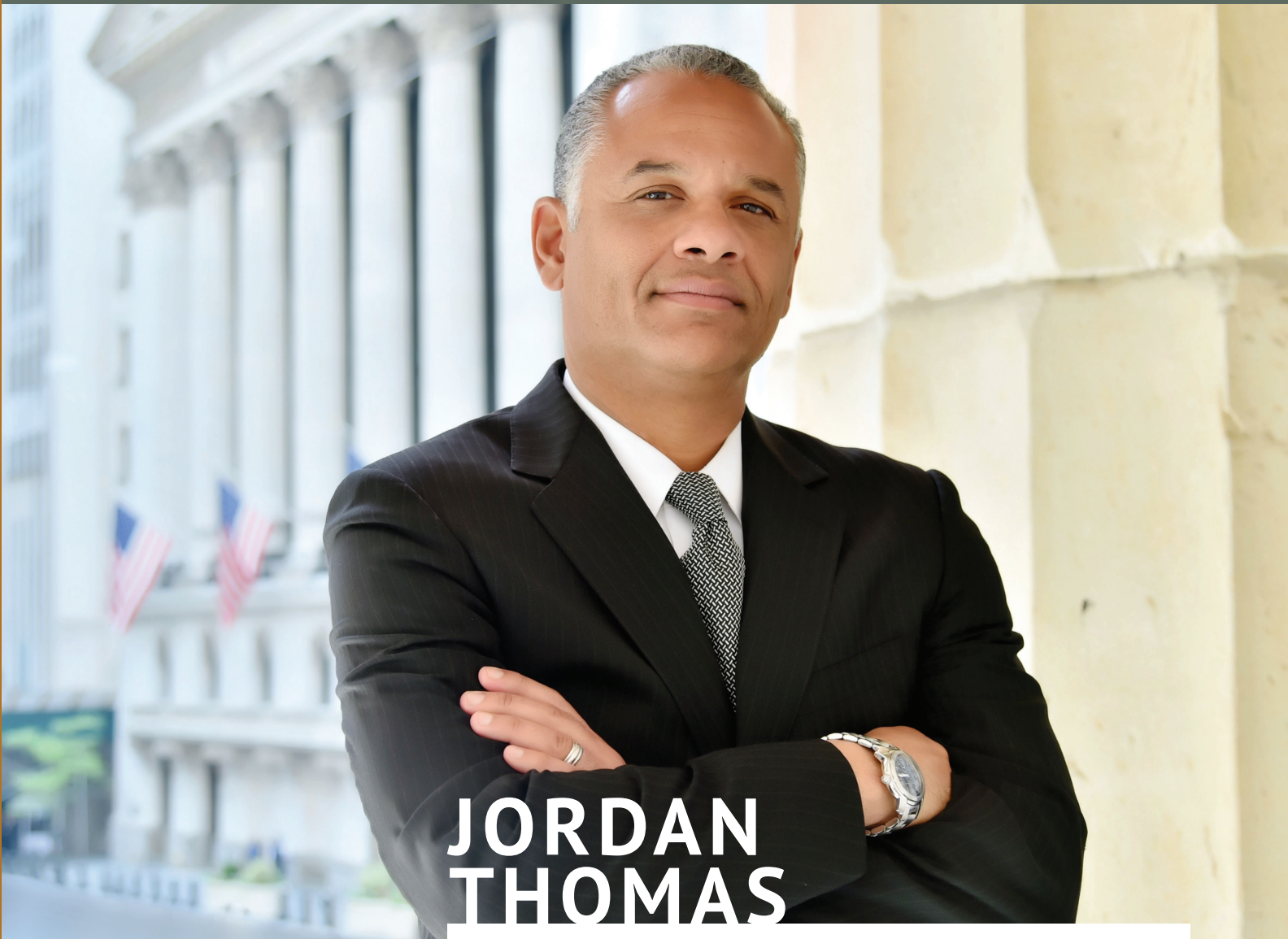
Philosopher George Yancy interviewed renowned philosopher and gender theorist **Judith Butler '78** for *The New York Times* in July 2019. Their interview exchange titled, "Judith Butler: When Killing Women Isn't a Crime" dove deep, with Dr. Butler unpacking a multitude of feminisms—their intersections and difference in focus and framework. Discussing her upcoming book, *The Force of Nonviolence: The Ethical in the Political*, she explained, "I work with the feminist idea of 'relationality' in order to show not only how lives are interdependent, but also how our ethical obligations to sustain each other's lives follow from that interdependency." Yancy shared how the two first became acquainted, "I reached out to the philosopher Judith Butler last year, not long after I wrote an article titled '#IAMSexist,' as the #MeToo movement was in full swing. I hoped to get an unvarnished critique of the essay. I got much more: a bracing and profound exchange that led to this interview and the reminder that violence against women, in its many forms, is a global tragedy."

DEBORAH BORDA

project 19

President and CEO of The New York Philharmonic **Deborah Borda '71** spoke with *The New York Times* recently about staging the Philharmonic's *Project 19* in February 2020, which will mark the centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment of the United States Constitution. *The New York Times* wrote, "A key offering will be a newly staged version of Virgil Thomson's 1947 opera, with libretto by Gertrude Stein, *The Mother of Us All*, which tells the story of Susan B. Anthony, an early suffragist who died before the amendment giving women the right to vote was ratified. Other historical figures involved with the movement—ranging from Daniel Webster to Lillian Russell—are also portrayed. The production will be jointly presented by the orchestra, Juilliard School, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the museum's Charles Engelhard Court, in its American wing." Borda reported that this collaboration is part of a larger effort to attract younger audiences, "who she hopes will find the opera 'absolutely riveting in terms applicable to today.'"





JORDAN THOMAS

blowing the whistle

NPR's *Planet Money* featured **Jordan Thomas '92** this past summer, speaking with him about the journey that led him to become the SEC top whistleblower attorney in the country. A former trial attorney at the Department of Justice and an assistant director at the Securities Exchange Commission, Thomas was a principal architect of an investor protection initiative through which whistleblowers can receive a substantial percentage of penalties the SEC collects in a successful enforcement action. Three of his clients were awarded a cumulative \$83 million last year after Bank of America's Merrill Lynch unit admitted wrongdoing and settled for \$415 million in 2016—the largest whistleblower award in SEC history. His clients have brought tips to the SEC that continue to lead to huge cases against some of the biggest banks in the world. In his conversation with *Planet Money*, Thomas shared, "Our job is to figure out who the good guys are, the real whistleblowers, the ones who know where the bodies are buried and the ones who can lead us to them. And we're pretty good at that. I think the second thing is that we're kind of hardened realists."



PHOTOGRAPH BY EDDIE HERENA

NIGEL POOR

freedom for ear hustle

The hit podcast *Ear Hustle* was back for a fourth season this summer, drawing even more interest after news broke that co-host and producer Walter “Earlonne” Woods had his sentence for attempted robbery commuted by Governor Jerry Brown. *Ear Hustle* started after **Nigel Poor ‘86** entered Public Radio Exchange’s Radiotopia podcast talent contest with Woods and Antwan Williams, another inmate serving time for armed robbery. Their pitch beat more than 1,500 contestants from 53 countries. Since it began to air in 2016, the podcast has been downloaded more than 20 million times by devoted listeners throughout the world. *The Associated Press* wrote, “During their podcast, Woods and fellow creator and outside co-host, prison volunteer Nigel Poor, give listeners a peek into the hardships and small joys of men incarcerated at the medium-security facility. In interviews with the hosts, inmates discuss struggles such as finding a compatible cellmate to share a 5-by-10-foot (1.5-by-3-meter) cell, share why they take care of frogs or black widow spiders as if they were pets, or describe the impact of solitary confinement or being on death row. The fourth season of *Ear Hustle*...will feature stories of his re-entry to society and interviews with other inmates released after long sentences. He and Poor also plan to visit maximum-security prisons and tell the stories of prisoners there.”

HEATHER DEWEY-HAGBORG

the dna artist

In August, *The Observer* headlined a feature on **Heather Dewey-Hagborg '03**, "This Artist's Medium Is DNA, and Her Current Project Is a Love Virus." Dewey-Hagborg is a transdisciplinary artist with a PhD in electronic arts from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and an interest in pushing the boundaries of data collection and biotechnology using art as her medium. Her groundbreaking work has made headlines ever since she began to combine art and biotechnology. From her exhibition, *Stranger Visions*, which displayed 3D modeled faces generated from DNA derived from chewing gum, hair strands, and cigarette butts left in public places to the show *Probably Chelsea*, exhibited and widely covered in 2017 when Dewey-Hagborg developed 30 models of the potential faces of Chelsea Manning while she was still in prison. This past summer outlets from *The Observer* to *The Economist* took note when she pushed the envelope again in two recent shows, *At the Temperature of My Body* and *Spirit Molecule*. *The Observer* wrote, "Her ongoing exhibition, *At the Temperature of My Body*, at Fridman Gallery, could be described as a chronicle of the grief, attachment and desire stages of love... Exhibited at the back gallery, the four-channel video installation, *T3511*, 2018... In the nine-minute film, she plays a biohacker who falls in love with her anonymous saliva donor through his biological data and pursues him to the clinic where he submitted his fluid." *The Observer* continues, "In the attachment stage, *Lovesick*, 2019, includes an actual love virus the artist developed at Integral Molecular in Philadelphia. The virus is presented in 10 glowing pink vials, and theoretically is designed to increase the production of oxytocin, which increases feelings of empathy, monogamy or bonding... this expansive concept is bookended by two other projects, one of which is currently realized as another exhibition at Michigan State University's Broad Museum. Titled *Spirit Molecule* the artist and her collaborator, Phillip Andrew Lewis, worked with MSU's departments of biochemistry and molecular biology to extract the DNA from four East Lansing locals and grow genetically-engineered mosses that contain their genetic makeup. Mixed within a mountainous pile of locally-foraged moss, the 'human' mosses create a sort-of alternative portrait of their human donors."

Artist collaborators: Toshiaki Ozawa, T3511 and Phillip Andrew Lewis, Spirit Molecule.



PHOTO FROM WIKI COMMONS



HELEN FRANKENTHALER

sparkling amazons

"This seems to be a Frankenthaler moment," CBS Sunday Morning reported in a feature profile of the life and work of **Helen Frankenthaler '49** that aired this past summer. Indeed, it is. This past year alone, Frankenthaler's work was exhibited in several major shows: *Abstract Climates: Helen Frankenthaler in Provincetown* shown at the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill, NY; *Helen Frankenthaler Prints: Seven Types of Ambiguity*, an exhibition at the Princeton University Art Museum; *Pittura/Panorama: Paintings by Helen Frankenthaler, 1952–1992* at the Museo di Palazzo Grimani, Venice, Italy; and *Sparkling Amazons*, an exhibition at the Katonah Museum of Art. The latter show recognizes the often-overlooked contribution by women artists to the Abstract Expressionist movement and the significant role they played as bold innovators within the New York School during the 1940s and 1950s. The museum writes that the catalyst for this show was the groundbreaking 9th Street show arranged by avant-garde artists and gallerist Leo Castelli in 1951. Of the more than 60 artists included, only 11 were women. In the early 1970s, art critic Thomas Hess would refer to the 11 women as "sparkling Amazons;" the reference for the exhibition's title. Amazon Prime Video is developing a new series based on the pioneering art and lives of the 9th Street women in a series with the same namesake, *Ninth Street Women*. The series was developed based on the recent book by Mary Gabriel, *Ninth Street Women* (Back Bay Books, September 2019).

*Helen Frankenthaler in her West End Avenue studio, New York, 1957.
Published in Life magazine on May 13, 1957. © Gordon Parks / The LIFE
Picture Collection / Getty Images.*

What did you once believe to be impossible that you now think is possible?

FEATURING

An excerpt from the prologue of Michael Pollan's '76 bestselling book, *How to Change Your Mind* • With selected contributions from

Randie Denker '72 • Ellen Bernstein Murray '62

Erica-Lynn Huberty '95 • Susan Butler '53 • Roger L. Kay '75

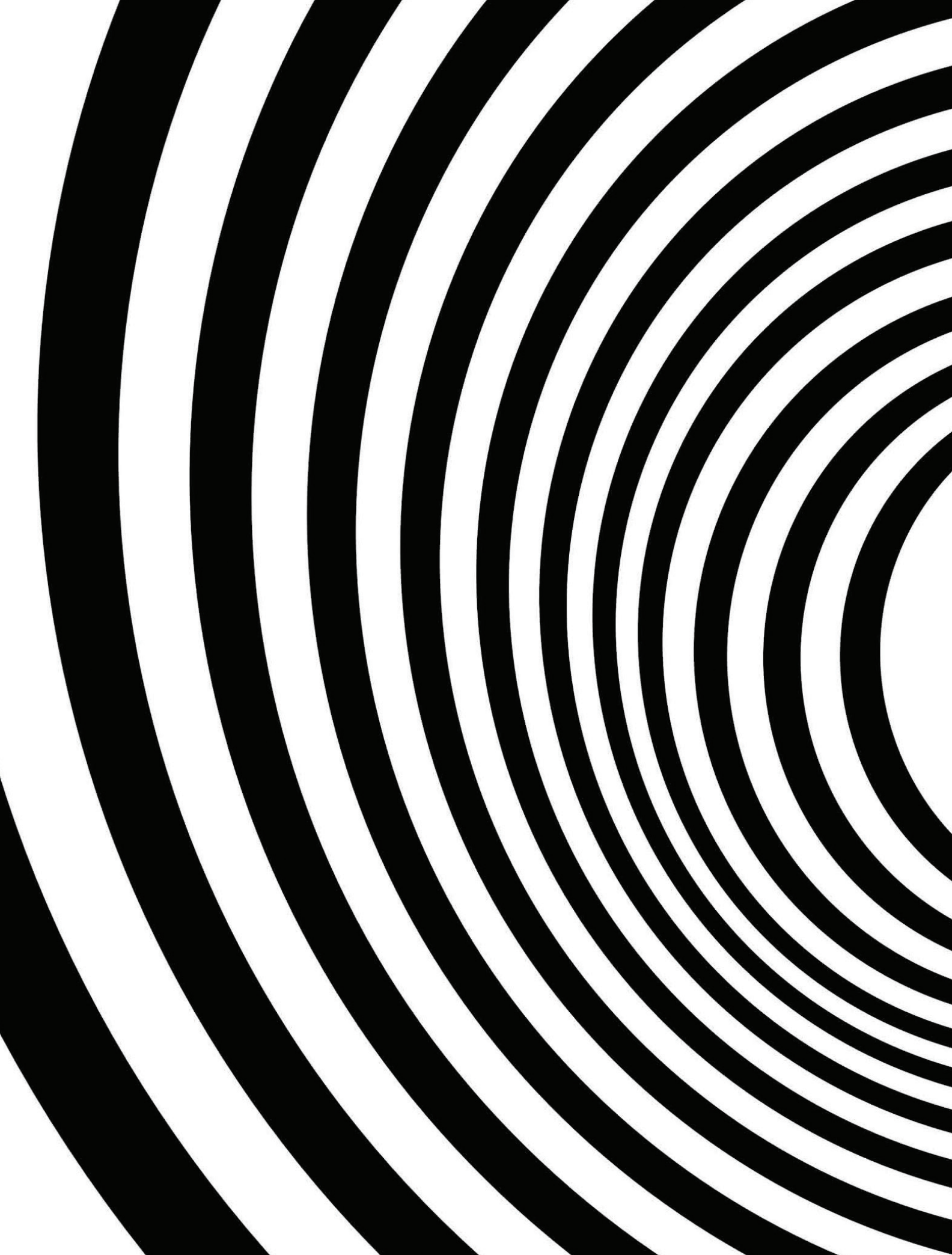
Joann Bromberg '63 • Lynn Donovan McCann '58

Kelsang Chenma (Linda Uram '87) • Janis A. Pryor '71

Tenara Calem '15 • Nancy Harrow '52

Teresa Booth Brown '85 • Hope Clark '87

The views and opinions expressed in the articles that follow are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of Bennington College.





A NEW DOOR

by Michael Pollan '76

An excerpt from the introduction to Michael Pollan's bestselling book, *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*.

IN

the spring of 2010, a front-page story appeared in the *New York Times* headlined “Hallucinogens Have Doctors Tuning In Again.” It reported that researchers had been giving large doses of psilocybin—the active compound in magic mushrooms—to terminal cancer patients as a way to help them deal with their “existential distress” at the approach of death.

These experiments, which were taking place simultaneously at Johns Hopkins, UCLA, and New York University, seemed not just improbable but crazy. Faced with a terminal diagnosis, the very *last* thing I would want to do is take a psychedelic drug—that is, surrender control of my mind and then in that psychologically vulnerable state stare straight into the abyss. But many of the volunteers reported that over the course of a single guided psychedelic “journey” they reconceived how they viewed their cancer and the prospect of dying. Several of them said they had lost their fear of death completely. The reasons offered for this transformation were intriguing but also somewhat elusive. “Individuals transcend their primary identification with their bodies and experience ego-free states,” one of the researchers was quoted as saying. They “return with a new perspective and profound acceptance.”

I filed that story away, until a year or two later, when Judith and I found ourselves at a dinner party at a big house in the Berkeley Hills, seated at a long table with a dozen or so

people, when a woman at the far end of the table began talking about her acid trips. She looked to be about my age and, I learned, was a prominent psychologist. I was engrossed in a different conversation at the time, but as soon as the phonemes *L-S-D* drifted down to my end of the table, I couldn’t help but cup my ear (literally) and try to tune in.

At first, I assumed she was dredging up some well-polished anecdote from her college days. Not the case. It soon became clear that the acid trip in question had taken place only days or weeks before, and in fact was one of her first. The assembled eyebrows rose. She and her husband, a retired software engineer, had found the occasional use of LSD both intellectually stimulating and of value to their work. Specifically, the psychologist felt that LSD gave her insight into how young children perceive the world. Kids’ perceptions are not mediated by expectations and conventions in the been-there, done-that way that adult perception is; as adults, she explained, our minds don’t simply take in the world as it is so much as they make educated guesses about it. Relying on these guesses, which are based on past experience, saves the mind time and energy, as when, say, it’s trying to figure out what that fractal pattern of green dots in its visual field might be. (The leaves on a tree, probably.) LSD appears to disable such conventionalized, shorthand modes of perception and, by doing so, restores a childlike immediacy, and

THE STUDY DEMONSTRATED THAT A HIGH DOSE OF PSILOCYBIN COULD BE USED TO SAFELY AND RELIABLY “OCCASION” A MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE.

sense of wonder, to our experience of reality, as if we were seeing everything for the first time. (*Leaves!*)

I piped up to ask if she had any plans to write about these ideas, which riveted everyone at the table. She laughed and gave me a look that I took to say, *How naive can you be?* LSD is a schedule 1 substance, meaning the government regards it as a drug of abuse with no accepted medical use. Surely it would be foolhardy for someone in her position to suggest, in print, that psychedelics might have anything to contribute to philosophy or psychology—that they might actually be a valuable tool for exploring the mysteries of human consciousness. Serious research into psychedelics had been more or less purged from the university fifty years ago, soon after Timothy Leary’s Harvard

Psilocybin Project crashed and burned in 1963. Not even Berkeley, it seemed, was ready to go there again, at least not yet.

Third data point: The dinner table conversation jogged a vague memory that a few years before somebody had e-mailed me a scientific paper about psilocybin research. Busy with other things at the time, I hadn’t even opened it, but a quick search of the term “psilocybin” instantly fished the paper out of the virtual pile of discarded e-mail on my computer. The paper had been sent to me by one of its co-authors, a man I didn’t know by the name of Bob Jesse; perhaps he had read something I’d written about psychoactive plants and thought I might be interested. The article, which was written by the same team at Hopkins that was

giving psilocybin to cancer patients, had just been published in the journal *Psychopharmacology*. For a peer-reviewed scientific paper, it had a most unusual title: “Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical-Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance.”

Never mind the word “psilocybin”; it was the words “mystical” and “spiritual” and “meaning” that leaped out from the pages of a pharmacology journal. The title hinted at an intriguing frontier of research, one that seemed to straddle two worlds we’ve grown accustomed to think are irreconcilable: science and spirituality.

Now I fell on the Hopkins paper, fascinated. Thirty volunteers who had never before used psychedelics had been given a pill containing

SERIOUS RESEARCH INTO PSYCHEDELICS HAD BEEN MORE OR LESS PURGED FROM THE UNIVERSITY FIFTY YEARS AGO.

either a synthetic version of psilocybin or an “active placebo”—methylphenidate, or Ritalin—to fool them into thinking they had received the psychedelic. They then lay down on a couch wearing eyeshades and listening to music through headphones, attended the whole time by two therapists. (The eyeshades and headphones encourage a more inward-focused journey.) After about thirty minutes, extraordinary things began to happen in the minds of the people who had gotten the psilocybin pill.

The study demonstrated that a high dose of psilocybin could be used to safely and reliably “occasion” a mystical experience—typically described as the dissolution

of one’s ego followed by a sense of merging with nature or the universe. This might not come as news to people who take psychedelic drugs or to the researchers who first studied them back in the 1950s and 1960s. But it wasn’t at all obvious to modern science, or to me, in 2006, when the paper was published.

What was most remarkable about the results reported in the article is that participants ranked their psilocybin experience as one of the most meaningful in their lives, comparable “to the birth of a first child or death of a parent.” Two-thirds of the participants rated the session among the top five “most spiritually significant experiences” of their lives; one-third

ranked it *the* most significant such experience in their lives. Fourteen months later, these ratings had slipped only slightly. The volunteers reported significant improvements in their “personal well-being, life satisfaction and positive behavior change,” changes that were confirmed by their family members and friends.

Though no one knew it at the time, the renaissance of psychedelic research now under way began in earnest with the publication of that paper. It led directly to a series of trials—at Hopkins and several other universities—using psilocybin to treat a variety of indications, including anxiety and depression in cancer patients, addiction to nicotine and alcohol, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, and eating disorders. What is striking about this whole line of clinical research is the premise that it is not the pharmacological effect of the drug itself but the kind of mental experience it occasion—involving the temporary dissolution of one’s ego—that may be the key to changing one’s mind.

AS SOMEONE not at all sure he has ever had a single “spiritually significant” experience, much less enough of them to make a ranking, I found that the 2006 paper piqued my curiosity but also my skepticism. Many of the volunteers described being given access to an alternative reality, a “beyond” where the usual physical laws don’t apply and various manifestations of cosmic consciousness or divinity present themselves as unmistakably real.

All this I found both a little hard to take (couldn’t this be just a drug-induced hallucination?) and yet at the same time intriguing; part of me wanted it to be true, whatever exactly “it” was. This surprised me, because I have never thought of myself as a particularly spiritual,

much less mystical, person. This is partly a function of worldview, I suppose, and partly of neglect: I've never devoted much time to exploring spiritual paths and did not have a religious upbringing. My default perspective is that of the philosophical materialist, who believes that matter is the fundamental substance of the world and the physical laws it obeys should be able to explain everything that happens. I start from the assumption that nature is all that there is and gravitate toward scientific explanations of phenomena. That said, I'm also sensitive to the limitations of the scientific-materialist perspective and believe that nature (including the human mind) still holds deep mysteries toward which science can sometimes seem arrogant and unjustifiably dismissive.

Was it possible that a single psychedelic experience—something that turned on nothing more than the ingestion of a pill or square of blotter paper—could put a big dent in such a worldview? Shift how one thought about mortality? Actually change one's mind in enduring ways?

The idea took hold of me. It was a little like being shown a door in a familiar room—the room of your own mind—that you had somehow never noticed before and being told by people you trusted (scientists!) that a whole other way of thinking—of being!—lay waiting on the other side. All you had to do was turn the knob and enter. Who *wouldn't* be curious? I might not have been looking to change my life, but the idea of learning something new about it, and of shining a fresh light on this old world, began to occupy my thoughts. Maybe there was something missing from my life, something I just hadn't named.

Now, I already knew something about such doors, having written

AFTER ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES, EXTRAORDINARY THINGS BEGAN TO HAPPEN

about psychoactive plants earlier in my career. In *The Botany of Desire*, I explored at some length what I had been surprised to discover is a universal human desire to change consciousness. There is not a culture on earth (well, one) that doesn't make use of certain plants to change the contents of the mind, whether as a matter of healing, habit, or spiritual practice. That such a curious and seemingly maladaptive desire should exist alongside our desires for nourishment and beauty and sex—all of which make much more obvious evolutionary sense—cried out for an explanation. The simplest was that these substances help relieve pain and boredom. Yet the powerful feelings and elaborate taboos and rituals that surround many of these psychoactive species suggest there must be something more to it.

For our species, I learned, plants and fungi with the power to

radically alter consciousness have long and widely been used as tools for healing the mind, for facilitating rites of passage, and for serving as a medium for communicating with supernatural realms, or spirit worlds. These uses were ancient and venerable in a great many cultures, but I ventured one other application: to enrich the collective imagination—the culture—with the novel ideas and visions that a select few people bring back from wherever it is they go. 🍄

Michael Pollan '76 is the author of seven previous books—*Cooked*, *Food Rules*, *In Defense of Food*, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, and *The Botany of Desire*. He teaches writing at Harvard and at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. Several of his books have been adapted for television: a Netflix series based on *Cooked* and both *The Botany of Desire* and *In Defense of Food* premiered on PBS. In 2010 *Time Magazine* named Pollan one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

SEX AT SEVENTY

WHEN I WAS IN MY TEENS, I thought that people in their 60s and 70s couldn't possibly still be having sex. The very thought of geriatric sex gave me a frisson of disbelief. How could such a thing even be possible? Even if the machinery of sex was still somehow able to chug along and climb the mountain ("I think I can, I think I can, I think I can"), surely desire could no longer coexist. How could lust still make a cameo appearance and share the stage with bat-winged underarms, topographical cellulite and Michelin Man love handles? The image was so preposterous and disturbing that I assumed that it was an impossibility: an urban myth like Nessie or albino sewer alligators.

But as I greeted each new decade, I kept waiting for the thrill of lovemaking to fade. I kept expecting that I would wake up one day to discover that it was gone, like the lost city of Atlantis or those cheap sunglasses that I keep misplacing. But it just kept tagging along on my life's adventures, like a loyal dog, wagging its tail and happy to see me.

I look over at my guy and he's thickened a bit in the middle and his hair isn't the lion's mane it once was. Now, I am that woman "d'un certain age" with the crow's feet and graying hair. We have between us so many years of tenderness and deep knowledge of the other. Perhaps we are less acrobatic now but we can still stick the landing. Perhaps we are slower now, but we know what Aesop wrote about the tortoise.

Some years ago, I met a woman who worked in a nursing home. She told me that many of the residents struggled with Alzheimer's and could no longer recognize relatives. Nevertheless, she said, she would often find them entwined together in various Kama Sutra positions and would have to disengage them to give them their medications. I find that hopeful. We all still long for human touch, long after we can no longer taste food, smell flowers, or see the sky. **B**

***Randie Denker '72**, lives in Tallahassee, FL. She is an environmental attorney and activist, sole proprietor of Denker Law Office, co-founder of Waters Without Borders, and currently a Fulbright teaching scholar. She specializes in water issues and is also a certified scuba diver. She speaks eight languages and can still do 50 regular push-ups.*




ALTHOUGH I ARRIVED AT BENNINGTON holding a cello under one arm, the truth is my first love has always been dance. As a child, I dreamed of becoming a ballerina; at Bennington, I dreamed of modern dance. In reality, modern dance at Bennington was, for me, a series of frustrated attempts. But still, Bennington’s “dance quarter” is where I learned stagecraft, structure and style, music, and choreography, and had the chance to perform at the famed 92nd Street Y in New York City.

I called it quits on my dream when in 1961 I sent a letter home to my parents reporting that the dance faculty said I “looked grim” as I danced, for I carried myself with a stiffness that showed from the stage to the depth of the last audience rows. I studied language and literature instead. After college, I became a freelance writer and raised my two children—one of whom also loved to dance and did so beautifully.

At 43, I was single again. Browsing through the “to-do” sections of the local weekly newspaper, I noticed a dance club at the local YMCA. I asked two friends to go with me as I put on high heels and a

red dress. I never looked back. It was there I learned the fox trot, waltz, rhumba, tango, and swing. That first night was an introduction to social dancing, and there would be many dances and nights following that first one. I went dancing every night of the week after that. I danced with a variety of partners, and sometimes I danced alone. Soon I gained enough confidence and entered a street fair swing competition and managed to win a few prizes.

What seemed impossible in college is now a major part of my personal and professional life. While I had never been a good performing dancer in any of its forms, social dance and I were meant for each other. At almost 80 years old, and for more than 20 years now, I have taught dance to people of all ages and abilities at the Mountain View Los Altos Community Center. 

Ellen Bernstein Murray '62 was a magazine journalist, a freelance writer, and editor of corporate communications publications. For more than 25 years she has taught dance through Mountain View Los Altos Adult Education. She continues her ballroom and Latin dancing at a bi-monthly dance club.

WE WERE SEVEN

We were a seven-strong text group who kept in touch daily across continents. **Matt Connors '95**, **Tim Buggs '95**, **Erin O'Donnell '94**, **Sara Licastro '95**, **J Blackwell '95**, myself, and my husband, **Alex Huberty '95**.

After graduation, Alex and I settled

on eastern Long Island, a few miles from the Atlantic, where it is almost as quiet as Vermont. When the group of us lived together under the stifling shadow of Mount Anthony during the summer of 1992—with an enormous group of friends, including **Lina Pomeroy Tans '92**, **Owen Wolf '94**, and **Matt Vohr '95**—I ached for this stretch of the sea. Our Bennington “family” often comes and stays with us, particularly in summer and on Thanksgiving.

Before I went to Bennington, the idea of belonging did not seem possible. There was almost no time, except while swimming in the sea, when I felt that joyful rush of being at home. But it was at Bennington that I formed a lifelong family of friends and a career that tapped into the core of who I am. I learned from the faculty who fostered and encouraged inquiry, creativity, and self-challenge. I learned just as much from students: so many of them are brilliant and deeply inquisitive.

This kind of perpetual life-learning takes a certain amount of energy. As someone who also manages a complex illness, I am often exhausted. Pain drains and detaches me from creativity. It would be enraging if I had the energy to be enraged. This kind of existence means that, when you are feeling the least bit better, you're unpleasant to be around because you're bitter over losing a week of your life. Illness is the enemy of the time that is left. None of my friends knew this better than Matt Vohr.

One day, resting on the sand after one of our many ocean swims, Matt said, “You seem unhappy. It makes me sad.” This was around 1999, when I was doctor-hopping, 98 lbs thin, and hopelessly un-pregnant, among other terrible symptoms. Matt and I were always close. We relied on each other to cheer each other up, needed each other in an infuriatingly familial way, and distracted each other from pain and bad habits, reminding each other that we were still loveable, still adaptable. Which works only so well if one is talking about, in my case, Stage IV Endometriosis and anxiety, and in his case, Type I Diabetes and functional alcoholism.

On January 28, 2017, the seven-strong text group woke me with 80 messages conveying the impossible. Matt was dead. In the photo posted by his sister on Facebook announcing his death in the middle of the night, he is smiling, model-handsome in his chef's apron.

Exactly one week later, Alex gave an already-scheduled performance with J Blackwell, now a Bennington faculty member, at the Museum of Art and Design in New York. Many of our Bennington friends attended to support Alex and J, and to connect in the wake of Matt's death. That night—unbeknown to us—came more of the impossible. Classmate **Marc Spitz '92**, died in his apartment only 30 blocks away from our impromptu, informal wake for Matt. Two weeks later, some of us traveled from Marc's memorial in New York directly to Matt's in Rhode Island.

I have photo albums—old plastic sheets of 35 mm film prints—documenting my Bennington life. Here is Matt on the lawn at Sunfest. Next to him, the incredibly talented artist Lina Pomeroy with her then-infant daughter Georgia; her boyfriend **Dudley Wyman '92**, Georgia's father is on stage with Alex; **Adam Zabarsky '95** and **Dave Brandt '95** performing with their band, The Breadmen. Lina died of cancer seven months after Matt died, leaving Georgia and two more children and a bereft husband.

Turn the page. There is my VAPA studio mate: sweet, gentle **Paul Ahrens '94**. Paul died 10 months before Matt, Marc, and Lina. In another photo is dear, clever Owen Wolf, a witty lit major who went to work in television; and there is **Sonny Orsini '93**, always gregarious like a gentleman from another era, at one of his hilariously elegant Bingham soirées. Owen became a casualty of a senseless random shooting in Los Angeles in 2000. Sonny, after serving as a senator in Guam, succumbed to cancer in 2017. In my albums we are all smiling, laughing, mugging: full of life and filled only with the promise of more life. Nothing else at the time seemed possible.

There are many things that I now believe possible that I didn't back then. Such as how these lives will still overlap and affect each other and live on, even when they are no longer living. They continue, not just in the grainy, shiny photo paper of our time on campus, but in the way we carry them with us. In the way that every time I swim, with every daunting wave I dive under, I say Matt's name like a prayer. And with his name flows, naturally, all the rest. **B**





5



6

1. Anna Rockwell and Owen Wolf in 1993
2. Erica-Lynn and Paul Ahrens, 1992
3. Erica-Lynn and Sonny Orsini over Field Work Term in New York City
4. Matt Vohr, 1994
5. Left to right: Lina Pomeroy Tans, Georgia Pomeroy Wyman, Erica-Lynn Huberty, Sara Licastro, Matt Vohr, Tim Buggs, Matt Connors, Jaclyn Baer, Sunfest 1995
6. Left to right: Matt Connors, Jaclyn Baer, Matt Vohr, Sunfest 1995
7. Left to right: Georgia Pomeroy Wyman, Lina Pomeroy Tans, Erica-Lynn Huberty, Sunfest 1995
8. Paul Ahrens, Halloween 1992



7



8

Erica-Lynn Huberty '95 is a pioneer in the contemporary fiber arts movement. She is the author of the collection Dog Boy and Other Harrowing Tales, which was short-listed for the Eric Hoffer Prize for Short Fiction and the Benjamin Franklin Award for fiction in 2011.

FINDING EARHART

As the biographer of Amelia Earhart, I had concluded that her plane would never be found in my lifetime. She and her navigator, Fred Noonan, went missing on July 2, 1937, as they looked for Howland Island, a tiny dot in the Pacific where they were planning to set down and refuel. The Pacific is so huge planes could not, in 1937, cross it without refueling. Even Earhart's state-of-the-art plane, the *Lockheed Electra* could not overcome this obstacle.

There have been many searches. I went on one organized by Ted Waitt, the producer of the movie *Amelia*, which was based on my book, *East to the Dawn: The Life of Amelia Earhart*. Waitt financed and commissioned the building of two underwater sonar subs to search the 17,000-foot-deep ocean floor that surrounds Howland Island. He chartered the 204-foot *Seward Johnson* to carry the subs out to the west side of the island—searching there on the assumption that due to headwinds, Earhart and Noonan had probably not flown as far as they had thought. In 2009, I boarded the *Seward Johnson* in American Samoa and went on the second search. It took 46 days.

We found nothing.

Robert Ballard, the man who found the *Titanic*, backed by *National Geographic*, joined the ranks of Amelia Earhart searchers last summer. Ballard was motivated by a theory Ric Gillespie suggested. He has led 13 expeditions to the Nikumaroro Island (350 miles from Howland Island) because he was sure the *Lockheed Electra* had crashed landed there and was washed into the sea. Ballard searched the waters surrounding Nikumaroro Island believing Gillespie was on to something. He found nothing.

I am suddenly being asked to speak by various groups, which I take as evidence of mounting interest in Earhart. I believe the plane will be found because of that new interest, coupled with the development of new and technologically superior search submarines that make scanning the ocean floor ever quicker and easier. Eventually Ballard or another group will search the ocean floor to the east of Howland Island, where I think they will find Earhart's plane. When I wrote Earhart's biography in 1997, I did not believe it possible that in my lifetime her plane would be found, but now I do. **B**



Amelia Earhart, June 28, 1933.
Lions' Paws Ch. XI.

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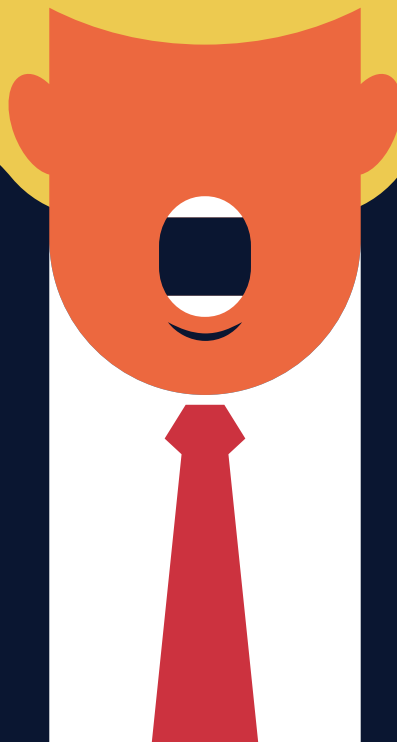
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Amelia Earhart -
June 28, 1933

Susan Butler '53 is the author of East to the Dawn, The Life of Amelia Earhart. The book was written after Butler spent more than a decade researching Earhart's archives that included her letters, journals, and diaries and drew on interviews with the aviator's friends and relatives. Butler's own mother was a pilot in the 1930s, which was why she was inspired to write about Earhart, and document her great contributions to society.

I ONCE
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IMPOSSIBLE
THAT OUR
DEMOCRACY
WOULD FAIL



I ONCE THOUGHT IT IMPOSSIBLE that our democracy would fail.

I now believe failure is not only possible, but happening.

I was in high school in the late 1960s, and there was a moment when we thought Richard Nixon was going to take over the country from the inside. The Vietnam War was raging, and Bob Haldeman and John Erlichman were as scary a couple of guys as anyone in Hitler's cabal. Under Nixon, the National Guard shot students on Kent State campus during protests over the bombing of neutral Cambodia (something which, mercifully, has not happened since).

For the span of a few months, a fascist takeover loomed its ugly head. But we had institutions that held (or appeared to hold) fast. We believed more in the federal government than we do now. That belief and others were even more important than the realities. We had great faith in the media; figures such as Walter Cronkite were revered as gods. Unions were real organizations that seemed to help the common man. Religious institutions were much stronger. Corporations were paternalistic, but patriotic, and kept things moving. I believed in the country.

Yes, we had killed the Kennedys, but I believed we aspired to a better nature.

In 1973, Archibald Cox, the Special Counsel in the Watergate case who subpoenaed Nixon's tapes, was fired for unmasking the aspiring dictator. Cox's dismissal at Nixon's hands contributed to the president's sudden fall from power. His autocratic move signaled to the Republican leadership in the Congress that Nixon had lost his viability. His own party's leaders informed Nixon that he did not have the votes. He would lose his impeachment trial in the Senate. Imminent checkmate persuaded him to step down before the trial.

After that, democracy seemed to be on a better, if wobbly, footing. Gerald Ford served out the remaining time of Nixon's presidency.

Jimmy Carter was elected and seemed to be both strong and moral, an embodiment of American character.

And then Ronald Reagan was elected and declared government to be the problem rather than the solution.

The current era descended in November 2016, when an opportunist, who seemed to have no real intention of winning, was elected president with fewer votes than his opponent. People were surprised by Trump's behavior, but he should have surprised no one. He told us what he was going to do—put right-wing judges on the bench, rescind trade agreements, cancel the Paris climate agreement, restrict immigration, deregulate industries that were regulated for a reason, and cut taxes for the wealthy—but we elected him anyway. And—surprise!—he did all these things.

Each step by Trump is more ominous than the last. And our institutions appear powerless to resist him, given their own corruption.

With Citizens United—the Supreme Court decision that permits corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money on so-called “independent political communications”—the United States of America has become a dollar democracy, where dollars, rather than people, vote. Oh, technically, we can still vote, but our votes hardly mean anything. In many states, because of rules at the state and federal level—often benefiting the two incumbent parties at the expense of the *populus*—certain citizens' votes simply don't count at all. In winner-take-all states such as California and Texas, the minority party votes for president do not count. Most states still maintain winner-take-all rules, awarding all electoral votes statewide to the winner of the popular vote rather than by popular vote.

So, it is not even a discussion of the possible, but of the actual. Our democracy is failing.

My greatest fear is that our democracy may not be able to withstand a perceived external threat; and I feel confident that Trump is looking for an opportunity to mount a coup, or find a reason to evoke martial law. A lot of people are benefiting from his depredations of the future for the present. A lot of people are feasting on the here and now. And these people are motivated to go along with him, even with, and maybe because of, his terrible behavior. But as long as there is a chance of military resistance to his rule, Trump has to continue to play a longer game, moving people around, disabling resisters and rivals. I am confident that if he had the military in his pocket, he'd be all too happy to use them, despite his lack of appropriate experience. He knows just what he'd like to do. He's already told us: be more like Kim Jong-un.

I never thought it possible that our system of government might end, but we're well down that road. As a Baby Boomer, I take some responsibility for the current state of play. This mess is happening on our watch, and I feel bad that we're handing it off to the next generation. **B**

Roger L. Kay '75 founded Endpoint Technologies Associates, Inc., an independent technology market intelligence company. Previously, he was a vice president at IDC and ran his own research and analysis firm. He has published in a variety of forums and is frequently tapped by media outlets for his expertise. Kay lives in Massachusetts with his wife and two children.

what language makes possible

Joann Bromberg '63

I was a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1970s when I became curious about everyday storytelling—the *you know what I mean/that happened to me* kind of personal testimony exchanged amid ordinary conversation. It was when the Women's Movement had garnered considerable public attention as a nationwide effort to revitalize society that I realized it was possible for storytelling to play an integral part in redefining the woman's role in society and in the family.

I came to the subject of how we use personal experience stories from a different direction than most of the contributors to narrative inquiry. My interest was sparked by questions about how culture members construct social reality together, rather than how individuals build a social identity for themselves. The development of social identity and social reality, are co-occurring and intertwined phenomena, of course, as they are complementary aspects of the same relational field. Since I began studying this subject, the informing question has been: how does a contemporary revitalization movement come about?

In 1971, I audited a remarkable Women in American Literature course. Students were encouraged to talk about our personal experience and to compare it to women represented in the classics. For most of us, this was a new way of learning. The following semester, our class morphed into a consciousness-raising group that disbanded at the end of the school year. Two years later, I joined another group composed of eight neighborhood women. Most of us were working, three were in graduate school and three were young mothers, like myself. We were just learning about feminism and unsure of how the term applied to us.

By 1973, thousands of privately held consciousness-raising groups like mine—small, self-selected, peer-oriented groups—were springing up across the county. Designed to explore gender-based questions, these groups formed a vital underbelly of the Women's Movement. Part of the power of these groups was the sense of connection we felt when sharing our *this happened to me* stories. Amid consciousness-raising, the way we talked about ourselves, sharing our stories, empowered us. It changed what we believed about ourselves and the world. Being a powerful woman did not mean having *power over others*; it meant *power within: having a strong sense of self*. Conversation generated in these small women's groups played a huge role in ensuring the larger movement success.

Conversation, especially sharing or not sharing personal stories, plays a crucial role in revitalizing communities. Stories withheld, responses not given, silences, and moves to change topic are tools enabling us to sculpt social identity. These are the basic tools with which we share meaning for experience—how we compare and contrast, agree or disagree, approve or disapprove of what we know to be our experience in everyday life. The exchange of stories is the medium, telling or not telling stories our tool, through which we know what is real and construction is carried out.

Today's #MeToo movement illustrates how, over time, exchanging stories can bring about cultural shift. A half-century ago, I could not have imagined movie stars revealing sexual abuse stories to the general public. Those stories were "dirty linen," to be revealed in a therapist's office. Nor could I imagine the larger society viewing this type of public testimony as fairly unremarkable, widely credited, the "new normal." We now see century-old shaming rituals being uprooted and transformed. Learning to talk about the power dynamics inherent in social transactions provided a foundation for what is now emerging. Despite the marked difference in content, the generalizing power is the same. Through an exchange of stories we reach shared agreement about how our social world works. **B**

After receiving her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in 1982, Joann Bromberg '63 moved to Beaux Arts Village, WA, to sell computers for Digital Equipment Corporation. She has volunteered as neighborhood mediator for the City of Bellevue, directed the "Talking About Beaux Arts" book project, and managed the grant funded by King County/Beaux Arts Shoreline Restoration Project to benefit salmon.

Lynn Donovan McCann '58

When I returned to teaching 10 years ago, well past retirement age, I never dreamed I would have to explain to college students the difference between a subject and a verb. The appalling state of language education to prepare young people for undergraduate work—much less wholesome participation in society—moved me to present and publish at several professional conferences.

I'm a Master of Social Work, a published author, and an editor. I currently work therapeutically with a successful novelist whose traumatic brain injury (TBI) has compromised short-term memory and the ability to compose her thoughts on paper. I teach writing at a small, urban community college where I've become keenly aware of problems with listening, speaking, and writing that seriously undermine the progress of my students. These two roles intersect in unexpected ways and have moved me to investigate the brain/language connection.

At a cutting-edge rehab facility, my brain-injured client, Amy, has learned to accept the shattered identity that comes with TBI, in order to reconstruct a new self. In concert with her rehab program, my job is to help her stitch together, on the page, a personal narrative of her past and present while restoring the creative relationship she has enjoyed with language all her life. With Amy, I may be re-building skills from the ruins, but with my students, I feel like I'm building from scratch.

I am alarmed by the way language is being taught—or not—to a large segment of our youthful population, those who most desperately need a voice. I'm stunned that, thrust into an academic path for their economic survival, many students today have no appreciation for the marvelous way we create meaning with words, much less a basic understanding of the mechanics that make it possible. My students find it seriously challenging, even threatening, to listen, to set aside their inner voices (not to mention their cell phones), to objectify, and to entertain new ideas and different realities. Their language skills simply do not support it.

Even students who say they love to write cling to a personal, first-person approach. Once they've expressed themselves, they're done. Revision only confronts them with humiliating errors. When it's "all about me," the world is very small. I find this disturbing in an era when social progress so critically depends on world citizenship. Unsurprisingly, there are serious issues with reading for comprehension. Any text, from literature to instructions for their own work, is skimmed without engaging the evaluative processes. This weakness carries over into writing and revising. Students do not attend critically as they write and simply do not grasp any need for editing and review. The word *grasp* has nothing to do with intelligence; it implies muscle and the desire to embrace and to own your work.

Language is the ability to transform consciousness, thought, into words—abstractions. Language is the way words are recognized, visually or aurally, and the way words are organized, logically, to create meaning—syntax. If language is to be shared, there must be agreement about how words relate to one another syntactically. And indeed, to develop at all, language must be shared. This points to the inherently social characteristic of language. Language connects us. Language makes us human.

My acquaintance's 2½-year-old daughter stood beside me as I spread peanut butter on bread. "I do it," she chirped.

This became my grammar lesson for a decade.

"Subject, verb, complete thought: it is a more important developmental milestone than your child's first step! You do it. We all do it. It is our evolutionary legacy—and it is not rocket science."

Impossible—that I would ever hear myself say this in a classroom—struggling to engage young mothers with day jobs, imploring them to read to their children because it will benefit them both. I firmly believe it is never too late to improve the neural structures that support this. My work with Amy substantiates it.

Higher levels of consciousness, unique to humans, require neural structures that permit us not just to feel, but to know that we are

We cannot be fully conscious, fully aware, fully ourselves without words—without language!

feeling, and what the feeling is. We observe our own experience, both internal and environmental, while we are experiencing it. Humans are aware of being aware. For my client Amy, damage to the area of the brain responsible for this rendered her unaware that she was unaware—of her injury. Her path to recovery depended on re-wiring that awareness to reconstruct her sense of self. She did it!

In *The Brain and the Inner World*, Solms and Turnbull observe: "Mainly language-based mechanisms are required to turn experience into awareness of experience," adding that sensory and emotional experience must be "recoded" into words in order for awareness to become conscious (Solms & Turnbull, 2002, p. 85). Now, I begin to understand why the work I do with Amy is therapeutic and why the work I do with my students is so urgent.

We cannot be fully conscious, fully aware, fully ourselves without words—without language! Thus, to the extent that language is limited, so is the self. Anything that messes with language messes with us. Oh, boy! Do I care about this! I can envision the possibility of marching to the nation's capital in a pink hat to protest: *Language is who we are! Language matters!*

Presenting at a conference recently, I heard echoes of my concern in the keynote address. My colleagues are making connections between deficits in language and critical thinking we see in our students and the sorry state of our antagonized and polarized nation. Poor concentration affects listening, which in turn supports isolation and egocentrism. Not listening leads people to talk over one another and to the adversarial tone that increasingly poisons our private and public conversation. When emotions run high, grammar—*along with the logical organization of thought*—goes down the tube. And, that's not the end of it. Bad logic puts the brain off balance, increasing the sense of both internal and external threat, and raising the emotional stakes. We hear an awful lot of empty noise—with no words to make sense of the fearful, existential stew.

We all know rich, beautiful, truthful language when we see or hear it. I suspect that the deterioration of language I've alluded to—in daily use, in education, and in politics—is apparent to most of us. How careless syntax breeds confusion and conceals falsehood. How fancy jargon and dense prose obscures vital information and excludes people—deliberately. How social media and texting erodes communication and separates people while promising the opposite. I am trying to say that the nuts and bolts of language matter, not just in the classroom or in a rehab situation such as Amy's. I'm suggesting that we are witnessing a systemic assault on language that should prompt us all to consider its protection as urgently as we do the issue of global warming. And, while I began to develop my own writing "chops" in college, I certainly never thought it possible that I would one day lose sleep over that. **B**

Lynn McCann '58 recently retired from teaching but continues to work with her client, Amy. This year she hopes to complete and publish a book of short stories and personal reflections entitled Latebloom.

AT PEACE WITH DEATH

In my first term at Bennington, my mother died. I didn't know it then but that was the beginning of my spiritual journey. After she died, I tried to understand what happens to us and started to research. I wanted to know where my mother went. I consulted friends who were into the occult, tarot cards, and astrology. I started and then stopped reading *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It was over my head. The ultimate question, I continued to ask.

During my senior year at Bennington, I had a dream of a symbol I had never encountered before spinning above my head. It was a powerful symbol and one that I drew as soon as I woke up. I incorporated it into my artwork. I asked everyone about it. These were the days before Google, so that is what you did. And back then no one knew what it was, including me.

A decade after I graduated, I found myself in a Buddhist temple. There it was! The symbol I dreamt more than 10 years earlier was the Dharma Wheel. It is meant to remind us that the Buddha's teachings are always moving, traveling around the world, never belonging to one country or people but moving according to karma. It felt like I had come home. I dove into everything dharma, studying and meditating, going to courses, traveling around the world for teachings. It was magical.

After all of these years, searching and questioning, I have come to peace with death. Most importantly I learned about death, what happens when we die and how to benefit those that are dying. Buddha taught that death is a permanent separation of mind and body. Every night when we sleep we have a temporary separation, our mind goes to the dream world while our body just lies on the bed. In the morning we reconnect, but when we die our mind goes to our next life and our body of this life is buried or cremated.

In our modern society we are often afraid to look at death or contemplate it, but death is so important to prepare for and to learn from. People spend so much energy on their bodies, making them healthier, thinner, stronger, but not as much energy on their minds. If you think about it, life is nothing but thoughts, and our thoughts come from the mind. Our thoughts are an internal path leading us somewhere. To the next thought, the next idea, the next life. Everything is created with thought—emotions, designs, theories. Where thoughts lead us is the most important thing, it's our inner path leading to freedom or suffering. I never thought it would be possible to consider my mother's death a gift, but it was.

Last June my father died. It was an amazing experience to go through it with him. I didn't stand there helpless at the side of the bed like I did with my mother. I truly feel I helped him to transition to his next life. It gave him peace and it brought me healing. **B**

Kelsang Chenma (Linda Uram '87) has been a Buddhist nun in the New Kadampa Tradition for the last 15 years. She lives at the Kadampa World Peace Temple in Glen Spey, NY.

What did you once believe to be impossible that you now think is possible?

THIS IS THE WRONG QUESTION

This is the wrong question for African American Bennington alumni. I specify African American because our historical relationship to the United States is different from the Afro-Caribbean and African experience. African Americans are an original and painful product of white dominance. A better question for African Americans at Bennington is: What role has the College played in helping African Americans hold on to a fragile hope and elusive sense of possibility when we face a uniquely vicious form of oppression in the United States?

What shocks so many African American graduates of my era is how little progress has been made. Some of us think we've fallen behind, given what's going on in this country right now. But if there's any institution of higher learning that can confront the complexity of racism with meaning and compassion, it's Bennington.

I have accommodated white dominance and ignorance for most of my life. It was that accommodation that drove me to succeed in school; that forced me to be the only child of any color in my classes throughout elementary school; that allowed me to understand the complexity of love in a country terrified of difference; that allowed me to be privy to the unguarded opinions and thoughts of white people about people of color. It was accommodation that generated perverse understanding when I was told I couldn't spend the break before spring semester with several white friends because black people weren't allowed at her parents' second home. Many years later at an alumni round-table discussion during reunion other African American alumni shared their stories as well. One is still burned in my memory. An African American student had housemates who kept two pet rats they named the N word and Coon. When she confronted her housemates and told them it was offensive, she was told she was "too sensitive."

After leaving Bennington, the impossible begins to form on the horizon of our lives, and it gets bigger with each passing year, fueled by the double standard racism advances, and it doesn't matter if you're rich or poor. It's about the color of your skin. There are only two races in the United States, white and not white. Those of us who are not white, leave Bennington without many of the advantages—both concrete and abstract—that so many of our white friends take for granted.

If we have acquired any kind of success worthy of a Bennington education, we know the art of accommodating white expectations. Students of color leave Bennington and realize (over and over) that nothing is equal for us. How the world embraces us is unequal. How we respond is unequal. Black people are active targets of either hate filled individuals or overzealous police throughout the country. We still carry what WEB DuBois refers to as "a double consciousness." The pain of witnessing the generations behind us come to grips with all this is unbearable.

We left Bennington with an extraordinary education and thought anything was possible. The question remains: what role has Bennington played in how African American graduates hold on to the fragile, elusive reality of possibility when we face a uniquely vicious form of oppression? **B**

Janis A. Pryor '71 spent more than 30 years in politics and media. Her work has garnered several awards including the Iris Award for talk show programming, the International Television and Film Award for cultural programming, and an Emmy Nomination for editorial broadcast journalism. She has written two books, the latest, Dinner with Trixie, the South settles an old score with the North (Black Pawn Press).

SUGGESTIONS & REFLECTIONS

*At the Fall 2013 All Class Reunion on campus, three alumni—**Janis Pryor '71, Esther Moses Hatch '72** (the late founder of the Independent School Diversity Network), and **Roberta Hunter '74**—led a round-table discussion with other alumni and staff about their experiences at Bennington as people of color. The conversation and dialogue was important to help the College as it works to build community and to foster inclusion on campus. Since that time, Bennington has created numerous programs, initiatives, and trainings to develop a more inclusive and diverse community—including a workshop directly led by Esther Moses Hatch in 2015 shortly before her death.*

*This is ongoing and essential work. We invite your reflections, recommendations, and participation. Please be in touch with **Delia Saenz, Vice President for Institutional Inclusion, Equity, and Leadership Development** with your own recommendations. Janis Pryor shared ideas of speakers and programs below to foster conversations about privilege, race, and community.*

Dain and Constance Perry—Give a showing of the PBS documentary *Traces of the Trade* that profiles one of America's largest slave-trading families, the DeWolfs of Rhode Island. Dain Perry is a direct descendant of the DeWolfs. With his wife, Constance, he has sought to confront their own role in this chapter of American history and its legacy by retracing the slave-trading route that their ancestors took from Africa to the United States. Invite the Perrys for a showing followed by a dialogue.

Peggy McIntosh, professor emeritus at Wellesley College—McIntosh originated the concept of white privilege and has developed anti-racism training programs for educators. She lectures on the advantages she has because her skin is white.

Crossroads Anti-Racism Training—Based in Illinois, this group develops workshops on systemic and institutional racism. Their trainings highlight in part historical facts that illustrate the evolution and perpetuation of racism, why and how racism is so entrenched in American society, how it impacts all of us consciously and unconsciously so we can create ways to dismantle systemic racism along with the language to talk about this.

Other speaker suggestions—Ta Nehisi Coates, Imani Perry, Michael Eric Dyson, Nikki Giovanni, Kiese Laymon, Michelle Alexander, Melissa Harris Perry, Tim Wise, Robin D'Angelo, Eugene Robinson, and Jim Wallis. I suggest a course be designed that is based on the writings and work of these recommendations, as well as other authors, who address the complexity of racism.

TENARA CALEM '15

In the last four years since graduating from Bennington, I have learned that it is not impossible to use art as a way of solving political problems. From Theater of the Oppressed to the Center for Performance and Civic Practice, where artist/activists creatively solve community crises using theatrical and performative methodologies, theatre and performance are helping to develop venues and processes to solve pressing problems. This is evident not only in the type of performances and spaces, but also in the trends in theatre. Today, there is a growing trend in the nonprofit theater world to hire community engagement directors whose jobs are to represent the community to the institution, and leverage the theater's resources (teaching artists, actors, space, audiences) to meet critical and local community needs.

This past summer, I worked on a production of *King Lear* with Shakespeare in Clark Park, in Philadelphia to create original text with United States veterans who played Lear's forgotten knights—building relevance between Shakespeare in Clark Park and a community that was not otherwise connected. In my work at FringeArts, I support large-scale public practice pieces in which the audience-members are the performers. This past September, we presented a massive ambulatory dance called *Úmbal: Nomadic Choreography for Inhabitants*, directed by Mariana Arteaga. In this piece, 50 dancers—made of residents with varying experiences in the performing arts—move a nomadic choreography through the streets of Whitman in South Philadelphia, picking up audience members as they go. My work on *Úmbal* brought me to build relationships with the community in civic association meetings, farmers' markets, local businesses, radio stations, libraries, and beyond. At first this was in an effort to recruit dancers and participants for the actual show, but the neighborhood was less interested in donating five hours a week to our rehearsals as they were in seeing artists contribute to the neighborhood. Whitman is one of the most densely populated and diverse neighborhoods in Philadelphia and is currently battling against gentrifying developers excited by the neighborhood's improvements. Instead of trying to convince neighbors to join the piece, our artistic team listened to the neighborhood's needs. Through this dance piece, we cleaned up parks, played bingo with elders, picked up trash with neighborhood children, and went door-to-door to share this dance piece and its process.

Although I did not think it possible while at Bennington, I know now that art does not have to limit itself to simply *enriching* the lives of its audiences, but it can aim to *improve* the direct day-to-day experience of our local communities. It is why I believe that the job of an activist and the job of an artist are actually quite similar: in both roles you have to be good at getting people excited about a new possibility, getting folks out of their houses to attend an event or an experience, engaging deeply with people's needs, and meeting them where they're at. The questions we ask are not: were the actors skilled in their roles and did they convey the story effectively? Instead, we ask: *did we respond to a need? Were we agile to feedback? When there was conflict, did we use it as an opportunity to create deeper understanding?* Not all public practice pieces will be able to say yes to all of those questions. But public practice's goal is to shift the process of artistic presentations out of "what will we say about the world around us?" to "what we will *do* about the world around us?"

Tenara Calem '15 is a playwright, performer, and administrator based in Philadelphia, PA. She has worked in several capacities with companies including Woolly Mammoth Theater Company, Trinity Repertory Company, Jewish Plays Project, Horizon Theater Company, Pig Iron Theater Company, Strange Attractor, Lightning Rod Special, InterAct Theater Company, Bread & Puppet Theater, PlayPenn, and Shakespeare in Clark Park. She is a second-year playwright with the emerging playwrighting lab The Foundry and works at FringeArts as the audience engagement coordinator stewarding Consensus Organizing and community engagement.

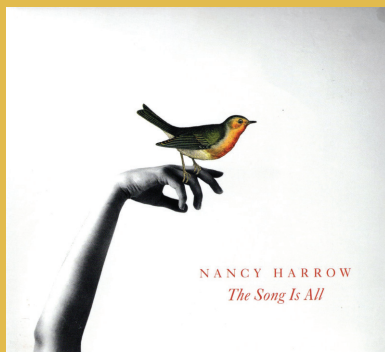


PHOTO BY JOHANNA AUSTIN



what art makes possible

In this collection **Tenara Calem '15**, **Nancy Harrow '52**, **Teresa Booth Brown '85**, and **Hope Clark '87** contribute the ways in which art has helped to expand their notions of what is possible.



NANCY HARROW '52

I knew I could sing, so I was not that surprised that I recorded albums of songs. But I never thought it was possible for me to compose songs, and now I have composed music and lyrics for six musicals, four of which have been produced off-Broadway and a fifth to open for a run at the Sheen Center in NYC in March 2020. Some of the others have also had runs at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, at Brooklyn Academy of Music in NYC, in Japan in translation, and at the History Theatre in St. Paul, MN. The new musical entitled *About Love* is a play based on a Turgenev short story. My submission is a selection of some of the songs I have written, newly recorded with young jazz musicians in 2016 and entitled *The Song Is All*.

HOPE CLARK '87

When I danced with Elizabeth Streb (contemporary dance choreographer and performer), we spent our days trying to do the impossible. That was our job. Imagine a move, try it, learn, try it again, and learn something new. Over and over again, until we developed the skills to master an achievement. Eventually, we were able to do what once appeared impossible, but even then, when we had achieved something repeatedly, we were working so deeply at the edge of our potential, we were never quite sure if we could really do it. I worked this way for the better part of the 1990s.

Before producers told Elizabeth her dances should be as long as a hit song, her pieces would span 20 minutes. Sometimes, we would be in the theater on opening night, and we still hadn't been able to get through the entire dance without stopping. We would have measured stops until we could get through the entire piece. These dances were individual feats as well as collective masterpieces.

To prepare for the impossible, I wouldn't eat for four hours before a show. I practiced yoga, touched the hardest parts of the pieces, and meditated. Despite that preparation, I still wasn't sure if I was going to be able to get through the entire performance. Then, I would get on stage in front of an audience, and my body would show up like a racehorse. I had no idea it had that kind of power. I was astonished. What seemed impossible became possible.

Hope Clark '87 lives on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. She founded Wheelbarrow Productions, Inc. (WHEE) partnering with communities to create social change and economic opportunities through the arts. WHEE has produced creative community projects in Ethiopia, Morocco, Palestine, and in Hope's hometown of Chestertown, MD.

TERESA BOOTH BROWN '85

I used to think a successful artist was one of those stars whose names we all know and whose work could be seen in galleries and museums in New York. After Bennington, I worked as a teacher by day and spent my evenings painting. But the distance between my work and being a well-known artist seemed like a canyon too difficult to traverse. The idea that I could attain that kind of success, or that there were other ways of having a successful career as an artist, seemed impossible.

Now I teach artists, by talking with them about their work, helping them to find their way. This aspect of my work is something I first experienced with my own teachers at Bennington. I have come to understand that the spectrum of what constitutes an artistic practice is very broad. What previously seemed impossible to me now seems infinitely expansive. There are as many ways of being successful as an artist as there are artists themselves.

Teresa Booth Brown '85 is the artist programs coordinator for the Aspen Art Museum. She teaches at the Pitkin County Jail, CO and La Napoule Art Foundation in the south of France. She is the 2019-20 recipient of the Marion International Fellowship Award for visual and performing artists.



PHOTO BY LOIS GREENFIELD

ALL-CLASS REUNION

RECAP

Approximately 350 alumni, their families and guests returned to Bennington for the All-Class Reunion and Fall Weekend, September 27–29. Attendees at every turn expressed how happy they were to be back on campus for such a beautiful Vermont weekend to meet up with old friends and connect with alumni and students across the generations. Over 50 alumni participated in sessions, performances, the 5X10 Art Exhibition and Film and Creativity Film Festival to share their work with the community. A highlight of the weekend for many was seeing the renovation of Commons—reminiscing about their time as student spent in the building and in awe of the stunning transformation.

Two alumni were recognized over the weekend for their advocacy through their work and on behalf of Bennington. The Elizabeth Coleman Visionary Leadership Award was given to educator, composer, and instrument-builder **John Bertles '81**. This annual award recognizes a member of the College community who has successfully demonstrated the willingness to step forward and take risks in order to solve problems and achieve results in the areas of education, government, the arts and sciences, or industry. The Hudas Liff '47 Outstanding Volunteer Award was given to **Sekka Scher '90**. Established in 1985, the Award recognizes outstanding volunteer service within the alumni body. Scher is Chair of Fundraising for the Spencer Cox '90 Field Work Term Fellowship for Student Activists. Scher urged the community to “dedicate all of our creativity and resources and never stop earning the trust of the next generation.”



Image taken by Ellery Schiller '21

A special thanks goes to the Reunion Committees for their involvement in programming much of the weekend's activities and festivities and for rallying their classmates and friends to return to campus.

SEE PHOTOS FROM THE WEEKEND AT:
www.Flickr.com/BenningtonCollege/Albums.

*Until next time at the End of the World,
we look forward to seeing you in your
region in the coming months!*



Image taken by Keegan Ead

art notes

ELEVATING FIBER ART

In August, faculty member **J Blackwell '95** discussed their *Neveruses* artworks with *Phaidon*. Blackwell's work elevates the cultural status of materials that might otherwise be considered garbage. The artist's work is included in a new publication (featured on page 9), *Vitamin T*—a first-of-its-kind global survey of more than 100 artists, chosen by art-world professionals for their work with threads, stitching, and textiles. Blackwell recently had their work exhibited in a solo shows at Kate MacGarry in London and will have another solo show at the Bennington Museum in May 2020.



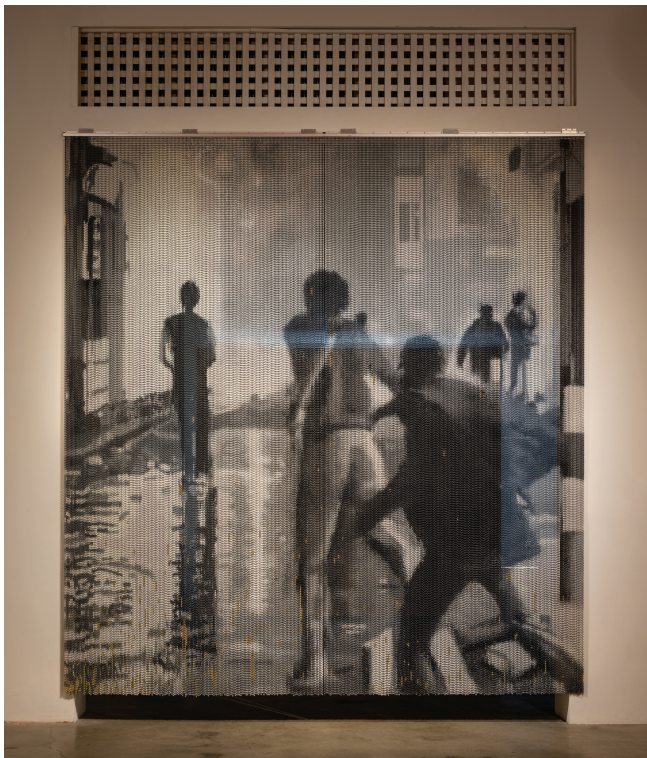
“Within the Modernist paradigm textiles have been disparaged as pedestrian, feminine, ephemeral, queer, exotic, decorative, and/or superficial. Modernism’s troubled relationship to textiles is very interesting to me as a person who has faced similar dilemmas. I think textiles are compelling to me because I see parallels between their social history and my own daily life.”

— J Blackwell '95 speaking with *Phaidon*





Fractured Memories: The Art of Philemona Williamson was exhibited at Hartwick College's Foreman Gallery this winter. **Philemona Williamson '73** is well known for her large paintings and soft sculpture figures that "depict individuals of varying ethnicities inhabiting timeless, invented, dream-like environments." Williamson discussed her work with the College. "I probe the psychological landscape of adolescence, blurring the lines between race, gender, and class." Williamson's art is represented by the June Kelly Gallery in New York City. Williamson has been guest lecturer/adjunct faculty at schools of art and design including Bard, Parsons, Rhode Island School of Design, Pratt University, and Cooper Union, among others. Williamson and fellow alumna **Betsey Ayer '72** reconnected at Hartwick this past fall, where Ayer is a professor of art history.



Cosmo Whyte '05 was featured in *Of Origins and Belonging: Drawn from Atlanta*, an exhibition that included work by six Georgia artists at the High Museum of Art. *Origins* grew out of the national debate about immigration reform and looked at issues related to place, belonging, and heritage. Whyte returned to campus in September 2019 as a featured Visual Arts Lecture Series speaker.



Faculty member **Jen Liu** was included in the 2019 Singapore Biennale, *Every Step In the Right Direction*. Liu exhibited *Pink Slime Caesar Shift: Gold Edition*—a suite of live performances, video, set design, installation, and paintings that reflect on the value and nature of gold. They investigate gold-particle genetic engineering, gold as a principle of wealth, labour and trade, and how one's body and fate can be altered by ingesting gold. Part of an ongoing series, this component explores biolistics, a method of shooting gold microparticles into cell walls to introduce a string of synthetic DNA into a cell organism. Installed at the Asian Civilisations Museum, the presentation extends the artist's interest to activate a conversation with collections, archival artifacts, and notions of display. Liu's work has been widely exhibited this year. She had pieces included in *Migration Narratives* at the Asia Culture Center in Gwangju, Korea; the 2019 Lishui International Photography Festival in Lishui City, Zhejiang Province, China; the San Diego Asian Film Festival; Red Bull Arts Detroit's traveling exhibition, *Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time: Against Capitalism's Temporal Bullying*; The Art Gallery at Pace University; and *Feast & Famine* at Main Gallery, Express Newark, among others.

Liu joined the faculty in 2019. She works with video, choreographic performance, biomaterial, and painting to explore topics of national identity, gendered economies, neoliberal industrial labour, and the re-motivating of archival artifacts. She has presented work at the Whitney Museum of American Art, MoMA, and the New Museum (New York), Royal Academy and ICA (London), as well as the Shanghai Biennale (2014), among others. She is also a recipient of the Creative Capital Award (2019) and Guggenheim Fellowship in Film/Video (2017).



Roshan Houshmand '82 had *Under the Bodhi Tree; Rituals* included in the exhibitions *Homenage a Julio Uruguay Alpuj por sus Discipulos* at the Museum of Art History in Montevideo, Uruguay, in November and at Museo Mazzoni in Maldonado, Uruguay, in October. Also in October, her works *Under the Bodhi Tree; Caravanserai Red and Gold* and *Under the Bodhi Tree; Caravanserai Remnants* were exhibited at the Giorgio Vasari International Award Exhibition at the Chancellery Palace in Rome. Houshmand was a recipient of the International Diego Velazquez Award, presented at the third Biennale of Barcelona at the European Museum of Modern Art, where her work was also featured.

Released in October 2019 by Princeton University Press, *Powerhouse: The Life and Work of Architect Judith Chafee* surveys architect **Judith Chafee's '54** work and her impact on the field of architecture. Christopher Domin and Kathryn McGuire author the book.

In a summer exhibition, Bennington Museum featured lyrical abstractions by well-known abstract expressionist and color field painter, **Emily Mason Kahn '54**.

Larry Becker Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, PA presented the show *Ruth Ann Fredenthal: Paintings* this summer. The exhibition included several paintings of earlier work by **Ruth Ann Fredenthal '60**.

Diverted Destruction: The Technology Edition Artbots by **Liz Mamorsky '60** was featured at The Loft at Liz's this past summer.

Ellen McCulloch Lovell '69 has been appointed interim executive director of the Vermont Studio Center. She will lead the international residency program for artists and writers while working with the Board of Trustees in its search for a permanent executive director.

The Georgetowner spoke with **Maxwell Mackenzie '76**

and **Rebecca Cross '78** about relocating their gallery, Cross MacKenzie Gallery, to Hillsboro, VA.

Annie Coggan '85 and artist Janis Stemmermann presented giant woodblock print daisies, single motif upholstery furniture, textile floors, drapery walls, and the world's largest smoked ceiling at Russell Janis—a print, art, design space in Brooklyn, NY featuring unique pieces and limited editions.

New paintings by **Erin Parish '88** were featured in *Full Spectrum*, an exhibition shown at Andra Norris Gallery in the spring. In the summer, Erin spoke with *VoyageMIA* about her journey as an artist.

A new series of drawings by **Jimmy Angelina '91** were included in the first KMAC Triennial in Louisville, KY this past fall. It was co-presented by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Angelina has also done illustrations for the forthcoming documentary, *Rolling Stone: Life and Death of Brian Jones*, from director Danny Garcia.

Jenik Munafo Khelalfa '96 had worked on the exhibition at the Martha's Vineyard Playhouse.

For her work at Moore College of Art and Design Galleries,

Carleen Zimbalatti '98 was given the Best in Show award.

Technical instructor **John Umphlett's MFA '99** latest work, *Elements of Degradation*, was showcased at University of Maine at Farmington's Emery Community Arts Center this past winter.

The Come Down: Portraits & Sobering Truths presented their third annual group pop-up show developed by **Julia Sub '15** and **Michelle Le Nguyen '15**. The show featured 38 up-and-coming artists living in New York City.

Three's Company, 2018, a group show at Dan Graham 2.0 in Los Angeles, CA, included work by **Max Ostrow '17**. In May, Ostrow's work was also included in the show, *Conditions of Exchange* at 80 Nassau Gallery.

Mira Darham '19 exhibited two of her etchings, *Dust Bite* and *Night Herd*, at Yellowstone Art Museum last winter.

(Im)Possibilities of Landscape, a senior curatorial work presented by **Sophia Gasparro '19**, invited visitors to the Robert Frost Stone House Museum to reimagine Frost and his surrounding environment. The exhibition was shown at the Museum this past summer.

The *Vineyard Gazette* highlighted the work of "Bikini Intern"

Grace Kenney '22, who runs her own clothing line with **Ella Simon '22** making hats cut out of repurposed plastic bags and fabric scraps.

Reshavan Naicker '22 spoke to *Berea Mail* about his internship for Umcebo Design, which will create a permanent art exhibition of recycled artwork at University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Faculty member **Jon Isherwood's** sculptures *The Gifting Angel* and *Omaggio to Giverny* were included in an exhibition in the medieval Italian town of Castiglione di Garfagnana.

Faculty member **Aysha Peltz** was a demonstrating artist at NCECA's Claytopia conference. The conference was led by **Josh Green '81**. Peltz was assisted by **Molly Fleiner-Etheridge '19**.

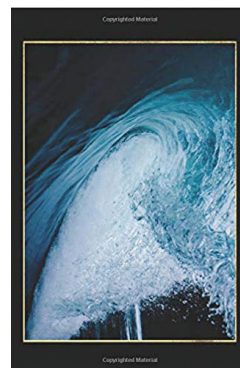
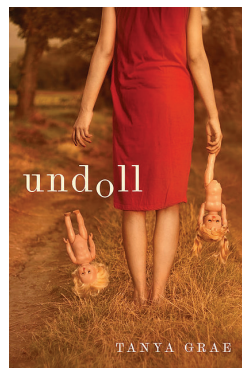
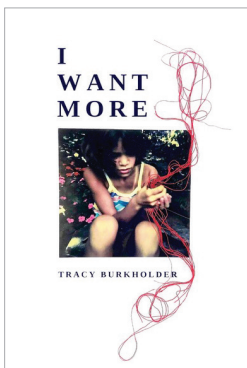
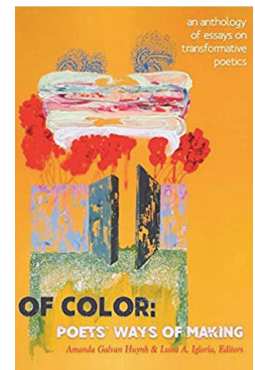
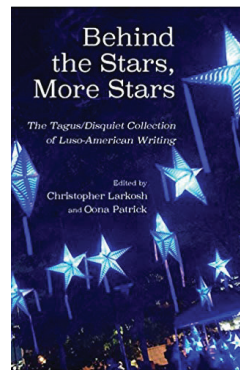
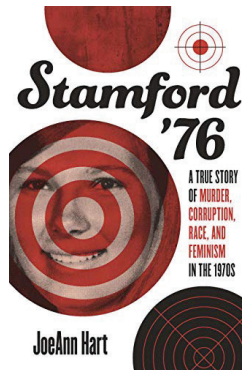
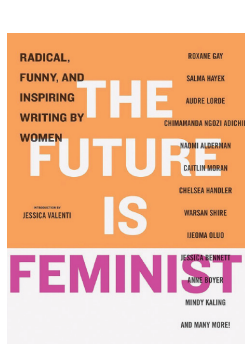
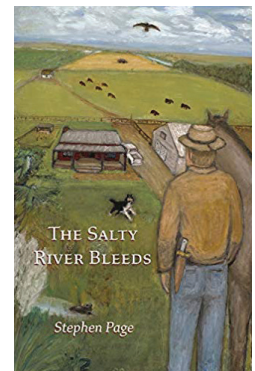
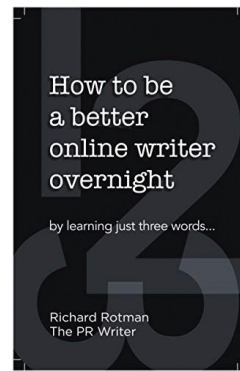
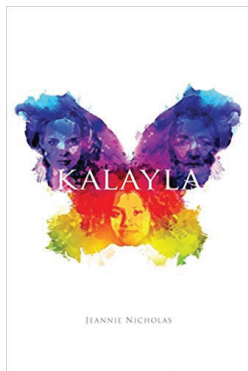
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ART NOTE**

book notes

NOW AVAILABLE.



Kalayla (Nurturing Light; June 2019) by **Jeannie Nichols '63** ● *Inheritance* (Other Press; September 2019) by **Evelyn Thal Toynton '70** ● *How to be a Better Online Writer Overnight* (Better Writer Publishing; May 2019) by **Richard Rotman '73** ● *The Salty River Bleeds* (Finishing Line Press; September 2019) by **Stephen Page MFA '08** ● *Stray Harbor* (Finishing Line Press; August 2019) by First-Year and International Student Advisor **Rage Hezekiah** ● *The Future Is Feminist* (Chronicle Books; February 2019) contributed writing by **Claire Vaye Watkins**, Writing Seminars faculty member ● *Stamford '76 A True Story of Murder, Corruption, Race, and Feminism in the 1970s* (University of Iowa Press; April 2019) by **JoeAnne Hart MFA '00** ● *Behind the Stars, More Stars: The Tagus / Disquiet Collection of New Luso-American Writing* (Tagus Press; March 2019) edited by **Oona Patrick MFA '01** ● *Of Color: Poets' Ways of Making* (The Operating System; March 2019) contributed writing by **Remica Bingham-Risher MFA '05** ● *I Want More* (Trade Paperback; July 2019) by **Tracy Burkholder MFA '05** ● *The Davids Inside David* (Terrapin Books; March 2019) by **Sarah Wetzel MFA '09** ● *Undoll* (YesYesBooks; September 2019) by **Tanya Grae MFA '13** ● *Good Works Review 2018* (FutureCycle Press; January 2019) with contributed writing by **Melissa McInerney MFA '15**

AWARDS & HONORS

Bennington Writing Seminars faculty member **Carmen Giménez Smith** was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for Poetry. Her latest collection of poems, *Be Recorder*, was also shortlisted for a National Book Award in Poetry.

Image of America CLINTON, written by **Peggy Adler '63**, won the Connecticut Society of Genealogists prize in their 32nd annual Literary Award Competition as a Genealogical Reference Publication.

WSB-TV anchor **Jovita Moore '89** was selected as an Atlanta Dream's honoree for Women of Inspiration Night.

Alan Elyshevitz MFA '99 won the 2019 North American Review James Hearst Poetry Prize for his poem "Bread."

Julie Cadman-Kim '05 won *Sonora Review* fiction contest.

Stephen Page MFA '08 won the First Place Award in Poetry for the 2019 *Bravura Literary Journal*.

Jessica Green '09 won the 2018 Midsouth Regional Emmy Award in the Best Video Essay category.

Tori Malcangio MFA '14 won the Cincinnati Review Robert and Adele Schiff Fiction Prize for her story, "See What I Mean," which appeared in *The Cincinnati Review's* summer issue, 2019.

Nicolette Polek '16 won a 2019 Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award for her fiction. Polek's short story collection, *Imaginary Museums*, will be published in January 2020 by Soft Skull Press.

Cape Verdean Blues, a debut collection of poetry by **Shauna Barbosa MFA '17** was a finalist for PEN America's 2019 Open Book Award.

Bennington Writing Seminars faculty member **Jill McCorkle** won a 2018 Stack Award for Best Original Fiction. Her story "The Lineman" originally appeared in *Ecotone* magazine.

ARTICLES & ESSAYS

Wendy Button MFA '96, a former speechwriter for John Edwards, wrote about her experience testifying before a federal prosecutor, political sex scandals, and the corrupt campaign finance system for *USA Today*.

"Marlena Learns to Drive" by **Kathryn Milam MFA '97** was published in *Flash Fiction Magazine*.

Gail Hosking MFA '97 had two essays and one piece of fiction published: "What Must Be Accounted For," which appeared on terrain.org; "Saudade," on *Post Road*; and "A Night of Fireflies," a short fiction piece published in *Adelaide Literary*.

Tara Ison MFA '99 wrote the essay "How an Anti-Feminist Book Made Me Pause Before Criticizing Other Women" for *O, The Oprah* magazine.

Susan Barr-Toman MFA '05 published a personal essay about her husband's cancer diagnosis in "My Husband Used to Make Dinner Every Night. What Would We Do Without Him?" in *The Washington Post*.

Amanda Auchter MFA '08 wrote a personal essay, "The Disturbing Truth of What the Government Shutdown Is Doing to Families Like Mine," for *The Huffington Post*.

Susan Scarf Merrell MFA '09 published "In Praise of Iris Murdoch" in *The New York Times*.

Judith Hertog MFA '10 wrote "Cowards and Accomplices" for *Longreads* and "The One Pure Dharma" for *Tricycle*. Her most recent essay, "Against Romance: An Unvalentine," appeared in *The New York Times*.

Charles Bock's MFA '11 "The Sporting House," about his teenage self, UNLV basketball, and how he crossed paths with a young street legend named Lloyd "Swee'Pea" Daniels, appeared in *The Believer*.

Aaron Gilbreath MFA '11 is an editor for *Longreads*. He wrote about the disappearance of music magazines and saving rare Iggy and The Stooges recordings.

Morgan Jerkins MFA '16 published an interview with Barry Jenkins in *The Believer*. She also published essays about celebrity internet apologies for *Rolling Stone*, Ruth Bader Ginsburg for *The Washington Post*, 2 Dope Queens for *Elle*, R. Kelly for *Teen Vogue*, blackness and "beauty" for *Longreads*, and Kamala Harris for *Glamour*.

A.W. Barnes MFA '17 published *The Dark Eclipse: Reflections on Suicide and Absence*, a collection of personal essays in which he explores his older brother's suicide and their status as gay brothers raised in a large conservative family in the Midwest.

Teresa Fazio MFA '18 received a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Her recent essays include "Let Women Be Warriors" in *The New York Times*, "I've Never Looked More Dignified on a Hike" in *The War Horse*, and "Stand at

"If a poem this intriguing can fly out of a girl onto the page when she's handed a pen by a stranger, what else is she capable of writing?"

—Chivas Sandage '87 writing for *Ms. Magazine*

Attention and Bite the Bullet" and "Sisterhood Is Powerful" in *Foreign Policy*.

"Wonderland," a story by **Lisa Johnson Mitchell MFA '18**, appeared in *Rumblefish Quarterly*.

Britt Peterson MFA '18 wrote "Tori Nelson Stays in the Ring" for *The Washington Post*. Her story "The Battles of Lexington and Concord" received honorable mention in the Zoetrope All-Story Short Fiction Competition.

Anna Gazmarian's MFA '20 essay "Death and Rebirth: Armenians in Jerusalem" was published in *The Rumpus*.

The Paris Review celebrated the 25th anniversary of **Sven Birkerts's** (Director Emeritus Writing Seminars), prescient essay, "The Gutenberg Elegies," about the rise of social media and its negative effects on reading, in a piece "Reading in the Age of Constant Distraction."

Two essays by Writing Seminars faculty member **Lynne Sharon Schwartz** were published this past summer. "Text and Texture" appeared in the July 7 issue of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. "Am I a Thief?" appeared in the summer issue of *Ploughshares*.

Dionne Peart MFA '21 published a short story "Merica" in *Caribbean Writer*.

POETRY

Betty Aberlin '63 has five poems and nine paintings in Issue 33 of *Fowl Feathered Review*, as well as an interview and seven poems featured in the spring issue of *Soul-Lit*, a journal of spiritual poetry. "The White Page Poems," her responses to George MacDonald's 1880 *Diary of an Old Soul*, is available from Winged Lion Press.

Rachel Michaud '74 and **Lulu Mulalu '18** read their poetry at a special event in Cambridge, NY, at Battenkill Books in June.

Poetry Magazine published a poem, "Dictionary of Owl" by **Mary Meriam '78**.

The New York Times Magazine published "We See 'The Lion King' on Broadway, I Enter the Pride," a poem by **Remica Bingham-Risher MFA '05**.

Changelings and Omen Birds by **Claire Clube MFA '08** was posthumously published by Railroad Street Press. It is

the complete manuscript of the poetry Claire left for final proofreading and publication before she died in 2013.

Stephen Page MFA '08 has a poem published in *Noctura Review*.

Brett Elizabeth Jenkins MFA '10 had her poem "What To Look For In A Horse" published in *The Sun Magazine*.

"The Cry Catcher," a poem by **Jalina Mhyana MFA '10**, appeared in *The Sigh Press Literary Journal* last winter.

Two poems by **J. Mae Barizo MFA '13**—"The Mothers" and "The Women"—were published in the July/August Issue of *Poetry Magazine*. Barizo was also a featured reader/presenter at the Asian American Literary Festival at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC in August. Barizo led a six-week workshop at Poets House entitled, Our Poetry, Our Selves.

"Lot's Wife Leaves Suburbia," a poem by **Tanya Grae MFA '13**, was published in *Ploughshares* last January.

"Donating the Cake Dome," a poem by **Lisa C. Krueger MFA '14**, was featured on *The Slowdown Show*—a podcast hosted by Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith and produced in cooperation with The Library of Congress and the Poetry Foundation.

Emily Mohn-Slate MFA '14 had three new poems appear in *Connotation Press*.

TriQuarterly Magazine published "A Practice of Gestures," a poem by **Alyssa McCanna MFA '15**.

The New Yorker featured the poem "Bees" by **Maya Ribault MFA '18**.

The Massachusetts Review published two poems by **Viplav Saini MFA '21**: "To My Future Lover in Pakistan" and "How to Raise a Bonsai."

Writing Seminars Director **Mark Wunderlich** chaired the National Book Awards poetry panel. Wunderlich's poem "Gone Is Gone" was featured as The Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day.

Writing Seminars faculty member **April Bernard** had her poem "The World Has Split" published in *Scoundrel Time*. Bernard's short fiction piece, "She Can't Eat Fish," was published in *The Southampton Review*.

PUBLISHING

In August 2019, Bill Henderson, founder of Pushcart Press, and **Jonathan Lethem '86** were interviewed by *Poets & Writers* about their plans for a series of reissues of Lethem's favorite forgotten books.

Chandra Ganguly MFA '18 launched *SPEAK*, a print magazine of multi-genre expressions in art and literature with a focus on social issues. The first issue included work by **Maya Ribault MFA '18**, Writing Seminars faculty member **Lynne Sharon Schwartz, Susan Sheu MFA '17**, and Writing Seminars faculty member **Clifford Thompson**. The second issue includes works by **Michael Autrey MFA '18, Julie Batten MFA '10**, Writing Seminars Director Emeritus **Sven Birkerts, Carrie Cooperider MFA '18, Teresa Fazio MFA '18**, Writing Seminars faculty member **Alice Mattison, Jennifer Solheim MFA '18**, and **Marley Stuart MFA '17**.

PRESENTING

Faculty member **Anna Maria Hong** spoke about the enduring allure of fairytales at the opening panel of the Deep Water Literary Festival this past fall. The current issue of *American Book Review* includes *Hansel*

and *Gretel* in 2019, her mutual interview with the novelist Lindsey Drager about feminist retellings of *Hansel and Gretel* in experimental novel form.

SHORT FICTION

Blake Butler's MFA '06 story, "Graph Atlas," was featured in the 100th issue of *The Collagist*.

"Shovelbums," a short story by **Amber Caron MFA '16**, appeared in *The Southampton Review*.

Sydney Bradley '18 had a short story featured in the spring edition of the *Washington Square Review*, a literary magazine at NYU. Bradley is currently writing and teaching in San Francisco, CA.

TRANSLATIONS

Goldie Morgentaler '71 edited and translated a book of her mother's essays called *Confessions of a Yiddish Writer and Other Essays* by Chava Rosenfarb (McGill-Queens UP), which was published in June. Morgentaler also published an essay in *Tablet Magazine* on her experiences as a student at Montreal's Jewish People's School.

Matthew Landrum MFA '10 published translations of original German poetry by Katharina Müller in *Euphony* magazine.

Bruna Dantas Lobato '15 received a 2019 PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant for her translation from the Portuguese of "Moldy Strawberries: Stories" by Caio Fernando Abreu. This past summer she taught The Art of Translation, a six-week online translation workshop offered through *Catapult* magazine. The latest issue of *A Public Space* features an excerpt from her novel.

Jeanne Bonner MFA '16 published a translation of an Italian short story entitled "Casta Diva" by Francesca Scotti in *The Kenyon Review*.

Faculty member **Marguerite Feitlowitz** discussed the personal aspects of literary translation and writing with *Entropy* magazine.

Faculty member **Sarah Harris's** chapter "She could devour him if she wanted to: Hunger, Scopophilia, and Power in the Skin I Live In," was published in the book *The Pathogenesis of Fear: Mapping the Margins of Monstrosity*. Harris first conceived this chapter when teaching her advanced Spanish literature course Our Monsters, Ourselves and developed it further while teaching her course The Politics of Pedro Almodóvar.

"Although poem-making is a solitary act, poem sharing and experiencing and relating is a public one."

—**Meaghan Quinn MFA '14** writing about overcoming fear and connecting to others through poetry for *The Puritan*

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business, science & technology notes



Stephen Pratt '77, senior chemist at the U.S. Department of Energy's Argonne National Laboratory, was recognized as an Argonne Distinguished Fellow. The Argonne Distinguished Fellow is the highest scientific/engineering rank at the laboratory, and this distinction is held by only a small fraction (approximately three percent) of the research staff. Argonne National Laboratory staff members who achieve this rank have a widely recognized international reputation and have demonstrated exceptional achievements in science or engineering that are relevant to Argonne's core missions: seminal discoveries or advances that have broad influence and impact. Dr. Pratt's research involves the study of photoionization and photodissociation dynamics as a means of learning about how energy flows among the internal degrees of freedom in highly energized molecules.

Victoria English Ellington '70 and her husband William edit a co-owned publication on biomedical innovation called *MedNous*—a business-science publication that circulates in Europe to biotech entrepreneurs. She writes, "We moved to Brussels from London in 2015 in order to take advantage of the EU single market and promote our publication to a European audience. We never expected that Britain, where we became citizens, would decide to leave the EU."

Aaron Sylvan '93 recently moved to Brooklyn, NY where he lives with his wife and 4-year-old daughter. He works as a consulting CTO, evaluating tech companies for investors and coaching tech CEOs for growth. Previously, he built and ran an Operations Research software company in Cambridge, MA for eight years, earned an MBA from the IMD Business School in Switzerland, and served as CTO for a family office. Sylvan also produces the TEDxFultonStreet franchise of the world-famous "TED Talks," and writes the Lemonade Heroes book series about entrepreneurship.

In 2019, **Lisa Gustavson '98** won the Travel and Tourism award for "Best Intimate Food and Culture Tours—France" from the UK's *Lux* magazine, which focuses on responsible luxury. She is the founder and owner of

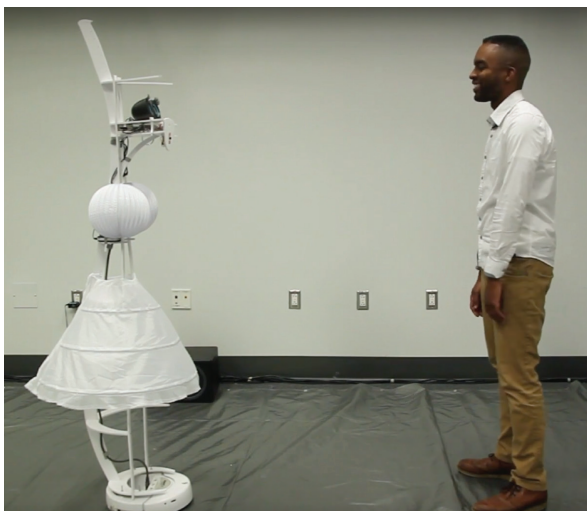
Sojourner Tours, a boutique tour company based near Austin, TX. The company specializes in tours to France.

Camille Renshaw '99 spoke at the Globe St. Women of Influence Conference on "The Path to Commercial Real Estate Success & How it Compares to Different Industries" as part of a panel discussing challenges leading women face in a male-dominated industry. Renshaw is the founder and CEO of B+E, a modern investment brokerage firm, specializing in 1031 exchanges and net lease real estate. B+E has offices in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Tampa, and San Francisco. In 2019, B+E set the record for the largest commercial real estate transaction sold by a digital platform, a \$324M portfolio.

Beck Strohmer '03 started as a PhD student in electronics engineering in February 2019 at the University of Southern Denmark. Their research looks into the improvement of tactile sensing and how it influences learning in legged robots using spiking neural networks. Disaster-relief rescue robots are a target real-world application for this type of research.

Jake Cutler '08, co-owner of Barnstorm Cycles, spoke with *Hot Bike Magazine* about starting a business. He began Barnstorm Cycles during an entrepreneurial Field Work Term.

Güvenç Özel '02 was the keynote speaker at Turkey Innovation Week in Istanbul last summer where *Cypher*—his most recent cyber physical sculptural installation—was exhibited, and conference attendees had the chance to interact with it. *Cypher* combines an interactive soft robotic body with a Virtual Reality interface. *Interesting Engineering* wrote a feature on the work of Özel in July 2019. The article titled “Güvenç Özel Creates a Robotic Installation Controlled by Virtual Reality” reports on how Özel uses artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), sensor technology, 3D printing, and other emerging technologies in a practice that bridges many worlds. *Interesting Engineering* wrote, “*Cypher* establishes a bridge between the physical and digital worlds, collapsing them into the same experiential plane by synchronizing a virtual reality simulation with human-robot interaction. Through an infrared sensor array and a LIDAR (similar to technologies used in autonomous vehicles), the shape-shifting sculpture and has the ability to detect the proximity of the audience and change its shape accordingly. The beautifully designed Virtual Reality (VR) headset—which is more like a helmet—is tethered to the sculpture teleports the user to its interior. It is then when the user experiences a shift from object to space. Already within the VR realm, the user has the ability to change the shape of the robot through natural hand gestures. As the user changes the shape of the VR simulation, the robot moves in real-time, aligning the physical and digital transformations. The AI component allows for the sculpture to get more intelligent the more it is exhibited, using the number of interactions it has with the audience to build a memory archive and cumulatively shape its motion and behavior through time. Through the synthesis of these multiple technologies, the sculpture challenges the human notions of what is real versus what is virtual. The experience allows the user to travel between a multitude of realities simultaneously. The combination of multiple technological systems working seamlessly is what allows *Cypher* to exist simultaneously in the digital and the physical worlds. *Cypher* responds to changes in its environment both as simulation and as a material entity. Özel’s projects and experimental installations have been exhibited in museums and galleries in the United States and Europe. Özel formerly taught at Yale University, Woodbury University, and the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. His recent design and research on 3D printing was awarded one of the top prizes at NASA’s 3D Printed Habitats Competition.



This past spring, **Hannah Wolfe '09** exhibited her robotic sculptures *Come Hither to Me!* at ACM’s Human Computer Interaction Conference (CHI) and *Touching Affectivity* at the International Conference on New Interfaces for Musical Expression (NIME). She exhibited *Cacophonous Choir* with her collaborator in September 2019 at Contemporary Istanbul’s Plugin Exhibition. “Whether we like it or not, we’re going to be interacting with robots,” Wolfe said to UC California’s magazine. “So, we need to think about how we will interact with them and how they will convey information to us.”

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SUBJECT: BUSINESS, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY NOTE

education notes

Marilyn Harris's '63 website, 1492theplay.org, offers the script of her 1992 play, *1492 The Play: the Conquest Through Native Eyes*. 1992 was the quincentennial year, and Harris chose to use the “teachable moment” to counter the Columbus myth of discovery. The play had three performances in Nashville, TN, where Harris taught high school Spanish. The three acts are written in verse and cover roughly the first 30 years of Spanish colonization in the Americas. She used song, dance, and rap in the service of re-education about Columbus. The website makes the script, as well as info and videos clips of the original production, available to educators, dramatists, activists, and those who wish to see Columbus Day replaced by Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Roxana Barry Robinson '68 has published her 6th novel and 10th book, *Dawson's Fall* (see page 9). She writes, “I am still living mostly in New York City, and teaching in the MFA program at Hunter.”

Claire Ferguson Garcia '78 has been named Dean of the Faculty at Colorado College. Garcia came to Colorado College as a Riley Scholar in 1990 and joined the department of English as a tenure-track faculty member a year later. She began her five-year term in July 2019.

Rhea Nowak '85 was promoted to full professor at the State University of New York (SUNY)

“The aim is to cultivate a classroom community where students feel comfortable taking risks, are curious about each other’s interests, and are open to feedback.”

– Faculty member Liz White spoke with AIGA's Eye on Design about how listening can be the best way to support students.

College at Oneonta, where she has taught in the art department for the last 12 years.

David Burgess '87 left the UK after retirement from his position as a high school principal. He writes, “I am now teaching Japanese and doing teacher training in Spain. I have moved to Spain permanently. [I would] love to hear from any Bennington alumni in Spain. Gracias.”

Jason Lagapa '91, associate professor of English at The University of Texas Permian Basin, was honored with the Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award.

Students from the Village School of North Bennington worked with technical instructor **John Umphlett MFA '99**, **Isabella Adler '20**, and **Phoenix Manlanga '22** to prepare sculptures for the upcoming North Bennington Outdoor Sculpture Show. This opportunity was arranged by faculty member **Jon Isherwood** and Design and Planning Coordinator & Robert Frost Stone House Museum Director **Erin McKenny**.

Rebecca Manery MFA '09 is the 2019–2020 program manager for the English Language and Literature Hopwood Awards Program at the University of Michigan.

Hannah Wolfe '09 moved to Maine and began as an assistant professor of computer science at Colby College. She defended her PhD in media arts and technology at the University of California Santa Barbara on “Embodied Technology, Human Machine Communication from the Media Arts Perspective.” Read more about her work on page 57.

Toby Lewkowicz '19, **Kameyo Okamoto '19**, **Steven Hendricks '20**, **Sherry Gao '21**, and **Daniel Coelho '19** taught French, Japanese, and Chinese at Bennington Elementary School and Village School of North Bennington.

Christiane Swenson '20 contributed an essay entitled “Tabloid Footprints Everywhere” to the Stanford Arcade, a scholarly digital salon for the humanities maintained

by Stanford University's departments of English and Literatures, Cultures, and Languages.

Faculty member **Debbie Warnock** and **Kelsey Broadfield '20** co-presented their paper about establishing a student-to-student mentorship program, “Constructing College Pipelines for Working-Class Students in Rural Vermont,” at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association in New York City.

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EDUCATION NOTE**



Amelia Rogers '76, Sue Temple '76, Ish Bicknell '76, Gretchen Paxson '77, and Lyn Bertles '77 reunited at Jennings. The group of friends had not gotten together in 36 years until they reunited in 2013 at Bennington. After that, Lyn reports, "Eureka! We spent a long weekend together in 2013, 2017, and again this summer in 2019. Hilariously, but not surprisingly, spending every waking moment sharing, walking, cooking, and cleaning up together was...seamless. Together, we were complete again in some primal, bonded-through-music-and-friendship way. Each visit has been a joyous leap back to the kind of bond that means so much when you're in your early 20s. In 2017, we spent almost the entire visit playing chamber music."

NOTES & UPDATES

Carol Davis Goodman '51 graduated with a baby in arms, married to Ted Goodman who was in public relations at the College. She majored in writing and has published many stories in magazines, won prizes, grants, and fellowships. Her youngest daughter, Elisabeth, taught environmental law at Bennington; she loved it. She now lives in Williamstown, MA.

Abbey Smith '63 is now living in Montreal's Le Plateau, where she attends contemporary dance classes and performances and enjoys the proximity of life-drawing and sculpture sessions with *modele vivante*.

Edward Ross '78 has been named the director of Lighthouse Guild's Behavioral Health Program. This program is the only one of its kind in the United States, and it is designed for people dealing

with the effects of vision loss on their emotional health.

Nichole Legendre Yamakawa '00 moved to Tokyo in September 2019 with her son Kousuke and husband Mune Yamakawa. Send her a note if you're in the area!

Julie Cadman-Kim '05 is working on a collection of short stories that focuses on the macabre, magical, and mundane moments of modern life. She lives in Seattle with her family, where she is a middle school teacher.

Julia Barstow '16 has spent the last three Augusts behind a camera, floating on the water 500 feet above the depths of a granite quarry in Websterville, VT. She is the photographer for The Quarry Project, a site-specific dance/theatre piece being created by Hannah Dennison for the Wells Lamson quarry, the oldest, deepest granite quarry in the country. She is also raising chickens and enjoying

the pickled fruits of her summer gardening labor.

Erika Lygren '16 is still longboarding, and folks would be glad to know that the migraine medication she's trying seems to be working, somewhat! She misses her Bennington peers, hopes they are doing well, and commends those down at the border fighting the good fight against ICE!

ON BENNINGTON

Bennington was awarded a grant of \$1 million from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to launch a three-year collaborative effort with local partners to address the systemic causes of food insecurity in Bennington County. Interim President **Isabel Roche**, Director of the Center for Advancement of Public Action **Susan Sgorbati '72 MFA '86**, and Sue Andrews from The Kitchen

Cupboard at GBICS spoke to Northeast Public Radio about the grant.

Bennington was selected to facilitate a session at the Council of Independent Colleges convening on Fostering Intergenerational Connections, following a grant to establish internships at the local adult day service agency Bennington Project Independence. Associate Dean of Work-Integrated Learning, **Faith McClellan** and Assistant Director for Employer Relations **Sarah Clader** led a discussion on high-impact practices in internship design. In the same week, McClellan presented at the Northeast Association of Student Employment Administrators in Philadelphia on the topic of student-centered design in campus employment.

Business Insider counted Bennington among the 18 colleges with the best dorm rooms. They wrote, "Bennington takes the idea of a cramped, institutionalized dorm room and throws it out the window."

The Chronicle of Philanthropy highlighted Bennington as a college that, in a time of turmoil in higher education, is finding success through a model that blends traditional fundraising with innovative partnerships and initiatives that align with its strengths and mission.

Insider recognized Bennington as the only college in the United States that requires students to have an annual internship since its founding.

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SUBJECT: CLASS NOTE

music notes



PHOTO BY BERNIE MINDICH

THE GOLD BATON

In June 2019, composer **Joan Tower '61** was awarded the 2019 Gold Baton Prize—the League of American Orchestras' highest honor. Given annually since 1948 for distinguished service to America's orchestras, the Gold Baton recognizes individuals and institutions whose far-reaching contributions to the field serve to champion and advance the cause of orchestras and symphonic music throughout the country. Previous Gold Baton recipients include, among many others, Leonard Bernstein (1959); The Ford Foundation (1966); Aaron Copland (1978); Beverly Sills (1980); Morton Gould (1983); William Schuman (1985); Betty Freeman (1987); Pierre Boulez (2000); Michael Tilson Thomas (2003); John Williams (2006); Ann Hobson Pilot (2017); and Yo-Yo Ma (2018).

Tower is widely regarded as one of the most important American composers living today. During a career spanning more than 50 years, she has made lasting contributions to musical life in the United States as composer, performer, conductor, and educator. Her works have been commissioned by major ensembles, soloists, and orchestras, including the Emerson, Tokyo, and Muir quartets; soloists Evelyn Glennie, Carol Wincenc, David Shifrin, Paul Neubauer, and John Browning; and the orchestras of Chicago, New York, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Nashville, Albany, NY, and Washington, DC, among others. Tower was the first composer chosen for a Ford Made in America consortium commission of 65 orchestras. Leonard Slatkin and the Nashville Symphony recorded *Made in America* in 2008 (along with *Tambor* and *Concerto for Orchestra*). The album collected three Grammy awards: Best Contemporary Classical Composition, Best Classical Album, and Best Orchestral Performance. Nashville's latest all-Tower recording includes *Stroke*, which received a 2016 Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. In 1990, she became the first woman to win the prestigious Grawemeyer Award for *Silver Ladders*, a piece she wrote for the St. Louis Symphony, where she was Composer-in-Residence in 1985 to 1988. Other residencies with orchestras include a 10-year residency with the Orchestra of St. Luke's (1997–2007) and the Pittsburgh Symphony (2010–11). She was the Albany Symphony's Mentor Composer partner in the 2013–14 season. Tower was cofounder and pianist for the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players from 1970 to 1985. She has received honorary doctorates from Smith College, the New England Conservatory, and Illinois State University. She is the Asher Edelman Professor of Music at Bard College, where she has taught since 1972.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JODY SOMERS



Rutgers University premiered faculty member **Allen Shawn's** "Concerto for clarinet, cello and orchestra (1983)" in September 2019. The 25-minute piece was the last commission from Benny Goodman. Shawn described the piece as "a big, brash, tuneful piece, very remote from the music I am writing now. It is the work of an ambitious (and somewhat reckless) 35-year-old composer, and I am now 71." Shawn and his wife, Bennington piano instructor **Yoshiko Sato**, premiered his new 55-minute "Etudes for piano" at the College in early September 2019. In November, Shawn's "Cello concerto No. 2" was performed at Williams College by Nathaniel Parke and the Berkshire Symphony. Shortly after that performance, Sage Sage City Symphony played Shawn's "Five Orchestral Scenes," written for them in 2002, in Greenwall Auditorium.



CONCRÈTE JUNGLE
(Dan Siegler '84)



TO GALLERY A CLOUD GROUND
(Ethan Koss Smith '21)



THREE VAPORS
(Michael Chinworth '08)

In June 2019, **Robyn Newhouse '69** was named president of the board of the Springfield Symphony Orchestra located in Springfield, MA. Newhouse writes, "It's a two-year gig. It is an honor with lots of challenges. I would gratefully accept any and all creative fundraising and development ideas."

The closing concert at the 38th Annual Vermont Spring Ring opened with "Prelude on Holy Manna" by **Cathy Marker '79**. Festival clinician Stephanie Rhoades of Dallas, TX conducted the 188-ringer massed choir. Scored for 3–5 octaves of English handbells, "Prelude on Holy Manna" is published by AGEHR Publishing.

Concrète Jungle, a conversation between New York's past and

New York's present, about New York's future, is a work of sound art performed live by composer **Dan Siegler '84**. It will have its full-length premiere at The Invisible Dog Art Center, NYC.

An audio recording of *Sacred Sands: A Play for Voices* by **David Hoppe MFA '86** was installed as a permanent part of the Portage Riverwalk at the Indiana Dunes National Park in Portage, IN. *Sacred Sands* concerns the natural and cultural history of the Indiana Dunes and the struggle to preserve this extraordinary landscape.

The latest EP from **Michael Chinworth '08**, *Three Vapors*, is now available. *Seven Days VT* wrote, "Three Vapors is a terse, raw but sonically complex EP that comes and goes in 20

minutes, yet leaves a strong emotional residue."

To Gallery a Cloud Ground, a debut album by **Ethan Koss Smith '21**, is available now. It was produced at Akin Studios in Hoosick Falls, NY with the help of **Sam Clement '08**.

Bennington, A Vocal Ensemble, a group comprised of faculty member **Tom Bogdan**, **Michael Chinworth '08**, **Liam Dailey '14**, and **Dane Whitman '16**, performed at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, CA.

Decameron, a music/theatre piece developed by faculty member **Nick Brooke**, used earworms to create an immersive sound performance and installation in 2019. It was performed in September at Coffey Street Studios, curated by

Michael Sharkey '95 and **Andromache Chalfant '94**. Other alumni involved include **Michael Chinworth '08**, **Michael Rugnetta '06**, and **Kerry Ryer-Parke '90**.

In July, faculty members **Susie Ibarra** and **Souleymane Badolo 'MFA 13** performed *Fragility: An Exploration of Polyrythms with the Dreamtime Ensemble* in partnership with Asia Society New York and Pioneer Works.

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performance notes



Monique Jenkinson '92 performed her show *Fauxnique: The F Word* at Williams College in May 2019.

“Dance is bigger than whatever trend is happening around it. Sometimes it seems like dance is bigger than everything.”

— Fran Cohen '53 speaking to *Phoenix New Times* about her illustrious decades-long career in dance.

Of the Woman..., a play by Lily Houghton '17, had its world premiere at Medicine Show Theatre in October 2019.

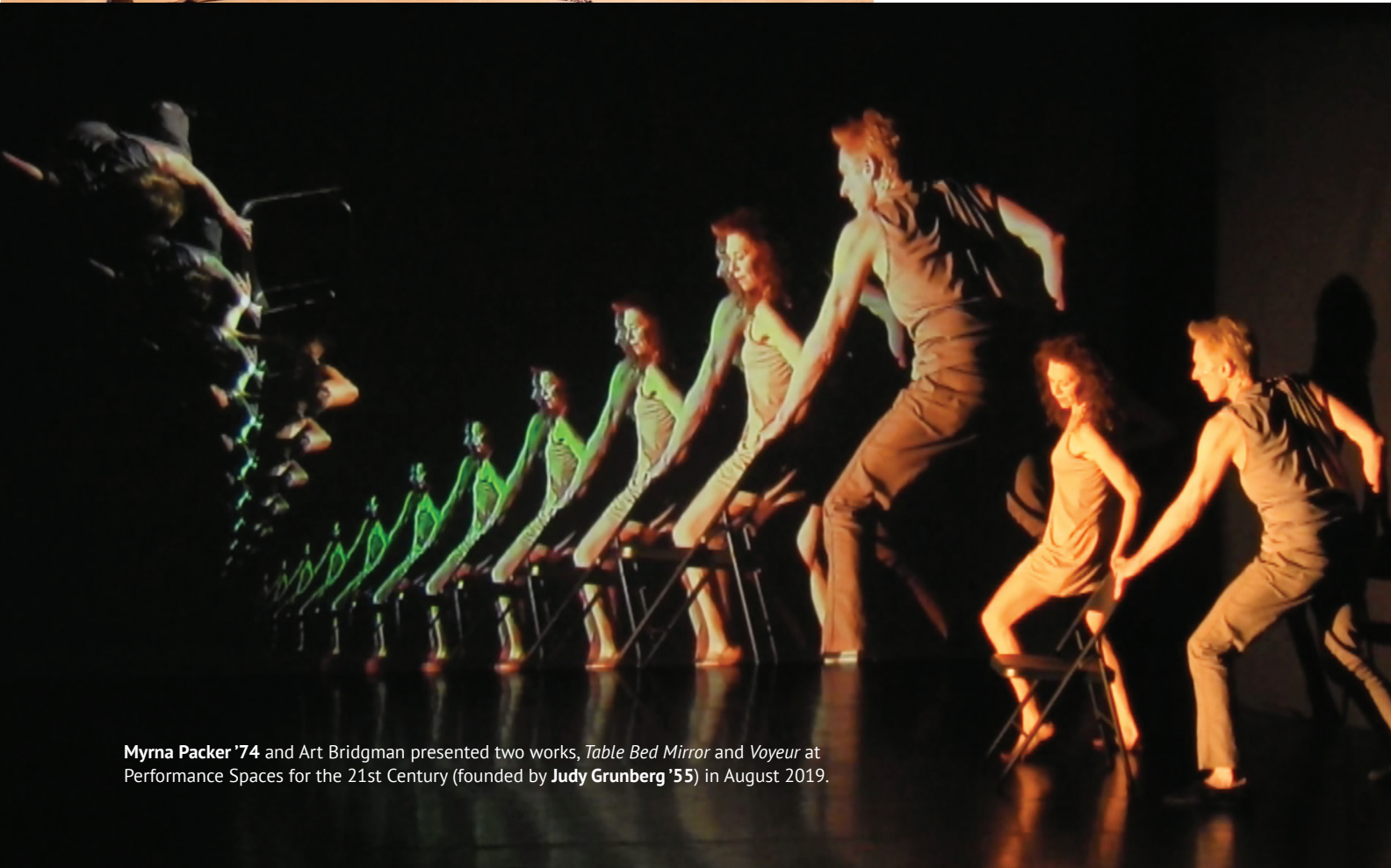




Liana Conyers '03 performed her solo show, *#MeandDaveChappelle*, at New York Live Arts as a culmination to her Fresh Tracks Residency. *#MeandDaveChappelle* was the first iteration of her full length work *#ImFuckingFunny*, which New York Live Arts picked up for their Live Artery series at the APAP conference in January 2019. In February 2020, she will present *#MeAndEltonJohn* (working title), a creative residency at The Chocolate Factory Theater (which was created and managed by **Sheila Lewandowski '97** and **Brian Rogers '95**). The work explores her autobiography through the deconstruction and abstraction of childhood memories. As a burgeoning comedian and social media non-influencer, Conyers says she explores the use of humor in the wake of adversity.

“Tell the stories you want to see. We are the people who help to define normalcy and culture.”

– Filmmaker **Cameo Wood '08** speaking to *Authority Magazine* about promoting diverse voices in the entertainment industry. Wood was nominated this year for a Northern California Area Emmy Award for her work as producer of the project *Real Artists*.



Myrna Packer '74 and Art Bridgman presented two works, *Table Bed Mirror* and *Voyeur* at Performance Spaces for the 21st Century (founded by **Judy Grunberg '55**) in August 2019.



A Bennington group attended a reception for the **Kathryn Posin '65** Dance Company opening of the 2019–20 Dig Dance Season at the 92nd Street Y. The company opened with three premieres including *Evolution: The Letters of Charles Darwin*, inspired by the work of former Bennington College president **Frederick Burkhardt**.



Translucent Borders, a project developed at NYU by **Andy Teirstein '79**, brought together artists from the United States, Cuba, Italy, Ghana, Israel, and Palestine in collaborative sessions in these countries last year. Artists from each site then traveled to the United States for a residency at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, followed by performances at the Lincoln Center Atrium and NYU. He writes, "Our work began in refugee camps on the island of Lesbos and continued in Ghanaian drum circles, in dance rehearsals in the Middle East, with Bedouin musicians on the Israeli border with Egypt, and in Cuban Rumba sessions. In today's political climate of increasing xenophobia and divisiveness, *Translucent Borders* brings artists together to make the contrary argument: that we are especially wired to exult in finding points of confluence with strangers."



Oscar winner Melissa Leo presented **Betty Aberlin '63** with the Hunter Mountain Lifetime Achievement Award in May 2019. Aberlin, who played Lady Aberlin for many years in *Mr. Roger's Neighborhood*, was noted for her work with the PBS children's series and also for the films *Dogma* and *Jersey Girl*.

“The play isn’t political... it’s about how to live a purposeful life. Ann [Richardson] was in the zeitgeist. Ann was a person who mattered to me. I liked knowing she was there for all of us, for our country.”

—**Holland Taylor '64** speaking with reporters about her play *ANN*, which ran at Arena Stage in summer 2019.

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Jerome Robbins Dance Division selected **Elizabeth Zimmer '66** as the dance curator fellow for the Selma Jeanne Cohen Collection.

Melissa Rosenberg '86, showrunner for *Jessica Jones*, spoke to *Indiewire* about how to craft a satisfying series ending.

Jonathan Marc Sherman '90 was interviewed on *Little Known Facts* with Ilana Levine, chatting about acting, his childhood in New Jersey, and playwriting at Bennington.

Mia Adams '91 (stage name, known as Amy Adams on campus), recently co-starred in the sixth episode of *The Naked Director*, a Netflix Japan docu-drama set in the 1980s. Adams broke onto the big screen when she appeared in Tim Burton's *Big Eyes* in 2014. Since then, she has won a Lead Actress in a Short Film award from The Berlin International Film Festival and has made several guest appearances on various shows including CBS's *Hawaii Five-0* and *Magnum P.I.* Adams co-wrote and stars in *The Chronic Crew*. She writes, "I would absolutely

adore to re-stage **Jonathan Marc Sherman's '90** 1990 Bennington production of *Landscape of the Body* with the original cast. Who's in?"

South Mountain, edited and produced by **Maria Rosenblum '91**, was screened at BAM Cinema Fest in June 2019.

Dorset Theater's 2019 Pipeline Series, a series of staged readings of works in process, featured *Panelists* by **Sofia Alvarez '07** in July, for a one-night-only performance.

First-Person, written and performed by instructor **Michael Chinworth '08** and developed and directed by **Tara Elliott '09**, ran in April at Triskelion Arts.

Allison Zajac-Batell '08 was selected as a 2019 Playwriting Fellow for New Perspectives Theatre Company's The Women's Work Short Play Lab.

Kaitee Tredway '11 appeared in Martin P. Robinson's Off-Broadway run of *All Hallows' Eve*, a new puppet musical in October 2019. She has also joined the puppeteer ensemble of Sandglass Theater's *Babylon* and is a part of

the devising ensemble for their new young audience show, *Rock the Boat*. Both shows grapple with the reality of refugees and the refugee process, and how we react to and engage with that reality at this crucial time. *Rock the Boat* will premiere in April 2020.

The World's Ending and Maybe That's Kinda Hot, written by **Catherine Weingarten '13**, premiered at The Tank in August 2019.

A Minute Flowering, a series of experimental short queer fantasy plays, were staged at The Baumann in Brooklyn in June 2019. **Jeremy Geragotelis '16**, **Singer Joy '16**, **Caitlin Brzezinski '14**, **Julia Crowley '18**, **Nick DiLeonardi '15**, and **Emma Welch '17** all appeared.

Singer Joy '16 and **Jeremy Geragotelis '16**, along with Sarah Bedrick, began Water House Collective, an emerging queer indie theater collective.

Sam Levit '18 will join Berkeley Rep as the development/fundraising fellow for their 2019–2020 theatre season.

Lifecoach, a play by **Lindsey Drew '23**, was selected for a workshop and staged reading at the Kennedy Center.

Faculty member **Maya Cantu** spoke on playwright, actor, and Gate Theatre Dublin co-founder Micheál mac Liammóir at the Mint Theater Company's Enrich-Mint Series, in connection with the Mint's current production of *The Mountains Look Different*.

Faculty member **Kirk Jackson** spoke to WAMC's Joe Donahue about Living Room Theatre's production of *Lucy's Wedding*, which ran in July 2019.

Faculty member **Oliver Wadsworth** performed in Saratoga Shakespeare's production of *The Tempest*, in July 2019.

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public action notes



ELIZABETH COLEMAN VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Educator, composer, and instrument-builder **John Bertles '81** was the 2019 Elizabeth Coleman Visionary Leadership Award recipient. John and his wife, Carina Piaggio, are co-founders of Bash the Trash, combining music, science, and environmental awareness since 1988. Bash the Trash builds, performs, and educates with musical instruments made from reused and repurposed materials. As a graduating senior, Bertles' advanced work included composing music and writing a book and lyrics for his own operetta, *The King and His Jester*. As the recipient of the ECVLA, Bertles performed at the Reunion Weekend, sharing stories of his time at Bennington and the impact that time has had on his life. Throughout the weekend, alumni and families enjoyed touring the newly renovated Commons space, and Bertles' music played on pipes, wooden boxes, and other materials under the atrium on the third floor was certainly a highlight. The award includes a \$5,000 honorarium and was established by parents of a Bennington alum in honor of the college's ninth president and former director of the Center for the Advancement of Public Action to recognize a living member of the Bennington College community.

The selected individual is an engaged citizen who has successfully demonstrated the willingness to step forward and take risks in order to solve problems and achieve results in the areas of education, government, the arts and sciences, or industry. Alumni will be asked again in the spring of 2020 to nominate someone from the community for this year's award. Please nominate someone you know who embodies the Bennington spirit of creative leadership.

“Opposition to immigration remained influential in environmental circles throughout the 20th century... from the 1980s into the early 2000s...environmentalists in groups such as the Sierra Club and Earth First! heatedly debated the desirability of further immigration restrictions.”

—Faculty member **John Hultgren** speaking to *The Guardian* and *The Atlantic* about the roots of eco-xenophobia and rise of white-nationalist environmentalists. In *EuropeNow Journal*, he discussed Bennington College's history of aiding those affected by forced migration and displacement.

Poet **Denise Provost '71** serves as a state representative for Somerville, MA representing the 27th Middlesex district, where she serves on committees on climate change and global warming, revenue, and higher education.

Randie Denker '72 writes, “I am still working as an environmental attorney and managing my own law office. Additionally, my partner and I run Waters Without Borders, an organization dedicated to resolving international, national, and regional cross-boundary water disputes. We have done a lot of work through NATO's Science for Peace program and through various other agencies and universities. Last year, I became a Fulbright Teaching Scholar. I spent the entire summer in

Trieste, Italy, combining work and play, and also...finding the perfect gelateria”.

Marianne Henry Saylor '87, partner at Willig, Williams & Davidson left the firm to become director of the Bureau of Workers' Compensation for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Margot Hoerner '91 launched Rosedale Green, a Washington, DC-based organizational development consulting firm, supporting nonprofits with strategic planning, leadership development, and facilitation. She encourages alums to reach out and email margot@rosedale-green.com or visit rosedale-green.com.

Ze'evi Berman '14 was one of six North American rabbinical and cantorial students chosen for Truah's Summer Human Rights Fellowship. They spoke with *Jewish Boston* about their passion for social justice activism.

In her TEDx talk, at Bath University, **Melodi Var Öngel '18** discussed her international peace and humanitarian projects, and how documentary songwriting can bring people together across boundaries and borders. She spoke about her work with two international peace projects funded by Davis Foundation—one in Turkey and Armenia, and the other in Cyprus.

Mary Brothers '22 called for a ban on semi-automatic weapons in an op-ed that appeared in *The Roanoke Times* last spring.

Faculty member **Noah Coburn** spoke with *Force for Hire*, a Stars and Stripes podcast, about how security contractors in countries not known for their human rights records can be robbed of promised salary, arrested, or worse—and what part defense contracting companies play in all of this.

Students in CAPA Fellow, **Judith Enck's** Plastic Pollution course testified at the Vermont Statehouse in support of S.113, which addresses the trifecta of plastic pollution: bags, straws, and expanded polystyrene.

Through her work with QueerConnect, **Sophie Nevin '18** helped organize the Town of Bennington's first annual Pride celebration.

In her TEDx Talk, **Lizzy Forman '23** discussed the identity challenges of donor-conceived people.

“When I was younger, I was under the impression that knowledgeable people knew who the bad guys were and how to deal with them. Now, I sometimes don't even know anymore what is evil, what is stupidity, and what is simply a difference in opinion.”

—**Judith Hertog MFA '10** in her essay “If We Don't Speak Up, We Are Cowards and Accomplices” for *Longreads*.

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JUDITH “JUDY” BACKER GRUNBERG ’55

Judith “Judy” Backer Grunberg ’55, artist, entrepreneur, and devoted community member, died on August 30, 2019, at St. Peter’s Hospital in Albany, NY. She was 86.

Born and raised in Manhattan, Judy attended the Dalton School in New York City before continuing her studies at Bennington, where she focused on visual arts with an emphasis on painting. She studied with Paul Feeley and Daniel Shapiro.

Throughout her life, art always played a central role. In addition to painting, Judy branched out to photography, textile work (including batik and shibori fabric dyeing), and digital graphic design. Her textile work was shown and sold at various exhibitions in New York, Boston, and Washington, DC.

In addition to creating her own art, Judy was passionate about supporting artists and their work. She curated art installations, served as the first artistic director of the Columbia County Council on the Arts, designed logos for local businesses and nonprofits, and founded PS21 (Performance Spaces for the 21st Century), a nonprofit based in Chatham, NY that recently completed the realization of her three decade-long dream: the construction of a 300-seat open air pavilion and 99-seat black box theater on the grounds of an apple orchard with sweeping views.

Judy was also an entrepreneur. She founded the Rewraps clothing store on Main Street in Chatham to benefit PS21 and also opened OPTIONS clothing store in Albany, NY. With her late husband, Paul Grunberg, she acquired the Blue Plate restaurant in Chatham in 1996, and she had owned and operated it since.

Always supportive of her community, Judy sat on local boards, including the Crandell Theatre in Chatham, NY; Time & Space Ltd. in Hudson, NY; The Columbia Land Conservancy, Close Encounters with Music in Great Barrington, MA; Chatham Area Business & Arts; Chatham Real Food Market; and WAMC Northeast Public Radio.

Judy is survived by her children, John, Daniel (Elaine), David, and Noah (Janet); her lifelong assistant Alice Witherell, and seven grandchildren. In addition to her husband Paul, Judy was predeceased by her parents, Theodore Backer and Mireille (Heller) Backer.

CAROLE MERRITT MFA ’96

Carole Merritt MFA ’96, writer, photographer, and consultant, died on May 13, 2019. She was 79.

Before earning her MFA in fiction from the Bennington Writing Seminars, Carole pursued a career in business. She completed her BS in business at the University of Redlands in 1989, and went on to co-own Merritt Chisik Management Consulting, which specializes in business and government travel management consulting, with her husband, Alvin Chisik.

Carole was a freelance writer, and contributed articles to *The New Yorker*. Throughout her career, she was working on a book about the painter Thomas Kinkade.

Carole is survived by her husband, Alvin Chisik, and her daughter, Lori Chisik Lysle.

CARRIE MCLEOD HOWSON '56

Carrie McLeod Howson '56, educator and activist, died on July 19, 2019, in West Orange, NJ. She was 84.

Although born in New York City, Carrie was raised in Phoenix, AZ. She initially attended Bennington College intending to study art, but her focus later shifted to American history, which she pursued with a passion, ultimately graduating with a BA focused in social sciences.

During the course of her life, Carrie's interest in history entwined with her love for activism, and she became a champion for historic preservation. In the early 1970s, she led a successful effort to save a one-room 1845 schoolhouse from demolition. The Little Red Schoolhouse has since become a museum on the grounds of Hyde Park's North Park Elementary School. As part of this effort, Carrie helped found the Hyde Park Historical Society, for which she then served as treasurer.

Carrie was an advocate for senior citizens. Her work at the Dutchess County Office of Aging inspired her weekly column for the *Poughkeepsie Journal* on senior and home care issues. She chaired the Council of Agencies Serving the Elderly and served on the Dutchess County Association for Senior Citizens board, championing compassionate caregiving and senior education.

Carrie loved the arts, particularly poetry. She self-published two books of poetry, *I Took the Scenic Route* and *Silently Screaming*, and she was published in several editions of *Lips*. An active community member, Carrie served as president of the Dutchess County Art Association/Barrett House, and she also served on the boards of the Dutchess County Arts Council and the Hyde Park Free Library.

Carrie was predeceased by her parents, Neil McLeod and Mary Bonthron; her brother, Bill McLeod; and her husband, John Howson. She is survived by her daughters, Teodora, Susan, and Charlotte; and her three grandchildren, Mary, Christopher, and Diana.


BRIAN PARMENTER, STAFF

Brian Parmenter, a steadfast Bennington College staff member who worked for more than 20 years as a carpenter in Buildings and Grounds, died on July 23, 2019. He was 58.

A lifelong Bennington resident, Brian graduated from Mount Anthony Union High School in 1979. As a staff member within Buildings and Grounds, Brian was respected and beloved for his sense of humor, lively conversation, and his generosity as a friend.

Within the broader southern Vermont community, Brian was an active member of the Bennington Lodge of Elks 567, where he was a past exalted ruler, past state trustee, and had previously been selected as Elk of the Year numerous times. At the club, Brian often tended bar and worked on many of the functions and activities.

Brian was an avid sports fan, hunter, and particularly enjoyed spending time at his family's camp in West Rupert, VT.

Brian was predeceased by his father, Walter Parmenter, Sr. He is survived by his mother, Barbara (Stone) Parmenter; his brothers, Walter (Connie) Parmenter, Bruce Parmenter, Mark (Sharon) Parmenter, Gary (Diane) Parmenter, and David Parmenter, as well as by 12 nieces, nephews, and cousins. 

We extend our deepest sympathies to the friends and family of the following members of the Bennington community who have passed away since April 27, 2019.

ALUMNI

Jessie "Jay" Nelson Engle '40
April 30, 2019

Marion Thompson Kohn '41
July 22, 2019

Deborah Froelicher Howe '42
May 29, 2019

Josephine Alter Kershaw '44
April 7, 2019

Virginia Finlay Dillon '44
May 9, 2019

Barbara E. Oldden '45
May 30, 2019

Joan Borden Stuart '50
July 6, 2019

Virginia Wilson LaPlante '52
June 28, 2019

Janet Gay Newman '53
July 18, 2019

Frances Smith Cohen '53
May 14, 2019

Claire Radoslovich Clark '54
May 6, 2019

Barbara "Bobbi" Israel Nowak '58
August 16, 2019

Annie Abel Schlesinger '65
June 4, 2019

Emily Stonington Hibbard '68
June 26, 2019

Diane Roberta Unangst '77
June 25, 2019

Beverly G. Dyer '79
June 22, 2019

Ellen St. Sure '50; P '76, '81
July 8, 2019

Peter B. Vance '84
June 13, 2019

Andrew M. Cohen '88
June 8, 2019

Kathryn S. Allen MFA '10
October 2, 2019

Seth C. Pase MFA '16
August 10, 2019

Quynh Huong Vo '17
May 29, 2019

FACULTY, STAFF, TRUSTEES, PARENTS, AND FRIENDS

Harold James Church, friend
May 28, 2019

William E. Dailey, Jr., friend
June 28, 2019

Albert Warner Dewey, Jr. P '86
May 27, 2019

Fisher Howe, friend
May 29, 2019

Gerhard Meilen P '21
September 28, 2019

Marie Colaneri Moran G '11
May 14, 2019

Robert Siegler P '84
April 23, 2019

Peter Stromgren, friend
May 24, 2019

Barry Westburg P '95, former faculty
July 2019

JUST RECEIVED

We acknowledge the passing of the following members of the Bennington College community, of which we were only recently notified.

ALUMNI

Barbara Cox Vallarino '43
May 26, 2017

Hanna Reich Hayman '46
July 15, 2013

Nancy Lindau Lewis '49
October 27, 2018

Betty Secunda Rich '50
April 25, 2019

Martha-Jane Woodcock Bralla '50
November 21, 2018

Judith Wilson Fouser '53
January 10, 2018

Jane Lowenstein Michaels '55
June 7, 2012

Karen Lukinson '64
September 15, 2015

Barbara Benary '69, P '99
March 17, 2019

Gregory C. Brown '79
2014

Katherine "Erin" Farrar '80
March 17, 2019

PARENTS, STAFF, FACULTY, AND FRIENDS

Sanford Cohen P '94
April 4, 2018

Roger Cournoyer P '90
December 19, 2016

Charles Gelman P '83
April 13, 2018

Paul Rich, friend
April 25, 2019

Donald Wheeldon P '95
March 30, 2016

Anne Wilson P '91
June 1, 2017

Steve Wolfson P '11
December 11, 2016

We regret that space restrictions prevent the publication of full obituaries. This list contains the names of deceased Bennington College alumni and community members for whom the College was notified as of April 27, 2019. For more information, please contact us at alumnirelations@bennington.edu.

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