A Record-Setting Year for Gifts to the Collection

During the 2014-15 fiscal year, Bennington Museum was the recipient of a remarkable trove of artworks and historic artifacts, gifts that together are of greater significance than the museum has received in any other year in the last decade.

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BEST MUSEUM MAKEOVER

Bennington Museum
Art History Innovation

At the Members’ Dinner last fall, I presented draft ideas for the museum’s new mission and vision, and solicited your input. Thank you for your suggestions! Taking these into consideration, the board subsequently approved new Mission and Vision statements. However, there is still time to have an impact on our future direction, as we are now working on our strategic plan.

First, some quick observations: It looks as though we’ve been changing like crazy here. We’ve been reinstalling the galleries and rolling out new events. The Festival of Trees has been renamed “The Festival Reimagined” this year. We have a new gallery devoted to the abstract art of the 1960s and 1970s, and we just hosted a “one-night living tattoo exhibition!”

All this seems new, and yet the changes are evolutionary. We have always been about the history of the region, and Bennington Modernism is now almost fifty years old, and a glorious part of Bennington’s—and the nation’s—history. And we have always cast a wide net around the creativity of this region. In the Gilded Age Vermont gallery we have fine paintings, Tiffany glass, an automobile, and industrial patent models. All these, in their myriad forms, represent the creative mind at work - innovation. Though we might not all like tattoos, they are a lively and current expression of the creativity of the region, and they fit in the theme of this summer’s exhibition of Grassroots Art—folk and outsider art that springs up from the ground. Art has always been a spontaneous expression of the human spirit.

The new Mission and Vision statements embrace some of the most current ideas in museums, such as the “participatory museum” (you can Google that!). But our new direction is also based on old ideas. We began all our deliberations asking the simple question: “How can we best serve our community of Bennington and the greater region of southern Vermont, eastern New York, and northern Massachusetts, AND offer deep experiences that intrigue, excite, and challenge all our visitors so that they leave excited and inspired?” All our goals are directed to our success: we cannot survive (and should not survive) unless we are deeply embedded in the community —which means that you come here regularly for exhibitions, programs and events; you meet people here and get connected; you have great, memorable, even life-changing experiences here; and we provide something important and useful to the community of Bennington, which includes education, entertainment, and economic development.

Mission Statement
Bennington Museum engages and transforms our visitors and our community by connecting them to our region’s diverse arts, rich history, and culture of innovation.

Vision Statement
Bennington Museum is a museum of art, history, and innovation. We collect, interpret, and celebrate the creativity of our region and of Vermont across time. We believe that by connecting people with real objects of art and history, and by challenging them with complex ideas, we will excite the imagination, inspire innovation, and bring delight. (To see the entire Vision Statement visit our website.)

—Robert Wolterstorff, executive director

On the cover (as detail) and above
Events

Clockwise from top left: Dorothy Halvorsen and trustee Marianne Peters, at the July 10 Summer Party, celebrate the opening of *Inward Adorings of the Mind: Grassroots Art from the Bennington Museum and Blasdel/Koch Collections*. Matt Harrington and Paul Mackin speak with Karen Mayne of Northshire Brewery at the Blues and Brews Party, which celebrated the spring exhibition *Alcohol in Vermont*. Lilli King exhibits her ink and body paint (courtesy of Shay Francis) at the recent one-day *Living Exhibition: Tattoo Body Art* held on August 7. Jennifer Koch and Gregg Blasdel with curator Jamie Franklin at the Summer Party. Thank you to the wonderful ladies who helped out at the Summer Party. Left to right are Jessie Kuzmicki, Molly Center, Julia Parks, and Erica Frost. Good luck to all of them as they head off to college!

Visitors

Over the last few months, we welcomed some very special visitors to the museum. From top left, clockwise: deCycles Indiana, a group of about 50 cyclists, ages 13 and up, who stopped by for a visit on their way from Bloomington, Indiana to Nova Scotia, Canada. The 1500 mile journey would be completed in 17 riding days. Thorsten Dennerline, instructor at Bennington College, brought his Printmaking Class to the museum and met with Robert Woltersstoff and Abby Shapiro to discuss the prints created by Dan Shapiro. The Community of St. Mary, Eastern Province along with their very special guests visited the museum for a behind-the-scenes tour of works by Sister Mary Veronica. From left to right: Mother Miriam, CSM; Lord George Carey, retired Archbishop of Canterbury; the Rt. Rev. Fanuel Magangani, Bishop of Northern Malawi; the Rev. Michael J. Robson, SSC, Rawdon, Canada; Lady Eileen Carey; Sister Mary Elizabeth, CSM; Sister Catherine Clare, CSM.
through October 12  Attracting visitors from around the world, the 1863 Jane Stickle Quilt features 169 five-inch blocks, and is surrounded by a unique scalloped border. In all, it contains a remarkable 5,602 pieces.

through October 18  The prints in 7 COLLABORATIVE PRINTS: Jennifer Koch and Gregg Blasdel are titled Marriages of Reason since obvious compositional necessities required the artists to unite two images into one composition. “We solved a large part of this problem by working with printing blocks that were literally cut into the same shape as our depicted images. This allowed us to position blocks together more strategically to suit our needs,” state the artists. Their exhibition is on view in the Regional Artists Gallery.

through November 1  Inward Adorings of the Mind: Grassroots Art from the Bennington Museum and Blasdel/Koch Collections draws on the museum’s renowned collection of historic folk art, including the world’s largest public collection of paintings by revered 20th-century folk artist “Grandma” Moses, and recent acquisitions of work by modern and contemporary self-taught artists like Gayleen Aiken, and intermixes them with objects from the private collection of outsider art gathered over the last 50 years by Gregg Blasdel and Jennifer Koch including works by Jesse Howard, Mose Tolliver, Inez Nathaniel Walker, Joseph Yoakum, and others.

through November 8  Bennington Museum and Bennington College come together to present selected photographs from the portfolios of Jonathan Brand, Lee Friedlander, John Hubbard, Neil Rappaport, and Garry Winogrand in this special exhibition People /Place: American Social Landscape Photography, 1950-1980. Each image in this exhibition provides a window that allows the viewer to look back in time and discover fragments of the sociopolitical, cultural, and emotional landscape that shaped that period. Combining these photographs to create an exhibit of wordless literature is an effort made by the College and Museum to link themselves as one, share photographs from separate archives, and allow visitors to enjoy the exhibit as a community.

November 27 through December 29  Bennington Museum has been moving rapidly in the past few years toward the goal of making the museum a center for creativity, invention, and imagination. With the Festival now in its 20th year, we have re-created it in line with that spirit of invention and are proud to present The Festival Reimagined. A major part of the new celebration is the presentation of works by selected contemporary artists who have reimagined, reinterpreted, or responded to the 4-foot Memory Ware Tower (page 2), one of the focal points of the Grassroots Art exhibition. Each piece on display in the changing galleries will be for sale by closed-bid auction through December 29.
Adjacent to the Bennington Museum is the beautiful Hadwen Woods and George Aiken Wildflower Trail. The six-acre Hadwen Woods property was donated to the museum by George Hadwen, a long-time Bennington resident and a museum trustee, and his wife Marie. Since 2009 volunteers have worked to expand the trail network, which now includes a Pine Loop Trail, a Jennings Brook Trail, an Elderberry Trail, a Black Cherry Trail and a meadow. In recent years, volunteer workers have widened and mulched the existing trails and created many new ones, and have removed invasive plants, created planting beds, and planted hundreds of wildflowers.

Two stone benches and a stone birdbath were recently added to the George Aiken Wildflower Trail. These are the first of what trail workers hope to be a series of unique benches done by Vermont stone artists using such Vermont materials as marble, granite and slate. The trail, which is in the pine grove and open field, is being developed as an extensive wildflower garden featuring many of the native plants, shrubs and ferns that Aiken — a two-term Vermont governor and six-term U.S. Senator — grew in his nursery at Putney and wrote about in his book, Pioneering With Wildflowers.

There already were three standard wooden benches along the trails, but the plan now is to add unique — not mass produced — stone benches as resting places. The hope is that future stone benches chosen from a portfolio of designs available at the museum would be purchased by donors. One of the new benches was carved at Rock of Ages in Barre and donated by the Bennington High School Class of 1965. Designed by Steve Benoit and carved by Nelson Craig, the bench is made of native Vermont white granite. The other bench and the birdbath — which were donated by trail workers — are made from Vermont granite and were created by Frank Sprague of Stonepuddles in Wilmington.

Jackie Marro, one of the organizers of the project, said that the idea of the stone benches is to showcase the work of Vermont stone artists in the woods in the same way that the work of other Vermont artists, potters and furniture makers is featured inside the museum itself. Any Vermont stone artists who have benches that might be suitable for the trail should send pictures and cost information to one of the two co-chairs of the Aiken Trail project, Jackie Marro at jcminvt@hotmail.com or Sara Bonthuis at sarabonthuis@gmail.com. Interested in volunteering? Contact Jackie or Sara to learn more. The trails are open to the public from dawn to dusk. We ask that the trails are treated with respect, and are left as they are found so that others can enjoy the peace and beauty they offer.

Story by Tony Marro, trail volunteer
We are delighted to announce a new concert series at the Bennington Museum, aptly called “Music at the Museum.” The four-part series covers a range of music as diverse as the museum’s collection. We anticipate that this will be a recurring series, so you can look forward to enjoying high quality music for years to come.

Our first concert is in celebration of *Inward Adorings of the Mind: Grassroots Art from the Bennington Museum and Blasdel/Koch Collections*. With such a fantastic collection of grassroots art on view – including outsider, visionary and folk art – we knew we had to find a fantastic folk group to add yet another element to your experience. We look forward to welcoming The Ramblin Jug Stompers (shown above) on Saturday, October 3 at 3:00 p.m. They will get our toes tapping, or maybe even stomping, with their great acoustic folk sound, while explaining the history of the music and the instruments they play.

On Sunday, November 8 at 2:00 p.m., Bennington College’s Allen Shawn, who recently published a biography of Leonard Bernstein, brings together pianist Elizabeth Wright, cellist Maxine Neuman, and violinist Joana Genova to perform compositions by Bernstein, including some written while he was a student at Harvard.

In the cold of winter, we’ll warm you up with Beethoven. Pianists and Bennington College faculty, Yoshiko Sato and Christopher Lewis are undertaking an ambitious plan to perform all 32 of Beethoven’s sonatas for piano over the course of two years at approximately eight concerts. They hope to perform one each term at the College, and the others at venues throughout the community. Their local appearance at Bennington Museum on March 12, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. is the first of their community venue performances.

We conclude our first Music at the Museum series with a really special treat. “Repast” is a Baroque music ensemble based in New York City. They will share JS Bach’s Musical Offering on June 11, 2016 at 2:00 p.m. Join us as the ensemble performs on period instruments, including harpsichord, viola, flute, cello, and violin, and shares the intriguing story behind the creation of Musical Offering.

All these wonderful performances are free thanks to a gift from Alison Nowak and Robert Cane. The donors are passionate about music and therefore offered to support Bennington Museum’s efforts to provide music programs by top-notch professionals to the greater Bennington community and our visitors. We are grateful for their support, a wonderful example of philanthropy at its best.

Deana Mallory, director of public programs
Jeanne Conner, director of development
Thank You! Everything that happens at Bennington Museum is the result of our donors, members, and volunteers. You give time, effort and financial support that are all vital to the existence of this very special place. Gift amounts are cumulative totals of cash gifts and in-kind gifts made during our fiscal year July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. During the last fiscal year Bennington Museum was chosen to receive memorial donations by the families of Harriette Leidich, Bob Mattson, Robert Moran and Frederick West. We are very grateful and were honored to accept them. Thank you very much for your generous support!

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Bennington Garden Club
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The Development Office prepared this list and has taken great care to ensure that the listings are complete and accurate. We apologize for any inaccuracies, should they exist, and ask you to call our attention to any omissions or errors. If you have questions or want to change your recognition please contact Jeanne Conner, Director of Development at 802-447-1571.
Programs and Events

Friday, September 18
3:45 p.m.

Stoneware Collectors Meeting – In conjunction with the highly anticipated publication of Art for the People, a companion book to the Weitsman stoneware collection at the New York State Museum, Adam Weitsman and John Scherer (NYSM Historian Emeritus) present some of the collection’s most interesting pieces. A book sale and signing with Weitsman immediately follows the talk.

Saturday, September 26
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Trinkets and Treasures – Join artist Susan Hayward as she guides participants through the creation of their own memory ware jug, in the spirit of the Memory Ware Tower on view in the current exhibition Inward Adorings of the Mind: Grassroots Art. Bring your own trinkets to incorporate into your jug, or use those provided. $45 per person. Registration required, 802-447-1571.

Friday, October 2
5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

First Fridays at the museum. Pay What You Wish.

Saturday, October 3
3:00 p.m.

Music at the Museum – The museum is delighted to present a new concert series, aptly called “Music at the Museum.” The 4-part series covers a range of music as diverse as the museum’s collection. (See page 6 for details.) For its first concert, the museum presents The Ramblin’ Jug Stompers. This concert is free and open to the public.

Friday, October 23
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Annual Members’ Dinner – Enjoy dinner at the museum with fellow Bennington Museum members and special guests. Be with us as we present the annual Walloomsac and General Stark Awards. Remarks by Executive Director Robert Wolterstorff and Board of Trustees Chairperson Edie Sawitsky, and a curatorial presentation by Jamie Franklin.

Sunday, November 8
2:00 p.m.

Music at the Museum – The second concert in the series celebrates the music of composer Leonard Bernstein. Bennington College’s Allen Shawn is joined by pianist Elizabeth Wright, cellist Maxine Neuman, and violinist Joana Genova to perform compositions by Bernstein, including some written while he was a student at Harvard.

Saturday, December 5
7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.
(Cocktail Hour 6:00 p.m.)

The Festival Reimagined Gala and Silent Auction – Join us for the highlight of the Bennington holiday season, an evening of music and conversation, delectable savory and sweet foods, fine wine and signature drinks. Free babysitting. $90/person; $75/person for reservations made and paid for before November 13. Gala Benefactor and Sponsorship opportunities are available. Call 802-447-1571 for details and reservations.

Saturday, December 12
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Family Day – Enjoy a festive day of children’s shopping, Santa, crafts, bake sale and more. $3 admission for everyone. Visit our website for more details.

Tuesday, December 29

The Festival Reimagined Art Auction closes at 5:00 p.m.
Ending November 1

Inward Adorings of the Mind:  
Grassroots Art from the Bennington Museum and Blasdel/Koch Collections

Looking Ahead …

for additional events see page 11.

Jane Stickle Quilt

Music at the Museum
Ramblin Jug Stompers
Compositions by Bernstein

Annual Members’ Dinner

Holiday Popup Shop: Cake Gallery at Bennington Museum

The Festival Reimagined
The Festival Reimagined Gala
The Festival Reimagined Family Day
The Festival Reimagined Art Auction closes

Kids’ New Year’s Eve Celebration

Milton Avery’s Vermont