Power Up Your Membership!

This is an exciting time for Bennington Museum. Great things are happening and the Museum is growing—both in its capacity, and in its aspirations. As a Museum Member, you are part of this!

I’m thrilled to announce a new level of Bennington Museum membership: the Monument Society. Members of this newly-formed group enjoy unique access to the Museum, including exclusive tours hosted by the Curator or Director, and invitations to special Monument Society events and parties.

Why should you join?

• You’ll make lifetime connections, meeting people who share an interest in art, culture, and community.
• You’ll have amazing experiences, like the exclusive tour of MASS MoCA last October, when Monument Society Members were welcomed by MASS MoCA director Joe Thompson.
• You’ll enjoy all the benefits of membership, including free access to the Museum and to more than 1,000 other museums in North America.
What exciting events are in store this year for Monument Society Members?

- Cocktails and dinner at the home of a trustee, June 14.
- Private tour and cocktails at the Hall Art Foundation in Reading, Vermont, in October, date TBD.

Perhaps the most important reason to become a Monument Society Member: by joining, you’re saying you want to be a leader in helping to create and sustain Bennington’s cultural community. You believe it’s important to support the Museum as one of Bennington’s essential institutions, critical to the cultural, economic, and creative life of the region. You want to make a difference—to your Museum, and to the community!

Please become a member of the Monument Society with your annual membership of $1,200, and help us reach our goal of 30 members by the end of June. Your participation gives important financial support to the Museum, and increases the depth and vitality of our community.

—Robert
EXHIBITIONS | Summer at Bennington Museum

This summer Bennington Museum is bringing you art, history, and innovation as never before. In addition to the permanent exhibitions found in many of the fourteen galleries, we are exploring a tumultuous time that changed the nation and helped define Vermont as we know it today, both culturally and socially. The Works on Paper gallery comes ALIVE with exquisitely colorful paintings by Emily Mason in her exhibition titled Color | Gesture: Early Works by Emily Mason.

Emily Mason is one of the great abstract painters. For more than sixty years she has been creating lyrical paintings on canvas and paper where strong gestural marks contrast with delicate washes of color and spontaneous splashes and drips. Mason attended Bennington College from 1950 to 1952 before immersing herself in the vibrant art scene of 1950s New York City. Color | Gesture: Early Works by Emily Mason traces the development of the artist’s distinctive style of abstraction through paintings on paper created in the 1950s and 1960s, at once brilliant in color, bold in conception, and intimate in scale.

Color Fields: 1960s Bennington Modernism
June 29 – December 30

During the 1960s, Bennington College served as a rural epicenter for a group of artists who were pushing the possibilities of abstraction in pared-down, color-based works that have come to be known collectively as Color Field. This exhibition looks at this critical moment when artists connected to Bennington led the way in American art, and expands our understanding of the variety of formal, material, and conceptual approaches that artists took to Color Field painting and related color-based sculpture. Seen in conjunction with Fields of Change: 1960s Vermont, the exhibition situates these artists and their work in the context of the dramatic cultural and social changes that came to define Vermont during this period, especially the Counterculture and Back-to-the-Land movements, with their emphasis on radical experimentation and close relationship to Vermont’s storied landscape. Artists on view will include Pat Adams, Anthony Caro, Paul Feeley, Helen Frankenthaler, Ruth Ann Fredenthal, Patricia Johanson, Vincent Longo, Kenneth Noland, and Jules Olitski.

Color | Gesture: Early Works by Emily Mason
May 11 – September 8
Bennington Museum’s major 2019 exhibition Fields of Change: 1960s Vermont explores a complex time that in many ways has come to define Vermont as we know it today more than any other historic moment. The 1960s were a decade filled with turmoil and revolutionary change in America, and Vermont was no different. This was a period of dramatic, paradigmatic shifts in the social, political, and cultural identity of the Green Mountains: the construction of an interstate highway system brought flatlanders into Vermont in droves; the state’s politics shifted from a 100+ year Republican reign to one of more balance, alternating between Republican and Democratic representation, and an attendant openness to progressive ideologies began to take root; a group of artists in and around Bennington College led the country in their exploration of the possibilities of color-based abstraction (see Color Fields); and the counterculture movement, including civil rights and anti-war protests, attempts at educational reform, and an influx of back-to-the-landers, with their emphasis on a direct, respectful relationship to the land, shifted the cultural landscape of the state forever. The exhibition explores these ideas, and the relationship, sometimes tense and sometimes quite friendly, between traditional Vermonters and the progressive new arrivals, through photographs, archival documents, works of art, posters, fashion, hand-made craft objects, and more.
The Art of Acquisitions: Building a Collection
by Jamie Franklin, Curator

Bennington Museum’s permanent collection is at the core of everything we do. Guided by our regionally focused mission, we collect art, artifacts, and archival documents that tell the story of innovation and creativity in southern Vermont and the surrounding region from the period preceding permanent settlement in the 18th century up to the present day.

As the curator of our collection, I work with my colleagues and the Museum’s trustees to build on past strengths, fill gaps and omissions, and forge new strengths within the collection. We do this through the cultivation of relationships within our own community, as well as a geographically diverse network of collectors, dealers, and scholars. This allows us to make strategic acquisitions through gifts and, more rarely, purchases. Every acquisition is unique. However, the following stories tell how a few recent acquisitions have made their way into our collection.

**Painted by Luigi Lucioni** in 1947, *Fall Shadows* is the first watercolor by this important artist, who had strong local ties, to enter the Museum’s collection. Lucioni was a nationally renowned American artist who summered in Manchester, Vermont, for decades. He is best known for his images of Vermont landscapes, barns, still lifes, and portraits that are so precisely rendered that they often have an uncanny feeling to them. *Fall Shadows* is a superb example of Lucioni’s work in watercolor and features an iconic Vermont barn and silo rendered with a crisp, crystalline quality to the light and color. The painting was generously given to the museum by local collectors Gary and Deborah Lucidon in 2016, along with a major oil-on-canvas still life by Lucioni. *Fall Shadows* is on view through May 5 in the exhibition *Works on Paper: A Decade of Collecting*.

**A miniature watercolor on paper**, a portrait of Lt. Jonathan Holton, may be one of the most serendipitous acquisitions in my 13 years. Holton’s story could have been lost to history forever, but for several twists of fate. An early photographic copy of the portrait had been made, with all these details written on the back. That tintype, from about the 1860s or so, found its way into our collection in 1976. In 2018, I shared that photograph in a Facebook post that was seen by the sharp-eyed David Schorsch, one of the country’s leading dealers in early American furniture and folk art, and a collector of 19th-century photographic copies of folk art portraits. He sent me a message with a link to the eBay listing, nothing else. In addition to helping make the connection between the photo and the original portrait, Schorsch, Eileen Smiles, along with members of the Museum’s Collections Committee, helped to fund the purchase of Holton’s portrait. The newly acquired work is on view in the Early Vermont gallery of Bennington Museum.

**Another exciting recent acquisition** made possible by a directed cash gift is a fence post topped with a carved bust of a Screaming Man. The post was carved by the eccentric Vermont farmer, inventor, and artist Russell Risley. It is on view through May 26 in a small, focused installation of vernacular Vermont
sculpture dating from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries. The fence post was included in the 1982-83 exhibition Always in Season: Folk Art and Traditional Culture in Vermont, organized by the Vermont Folklife Center, which traveled to venues around the state, including a stop at Bennington Museum. It had burned its way into my imagination since shortly after I arrived in Bennington and saw it illustrated in the exhibition’s catalog. I was therefore startled and delighted when I stumbled across an image of the post in the catalog to Skinner’s November 2018 Americana and Folk Art auction. It was the first time I had seen the sculpture illustrated in color and it grabbed my attention! It turns out, the post had been purchased shortly after Always in Season from its then owner by Frank Maresca, a pioneering dealer in American folk sculpture, who quickly sold it to Marvin and Jill Baten. The Batens’ Marvill Collection was considered to be one of the finest private collections of American folk sculpture formed during the last 40 years, so the post had been well cared for even as it disappeared from public view the last 35 years. Thanks to a generous donation from Lyman Orton, former CEO of the Vermont Country Store, who deeply admires the story of Russell Risley, a quirky, quintessential Vermont Yankee farmer, we are now able to share this mesmerizing object with our visitors for decades to come.

**Last, but not least,** in this collection of acquisition stories is the purchase of Norman Rockwell’s exquisitely rendered charcoal portrait of Dorothy Canfield Fisher and her husband John Fisher. Canfield Fisher lived most of her adult life, 1907-1958, in Arlington, Vermont, where her family had resided since the 18th century. She was a best-selling author who drew inspiration for the characters and plot lines in many of her books from direct observation of her neighbors and their interactions in her ancestral home. Rockwell, arguably the most beloved artist in America when the portrait was created, around 1950, had carefully crafted his own iconic images of “Every Town” America based on observation of his neighbors in Arlington. The portrait has been on loan to the museum from the Arlington Community Club since 2007, when we first borrowed it for the exhibition Rockwell Kent to Norman Rockwell: Arlington’s Artistic Community. This exhibition surveyed the incredibly rich concentration of creatives living and working in Arlington between 1920 and 1960. Last year the board of the Arlington Community Club, which had been given the portrait directly by Canfield, decided that they needed to sell the drawing. However, they very much wanted to keep it locally and so they gave Bennington Museum the right of first refusal. While acquisition funds are always limited, the Museum decided that this was too important a cultural and historic artifact, linking two of Bennington County’s most significant creative individuals of the mid-twentieth century, to let it leave this region. The money used to purchase the drawing came from the earlier deaccessioning of art given to the Museum by Joseph H. Colyer, Jr. in the mid-twentieth century. The works donated by Colyer no longer served the Museum’s mission, which has evolved over the last 70 years to focus on regional art and history. Colyer directed in his will that such funds be used to acquire portraits of famous Americans. Canfield Fisher, one of America’s most significant literary figures during the mid-twentieth century, certainly fits the bill. The acquisition of her portrait by Norman Rockwell ensures continued public access to this important work, which will be a touchstone of our collection for generations to come.
A wide range of programs and events awaits you at the museum this summer. Sign up for our email list to get regular updates and more details.

Programs and Events

**Saturday May 11 — Community Day**
Free Admission for everyone. At 11:00 am Eileen Travell, senior photographer for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC and Bennington Museum Curator Jamie Franklin offer a gallery talk for *Up Home: Hand-Colored Photographs by Susanne and Neil Rappaport*. At 3:00 pm join us as we celebrate the opening of *Color | Gesture: Early Works by Emily Mason* in the Works on Paper Gallery.

**Sunday, May 26, 2:00 pm — Music at the Museum**
Join us as pianist Elizabeth Wright performs Beethoven Sonatas with special guests violinist Joana Genova and cellist Nathaniel Parke. Among the pieces being played are Piano Sonata #31 in A-flat major, Opus 110; Piano Trio #VII; and "Archduke", opus 97, in B-flat major. Free and open to the public.

**Friday, June 14, 6:00 - 8:00 pm — Monument Society Dinner**
At the home of a Museum board member. Enjoy the company of others who have pledged their support in helping to create and sustain Bennington’s cultural community. Monument Society Members watch for your invitation. Interested in becoming a member? Call Deana Mallory at 802-447-1571 ext. 203.

**Friday, June 28, 5:00 - 7:30 pm — Vermont in the 60s — Summer Party and Exhibition Opening**
Be among the first to see the Museum’s two major summer exhibitions *Fields of Change: 1960s Vermont* and *Color Fields: 1960s Bennington Modernism*. Speak with curator Jamie Franklin as you explore the complex time that in many ways has come to define Vermont as it is today, both culturally and socially. Join us for this mid-summer party when we enjoy food and drink from regional producers. Reservations Required. Cash Bar. Watch for your invitation in the mail.
SUMMER CAMPS at Bennington Museum

**Vermont Arts Exchange (VAE) and Bennington Museum** bring VAE style camps to the beautiful outdoor surroundings at Bennington Museum. While much of the time is planned for outdoor activities, each camp is set to integrate objects on view in the Museum’s galleries, centering on music and sculpture. For information contact infovae@comcast.net or 802-442-5549. Register for these camps online at vtartxchange.org

**Monday, July 8 – Friday, July 12, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm**

**OUTDOOR SCULPTURE**
Instructed by Matthew Perry. The Hadwen Woods is the perfect outdoor studio for this week of camp. Artists who work with natural materials are our inspiration as we create small models and large-scale works. Ages 8+, $225.

**Monday, July 22 – Friday, July 26, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm**

**MAKE ART, MAKE NOISE!**
Instructed by music educator and drummer Brian DeAngelo and visual artist, Matthew Perry. A mish-mash week of making music and art ranging from sound sculptures created in the Museum’s Hadwen Woods to bucket drumming in downtown Bennington. July 22-26, Ages 8+, $225.
In our ongoing coverage of the wide variety of publications carried in the Museum Store, this newsletter introduces a wonderful series of books that have been flying off the shelves.

Created by Tim Wager, a native of Bennington, *Bennington History: A Colorized Journey Through the 19th-20th Century* is the ultimate outcome of Wager’s interaction with a group from Bennington and the region who were posting historical photos on Facebook. Many of the images did not have dates or captions, so Wager began adding this information and began to think about making a book to compile them. After a number of years, he created his own Facebook page for current and former Benningtonians and called it “Bennington History, After Dirt Was Invented.” This page currently has over 3,500 members. But Wager’s interest did not stop there.

Following a conversation with Bennington Museum’s collections manager Callie Raspuzzi regarding the digitization of the Museum’s collection of glass plate negatives, Wager got the idea to colorize them. “The Bennington Museum has an amazing collection of glass plate negatives and vintage prints documenting the history of Bennington and the surrounding area,” Raspuzzi said. “These images are a rich tool for researchers, but we’re also happy to see them used in more lighthearted projects like Wager’s books.” Wager was delighted to find that colorization was bringing out a whole different dimension that was once hidden.

It takes Wager anywhere from four to twelve hours to colorize a single photo. He estimates that approximately 350 hours went into colorizing all of the photos in his first book, and overall, he has colorized over 300 photos of historical Bennington, North Bennington, and Shaftsbury, 1860 to 1960.

Volumes 1, 2, and 3 of *Bennington History: A Colorized Journey Through the 19th-20th Century* are currently available through the Bennington Museum Store. All volumes are available online so former Benningtonians who no longer live in the area can also obtain a copy, a feature Wager particularly liked. In return for access to the library of photographs that the Museum holds, Wager is donating all profits from the sale of the books to the Museum.

Bennington Museum is publishing two issues of the Walloomsack Review this season, one featuring a cover devoted to the “Black youth” who led captured Hessians after the Battle of Bennington. This image sets the stage for the articles in this issue which include topics pertaining to the history of African-Americans in Vermont, and how Vermonters engaged with the Civil Rights movement. The second is a special edition that contains articles written by current students at Bennington College.

In Volume 23, Phil Holland analyzes the work of several historians who wrote about the legendary “Black youth” portrayed in the twelve-foot panorama titled Prisoners at the Battle of Bennington. Other articles include letters from Benningtonians who lived in Kentucky during the Civil War; a recollection of Governor Phil Hoff’s 1965 “Vermont in Mississippi” project; and a review by curator Jamie Franklin on Peter Miller’s new book of Vermont photographs.

The idea for a cooperative college-authored issue came from faculty anthropologist Mirka Prazak, who asked her students to focus on the town in which they find themselves – Bennington. They responded with a fascinating variety of observations — sociological, governmental, economic, agricultural, demographic, environmental, philanthropic, and political.

Issues of the Walloomsack Review are available for $4.95 per issue through the Museum Store and online at store.benningtonmuseum.org or sign-up for an annual subscription of two issues ($12.95) and eliminate the shipping fee that accompanies online orders.

Museum Store: 802-447-1571 ext. 208 or online store.benningtonmuseum.org
The George Aiken Wildflower Trail is an engaging garden covering six acres of the Museum’s 10-acre property. Located in the Hadwen Woods, its goal has been to provide a pleasant retreat for visitors and to showcase many of the native plants, ferns and wildflowers that George Aiken – one of Vermont’s best-known and most-respected political figures – grew at his nursery in Putney and wrote about in his book *Pioneering with Wildflowers*. While the wildflowers of the area continue to thrive, the Eastern White Pines were almost universally infected by red rot (Fomes pinii), a fungus that penetrates the heart of the trunk, severely weakening it. Every year the Museum has been losing 10-30 trees along the trail. After more than a decade of study, in June 2018 the Museum’s Executive Committee voted reluctantly to remove the pine forest, and begin implementing plans for a new landscape designed by Reed Hilderbrand, one of the foremost firms of landscape architecture in the nation.

The problems go back to 2007, when over thirty trees fell. On the advice of a state forester, the Museum removed 270 trees in the hope that the remaining trees would get stronger. However, in 2008 another twenty trees fell, the trunks snapping off approximately twenty feet above the ground. The Museum engaged a state forester for further evaluation. The advice we received has been consistent: the pines initially grew too close together and were never thinned out. They were too tall and thin, with sparse branches only at the top. Growing so close together also facilitated the spread of the red rot, which infected almost all the trees. The trees could not be treated and would continue to fall, if they were not removed. Then, in December 2012, another 55 trees were felled in a single devastating storm. This created a domino effect: the loss of trees opened up the heart of the woods to the wind, leading to further losses. The losses caused work and expense for the Museum, demoralized the volunteers who have created and maintained the Wildflower Trail, and posed a danger to visitors and to houses on neighboring properties.

Most of the pines were cut in November and December 2018 and cleanup is well underway. Already spectacular vistas have been opened up from the top of the hill. Plans are now being developed by Reed Hilderbrand for a natural New England landscape that preserves the George Aiken Wildflower Trail in the context of meadows, a successional forest, a fern walk, and the existing hardwood forest in the bottomlands near the creek.

The Hadwen Woods was donated to the Bennington Museum by the late George Hadwen, the founder of the Bennington Pennysaver and a former museum trustee. The George Aiken Wildflower Trail has been developed over the last decade entirely by private donations and by a team of volunteers led by Jackie and Tony Marro. The trail is open to the public dawn-to-dusk, free of charge, and is a delightful place to hike, walk your dog, picnic, or sit and relax on one of the artist-designed benches. Anyone interested in doing volunteer work or donating money or plants should contact Jackie Marro at jcminvt@hotmail.com.
Coming This Summer

**Fields of Change: 1960s Vermont**

Looking Ahead…

Through June 11

May 11
June 8 through August 25
June 29 through December 30
June 28
August 31 through October 14

**Up Home: Hand Colored Photographs by Susanne and Neil Rappaport**

Community Day - FREE Admission

**Archaeology of the Bennington Battlefield**

**Color Fields: 1960s Bennington Modernism**

Summer Party and Opening of Summer Exhibitions

**1863 Jane Stickle Quilt**

For additional information see Events on page 8.