

SGORBATI NAMED TO CHAIR IN SOCIAL ACTIVISM

In an April ceremony, faculty member **SUSAN MEYER SGORBATI '74** was named to The Barbara and Lewis Jones Chair in Social Activism. The investiture realized the vision of the late **ALICE PULSIFER DOYLE '39**, who set up an endowment for the chair in honor of two of Bennington's first faculty members. The legacy also honors one of the College's defining aims: that a Bennington education should "seek to liberate and nurture the individuality, the creative intelligence, and the ethical and aesthetic sensibility of its students...toward constructive social purposes."

When Bennington opened its doors in 1932, Barbara and Lewis Jones were among its faculty. Between them, these vibrant teachers had great impact on the young Alice Valentine Pulsifer, who arrived on campus intent on studying art. After a class with Barbara Jones, however, she switched to the social sciences, focusing on the situation of working people. A practicing Quaker, Doyle spent much of her life fighting for social justice. In 1990, when she pledged \$1 million to establish the Barbara and Lewis Jones Chair in Social Activism—the College's first endowed faculty position—she said that endowing the chair was her way of "expressing immense gratitude to all faculty—past, present, and future."

In her remarks at the ceremony, President Elizabeth Coleman noted that Susan Sgorbati's history at Bennington—which spans more than three decades—has included the roles of student, dancer, teacher, choreographer, administrator, and mediator. "She has been an innovative moving force in all of them," Coleman said.



Susan Sgorbati works with Quantum Leap students.

As performer and choreographer, Sgorbati has created site-specific dances throughout New England. In 1995, she cofounded *Materia Prima*, a group of dance improvisers who perform regularly in the New York Improvisation Festival. As teacher, she directed the dance program at Castleton State College, taught at Williams, and initiated the Governor's Institute on the Arts, a summer program for adolescents. In 1987, after earning her Master of Fine Arts, she joined Bennington's faculty and served as its dean of faculty in the early 1990s.

Sgorbati's growing interest in mediation—enhanced by study with the Quakers and at Vermont Law School—led to a new direction for her work, and for the work of the College. After developing a mediation project for the Small Claims Court in Bennington, in 1999 she and faculty member Danny Michaelson created Quantum Leap, a program that uses the principles of mediation to help truant students return to school. That program, which has now mentored more than 60 students in the Bennington area, continues to expand. Working through Quantum Leap last term, 20 Bennington College students implemented creative educational projects in the schools. Sgorbati's leadership has been recognized statewide: She is a mediator for the Vermont Attorney General's office and the Vermont Human Rights Commission, and past president of the Vermont Mediator's Association.

In her remarks, Sgorbati spoke about connections in her work: "The reason dance improvisation and mediation attract me is that I can participate in making order out of chaos. In improvisation, I get to see emergent forms structure themselves...in mediation, I watch the chaos of conflict resolve itself into structured solutions. The other common thread is the potential for growth in the people participating."

"I like to think Susan's journey has hallmarks that are particularly Bennington in nature," President Coleman noted. "Throughout her career, she's made connections between seemingly disparate things: bringing the balance of dance to the mediation table; using the principles of improvisation as a springboard for problem-solving; infusing every aspect of her work with the spirit of collaboration."

NEWS AND NOTES

NEW DEAN / PROVOST APPOINTED

Elissa Tenny, vice dean of The New School, New School University, in New York City, has been selected as Bennington's new dean of the College/provost. Upon unanimous recommendation of a search committee composed of Bennington faculty members—along with feedback from students, faculty, and staff—Tenny was chosen from an exceptional pool of 75 talented applicants.

"I was drawn to Bennington's commitment to critical thinking and abiding belief in the centrality of ideas," notes Tenny. "It's clear that the teacher/practitioner model at Bennington is not merely an idea to be sought but a passionate work-in-progress. I am filled with a wonderful sense of excitement about working with the faculty and students and being part of the College's future."

PRESIDENT COLEMAN VISITING FELLOW AT NEUROSCIENCES INSTITUTE

In February, President Elizabeth Coleman was a visiting fellow at the Neurosciences Institute in LaJolla, CA. The work of the Institute is to pursue a biologically based theory of the brain that attempts to account for the entirety of experience, rather than fragments of it. Coleman's investigation centered on the question of integrating such work into a liberal arts curriculum.

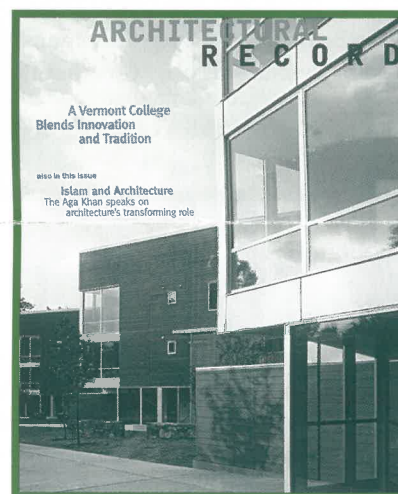
BENNINGTON AND THE J. PAUL GETTY TRUST CO-HOST ART, ARTISTS & TEACHING SYMPOSIUM

In June, the J. Paul Getty Trust and Bennington College will bring a small group of leading thinkers on education and the arts to the College for a three-day symposium called *Art, Artists & Teaching*. The symposium proposes to lay the groundwork for pursuing the most informed, compelling, and pragmatic strategies for expanding the role of the arts and artists in America's schools. Invited guests include Doug Herbert of the National Endowment for the Arts, Derek Gordon of the Kennedy Center, Steve Siedel of Harvard's Project Zero, **ERICA CLARK '69** of Art Center College of Design, **JOSH GREEN '81** of Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, and **ELLEN MCCULLOCH LOVELL '69** of The Center for Arts and Culture.

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD FEATURES NEW STUDENT HOUSES AS FEBRUARY COVER STORY

"The kids are all right," proclaims the February cover story of *Architectural Record*, the premier magazine for architects, "as innovation blends with tradition in new student housing at a college known for breaking boundaries."

In vivid color, Bennington's three new student houses beat out New York's new flagship Prada store designed by Rem Koolhaas, and Moscow's U.S. Embassy for a dazzling magazine cover. An extensive five-page feature details the beauty and practicality of these new residences.



SPRING SPEAKERS CAPTIVATE CAMPUS

ED SHERIN, director of *The Great White Hope* (with James Earl Jones and Jane Alexander, 1966), national vice-president of the Directors Guild of America, and former *Law and Order* executive producer, worked with students on campus for three days in March. Sherin spoke about his career and life in the arts, and met individually with students on prepared monologues and scenes—focusing on physicalization of impulse and the deepening awareness of a character's emotional life.

EDWARD VILLELLA, one of America's most celebrated male dancers, spoke at Bennington on April 16. Villella danced for President Kennedy's inaugural, and also performed for Presidents Johnson, Nixon, and Ford. He was the first American male dancer to perform with the Royal Danish Ballet and the only American ever to be asked to dance an encore at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. In 1997, he received the National Medal of Arts from President Clinton.

Everybody's pediatrician, **T. BERRY BRAZELTON**, MD, was this year's Ruth Ewing Social Science Lecturer on April 30. Dr. Brazelton is renowned for his pioneering scientific work in child development. He is founder of The Brazelton Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale, author of myriad books on child development, and father of Bennington faculty member Kitty Brazelton.

Acclaimed author **MICHAEL POLLAN '76** returned to campus on May 9 as the Candace DeVries Olesen Lecturer for Distinguished Alumni. His books include *Second Nature*, *A Place of My Own*, and most recently, *The New York Times* bestseller, *The Botany of Desire*. Pollan is also a contributing writer to *The New York Times Magazine*, former executive editor of *Harper's*, and a frequent guest on National Public Radio.

Renowned composer, singer, filmmaker, choreographer, and director **MEREDITH MONK** was the 2002 commencement speaker. A MacArthur fellow and pioneer in extended vocal technique and interdisciplinary performance, Monk has been a major creative force in the performing arts for more than 30 years.

WINNING DESIGNS

The College's viewbook, *Stories*, garnered the top honor awarded in its category, at the 31st annual design competition of the University & College Designers Association in 2001. More than 1,500 schools submitted publications to the competition. In the CASE District 1 competition, the College received honorable mention in two categories: the alumni magazine and the website.