

MYSTIC MUSEUM OF ART

News & Views | Fall 2017



THE CLEARING BY CHARLES H. DAVIS

News 2
Exhibitions 5
Events 7
Museums 9
Audiences 10

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MYSTIC MUSEUM OF ART

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Mary Anne Stets
Chairperson

David Madacsi
President

Andrew Halsey
Vice President

Michelle Kirk
Treasurer

Alex Bancroft
Secretary

Erika Neenan
Assistant Secretary

DIRECTORS

Gwen Basilica

Todd Brady

Patty Kitchings

Mari Kodama

Cynthia Martin

Joe Selinger

George G. King
Ex-Officio

STAFF

George G. King
Executive Director

Dawn Salerno
*Deputy Director
for Public Engagement
and Operations*

Mary Addison
Education Coordinator

Rita Dawley
Visitor Services Associate

Judy Flora
Director of Finance

Melissa Hall Baker
*Corporate Relations
and Events Manager*

James Kaczman
Graphic Designer

Erika Neenan
*Curatorial Assistant
to the Director*

Betty Pacelle
Visitor Services Associate

Dan Pearson
Manager of External Affairs

Rodolfo Reyes
Facilities Manager

Mystic Museum of Art
9 Water Street
Mystic CT 06355
860.536.7601
MysticMuseumofArt.org
info@MysticMuseumofArt.org

A MAJOR BEQUEST

Mystic Museum of Art is both a museum and a cultural center, but equally important it is an archive preserving more than a century's worth of art and records. As with other area institutions, the Museum's permanent collection serves to inspire and educate, but also to provide continuity and perspective on this unique part of the world. Many works in the collection reflect the beauty, the industry, the people, the landmarks that define a sense of this place. It is memories and ideas born all over the world but stored here as a living document that extends backward to our past to illuminate and inspire the present and the future.

Numbering 250 objects, the collection is modest in size but requires meticulous maintenance and protection along strict guidelines in order to fulfill our responsibility to artists, scholars, and the public. Museum supporters provided crucial funding at this year's museum gala to help us purchase specialized museum-quality equipment and professional services necessary to best protect the works in our care. While many artists are represented in the collection, however, no figure may feature more prominently than Charles H. Davis, who founded both the Mystic Art Colony and the Mystic Art Association.

With the above preamble, it therefore gives me great pleasure to announce that in July, Mystic Museum of Art received an important gift to its collection when it acquired *The Clearing*, by Charles H. Davis (see cover, detail, and page 2, black and white), as a bequest from the late Margaret Howe Kitchings. It joins Davis's *Summer* as one of two of his works contained in the collection.

A Massachusetts native who settled in Mystic in 1892 after a successful painting career in France, Davis was one of the most celebrated painters of his era. First inspired by Millet and the Barbizon painters, Davis changed his style several times throughout his long and successful career. *The Clearing*, dating from c. 1915, is a wonderful example of his mid-career style, when, at the turn of the 20th century, he began to reject the Tonalist style, which characterized his early works, for a brightened palette influenced by Impressionism. Additionally, it was during this time period he began to place heavy emphasis on a bright, cloud filled sky in his works, for which he became well known.

While Davis is an important artist nationally, he is particularly important to our organization and the Greater Mystic area. We are so pleased to add this work to our permanent collection.

George G. King
Executive Director



MMoA NEWS & VIEWS

Fall 2017

Dan Pearson
Editor

James Kaczman
Graphic Designer

Cover: Charles H. Davis,
The Clearing (detail),
ca. 1915. Oil on canvas,
42 x 34 in. Mystic Museum
of Art Permanent Collection.
Bequest of Margaret Howe
Kitchings.



Charles H. Davis, *The Clearing*, ca. 1915. Oil on canvas, 42 x 34 in. Mystic Museum of Art Permanent Collection. Bequest of Margaret Howe Kitchings.

MMOA INTRODUCES SPEAKER SERIES *I FEEL VOXISH*

Starting in September, Mystic Museum of Art will host *I Feel Voxish*, a forward looking monthly speaker series in which leaders in culture and ideas present topics representing their passions. The program, which will feature individual speakers and salon discussions, will be the first series held in MMoA's 15 Water Street Gallery. Each event will conclude with a selection of locally-produced cheese, charcuterie, wine, and beer. The autumn program for *I Feel Voxish* includes:

Eliot Van Buskirk: *Court Tennis: The Game that Created All Games*: A leading technology journalist and digital music expert, Eliot Van Buskirk is best known for being the first journalist to proclaim the advent of the iPod at Steve Jobs's 2001 unveiling. He is also an avid player of the little known sport of Court Tennis, whose origin dates back to Persian and Egyptian fertility rites. Buskirk will speak on the sport and the unique architecture at courts in the US and Europe.

Simon Feldman and Alan Hazlett: *What it Means to Eat All You Can: The Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics of Buffets*: Chair of the Philosophy Department at Connecticut College, Feldman teaches the popular seminar *The Meaning of Life*. A professor at Washington University in St. Louis, Hazlett serves on the editorial board of *Philosophical Quarterly*. In their free time, however, Feldman and Hazlett travel the world to eat at buffets. Since 2005, they have sampled buffets in 21 states and seven countries.

Christopher Heuer: *Trash-Rock Dialectics*: Widely recognized as a specialist in early modern European art and architecture, Heuer is also a music obsessive with a focus on jazz, garage, and indie rock. He will speak on Nation of Ulysses, a legendary Washington D.C. concept band that fused music, fashion, and political manifesto.

See page 8 for series details.

MYSTIC MUSEUM OF ART WELCOMES NEW STAFF



MELISSA HALL BAKER

CORPORATE RELATIONS
AND EVENTS MANAGER

In June, Melissa Hall Baker joined MMoA's staff as its new Corporate Relations and Events Manager, replacing Andrea Frickman, who left for a job in Groton Long Point. Melissa plans and executes the corporate partnership program that supports exhibitions and events and manages all aspects of Museum, public, and private events, as well as facility rentals. She also contributes to marketing and promotion efforts for event rentals, including weddings and corporate retreats.

Melissa has over fifteen years of event planning experience in which she managed and coordinated everything from small dinners to large multi-day conferences. In addition, she brings twenty years of hospitality experience, working for small inns, hotels, and conference centers throughout Southeastern Connecticut. For the past three years, Melissa oversaw all fundraising and event rentals for the Guest House Conferences & Retreat Center in Chester. Melissa majored in Travel and Tourism at Johnson and Wales University and continued her education in Business Management at Albertus Magnus College. She lives in Mystic with her two children, Garrett and Cassidy.



RODOLFO REYES

FACILITIES MANAGER

Rodolfo Reyes in June became MMoA's full-time Facilities Director, replacing Tony Saccone, who took a job with the Town of Ledyard. A New London native, with Puerto Rican and Costa Rican roots, Reyes is a dual citizen of the United States and Costa Rica. After a successful high school football career, Rodolfo went on to become the second generation in his family to play football for the Costa Rican National Team, who compete throughout South and Central America. Rodolfo spent ten years in Costa Rica before returning to New London.

As Facilities Director, Rodolfo brings to MMoA an interest in gardening and the natural world, particularly orchids, and a background as an artist and painter. He oversees all elements of buildings and grounds, which includes preparing galleries for new exhibitions, performing all maintenance, managing MMoA's parking lot and parking booth staff, and working closely with volunteers and members of Mystic Garden Club to beautify the property. He lives in New London with his wife and two daughters.



MARY ADDISON

EDUCATION COORDINATOR

In August, artist and art teacher Mary Addison joined the MMoA staff as Education Coordinator, replacing Carlene Bermann, who recently left to take a new job in Vermont. In this position, Addison will manage School Outreach and Studio Art Programs for audiences aged three and up and co-plan, schedule, implement and evaluate on- and off-site group programs for grades Pre-K through 12, as well as studio art classes in various media for the general public. In addition, she will assist in hiring and supervising models and instructors, budget-tracking and development, purchasing, data-entry and reporting, copy-writing and all related correspondence and administration for programs.

Well known to the MMoA community, Addison began teaching at the Museum in 2014. Addison has taught on- and off-site programs, art camps, and courses, including the popular Nature in Art class. A graduate of the University of Colorado, Boulder, who also studied Italian art, language, and culture in Florence, Italy, Addison also previously worked as a Pre-K and art teacher at Sacred Heart School in Groton.

PHOTOGRAPHY FACULTY BRENDA DE LOS SANTOS

With smartphones, everyone is a photographer and artist capturing, manipulating, and defining moments through image. Does a professional photographer then see this as a degradation of the form or a chance to enliven the medium?

“I often tell my students that the best camera is the one they have with them, even if it’s just an iPhone,” says Brenda De Los Santos. “It gives people the chance to experiment with photography without having to make the initial investment, which often sparks enough of an interest for them to eventually get a more full-featured camera.”

Photography will be at the forefront for many in September when Mystic Museum of Art hosts its 39th annual photo exhibition. But photography is an art that is practiced year round at MMoA, often with De Los Santos at the center of it. She is the longest serving photo instructor on MMoA’s faculty. De Los Santos began with the Museum in 2012, and frequently teaches introductory level courses with students using cameras with manual settings. She also teaches classes covering specialized topics such as night photography, photojournalism, and photo editing using Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom.

Photojournalism was De Los Santos’s first professional pursuit in the medium. After graduating with a degree in Photojournalism from Boston University in 2006, she worked as a staff photographer for *The New Britain Herald* and *The Middletown Press*. In 2009, she chose to start her own photography business. Since 2014, she has been self-employed as a portrait and wedding photographer, in addition to her work at MMoA.

A New London native, who returned to reside there, De Los Santos said she was first drawn to photography for the “realness” of documenting the world as she saw it. Dorothea Lange’s work humanizing terrible circumstances during the Great Depression and in Japanese-American internment camps proved influential. De Los Santos said she is also influenced by Sandy Puc, founder of Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, a non-profit that provides free professional portrait photography to families suffering stillbirth or infant loss. She began volunteering with the organization in 2015 and became area coordinator in 2016.

“(Puc’s) generosity and compassion is something I try to incorporate into my life and career,” says De Los Santos. “Although it isn’t easy, it is so incredibly worthwhile to know that my photos can help others in their darkest times.”



Interestingly, De Los Santos also recently taught herself how to make soap, lip balm, lotions, and body butters, inspired, she says, by a desire to have better understanding of what people put in and on their bodies. De Los Santos has brought her knowledge to the Museum by teaching courses in D.I.Y. body products.

De Los Santos’s subject matter in photo ranges from landscape and night skies to food, believing food photography has as much potential as any material to tell a story. But her primary focus remains portrait, in part because she says she loves “capturing the love that families have for each other” and special moments in their lives. Her skills and enthusiasm have inspired many MMoA students.

“As a portrait photographer my advice is to learn as much as you can about the technical aspects of photography and to really understand how your camera works before you begin to charge for your services,” she says. “Just like anything else, you have to work at it and not expect success overnight.”

Photo by Brenda De Los Santos

JOHN BOONE'S DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Once, while giving a talk to a group of college students, artist John Boone was asked if the digital text in his paintings were done by machine or by his own hand. When Boone responded that it was indeed painted by hand, another student in the audience shouted out that he was a “liar.” While the incident may have occurred some years back, it provides a relevant illustration of the tensions, dualities, and possibilities at the heart of Boone’s textual pop art. Many of his canvases feature a background of a solid color overlaid with an assembly of words, often idiomatic and repetitive, painted in an angled font he created, which he calls “digital.” While there is an immediacy and simplicity to the works, they result from a long artistic apprenticeship and require labor-intensive attention to detail.

Boone’s unique aesthetic will be on display when Mystic Museum of Art presents *Pairs*, an exhibition in MMoA’s Liebig Gallery, which will feature six related pairs of Boone’s paintings and mixed-media. Special to MMoA’s show will be *Time Pieces-Free Time* and *Time Zones*, which will include a still image under a reflective plexiglass where the viewer’s image resides alongside an eight-minute program with 200 idioms about time. In some pieces, the link is fractured. In some, as with two paintings about drawing, Boone says it is more natural.

“Drawing conclusions and drawing a blank are two sides of how the mind works,” says Boone. “In one case there is no comprehension and in another there is.”

While each pair represents its own conflict and convergence, taken together, however, the familiar is rendered unfamiliar; the folkloric becomes futuristic; the precise becomes ambiguous; the literal becomes symbolic; mass production results in the singular; and, the mechanical becomes humanized.

A New Jersey native, who studied at Earlham College in Indiana and, later a series of art schools, Boone says he was inspired by *New Yorker* cartoonist Saul Steinberg, who made words and letters characters in his drawings. Boone designs on a computer but then paints his canvases entirely by hand, which sometimes requires remarkable detail and patience painting hundreds of letters. Perhaps the most interesting duality of Boone’s work resides in this digital alphabet itself, which Boone says is always the constant and arbiter of any work. The letters evoke the future, but it’s a soft archaic future of Tron, Atari, and the primitive computers that were all a precursor to current ideas about modernity. By doing this, gravity is set against levity as we consider the future we remember against the future we are yet to encounter.



In addition to painting, Boone creates installation, mixed-media, and performance. Memorably, in 1996, he organized “HEY YOU...”, in which an airplane flew up and down the Connecticut and Rhode Island Coast on Fourth of July trailing a sign that read, in giant letters, “Hey You...” As a premise, it works on many levels. Anonymity and recognition, man and machine, but most powerfully the strangeness of a consumer culture conditioned to expect an ad when no marketing or ploy ever appears afterward.

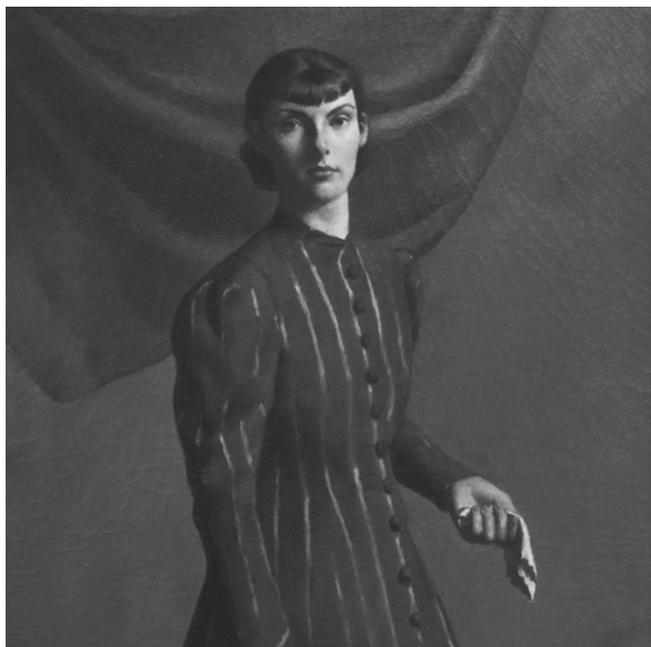
Boone’s work is held in dozens of private and public collections around the world. He divides his time between Brooklyn, New York, and Stonington, where he maintains a studio at the Velvet Mill.

“I never feel confined by my approach to making art. Frankly, it is just the opposite. It’s a formula for a wide degree of possibilities,” says Boone. “It’s like having my own radio station. But it possesses all the ingredients I think are important for a conversation about the world we live in, which include the handshake between constant technology and human inconsistencies.”

John Boone: Pairs will be on view September 28 to November 11. Opening Reception: Thursday, September 28, 5:30pm – 7pm.

Photo by James Kaczman

EXHIBITION CALENDAR



THROUGH SEPTEMBER 23

Robert Brackman: Thinking in Color

THROUGH SEPTEMBER 16

Janvier Miller Solo Show

61st Regional Exhibition



SEPTEMBER 28 - NOVEMBER 11

John Boone: Pairs

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 28, 5:30pm - 7pm

Wendy Edwards/Jerry Mischak

At 15 Water Street Gallery

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 28, 5:30pm - 7pm



SEPTEMBER 22 - NOVEMBER 11

Photo Show 39 - Juried

Selections from the Permanent Collection

Opening Reception: Thursday, September 28, 5:30pm - 7pm



NOVEMBER 18 - DECEMBER 23

Holiday Fine Art Show

Preview Party: Friday, November 17, 6pm - 8pm

To view prospectuses and submission guidelines for specific exhibitions visit MysticMuseumofArt.org.

EVENTS



Artini Hour

Mix cocktails and your creativity for your next happy hour. Take on a creative project with one of our instructors, as you learn to play with a variety of media in the studios and galleries. We provide instruction, supplies, a tasty beverage and plenty of time to socialize.

Thursdays, 5:30pm - 7:30pm
\$18 Members / \$23 Public
Season pass: \$50 Members / \$60 Public
Call to register: 860.536.7601 x209

September 21

Grapevine Globes

Sue Palmer

Make contemporary décor using yarn, hemp, glue and balloons. Finished globes make nice light shades or fill a fruit bowl.

Tonight's martini: The Mojito

October 19

Calligraphic Quilts

Gail Turgeon

Letters are symbols we use to make words, but they are also design elements. Tonight we will create a few letters and use them with other scrapbook papers to create a quilt that we will then attach to a card.

Tonight's martini: The Lemon Drop

November 30

Garlands

Judy Pettini

Garlands symbolize many things to many different cultures. Tonight's garland-making utilizes twine, buttons, objects from nature and the "bling" of your choice. Participants are welcome to bring some of their own tchotchkes to weave into their garlands.

Tonight's martini: The Creamsicle

Workshop: The Writer in the Museum with Ruth Crocker

Whether you are writing fiction or nonfiction, or want to get started with a writing project, a museum may be a rich source of material. Paintings, photographs and sculpture are full of symbols, ambiguities, and imagery with the potential to spark observation skills and memories. Perhaps you have a work in progress. Perhaps you have ideas but need incentive and encouragement to get them down on the page. Either way, this workshop, appropriate for all levels, will guide you into the process of using art as a stimulus for unlocking ideas.

Monday, September 25, 6pm - 9pm

Saturday, October 7, 1pm - 4pm

\$45 Members / \$60 Public, per workshop

Call to register: 860.536.7601 x209

Ruth W. Crocker's essays have appeared in *The Gettysburg Review*, *Grace Magazine*, *O-Dark-Thirty*, *T.A.P.S. Magazine*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and many other journals and trade magazines. Writing awards include a notable essay in *Best American Essays* and a Pushcart Prize nomination. She is the author of Elm Grove Press' *People of Yellowstone* and *Those Who Remain: Remembrance and Reunion After War*, the latter of which received the Benjamin Franklin Award and a Silver Medal from the Military Writers Society of America. She has taught writing workshops throughout the U.S. and is an avid reader.

Making Something from Nothing: The Creative Process

This lecture series delves into what it takes to create a work of art. Those interested in the visual arts will learn by examining the methods and materials of artists, the elements and principles of design, and what it means to be "creative" as well as the cognitive and emotional processes tapped by a creative practice. The last class will serve as a discussion with participants and guest panelists.

Instructor: Julia Pavone

Wednesdays, 6:30pm- 7:45pm

October 18, 25, and November 1, 8

Series:

Members \$35 / Public \$50 / Students w/College ID \$20

Single Class:

Members \$10 / Public \$15 / Students w/College ID \$5

Advance registration requested: 860.536.7601 x209



Art After Dark

MMoA's family-friendly Tuesday night concert series is back for its 7th season with live music and live art on our riverfront patio.

Members \$12, Public \$15, Children 4 - 12 \$3, Children 3 and under are free. Parking validations provided with admission.

Tuesday, September 26, 6pm - 8:30pm

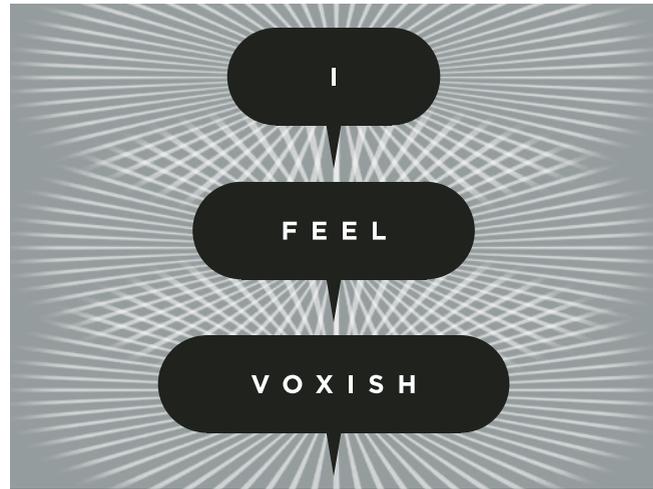
Live music by Green Tea, live art by Katharine Gates, and balloon art by April Brunelle

Tuesday, October 17, 6pm - 8:30pm

Live music by The Mill, live art by Russ Kramer, and balloon art by April Brunelle

Artwork produced by live artists will be available for purchase via silent auction.

Sponsors: ABC PhotoLab, Captain Daniel Packer Inne, CMB Creative Group, Coca-Cola, Cottrell Brewing Co., Dogwatch Café, A Greener Perspective, Hosmer Mountain Beverages, Market Realty, Mystic Shipyard, Mystic River Mudheads Sailing Association, Noank Village Boatyard, Pizzetta, Sails Up 4 Cancer, and The Real McCoy Rum



I Feel Voxish Speaker Series

I Feel Voxish is a forward looking monthly speaker series in which leaders in culture and ideas present topics representing their passions. The program, which will feature individual speakers and salon discussions, will be the first series held in MMoA's 15 Water Street Gallery. Each event will conclude with a selection of locally-produced cheese, charcuterie, wine, and beer. *I Feel Voxish* will run September through June. No event will be held in December.

Eliot Van Buskirk: *Court Tennis: The Game that Created All Games*

Buskirk is an avid player of the little known sport of Court Tennis, whose origins date back to Persian and Egyptian fertility rites. Buskirk will speak on the sport and the unique architecture at courts in the US and Europe.

Sunday, September 17, 5:30pm - 7pm

Simon Feldman and Alan Hazlett: *What it Means to Eat All You Can: The Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics of Buffets*

In their free time, Feldman and Hazlett travel the world to eat at buffets. Since 2005, they have sampled buffets in 21 states and seven countries.

Thursday, October 12, 5:30pm - 7pm

Christopher Heuer: *Trash-Rock Dialectics*

Heuer will speak on Nation of Ulysses, a legendary Washington D.C. concept band that fused music, fashion, and political manifesto.

Sunday, November 12, 5:30pm - 7pm

Tickets: \$8 Members, \$10 Public

Sponsored by E-List.com

HONEY, I SOLD THE ROCKWELL

BY DAWN SALERNO

The museum community has recently been fixated on the decision of the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, to sell forty paintings and other objects from its collection. The items to be sold at auction by Sotheby's this fall include works by Alexander Calder, Frederic Church, George Henry Durrie, and, most controversially, two paintings by Norman Rockwell, one of which, *Shuffleton's Barber Shop*, is considered one of his best.

The sale is estimated to yield approximately \$50 million to fund the "reinvention" of the 114-year old museum, including establishment of a \$45 million endowment and major renovations of the building and its exhibition space to deploy state-of-the art technology and exhibition design to emphasize science and history in an inter-disciplinary way. The new vision for the museum was the result of a two-year process that engaged over 400 members of the community in a far-reaching discussion. The museum is, in some ways, the poor unnoticed sibling in a large family that includes MASS MoCA, Clark Art Institute, and Norman Rockwell Museum. Berkshire currently has a structural deficit that averages \$1.15 million per year and would have exhausted its cash in a few years. As community philanthropy shifts, museums that have long relied on those donors must explore new options, or risk closure. This sale of artworks is not just Berkshire's answer to surviving financially as an institution, but also to thriving as a community organization.

The decision to sell art has resulted in an outcry of both criticism and support. At the heart of the controversy is the tension between the traditional role of a museum to preserve its collection for perpetuity and the need to meet the challenges of changing demographics, diminished philanthropy, difficult finances and the changing ways in which museums serve their communities.

It is, of course, a high priority of museums to preserve the objects entrusted to their care and not use them as fungible assets to be disposed of instead of selling stock in the portfolio. The ethical guidelines of American Alliance of Museums limit the use of the proceeds of sale to add to the collection or to provide direct care for the collection. Interestingly, that guideline was enacted not so much to protect collections but to avoid the adoption of a financial accounting standard that would have required museums to report the full market value of their collections on their public balance sheets. But since its establishment as a field-wide standard to safeguard collections, it continues to be defended vigorously and offenders are denounced.



On the other hand, a museum's board of trustees is vested with a legal obligation and fiduciary duty to do what they believe is in the best interest of the museum. In Berkshire's case, the board held seven retreats, totaling over 60 hours of time, on this single topic. In the end, the decision to fund the master plan by sale of objects from the collection was adopted by unanimous vote.

In so doing, Berkshire Museum joined other museums that have made a decision like this. When Delaware Art Museum made a similar decision in 2014, for example, the American Alliance of Museums, in stripping the museum of its accreditation, said, "... The museum is there to save the collection; the collection is not there to save the museum. ... Thus it is critical that the museum field condemn the declared actions of the Delaware Art Museum."

Mike Miller, CEO of the Delaware Art Museum, issued the following statement: "After detailed analysis, heavy scrutiny and the exhaustion of every reasonable alternative to relieve our bond debt, the Trustees had two agonizing choices in front of them—to either sell works of art, or to close our doors. While today's decision is certainly hard to bear, the closure of this 100-year-old museum would be, by comparison, unbearable."

In addition, Van Shields, the Berkshire Museum's Executive Director, said, "I'm in this business to transform lives. It is not about what we have. It is about who are we for."

The question this case raises for the museum community is: at what point might it become more "ethical" to sell objects to raise funds to better meet the needs of the community served by the museum or, in a worst case, to ensure that the museum will survive? Which is a higher priority? This is an important discussion that will have growing urgency as the challenges facing museums increase.

Photo by Alexis Horatius

AUDIENCES

IN YOUR ART OR SULLEN CRAFT

BY DAN PEARSON

Here I think I am writing mainly for students who have experienced a creative impulse, not just in visual art, but poetry, film, music, any medium, and are full of both fear and enthusiasm at the prospect of pursuing it more than recreationally. I was once there myself. And, like many, I started out with a romantic image of it all, of myself alone in some lighthouse on a remote Scottish island living on red wine and roasted root vegetables, warmed by a single peat brick, convinced the public awaited my masterpiece. After college, I went that direction then, moving from place to place, earning enough to get by, all in the name of art. While friends built careers, I sought freedom and solitude. Nothing else. And I might have continued that way until that pursuit took me on a bus ride to Portland, Oregon, where I found myself sleeping on a kitchen floor surrounded by mouse traps baited with expired peanut butter, viscous with sweat from a diet of margarine sandwiches, temping at a title insurance company with the most lenient casual Friday policy ever witnessed (think overalls, but no shirt.) Time to assess, perhaps?

It's one thing to have the immediate response of playing to an audience. It's also one thing to be part of what Balzac popularized as the "cenacle," a group of artists and thinkers who gather and push each other into conversation and ideas that propel the entire collective. But somewhere in all of that is still a need for the deep, cosmic silence imperative to create. In this endeavor then, if you choose to make art, you are, in a sense, entirely alone. Alone because only you can determine what is worthwhile or needs to be said. Alone because only you have the eye, ear, or soul to determine whether you are being true to your vision. Yet, in another sense, you are never alone in art. No, you are among noble company because you have behind you the centuries of others who risked their lives or reputations to pursue with conviction. The history of art is the history of individuals being misunderstood, condemned, or ridiculed and continuing anyway. That is why you need to keep that august company close. When you toil in obscurity for a protracted and uncertain reward, your ancestors, ghosts or not, believe in you.

There are countless examples of all what I mean. The audience rioted at the first performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. The very term "Impressionism" originated as a pejorative by a critic dismissing Monet. Joyce's *Ulysses* had to be smuggled into the country. Nearly everything that is now in the canon, revered in museums, selling for millions at auction, or assigned in school curriculums was originally either banned, suspect, or repeatedly dismissed as worthless. The list goes on and on and on. But I would here encourage you to consider just the novel, *Confederacy of Dunces*, by John Kennedy O'Toole. Originally, the novel was rejected over and over by publishers and literary agents. Only the tireless efforts of the dead author's mother enabled it to reach the public where it received the Pulitzer Prize. The novel's title does a better job than I to illustrate the subject at hand. It comes from a quote by Irish satirist, Jonathan Swift: "When a true genius appears in the world, you will know him by this sign, that the dunces are all in confederacy against him." That sounds fairly dramatic. But it's not. It's meant to remind you to start young to develop the resiliency to heed and defend your inner voice. What is popular is often ephemeral and shallow, while much that will influence and endure is disregarded.

I mention all of this here in these pages because the demographic to whom I'm writing is typically the one least engaged with this museum. Yet Mystic Museum of Art stands at a moment where it can be a very practical and beneficial resource to young artists because it can provide a venue for their effort and start a dialogue with the public, particularly as the Museum is now beginning to focus on young artists and contemporary work at its 15 Water Street gallery. Known to most as the former Emporium store, the size and minimalism of the space, and its high visibility, lend itself to pop-up exhibitions, installation, and solo shows. The gallery gives MMoA flexibility to be innovative and to move more quickly than it could with extensive curation. We very much want to hear and foster new voices and perspectives. It energizes the institution as a whole. Youth often has the audacity to see what is not yet seen or to ask the questions others fear. Experienced artists can be inspired by that. Seasoned artists in turn may be able to talk to young artists about creative strategies, the business side of art, and educational options. And best of all, they can reassure these young people just starting out on their journey that they are never alone in the creative life no matter how much they must depend on self and self alone for it.

MYSTIC MUSEUM OF ART

9 WATER STREET MYSTIC CONNECTICUT 06355 860.536.7601 MYSTICMUSEUMOFART.ORG

FOLLOW US    

RECYCLE

NON PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 45
MYSTIC, CT
06355

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



HISTORIC MYSTIC, LLC

Frank Loomis
Palmer Fund
Bank of America, Trustee



PHOTO SHOW

39

SEPTEMBER 22 – NOVEMBER 11, 2017