

BENNINGTON

summer 2012



Helen Frankenthaler '49
1928-2011

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ON THE COVER
Helen Frankenthaler '49
Silver Coast, 1958
Oil on sized primed canvas
39" x 41"
Bennington College collection
©The Estate of Helen Frankenthaler/
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EDITOR'S NOTE

In the winter 2011-2012 issue of *Bennington*, we mistakenly reported that Bennington chairman **Alan Kornberg '74** chairs the Committee on Bankruptcy and Corporate Reorganization of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York. He previously held, but does not currently hold, that post.

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

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Bennington is published twice a year
for alumni and friends of
Bennington College.

Direct correspondence to:
Bennington Magazine
Office of Communications
Bennington College
One College Drive
Bennington, VT 05201-6003

Phone: 802-440-4743
alumnirelations@bennington.edu
www.bennington.edu

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

letter from the president

From the outset, Bennington's purpose has been focused and clear: to enlarge, deepen, and transform the lives of its students. To get there we do something radical—we recognize that students come to Bennington with something we can't give them.

This issue of *Bennington* celebrates that spark which ignites when you give people the time and space to chart a path based on what fuels them. You see it in the unfolding of our students' academic plans, yes, but also in the work our faculty do and the lives our alumni lead. There's a vitality, a hunger, a fearlessness.

Let me give you one example, but this issue is full of them. Last fall, the Bennington drama faculty mounted a production of the original *Angels in America* in its entirety—a full 5.5 hours of performance—a near impossible feat rarely attempted even by professional theaters and almost never by a college. It's what director Jenny Rohn describes as a “full-on-all-the-time-don't-you-dare-take-yourself-out-of-it-for-a-second kind of play.” Why did they do this? In part, because they could. But more than that, it's because the Bennington ethos is one of constant motion, as Dean Isabel Roche puts it, of harnessing potential, giving it shape, pushing and testing it, and then setting it free.

There's an image that Helen Frankenthaler '49 once used to describe herself at Bennington: “that young whirling dervish, that imp who strives to make anything possible.” I don't think anyone has painted a more evocative portrait of the Bennington spirit.

I hope that as you read these pages you see something of that imp, and it reminds you of something in yourself.



Elizabeth Coleman
President

COURTESY OF LOUISE SPIEGEL '46



"Mr. Billingsley was the car around campus, which just seemed to pass from one generation to the next" recalls Louise Spiegel '46. "We had a crazy good time." Pictured from left to right: Margaret Dunn Siebens '45, Kate (Evarts) Merck '46, Louise (Wachman) Spiegel '46, Mary St. John Douglas '45, Geraldine (Babcock) Boone '44, and Lydia (Phelps Stokes) Katzenbach '45 (on the ground).

This photo is one of many submitted to the Bennington College Alumni Flickr collection in honor of the Penny Wilson '45 Challenge for Campus Renewal (see back cover). View the collection or upload your own photo: www.flickr.com/photos/benningtoncollegealumni/collections

summer 2012

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Elizabeth “Betty” (Haas) Pfister '43; **Ethel Winter Hyman '45**;
Miriam (Hermanos) Knapp '55; and **Anne (Schlabach) Burkhardt**, former faculty member.

“

In our house, the word *breeding* was said with the same vitriol used when mentioning Republicans, Tim Tebow, and pit bull fight clubs. Women churning out multiples were breeders, and when they were profiled as heroes in newspapers and television shows, Malachi wrote editorials that usually went unpublished.

”



The Boston Globe called visiting faculty member and MFA alumna **Megan Mayhew Bergman MFA '10** “a top notch emerging writer” after the release of her universally praised debut, *Birds of a Lesser Paradise*. The collection of 12 stories has been named a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Selection, as well as an Indie Next Pick, an Amazon Top Ten, and a “Must-Read Book for March 2012” by *O Magazine*.

We'll add one more: [Another blockbuster Bennington beginning.](#)

Following is an excerpt from “Yesterday’s Whales,” a story in the collection Birds of a Lesser Paradise by Megan Mayhew Bergman MFA '10.

YESTERDAY’S WHALES

I’ve been told self-righteous people always have it coming, that when you profess to understand the universe, the universe conspires against you. It gathers and strengthens and thunders down upon you like a biblical storm. It buries your face in humble pie and licks the cream from your nose because when the universe hates you, it *really* hates you.

What? Malachi shouted through the door in a panicked voice. That’s impossible.

I burst out of the bathroom and wagged the positive pregnancy test wand in front of his face.

Immaculate conception is out, I said. God and I aren’t on good enough terms.

My heart was pounding and my voice was too loud. What I wanted to do was sleep and talk about this another time, a time when I had a better idea of how I felt, how I would handle the news. Though I suspected we were both looking for our moral footing, we jumped into the conversation, eyes afire.

This is a really big deal, Malachi said, sitting down on the bench we kept in the kitchen. He put his face in his hands, then peeked out like a sheepish toddler. This is just—

What? I said. You think that because you’re the East Coast’s predominant voluntary extermination proponent that we’re magically infertile? Because you tell other people they shouldn’t have children you—

There’s a clinic downtown, he said, nodding his head as if he was agreeing with himself. I know the guy that runs it. Sam Wise. He was at last week’s conference. I’ll call—

We’re not even going to talk about it? I said, moving closer to him. We’re not even going to give it the weight we give a decision about what we’re going to have for dinner?

We just spent fifteen minutes in front of the produce section at the market. We just tested our peaches for bruises. We debated what type of olives—

I have strong beliefs, he said. *You* have strong beliefs. Your decisions are hormone-driven right now, and I understand—

You do *not* understand, I said, gripping the countertop and closing my eyes.

Malachi began backing away to the French doors that opened onto the slate patio, where he was grilling eggplant steaks. He was a vegetarian epicure who snuck bites of bacon out of salads and quiches when he thought I wasn't looking. His senior year at Yale, he'd started a non-profit he called Enough With Us or E.W.U.—an earnest throwback to Wordsworth's poem, *The World Is Too Much With Us*. In the eight years since, he'd put out two books and worn a path along the liberal college and Unitarian lecture circuit, advocating the end of human kind, sacrificing the human race to let nature reclaim the earth.

I was proud of him. I thought he was right. I'd grown up under two biology enthusiasts in rural Maine where people were scarce and wilderness still had an edge. I wanted nature to win, too.

Malachi dreamt of thick forests and megafauna consuming urban landscapes, nothing but our plastics and waste scarring the earth centuries after our disappearance. He pinned lush pictures of Borneo to our bedroom walls, cliffs with rivulets of water spilling down, visions of earth with no evidence of man's hand.

Five years ago, I met Malachi at a vegan cooking class on P Street. We made a savory vegetable pot pie and went out for wine afterward. We moved in together within a year. He knew a lot about food, poetry, music, and politics, and I introduced him to the outdoors—camping, hiking, foraging. On weekends we cooked for friends, volunteered at events for the local animal shelter, saw live music, and took long walks in Rock Creek Park.

In our house, the word *breeding* was said with the same vitriol used when mentioning Republicans, Tim Tebow, and pit bull fight clubs. Women churning out multiples were breeders, and when they were profiled as heroes in newspapers and television shows, Malachi wrote editorials that usually went unpublished. *We are parasites on the world, all of us*, he'd written. His thoughts—our thoughts?—were not palatable to most people, including my family. I'd learned voluntary extermination was not fodder for pleasant table conversation; two years ago Malachi blasted my mother over pumpkin pie for expressing her hopes for grandchildren.

You'd give them a death sentence, he said. Massive water shortages and die-offs are imminent. It's selfish to make more of ourselves; the desire to see your genes replicated in the world is a crude biological impulse.

Before you got one one-hundredth of the world to take you seriously, she said, and that wouldn't be enough, the earth would already be shot, done for. There may be time to turn things around.

There isn't, Malachi said.

You are one hundred thirty pounds of FUN, Mom said, mocking Malachi's slight frame. He scowled.

You think I like the fact—

Look, Mom said. When it comes to mass annihilation, put your money on a rogue black hole or nuclear winter. You're pinning your hopes on the very people you'd like to extinguish.

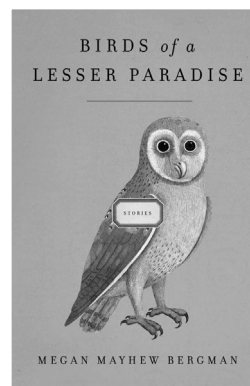
My mother, the long-time director of one of Maine's conservation organizations, was no soft-hearted bridge-player who pined for craft time and sing alongs. She wore no makeup and kept her gray hair cropped short in a pixie cut. At fifty she'd hiked the Long Trail on her own, kayaked whale watching expedition routes off the coast of Lunenburg in Nova Scotia. Compared to Malachi, she was no less ardent an environmentalist, just hopeful.

Malachi paced in front of the patio doors, one hand in his hair, then on his lips. Hand me a plate, he said.

Where are you going? I said, something feminine and hysterical brewing inside me.

I'm not walking away from you, he said. I'm walking *toward* the eggplant. I need to be outside to think.

When he opened the door, the city screamed and the post-work din of Washington's Dupont Circle spilled into our townhouse. Busy people walking, talking, eating, spending. The door shut behind him, and it was as if I was standing in a soundproof room. Or drowning.



COURTESY OF MEGAN MAYHEW BERGMAN MFA '10



Megan Mayhew Bergman's fiction has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has been featured in *Ploughshares*, *The Kenyon Review*, the *Best American Short Stories 2011*, and elsewhere. Mayhew Bergman received a fellowship from the Millay Colony for the Arts and was a Breadloaf Fiction Scholar at Middlebury. She received her BA from Wake Forest University; MA, Duke University; MFA, Bennington College. She was a visiting faculty member at Bennington for the 2011–2012 academic year.

Brooke Allen has been named a contributing editor for *The Hudson Review* and will continue to be its regular film critic. She is writing a book for Now and Then electronic publishing, *Generally Queer: Great Gays in the Military*, to be published later this year. Allen has written an essay about George Gissing and reviewed his new biography by Peter Coustillas, forthcoming in *The New Criterion*. She continues to write a monthly, online literary column for *Barnes & Noble Review*. In February, she delivered a lecture at UNC-Asheville on the religious views of the Founding Fathers.

Doug Bauer's essay, "Cather's World & the Future of Narrative," adapted and expanded from his remarks to the undergraduates at Bennington's 2010 graduation ceremony, is featured in the March/April 2012 issue of *The Writer's Chronicle*.

A set of gothic woodblock and letterpress images from **Thorsten Dennerline's** book *13 Tattoos* was one of the highlights of New Prints 2012/Winter, the 41st presentation of International Print Center New York's (IPCNY) New Prints Program. This series of juried exhibitions organized by IPCNY several times each year features prints made within the past 12 months by artists at all stages of their careers.

Janet B. Foley, in collaboration with **Angela Herring '05**, has had a paper accepted for publication in *Inorganica Chimica Acta*, an international inorganic chemistry journal.

Yoko Inoue had a solo installation, *Mandala Flea Market Mutants: Pop Protocol and the Seven Transformations of Good-luck National Defense Cats*, in March at Smack Mellon gallery in New York. Several Bennington students, **Jennifer Sonenberg '14**, **Aleah T. Stewart-Souris '14**, and **Fei Lai '12**, worked with her on the installation. Inoue is also the recipient of the 2012 Paris Residency sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, a partnership with the Mayor's Office of the City of Paris. She will be in residence at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris from May to October 2012.

In March, **Sherry Kramer** read from a work in progress at the Michener Center for Writers at The University of Texas at Austin.

Scott Lehrer produced Hazmat Modine's CD *Cicada*, one of the most successful world music CDs of the year; he also recorded Bebe Neuwirth's first studio project, *Porcelain*, and Columbian singer Lucia Pulido's CD *Journeying*. He designed

sound for the Bart Sher production of *South Pacific* at the Barbican Center in London; Richard Nelson's play *Sweet and Sad* at the Public Theatre in New York; the gala re-opening of New York City Center and their co-production of *Cotton Club Parade* with Jazz at Lincoln Center; and *Pipe Dream* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* for the City Center Encores series. He helped produce media exhibitions for the redesigned New York Historical Society. He also is mixing a concert version of *The Mikado* with the Collegiate Chorale at Carnegie Hall. His sound design for the Mike Nichols production of *Death of a Salesman* earned him his fourth Tony Award nomination in as many years. The South Korean government brought Lehrer to Seoul to do a public lecture and weeklong master workshop with Korean sound designers.



Carol Pal was named next year's Dibner Fellow in the History of Science at the Huntington Library in California, one of the foremost rare book and manuscript research

libraries in the U.S. She gave her talk, "Neither Fish nor Fowl: How Texts and Authors were Redefined in the Hartlib

Circle,” at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Studies Association in Washington, DC, in March. Her book *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* was published in May by Cambridge University Press as part of their series in intellectual history.

Ann Pibal’s show this past September at Meulenstein gallery in New York was reviewed in the *New York Times*, *ArtForum*, *Art in America*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *Modern Painters*. Her work was included in three publications this past fall: *Hannah* (vol. 2), a book of collaborations between painters and poets by Andrew Moeller; *Possible Press: A Quarterly of Artists’ Writings* (vol. 2, no. 3), curated by Michelle Grabner; and *Foundations of Design*, by Jeff Davis. The Spring 2012 issue of the literary journal *Fence* will feature her work on the front and back covers and an interview by **Camille Guthrie**. Both Pibal and **Mary Lum** had works exhibited in the 2012 de Cordova Biennial, which displays a diverse range of approaches to media and content. Pibal also was chosen from a pool of 175 artists nominated by members of the American Academy of Arts and Letters to participate in the *Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts* in March. Her work is also on display in *Unfolding Tales: Selections from the Contemporary Collection* at the Brooklyn Museum.

Mirka Prazak participated in the American Ethnological Society 2012 conference in New York City, which was aimed at exploring and assessing anthropology’s capacity to make important interventions in public issues and to shape global realities. She presented on the AIDS Activism in Africa field-work course she led in Uganda, assisting AIDS activists in learning new skills to empower their work.

Allen Shawn’s new CD *Allen Shawn: Piano Music, Volume III* is out on Albany Records, as are *Piano Music, Volumes I and II*. The new recording includes his own performances as well as those of current faculty member **Yoshiko Sato**. It contains Shawn’s first and fourth piano sonatas, spanning 27 years of composition, as well as *Recollections for Piano*, and *Nocturne for*

Y. In March, his memoir *Twin* was released in paperback. Also in March, a ballet to his music *Childhood Scenes* with choreography by Antonia Franceschi was performed by the New York Theatre Ballet. At Bennington last September, violinist Juliana Athayde performed his *Rhapsody for Violin and Piano*, written for her in 2010, along with *A Chorale and Two Dances*.

COURTESY OF EDWARD THORP GALLERY



Andrew Spence had paintings in two New York group exhibitions in February and March: *Gallery Artists: A Survey* at Edward Thorp Gallery and *What I Know*, organized by Jason

Andrew at New York Center for Art and Media Studies.

Kerry Woods’s paper “Losses in Understory Diversity over Three Decades in an Old-growth Cool-temperate Forest,” coauthored with David Hicks of Manchester College and Jan Schultz of the U.S. Forest Service, has been published in the March issue of *Canadian Journal of Forest Research*. Woods received a grant from the Hanes Fund for Botanical Research to support his long-term research on Michigan forests. He has lectured about his Michigan research at Williams College and the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia and conducted workshops on the local landscape ecology. He has been invited by the president of the International Association for Vegetation Science to chair a committee charged with drafting a code of professional ethics for the organization.

A group of **Mark Wunderlich**’s poems was a finalist for the *Missouri Review* Editor’s Prize and will be featured in the magazine along with an audio recording of the poems. A selection of his poems has been translated into Swedish by the poet Jonas Brun and will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Ord och Bild* (*Word and Image*), Sweden’s oldest literary and culture journal.

alumni & faculty bookcase

POETRY

Julia (Rosenblum) Crane '87

Twisted Little Love Stories
(Finishing Line Press, February 2012)

Safiya Sinclair '10

Catacombs
(Argos Books, December 2011)

FICTION

Alice Mattison (faculty)

When We Argued All Night
(Harper Perennial, June 2012)

Ruth Doan MacDougall '61

A Born Maniac
(Frigate Books, November 2011)

Victoria Houston '67

Dead Tease
(Tyrus Books, March 2012)

Evelyn (Thal) Toynton '70

The Oriental Wife
(Other Press, July 2011)

Caren Umbarger '77

Coming To: A Midwestern Tale
(CreateSpace, September 2011)

Sparrow Hall (Seth DeCrocce '98)

Two Blue Wolves and Nightwork
(Hydrogen Media, May 2011)

Alan Elyshevitz '99

The Widows and Orphans Fund
(Stephen F. Austin State University Press,
November 2011)

Trinie Dalton '05

Baby Geisha
(Two Dollar Radio, January 2012)

Megan Mayhew Bergman MFA '10

Birds of a Lesser Paradise
(Scribner, March 2012)

NONFICTION

Janice Van Horne '55

*A Complicated Marriage: My Life with
Clement Greenberg*
(Counterpoint Press, April 2012)

Barbara Johnson '56

*Why I Didn't Sleep with Mitt Romney
& Other Tales*
(Veritas Publishing, January 2012)

Dassie Hoffman '57 (editor)

*The Voice Dialogue Anthology:
Explorations of the Psychology of Selves
and the Aware Ego Process*
(Delos, Inc., February 2012)

Len Lesser '58 and Tama Ryder

*Where's the Watch?! And Other Tales:
A memoir from Seinfeld's Uncle Leo*
(Staff Picks Press, November 2011)

Pamela Acheson '67 and Richard B. Myers

*A Year in Palm Beach: Life in an
Alternate Universe*
(Two Thousand Three Associates,
November 2011)

Evelyn (Thal) Toynton '70

Jackson Pollock
(Yale University Press, January 2012)

Harold Davis '73

*Photographing Flowers: Exploring Macro
World with Harold Davis*
(Focal Press, October 2011)

Alec Wilkinson '74

*The Ice Balloon: S.A. Andrée and the
Heroic Age of Arctic Exploration*
(Alfred A. Knopf, January 2012)

Jonathan Lethem '86

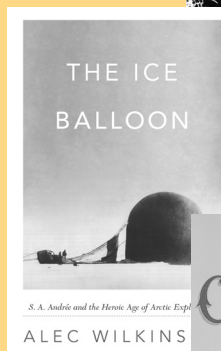
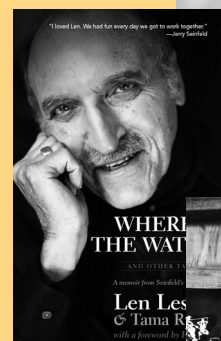
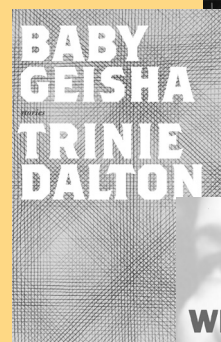
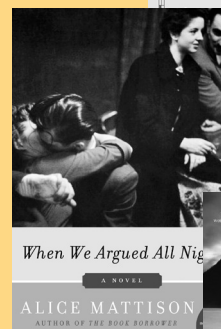
The Ecstasy of Influence: Nonfictions, Etc.
(Doubleday, November 2011)

Michael Popek '99

*Forgotten Bookmarks: A Bookseller's
Collection of Odd Things Lost
Between the Pages*
(Perigee Trade, November 2011)

Charlotte Silver '03

*Charlotte au Chocolat: Memories
of a Restaurant Girlhood*
(Riverhead Books, February 2012)



MFA FACULTY WIN TOP HONORS

MFA faculty member Tracy K. Smith was awarded the coveted Pulitzer Prize in poetry, while Writing Seminars director Sven Birkerts was elected to one of the most prestigious honorary societies in the country, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Tracy K. Smith, who joined the Writing Seminars this year as a visiting faculty member in poetry, won the Pulitzer Prize for her third published collection, *Life on Mars*, which was released last year.

The Pulitzer board praised *Life on Mars* as “a collection of bold, skillful poems, taking readers into the universe and moving them to an authentic mix of joy and pain.”

Prior to the Pulitzer, *Life on Mars* was selected as a *New York Times* Notable Book. *The Times* said of the book, “As all the best poetry does, *Life on Mars* first sends us out into the magnificent chill of the imagination and then returns us to ourselves, both changed and consoled.”

Director of the Writing Seminars **Sven Birkerts** agreed. “Tracy has a natural sense of metaphor, things linking up from micro- to macro-, and she charges her work with a sense of impending discovery,” he said. “As a faculty presence at the Bennington Writing Seminars she has been gracious, open, and superbly attuned to her students.”

Birkerts himself won top literary honors with his election into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, which recognizes some of the world’s most accomplished scholars, scientists, writers, artists, and civic, corporate, and philanthropic leaders. Among the class of 220 to join the Academy with Birkerts were Hillary Rodham Clinton, Melinda F. Gates, Andre Previn, Neil Simon, and others.

In addition to his work in Bennington’s graduate writing program, Birkerts is an essayist and literary critic who has written numerous books including *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. He also edits the literary journal *AGNI* at Boston University.



TINA CHANG



RICHARD HOWARD

GETTING PUBLISHED?

Contact the Communications Office by phone at 802-440-4743,

by email at communications@bennington.edu, or send a copy of your book to the

Communications Office, Bennington College, One College Drive, Bennington, VT 05201.

Our deadlines are January 1 to be included in the spring/summer issue and July 1 for the fall/winter issue.



CHAMPIONS OF VERSE

A very special gift from **Henry Dale Smith, Jr.**
and **Deborah Klang Smith P'05** reasserts poetry's
prominence in, and beyond, a Bennington education.



It is not every day that arguably the most modest of art forms receives a big boost of support. But that is exactly what happened when **Henry Dale Smith, Jr.** and **Deborah Klang Smith P'05**, parents of Chandler Klang Smith '05, ensured that their love of poetry would find its way into the minds and hearts of generations of Bennington students to come.

"Perfection is rare, particularly in things that really matter," says President Elizabeth Coleman. "This gift is most certainly such an accomplishment in its inspired blend of poetry, teaching, and love. We are stunned, ecstatic, and, most of all, deeply grateful to Deborah and Dale for what they have set in motion in this, the latest instance, of their remarkable generosity to the College."

Mark Wunderlich, an award-winning poet and faculty member since 2004, will serve as point person for the programs, residencies, events, and courses now being envisioned as part of the Smiths' four-year commitment.

"When I first heard about the gift, I was quite stunned by the level of generosity and the simplicity of its intent: to fund poetry programming and curricula at the College. As a teacher, I have spent many hours in the classroom trying to help students be better, more discerning readers of poems. I want my students to carry their understanding of poetry into their other work. This gift will only help to bring poems and poetry into the center of [their] work."

A key aspect of the Smiths' gift is the underwriting of a series of mini-residencies for poets—both emerging and distinguished voices—to live and teach at the College beginning in the fall of 2012. The visiting poets will offer craft sessions and master classes for students, and Wunderlich will organize a "poets in conversation" series that ties the residencies together and embeds them in the Bennington curriculum.

“Many important poets have spent time here, taught here, and worked here,” explains Wunderlich, referring to such luminaries as Theodore Roethke, W.H. Auden, Stanley Kunitz, and Mary Oliver. “And for years the members of the literature faculty at Bennington have been developing a curriculum that is designed to help students become the best writers they can be. We think of what we do as going beyond the typical workshop model to offer a more holistic approach to writing, which is really an extension of reading.”

“In a 1977 interview with Chris Busa,” says Deborah Klang Smith, “poet Stanley Kunitz remarked, ‘I dream of an art so transparent that you can look through and see the world.’ At its best, poetry is such an art, and one that we hope to celebrate with this gift.”

Isabel Roche, dean of the College, adds, “This gift is not just about poets but also about poetry itself.” She explains: “In very basic and complicated ways, poetry—all art forms—teaches us about ourselves, about the world.”

Because Bennington has “long been a gathering place for people interested in literature,” Wunderlich says it is also an ideal place in which to once more call attention to poetry’s necessity. “[While] poetry is, and always will be, fine in the same way that art and music will always be fine, colleges and students and organizations involved with poetry need champions. What impresses me most about what the Smiths have done is the purity of their intent. They have given us the resources to give others the chance to engage with poets and their work.”

And to those who often argue that the arts, and poetry in particular, do not address needs at the level of other, more self-evident causes, Wunderlich has an answer:

“Poems act in the world by creating opportunities for empathy. They collapse time and allow the dead to speak again. When you read a poem aloud, you are taking in someone else’s thought and breathing it out into the world. Poetry cuts through murky, tired, misused language, and returns meaning to it. It revitalizes the language we use every day. If you believe in beauty, mystery, and the complexity of human emotion—and if you want to connect through those things to other human beings—then read a poem. That isn’t so much a ‘cause’ as it is a reason to have hope in the future. And that seems worthy of support, doesn’t it?” ●

W 113TH STREET

Tee and I took cinnamon sticks
from the back of the toilet. We called them
smokers. Or we were smokers, inhaling
sips of pungent bark, our tallest
fingers flanked the quills. We kept the

smokers in a paper playing card box.
I do not know what happened
to the playing cards. We hid the box
in a black messenger bag Mom
once used for work. We had

one special smoker: a broken pencil with
a red eraser “filter.” Surely Tee
was the only one to use it.
I once snuck a smoke without Tee.
The pencil wasn’t hollow like

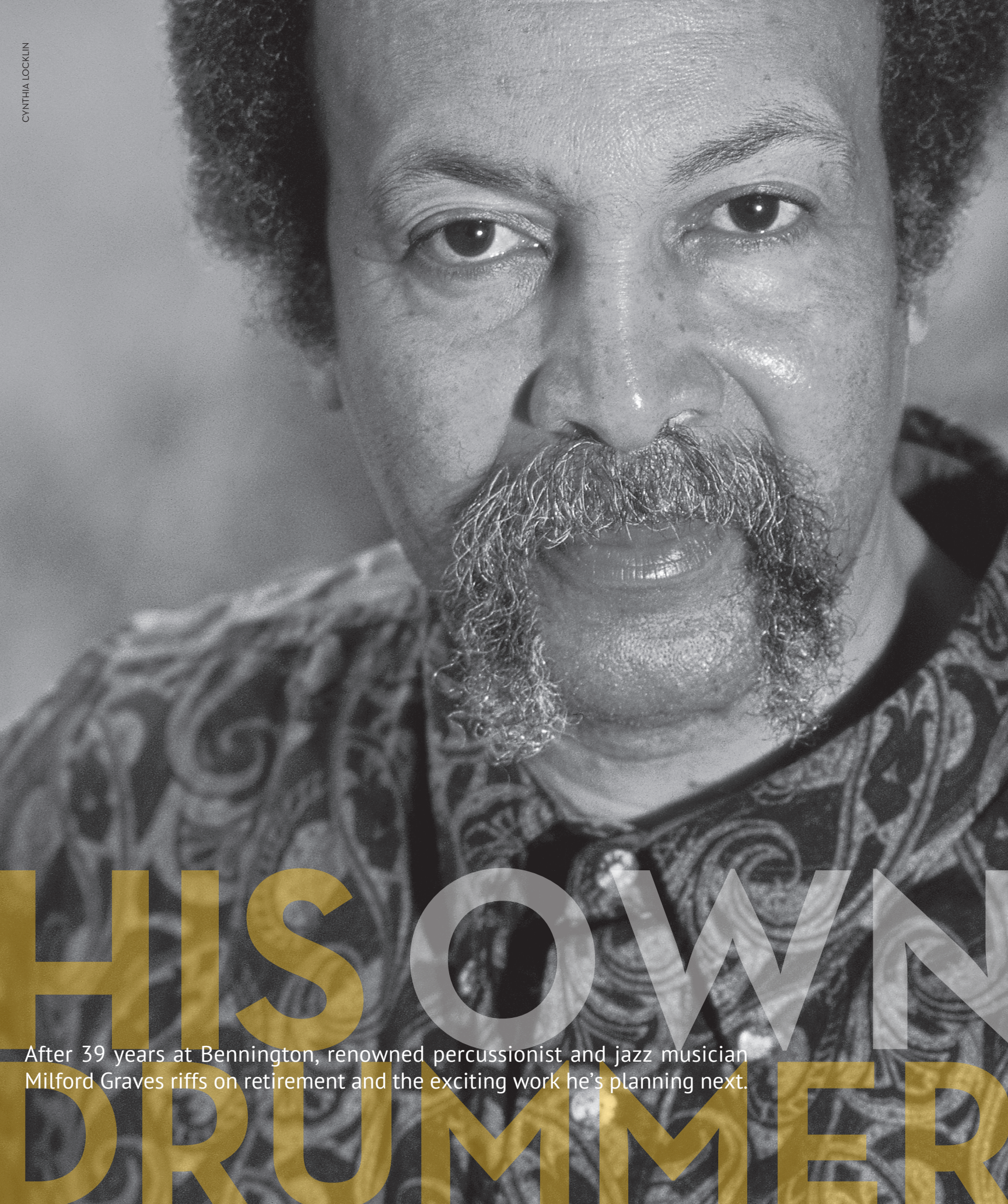
the quills—it left no spicy tang
on my lips. I worried over
the lead, would it poison? Without tapping
any loose ash, I butted the
pencil against the clock-ashtray.

by Jenny Rae Bailey '12

*To listen to Jenny Rae Bailey read another poem from her
collection, visit benningtonradioproject.squarespace.com
(April 21, 2012 post). 🎧*

“If you believe in beauty, mystery, and the
complexity of human emotion—and if you
want to connect through those things to
other human beings—then read a poem.”

—Mark Wunderlich



HIS OWN DRUMMER

After 39 years at Bennington, renowned percussionist and jazz musician Milford Graves riffs on retirement and the exciting work he's planning next.



It was an appointment that **almost** didn't happen.

Milford Graves was first introduced to southern Vermont and Bennington in 1972 at the invitation of former faculty member Bill Dixon who, at the time, was organizing a Black Music Festival. "I'm a guy from Bed-Stuy, Harlem, and Queens," Graves says, "and I got here and I thought, 'Now, wait, this is kinda different. Look at these mountains, the cows.'"

A year later, when Dixon began forming what would later become the College's highly regarded Black Music Division, he asked Graves to think about leaving New York behind—not to mention that feeling of "having to look over your shoulder"—and to give the Green Mountain State, and teaching, a chance.

"You have to remember this was just after Civil Rights, black militancy, all that stuff, and I wasn't sure. But I remember a few of the white students coming up to me in those early days and saying they would never have communicated with a black person otherwise, and I thought, more than drumming, man, this

is what I can bring. If I can play any role in someone becoming more of a human citizen, expose them to another culture, and another experience...that's what I wanted to contribute."

Graves's contributions go far beyond these, but at the end of nearly 40 years of teaching beneath mountains and amid cows, it's the one he seems most proud of. "I tell my students, 'listen to this'—and I play jazz. You want to understand something about diversity, about black culture...you can *hear* it."

Music as a way into understanding isn't just a romantic notion for Graves. He has dedicated much of his recent work to its relationship to culture, social justice, and now medicine. His latest work was awarded with a Guggenheim in 2000 and will occupy the man in the next phase of his life.

"I started playing drums when I was 2, and then, around 11, I was exposed to music that dealt with a form of Santeria [a Cuban religion that involves healing practices in its theology].

So, I was taught music from a healing source,” he says. “It was never an intellectual experience for me. You know, people have said, you take the music away, and black folks die. I always wondered, what is it with music? I would travel to these areas—these really rough areas—and it was music that would make people feel good; it cut across all cultures. And then I started to get into the science of why people were feeling ill and why, after they heard this music, they felt better.”

Graves, who at one time ran a diagnostic lab for a veterinarian, fused his love for kinesiology with his love of music and began to study the heart, its beat, and how medical conditions that change the heartbeat—arrhythmia, for example, or cardiovascular disease—might be healed through corrective percussion. Using EKGs and formulating algorithms based on the person’s faulty beat, Graves composes and sends in new beats through pulses via acupuncture needles.

The theory is that each body possesses a register of health that, if damaged or malfunctioning, can be affected, and manipulated back into health, musically. As the drum of the body, the heart is the natural place to begin restoring the body’s balance.

The work has recently caught the attention of several researchers, including one at the University of Bologna in Italy, who wants to work with and develop this type of biofeedback.

“Just like what we ingest matters to our body, so does what we put in our ears,” says Graves. “What we smell, what we see. People have gotten away from these ideas. So food, sound, beautiful visuals...these things matter to our overall health. And music, because it cuts across everything—culture, politics, language—can play a lot of roles. Music is important. Why do you think the first thing that Occupy Wall Street did when it took over that park was bring the drums?”

Graves will still conduct small tutorials for some Bennington students from his home in New York. He still has that desire to be a force for making “human citizens.” It is a desire he hopes young people will embrace long after he retires. In a cadence as strong as his compositions, this jazz master offers this last bit of advice:

“I say to the young people, you have a responsibility to make sure the planet survives, to not be manipulated by people who are control freaks, or by technology. And I encourage them to listen to their elders. They are running on top of what came before, the roots. Study your teachers; know your teachers.”

For Graves’s students and colleagues, it is strikingly clear who tops this list. “Bennington has had its share of heroic figures,” says President Elizabeth Coleman, “none more so than Milford Graves. His talents as an artist are legendary. He is second to none in his devotion to this College and in the courage and conviction with which he expressed that devotion. It has been a privilege and an honor to have had him as a colleague.”





“BUT I REMEMBER A FEW OF THE WHITE STUDENTS COMING UP TO ME IN THOSE EARLY DAYS AND SAYING THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE COMMUNICATED WITH A BLACK PERSON OTHERWISE, AND I THOUGHT, MORE THAN DRUMMING, MAN, THIS IS WHAT I CAN BRING.”

New York may still
be the center of
the art world, but
190 miles north
two Bennington
women are
making work that
is shaking it up.

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY



Liz Deschenes
Installation view of *Registration*
Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York City
2007

Consider these laurels: Recognized by the 2012 Whitney Biennial? Check. Recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship? Yep. Inclusion in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Rubin Museum of Art, and the Brooklyn Museum? Done. Oh, and did we mention, the two women who have achieved these accolades separately now share one: Visual Arts faculty members **Liz Deschenes** and **Yoko Inoue** have both been awarded the prestigious Anonymous Was A Woman grant, which recognizes the artistic quality and accomplishments of female artists so that they continue to grow and create.

“For me, it was an enormous honor,” says Deschenes, who received the Anonymous grant in 2004. “I did not have much institutional support for my work during this period, and this acknowledgement—in this particular time period—was paramount to my ability to feel connected to a greater community of exceptional artists and those responsible for making this award exist and prosper.”

In the case of these two Bennington artists, “anonymous” has never been so misleading a term. Both at the vanguard of their fields, Inoue and Deschenes have lately been racking up the honors as their work continues to draw attention and admiration. Deschenes was selected for the 2012 Whitney Biennial; Inoue was chosen for a prestigious residency in Paris sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Mayor’s Office of the City of Paris.

Lauren Katzowitz Shenfield, who directs the Anonymous program, explains that this award in particular is “synonymous with important recognition, [both] in [a woman’s] personal and artistic development. The financial gift helps artists buy time, space, materials, and equipment, often at early stages of a new project, and, sometimes, recover from traumatic life events. In itself, the award helps artists feel recognized and honored by other distinguished women who seek no credit for the role they play.”

Yoko Inoue
Installation view of *Mandala Flea Market Mutants: Pop Protocol and the
Seven Transformations of Good-luck National Defense Cats*
Smack Mellon Gallery, Brooklyn, New York
2012

ANONYMOUS WAS A (BENNINGTON) WOMAN





Liz Deschenes
Installation view of *Tilt/Swing* (360° field of vision, version 1)
Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York City
2009

Although the women operate in different media—Inoue’s work involves sculpture and installation, among other forms, Deschenes focuses on photography—both are leading the Bennington tradition of faculty members (and women) with artistic talents that may take shape in Vermont but are appreciated well beyond it.

“The faculty at Bennington are incredible in many ways,” says Deschenes, “the most crucial being that we are all dedicated to work in the studio and the classroom. This is not easily accomplished. The curriculum is genuinely interdisciplinary, allowing us to challenge students to find ways to find the precise methods to communicate their ideas.”

Not surprisingly, the ideas of their teachers are Bennington-esque as well. In addition to exploring aesthetics and the visual field itself (in Deschenes’s case), Inoue’s work addresses contemporary questions that involve politics, socioeconomic issues, and global culture. She says she wants to “consider the confluence of different cultures in the marketplace, paying attention to product routes, specific cultural derivations of products, and the influence of globalization and free trade on traditional culture. In my installation art, I use the ceramic medium because of its cultural universality to seek ways of linking contemporary objects to their history, lost cultural origins, and displaced meanings.”

Aside from balancing the demands of their own work and the classroom—and in doing so reminding their students that both settings are rich learning environments—Inoue and Deschenes share a subtler, but no less powerful, lesson: the struggle of women artists is still going on today.

“During the ’80s, when I was an undergraduate studying visual art, the more established and better-known New York galleries unapologetically did not represent women artists or they would have only one,” says Deschenes. “It would be impossible for these conditions not to have a negative effect on any young person aspiring to be an artist. It’s certainly not equitable today, but I am especially grateful for the generation of women artists who preceded me. They did a tremendous amount of work to make more opportunities for women artists a genuine possibility.”

It is a baton that both Deschenes and Inoue plan to carry forward. For her current attention-getting show at Smack Mellon in New York, Inoue gave a rare opportunity to **Jennifer Sonenberg ’14**, **Aleah T. Stewart-Souris ’14**, and **Fei Lai ’12** to be a part of her creative process during their Field Work Terms.

Anonymity may indeed be a big club with a (dubiously) long tradition, but leaving it, as Inoue and Deschenes have, is more than just a coup for themselves, women, even Bennington. It is a coup for the art world itself, which ultimately survives on the unsung visionaries finally getting sung. ●

iz Deschenes’s work is in the permanent collections of The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Art Institute of Chicago, The Walker Art Center, and The Hirschhorn, among others. In addition to being included in the 2012 Whitney Biennial, her work has received an Aaron Siskind Foundation grant and been published in *Rethinking Photography* and *Concrete Photography*. As an artist, curator, and educator, she has been dedicated to expanding the dialogue around the medium of photography, and its relationship to other artistic practices. She has taught photography at The School of Visual Arts and has been a visiting artist and critic at Columbia University’s Graduate School. She received her BFA at the Rhode Island School of Design and has been a faculty member at Bennington since 2006.

Yoko Inoue is a multidisciplinary artist whose work includes sculpture, installation, collaborative projects, and public intervention performance art. Her work explores the commoditization of cultural values and assimilation and identity issues. Originally from Kyoto, Japan, Inoue earned an MFA in Combined Media from Hunter College and attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2000. Her work has been shown at the Brooklyn Museum, the Sculpture Center, the Rubin Museum, the Bronx Museum, LMCC, Greene Naftali Gallery, and Art in General, among other places. She has received numerous awards and grants, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Joan Mitchell grant. She is a member of the Artists Advisory Committee of the New York Foundation for the Arts. Inoue has been a visiting faculty member at Bennington each fall term since 2004 and joined as part-time faculty in fall 2011.



SUSAN P. HUGGINS



AL PRICE





ALL PHOTOS BY SUE REES

If theatre is about being fearless,
then those responsible for it must
be as well. Enter this year's production
of *Angels in America*.

"Impossible" is a word you hear a lot when talking to those involved in drama at Bennington. But it doesn't mean what you think. The term has become a sort of dare, a litmus test for what is worth doing, and a way to gauge the commitment of those who participate in the productions mounted every year. But never have those been more true than this past fall, when faculty members **Kirk Jackson** and **Jenny Rohn** decided to put on Tony Kushner's Pulitzer Prize-winning opus, *Angels in America*.

Consider a few numbers: 2 full-length plays totaling 5½ hours, presented consecutively over 2 weekends, by the same 17 actors, with 2 directors. A play that was also the result of: a team of student dramaturges compiling primary and secondary source material on the work's historical context over an entire summer; major contributions from a team of costume design students; multiple rehearsal rooms humming six days a week; and roughly a thousand creative solutions to an equal number of logistical nightmares (create a levitating angel, anyone?) that would, and has, warded off many professional companies.

Impossible? Absolutely!



“We knew it was impossible,” says co-director Jenny Rohn. “Nearly impossible. I remember exactly where I was sitting when Kirk suggested we do it. I was absolutely terrified. But I knew that we spoke the same language and that we had personal reasons for wanting to remind and inform this generation of the devastating events of the [AIDS] crisis that had occurred before they were born. For me, if there is an emotional, spiritual, intellectual connection to the material that runs deep, I have no hesitation in committing myself fully. It’s rare.”

Says Rohn’s partner in the impossible, Kirk Jackson: “We always want to challenge ourselves and our students. In 10 years, I can’t think of a time when we thought, ‘Oh, let’s do this project, it’ll be easy; we’ve done that before.’ Fundamental to this fact is that we don’t sell tickets or market our productions to an outside audience. Sometimes that seems unfortunate because we make really great theatre here and more people should see it. But it means we don’t think in terms of pleasing an audience or fulfilling expectations. Instead, we start with the idea of ‘challenge’ when choosing our projects. This is an essential aspect of a Bennington education: It’s not about fulfilling expectations; it’s about asking tough questions and pursuing greater truths in the answering.”

For **Ethan Woods ’12**, who oversaw the complicated sound design and music for the sprawling epic, it was the impossible that finally sold him. “When I first heard about *Angels*, I wasn’t really familiar with the show, so my reaction was along the lines of ‘that’s neat.’ But as the term went on, I began hearing more and more, and once I learned it was actually two

different plays, and the College was going to do both in the same term, I thought, ‘Why the hell would they want to do that to themselves?!’ I began realizing how cool and crazy of a project it would be and began feeling the absolute need to be a part of it.”

“I think it’s that willingness to take on impossible-seeming projects—and to commit not just to completing them, but to making them extraordinary—that characterizes theatre at Bennington,” confirms **Meg Osborn ’12**, who led the aforementioned dramaturgical team. “One of the challenges specific to *Angels* is that there are so many areas to explore and understand before you can even begin putting the play on its feet. We—myself, **Eric Marlin ’13**, and **Chelsea Bernard ’13**—researched the AIDS epidemic, Mormonism, Reaganism, the mythology of angels and prophecy, Judaism, the Rosenberg trial, and the geography of New York City, just to name a few topics. We created a huge database of information in order to provide the cast and production team with resources—historical, cultural, linguistic, literary, and visual—that aided in the creation of a full, rich, and accurate performance of the playwright’s work.”

For **Jonah Lipsky ’13**, who played Louis—one of the play’s most deeply conflicted characters, a man who abandons his partner soon after he is diagnosed with AIDS—the idea of taking on the role struck him as so daunting, it became irresistible. “I was looking through the curriculum and saw ‘Production: *Angels in America*,’ and I was like, ‘Oh my god. They’re doing what?!’ Initial disbelief gave way to excitement. In scope and intensity it was like auditioning for *Hamlet*, only

“This is a full-on-all-the-time-don’t-you-dare-take-yourself-out-of-it-for-a-second kind of play.”

—Jenny Rohn

the playwright is still alive and the play was written 20 years ago.”

Since its original staging in 1990, *Angels in America* has become one of the most canonical works in American theatre. Not only has it reaped a slew of awards, seen major productions on Broadway and around the country, including an anniversary revival last year, and become an Emmy-winning Mike Nichols’ miniseries that aired on HBO, it continues to capture the zeitgeist when it comes to themes Rohn says required so much of the young students.

“Every student involved in this production evolved in some significant way,” reflects Rohn. “For the actors, it was through a kind of emotional courage and willingness to open themselves up to the staggeringly high stakes of the play: life and death, insanity, betrayal, sexual awakening, crises of faith, abandonment. We told them, ‘this is not a play where you are going to be backstage goofing around when you aren’t in a scene. This is a full-on-all-the-time-don’t-you-dare-take-yourself-out-of-it-for-a-second kind of play.’ As a faculty member, to be able to say that I had one of the peak creative experiences of my life...well, that’s remarkable to me.

Bennington encourages you to teach what you dream about, what keeps you up at night.”

Jackson agrees. “The actors, to a person, did their best work to date. Their sensitivity to the material—some of it very intimate and adult—seemed to grow in respect for the play even as they began to master it.”

“The size of the play and the depth of what it deals with were the hardest parts,” says Lipsky. “We had to get to know the AIDS epidemic from an emotional point of view. A mostly straight cast had to feel what being a homosexual is like. People had to be Valium addicts, they had to be homeless people, they had to be Roy Cohn (perhaps the worst thing to be), they had to be dying. For me, I had to move out on my dying lover because it was too stressful and scary, watching him deteriorate. The play means business; thus we had to mean business too.”

Much is made of collaboration when talking about theatre, but that well-worn term took on a new life for the team responsible for this version of *Angels*. In addition to the production’s directors and students, several members of the College’s faculty were involved, including **Sue Rees**, who designed the set and projections; **Michael Giannitti**, who





designed lights for one of the productions and helped with stage management; **Charles Schoonmaker**, who taught a costume class that focused on the costumes for the production; **Richard MacPike**, who designed and built the wings for the angel; **Scott Lehrer**, who supervised three student sound designers; guest faculty member James Smith III, who performed in both shows; and biology teacher **Betsy Sherman**, who was cast as the rabbi.

"I was so grateful to have been involved in *Angels*," says Sherman. "It took so much insight, determination, patience, talent, and, dare I say, chutzpah on Kirk and Jenny's part. But perhaps the most inspiring and exhilarating aspect of the production for me was getting to know so many wonderful students—the actors whose work humbled me and the technical staff who made sure I was where I was supposed to be with my beard in place. This was a heroic and important event at the College, one I will remember with gratitude and awe for the rest of my life."

"There is a great deal of professionalism involved with every production at Bennington," says Ethan Woods, who, for *Angels*, learned an entirely new software system for sound design. "We take our shows very seriously and work abnormally hard to make magic. [But] *Angels* pushed everyone to their limits. There was an understanding between all of us that we had a duty to make something great."

"Collaboration in professional theatre can be compartmentalized but when the object of making theatre is the education of its participants that cannot be the case," observes Jackson. "Asking questions is the mode of conversation in the best collaborations and the best classrooms. And there's no better way to understand the art form one has dedicated one's life to pursuing than to attempt to teach its values to another. Teaching keeps me honest, challenged, and makes me a better actor, director, and citizen."

As it turned out, Jackson's sense of citizenship went beyond him and even the play, extending across the campus. His and Rohn's production was linked to anthropology faculty member **Mirka Prazak's** and visiting faculty member Kieran

Honderich's HIV/AIDS Epidemic class. Members of the cast and crew attended select sessions of the class and, in turn, the HIV/AIDS Epidemic students created concession and information tables in the lobby to raise awareness and money for an African AIDS charity.

"I had collaborated with Mirka the last time she taught that class," says Rohn. "I knew that we needed to involve her class in some way. Kirk and I felt strongly that we must take the events of the play into the present day and remind people that it is still a devastating disease."

For many in the audience, it was a transformational experience, one of the most memorable, if not *the* most memorable, production in Bennington's history. **Allen Shawn**, music faculty member, said of Bennington's *Angels*: "The whole piece soared with power and tenderness."

And while audience transformation is a part of every good dramatic performance, when talking to those involved with this *Angels* production, there is a keen sense that the performance changed them just as much.

"It changed all of us," says Meg Osborn. "After the last show, the cast met one last time to talk about how doing the show had affected us. Everyone had something to say. I saw almost every person—some of them classmates whom I'd known for years, others with whom I'd never worked before—do things I'd never in a million years have expected of them, things that were clearly outside their comfort zones."

I think we all came away with the sense that we'd been a part of something really big, really important. Part of that was the play itself, but part of it was the group of people who created it. I don't know that I'll necessarily be doing much theatre after I leave Bennington, but this production is one of the things I'm most proud of having done here."

"Theatre is strange," says Woods. "It is a structure in which every single person needs to be committed or the whole thing collapses. Theatre on the scale of *Angels*, though, exists not only as great art but also as a testament of the involvement of its crew and cast. When one is watching theatre, one is actually seeing the collected efforts of dozens of people who

all put their focus into this one moment. With a production of this magnitude, there is a strong leap-of-faith element: You have to trust everyone involved to move forward with you. For me, it was an intoxicating experience.”

Jonah Lipsky says he had never done anything “that huge” in his acting life. “I have this knowledge now that if you throw yourself fearlessly into working on a production that you love, something good will happen. It pushed me past all of my limits. It redefined for me how hard I will have to work in order to be working as hard as I can.”

“We never anticipated the emotional impact it would have on the students, the community, and on us,” says Rohn. “The actors saw each other risking, giving it their all in rehearsal after rehearsal with such profound integrity. The crew echoed this level of hard work and courage; they demonstrated such commitment and willingness to collaborate. I learned and remembered so much about myself, my strengths and weaknesses, and the value of pushing myself beyond what I thought was even possible. When you direct and teach at the same time, it requires you to do what you should always do as an artist but often forget to do: trust and surrender to the process.”

In other words, make the impossible, possible. ●

Bennington's production of Angels in America was made possible through generous support from the Jerome A. Newman Performing Arts Fund and an anonymous gift from Bennington parents.

“Angels pushed everyone to their limits. There was an understanding between all of us that we had a duty to make something great.”

—Ethan Woods '12







Salem Art Works is part-art gallery, part-artist retreat, and part-conservatory in upstate New York.

VOCALS

Three Bennington alums decide to stick close to their alma mater and establish institutions that extend its spirit.

The arts, the environment, education—causes don’t get much more big-picture than these. And yet for **Anthony Cafritz ’85**, **Constance Kheel ’67**, and **Jessica Howard ’64**, the big picture is best addressed through smaller, more surgical efforts. In their cases, efforts aimed within a 30-mile radius of the place they first discovered they had a yen for making change.

“Bennington has an energy,” says Cafritz, the founder and executive director of Salem Art Works (SAW), a place that is part-art gallery, part-artist retreat, and part-conservatory for aspiring artisans in Salem, New York. “I remember VAPA: It was 24 hours. We’re about perpetuating that energy here at SAW. That energy is timeless; it’s predicated on passion. It’s about pushing yourself and your boundaries, creating an atmosphere where that energy and passion become possible.”

After working in New York and then at The Carving Studio in Rutland, Vermont, Cafritz felt called to reignite the energy he had discovered at Bennington in Salem, New York, a town situated just a half-hour away. Begun in 2005, SAW offers workshops with master instructors in such disciplines as glass,

ceramics, and sculpture; it also hosts artists in the summer, giving them crucial studio space; and it regularly reaches out to the community through exhibitions and events, becoming a hub of creative endeavor. “We’ve wanted to keep this idea pure,” he says, “free of politics and set aesthetics. With a focus on going beyond your limits.”

Such a mission might have launched anywhere, but Cafritz cites the region as being especially conducive to this labor of love. “Southern Vermont and this part of New York have hosted a number of important artists. The Hudson River School, the people who have lived and taught at Bennington...even the light itself here is unusual.”

Since beginning SAW, Cafritz has mentored more than 35 Bennington alumni, including his former associate director who began as an intern. The chairman of his board, **Walter “Gator” Dunnington**, is class of 1984. In addition, SAW has involved and drawn on many others in the Bennington network: **Thomas Dunn ’96**; **Ciaran Cooper ’87**, **MFA ’04**; and **Ned Mooney ’93**; plus other SAW board members **Mary Early ’97**;



Hiland Hall was founded by Jessica Howard '64 (right) in 1991 in the progressive education tradition of John Dewey.

Stephan Fowlkes '93; Andrew Kromelow '90; and Margaret (Owen) Johnson '85. “At Bennington, there is a quiet, unsaid, but real alumni network that provides a living springboard for undergraduates toward their goals and careers. I’m talking about alumni spanning 60, 70 years—it doesn’t matter.” Cafritz also cites Franconia Sculpture Park, operated by **John Hock '82** and **C. Fuller Cowles '84**, as a chief inspiration for SAW.

“I think the core premise of Bennington is, ‘what am I doing?’ In the 21st century, ideas have become commodified, but the Bennington ethos is to ‘dimensionalize’ thought, to open it up, to unravel it.” For Cafritz, this is what is at stake with SAW: to provide a place where ideas become pure again, where reflection is not only fostered but regarded as an essential act of a whole life. In a time where noise reigns everywhere, his may be one of the important missions anywhere.

No less timely—or urgent—are the objectives of the Hiland Hall School founded by **Jessica Howard**. Hiland Hall is a progressive school in Bennington for children ages 5 to 14 (some of whose parents are Bennington College faculty and staff), where the curriculum emerges out of the “thoughts, interests, and needs of the child.” Howard, who knew she wanted to become a teacher since “the age of 10” chose Bennington because she felt it was the “adult version” of the educational principles she first sensed, and loved, in Louisa May Alcott’s writings. “I studied philosophy and history at Bennington,” Howard says, “and I started the Hiland Hall School in 1991 because I wanted a setting to teach according to the philosophy we had developed at the Prospect School,” which itself was started by Bennington faculty in 1965.

What began as a grassroots dream has flourished in the last 20 years: The Hiland Hall School began with 12 families and 15 kids and now has close to 30 families and 35 kids. There are no grade levels and no grades; interaction is both group oriented and one-on-one. “Education now is about huge amounts of standardization and very little respect for the pacing of the child.

We have a great difficulty in this culture differentiating between information and knowledge.”

Howard’s vision for education may be a tailored one, “highly descriptive,” she says in the sense that it relies on keen observation from teachers to assess progress. But “side by side with the individual, we are deeply committed to social values, group responsibility, and the need to care for each other. We are often told our kids have manners in that old-fashioned sense. That they’re more self-aware, more motivated, more responsible, and have better relationships with adults.”

While some educational conventions have changed, and people are open to new models for learning, Howard says her methods are still unfamiliar to some. “People are afraid. They want accountability, which is good, but we’re very given to evaluating everything in terms of numbers. But there are many forms of accountability that cannot be found in the realm of numbers.”

That fear, she says, is what can undercut the enterprise of education in our country and compromise the full, informed, and rewarding intellectual lives most parents want for their children.

At the end of this year, Howard is retiring from The Hiland Hall School, ending an era both at the school and in her own life. But the power of the nearly 50-year commitment this Bennington alum has made to education can be observed in just how deeply rooted her ideas have become. And they are certain to thrive in her absence. Anyway, as it turns out, she won’t be that absent. “Oh, I still plan to be here, teaching,” she laughs.

That which abides is a theme shared by **Constance Kheel** and the environmental mission of her Persistence Foundation. An abstract, Color Field painter, Kheel traces her involvement in land conservation all the way back to her days as a student at Bennington.

“No doubt,” she says, “I took many drives into the countryside while attending Bennington and was enraptured by the agricultural landscape. I was determined to move back to the area after graduating, and in 1970, I purchased a farm near the College and transformed a barn into a studio and have been living and painting in Buskirk [New York] ever since.”

When Kheel thinks back on her time at Bennington, she is reminded of one particular course she took with Stanley Edgar Hyman: *Myth, Ritual, and Literature*. “It helped me, and surely many others, to find meaning and connections in unconventional ways. At Bennington we were also encouraged to delve deeply into our field of interest. That ability to focus intensely, which I learned there, has helped me immeasurably working on the causes in which I’ve become involved.” The Persistence Foundation has not only made use of Kheel’s intense focus but also her Bennington network; fellow alumnae **Susan Crile '65** and **Elizabeth Frank '67** are both members of its board.

Founded by Kheel in 1996, the foundation works to conserve agricultural lands and what the organization calls their

“agricultural heritage.” In a region where the beauty of the land can make cash sounds as far as a developer’s eye can see, that heritage is at risk.

“As the farm economy has struggled in recent years, many of the barns in the area have fallen into disrepair,” says Kheel. “Farms have been sold for development and suburbanization is encroaching on the farmland, fragmenting the agricultural vistas. As a result, I have felt a more urgent need to help implement land conservation strategies.”

To date, The Persistence Foundation has meticulously documented more than 200 historic barns in the local area. Several of them have undergone actual restoration. In the case of the Historic Barns of Nipmoose, the largest and most recent project the foundation has undertaken, the group has spent 10 years dismantling, restoring, and resurrecting two large barns and one small corncrib. Their history safe and secure, the barns are now used as event sites for weddings, parties, and tours.

“What I hope persists with the work of the foundation is a recognition of the significance of America’s agricultural heritage, as well as the need to conserve farmland. Very specifically, I hope that the Historic Barns of Nipmoose will inspire people to identify, appreciate, and preserve the remarkable barns constructed by the early timber framers. They are, after all, America’s largest antiques.”

For alumni who have settled near Bennington, the College can act like a battery from which they continue to draw inspiration, stamina, even new ideas. But most will insist you don’t need to be in driving distance to sustain the Bennington spirit.

“I would encourage Bennington alumni to get involved in community organizations,” advises Kheel. “From my experience, there are endless ways in which communities can benefit from creative thinking. Thinking ‘outside the box’ is what we learned at Bennington, but that is sorely lacking in most organizations and municipalities. Promote the arts. That is an area that inevitably gets shortchanged, particularly in difficult economic times. Combine disciplines. That is, find avenues for cross-pollination of ideas, talents, and studies.”

Cafritz describes meeting Bennington’s Pioneers, the women from its early days who are now in their 80s and 90s but whose “eyes are always bright.”

“I mean, that’s it, what you see in their eyes—the most important thing in life is that relentless passion. Bennington teaches that. Bennington shows you that pursuing things that may be impossible is what’s important. If you can keep that principle operative in your mind, keep living a life where that process is internalized, you won’t atrophy. The other thing I’d say is to be extroverted in the world. Use your reactions to the world to charge those passions. It’s the way we keep from being solipsistic.”



COURTESY OF THE PERSISTENCE FOUNDATION

These historic timber-framed barns located on Nipmoose Farm in Buskirk, New York, were meticulously restored by The Persistence Foundation.



In Provincetown, MA, July 1950

remembering HELEN FRANKENTHALER



Helen Frankenthaler '49, *Red Square*, 1959, Oil on canvas, 5'8" x 10'6¼", Bennington College Collection, ©The Estate of Helen Frankenthaler/ARS (Artists Rights Society), New York

The entire Bennington College community mourns the loss of one of the most influential and defining artists of the last 50 years—and one of the pivotal figures in the College's history: **Helen Frankenthaler '49**. She died on December 27, 2011, at the age of 83. Her pioneering technique, along with her use of landscape to inform her abstract work, forever changed the way artists conceived and used color in their work.

HELEN FRANKENTHALER

on Bennington

“Half a century ago, whenever I mentioned I was a Bennington girl, the reaction of a raised eyebrow and knowing smile implied that I was a certain kind of princess: the new liberated woman, even a misfit or the dangerous kind. (I still thoroughly enjoy articulating those three syllables—**BENN-ING-TON**—at a stuffy dinner party.)

All of my Bennington memories melt into one joyful stream of laughter, invention, serious concerned pursuits, intense friendships, and the opening of my already ‘analytic mind’—all surrounded by beautiful Vermont landscape.”



ALEC BROWN '74



MARVIN E. NEWMAN

“The first day of Paul Feeley: He was fresh from the Marines in blue jeans and T-shirt, devastatingly handsome, and resembling a rugged version of Cary Grant. Paul had large, wet, alert, and searching eyes. Smiling and bright, he was full of talk, ideas, and receptive to anything and everything. He lit a fire under class seminars. There were many wild and brilliant teachers on campus; inspiring, you could only want more, and they gave it.”

“Peter Drucker: I was terrified when he had me alone in his office to discuss my freshman paper. PD: ‘What’s the real meaning of money?’ I did a mental gulp. My nonplussed expression forced him to give me the reply he sought: ‘Credit. Barter.’ I did not become an economist.”

“I look back on a parade of faces and classrooms: Erich Fromm and his magic—Freud, The Bible, and Spinoza—all crowding my writing and dreaming life. Kenneth Burke and his lessons in rhetoric and persuasion, some of which I use to this day.”

“There was much to be learned off campus as well: One NRT [Non-Resident Term], upon Paul Feeley’s recommendation, I studied with Wallace Harrison. Great teacher. I still have drawings I made with him. I worked another NRT in Boston for the editor of a weekly newspaper called the Cambridge Courier. Tough boss. I wrote an editorial on Plan E in the 1940s and he fired me when it appeared. I went directly downstairs and took a job wheeling a slop tray/wagon in a huge cafeteria on Harvard Square.”



TED GOODMAN

This page (top to bottom): With Betty Ford at the dedication of VAPA, 1976. Greeting students at an exhibition of her work on campus, 1978. In class with Paul Feeley.

Opposite: With friends at Bennington College, including Miriam (Marx) Allen '49, Marilyn (Miller) Bowie '47, Alexandra (Bayar) Crawford '48, Wilma (Miller) Gilbert '47, Nancy (Lindau) Lewis '49, Ellen (Denson) Jones '49, Eleanor (Cohen) Stillman '49, Jeannette Winans Bertles '49. Courtesy of The Estate of Helen Frankenthaler.



“My mother once came to Bennington for a José Limón dance production. I was very proud of having worked on the set. Finally, the curtain fell, my mother turned to me, lovingly but puzzled. Where exactly was my handiwork? There seemed to be no set at all! I explained I had a great deal to do with the small papier-mâché rock that sat on the stage bathed in gray light. That rock comprised the whole set. Couldn't she see? All the rest was empty dance space. That rock became sort of a symbol for me.”

“Today, many of my dear Bennington comrades are gone. Inside and out, we all reflect the mirrors of surprise and change. Age, that rock. Yet, I always try to leave a lot of space for that young whirling dervish, that imp who strives to make anything possible.”

HELEN FRANKENTHALER was born in New York City in 1928, the youngest child of Alfred Frankenthaler, a state Supreme Court judge, and Martha Lowenstein, a German immigrant. Her interest in art, and color experimentation in particular—for which she would become most well known—started early. As a child, she was known to mix nail polish and water in sinks to watch its evanescent permutations.

After graduating from The Dalton School, where she studied under Rufino Tamayo, Frankenthaler entered Bennington in 1946. Describing her years at the College as one “joyful stream of laughter, invention, serious pursuits, intense friendships, and the opening of my already ‘analytic mind,’” Frankenthaler credited Bennington with being formative in her development as an artist and a person. Studying with such remarkable teachers as **Paul Feeley** (“who taught me everything I know about Cubism”), **Peter Drucker**, **Kenneth Burke**, **Erich Fromm**, and **Ralph Ellison**, Frankenthaler regarded Bennington as “wild,” “brilliant,” and “inspiring.” Indeed, the College remained close to her throughout her entire life, and she served on its Board of Trustees from 1967 until 1974 and from 1975 until 1982. She was a generous donor to the College, supporting a range of initiatives from campus renewal to student scholarships.

“Getting to know Helen Frankenthaler has been for me one of life’s great adventures,” says President Elizabeth Coleman, “her genius with words, her piercing intelligence, her devotion to Bennington—all the more stunning given her lack of sentimentality and aversion to posturing—and, of course, her dazzling talent.”

After graduating from Bennington, Frankenthaler entered the New York art world, where she was influenced by such artists as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, and Robert Motherwell (whom she married in 1958). Although Abstract Expressionism was the dominant movement of the day, Frankenthaler forged her own path in 1952 when she painted *Mountains and Sea*, considered the groundbreaking work from which her own creative voice—and a new movement—emerged. Unlike Pollock and others, who allowed pigment to rest atop canvases in a multidimensional way, *Mountains and Sea* was the result of turpentine-thinned paint brushed into the canvas’s very fibers. Frankenthaler’s method not only reinterpreted color but also heralded a unification between color and canvas, its beauty and complexity residing in how it barely distinguished the two.

She later said the famous work was the result of “memories absorbed into not only her mind but her wrists as well.”

The technique inspired the art world. Critic Nigel Gosling said, “If any artist can give us aid and comfort, Helen Frankenthaler can with her great splashes of soft color...they are big but not bold, abstract but not empty or clinical, free but orderly, lively but intensely relaxed and peaceful.... They are vaguely feminine in the way water is feminine—dissolving and instinctive, and on an enveloping scale.”

After a visit to her studio, Morris Louis, who was himself struggling with Pollock’s legacy, said that Frankenthaler was “the bridge between Pollock and what was possible.”

Later named Color Field painting or Post-Painterly Abstraction, Frankenthaler’s methods still took some time to gain wider attention. Her first major museum show took place in 1960 at The Jewish Museum. In 1969, she was given a major retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Unlike many of her contemporaries, the artist did not produce serial works, preferring to keep her paintings distinctive. “There is no formula,” she said once. “There are no rules. Let the picture lead you where it must go.”

Aside from paintings, Frankenthaler explored sculpture, lithography, etchings, and printmaking. She is often credited with bringing the gossamer forms of her paintings to the more geometric style of woodcuts. In all these, Frankenthaler’s gift, according to critic

Barbara Rose, lay in the “freedom, spontaneity, openness, and complexity of an image...tied to nature and human emotions.”

Her works have been collected by every major art museum in the United States, and she was granted numerous solo exhibitions, including at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, and The Museum of Modern Art in New York. Among her many honors, Helen Frankenthaler was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 2002. She is survived by several neices and nephews, Ellen M. Iseman, Fred Iseman, Peter Iseman, Alfred Ross, Beverly Ross, and Clifford Ross; and four stepchildren, Jeannie Motherwell and Lise Motherwell, and Jennifer DuBrul Missbrenner and Nicholas DuBrul. Her husband Stephen M. DuBrul, whom she married in 1994, died eight days after Helen.

“It is impossible to measure either for me personally or for the College, what her loss means,” says President Coleman. “That loss is matched only by the power and pleasure of having known her presence.”



Entering class photo, Bennington College. Courtesy of Bennington College archives.

ANYONE CAN BE A PHILANTHROPIST



- ✓ GLOBAL CITIZENS
- ✓ WRITERS
- ✓ SILO SOCIETY MEMBERS

Former trustee Loet Velmans and his wife Edith make a generous bequest to support international education at Bennington.

“Global citizen” is one of those buzzwords that can seem both en vogue and vague until you meet people like Loet and Edith Velmans.

Both born in Holland under the shadow of World War II, Loet Velmans moved with his family to the Dutch East Indies to escape the German invasion. There, he joined the army, eventually becoming a prisoner of war in Japan, and one of the survivors responsible for building the infamous railroad over the River Kwai. In the summer of 1942, also in order to escape the Nazis, his wife Edith was sent into hiding with a Christian family in a small town in the south of Holland. She adopted a new identity, kept a diary, and maintained an underground correspondence with family members, many of whom would become victims of the Holocaust.

Seventy years later, it is hard not to view their harrowing and tragic beginnings as the seeds for their impassioned views on international education.

“Our international conflicts often occur because we don’t understand each other,” says Loet, who chronicled his story in *Long Way Back to the River Kwai* (Edith told hers in the much-acclaimed, internationally published memoir *Edith’s Story*). “Many people have gone through difficult war times that colored their lives, but learned to adjust and make the best of it. Edith and I have had to adjust to the different cultural environments in which we lived: France, Holland, Switzerland, and the U.K. By making adjustments to new cultures you grow and make a better life for yourself.”

It is no surprise, then, that the Velmans—neither alumni or parents of alumni—are themselves sort of chameleons of the Bennington culture. A former CEO of Hill & Knowlton, a leading international public relations firm, Loet served as a College trustee from 2001 until 2005. In 2011 he and Edith created a legacy gift—through a bequest and through the

creation of a charitable gift annuity—to foster international education at the College.

“We wish that students, wherever they come from, will have their eyes opened to foreign cultures and we trust Bennington to know how to do that,” says Loet. “That is why we are pleased that the legacy of our gifts to the College will be the establishment of the Loet and Edith Velmans International Studies Fund.”

“Loet’s and my heart were opened by our experiences with Bennington,” says Edith, who, in addition to being an author and highly regarded psychologist specializing in gerontology, was the College’s 2003 Commencement speaker. “The openness there, the atmosphere, and the feeling that there was a chance for young people to do something that would better the world...I almost feel envy when I think of Bennington and wish I were younger so I could go and study there!”

Says Loet: “A legacy should be looked at in terms of where it can do the most good and in terms of your own interests. Edith and I talked about it, and we felt that what we wanted most was to support young people and education. We believe that conflicts often emerge from prejudice, and education can, and should, be the corrective in changing that.”

Aside from the gift being a natural extension of the Velmans’ global lives, both Loet and Edith agree that it is also an expression of their Dutch origins.

“Holland is small,” says Loet. “And because it is a small country, there is a spirit of openness to the world. It’s interesting that, unlike other immigrants, the Dutch immigrants—who went to America, to Australia, to wherever—they didn’t go as victims [of their home country]. They went to explore and see new things. They went just for that.”

“We trust that the international studies program will help widen the horizon of many Bennington students,” Edith says.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MAKING A LEGACY GIFT:

visit www.bennington.edu/silosociety.aspx, call 800-598-2979, or email silosociety@bennington.edu.

A charitable gift annuity or CGA is a unique way to fulfill your philanthropic and personal investment goals at the same time. A CGA is a donation that is invested by the College; a fixed percentage of that investment then provides income to you during your lifetime and, upon your death, establishes an initiative in your name at the College.

30s

Reba (Marcus) Gillman '38 says, "At age 95 I wobble along, but I still serve on the Board of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin and I contribute as much service as I can. I especially enjoy writing letters for our newsletter."

40s

Alicia (Ruhl) MacArthur '43 says, "I am still residing at a Quaker retirement home near Philadelphia. I have a grandson graduating from Vassar this year, another who chose protesting mountaintop mining in place of college, and a granddaughter who favors Bennington for next fall."

Olga Owens '45 is still painting watercolor and pastels and exhibiting in local shows. She spent a week in Venice in November and is hoping to survive to her 70th anniversary in 2015.

Ann (Breese) White '46 reports, that "We moved to an apartment in a retirement community in Englewood. My husband is on the assisted living floor. It has taken a while to adjust to living here but hope soon to get back to painting and become more active with the Colorado Coalition for the Prevention of Nuclear War. We are trying to take 42 missiles in northern Colorado off 2-minute alert."

Joan (Brauer) Alpert '47 is still selling real estate in Princeton, NJ, at age 86 and has five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Margot (Starr) Kernan '48 reports, that she is living in a "progressive, hip (sort of) retirement community outside Washington, DC. The layout of our

cottages reminds me of the Bennington houses, except, alas, no mountains in the distance." After living in the town of Bennington for five years, and teaching for a term at the College, she is still attached to the idea of learning in open space, with trees, birds, flowers, and deer (to eat the flowers). Kernan is active in her community, producing a fall and spring film festival, managing the Christmas party, and writing one-act plays to be produced by the drama group. The first, *The Day They Had Lobster Tails for Lunch*, was a geriatric hit, and *The Night They Didn't Have Chicken for Dinner*, was a horror-comedy musical. "An October trip to Berlin for opera introduced me to the rich art and culture of Germany. I would like to return."

Florence (Gallup) Atkins '49 writes: "We were all together on October 20 to celebrate my 85th birthday and Thanksgiving at the farm just north of North Adams. We had a turkey trot and T-shirts! November 20, 2011 my first great-grandchild was born, Amber Elizabeth. Pink, pudgy, and beautiful. Lots of red hair."

50s

Olga (Landeck) Rothschild '51 reports, "My son, Michael Heming, has organized an exhibition of my father's (Armin Landeck) prints, my rugs, and his (Michael's) photographs—currently at the Gordon Library at Worcester Polytech Institute."

Solveig (Peterson) Cox '53 shares, "I keep making pottery about cats and have a good time doing it."

Martha (Dow) Fehsenfeld '53 received the Morton Cohen Award for a

Distinguished Edition of Letters on January 2, 2012, MLA for the *Letters of Samuel Beckett Volume 1*.

June (Wineburgh) Mattingly '53, contemporary art critic and collector, was saddened to hear of Helen Frankenthaler's death and sent in this reflection about her: "Helen Frankenthaler graduated from Bennington in 1949, the year I was accepted. Since my home was in Dallas, my parents' concern of my dressing to handle the cold Vermont weather brought on the scene my New York grandmother who was a friend of Helen's mother. My attending Dalton School when I lived in New York was another connection between Helen and me. First I met Helen in her Fifth Avenue apartment and again on campus with the critic Clement Greenberg. As a painting major like Helen, I studied under Paul Feeley, through whom I met Jackson Pollock. Through my other art instructor George Holt, I met David Smith. In 1968, Paul (who I had a secret crush on) was given a posthumous retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum. The third time I met Helen was in the early '80s at Tyler Graphics outside of New York; they had just published a print of hers I purchased for my gallery in Dallas. While I was a student, a show of Helen's paintings on paper in the gallery in the Commons building, priced around \$400, were over my allowance! Helen was one of the very few really recognized women artists in the early years. Today, as an art critic, I write regularly for my website TexasContemporaryArt.com and I'm on the verge of completing an e-book titled *The State of the Art* on close to 100 contemporary Texas artists.

This keeps my mind active and my eye attuned to the contemporary art world.”

Albert Pessó '53, one of the original “dance boys,” will receive the Lifetime Achievement Award from the United States Association for Body Psychotherapy for his contributions to the field for the past 50 years. Al and his wife, **Diane Boyden-Pessó '52**, founded the Pessó Boyden System Psychomotor mind-body approach.

Barbara (Elliott) Ingraham '54 writes: “My husband of 55 years, Bill Ingraham, died from a stroke and complications of Parkinson’s Disease this past April. I am living in Celebration, FL, and hope to do more traveling and visit the College again.”

Aldona (Kanauka) Naudzius '55 reports, “Nothing really new.” She still plays the piano, does some substitute teaching in Chicago public schools (she is retired), and enjoys her six grandchildren—four boys and two girls.

Carol Rubenstein '55 writes: “I enjoyed being at the Vermont Studio Center with a fellowship residency in poetry for December 2011. Splendid place—like Bennington College!”

Barbara (Cholfin) Johnson '56 reports, “My memoir and second book, *Why I Didn't Sleep with Mitt Romney & Other Tales*, is now an e-book on Amazon. In it, I mention the humorous events of that era in Welling House and classmate **JoAnn Marcus Gardner's '56** books on gardening. My first book, a whistleblower, is *Behind the Black Robes: Failed Justice*; my third, *Cry Rape!*, a true-life novel, is coming soon.”

Carol (Friedman) Kardon '56 shares that due to her receipt of the Atlantic Papers Award, at the 39th Annual

Open, Juried Exhibition of the Pastel Society of America in New York City, she has been recognized as a Master Pastellist by the society. This title is awarded to an artist who has won three prizes in three different shows with the society. All future work is automatically accepted into juried exhibitions. She teaches painting at the Main Line Art Center in Haverford, PA, and the Wayne Arts Center in Wayne, PA, and is currently a member of the Philadelphia Sketch Club. Her work may be seen at the Great Frame-Up in Wayne and at the Carspecken-Scott Gallery in Wilmington, DE.

Riva (Magaril) Poor '56 published an article updating the 40 years since her book *4 Days, 40 Hours; Reporting a Revelation in Work and Leisure* introduced rearranged workweeks. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, nearly one-third of the U.S. workforce is on one form or another of these flexible schedules today.

Bunny Willa (Katz) Shulman '56 writes: “I’m quite proud that my fourth and latest novel, *Step by Step*, has just been published and is currently available in paperback and e-book.”

Roberta (Selwyn) Miller '57 reports, “I can’t believe I am 75! Retired, visiting five grandchildren. So glad the College had no flood damage.”

Marcia (Morgan) Qasim '57 reports, “[My] Olive tree featured in the local paper, also in *Southern Lagniappe* and in the upcoming *Mississippi Gardener*.” She has shown paintings in two Jackson museums and won a few blue ribbons. Her husband is a retired computational chemist and they have six grandchildren.

Judith (Jacobson) Magee '58 mentions that her father Solomon A. Jacobson was married to **Barbara Scott Jacobson**

'36 for 34 years and that Judith and her sister, **Barbara Jacobson Zimmerman '64**, are graduates of Bennington. After her mother’s death, he married **Barbara Saul Sprogell '37**, and they were married 34 years. Barbara’s daughter, **Lynn Sprogell '65** is also a Bennington grad. “This must be some sort of a record to be associated with Bennington women!”

Paul Berensohn '59 received a Distinguished Educators Award from James Renwick Alliance of the Smithsonian Institution in March for nearly 50 years of offering workshops on clay, journal making and keeping, poetry and movement, and for his much-loved book *Finding One's Way with Clay*, first published in 1972 and still in print.

60s

Stanley Berke '60 shares, “I continue to be the artistic director of choreography at Nassau Community College. A year of chamber works beautifully performed. Aaron, Jake, and Sam—after years of homeschooling—continue to be creative in the educational environment!”

Robin Wilson '60 writes: “It’s been many years since I’ve been in contact with Bennington.” She went on to earn a degree in social work from Columbia University in NYC and now works as a director of a methadone clinic in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. She has reconnected with her music roots, encouraged at Bennington, by attending the evening division at the Juilliard School of Music in the city. She says it is an awesome experience for someone who has always loved and sung music but never really understood the foundation of it. It is challenging to learn something from the bottom up and exciting to delve into the theory,

harmony, and progression of music over time. Wilson is also studying voice with Claude Stein, outside the Juilliard system, which has been a profoundly moving experience. “My memories of Bennington are vivid in spite of the years. I don’t think there could have been a better school for me at that time and the many fellow students I met remain imprinted on my mind and feelings. It was an extraordinary place to be and learn for which I will always be grateful.”

Ruth (Doan) MacDougall ’61 writes that her essay “Shoptalk” was published on the “Soapbox” page of the February 6th issue of *Publishers Weekly*. In it she described how her Bennington literature teacher, Thomas Wilcox, introduced her to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Crack-Up*, in which the “Note-books” section made a big impression on her and how her Bennington writing teacher, Kenneth Burke, suggested keeping a notebook of descriptions for the 14 novels she has written since. *A Born Maniac* is her 14th novel and the 4th sequel to her best-seller *The Cheerleader*.

Joan Tower ’61 won three Grammys for her Naxos CD in 2008. She was named Composer of the Year by the Pittsburgh Symphony, which played six of her works during the 2010–11 seasons, including *Stroke*—a newly commissioned work conducted by Manfred Honneck. A Portrait Concert of her chamber work was presented at Miller Theatre in NYC by the Curtis Institute of Music. There are three premieres of her works in spring 2012 by the Pascal Riout Dance Company, *Transient Glory*, *Chorus*, and the *Daedalus Quartet*.

Lisa (Hartmann) Blake ’62 says, “Life as a single is an amazingly huge change. In this regard I would like to hear from some of my college friends:

Brenda Corman ’62, Jane Harriman ’62, Fausta Price ’62, Molly Stewart ’63...are you out there?”

Andrea Kanner Halbfinger ’62

participated in a two-person art show this past December in Montclair, NJ, at Congregation Shomrei Emunah. She showed 13 new paintings, abstract but with reference to dance. Halbfinger has been working at a Lower East Side studio for the past 18 months and loves living in Manhattan. She has a new website, www.andreahalbfinger.com, featuring her paintings up to the current time.

Gael (Rockwell) Minton ’64 says, “I am now a farmer—Squash Blossom Farm CSA provides produce, flowers, fruit, and honey to eight families five months of the year. We have two grandchildren: Adelaide, 4, in Farmington, ME, and Odin, 2 in Jackson, WY.”

Mary Kelley ’65 reports, that she has been working with the Bostonian Society, which celebrates the 300th anniversary of the Old State House in 2013. Liberty is the theme. The struggle for independence started here and the tercentenary will explore what liberty meant then and means today through media, events, and community programming. “So many stories of import happened in and around this magnificent building. Stay tuned!”

Eliza W. Livingston ’65 reports, “We are in our ninth year of welcoming discerning visitors from around the world to the Villa Marco Polo Inn; we bought it in 2003, and since then have received numerous accolades from *Condé Nast*, *Karen Brown*, *Select Registry*, and most important, from our fabulous guests. We host many destination weddings, which involve a significant element of theatre—set the stage, manage the props, the lighting,

etc—and when the curtain goes up, the gasps of delight are palpable. This life is a long way from working on staff as a midwife at a major medical center!”

Anne Waldman ’66 writes that she has recently published some poetry books, including *Manatee/Humanity* and *The Iovis Trilogy: Colors in the Mechanism of Concealment*, a feminist anti-war epic. She is also the co-editor of the *Beats at Naropa* anthology. She is based in New York City, but continues as the artistic director of the Jack Kerouac School Summer Writing Program at Naropa University in Boulder, CO, an MFA program she co-founded with Allen Ginsberg in the 1970s. Waldman also travels extensively, lecturing, teaching, and performing with her son Ambrose Bye, a composer and musician. The Living Theatre presented her play *Red Noir*, directed by Judith Malina in NYC in 2010, and her opera *Cyborg on the Zattere* with composer Steven Taylor premiered at the Douglas Dunn Salon in 2011. She is the recipient of the Shelley Memorial Award and has recently been appointed a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets.

Carolyn (Heimbürger) Gannon ’67 recently spent three weeks in Africa volunteering for the African Library Project, on whose board she serves. She found it tremendously rewarding to spend time with ALP’s African Partners from Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, and Ghana and to exchange best practices on making rural libraries successful. ALP, an all-volunteer organization, has established more than 700 in just 6 years! One of those 700 libraries in Malawi was created by Bennington College (thanks Kindra Covert!) this year. “To cap off a week each in Swaziland and Malawi visiting ALP libraries, my husband Terry and I spent a couple of days at the African Leadership Academy outside Johannesburg, giving a seminar

on 'leadership and entrepreneurship' and having dinner with four ALA students interested in applying to Bennington. What an amazing academy!"

Pamela (Acheson) Myers '67 writes: "My husband Richard Myers and I moved to Palm Beach several years ago and our latest book, *A Year in Palm Beach: Life in an Alternate Universe*, was published in late 2011. It is our first hardcover book and it is a story of love and adventure."

Susan Mauss Tunick '67 has just received an Individual Artist's Grant from the Architecture, Planning, and Design Division of the New York State Council on the Arts. This will provide funding for her to curate a section of an exhibition honoring the Woolworth Building's 100th anniversary. The exhibition is planned for 2013 and will be presented by The Skyscraper Museum in lower Manhattan.

Patricia (Woodbridge) Dunn '68 reports, that she spent this past summer along the Connecticut coast, art-directing a small movie currently titled *Great Hope Springs*, starring Meryl Streep, Tommy Lee Jones, and Steve Carell. She is currently completing a second edition of her textbook *Designer Drafting and Visualization for the Entertainment World* to be published in spring 2013.

Elenita Muñiz '68 was the program co-chair and keynote speaker for the triennial congress of the U.S. section of Woman's International League for Peace and Freedom, in Chapel Hill, NC, this past June.

70s

Elizabeth Vick '70 writes: "I retired from early education administration and teaching and am raising veggies,

fruit, sheep, and chickens on our small farm in Marlboro, VT. With family in Italy, London, and Australia, Craig and I have many excuses for traveling when we're not otherwise occupied with animals."

Lane deMoll '71 writes: "I thought you all would like to know that there were nine Bennington graduates at my nephew's wedding in Minneapolis recently: the groom, **Hans Buetow '04**; his mother, **Cathy deMoll '73**; his aunts, **Lane deMoll '71**, **Lauren deMoll '79**, and **Meg deMoll '80**; cousins **Skye Bender-deMoll '01** and **Morgan Bender-deMoll '05**; and friends **Lucas Westcott '03** and **Hiland Worsfold (Eli) Hall '02**."

Constance Richardson '71 writes: "My book *Swimming Upstream*, a memoir, has been published. A lot in it takes place in Bennington, Paris, and South America. It ends with my graduation from Bennington 13 years after I dropped out."

Harold Davis '73 writes: "I'd like to share a little news with those who might remember me from Bennington. I am living and working in Berkeley, CA. My wife Phyllis and I have four kids, ages 3 to 14. I have recently published *Photographing Flowers: Exploring Macro Worlds with Harold Davis*."

Betsy Robinson '73 reports, that on New Year's Day, she did an interview about her new book, *Conversations with Mom: An Aging Baby Boomer, in Need of an Elder, Writes to Her Dead Mother*, on Michigan Public Radio's "Open Mind with Cecilia Skidmore." The title says it all. She is editor-in-chief of a new online literary journal, *The Feathered Flounder*. She is looking for stories and essays, by writers age 60 and older. No pay but good exposure.

Richard Rotman '73 has been named professor in the School of Media

Studies at Humber College, Toronto. He teaches media relations, PR writing, and social media.

Susan Birdsall Cantrick '74, former professional violinist crossed over to painting 15 years ago, is pleased to announce the launching of her website susancantrickart.com. She lives and works in Paris, France, and would be happy to connect with other Parisian alums.

Carol (Berman) Reese '74 writes: "I continue to coordinate/teach at the Gifted and Talented Program at West Ridge Middle School in Austin, TX." She has received a few awards in the last two years: Teacher of the Year for her campus, Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted for Region XIII, and Outstanding Teacher of the Gifted for the State of Texas. "Last June, my older son was married. This coming June, my younger son will graduate from college. My husband, professor and associate dean of Academic Affairs at U of Texas, recently published a book, *Hope for the Thinking Christian*. Time is flying! Life is good!"

Virlana Tkacz '74 reports that she curated and directed a play, *Raven*, based on a poem by Oleh Lysheha at La MaMa in April 2011.

Terry Berne '77 writes that his limited-edition book, *5 Poems by Marc Penka*, with drawings by German artist Marion Thieme, has been published in Madrid, Spain, on the occasion of a tribute to **Marc Penka '78** organized by Berne in September 2011. The event was held at the Ateneo, Madrid's oldest and most iconic cultural venue, founded in 1827. Participants included three well-known Spanish poets, Eugenio Castro, Fermin Higuera, and Antonio Santamaría Solís, who read their own work as well as the five poems featured in the book. These

poems had previously been published in a special bilingual supplement to the Spanish literary magazine *Cuadernos del Matemático*. The entire event was bilingual, with all the poems read in both Spanish and English. The event was filmed in high-definition video, which is now in the process of being edited and it is hoped will appear soon on the Marc Penka Poetry Foundation's website marcpenka.com.

Caren (Simon) Umbarger '77 reports, that she has written and published her first novel, is the artistic director of a 300-plus student youth orchestra program in northeast Florida, and is a professional violinist. She is half of The Island Duet, a violin/guitar/vocal duo with her husband Paul, who is also a painter. They play classical, gypsy, jazz, folk, rock, The Beatles, Irish, and swing. "After 28 years of teaching and performing in (frigid) Minneapolis, we now live on Anastasia Island in St. Augustine, FL. A former violin student of mine, **Lydia O'Callaghan '15**, is a freshman at Bennington because I used to talk about what a wonderful and magical place it is during her lessons!"

Alec Marsh '78 writes: "My biography of Ezra Pound will be available by mid-October. I first became interested in Pound through Stephen Sandy's poetry course and my senior thesis with Phebe Chao in 1978."

Lorca Peress '79 developed and directed the world premiere production of *Temple of the Souls*, book and libretto by Anita Velez-Mitchell, music composed by Dean Landon and Anika Paris. The work includes contemporary, traditional music and dance, masks, and puppetry and will be presented by MultiStages. This multilingual (English, Spanish, and Taíno) musical drama tells the story of Amada and Guario, two young lovers

in a forbidden union during the culture war between the Spaniards and the nearly extinct Taínos of Puerto Rico.

80s

Pamela A. Lawton '81 reports, "I had a one-person show in The Galeria Nacional in Costa Rica, on view simultaneously with a show I curated there, showing the artist's curatorial eye. Bennington teacher Pat Adams was one of several artists whom I included." A catalogue of the show was published. Lawton was inspired to create her current work while she was an artist-in-residence at the World Trade Center for 18 months. Painting in a 16,000-square-foot raw space prompted a new theme for her work. The view, a maze of buildings and glass, had unique formal properties. She put this vertigo into her work. In the aftermath of 9/11, the work took on a new meaning. She has had two recent exhibitions in New York City, *Curved Reality* at the former Citicorp Center, and *Liquid City* at the Conde Nast building. There she showed an 18 foot high painting.

Leah (Rosenblatt) Wells '82 writes: "My mother, **Judith Kanin '50**, is a Bennington alumna, and I attended Bennington for two years, between 1977 and 1979. I spent my time at Jennings studying music and composition, and now I'm a performing musician and music teacher." She was featured in the Canadian Education Association's online journal, with some fruitfully controversial opinions about preschool education. Her book, *Games That Sing*, was published in 2011. Let her know if you, or anyone in your teacher certification program, would like to receive a complementary copy of the book. "I look back with fondness on my formative years at Bennington."

Angela L. Gadsby '84 says, "Still love my job as a pediatrician...just turned 50 but don't feel too different than when I was at Bennington—doing handsprings and back flips and laughing till I cry."

Jeanne Gorfinkle-Wiley '85 for the past several years has been developing her skills as a mixed-media artist. Combining clay with the kind of reeds used in the fashioning of Nantucket baskets, she has been creating unique and beautiful artworks that have won her awards and representation in major Boston venues. She was recognized beyond Boston a few years ago when a large installation piece, *The Woven Car*, was accepted into a city-wide art exposition in Philadelphia. Her recent work includes a superb collection of sculpted and woven vessels, bowls, platters, plates, and lamps, many of which were displayed in March in CraftBoston Spring at the Seaport World Trade Center. (This note was submitted by Jeanne's mother, **Constance Golub Gorfinkle '57**.)

Philip Price '85 writes: "I released a fifth album, *All My Lovely Goners*, with my current band Winterpills in February. We've been making ethereal indie-pop and touring around the world since 2004 on the Signature



Cinnamon Booth '93, Jenny Chapin '92, and Ellen Voll Atkins '92 in Florida.

MARRI DAVIS '86 AND WHAT'S "NEXT" FOR BENNINGTON

Measured in Marri Davis's '86 terms, Bennington's purpose couldn't be more clear, or more potent.

"I learned to think at Bennington," she says.

Marri studied photography and history at Bennington and drew on that interdisciplinary experience to shape her early career as an artist, which explored 19th century photographic techniques, and her graduate work in photography. Whether it was the pivotal experience she had at Bennington cultivating an intellectual identity or the raising of four daughters or both, Marri discovered a latent interest in educational psychology and returned to New York University to earn a master's degree in the subject.

Throughout, Marri remained connected to her network of Bennington friends and to the institution that seeded her evolving professional life. So in 2007, when a group of young alumni leaders was emerging at Bennington, the College enlisted Marri to help give it shape. The group dubbed themselves The Next

Pioneers, formed a steering committee, and Marri was named chair. In her 5 years leading the steering committee, The Next Pioneers has grown to 100 members. In addition to serving as models in their own philanthropy, they are deeply committed to fostering meaningful connections between alumni and the College and among alumni of all generations.

"Bennington has changed my life and I feel strongly that, as an alumna, it is my responsibility to make sure this important institution gives others the opportunity afforded to me," says Marri.

Marri has decided to step down as chair at the end of June 2012 but will remain an active member of the committee. Amanda Spooner Frank '92, who has served on The Next Pioneers Steering Committee since 2007, will become chair in July. "I look forward to continuing Marri's outstanding work with The Next Pioneers," says Amanda, "and to building our long-lasting bond forged at this amazing place."



Learn more about the Next Pioneers. 800-598-2979 | nextpioneers@bennington.edu | www.bennington.edu/nextpioneers.aspx

Sounds label." He also had a band with **Antony Widoff '87** in the late '80s called Memorial Garage and has collaborated over the years with **Jonathan Lethem '86** on extracurricular songwriting activities. "I find I draw on a lot of my visual arts and literary inspiration from Bennington teachers in my songwriting." Winterpills has toured all over with the likes of CAKE, Grant Lee Phillips, Lisa Germano, St. Vincent, Vampire Weekend, Juana Molina, Josh Ritter, Fountains of Wayne, and The Mountain Goats and has appeared on NPR, Mountain Stage, and XM/Sirius Radio. "In addition to national touring, we will be making an appearance with Jonathan Lethem at Back Pages Books in Waltham, MA, in June, playing songs from the Talking Heads album

Fear of Music in celebration of the release of Lethem's essay on the album in a new 33½ book about it. Should be fun."

Marianne Henry Saylor '87 has been elected to the Lansdowne Borough Council. The Council directs the activities of the Borough of Lansdowne, located in Delaware County, PA. Saylor's four-year term began in January. She continues her practice as a Philadelphia workers' compensation lawyer with the Philadelphia labor union and employment law firm Willig, Williams and Davidson.

90s

Jonathan Kinzel '90 writes that summer 2011 included teaching

contemporary dance classes in Moscow, and a very pleasant first-time visit to Hawaii.

Cinnamon Booth '93, Jenny Chapin '92, and Ellen Voll Atkins '92 celebrated more than 20 years of friendship with a trip to Florida this past winter. Looking forward to another 20.

Manju Shandler-Estrin '95 writes: "I am very pleased that The Little Orchestra Society presented my production design of *Cinderella and the Prince Who Slays the Magic Dragon* at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall in March for its third performance cycle."

Rob Faucette '96 reports, "I just released an album on iTunes under

the Amy Radio name featuring 10 songs.”

Elizabeth “Lizzie” (Harris) McCormick ’97 shares, “My husband, Paul McCormick, and I had a baby boy, Jack William, on November 9, 2011.”

Allison Schermerhorn ’97 was recently nominated for an Emmy and Producers Guild Award for her role as Supervising Producer on CBS’ *Undercover Boss*.

Erica (Beloungie) Noyes ’99 writes: “I am happy to announce that in May 2011, I was married to Charles F. Noyes in a small ceremony on the coast of Maine. Shortly after our wedding, I became the development and communication associate at Helping Hands: Monkey Helpers for the Disabled in Boston, where we train capuchins to assist people living with mobility impairments. I have never been happier and I love working at the ‘Monkey College!’”

OOs

Britta Maeve Milner ’00 writes that she is currently enrolled at Capella University with a focus in psychology and with the ambition to get a PhD in co-occurring disorders in adolescents, as well as working on an album for Folkways Records in Connecticut with her uncle, Dan Milner, and others. She performs at various venues, primarily in NYC with the NY Packet Club, as we jokingly refer to ourselves, ‘a bunch of ruddy drunks and scoundrels’ who aren’t just a bunch of characters of varying ages most of whom at some point performed with her late father. “I am engaged to Mark Fenlason, a man who has worked on movies such as the *Transformers* series and wanted me to go to Haiti with him for a documentary for which he was nominated for an Emmy. True love, I guess, to have lasted this long. So that is what this ‘Bennington College chick’ has been up to, only when



Rebecca Rideout ’04 and W. Ryan Nestor ’04

I go to NYC on the train, I don’t tend to sculpt in the bathroom. I am also working on a book of poetry about life, the universe, and everything.”

Melody (Zilber) Hoffman ’02 writes: “My production company, Hoffman Productions, Inc., made a book trailer video for *The Unbecoming of Mara Dyer* and MTV picked it up.”

Charlotte Silver ’03 has had two books published; her memoir, *Charlotte au Chocolat: Memories of a Restaurant Girlhood*—sections of which she first wrote while a student at Bennington—was published in February. Her second book, a young adult novel called *The Chaperone*, is forthcoming.

Becky Steckhahn-Strohmer ’03 moved to Denmark in 2008 and met her wife, Pernille with whom she started a nonprofit organization, Q-Factor, with the mission to promote LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) equality through business. In 2011, Q-Factor completed the Danish LGBT Workplace Survey and Report; this survey was designed to be a comprehensive overview of how LGBT employees experience work life in Denmark. Q-Factor also produced a short film, *SOS: Sharing Our Stories*.

Shazieh Gorji ’04 writes that this past summer she was invited to represent

Pakistan at the 39th Annual Gangjin International Ceramic Festival. Seventeen artists from around the globe came together and absorbed Korean ceramics, culture, and tea by traveling around the country visiting with potters and hiking through the Holy Mountain of Tea. “The experience was invaluable.”

Rebecca Rideout ’04 and **W. Ryan Nestor ’04** just wanted to pass on the news that “we two Bennington alumni, who met there in 2000 just got hitched, after being together for 10 years!” **Catherine Edden ’04**, **Matthew Labonville ’05**, and **Amelia Pillow ’04** were all in the wedding party. The ceremony took place in Green River Village in Guilford, VT.

Jaamil Olawale Kosoko ’05 reports, that in April he presented new work entitled *other explicit body* at Harlem Stage in NYC.

Catharine Maloney ’05 reports, “I am studying to become an elementary school teacher at the Teachers College in New York. This past January I was in a 4-person exhibition at Vox Populi Gallery in Philadelphia.”

Ryan Biracree ’07 and **Sarah Crow ’07** recently announced their engagement. Last year, Crow received her master’s

FUNNY GIRL

Julianne Smolinski '05 is a humorist, a sex advice columnist, and a maven of social media (sometimes all in the same sentence).

You may know her as the “illin” girl: the woman who caused a minor media storm by correcting *New York Times* puzzle master Will Shortz on the meaning of this hip-hop clue in his Sunday crossword. You may know her as Boobs Radley (though she really wishes you would stop calling her that), her handle for both her MTV blog “Ask Boobs Radley” and her Twitter account, which currently boasts more than 60,000 followers. You may also know her as *GQ*’s sex columnist, where she opines on how to break up, how to meet the parents, and how to talk politics with your girlfriend. What you may not know is that at Bennington **Julianne Smolinski '05** was into—wait for it—science.

“I wanted to do premed because they always pitched [Bennington] as the place where you could be a cartoonist who studied opera or a puppeteer who studies soil. I thought, ‘Okay, well, I’ll be the book dork who wants to be a surgeon.’ The problem was that I’ve wanted to write since I was old enough to want to do something and so that ended up winning out. Probably good: I have a thing for men who are gravely ill/dying so my bedside manner could have gotten weird in a hurry.”

Just seven years beyond Bennington, Smolinski has crafted an impressive writing career that is part Dorothy Parker, part Dr. Ruth, and part Tim Burton. Read her work in *GQ*, or in New York, or on her blog, and you see how adept Smolinski is at turning her own vulnerability and self-deprecation into witty reassurance and quirky, but useful insight.

Here’s Smolinski on our current cultural moment:

“Whenever people seem too celebrity obsessed or body obsessed, the pendulum swings back the other way. Like in old Hollywood, when everybody had pancake makeup and perfect hair and people read all of these horrible celebrity magazines. And there were, like, the ’70s and ’80s, where Albert Brooks was a viable romantic lead who could take his shirt off and have sex with someone onscreen, and literature got really dark, and everybody had pubic hair. I’m looking forward to the pendulum swinging back.”

Smolinski, who downplays her social media maven status and the hype about social media itself—calling it more a bulletin board for jokes—says she tries “not to write too much about myself. [But] I’m much more a humorist and essayist than I am a journalist, so I end up writing a lot of observational humor, which is, in itself, really personal.”

The young humorist started out as a receptionist at *National Lampoon*, working her way up to becoming an “all-purpose factotum.” From *Lampoon*, she worked Hollywood jobs, “some of which were fun and some of which were very terrible.” She talks

about pluck and luck when describing her trajectory, with an emphasis on the pluck.

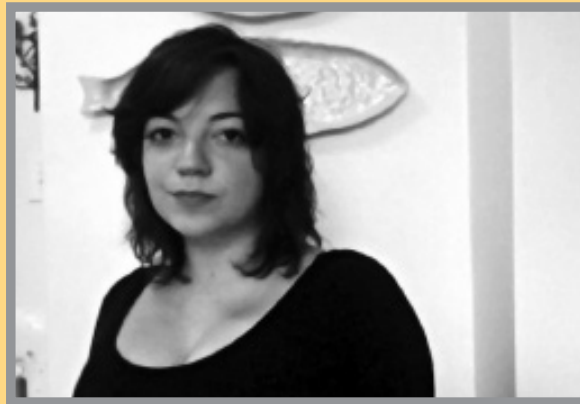
“I was lucky enough to be in a community where people read the jokes I wrote, but I do get up every day and write and I don’t have, like, office hours where I’m done at some point. I work until I’m done and sometimes then some. That’s the Bennington in me. You don’t do a project to get an A or have it done. You’re doing the project because this is your thing. It’s like, you don’t feel bad for people who are in VAPA until 6 a.m. because there’s

not any other place they’re supposed to be.”

In addition to her bylines, you can find Smolinski as a contributor to *The Today Show* and she says she’s working on screenplays, a pilot for television, and even appearing in front of the camera. “I avoided performance and being on camera for a while, but now I’m all about confronting that fear and embracing the camera, like the narcissist I probably secretly am.”

Still, it’s doubtful she’ll ever leave the page or the comedic voice that the page has honed within her:

“My mom had a blue Selectric and she used to give us poems to transpose when we were 4 or 5. Ogden Nash and Sylvia Plath, which in retrospect was a little weird (Sylvia Plath, Ma?). When I was 6, I wrote a story about a school for kids whose parents didn’t want them, and for an extra tuition fee, the school would arrange the child’s ‘accidental’ death. I think it was a statement about public education but I can’t be sure.”



degree in digital publishing and new media from NYU and is now a full-time writer, having contributed to *PopEater*, *Guest of a Guest*, MTV's *NextMovie*, and, most recently, as a featured columnist for *XOJane*. Biracree recently completed an MFA in poetry at Sarah Lawrence and teaches writing at the College of Mount Saint Vincent. He is the editor of a new small press for experimental poetry, Bovine Excision Editions. They plan to be married in November near their home in Beacon, NY.

Jonathan Leiss '06, MAT '07 has started a career as a professional firefighter. He joined the Durham, NC Fire Department in May for a 27-week academy covering emergency medical care and fire suppression. In November, he graduated along with 21 other recruits to serve the city as part of the 300-strong fire department. Leiss reports, that the opportunity to help people is one of the things that drew him to the job, and one of the most rewarding. "I also really enjoy the physical and mental challenges firefighting presents. Every day you report for duty, you never know what situation you might encounter, from a house fire to any sort of medical emergency. It requires a lot of thinking on your feet."

Charlotte X. Sullivan '07 spent the summer of 2011 working as a visualizing science fellow at Sierra Nevada Research Institute in Yosemite National Park, California.

10s

Kelly Raila '10 reports, "After a year of hopping from one temp job to another, getting video and animation work here and there, I'm back in school at Boston University's MS Media Venture Program. Spring and summer terms take us out to LA—I'm looking forward to connecting with the Bennington grads out that way."

Matthew Nunes '11 "Make all mobile apps!"

Helen Rose Patterson '11 writes: "I am serving as an environmental education volunteer with the Peace Corps in Morocco. I am working on mitigating desertification and building a community center in a rural village in southeastern Morocco. I began my service in May 2011 and will finish 12 months later. I am constantly in the process of learning to speak Darija/Moroccan Arabic and making friends with the 700 members of the community in which I live and work."

MFAs/MATs

Mame Willey MFA '99 has published her second book of poetry, *On the Irreversibility of Time*, with Antrim House Books.

Robert "Robbie" Cook MFA '04 writes that he is currently a part-time dance faculty member at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and teaching in the summer at American Dance Festival and Bates Dance Festival. Since graduation he has created and performed his own work in NYC, as well as continuing to dance professionally with Margaret Jenkins, Liz Gerring, Other Shore, **Keith Thompson '03** and touring nationally and internationally with **Liz Lerman '69** Dance Exchange.

Willa Carroll '97, MFA '11 graduated this past June from The Bennington Writing Seminars with an MFA in poetry. She has four poems forthcoming in *Narrative* and two poems in the next issue of *5 AM*. Her poem "No Final Curtain" recently won *Narrative's* Third Annual Poetry Contest.

keep us posted!

Bennington loves to hear about what alumni are doing. Send us your updates and photos by **January 1** to be included in the spring/summer issue and by **July 1** for the fall/winter issue.

You can submit your Class Note in one of three easy ways:

ONLINE at bennington.edu (click on "For Alumni," then "Class Notes");

BY EMAIL to alumnirelations@bennington.edu; or

BY MAIL to the Office of External Relations, Bennington College,
One College Drive, Bennington, VT 05201-6003.

Please visit www.bennington.edu for more recent updates on classmates and friends.

Please note: Due to space constraints, *Bennington* reserves the right to edit and condense Class Notes submissions. We may not be able to include all photos submitted.

A PASSAGE FROM INDIA

Miranda Kennedy's MFA '12 first book, *Sideways on a Scooter*, is a compelling blend of journalism and memoir—an examination of otherness that leads to self-discovery.

When NPR journalist **Miranda Kennedy MFA '12** set out for India to become a successful foreign correspondent, she didn't realize that her examination of the country's views on globalization, caste, marriage, and religion would illuminate her own perspectives on being a woman, work and life, and relationships. "What I wanted to do when I decided to leave my life in New York," she says, "was follow a family path back to India, learn to understand something of India's culture, and help Americans understand something of India's diversity and complexity. I learned many things about myself in India, but that happened by accident."

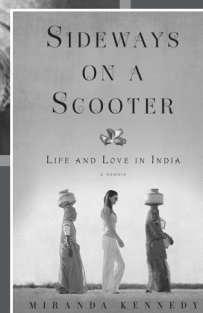
Happy accidents, as it turns out. While Kennedy does not see the book in the vein of other recent memoirs about the odysseys of women in foreign lands—such as Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* or Frances Mayes's *Under the Tuscan Sun*—her ability to connect the sociological with the personal, the foreign with the universal, is unusual and deft. "My experience in India was certainly one of an outsider, but it was of a journalist. In *Sideways*, I focus on the experiences of six women I came to know while living in Delhi; I use my own life as a point of comparison for theirs. If you pick up my book looking for a self-transformational experience like that in *Eat, Pray, Love*, you will probably be disappointed. That said, my book does share Gilbert's interest in marriage and relation-

ships—my own and those of my women friends in India—because I see that as the pulse that runs through women's lives, helping us all to define the kind of people we will be."

"Defining" is also the pulse behind another challenging task

Kennedy undertakes: mapping an intricate, emerging country with nuance and depth. *Sideways on a Scooter* is a timely, important offering as the author's analysis of India becomes a microcosm of what cultures the world over are confronting: globalization versus tradition and whether the good of the two can ever be harmonized. In raising these issues—and pairing them with a personal narrative that gives us direct access to those they most affect—Kennedy lends a clarity to problems and patterns news headlines cannot encompass, proving anew how art can be a crucial act of enlightenment.

"I didn't set out to try to improve the world when I went to India. My main aim was much more selfish than that. But I had several different, sometimes conflicting, goals, as I think most people do when they set out to do anything. And there's something to be said for selfish and conflicting aims. I think that for many people, it works best to combine altruistic desires with your own personal goals—that way they're more likely to be lasting."





Carolyn “Crossie” (Crossett) Rowland ’37 (1916–2012)

A life trustee of the College, Carolyn (Crossett) Rowland—Crossie to her Bennington friends—was a trusted advisor, dedicated philanthropist, and extraordinary woman. She was a member of Bennington’s second graduating class and studied photography while a student here. She went on to study with Ansel Adams and traveled extensively as a photographer herself. She joined Bennington’s board in 1995 and was a devoted supporter of Crossett Library, which her father helped to build. In addition to Bennington’s, she served on the board of trustees of the University of Massachusetts, the Shipley School, the Osterville Free Library, the Boston Metropolitan Chapter of the American Red Cross, Boston Children’s Services, Massachusetts Bay United Way, and others. Crossie was an overseer of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. She was one of the first women vestry members at Trinity Church in Boston and served on the boards of directors for the Crossett Lumber Company, the Crossett Chemical Company, Public Utilities of Crossett, Fordyce Lumber Company, and Crossett Timber and Development. Crossie, a sailor who skippered Wianno Seniors sailboats since the 1930s, died at the age of 96 and is survived by numerous friends, family, and devoted loved ones.

EDITH (NOYES) MUMA '36

A member of Bennington's first graduating class, Edith (Noyes) Muma '36 died on March 17, 2012. She was 96. After graduating from Bennington with a concentration in social science, Mrs. Muma went to work for the New York City Housing Authority. Two years later, she married John R. Muma. In 1970, sensing an urgency to "protect and restore the Earth's natural systems," Mrs. Muma, along with her family, reoriented the charitable foundation her stepfather had established to assist with environmental causes. The environment became a major focus of Mrs. Muma's life's work; she was a major force behind implementing legislation on Long Island that allowed farming to continue and thrive amid the pressures of development. She was also known for her deep commitment to helping individuals who addressed ecological issues. According to noted environmentalist Maureen Kuwano Hinkle, "One of the things that was so special about Edie was her belief in the power of individuals. The individuals she funded tended to be pioneers in their fields, outstanding for their ability to get critical things done regardless of how difficult or unpopular they might have seemed." Among those Mrs. Muma supported were physicist and chairman of the Rocky Mountain Institute, Amory Lovins; best-selling author and food policy expert, Joan Gussow; founder and president of the Earth Policy Institute, Lester Brown; David W. Orr, a leader in ecological/green architecture and design; and founder of The Land Institute, Wes Jackson. A resident of Old Town, Florida, Mrs. Muma served as president and chairman of her family's foundation, The Noyes Foundation; she also served on the boards of The Nature Conservatory and the American Farmland Trust. She was an avid gardener and cook, and took great delight in watercolor painting and tai chi. Mrs. Muma is survived by her daughter, Dee, family members, and many friends and associates.

PAMELA (RICHARDS) BROOKS '41

A longtime supporter and advocate for the College, Pamela (Richards) Brooks '41 died on February 6, 2012. She was 92. Mrs. Brooks studied art at Bennington, exploring a wide range of media, including painting, architecture, design, sculpture, drawing, and photography. She was a student of Russell Krob's, Edwin Park's, and Paul Feeley's, among others. Her lifelong dedication to helping others took shape at Bennington, particularly during a Field Work Term when she became a community volunteer in a rural part of Tennessee. During World War II, she worked for the Red Cross in Australia and the Philippines. Following the war, she worked in the film library at March of Time in New York. In 1948, she married Francis H. Brooks and settled in Weston, Massachusetts, where she became a volunteer librarian in the Boston public schools, helping to set up certain elementary school collections. She was also a craft-class teacher at Children's Hospital in Boston. Her interests extended beyond libraries and reading to such causes as nuclear disarmament, women's reproductive rights, and civil rights; she marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. in Boston in 1965. Mrs. Brooks said she wanted to emulate

Bennington's message that "we continue to learn." In addition to her social causes, Mrs. Brooks photographed and painted, and she was an active birder, gardener, and traveler. In 1995, she and her husband sailed the Amazon River. Throughout her life, she maintained an active connection to Bennington, supporting many of its campaigns and serving as a phonathon volunteer, a mentor program volunteer, and as co-chair for her 50th class reunion. She was also a class secretary (in 1947) and volunteered for the College's 25th Anniversary (1955–1956). She is survived by three daughters, Christina, Laura, and Holly, as well as several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

ELIZABETH "BETTY" (HAAS) PFISTER '43

A pioneer in women's and U.S. military history, Betty Haas Pfister '43 died on November 17, 2011. She was 90. Mrs. Haas Pfister was one of the last remaining Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs—the first women to fly military aircraft in U.S. history. The WASP program sought to address a shortage of pilots given the number of male aviators fighting combat missions abroad. Mrs. Haas Pfister was one of three Bennington alumnae who joined the program; she and the entire WASP corps were recognized in March 2010 with the Congressional Gold Medal. "I was the kind of lopsided student Bennington was made for," she once said. "Bennington accepted a girl who was no good at French or math but who had a burning, passionate desire to explore something." After graduating in 1943 and completing her WASP career, she worked as a stewardess for Pan Am, an aircraft mechanic, and occasionally flew cargo planes. She married Arthur Pfister in 1954. In the 1960s, Mrs. Haas Pfister helped organize the Pitkin County Air Rescue Group; in 1976 she helped found the Snowmass Balloon Festival in Colorado. She received the Elder Statesman of Aviation Award from the National Aeronautic Association in 1994. Ten years earlier, she had been inducted into the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame. Mrs. Haas Pfister is survived by three daughters: Suzanne, Christina, and Nancy Pfister; a sister, Priscilla Blum; and five grandchildren. Her husband died in 2008.

ETHEL WINTER HYMAN '45

Noted dancer and dance teacher Ethel Winter Hyman '45, who received her bachelor's and master's degree from Bennington in dance, died on March 10, 2012. She was 87. Mrs. Hyman's connections with Bennington dance run deep: Not only was she a renowned member of the Martha Graham Dance Company, joining the company in 1944, but she also later received the 2008 Martha Hill Lifetime Achievement Award. Mrs. Hyman had studied under Hill, who was the College's first dance department chair and became a lifelong mentor to her. She continued with the Martha Graham Company until 1969, originating such roles as Helen of Troy in *Clytemnestra* and Aphrodite in *Phaedre*. She was known for her "lyrical quality, intensity, and diverse range"; Mrs. Hyman was the first dancer Graham chose to take over her roles. Mrs. Hyman became a soloist with the Sophie Maslow Company and

appeared in Broadway productions and on television; she was also a beloved teacher, both as a permanent faculty member of The Martha Graham School from 1946 to 2006 and Juilliard from 1953 to 2003. She was the founder of the London School of Contemporary Dance and the Bathsheva School in Israel.

MIRIAM (HERMANOS) KNAPP '55

Miriam H. Knapp '55, who concentrated in literature at Bennington, died on March 20, 2012. She was 77. Mrs. Knapp was born in Paris, a graduate of The Dalton School and, after Bennington, Columbia University, where she received a master of arts degree in French literature. She became a highly regarded sculptor, producing work that is still on display at the State University of New York in Brooklyn, Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, and the Ritz Carlton Palm Beach in Manalapan, Florida. She was also president of her own studio, MHK Sculptors. Mrs. Knapp was married to Dr. Robert Knapp for 56 years and became active in supporting ovarian cancer research (a disease for which her husband pioneered a detection procedure), as well as the performing arts. She was a longtime advocate and board member for the Miami City Ballet, chairing its 25th anniversary gala. Besides her husband, Mrs. Knapp is survived by her brother, Robert; three children: Louise Iyengar, Jennifer Crawford, and Michael Knapp; and five grandchildren.

ANNE (SCHLABACH) BURKHARDT

Anne (Schlabach) Burkhardt, a former faculty member in philosophy, wife of former College President Fred Burkhardt, and stepmother to Jane Burkhardt '62, died on March 11, 2012. She was 96. Mrs. Burkhardt was a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University and the University of Wisconsin, where she earned her PhD in philosophy. She taught philosophy at Bennington from 1948 until 1980. She is the co-author of *The Development of American Philosophy*. She married Frederick Burkhardt in 1972 and, after retiring from the College, joined him as associate editor in "The Darwin Project," his collection and publication of all available correspondence to and from Charles Darwin. The project took 25 years to complete, and the Burkhardts spent summers traveling to track down the letters that would end up comprising the collection. They completed the work before Fred died in 2007; "The Darwin Project" has received wide recognition, including Britain's Queen's Anniversary Prize. Fred Burkhardt often said of his wife that, unlike many philosophy teachers, she tried to live her life according to the ideas she taught. He said she believed that ideas were tools to help one live a better life. Mrs. Burkhardt is survived by her sisters, Marian Ramlow and Ellen Wright; three stepchildren; and two step-grandchildren.

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.*

Frances Trott Robinson '36
Mary Shaw Schlivek '37
Helen Webster Feeley Wheelwright '37
Betty Graff Keating '38
Elizabeth Wallace McLean '38
Laura Jennings Ingraham '39
Emily Flesheim Schaffner '39
Lavina Kelly Falconer '40
Margaret Wallace Daly '41
Stephanie Townsend Head '41
Elizabeth Plimpton Tilton '41
Janet Walker '41
Eva Hellige Means '44
Mary-Jane English Tichenor '44

Aurelia Brown '46
Carole Kobin Newman '46
Patricia George Peterson '46
Edelgard Zerbs Frye '48
Katharine Bunker Getsinger '48
Joanne Evans Wehe '50
Sally Pickells Burrill '51; P '72 '77
Martha Holt Giles '51
Cynthia Coe Smith '51
Renee Hubert Spencer '51
Alexandra Tschacbasov Bedics '52
Frances Paine Whitehead '52
Elinor Lancaster '54
Isabel Cohen Weiss '56

Marjorye Hirsch Goldstein '57
Leonard Lesser '58
Judith Cohen Ross '58
Paula Velsey '59
Patricia Seelinger Windsor '60
Rae Hanewald Harsch '61
Ann Ewbank Ludy '63
Sheilah Marlowe Miller '63
Paul Emerson Opel '78
Mary Marsicano MFA '82
Larry Stevens '83
Annette C. Davino '84
Hedy Z. Dowd-Suraski MFA '10
Bruce Winn, former faculty

*Notifications received by May 15, 2012.

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A. The complete restoration
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and when 2,500 donors give to
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