

BENNINGTON

fall 2004 / winter 2005



the alumni magazine



ON THE COVER: A still from *89 Seconds at Alcazar*, a video installation by Eve Sussman '84. The digital video, which premiered at this year's Whitney Biennial, brings Velázquez's 1658 painting *Las Meninas* to life. To learn more about the making of this piece, see pages 18–23. Photograph by Benedikt Partenheimer for Eve Sussman & The Rufus Corporation

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INVESTING IN INNOVATION

Mercks Donate \$10 Million to Bennington

CYNTHIA LOCKLIN



“Is it not manifest that our academic institutions should have a wider scope; that they should not be timid and keep the ruts of the last generation, but that wise men thinking for themselves and heartily seeking the good of mankind, and counting the cost of innovation, should dare to arouse the young to a just and heroic life...”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

In 2002 Katharine '46 and Albert Merck performed a grand act of philanthropy by giving \$5 million to Bennington. This past June, the Mercks surpassed their own benchmark with an unprecedented additional \$10-million donation. This now becomes the largest single gift to the College, and portends great things for Bennington's future.

The Mercks' gift establishes the *Kate and Al Merck Fund for Excellence and Innovation*, which will provide support for the most critical needs of the College over the next decade. Initiatives that have transforming potential—those currently in place and those yet unimagined—will have the room to develop with adequate personnel, facilities, and technological support. “The flexibility and accountability built into the design of this gift,” President Elizabeth Coleman said, “exhibits a rare order of imagination and foresight as well as generosity that we have come to associate with Kate and Al. Its design is to use a substantial capital asset to build into the very financial structure of Bennington a culture of excellence and innovation rather than a culture of complacency and self-perpetuation.”

Through this gift, the Mercks are making a strong statement of their confidence in Bennington and in its ability to continue

the tradition of developing dynamic new approaches to education. “We give to Bennington because it has demonstrated that innovation can lead to excellence in undergraduate education and with the hope that its example will inspire other institutions of higher learning to take the necessary risks to prepare their students for a profoundly different century,” say Kate and Al Merck.

The Mercks' donation not only makes an inspirational investment in Bennington's future, but it also stands as the lead gift to the College's upcoming capital campaign. The goal of the campaign is to secure Bennington's future by raising funds for campus renovation and construction of new facilities; a significantly increased endowment to support faculty salaries, student scholarships, the library, and technology; and support for new programmatic initiatives and special projects.

The Mercks are longstanding champions of education, dedicated to the advancement of numerous schools and universities beyond Bennington. Kate helped establish and served on the board of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund for her New Jersey region. In 1975 she founded the Plaid House, a group home for girls in Morris County. Kate also served on the board of trustees at Bennington from 1972 to 1979, and she has been a dedicated, innovative fundraiser and longtime volunteer for the College.

A member of Harvard College's class of 1943, Al Merck earned master's degrees from Columbia University Teachers College and Rutgers University in the 1960s. He spent several years teaching political science at Rutgers and Drew universities and has been a trustee of the Bonnie Brae School for Boys, Newark State College (now Kean College), Westminster Choir College, Drew University, and St. George's School. In the early 1970s, he was elected to the New Jersey legislature as a representative for Morris County, serving as chair of the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education.

The Mercks have been deeply impressed by Bennington's vigorous turnaround in recent years. Elizabeth Coleman has credited this renaissance to Bennington trustees who remained true to their vision for the College, to the ideas at the heart of the College's new direction, and to a superb faculty community. Al Merck directly credits Elizabeth: “What prompted the [original] gift was how President Coleman turned the College around and essentially revived its ideals. I think it's a successful model of what a true education can be.” Added Kate Merck: “Bennington College has been picking up speed for really a number of years and is in high gear now.” By establishing this fund, Kate and Al Merck have asserted their confidence in Bennington and have encouraged the College's supporters to join them in securing Bennington's future.

KEEP IT MODERN (KEEP IT BENNINGTON)

excerpts from the 2004 commencement speech by Iona Bruckner '04

“We are not
entering into the
world as it is; we
are entering into
the future as we
will make it.”

you shall above all things be glad and young
For if you're young, whatever life you wear
it will become you; and if you are glad
whatever's living will yourself become.

e.e. cummings wrote these lines just after this school was founded—1932, the Jazz Age, the heart of the Modern Era. Bennington is and has always been a modern college. Inspired by John Dewey and many other artists and thinkers of the time, its founders were convinced that it wasn't simply the content of typical university classes that needed to be reformed, but the very way students were taught. They dared to weather the odds of the Great Depression in their belief that a school founded on principles of creativity, individuality, and personal discovery was not only possible, but necessary.

One of my first classes here was figure drawing. If any of you have tried it, you understand how difficult it can be: to look at a figure and really draw how the neck muscles intersect the collarbone, or how the fat of the heel presses into the ground. We can't rely on some watered-down image or memory of what a collarbone looks like. It requires looking at this strange form as if it were an ancient woodcarving, recently unearthed. This kind of seeing, we were asked to do in all of our classes, whether studying a piece of art, a political conflict, or a fish mating ritual.

But in a figure drawing, to make the picture come alive, we must discover through our markings, along with our eyes. We must learn through process. A certain poetry teacher up in the Barn always tells his students, “Your poems are smarter than you are.” Most of our teachers have insisted that we discover and learn through the actual words, gestures, and markings that tumble out of our mouths, bodies, and hands.

Working in these ways, we often surprised even ourselves. What we came up with was usually more interesting than we imagined it could be because it was not a simple regurgitation of the known past. It was something new.

For those of you who don't know, Bennington is a giant smorgasbord. There is so much to eat that you don't even know where to start, when to stop, and how to consume it all in one sitting. Each term is like a meal we must put together—should the salad come first; should I skip the carbs? (I think those would be the sciences.) We learn what happens when we take too much—and either can't eat what's on our plate or end up shoveling it in; those terms we lie comatose on our parents' couch for two weeks afterward. And then there is taste: cultivating a sense of personal preference and style. *Does Schoenberg agree with my palate, or do I prefer free jazz?* Over these four years, we have become acutely sensitive to our own digestive processes.

It seems strange that feeding oneself—a basic instinct—requires so much figuring out and practice. But it has proven helpful to have some guidance. I think we all have benefited from the advice of our advisors and teachers, who pushed us to try new things, helped us stick to the ones we already knew, and made sure that we internalized at least some of what they taught us. For that, and everything else, we thank you.

I realize you parents out there are maybe listening skeptically to all this stuff about learning through our hands and mouths, about finding our inner calling. You're probably wondering where the money to support your retirement and grandchildren is going to come from. All I can say is that I hope you have another child going to Harvard Business School. But for those of you not that lucky, who have placed your only hopes into Bennington (sorry Mom and Dad), I have a little inspirational thought: Do not fear. The reason that any of us are sitting here today is that we have learned to make things happen, or at least pretend to. When there wasn't a class offered in our curriculum, we created a tutorial. When there wasn't an opportunity to study art history, a bunch of us whined loud and long enough that the College implemented a lecture series. We have weaseled our way into classes, proposed new and improved deadlines, and repeatedly managed to persuade funding committees of the feasibility and brilliance of our projects. Every year in our plan meetings, we have convinced our teachers and the Dean's Office that we knew exactly what we were doing at Bennington, and why we wanted to do it. This kind of creativity and initiative might not guarantee a retirement mansion in Florida, but it likely means that—even with the economy as it is—we will find something to do, something to pay the bills. And if we don't, we'll make something up. So don't worry, we'll be fine, at least in this regard.

Outside of the Bennington bubble live the realities of our lives: family dramas, piles of debt, a dwindling job market, a network of corporate control, a nation at war, and a government teetering toward fascism. Our initial impulse is fear—followed by waves of panic.



CYNTHIA LOCKLIN

But the founders of Bennington College, who spent a decade of their lives imagining this place, had a hope for it: that it would teach its students to envision a different way of interacting with the world. After four years, give or take, of living in this place, taking its quirks and philosophies for granted, we would be truly selfish to leave here without taking that vision with us. We are not entering into the world as it is; we are entering into the future as we will make it. Do not accept the world as you have always seen it, or as others think you should. War is old, poverty is old, sexism, racism, and class systems are old. Look, question, learn from your experiences; get dirty.

My final wish for all of us graduates under this tent tonight is this: Keep it Modern. By this I mean meet each person, idea, and situation as if you have never come across such a thing before, erasing all preconceived notions about it. Find a deep, personal dialogue with it and what you do in your lives will be a continuation of what we have learned here. I can only imagine that it will also be an original, positive addition to the world. I think this wish is not just mine, but also that of our teachers, administrators, founders, and all those people through the years who have become deeply connected to Bennington. So let's get to it.

Iona Bruckner '04 of Kimberton, PA, focused in architecture at Bennington after studying a wide variety of subjects, including political science, sculpture, biology, and philosophy. She currently works for Joanna Alimanestianu Architects in Southampton, NY.



Faculty member Ann Pibal and Patrick Evans '04



Faculty member Kerry Woods, Lucas Westcott '03, and Josie Lawlor '04.



Deborah Wadsworth, chairman of the board, and Elizabeth Coleman, president



Niranjan Kunwar '04 and his family with Elizabeth Coleman.



2004 graduates Kara Bassman, Timothy Brown, and Rachael Hayes (L-R, front row)



2004 graduates Nina Rudnick, Ariana Kanwit, and Joanna Lautenberger (L-R, front row).

COMMENCEMENT 2004

PHOTOS BY CYNTHIA LOCKLIN

Following is an excerpt from the commencement speech of Marguerite Feitlowitz who addressed the Class of 2004 and offered this insight into the next chapter of their lives:

There is an ancient grammatical wisdom, and it's called the Past Imperfect. It is the tense for actions as yet uncompleted, for stories still unfolding, for memories that will ever be quick and never congeal. It is where the past and present come together in a single conjugation. The Past Imperfect is really all about energy, the transforming energy that carries us through an open expanse of time and space. So, in this spirit, let us all be imperfect.

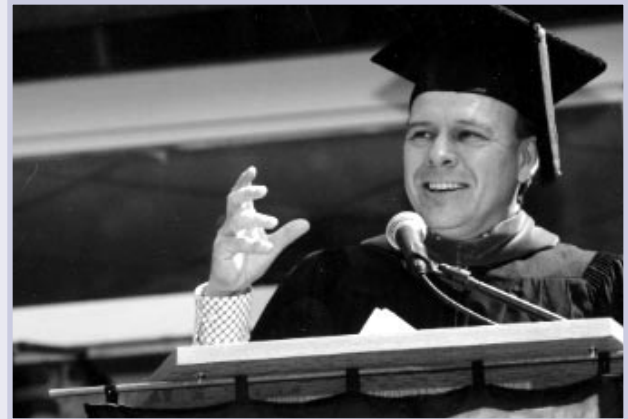
The Kabbala has it that the world, in its divine creation, was a text, which in the strife of ages, got torn apart, and its fragments spilled, scattered through the cosmos like seed. The mystics hold that our task is to gather up those fragments and re-create the numinous text that is the world. A task at once sacred and impossible. In other words, in the best of words, imperfect.

As my ancient people likes to say on such occasions, "L'Chaim!"

To Life. To Your Lives. Each and Every One.



Marguerite Feitlowitz, faculty speaker.



Jon Isherwood, faculty speaker

"I was a dot out for a stroll
and I became a line."

— artist Paul Klee

Jon Isherwood came up with a question for graduates of the Class of 2004: *What shape were you before you came to Bennington? What shape are you now?*

Here are a few of their responses:

"When I got here I was a spoke.
Now I'm a hub."

"A solitary drop of water and
now I am a ripple in a pond."

"Before I came to Bennington I was
an adjective. Now I am a verb."

"I was written down and put in a box in a
closet for posterity. Now I'm motion and
sound and utterly airborne."

"I was an ear turned into a mouth."



ISLAM, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

*excerpts from the 2004
commencement address*

by Shirin Ebadi



I am delighted to be on the campus of Bennington College, an institution famous for its innovative approach to learning and responsiveness to the interests and aspirations of individual students. The newly launched Democracy Project at Bennington is a clear example of how concerned this college is to address the urgent need for national and international civility. In practice, the concept of democracy has evolved to the point that it is assumed to be based on universal human rights and charged with protecting an all-inclusive civil society. It is no wonder, then, that supporters of peace throughout the world find it imperative to promote the culture of democracy. The most effective way to promote the culture of democracy in a non-partisan and non-ideological fashion is to integrate it into the curriculum of educational institutions, at all levels of learning. Since a college community is the place where dialogue about critical issues facing collectivities can flower and bear fruit, I wish to devote my speech to a central question of our era, the relationship between religion and democracy.

In some nations, particularly in the Islamic world, the thorny relationship between religion and democracy is yet to follow the European experience. Consequently, some observers mistakenly attribute the current obstacles to democracy in most Muslim countries to the religion of Islam. The view of Islam they have in mind is what despotic states define as the religion of their people, which, in fact, is a state ideology defying the interpretations and preferences of the vast majority of ordinary Muslims. In reality, the entrenched rulers have created a state religion with little concern for what the ruled feel and think. The guardians of state religion brand those who oppose them as infidels or enemies of Islam. Using this rather convenient ploy, they try to force their political opponents into silence and rob them of their spirit to resist. They assume that common people can be more easily intimidated if they are made to think that rejecting the claims of their governments is equivalent to opposing the religion of their ancestors.

The efforts to expose the deceptive nature of dictatorial governments in the Islamic countries are, at the present time, largely the work of Islamic reformers and intellectuals. These individuals and groups, regardless of their nationality, are potentially a united front against the despots who justify their rule in the name of Islam. The formation of this multi-national coalition, equipped with valid jurisprudential interpretations and inspired by the spirit of the holy Quran, promises to free Islam from its self-appointed custodians and pave the way for democratization of Islamic societies. This united front has no name, no leader, no central headquarters or branches, and yet it is ingrained in the minds of enlightened Muslims, who, while safeguarding their ancestral faith, choose democracy, reject rule by fiat, and refuse to follow the misguided proclamations of state supported religious authorities.

Islam—like other Abrahamic faiths—is, in its essence, a religion of equality and compassion. The spirit of Islam is open to pluralism and does not permit the privileging of one segment of the population over others. The problem of intolerance and arbitrary rule in Islamic societies cannot be attributed to the nature of the Islamic faith, but rather to certain cultural propensities and opportunistic rulers who concoct precedents and instrumentalist interpretations of religious doctrines in order to deny the rights and equality of their citizens. Thus, what is needed in Islamic societies, in addition to facing up to the arbitrary acts and claims of those controlling the state, is promotion of reform in the political culture and attitudes of the populace. We need to transform our political and cultural norms in such a way that they remain compatible with the spirit of Islam while responding to the challenges of modernity and human rights standards. The populace have to feel secure about being the citizens of a democracy and remaining faithful, if they so wish, to their religious beliefs.

THE DEMOCRACY PROJECT AT BENNINGTON

To kick off Bennington's major new initiative, the Democracy Project, Iranian lawyer and human rights activist Shirin Ebadi, winner of the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize, addressed the Class of 2004 at the commencement dinner in June.

As in the 1930s, when it was the first to include the visual and performing arts as a serious part of a liberal arts education, Bennington is once again forging an uncharted path in American undergraduate education with the Democracy Project. This incentive has been in the planning stages for several years and has included ongoing conversations between Bennington faculty from a wide range of disciplines, and ongoing discussions with scores of distinguished scholars and practitioners from outside the College such as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Nobel laureate in economics Amartya Sen, and Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer James MacGregor Burns.

The claim to protect national security is another excuse for violating human rights. Fighting terrorism is a necessary and just cause. But this fight must be conducted in accordance with international humanitarian laws. At times, rulers exaggerate a real threat to society and use it to suppress the voices of dissent. They constrain the rights of their people by creating imaginary foes, seeing conspiracies behind the demand for freedom and becoming obsessive about the protection of social order. This kind of state behavior threatens civil liberties even in some Western countries, including the United States, and is

oppressively prevalent in Islamic societies like Iran. Given the intimidating nature of such circumstances, it is deeply gratifying to know that international and national human rights organizations are more active and courageous today than ever before. Their purpose is to put the protection of human rights on the agenda of global politics. This is a goal worth fighting for. Doctors without borders, journalists without borders, scientists without borders, environmentalists without borders, and human rights activists without borders are all showing the way to a better future. In the age of globalism, it is only logical

The September 11 crime against humanity and its far-reaching consequences clearly demonstrate how globalism has made war, peace, and terrorism a worldwide phenomenon. Without being party to a violent conflict, a country or community suddenly finds itself engulfed in its midst. The United States is at war with al-Qaeda and terrorists target innocent people in Spain. The causes of terrorism are too complex to be reduced to one or two factors, but we have to face the fact that U.S. alliance with dictators and its selective support or instrumental use of religious fanatics is a major source of anti-

“And yes, I am a dreamer when I think dreams are—
have always been—an impetus of progress in history.”

that we work for the expansion of a global community trying to make the world a more peaceful and equitable place.

My dear students, if such a world is possible, you have to be its architects. As you know by now, the search for knowledge is never-ending. Do not accept the answers that you have hitherto been offered. Seek better and more effective answers.

If we leave our minds at the mercy of this or that group, this or that party, this or that ideology, this or that religion, we could become victims of the curse called dogmatism. Thus if you are committed to a particular belief or idea, study other beliefs and ideas as well. If you are a member of a political party, learn about the positions or programs of other parties. Becoming dogmatic about one's belief or opinions freezes our intellect and imagination. Dogma is a threat to peace and civility. Be prepared that the view you hold might be wrong. Be ready to accept the possibility that the story you have heard is inaccurate.

When it comes to news, particularly political news, never limit yourself to American sources; try to consult other sources, from other countries, listen to what they have to say. Compare the competing claims you receive and subject them to the rules of logic, evidence, and common sense if you wish to have reasonable understanding of what is actually happening. Only then can you contemplate how we might influence the course of events, whether there is a different way of setting our priorities and pursuing our goals.

Americanism and terrorism originating in the Middle East. Contrary to the recent claims of the American administration, Washington continues its intimate connection with too many despots in the region. It is no exaggeration to say that defending or helping undemocratic governments has the potential, to say the least, to become selfdestructive, like pointing a loaded gun at oneself and playing with the trigger. It is my fervent hope that the United States and other Western powers find a way of ending their support and cooperation with the despots who arrogate to themselves the right to govern without the consent of the governed.

Yet, we ought to be aware that democracy is not a gift to be offered by one country to another. Modern developments in Europe and North America make it evident that democracy has to grow within each society and follow its own native path. It is naïve to assume that a powerful state can export democratic norms, even with the best of intentions, through bombing and military invasion. Nations in breach of human rights must be compelled to comply with their international obligations through the decisions of the United Nations and pressure of non-governmental organizations. Only then external intervention for promotion or protection of human rights has legitimacy and promises to be effective.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that globalization is a double-edged sword. It has brought us both costs and benefits

and the vast majority of people in the world either pay the costs or see little tangible benefits from it. If promotion of human rights and democracy is to be more than a rhetorical game, it is essential that globalization reduces the deep gap between rich and poor nations. We cannot expect the world to become more humane or democratic if destitution is to remain a condition of life for a majority of the world's population. We cannot monopolize the benefits of globalism and expect the growing ranks of excluded to be satisfied with the status quo.

Islam is not a religion of terror and violence. Let us not consider the wrong deeds of individuals or fanatical groups as the fault of their religion. Let us separate the faults of individual human beings from the religions and civilizations they belong to. Cultures are not in clash, but in fact share many common points. Let us talk of our points of confluence, not of conflict. Let us never legitimize war, as no one emerges victorious from this cursed phenomenon. I am deeply saddened by the death of American soldiers in Iraq; I hope that with an end to the conflict, your children will soon return home, safe and sound. I am also deeply grieved and surprised by the news I hear about the treatment of Iraqi prisoners. I ask myself, how can American civilization and American civil society tolerate such behavior? I remind you that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was ratified with the extensive support of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. The efforts of this great American woman are immortalized in history; her name inscribed on the most cherished document of human civilizations. We should all be guided by the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt in setting the goals and priorities of our nations or communities. This ought to be particularly the case for American policy makers because they are, more than any other group of people in the world, in the position of shaping the course of international relations.

I sound like a dreamer, I know. I am a dreamer when, in the midst of the turmoil in the Islamic world, I imagine a dynamic Islam that not only is entirely compatible with democracy and human rights but can participate in carrying the banner of advancing the cause of peace and human rights in the world. I am a dreamer when I wish for the growth of a sustained global concern for peace and human rights. And yes, I am a dreamer when I think dreams are—have always been—an impetus of progress in history. The challenge facing us today is to think like dreamers but act in a pragmatic manner. Let us remember that many accomplishments of humanity began as a dream.

*Shirin Ebadi's visit, the inaugural event of Bennington College's Democracy Project, was made possible through the generous support of the **Ruth Dewing Ewing '37** Lectureship in Social Activism. More information about the Democracy Project will be included in future issues of Bennington.*



CYNTHIA LOCKLIN

Shirin Ebadi, the first Iranian to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, served as president of the city court of Tehran from 1975 to 1979. The founder and leader of the Association for Support of Children's Rights in Iran, Ebadi has written extensively on human rights. She is an activist for the rights of refugees, as well as those of women and children. In her research and as an activist, she has unfailingly extended the reach of those principles that inform her life and work—freedom, democracy, non-violence, and human decency.

EARTH



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

QUAKE


MISFORTUNE, INJUSTICE, OR
THE WILL OF GOD?

From Bam to Lisbon

BY MANSOUR FARHANG

Bennington faculty member Mansour Farhang served as revolutionary Iran's first ambassador to the United Nations, resigning in protest when the Khomeini regime refused to accept the United Nations Commission of Inquiry's recommendation to release American hostages in Tehran. He has taught international affairs and foreign policy at Bennington since 1983.

Farhang is a frequent contributor to scholarly journals and to the national news media. The following are excerpts from an article that appeared in the Spring issue of *Dissent* magazine. To read the full article, visit www.dissentmagazine.org.

n December 26, 2003, a powerful earthquake struck southeastern Iran, killing more than 41,000 people, injuring 16,000, leaving 70,000 homeless, and destroying more than 60 percent of all structures in the city of Bam. The ancient quarter of Arg-e-Bam, including a 2,000-year-old citadel, built entirely of mud bricks, clay, straw, and trunks of palm trees, was also severely damaged. Bam was founded during the Sassanian period (224–637 C.E.) and its attractions to visitors, in addition to the citadel, were a Zoroastrian fire temple and other remains of the time when the city was a commercial center on the famous Silk Road.

Opposite page: Mohsen Jahanshahy, who lost his three young nephews, prays in front of the rubble of the family house in the earthquake-devastated city of Bam, Iran, December 31, 2003.

The day after the devastation, local people told reporters that on Friday, December 26, a light quake awakened them at 4:00 a.m. Some got frightened enough to go to the street, but they soon returned to their beds. Then at 5:27 a.m. an earthquake that registered 6.6 on the Richter scale caused the collapse of roofs and ceilings, made largely of bricks to keep the house cool in the summer, and buried the sleeping residents under tons of rubble. The location of the earthquake was in a region where major faults had been previously mapped, about 60 miles south of towns where two other earthquakes had occurred, on June 11 and July 28, 1981, causing 4,500 deaths.

Iranians at home and abroad responded to the news of the quake with an outpouring of sympathy and with efforts to raise funds for survivors and also for the reconstruction of the city. In the words of one observer, Ahmad Reza Shahri, the spontaneity of people's behavior was reminiscent of their solidarity in the early days of the 1979 revolution or at the time of Iran's 1997 victory in the football match with Australia.

Three days after the quake, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, visited Bam, expressed sympathy for the victims, and urged government officials to help the survivors and expedite reconstruction efforts. Then he added that "this disaster reveals emtahan-e elahi [God's testing]. It is in such hardships that we can grow and strengthen our faith." Khamenei's use of the expression emtahan-e elahi was not original. His predecessor, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Iranian theocracy, used the same phrase in a statement addressed to the general public following one of the 1981 quakes:

The devastating earthquake that caused so many deaths and so much destruction has made us all sorry and grieving. Yet, we must view the occurrence of such disasters as God's way of testing our resolve. All of us, including the survivors of the quake, need to prove that in the face of misfortune we can remain faithful to the edict of the Glorious Koran and consider ourselves as simply temporary trustees of God.

A variety of public officials appearing on Iran's state-owned radio and television stations in the days following the quake referred to Ayatollah Khomeini's words to console their audiences.

The fund-raising initiatives, with impressive success, continue to this day, but the discussion of the tragic loss of life has shifted to the question of Iran's vulnerability to earthquakes and the dismal performance of government agencies in the rescue and recovery operations. Why is it, critics ask, that a country on the seismic line has failed to implement building codes that can make structures earthquake-resistant? This ongoing dialogue is focused on the political causes of Iran's failure to learn from the impressive success of Japan and California in containing the consequences of earthquakes. In fact, many observers, including scientists, poets, journalists, historians, and social scientists, are using the Bam earthquake to discredit the idea that human beings are lost and helpless in the face of natural disasters. Instead, they argue that much of the devastation was due to the vulnerable housing of Bam's residents. They contend that existing technology, if applied, could enable towns and cities to survive major quakes. They provide examples of how caring and scientifically equipped governments have managed to reduce dramatically both casualties and material loss. To illustrate this point, observers compare the devastation in Bam with the 1989 earthquake in San Francisco. In Bam, the quake reached a magnitude of 6.6 and killed 41,000, while in San Francisco the quake measured 7.1 and resulted in only 63 deaths.

In the days following the calamity, Bahram Akkashe, a physics professor at Tehran University, explained Iran's vulnerability to earthquakes and criticized public officials for their negligence in applying available knowledge to minimize the quake's destructiveness. In an interview with Persian BBC, he complained that for four decades Iranian authorities have ignored his warnings about the necessity of city planning and building codes in the vulnerable regions of the country. Another Iranian observer, in a passionate article posted on a popular Web site, wrote that "we can blame the weak structure of the 2,000-year-old Bam citadel on absence of technical knowledge or sturdier materials at the time it was built, but what is our excuse for the poor structure of the houses built in

“From the beginning of recorded history to the middle of the 17th century, men and women belonging to diverse cultural traditions were convinced that all natural disasters had a divine purpose, however incomprehensible the purpose might appear to humans.”

recent times? We live in the age of technology and information but have failed to do better than our ancestors in strengthening the resistance of our dwellings against natural disasters.”

Web logs, radio interviews with people on the street, newspaper articles, and commentaries on numerous Web sites reveal that mocking the idea of *emtahan-e elahi* and blaming the government for failing to implement earthquake resistant measures are now common themes of Iranian national discourse. Numerous Iranians question the idea of God controlling the workings of nature or authorizing anyone to guide their lives—a veiled reference to the ruling clerics’ claim, enshrined in the Islamic Republic’s constitution, that they are “the viceroys of God on earth.” In other words, Iranians are using the quake to criticize, not only the competence and priorities of government but, more pointedly, the regime’s religious claims to legitimacy.

In both the Bible and the Qur’an, the Day of Judgment begins with an earthquake. There are numerous references in the sacred texts of Jews, Christians, and Muslims to earthquakes as a manifestation of God’s power. According to these texts, it is not only earthquakes that signal God’s judgment. Wind, storm, rain, and hail are also included in God’s armory for ruling the world in righteousness. Before the spread of scientific knowledge, theologians in the Judaic, Christian, and Islamic traditions (perhaps others as well) assumed that a wise God created nature and that any apparent imperfection in its working had to be judged in accordance with the absolute goodness of his overall plan. They portrayed the victims of earthquakes as God’s intended targets who had to suffer for their sins or be tested for their faith.

From the beginning of recorded history to the middle of the 17th century, men and women belonging to diverse cultural traditions were convinced that all natural disasters had a divine purpose, however incomprehensible the purpose might appear to humans. The victims of nature’s calamities had no one to blame for their plight. Not until the age that came to be known as the Enlightenment was there a reconsideration of common views about natural disasters. Some wondered, for example, what kind of sins could infants and children commit to deserve God’s wrath? Why was it that when earthquakes struck, the inhabitants of mud houses always turned out to die or suffer in greater numbers than those who lived in stone structures? It was a time for rethinking the workings of nature, human personality, science, values, beliefs, religion, the role of the church in governance, the source of political legitimacy, and the purpose of political rule. Debates on these issues began the historic contest between modernity and tradition, which tested the capacity of reason to overcome habitual views and fatalistic beliefs about social and natural phenomena.

The Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, provided a dramatic focus and a turning point in the ongoing political and philosophical arguments. The estimates of the number of people killed by the earthquake ranged from 10,000 to 15,000; only 3,000 of 20,000 city dwellings remained habitable after the calamity. At the time, Lisbon was the fourth largest city in Europe, after London, Paris, and Naples, with a population of 275,000. The city was a center of the Inqui-

sition and more religious than London or Paris. Its destruction compelled observers throughout Europe to go beyond expressions of sympathy for the victims; they tried to understand the devastation and to draw political, economic, and moral lessons. The Jesuits (who had close ties to the aristocracy in Portugal) insisted on the correctness of the doctrine of supernatural causation. Many Protestants viewed the event as a punishment aimed at the perpetrators and supporters of the Inquisition. On the first anniversary of the earthquake, Gabriel Malagrida, an influential Jesuit missionary, issued a pamphlet arguing “that the people of Lisbon had continued on their sinful ways, including their love for theater, music, dance, and bull fighting and that their efforts to repent were shortsighted.” He urged people to wake up and make peace with God.

The most revealing debate on the implications of the Lisbon earthquake was an exchange between Voltaire, the literary star of the Enlightenment, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the first conceptual analyst of natural disasters. They had corresponded with each other before the earthquake, but their public clash came after it. Voltaire’s first response to the disaster was his famous “Poem Upon the Lisbon Disaster: An Inquiry Into the Maxim Whatever Is, Is Right.” The poem was an attack on all those who believed that natural disasters were acts of God—the just but incomprehensible God.

Voltaire boldly opened a discussion but offered no resolution; he did not question the view of disaster as misfortune. He simply used the earthquake to undercut the dominant religious view of natural disasters. Rousseau, a deist, found Voltaire’s assault on traditional faith disturbing. He agreed with Voltaire that earthquakes are natural calamities, but he thought that quarreling with God could only deprive the victims of their hope in a benevolent deity. More significantly, however, Rousseau suggested a new way of thinking about the disaster:

Without departing from your subject of Lisbon, admit, for example, that nature did not construct twenty thousand houses of six or seven stories there, and that if the inhabitants of this great city had been more equally spread out and more lightly lodged, the damage would have been much less and perhaps of no account.

This is a social scientific perspective, implying as it does that some of the dead were victims of negligence because certain measures could have been taken to reduce the earthquake’s destructiveness. Rousseau introduced the concept of vulnerability by pointing out that poor structures, weak building materials, the urban pattern, and the location of Lisbon made the residents of the city susceptible to damage. His clear conclusion was that the community needed to take steps to minimize the effects of natural disasters.

The Lisbon earthquake was the first modern disaster that compelled the state to oppose the notion of supernatural causation and accept responsibility for the reconstruction of the city. The late political theorist Judith Shklar noticed this and wrote that the modern age has many birthdays. One of them, my favorite, is the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. What makes it such a memorable disaster is not the destruction of a wealthy and splendid city, nor the death of some ten to fifteen thousand people who perished in its ruins, but the intellectual response it evoked throughout Europe. It was the last time that the ways of God to man were the subject of general public debate and discussed by the finest minds of the day.

Shklar uses the public response to the Lisbon earthquake to illustrate how people who once regarded certain kinds of suffering as misfortunes, “acts of God,” came to view them as injustices—caused by the action or inaction of the powerful. She argues that the border between misfortune and injustice is historically and culturally moveable.

The city of Bam in 2003 had little in common with Lisbon in 1755, but the two earthquakes produced similar conversations among Iranians and Portuguese, focusing on the negligence of public officials and the religious beliefs used to justify the dominant political order of 18th-century Portugal and Iran today. The idea that God is behind natural disasters is still a respectable super-

stitution in most Islamic societies, just as it was in pre-modern Christian communities. However, Muslim preachers, unlike their distant Christian counterparts, have never viewed the victims of natural disasters as sinners who deserved their misfortune. Instead, they propagated the idea of *emtahan-e elahi* or God's testing in order to prove that God acts for a reason. With the spread of scientific knowledge and secular ideas in eighteenth-century Europe and 20th-century Islam, people of diverse cultural traditions, particularly the learned among them, began to view natural disasters in political, economic, and normative terms. They came to see the action or inaction of the state as a primary determinant of how destructive or deadly an earthquake can be. They gradually moved (are moving) to regard those dying under the rubble or left homeless in the aftermath of a natural disaster more as victims of injustice than misfortune.

Today, in advanced industrial societies, the assertion that God is behind "Mother Nature's fury" is generally dismissed as atavistic. In the United States, however, some church leaders still see the hand of God in such disasters as the AIDS pandemic and the indiscriminate violence of men. For instance, following the 9/11 calamity, Jerry Falwell said, on a television program hosted by Pat Robertson, "I really believe that the pagans and the abortionists and the feminists and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who try to secularize America.... I point the finger in their face and say you helped this happen." And Robertson replied, "I totally concur, and the problem is we've adopted that agenda at the highest levels of our government, and so we're responsible as a free society for what the top people do, and the top people, of course, is the court system." The suggestion that God had assigned the task of punishing America for its sins to Osama bin Laden turned out to be so offensive to the general public that Falwell and Robertson felt compelled to retract their words. Yet, a review of religious right publications during the period reveals that various evangelical observers answered the question of how 9/11 could happen by referring their readers or listeners to the Bible. For example, Frederica Mathewes-Green wrote in *Christianity Today* (September 25, 2001), "this isn't just an Old Testament phenomenon. When people told Jesus that Pilate had killed worshippers at the Temple, he responded, 'unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.' (Luke 13:3). There seems to be a biblical pattern here: national suffering should bring about repentance."

In mature democracies, planning to minimize the harm of natural disasters or contain their consequences has become institutionalized.

Universities teach courses in the field and support research projects seeking to find more effective ways of responding to the needs of disaster stricken people. But no dictatorial regime has shown a serious inclination to move in this direction. The failure is not always due to lack of funds. Over the past half century, Iran has received nearly a trillion dollars in oil revenues. Much of this vast capital has been diverted to the kind of economic projects that enrich the politically dominant class. Expenditures on the army and on other instruments that serve to maintain the incumbent despotism also account for the waste of the nation's oil money. The Iranian state has devoted very little of its wealth to developing a comprehensive program of earthquake-resistant measures in the vulnerable regions of the country, including Tehran with its twelve million people. Concentration of wealth and income in Iran has become more skewed in the clerical theocracy than it was under the Pahlavi dictatorship. This trend is unlikely to change so long as despotism prevents the Iranian people from taking part in the political life of their country.



MITCH EPSTEIN

Mansour Farhang and Bennington students Alycin Bektash '06, Daly Clement '06, and Jesse Jewell '05 [L-R].

AN INTERVIEW WITH EVE SUSSMAN '84

AN INTERVIEW WITH EVE SUSSMAN '84

by Becca MacLaren

At its U.S. premiere at the Whitney

Biennial this year, *89 Seconds at Alcazar*, an installation by film/video artist **Eve Sussman '84**, emerged as a critical favorite. The piece was described as “ravishing” (*The New Yorker*), “astonishing...uncanny” (*New York Magazine*), and “smashing” (*The Washington Post*).

The digital video, projected on an entire wall in a 10-minute loop, brings Diego Velázquez's 1658 painting *Las Meninas* to life. Sussman, with 12 actors dressed in Baroque costume and an elaborate set modeled after the Alcazar [palace], recreates the enigmatic scene depicted in *Las Meninas*—and imagines the moments surrounding it. The camera circles the room, following the individuals depicted in the Velázquez painting; King Philip IV and Mariana of Austria—seen for centuries only as mirrored reflections on canvas—as well as servants, members of the royal family and court, and Velázquez himself.

The talented cast of *89 Seconds at Alcazar* included **Peter Dinklage '91** (*The Station Agent*) in the role of Maribárbola. The soundtrack, made up of more than 60 tracks of audio-mixing footsteps, whispers, heartbeats, and contemporary ambient noise, was designed by **Jonathan Bepler '86** (who composed the music for Matthew Barney's *The Cremaster Cycle*).

Sussman, who is also a sculptor and builder, has exhibited internationally for more than 10 years. She has received the Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and grants from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and the Jerome Foundation.

89 Seconds at Alcazar has been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and will be on view there in November. In January the piece will be shown at Rice University Gallery in Houston and will tour for the next year to international venues, including the Reina Sofia in Madrid.

Recently Becca MacLaren, *Bennington's* editor, sat down with Eve Sussman to discuss *89 Seconds at Alcazar*.

BM: What drew you to *Las Meninas*?

ES: I went to Madrid and saw the painting in the [Museo del] Prado. I thought, *It's a film still that predates photography by 200 years*. I imagined that you could invent action that leads up to that moment and action that comes out of it. That's what's so amazing about [*Las Meninas*]: There was no such thing as a snapshot then—and nobody else painted like that.

BM: Visually, it's spectacular: the rich colors, the way the characters move. It's also mysterious; you can barely make out what they're saying. Was there a narrative driving the action?

PHOTOGRAPH BY BENEDICT PARTENHEIMER FOR EVE SUSSMAN & THE RUFUS CORPORATION

ES: There was a slight narrative about how people would have entered the room—their underlying motives. We played with language not for its meaning, but for the psychology that a voice can convey. We were more interested in the psychological tensions and emotional content in the room.

BM: How did you work to explore that energy?

ES: Jeff Wood and Helen Pickett, who played the king and the queen, and Walter Sipser, who played Velásquez, worked with me doing improv for a few weeks before we went into rehearsal. Then we developed more specific blocking with the choreographer, Claudia de Serpa Soares. We had the whole group together for only two days before we began shooting. I worked with people who are amazing improvisers. That was the beauty of this ensemble—and not everybody was a professional actor.

BM: How did the piece evolve over the course of two days of rehearsing and the one day of dress rehearsal?

ES: Initially it felt way too comedic. It didn't have any of the intensity that we were looking for. It was probably partly due to the fact that everyone was moving too quickly. The pacing was really something that I had to impress upon the crew as well: *It's okay to have blank space—this is not television!* I have no interest in shooting anything that looks remotely like what you would see on television—or even mainstream movies, for that matter. The rote way of filmmaking that people learn in film school—take/countertake, close-up/long shot—is completely uninteresting to me. I'm really coming from an outsider position. I'm trying to maintain that position and still make things that, somehow, could be called motion pictures.

BM: I'm curious about your relationship with the Velásquez painting. How present was it in the making of *89 Seconds*?

ES: I was constantly worried that we weren't getting close enough. I was sort of haunted by it. Then I thought, *It will look like the painting...but it's going to be kitschy.* We had built what was really a very theatrical set and Karen Young did an amazing job replicating the costumes. So we had these huge dresses and giant wigs. It can go campy fast. You can very easily slide into bad soap opera/costume drama as soon as you put people in big dresses. To keep it in this other energy was not easy. There was a day when I realized: *This is not about just trying to make this painting come alive. It's its own thing, separate from that.*

BM: What is *89 Seconds* at Alcazar about?

ES: For me it has to do with contemporary ideas—ideas about performance and process. I'm interested in improvisation and body language. I'm interested in a kind of cinematography that I don't see too often in mainstream filmmaking—[cinematography] that's more fluid and has a formal content that is more mysterious. It has a lot to do with the way that we shot the opening of the piece; everything is quite tight and mysterious. The information is a little bit truncated. I once was asked in an interview why I cut people's heads off. It's a film school no-no. You don't shoot like that because it doesn't tell people what's going on. It does eventually, but we're not spoon-feeding the audience. There's no reason to condescend to the viewer.

BM: When did you realize that it was working—that it wasn't "kitschy"?

ES: It came together in the editing, and after putting in the effects and compositing—all that blue screen work with the windows because, obviously, we weren't shooting on a mountaintop in Spain. But even editing and seeing it on a small monitor I was unsure—it really wasn't until I saw it on the wall in the Whitney that I thought, *Okay, it's going to be all right.*

BM: You worked with an architect to recreate the salon of the Alcazar in a garage in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Was that your first experience building such an elaborate set?

ES: For years I made my money renovating buildings and houses. When I graduated from Bennington, I floundered around like most people. I came to New York and ended up doing a lot of renovation and building work. And I got a funky old loft space and had to build it out—sort of the typical New York story.

BM: It sounds like you synthesized your interests and skills in this project.

ES: Even if I'm shooting things that look more like video art, there's always a construction project involved. I like to build things that could be an art installation but also a functional space; I like when things have a dual purpose. [For *89 Seconds*], we rebuilt the space as close to the 1650 plans of the room as possible. The construction of that space was, in a way, a big installation.

BM: Did you do installation work at Bennington?

ES: I was a photographer and a printmaker at Bennington. But I always liked the object that you created to make the print—the block or the plate—more than the print itself. Even then, I would often construct spaces to shoot in. It's not such a far cry from what I'm doing now.

BM: How did Jonathan Bepler '86 develop the soundtrack?

ES: I was disappointed that we couldn't use more of Jonathan's compositional talent; this wasn't the kind of piece where he could have written a big musical work. But maybe on the next project he will. He had this lovely idea that the soundtrack would be made up of monotone vocal tracks. These tracks—sort of the inner thoughts of the characters—would create chords in the room. We used a bit of it, but we found that we needed to pull it back and be more subtle. Ultimately, I think we'll use that same concept in a new piece where I think it will fit better.

BM: Can you tell me about this new piece?

ES: I'm working on another big film project based on the myth of the Sabine women. We're doing it as an opera, a nontraditional, experimental opera, set in a marketplace in Greece; as the camera moves around the market, you sort of morph back through time. I'm looking at a lot of different paintings; I'm really interested in *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* by [Jacques-Louis] David—but I'm not trying to recreate it.

BM: What is the myth of the Sabine women?

ES: It's the story of the founding of Rome. Romulus has a city full of men and realizes it's going to die out. So he throws a festival to Neptune, invites the neighboring tribe—the Sabines—and steals a number of their women. The Sabines go [back] to attack the men of Rome. The women and children put themselves between these two factions of men to keep them from killing each other.

BM: What are you looking to explore through this myth?

ES: I'm interested in [exploring] violent or aggressive energy that isn't logical and acceptable. When you see fight choreography in movies, it's always sanitized. It's always men fighting in uniforms. Even if you're a total pacifist, you somehow sympathize with one side or the other. There's something okay about it; I mean, we've seen so much of it. I want to make this really irrational and freaky. Part of it will be that people are not going to be wearing a lot of clothes. If everybody's naked, it's much scarier. And what if you put women and children in the middle of it?

BM: How is the project moving forward?

ES: We're desperately trying to raise money now. We start casting and rehearsals this September in Athens. We'll be in pre-production for six months after that and plan to shoot in Greece next May. Going forward, we have to start working with real budgets...



Eve Sussman '84 at work filming *89 Seconds at Alcazar*.
Photograph by Eve Sussman & The Rufus Corporation.

BM: Did you work with a real budget on *89 Seconds*?

ES: No way! I had about \$20,000 to start with from a NYSCA [New York State Council on the Arts] grant and from a job I did making a video for a jeans company. I thought I could probably do it for close to that; it was ultimately a \$100,000 project. I ended up putting more than \$25,000 on credit cards. And I got more than \$50,000 in in-kind donations from HD Cinema, my primary sponsor. Jeff Blauvelt, the owner, came in as my DP [director of photography] and didn't ask for a dime—without him the piece wouldn't have happened.

BM: This new project seems especially timely now.

ES: It's always sort of timely. There hasn't been, in the last 2,000 years, a peaceful moment. There's always been a war somewhere on earth. So the idea that you're going to stop war is very utopian. But women and children somehow forcing this reconciliation—and being in the middle of this massive fight choreography...I think it could be an incredible visual and operatic moment, and one can only wish it might be a cogent one.

89 Seconds at Alcazar, a Rufus Corporation Production, was sponsored by HD Cinema and Smack Mellon Studios. The piece was made possible by additional sponsorship from The New York State Council on the Arts, Panasonic USA & UK, Digital Society Computer Center Inc., NYC, Black Magic Design, Atto Technologies, Medea Corporation and The University of Hertfordshire, UK, Dan Wurtzel Studios, NY Props, Edward Mahoney Wigs, and Materials for the Arts-DCA.

Pages 22 and 23: Photography by Eve Sussman & The Rufus Corporation (page 22 top, page 23 bottom); by Bobby Neel Adams for Eve Sussman & The Rufus Corporation (page 22 bottom); and by Benedikt Partenheimer for Eve Sussman & The Rufus Corporation (page 23 top).





Quantum leap



A RADICAL IDEA FOR KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL

by Becca MacLaren

Any explorer who discovers new terrain—physical, creative, or otherwise—begins by asking questions. Five years ago, the founders of the Quantum Leap program had a few: Could the Bennington Plan work in a public school setting? Could the Plan Process get at-risk kids excited about learning?

Susan Sgorbati '72 and **Danny Michaelson**, faculty members at Bennington for more than 20 years, with these questions in mind launched Quantum Leap. The pilot program—a mix of the Plan Process, mentoring, and mediation—aimed to tackle the alarming rates of truancy in the town's primary and secondary schools.

What started as a volunteer-run experiment has developed into a strong partnership between the College and the local public school district. Quantum Leap now serves as a model for schools all over the state and country. Its innovative and effective approach to learning has been recognized in other

ways; Quantum Leap's extraordinary growth has been made possible by generous private and public support.

To date, the program has served 155 elementary, middle, and high school students; all but five of the current students are enrolled in an accredited academic program and have shown a decrease in violent or self-destructive behavior.

"In five years, Quantum Leap went from 7 to 104 students," says Sgorbati. "We have 18 mentors working for us. Just yesterday we were saying: 'How did this happen?'"

The program grew out of what Sgorbati calls a "radical idea"—giving at-risk students responsibility to initiate their own goals. Quantum Leap students learn and practice conflict resolution skills and work to identify issues that have prevented them from succeeding. Mentors, who are Bennington students and members of the community, are trained in mediation to

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Quantum Leap in the Community

“Social relationships are a big part of what determines the spirit of a community,” says **Matthew Moss '94**, a Quantum Leap mentor. “Those relationships are something we need to build here [in Bennington].”

To strengthen the spirit of his community and to expose Quantum Leap students to career options and cultural experiences outside of school, Moss has started to collaborate with local businesses and individuals. He launched a new program last fall with the help of community member **Bill Scully '94** and the staff of Pangaea, Scully's restaurant in North Bennington. In a series of five after-school workshops, a group of teenage students learned how to prepare a gourmet meal. In kitchens donated by individuals in the community, the students worked on preparing everything from mushroom strudel to fine pastries.

Each student was responsible for preparing one course of the meal; as the culminating project, they cooked and served that meal at Scully's restaurant to a dozen guests, including an adult of their choice and several community leaders. Though they were shy at first—and a bit reluctant about unfamiliar menu items like scallops—they really came out of their shells, says Scully.

“When the students brought out all the food that they had made, they went around the restaurant saying, ‘Look what we did!’ They were so excited—they were bouncing off the walls.”

Not only the kids were excited; several diners in the packed dining room of Pangaea expressed interest in hosting the program. This support and enthusiasm is exactly what Moss was seeking.

“When you involve the community in education, kids become connected,” he said. “With this program we're looking to help students develop a relationship with what they're learning and an attachment to local people and things.”

This past spring Quantum Leap students worked with a master gardener on the design and implementation of a new garden for the courtyard at Mount Anthony Union High School.

Looking ahead, Moss is drawing on the strong relationship, forged through Quantum Leap, with Mount Anthony. He hopes to see the program integrated into classroom curriculum with students engaged and learning in—and with—the community. “We all have a lot to learn.”

Photo on left: **Bill Scully '94** teaching Casandra Simmons and Katie Loomis how to prepare a gourmet meal for “The Pangaea Project.”
Photograph by Shira Sternberg '05.

Photo on right: Tenth-grader Katie Loomis and **Shira Sternberg '05**. “Through Quantum Leap I've learned firsthand how to effect social change in public education,” says Sternberg, the new Civic Engagement Coordinator at Bennington. She calls Katie “my pride and joy.”
Photograph by Matthew Moss '94.



Support for Quantum Leap, 2003-2005

A.D. Henderson Foundation
Leir Charitable Trust
Mount Anthony Union High School
Permanent Fund for the Well-Being of Vermont Child
Southwestern Vermont Health Care Corporation
Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union
State of Vermont
Velmans Foundation
Vermont Agency of Human Services
Vermont Community Foundation
Private individuals

Quantum Leap Projects

Theater Arts Mentorship Project: a collaborative project with the Center for Restorative Justice in Bennington in which adolescents convicted of minor offenses write, direct, and produce their own plays.

What's GNU? Global Network of Understanding: an international exchange that uses the Internet to connect students at Bennington's Mount Anthony Union Middle School with students in Kenya, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

Project Leap: an after-school leadership program using an adventure-based, experiential learning approach.

Real People Theater (RPT) Project: continued collaboration with a theater group for at-risk youth in Brooklyn, NY.

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facilitate meetings between students, family members, and school personnel. They also help students develop an educational Plan that reconnects them to learning.

Michaelson says this is precisely what sets Quantum Leap apart from other mentoring programs. "It always circles back to education. That makes a Quantum Leap mentor more than a role model or a good pal."

Quantum Leap recently received support from the state of Vermont. The Governor recognized the value of the program in its importance to the community. Therefore, the Governor recommended in its fiscal year 2005 budget and the Legislature concurred that \$50,000 of the general fund should be appropriated for this program.

Named a "Best Practice" by the Vermont Agency of Human Services, the program has become a model for schools across southern Vermont. Schools in several major urban areas have also expressed interest; Sgorbati and Michaelson have consulted with educators from New York to Ohio.

A BENNINGTON APPROACH

"I just love it. I love that somebody would think of that." Danny Michaelson is talking about how one Quantum Leap mentor got a student to connect with a school subject that was difficult for him.

Last year **Nik Krause '06**, who studies Chinese, worked with an elementary school student who struggled with reading. Krause, aware of the boy's keen visual sense, introduced him to Chinese characters. Through this approach, he helped the student to make strides in his reading.

"Bennington students come up with really out-of-the-box ideas," says Michaelson. "I think that's why the mesh with the College has been so successful."

As mentors, Bennington students provide a meaningful look into a future that involves college—a future that some Quantum Leap students might not have otherwise imagined possible. Like all mentors, they undergo 20 hours of mediation training in *The Art of Negotiation and Mediation*, one of several courses taught by Sgorbati and Michaelson.

The thinking involved with Quantum Leap is not only fresh, it's also nearly limitless. Most social service agencies and people in the helping professions are limited by the types of problems they can address, notes Sgorbati. Through Quantum Leap, mentors have done everything from buying a prom dress to providing money for a family to buy groceries.

"We have the freedom to do what is necessary to help a kid get back in school," says Sgorbati. "That's pretty amazing."

“Mediation—an alternative way of dealing with conflict—works to solve problems,” says Michaelson. “It permeates everything we do. It’s the language we speak.”

THE LANGUAGE OF MEDIATION

Creative problem solving is at the heart of Quantum Leap, no accident given that Sgorbati is a dancer/choreographer and Michaelson is a costume/set designer. Their approach to problem solving—flexible but focused—comes naturally from their theater background and work as professional mediators.

“Mediation—an alternative way of dealing with conflict—works to solve problems,” says Michaelson. “It permeates everything we do. It’s the language we speak.”

In fact, Sgorbati and Michaelson had a “lightbulb moment” writing a recent grant report. “We realized that we were integrating the steps of the mediation process directly into the structure of this program,” says Sgorbati. What is known in mediation as an agreement—reached through nonjudgmental listening and exchange—is a Quantum Leap student’s Plan.

Starting this year, every student in an alternative program at Bennington’s Mount Anthony Union High School will develop an educational Plan. The high school is also taking over management of the full-time Quantum Leap classroom it has hosted since 2002.

The classroom, a space that allows students at risk of dropping out to focus on their interests and take courses in anger management, was staffed by full-time teachers who came directly out of Bennington: **Rachael Torchia ’02**, **Oona Gilles-Weil ’00**, and **Dave Cornwell MAT ’05**. This year **April West ’98**, **MAT ’06** will join the classroom staff.

Sgorbati and Michaelson have led a training workshop for the entire teaching faculty at Mount Anthony—part of their plan to hand the program over to the school.

Believing that education should involve parents, educators, school boards, supervisory unions, business people, state agencies, and especially students, Sgorbati and Michaelson are thrilled to see Quantum Leap grow and take on new shape in their community and across the state and country.

Quantum Leap—this radical idea—makes a lot of sense, says Michaelson. “Working with a person’s strengths and interests— isn’t that what education should be?”

MITCH EPSTEIN



Dave Cornwell MAT ’05, Michaelson, Sgorbati, and Jordan Caslin in the Quantum Leap classroom at Mount Anthony Union High School.

TITLE DESIGN BY ROBIN ROSENTHAL

MISSING IN ACTION:

THE WOMEN BEHIND TELEVISION'S GOLDEN AGE

Missing in Action: The Women Behind

Television's Golden Age, a documentary by wife and husband team **Molly Sackler '85** and **Jason Wulkowicz '86**, tells the story of the unsung women who helped invent television in postwar New York City. Due out in 2005, *Missing in Action* weaves together rarely seen footage of early television and interviews with women who were behind-the-scenes producers, production assistants, casting directors, directors, and writers.

The filmmakers were inspired to explore this subject when they uncovered a previously unknown chapter of Molly's mother's life—a career as a production assistant in New York City. Her mother left television to devote herself to raising a family after marrying Howard Sackler, a Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, director, and screenwriter who wrote *The Great White Hope*, *Jaws*, and a number of Stanley Kubrick's early films.

To make the film, Molly and Jason connected with a network of women—friends who worked together in television more than 50 years ago. Their stories shed new light on the birth of television and women's experiences of work before the feminist movement.

The following is an excerpt from an article written by Molly Sackler, which is available at WomenBehindTV.com.

All Americans know

June Cleaver and Alice Kramden, and everybody loves Lucy, but no one saw the often uncredited women who were behind the scenes making television in its Golden Age; now it seems they never existed. This documentary fills in the blanks made of their presence. We ask what happened to the young women who—instead of choosing the ordained roles of wives and mothers that common lore tells us was the only route for women in 1950s America—worked in television when it was a kindling medium fueling itself on people's imaginations.

The women who come out from behind the scenes and into the spotlight for this documentary are an antidote to our bland, monolithic image of the 1950s woman—and to our lackluster vision of 1950s TV, courtesy of Nickelodeon and TVLand. Just as we want to recast stereotypes of the women and television of the day, this documentary will shed the clichéd style of 50s imagery and resuscitate the authentic look of these early New York shows in its presentation and structure.

The shows had a highly stylized aesthetic—introducing Leonard Bernstein, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Eartha Kitt to America—and this documentary reflects the milieu: sophisticated, witty, angular, dry rather than sweet, urban rather than suburban, dissonant, and minimalist. There were no Lassies or *Leave it to Beavers* coming out of New York. The New York shows were live and unpredictable. If comedy was king, Broadway ruled and the live drama shows, like *Kraft Television Theatre* and *Studio One*, held audiences rapt from coast to coast nightly. If these shows weren't recorded or their kinescopes long ago destroyed, they're buried in archives and museums. *Missing in Action* showcases some of these rarely if ever re-broadcast programs.

RHODA MANN-WINKLER

Puppeteer and Voice-over

"It took about a month of salaries to buy it, but I had to buy a TV set so my father could see what I was doing...I wasn't getting credits yet, but he knew that it was Rhoda working the puppets."

A New York City kid from a modest home, Rhoda Mann taught herself to work marionettes at age 9. Her first job in show business was working as assistant to Ali Benali, the Moroccan Wonderman, aka Henry Gross of the Bronx.

At 20, she was supporting her family as the master puppeteer on *Howdy Doody*—although she later learned she was being paid as an extra. After AFTRA [American Federation of Television & Radio Artists] was formed she sued the network successfully for years of back pay—a whopping \$4,000! She was the first woman on the set permitted to wear pants—she worked the Howdy puppet on 12-foot-long strings from a bridge swaying above the studio floor. Mann was the first woman to do voice-over for a car commercial in the 1960s.



Rhoda Mann adjusts Howdy out of sight of his pint-sized fans. Photograph courtesy of Rhoda Mann-Winkler.

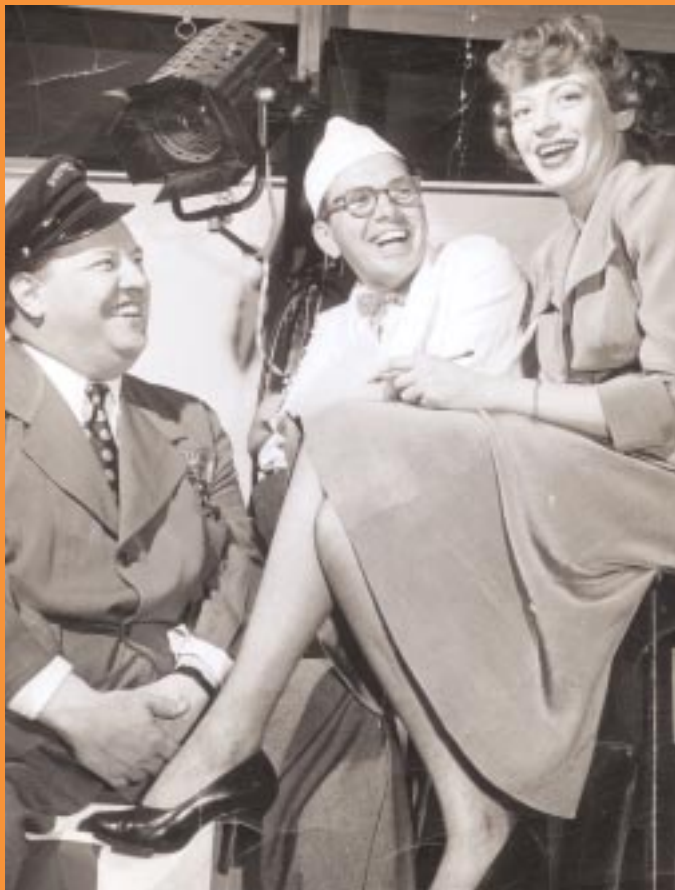
ANNETTE BACHNER

Director

"In the late 1940s I became NBC Television's first female director...by accident, not design."

Annette Bachner became the first woman director at NBC Television in 1947. She started working at NBC in 1945 when the Television Department was a staff of six relegated to one room behind the then all-important radio equipment area. The scrappy young New Yorker learned the ropes on the mobile unit, covering V-E Day, V-J Day, parades, and sports events.

After stage-managing, which, as she puts it, was mainly "potty patrol," on the *Howdy Doody* show, Bachner was promoted to director, contrary to official policy. She was in the rolls as "A. Bachner." When the network realized that A. Bachner was a woman, they squeezed her out—after she directed NBC's first televised news program. Bachner went on to a long, successful career directing and producing commercials. She was the first American to win the Golden Lion at Cannes for directing a TV commercial in the 1960s.



Director Annette Bachner with the stars of NBC's *Guess Who?* before the live broadcast. Photograph by Conrad Eiger.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NBC-TV PUBLICITY

PHYLLIS ADAMS JENKINS

Producer

"It is, however, much too cerebral for a mid-morning spotting, and it's doubtful if the program can win a viewing audience composed mainly of housewives who've got the day's cleaning and shopping worries ahead of them."

—from a 1951 *Variety* review of *What's the Problem?*
produced by Phyllis Adams

Phyllis Adams started life as a Manhattan debutante, but showed her maverick nature by traveling war-torn Europe in a USO tour of Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* before covering the Nuremberg Trials as a reporter.

Back in New York City in the 1950s, she got press as the "Girl Producer" on the first serious issue-oriented programs directed at women. Adams was the producer of *Home, What's the Problem?*, *Author Meets the Critics*, and many of Arlene Francis' programs. Believing that women were not interested merely in how to arrange flowers for the dinner table, Adams at one point risked losing her job by putting Margaret Sanger, founder of the American birth control movement, on television.

Phyllis Adams Jenkins died on February 26, 2004, in Santa Monica, CA, at the age of 80.

LELA SWIFT

Director

"I was the first generation basically that went into television and we just grew up with the medium...We would do all kinds of things using our imagination, using our ideas. We had to be gifted in some way to remain there. Because all that we had was our creativity. We had no money."

Lela Swift was the only woman directing drama shows in the 1950s, debuting on the legendary *Studio One*. She directed the cult classic *Dark Shadows* from 1966 until 1971.

Swift started out in television working as an assistant stage-manager under a woman director, Frances Buss, in the 1940s and continued her career until 1989. Although Swift was passed over five times, she finally became a director in 1951. She was warned she would only do cooking shows and advised that she should do casting instead. She had her first child while working on *The Web* in the 1950s and she recalls when her toddler son walked into a party of directors (who were men) and said, "You can't be a director. A director is a mommy."



Budding director Lela Swift invents stage managing signals in a late 1940's CBS show. Photograph courtesy of CBS Television Publicity.

*To learn more about Missing in Action:
The Women Behind Television's Golden Age,
visit www.WomenBehindTV.com.*

*You can also contact Molly and Jason at 914-235-7289
or info@WomenBehindTV.com.*

Molly Sackler '85

(Producer/Director/Writer)

Molly is a writer, editor, and former academic who has turned her expertise to the documentary form. After a stint in publishing, she taught at NYU while working toward her doctorate in English literature. She was the Robert Halsband Fellow and presented her work at international forums. Molly recently made her first video short *Valediction*, which premiered at the 2003 Reel Venus Film Festival at Symphony Space in New York City.

Jason Wulkowicz '86

(Producer/Director/Director of
Photography/Editor)

Jason has been a producer, director, director of photography, and editor for more than 17 years. He codirected his first feature, *Blood Harvest*, with **Nathan Thompson '86**. The piece was shot on location at Bennington College, with an all-Bennington cast and crew. He graduated with the first degree in video from Bennington College. In Chicago he built and managed a 24,000-square-foot production facility, which included a five camera video soundstage, two editing suites, a film soundstage, and satellite uplink. Jason has shot and edited nonfiction works (including *Waste Not, Want Not*) that have appeared on cable and PBS.

faculty notes

Final Cut: *The Making of "Heaven's Gate" and the Unmaking of a Studio*, a documentary based on the landmark book by **Steven Bach**, aired on the cable channel TRIO in June. The documentary tells the behind-the-scenes story of one of Hollywood's most notorious failures. *Final Cut* screened at the Toronto International Film Festival in September. The documentary also played in October—on a bill with *Heaven's Gate*—at the Film Forum in New York City.

Poetry by **April Bernard** recently appeared in *The Nation*.

As president of the Electronic Music Foundation, **Joel Chadabe** will coproduce two evenings of music in December at Le Palais de Tokyo in Paris. In October he was keynote speaker for Atelier Improvisation avec l'ordinateur/Workshop on Improvisation with Computers at IRCAM in Paris. In November Chadabe was a guest panelist in a discussion on the future of electronic music at the International Computer Music Conference in Miami, FL.

Along with Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, and others, **Man-sour Farhang** weighed in on "How to Get Out of Iraq" in the May 24 issue of *The Nation*.

Marguerite Feitlowitz was keynote speaker at the New England Translators Association (NETA) Annual Conference, held in Marlborough, MA, May 1–2. Her talk was entitled "'The Only Safe Words Are Our Words': Translation in Times of Repression."

The July issue of *Harpers Magazine* included "The Landscape Listens," an essay by **Edward Hoagland**. Selections from his journals appeared this fall in *American Scholar*.

Kirk Jackson appeared in two productions of *Stones in his Pockets* by Marie Jones, a recent winner of London's Oliver Award for Best Comedy. He performed in a Phoenix, AZ, production in January, and in Glens Falls, NY, in July. This summer Jackson was the assistant director of Ivo van Hove's production of *Hedda Gabler* at the New York Theatre Workshop.

An exhibition of large salted paper prints by **Jonathan Kline** was at the Silpe Gallery at the Hartford Art School this past summer. For this series, Kline used a technique created at the dawn of photography in 1834, shooting in the landscape with his own handbuilt 20 x 24 camera.

Scott Lehrer designed sound for Steven Sondheim's *The Frogs*. The musical, starring Nathan Lane and directed by Susan Stroheim, opened at Lincoln Center this past summer. Lehrer also designed sound for *Rodney's Wife*, written and directed by Richard Nelson, at the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

Simon Silber: Works for Solo Piano, a novel by **Christopher Miller**, has been translated into French, Dutch, and Japanese. Under the French title *Variations en fou majeur*, it won the prestigious Prix PellÉas for best book on music published in 2003—the first time a novel has been so honored. The film rights to *Simon Silber* have been optioned by Leonardo DiCaprio.

In February **Ann Pibal** was in residence at Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, NY. In May she exhibited a small group of paintings at Pierogi Gallery in Brooklyn. Her work was also included in "About Painting," an exhibition at the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY.

Mirka Prazak gave a presentation at the American Ethnological Society Meeting in Atlanta, GA. Her paper, "Genital Cutting as a Threshold in Identity Formation in Rural Kenya," was part of a session that she co-organized with Janice Stockard of the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research.

Jean Randich directed *Antigone* this past summer for the National Asian American Theatre Company at Intar 53 Theatre in New York City. **Sue Rees** designed the sets and **Colleen Jennings '05** was assistant stage manager.

Swept Away, a video short by **Sue Rees**, was chosen for the Thailand New Media Festival held in Bangkok in February. She designed the sets for Len Jenkin's *Like I Say* at The Flea Theater Tribeca and for *The Internationalist* by Anne Wash-

continued on page 34

faculty bookshelf

P *Prime Times: Writers on Their Favorite Television Shows* (Crown Books), edited by **Douglas Bauer**, was released this year. The book includes pieces by Bennington contributors **April Bernard**, **Sven Birkerts**, **Susan Cheever**, and **Jill McCorkle**.

The Curse of the Appropriate Man (Harcourt) is a collection of 14 short stories by **Lynn Freed**, award-winning author of five novels. Written over the past 10 years, Freed's stories explore the complex, often preposterous, relationships between mothers and daughters, men and women, and masters and slaves.

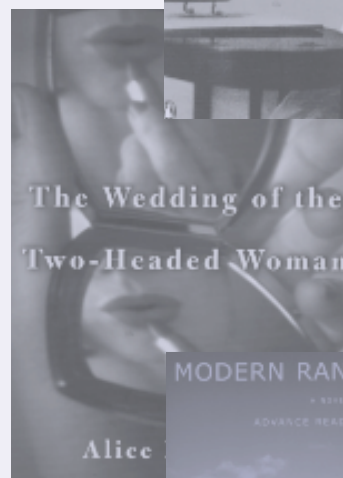
Ghost Girl (Penguin Poets) is the latest collection of poems by MFA faculty member **Amy Gerstler**. Using a variety of voices, Gerstler writes playful monologues on subjects ranging from a doll hospital to a reincarnation of the Delphi oracle in an adolescent girl. *The Los Angeles Times* calls Gerstler, a 2000 graduate of the Bennington Writing Seminars, "a resourceful, gifted writer...completely in control of her material."

Alice Mattison has published *The Wedding of the Two-Headed Woman* (William Morrow), her fourth novel. Revisiting a character from one of her critically acclaimed short story collections, Mattison explores the complex life of Daisy Andalusia, a woman in her 50s who marries a mysterious New Haven landlord, then becomes involved with a vastly different man. In a starred review of her book, *Kirkus Reviews* says that "Mattison's voice is like that of no one else writing today."

Modern Ranch Living (Miramax) is the second novel by **Mark Jude Poirier**, an acclaimed author whom the *Times Literary Supplement* recently cited as *the* young American writer to watch. Set just outside of Tucson, Poirier's darkly comic story follows three malcontented youth through one long summer in their run-down desert town.

Former Bennington faculty member **Arturo Vivante** has published *Solitude and Other Stories* (Notre Dame Press), winner of the 2004 Richard Sullivan Prize in Short Fiction. Author Elizabeth Spencer says that Vivante's semi-autobiographical stories—three of which take place at Bennington College—"glow with a special radiance."

The Curse goes
here



Art History Project Lecture Series – Spring 2004

CYNTHIA LOCKLIN



The newly established Art History Project continued this year with a series of provocative lectures. Faculty members **Donald Shere-fkin, Andy Spence, and Steven Bach** [L-R] explored architecture, art, and film. Their lectures were entitled, respectively, “Notes on the History of the Window,” “Art of the ’50s and ’60s,” and “A Perspective on Film History.”

burn, produced by 13P at Culture Project in New York City. That play was directed by Ken Russell Schmoll, with lighting by **Garin Marschall '00**. Rees also produced a live video feed for Joe Poulson’s dance performance, choreographed by **Terry Creach**, at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. This year she was an artist-in-residence at Middlebury College’s dance program and at the Vermont Carving and Sculpture Center in Rutland.

Dana Reitz spent part of her summer at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts. She taught a dance workshop for students, and co-taught a movement and light workshop for dance and design faculty.

Last spring **Isabel Roche** published an article entitled “Inscribing his Ideal Reader(ship): Victor Hugo and the Shaping of le lecteur pensif” in *French Forum* (Volume 28, No. 2).

Chamber Music, a new CD of music by **Allen Shawn**, was issued by Albany Records in August. It includes “Childhood Scenes” played by pianist Yoshiko Sato, “Episodes” for cello and piano with Maxine Neuman on cello and Shawn on piano, and String Quartet No. 4, played by the Music from Salem quartet.

This past summer **Sally Sugarman** attended the Children’s Literature New England Institute at Williams College where participants examined how literature for children and young adults reflects the contemporary world. Along with serving on the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award Committee, she contributed to a new encyclopedia of children’s literature.

Brad Verter has been appointed a fellow of l’Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris for 2004–05.

Last summer **Paul Voice** presented a paper entitled “Radical Pluralism and the Possibility of Justice” at the World Philosophy Congress in Istanbul, Turkey. He also addressed “Democ-

ratic Constructivism,” at the International Political Science Association Meeting in Durban, South Africa. This past summer Voice was a Hugh Le May Fellow in Philosophy at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa.

Bruce Williamson recently performed at the Jazz Bakery in Los Angeles with trumpeter and film score composer Mark Isham, and at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, SC, with the Fred Hersch Ensemble, featuring vocalist Kurt Elling. He also recorded and performed at CAMI Hall in NYC with Manhattan New Music Project. In October he recorded selections from Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, with music composed by Fred Hersch.

Kerry Woods has been selected to serve as the program chair for the 2007 national meetings of the Ecological Society of America. He presented at the Society’s annual meeting in Portland, OR and at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. This past spring Woods also participated in a National Park Service workshop at Acadia National Park.

MFA FACULTY NOTES

Sven Birkerts attended the Cuirt Literary Festival in Galway, Ireland, where he read with Alastair MacLeod. He has recently published essays and reviews in *Bookforum*, *Speakeasy*, *The Believer*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *Post Road*.

The Virginia Quarterly Review featured work by **Tom Bissell** in the “Fiction’s New Luminaries” issue. His story “God Lives in St. Petersburg,” published last year in *McSweeney’s*, won a Pushcart Prize. His essays and journalism also appeared in *Agni*, *9th Letter*, *Gentlemen’s Quarterly*, *Harper’s*, *Premiere*, and *The Believer*.

Middle Earth, a book of poems by **Henri Cole**, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, *The Los Angeles Times* Book Award, and the

Lambda Literary Award. Cole had poems and an interview published in a recent *American Poetry Review* and received an Award in Literature from the Academy of Arts and Letters.

This past summer **Martha Cooley** taught fiction at the 92nd Street Y and lectured at the second annual Tuscan Arts Festival in Cartona, Italy. She recently published work in *Agni* and was a panelist for fellowships in fiction at the Massachusetts Arts Council. She is currently teaching in the graduate writing program at Boston University.

Poems by **Amy Gerstler** were recently published in *Court Green*, *The Sycamore Review*, *The Columbia Poetry Review*, *The DMQ Review*, and *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present*.

"The Death Mask" by **Lyndall Gordon** is included in *Lives for Sale: Biographer's Tales* (Continuum). Gordon read her piece on "Book of the Week" on BBC Radio 4. The tales coincide with the publication of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which includes articles by Gordon on Virginia Woolf and Vivienne Eliot.

"In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson is Buried," a short story by **Amy Hempel**, was recently read by Sigourney Weaver at Symphony Space in New York City, as part of a program organized by David Sedaris. Hempel was in residence at the Vermont Studio Center and gave a reading with David Gates at UMass Amherst.

"Identity," an essay by **Sheila Kohler**, was published in the summer issue of *Salmagundi*. Her story "Violence" was featured in the *Antioch Review*, and an essay about her daughter appeared in *O* magazine.

David Lehman has poems in recent issues of *Poetry*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Boston Review*, *Cue*, *Sentence*, *Green Court*, *American Poetry Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Slate*, *Open City*, *Poetry Daily*, and *The Hat*. His essay on Emma Lazarus appeared in *Smithsonian*, and he has been writing "lost and found" columns on great neglected books for *Tin House*.

An essay written by **Alice Mattison** recently appeared in *Southwest Review*, and two of her stories were included in *Glimmer Train*. This past summer she taught at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA.

E. Ethelbert Miller curated "All the Stories Are True: African American Writers Speak," an exhibition on view until the end of the year at the Smithsonian Anacostia Museum & Center for African American History and Culture. His work was featured in *Intimacy: Erotic Stories of Love, Lust, and Marriage by Black Men*, and *Sheets for Men Only: International Anthology of Poetry and Prose*. Miller spoke on behalf of Bennington's Writing

Seminars at a recent meeting at the Hurston/Wright Foundation. In November he will be a Fulbright scholar in Israel.

Rick Moody will be a writer-in-residence at Bennington's Writing Seminars in January.

George Packer has been covering Iraq for *The New Yorker*, where he is now a staff writer.

Poetry by **Liam Rector** was featured in *Southern Indiana Review* and *Agni*. His poems and a remembrance of Jane Kenyon appeared in *American Poetry Review*, and in October he read for the Poetry Society of America at The New School.

The latest issue of *Post Road* has an interview with **Elizabeth Searle**. She has a novel excerpt entitled "The Thing About Hinckley" in a new magazine called *Other*, available at Tower Records.

Bob Shacochis judged the 2003 fiction fellowships for the National Endowment for the Arts. His book of short stories, *Easy in the Islands*, and novel, *Swimming in the Volcano*, were recently reissued by Grove/Atlantic.

This past summer **Jason Shinder** was a visiting poet at the Hellenistic International Arts Institute in Greece. His poetry has recently appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *P-Town Arts Chapbook 2004*, and *Never Before*, an anthology edited by Laure-Anne Bosselaar.

OTHER NOTES

Former faculty member **Pat Adams** had an exhibition of 14 small works at the Bennington Museum this past summer. In a review in the *Bennington Banner*, **Stephen Sandy** called the paintings "joyful and sobering at once; they're lusciously serious."

Betsy Burris, associate director of Bennington's Center for Creative Teaching (CCT), presented a paper in September at the Complexity Science and Educational Research Conference for 2004, in Kingston, ON. Her paper compared perceptions of classroom "reality" using two different lenses: a traditional, mechanistic lens and an enactivist, ecological lens.

Jennifer Hyatt, acting director of the CCT, and **Betsy Burris** were awarded a grant from Vermont Campus Compact (through the Maine Campus Compact) to incorporate service learning into Bennington's student teaching curriculum. The grant supports the development of an ongoing collaboration between the CCT and the local early childhood, elementary, and high schools where student teachers work.

Can you help me fix this?

30s “Sofia’s Ladder,” an article that appeared in *The Patriot Ledger* (Quincy, MA) last summer, described a special ladder built by **Mary Gregory ’36**. Gregory, an accomplished architect and woodworker, built a ladder that allowed her cat Sofia to get in and out of her second-floor room at the New England Friends Home in Hingham, MA. “I’ve had a nifty life,” she said. “I’m ready to go, but I will have a good time until it happens.”

Frances (McElwain) Wakeman ’36 has been recognized by The New England Women’s Fund, a not-for-profit organization whose goal is to increase opportunities for women and girls through sports. In 2003 Wakeman was inducted into The New England Women’s Sports Hall of Fame for Sailing. She is four-time winner of the prestigious Adams Cup (1935–38). She served as a Trustee of the Cup from 1947–2001.

40s “I have moved to a delightful retirement community with lots of nice people and things to do,” writes **Anne Thomas Conklin ’40**. “I’m still busy with my sculpture and had a show of my work last year.”

In June **Carol Channing ’42** was presented with the 2004 Oscar Hammerstein Award at the York Theater in NYC.

Elizabeth Wheeler LoMele ’42 writes: “My husband of 64 years, Albert C. LoMele, died on December 27, 2003, after the long descent into Alzheimer’s Disease. I live in a wonderful retirement community in Santa Barbara, CA, and

continue to enjoy art and writing.”

“I went many times to Washington to protest the Iraq war,” reports **Madi (Blach) Lanier ’43**. She is also kept busy with courses at the Institute for Retired Persons (IRP), a peer-learning program at The New School in NYC. Along with giving a talk each semester for *Art in New York Museums*, she has shown watercolors and prints at the IRP, the West Side Arts Coalition, and the Sheffield Art League. *Gallery & Studio* magazine praised her ability to “simultaneously evoke the natural mystery of a forest and make a nuanced formal statement.”

Both **Louise (Wachman) Spiegel ’46** and her husband, Honorable S. Arthur Spiegel, received 2004 Beacon of Light Humanitarian Awards from Light-house Youth Services. The organization, based in Spiegel’s native Cincinnati, called her “a community servant in the truest sense.” She has worked with the Urban Appalachian Council, AmeriCorps, Cincinnati Human Rights Commission, and Children’s Defense Fund, among others.

The Woodcuts, an exhibition of work by **Helen Frankenthaler ’49**, was at NYC’s Salander-O’Reilly Galleries in March.

50s “All’s well,” writes **Kay Brown Cunningham ’50**. “I’m still golfing twice a week, singing with the Village Voices and playing bridge. We’re in Arizona for 8½ months and Cape Cod for 3½. No complaints!”

Nina Pattison ’50 is “alive and well and

living with Catherine, the cat, and Rosey, the dachshund. I am also practicing piano and doing community stuff.”

Mary (Carpe) DeSantis ’51 is retired; she spends winters in Sharon, CT, and summers on Block Island. She also raises pugs (“for fun and no profit”).

In the spring **Emily Mason Kahn ’54** exhibited paintings at the Lew Allen Gallery in Santa Fe, NM.

Carol Rubenstein ’55 has received a Saltonstall Foundation grant for poetry. “I arrived in Ithaca, NY, in 1989 to archive my Borneo papers for Cornell’s Kroch Library, Rare and Manuscript Division. After many years in far transit, I am enjoying this pleasant little city.”

According to a review in the *Austin American-Statesman*, **Latifah (Irene Ryan) Taormina ’55** “kindled a veritable onstage fire as the excitable Louise” in *Always...Patsy Cline* at the Zachary Scott Theatre in Austin, TX. Taormina—in her first stage role since the ’70s—played the part of a Houston fan who had a three-year correspondence with the country singer.

“I am now the grandmother of four boys,” writes **Uli Beigel Monaco ’56**, who has another grandchild on the way. As a recent retiree, she enjoys travel, exercise, reading, writing, political activities, and “having free time for the first time since graduating from college.”

Sculptor, painter, and community artist **Nina Gelles Koepcke ’57** was recently

awarded a fellowship from the Arts Council Silicon Valley. In June her work was exhibited at The Triton Museum of Art in Santa Clara, CA.

Carole Ione Lewis '59 sends news: "I am currently curator of the Gallery at Deep Listening Space and artistic director of the Pauline Oliveros Foundation, Inc., a not-for-profit arts organization based in Kingston, NY. My book, *Pride of Family: Four Generations of American Women of Color—a New York Times* Notable Book—will be republished in October by Doubleday

Books/Broadway Books, a division of Random House, as a part of their Harlem Moon Classics imprint. For more information, visit www.deeplisting.org/ione."

60s After 42 years of making porcelain pottery, **Laurie Vance Adams '60** has switched mediums to paint in watercolor and acrylic. "It's exciting to start a new career at this point in my life." As for her children, "My daughter Sarah and her husband are parents of 2-year-old Hannah,

and [son] Matt and his wife live in Colorado."

In March **Liz Mamorsky '60** exhibited work in *Present Identity*, a group show at 8th Street Studio in San Francisco. A solo exhibition of her acrylic Op Art and Organic Abstraction paintings from the 1960s and '70s was at San Francisco's Design Within Reach studio in April.

The work of **Patricia Johanson '62** is featured in *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958–1968* (The MIT Press),

continued on page 33



High school sweethearts **Ruth Milidonis '48** and Donald Gerlach pose on the steps in front of Commons in 1944 and again in 2001. Milidonis writes that, after long marriages to others, they became reacquainted in 1997.

Taking Creative Risks

FRAN (GROSSMAN) BULL '60

“My time at Bennington defined my life,” says **Fran (Grossman) Bull '60**. “From it, I took courage to pursue quite a risky course: to be an artist. My fellow students, the faculty, that setting—it was an extraordinary experience...maybe that’s why I circled back around.”

Bull, a painter and performance artist based in New Jersey, returned to Vermont five years ago to set up a second home and studio. With local designers and builders from the McKernon Group, Bull created her dream space in a structure familiar to Bennington alumni: a converted barn.

While her sun-drenched studio in Brandon has a classic haybarn shape with post and beam construction, its function is obviously creative. Gesturing to a worktable cluttered with tubes of paint, Bull said she was starting a new series. “I’m going through the pangs of birth,” she admitted. “Whenever I begin a new body of work, it’s like I’ve never done it before.”

Difficult as beginnings may be, Bull is a prolific artist. Her paintings are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC. She’s shown her work in exhibitions at the Sylvia White Gallery in New York City and Los Angeles, the New York Academy of Sciences, the Fisher Fine Art Gallery in London, and the Chicago International Art Exposition. Bull earned a MA in Fine Art and Education from New York University, where she taught for five years in the early 1980s.

During the ‘80s, Bull achieved commercial success with her photorealist paintings. But while the work sold, she remembers feeling discontent. “I knew I had so much more in me as an artist. I went to Ireland for a retreat with a trunkful of art supplies. I thought it would be easy to develop a new direction; I thought, *Now I’ll be myself*,” she laughed. “I sat in the cottage where I was staying and I panicked: *I don’t know what to do!*” After breaking

through that, she produced “13 Moons of the *Magdelene*,” a series of acrylic paintings of which she is especially proud.

In addition to visual arts, she’s also turned her creative attention to poetry and performance. “As I develop a work, it tends to demand a certain medium,” she explained. “I have to make a journey and trust that the work will reveal itself.”

Whether the revelation takes place on a canvas or a stage, in abstract or figurative form, there’s always an element of theatricality. “I like my work to have a certain drama, a vivid quality,” she said. Theatricality has long played a central role in Bull’s creative life; at Bennington, her primary focus of study was opera.

Bull’s love of performance influenced the design of her Brandon studio; free of beams or partitions, the 30 x 40 foot space also functions as a stage. Last summer Bull performed in a concert with two other singers. “Three Sopranos” was accompanied by an exhibition in Gallery-in-the-Field, the second wing of Bull’s unusual, beautiful H-shaped building.

Beyond creating a spectacular studio/gallery in Vermont, Bull continues to seek new directions for her creative impulses. She traveled to Barcelona in 2001 to collaborate with a master printer. Last year she made her film debut in *Dakota*, which she described as “slow paced, with a David Lynch feel.”

Beyond creating a spectacular studio/gallery in Vermont, Bull continues to seek new directions for her creative impulses. She traveled to Barcelona in 2001 to collaborate with a master printer. Last year she made her film debut in *Dakota*, which she described as “slow paced, with a David Lynch feel.” Perhaps the most meaningful of her recent artistic journeys took place in the Czech Republic, where she went to teach at the University of West Bohemia in Pilzen. “My students did the most incredible, beautiful work. They really caught fire,” she said.

“I knew I was bringing something of the spirit of Bennington to them— something they needed as they struggled to move beyond the years of Communist rule. It was the mandate so palpable at Bennington: *Work hard and become all you can and all you dream.*”



BECCA MACLAREN

—Becca MacLaren

edited by Ann Goldstein. Included are photos of her installation of *Color Room* in Paul Feeley's office on the third floor of Bennington's Commons. In a statement for an exhibition of her work at the College's Usdan Gallery in 1973, Johanson described *Color Room*: "[It] consisted of an over-life-size irregularly faceted orange 'space': the 'room' (Paul Feeley's office) with its walls, floor, and sloping roof completely covered with orange paper. Once having entered, you were outside part of the sculpture, inside the rest. Together they united to form a non-decorative color-space in which different 'compositions' could be created by moving through the work."

Linda (Appleman) Guidall-Shapiro '63 writes: "Our darling grandson, Eric, will soon be three and we find ourselves—along with all grandparents we know—madly in love! I continue in my private psychotherapy practice, along with writing; husband George Guidall has just been nominated for his third Audie Award for best narration—this time for *Don Quixote*. Our Renaissance daughter Mia—singer, poet, and social worker—is now employed in the world of finance; and Eric's mom, Karen, is a health educator. We count our blessings!"

"After moving several times in the last 18 years," writes **Suzi (Brandt) Lipés '64**, "my husband and I finally bought a home. I've told all my friends, 'The wandering Jews are home at last!' At 61, I still love my 'new' nursing career (started at age 42) and have no plans to retire. My daughter, Julie, son-in-law, Doug Shapiro, and granddaughter,

Naomi, live in Chappaqua, NY. My son Ken is in LA. Visiting is fun!"

Jane Wechsler '66 writes: "I have just completed my 22nd year of directing and teaching (part time) at the Montessori Family School, which I founded in Berkeley in 1981. We were able to purchase our preschool site and are now in the process of looking for a suitable site for our elementary school. I have had the pleasure of having two Bennington students spend their FWT at the school. My endless gratitude goes to Bennington for its unlimited inspiration."

Ellen Wilbur '66 sends word from Cambridge, MA. She edited *The Consolations of God and Great Sermons of Phillips Brooks* (Erdmans Publishers, Fall 2003). Her most recent story appeared in *The Yale Review*. She's also working on a collection of new and selected stories.

Deborah Shapiro Krasner '69 is offering culinary vacation programs in Putney, VT, and Umbria, Italy. To learn more, visit www.deborahkrasnerversmont.com.

70s After five years in Melbourne, Australia, **Christopher Johnstone '71** and his wife, Louise, have returned to Auckland, New Zealand, to be close to their grandchild, Isobel. In Melbourne Johnstone was responsible for sponsorship at Heide Museum of Modern Art and then the Frankston Arts Centre. Now he is back to freelance work and is organizing a commercial exhibition of British drawings for November.

Goldie Morgentaler '71 wrote to announce the publication of two of her translations from Yiddish to English. The books are by her mother Chava Rosenfarb, a holocaust survivor and one of the last great writers of Yiddish literature. *Survivors: Seven Short Stories* (Cormorant Books, Toronto) deals with the afterlives of holocaust survivors who have settled in Canada and the U.S. after the war. *Survivors* should be available in the U.S. this fall. The other translation is the first volume of *The Tree of Life*, Rosenfarb's epic novel about the Lodz ghetto, which the University of Wisconsin Press is publishing in three separate volumes. *Volume I, On the Brink of Precipice, 1939*, will also be available in the fall.

Christiane Stahl '71 writes: "I'm a MD at the University of Illinois at Chicago, in charge of the Adolescent Medicine Section for the Department of Pediatrics. The eldest of my three sons, Michael Stahl-David, made equity last fall in a production of *The Goat* at the Goodman Theater in Chicago. I am married to Richard David—who I met at the Bennington snack bar as a freshman."

Dancer **David Appel '72** recently performed with guitar player Loren Connors in 2004 *Improvised and Otherwise: A Festival of Sound and Form*. The festival took place in April at the Williamsburg Art neXus in Brooklyn.

"I'm still living on Firefly Pond Farm in Tallahassee, FL, with my geriatric horses," reports **Randie Denker '72**. "My daughter, Gaea, graduated magna cum laude from Cornell and is now off to film school. I have already prewrit-

ten her Oscar acceptance speech in which she profusely thanks her wonderful mother. I spend about 25 percent of my time now in Costa Rica in the rain forest, working on environmental projects. I run my own environmental law firm (now in its 23rd year!).”

Richard Fishman '73 sends word: “After many years in California and Vermont (and never before submitting to this publication), I am now in Washington, DC, which I find fascinating, beautiful, and astoundingly humid. I recently launched my own firm—Fishman Design—providing expertise in graphic design, exhibit design, and marketing strategies. We focus primarily on small businesses, institutions, and rising entrepreneurs. I send warm greetings to the folks from the San Francisco alumni group and encourage anyone to reach me—for friendship, business, or both—at fishlegs@starpower.net.

“I own a fine sewing business in San Francisco called Laurel Sprigg, Inc.,” writes **Laurel Sprigg '73**. Along with making beautiful things for the interior design trade, she has work on display in the San Francisco Design Center. “I have written many articles for *THREADS* magazine, and regularly teach interior sewing in the Bay Area,” she writes. “In June I spoke to the Textile Arts Council at the Legion of Honor Museum on the history of drapery and curtains. On a personal note, I have been married for 21 years to Alan Briscoe, and my son, Jordan, is a senior in high school. I sing in the SF Choral Society and study opera singing privately. I welcome contact with old

classmates.” To see her work or to get in touch, visit www.laurelsprigg.com.

Bernie Perlmutter '75 is beginning his 10th year as a clinical professor of law, director of the University of Miami School of Law Children & Youth Law Clinic, and clinical fellow at the Center for Ethics and Public Service. The Children & Youth Law Clinic received awards for its advocacy last year from the Clinical Legal Education Association, the National Association of Counsel for Children, and the Florida Bar Foundation. Perlmutter is married to Pamela Chamberlin, an attorney, and has a 10-year-old son, David Lucas. He can be reached at bperlmut@law.miami.edu.

Brant Houston '76 was recently promoted to professor at the Journalism School at the University of Missouri. He is executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors, a nonprofit association and educational institute of 5,000 members.

For 20 years **Katy (Redfield) Bresee '77** lived in Oslo, Norway, working professionally as a dancer and choreographer. “A week before 9/11, I returned to the U.S. with my daughter and moved to Newton Centre, MA, outside of Boston.” Her e-mail address is krbreesee@earthlink.net.

From the Maine coast, **Cindy Kallet '77** sends news: “I have two sons, Arthur, 17, and Gabriel, 14. I teach guitar at home and travel around the country to perform and teach. I’ve built and helped build a couple of houses. I’ve also been

a local La Leche League Leader, helping breastfeeding mothers and their families. Over the years I’ve recorded eight albums—five of them solo and three with other musicians. Last year I finished *The Cindy Kallet Songbook*, a collection of 32 original songs for guitar and voice. In between all of those projects, I’ve been part of the trio of Cindy Kallet, Ellen Epstein, and Michael Cicone. We have two recordings on the Overall Music label. For more information, visit www.overallmusic.com.”

In May **Lorca Peress '79** married Leonard Fusco, her “romantic partner of 20 years.” She was recently curator for the Strasberg Studio (where she also teaches) in NYU’s hotINK Festival. She directed several new play readings for Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, and judged Repertorio Espanol’s Nueces Voces Contest. Peress, the founder and artistic director of MultiStages, produced its New Works Festival last fall. This spring she directed Melody Cooper’s *Day of Reckoning* at The Kraine Theater in NYC. Cooper was the winner of the MultiStages 2003 New Works Playwriting Contest. Judges in that contest included **Judy Dennis '78**, **Laura Shelton Bassin '81**, and **Maryann Mazzacaro '81**, a MultiStages board member. *Day of Reckoning* featured set and costume designs by **Peter Janis '82**. To get in touch, e-mail her at lperess@nyc.rr.com.

Erin Quinn '79 writes: “I am in my 21st year at the University of Southern California (USC). It has been a great place for my career. I am the Dean of Admissions for the Keck School of Medicine

and teach at both the medical school and in the undergraduate Baccalaureate MD program. My son, Brian, is a junior at USC and Anna and Tamara, 18, start college this fall. Time flies. Love to all my Bennington friends.”

80s **Eva Salzman '81** recently received a Cholmondeley Award from The Society of Authors and an Arts Council of England Writers Award. Her fiction has appeared on BBC Radio, and she is currently writing an original opera libretto for Buxton Festival 2005. Her mini-opera, written with her composer father, Eric Salzman, has been performed in Dusseldorf, Vienna, and Oslo. Her poems recently appeared in *Kenyon Review* and in the online journal *Mot Juste*. Last fall she toured Ireland and returned to the U.S. to give readings in NYC, and to teach at the New Hampshire Writer's Project. Her new book, *Double Crossing: New and Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe, UK) is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation.

Bryan Dechter '82 lives with his wife, Jia Wildwyn, and son, Sequoyah Wildwyn-Dechter, in Zionville, NC, near Boone. They moved to this Appalachian Mountain region in 2000, after six years on the central coast of Maine. Dechter is a painter, photographer, and graphic designer. Since 1997 he has been designing websites and various print media graphic projects with his company, Dancing Eyes Design (www.dancingeyes.com).

Sarah Gates '82 sends word from Greensboro, NC: “We moved south of

the Mason-Dixon Line two years ago and haven't looked back. Puppy, cats—no kids. After 10 years in business and a recent series of lay-offs, I am headed back to graduate school, this time in history. Would love to hear from old classmates, circa 1978–80. Bennington was a long time ago, but the days there were indelible.” Sarah's e-mail address is sarahg332@aol.com.

“In the last five years my husband, Matthew, and I have expanded our family,” reports **Susan (Kaufer) Carey '83**. “Our two daughters—Hannah, 5, and Ella, 2—were both born at home. They are a daily reminder of how life is supposed to be! We bought a home where Matthew (an artist and production designer) and I each have a studio. I work as a fine art portrait photographer. Matthew and I were in an exhibit together in a gallery in Santa Monica. I love having my studio on our property because it allows me to work and be close to the girls. Hannah is learning to be my assistant! I am also writing a book. Life is rich and we feel blessed.”

Michael Shari '84 has returned to New York after nearly 20 years in Asia. Shari was a freelance writer in Bangkok, Tokyo, and Jakarta from 1985–93 and wrote for *Time*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Miami Herald*, *BusinessWeek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Agence France-Presse*. As Singapore bureau chief on the expatriate staff of *BusinessWeek*, he covered the fall of Suharto and won journalism awards from Columbia, the Overseas Press Club of America, the Society of Professional Journalists, and Amnesty Inter-

national, among others. Shari, a McGraw-Hill editor, lives in Brooklyn with his wife and two daughters and can be reached at mshari@nyc.rr.com.

With his six-piece ensemble, The Panorama Jazz Band (www.panorama-jazzband.com), and his eight-piece street band, The Panorama Brass Band, **John “Ben” Schenck '86**, played twice at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in April and May. The jazz band has been performing locally and abroad since 1995; the brass band formed this year to play for Mardi Gras parades. Schenck and his “longtime paramour,” Ama Rogan, were wed in New Orleans in October 2002. They have also bought a double-shotgun house to which they are completing renovations.

Since March of last year **Regina Walker '86** has been a monthly contributing writer to *The Philosophical Mother* magazine (www.philosophicalmother.com). Her work has appeared in *Hip Mama*, *widdershins*, *The Future Generation*, *Motherevolution*, *Motherload*, *Commie Mommie*, *Community Mother Magazine*, *Athesist Bear*, and the online magazine www.stickyournckout.com. She is the author of the “Clinical Viewpoint” column in the *Substance Abuse Letter* published by Pace Publications. She can be reached at cswcasac@aol.com.

Monica D. Church '87 received the Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Best in Show Award for *Nesting*, a handmade paper installation, at the 55th Annual Art of the Northeast exhibition. The exhibition—held at the Silver Mine

Guild Arts Center in New Canaan, CT—was juried by Maurice Tuchman, senior curator emeritus at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This spring LoRiver Arts Gallery in Beacon, NY, presented “Inside the Hula Hoop,” an exhibition of her paintings.

Cynthia Katz '87, who heads the Visual Arts Department at Concord Academy in Concord, MA, sent word: “Last fall **Erica Wurtz '87** and I exhibited together at the Drury Gallery at Marlboro College. I was also part of “Plant Matters,” a group exhibition at the New Art Center in Newton, MA. I was invited to show my work and to sit on a panel called “Conversations” at the Concord Art Association, moderated by Arlette Kayafas of Boston’s Kayafas Gallery. I’m a single mom of a 13-year-old son who was bar mitzvahed in February. A big year!”

Hillsboro, NH, potter **Gary Edward Rith '87** passed the review and was selected as a State Juried Member of the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen. The League is a statewide organization devoted to promoting and exhibiting fine crafts. “Thanks go back more than 20 years to Stanley Rosen and Jane Aebersold, two wonderful ceramics instructors.”

Ehran Elisha '88 earned a MA at Wesleyan before settling in NYC, where he performs, records, and teaches music. “I have four CDs out and lead a few different groups, such as the Kinetic Music, Kinetic Drums, and EYEtone ensembles. I’ve performed at venues and festivals in the U.S., Europe, and

Israel. I teach music history, world music, and percussion at the Ramaz Upper School, and music appreciation at the College of New Rochelle. I worked for a decade as a music therapist at Manhattan Psychiatric Center. My real Bennington ‘learn by doing’ education materialized with the idea of creatively fusing my interests in music, education, psychology, and youth culture into rewarding professional experiences. I always try to keep the perspective positive, fresh, and inspiring. Music continues to inspire me, as do my students. All the best to everyone.” Elisha’s e-mail address is eye-tone@aol.com.

“I live a block from the beach in Capitola, CA,” writes **Katrina Leestma '88**. “I am an ICU Nurse, Artist, and a Mom (all in capital letters!). My daughter, Chewy, turned nine this summer. I would love to hear from old classmates; it’s been too long. I’m easily reached at kleestma@sbcglobal.net.”

Stacy (Yeoman) Sinclair Tarr '89 writes: “This completes my first year as an independent education consultant. I have been working in K–12 science and assessment. In May I became a doctoral candidate in the area of educational technology. I am also proud to be working with **Rima (Gitlin) Faber '65** on the revision of the national K–12 dance standards.”

90s For the third time in as many years, **Stacey Earley Tonges '90** provided harmony vocals for Harvey Sid Fisher at a performance last

December at Chicago’s Intuit Gallery of Outsider Art. The lineup, which includes the Chicago avant-garde band Cheer-Accident, also performed the signs of the zodiac at the 2004 South by Southwest Music Festival in Austin, TX.

Joe Mueller '92 was awarded a Vermont Arts Council Opportunity Grant to support a summer residency at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, VT. Mueller, who teaches English composition, research writing, and poetry at Southern Vermont College in Bennington, also received a residency grant from the Vermont Studio Center.

“I’m engaged to be married October 2 in Sarasota, FL, to Melissa Marcello,” writes **Eric Sturm '92**. “I am now an associate with OPX Architecture & Interiors on Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. If there are any classmates in town that would like to get together, e-mail me at erics@opxglobal.com.”

Erik J. Hughes '93 appeared in a production of *Glengarry Glen Ross* this winter at the Strollers Theatre in Madison, WI. *The Wisconsin State Journal* said of his performance, “Hughes, as Williamson, delivers one of the evening’s finest performances as the office manager who turns out to be more manipulative and menacing than his reps could have guessed.” He also appeared as Don Pedro in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Madison’s Bartell Theatre.

After Bennington **Thammarath Jamikorn '94** earned a MA in Comparative Literature from Princeton. In 2000

alumni bookshelf

Henrietta Snow (Frigate Books), by **Ruth Doan MacDougall '61**, is the third installment in a series that began with *The Cheerleader*, a national bestseller that *Library Journal* called “a devastatingly accurate portrait of the '50s.” Now, a few decades later, MacDougall revisits her characters with an eye that Rebecca P. Sinkler, former editor of *The New York Times Book Review* calls “as fresh and lively as ever.”

Anne Waldman '66 has edited *Civil Disobediences: Poetics and Politics in Action* (Coffee House Press) alongside Lisa Birman, a fellow poet. Howard Zinn calls the collection, for which Waldman also wrote the introduction, “a book one can feast on, an exciting collection of poetry, ponderings, interviews, reminiscences, by a brilliant assemblage” including Allen Ginsberg, Sonia Sanchez, and Michael Ondaatje.

In *The Future of Ice* (Pantheon Books), **Gretel Ehrlich '67** chronicles six months of travel to extreme locales and reflects upon winter as reality and metaphor. In its introduction, Ehrlich describes her ninth book as “both ode and lament, a wild-time song and elegy, and a cry for help” in the face of global climate change.

John May MFA '01 has published *Poe & Fanny* (Algonquin Press), a fictional account of an illicit affair between Edgar Allan Poe and Fanny Osgood. Using the pair’s actual love poetry as inspiration, May sets his story in the vibrant atmosphere of pre-Civil War New York. *Booklist* calls May’s “sensitive historical novel...impeccably literary and unabashedly romantic.”

Stalking the Divine: Contemplating Faith with the Poor Clares (Hyperion) by **Kristin Ohlson MFA '01** won an award for Best General Nonfiction from the American Society of Journalists and Authors for 2004. Bennington MFA faculty member **Bob Shacochis** called it “one of those beautiful rare books that churns in a reader’s heart long after you put it down.” This winter *Stalking the Divine* will emerge in a new paperback edition from Plume.

Ruth Doan MacDougall

Henrietta Snow
A Sequel to
THE CHEERLEADER
and SNOW

Civil
Disobediences
Poetics and Politics in Action

THE
FUTURE
OF
ICE

POE & FANNY

INTO COLD

"What is faith? How do you know when you have it? Kristin Ohlson does a wonderful job of weaving her own personal journey with the story of the Poor Clares. As a book, worth reading for anyone who has ever had religious doubts, it is written in Ohlson's characteristic elegant, understated, and deeply moving style. (Booklist)

Stalking
the
Divine

KRISTIN OHLSON

Jamikorn founded a website on raw foods/sustainable living/hemp products called www.rawganique.com, which stands for raw-organic-unique. “It’s been an incredible four years of toil, trial, tribulation, and joy. I have been living with Klaus Wallner (my spouse of eight years) on a 42-acre homestead on a small island in the Strait of Georgia, about four hours from Vancouver, BC. We live off the grid on solar and wind energy—a dream come true. It’s such a privilege to be away from it all and yet be able to run my website in between organic gardening, reading, writing, and making music. I think the Bennington education had a lot to do with my being able to tackle it all and make it work (and still be happy and sane). Old friends: please e-mail me at tjw@rawganique.com.”

After receiving a Masters in Architecture from the Harvard Design School, **Garrick Jones ’94** opened a joint office with MRLD, an urban design and landscape architecture office. His projects include an urban design master plan of the new Eastern Waterfront district in Portland, ME; a series of prototypical homes in rural Panama; and proposals from new “mulletown” community development interventions in rural Appalachia. Articles previewing his book *Redneck Planning on the Middle Frontier* are upcoming. Jones can be reached at gjplanten@earthlink.net.

In 2000, after five years as a theater designer for San Francisco’s Auerbach and Associates, **Tom Morison ’94** changed careers. He will graduate from Life Chiropractic College West in 2005.

Aryn Chapman ’95 lives in NYC with her husband of five years, Ariel Nachmann, a video editor from LA. “I have an incredible son, Alexander Riley, who is almost three. I’ve given up my four-year-long career in film production as a camera assistant/shooter to be a mom and to paint. I’ve begun to sell my work and am planning a show in November.” To see her work, visit www.arynchapman.com.

“I have changed careers! I went back to school for textile surface design at Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in NYC and loved it,” writes **Soheray Meier ’95**. “I now work as a designer for printed scarves and other accessories. Eventually I hope to move into high-end home [work], but I love where I am and what I do!” Her e-mail address is soheray@yahoo.com.

Erin (Miles) Ramussen ’95 writes: “After almost 10 years in high tech, my husband and I moved out to the desert, where I work for the 100-year-old avian biology journal *The Condor*, and for a local bakery. I’ve sold a few paintings, climbed a bunch of rocks, and plan to spend the summer fishing.”

David G. Hertz ’96 and Lisa Karen Fuchs were married May 30 in Tampa, FL.

Naomi (Mead-Ward) Ninneman ’96 and **Eric Ninneman ’94** welcomed their first child, James Wesley Ninneman, on February 15.

Ali Herrmann ’98 created two sheep for Sheeptacular Pittsfield, a public installation for Pittsfield, MA. The sheep, on

display throughout the city this past summer, were auctioned off in September. “One sheep was decorated with a patina finish and then covered in pennies, while the other was a more traditional mirror and tile mosaic. Both were well received by the public—it seems that children really like the surfaces and textures on both.”

After Bennington **Srini Lalapet ’98** studied International Relations at Yale Graduate School. He currently works as a senior economist at BDO Dunwoody, a multinational accounting and consulting firm. He works in transfer pricing, which concerns international trade and taxation. “More important,” he writes, “I recently got married. My wife, Srividya Lalapet, and I live in Toronto, Canada. We would be delighted to help alumni/students on a professional and personal level.”

Melanie Plaza ’98 is settling into a new life in New Orleans, LA. “I’m working at a wonderful art gallery right on Royal Street, the arts and antiques road in the French Quarter.” Her e-mail address is plazamimi@hotmail.com.

Nina Tucciarelli ’98, creator of the singing and dancing burlesque group The Lipstick Lovelies, premiered a new show in June. *Hotel Femme Fatale* “takes place in an undisclosed European city where seduction and frivolity ensue in a flurry of sequins, satin, and fringe.” The show, which featured old and new cabaret tunes, was at the Hudson River Theater in Hudson, NY. To learn more, visit www.lipsticklovelies.com.

Margaret Eisenberg '99 works as an ophthalmologist's assistant. "I test vision, prescribe glasses, run special testing equipment, photograph retinas, and assist in minor eye surgeries. It's fun! I'm also a coadministrator and maintenance director of an outdoor wilderness summer camp called Camp St. Michael."

"Since graduation I have been singing in the NYC-based band Split Me Wide Open," says **Giorgio Handman '99**. "We have performed at many clubs [like] CBGBs, and created installations at galleries such as Gavin Brown Enterprise. I also teach art for an after-school program."

OOs "Hello all," writes **Brooke Bauer '01**. "I'm now working as a Picture and Archive Communication Systems (PACS) Administrator in the Radiology IT Department at Children's Hospital, Boston. I've been here for almost a year after a string of unfulfilling jobs following graduation. Working in digital imaging is finally making me feel like I'm using all the skills I picked up at Bennington. As for big news, I'm engaged to be married to Joseph Sarno on October 16, 2004, in my hometown of Dedham, MA."

As a preparator for Peter Bartlow Gallery in Chicago, **Erin Hegg '02** is

"having an absolute blast" with archival/restorative processes. "I've gotten my hands on the works of Picasso, Giacometti, Matisse, Matta, Debuffet, Anne Raymond, and many others. I'm immersed in many projects these days: getting my 6,000-square-foot loft past its 'potential' stage, throwing huge, raucous parties, and building my mom a new deck." She still creates "intricate paintings/drawings/sculptures. These hands are callused, scarred, and very happy."

In May **Alyssa Lowe '02** began working with the Peace Corps as a public health volunteer in Kenya.

CYNTHIA LOCKLIN



At a senior dinner in May, **Paul Vargas '04** addressed his fellow graduates. The following is an excerpt of his remarks.

Last year's commencement speaker, **Lucas Westcott '03**, said this place worked because of a concept he called "takin' care of your people." We should have that added to the traditional Bennington commencement statement. It's a truth about us in the finest shorthand. *I will help you put up your stage lights because I've never done it before, and you will help me fix my screenplay because you've never read one before.* Fresh eyes, fresh hands, fresh concepts. Through learning, we are empowered to introduce new ideas. School was only the first step...

Alone or in a group, publicly or with the strictest of confidence, we're all available to offer help to each other, to make this a community. We mediate and deliberate. We trust in some to pour over our policies, to update and clarify them. Others trust in us to keep talking, keep offering. I love the back and forth, the trade.

York Marble '02 sent along a list of news: "Working in California as a naturalist and outdoor educator. Enjoying a high quality of life. Traveling often, far and wide. Being the change I want to occur."

From Karachi, Pakistan, **Raania A.K. Durrani '03** writes: "I'm working at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture, as a faculty member in the Department of Ceramic Design. In June I was selected to represent Pakistan at an International Artist Camp in Bhaktapur, Nepal. Fourteen artists from all over the world—India, Pakistan, Nepal, Thailand, Bangladesh, the UK, and the U.S.—participated. It was a fabulous experience."

Emilia Keene-Kendrick '03 has recently been invited to join Kelly Donovan and Dancers of Boston, MA. Her first performances with the company were in early October.

Mary Catherine La Mar '03 is enrolled in a one-year Master of Arts program in English at the University of Chicago.

Peace Corps volunteer **Graham Porell '03** will spend two years living and working in the village of Fernie, South

Africa, near the Swaziland border. "The people in my village seem very happy to have me here, and the teachers in the three schools that I am assigned to seem very eager to work with me."

"I am now living in Los Angeles, which isn't so cool," says **Ryan Stevens '03**. "But all those hours of playing video games have paid off; I landed a job at G4, the video game cable channel."

MASTERS Sandra L.

Burton MFA '87 has been named the Lipp Family Director of Dance at Williams College. Burton, the codirector of Dance Company and Kusika, teaches both African and modern dance classes. She recently created choreography for photographer Carrie Mae Weems' first film.

Wendy Button MFA '96 played a significant role in writing the acceptance speech John Edwards delivered at the Democratic National Convention this summer. Button has worked as a speech writer for Boston Mayor Tom Menino and for Hillary Clinton; she is currently working with the Kerry campaign.

Joe Ann Hart MFA '00 is in the final stages of writing her first novel, *Addled*, about a conflict between Canadian geese and golfers. In March, she read from her work at PEN New England's annual Discovery Evening at Emerson College.

we want to hear from you!

Please offer your thoughts on the enclosed envelope and tell us what you want to hear about from us. Faculty news? Alumni updates? Student profiles? We need your input!

As always, we also love to receive your news—about work, travels, family—for Class Notes, the magazine's most-read section. Send a note in the enclosed envelope, or e-mail at alumlett@bennington.edu.

in memorium

*The Bennington community extends its deepest sympathy
to the families and friends of the following alumni, former faculty members,
and friends of the College who have recently died.*

Janet Summers Aaron '36
Ellen (Conried) Balch '37
Mary Lou (Taylor) Kenyon '37
Caryl (Field) Kittredge '38
Alison (Green) Sulloway '39
Zoe (Thorne) Holderness '40
Marne (Lloyd Smith) Hornblower '40
Caroline (Wickett) Dern Oliver '40
Barbara (Stark) Marcus '45
Edith Leah "Bonny" (Bonoff) Birnbaum '47
Margot (Goldschmidt) Kimberk '47
Diane (Kremm) Nolan '49
Helen "Chickie" (Cappel) Miller '51
Sally (George) Owen '52
Virginia (Mackoy) Smith '54
Cynthia (Wilson) Altchek '58
Karen Egeberg Warmer '61
Catherine (Schwartz) Shawn DeSamos '62
Polly (Lauterbach) Keyworth '62
Judith (Hidler) Richardson Silvia '62
Nancy (Steinmetz) Murray '63
Erna (Crown) Reingold '64
Renee (Engel) Bowen '65
Marsha Kadesch '68
Elizabeth (Schutz) Lydon '78
Nathaniel "Than" Edelstein '84
Colette (Carr) Larson '84

Margaret DeGray, former faculty member
Maurice Lazarus, former trustee and father of **Carol Lazarus '75**
Michael Small, friend to the College, husband of **Lynn (Goldberg) Small '61**





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"If there is one thing truly unique about Bennington, it is the shared responsibility you accept for your education on coming here. The life you are learning to live is yours and so should be the choices that guide it. The quality of achievement you establish here will set standards to challenge and compel you for the rest of your life."

—Steven Bach, faculty member, literature and film

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Carnaval Parade (opposite)

On May 28, 2004 students, faculty members, and staff came out for a Carnaval Parade, the final end-of-term celebration of *Carnaval*, a course taught by Bruce Williamson (music) and Danny Michaelson (costume design). The massive celebration included a giant dragon, stiltwalkers, live music, samba and salsa demonstrations, and more. Photograph by Cynthia Loclkin.