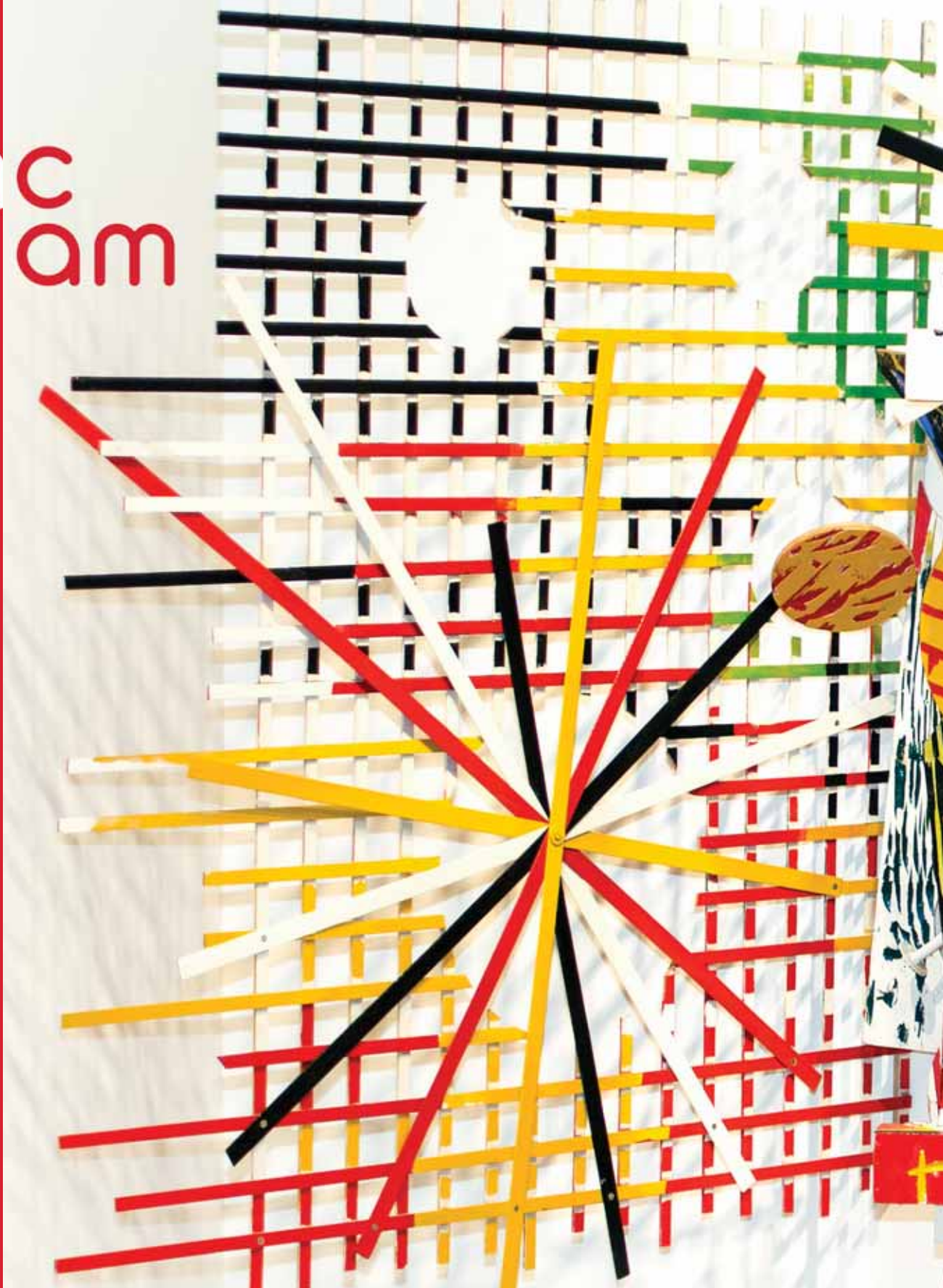


mhcam



MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

FALL 2015



## MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

**Who are we as an institution?** That is the question the staff set out to answer this year. Though this is an essentially metaphysical question, it has important practical applications. We need to be clear about our priorities when it comes to the allocation of our precious resources—human, financial, spatial, and temporal.

As the first step, we reconceived our vision. We asked what the Museum means in the world—what difference it can make in the lives of those who engage with it. To arrive at the fiery language of our new vision statement, we imagined it as the utterance of the visionary, the thinker unfettered by practicalities.

Then we needed to consider how to carry out that vision. For the mission statement we felt that the Museum functions as much more than the caretaker of the 24,000 objects in its collection.

While we at the Museum have long embraced its primary role as a teaching museum, we recognized the need to clearly articulate what the Museum does now. It cares for its collections, yes, but it is also deeply involved in reconceiving the display of art and material culture, interpreting objects, and organizing opportunities for a variety of creative collaborations with faculty, students, and the community at large. In other words, the Museum is a catalyst for creative thought through the display

and interpretation of art and material culture in its galleries.

The new vision and mission statements reflect these goals and offer a clearer picture of how the Museum actually functions—both on campus and in our community.

The next step was figuring out a way to distinctly signal our visual identity so as to reflect the values embedded in our vision and mission. With this edition of the *MHCAM Newsletter*, we introduce our new logo and typeface. The new logo emphasizes our role as a college museum by using the “c” as the bridge between “Art Museum” and “Mount Holyoke.” The font was hand drawn just for this logo. We are excited by the creativity that inspired this new visual identity—and by the creativity that it is sure to inspire.

We are also debuting a brand new website this fall, which we hope you will take out for a test drive. There you will find many of the most obvious changes to our visual identity. We have redesigned everything about our website, using our mission as a guide. The new site will help us “serve, steward, foster, provide, and generate.” It emphasizes the collection as our core and engagement with objects as our chief goal. Over time we will be adding more content to this site. Soon we will boast lectures, related reading and images, and interactive approaches to working with art and material culture.

Despite our exciting new web presence, the galleries will continue to be the locus of our most concentrated activities. This fall you will find three new contemporary art exhibitions at the Museum. Judy Pfaff has worked with me on making a carefully selected presentation of her work at a key moment in her early career. It has been pure joy to work with such a perceptive, intelligent, and generous person. And I know that my colleague in the philosophy department, Professor Thomas Wartenberg, has felt the same way about working with

**Cover:**

Judy Pfaff (*American*, b. 1946)

*Wallabout*, 1986

Mixed media assemblage

Purchase with funds

from Astrid Rehl

Baumgardner (Class of 1973)

2014.8a-k

Photograph by Laura

Shea

(detail of p. 4)

Mel Bochner on his research into the artist's challenging illustrations to Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. In the related exhibition, Wartenberg brings new light to these important conceptual works, which are recent additions to the permanent collection.

Finally, we welcome the newest member of the curatorial team, Hannah Blunt. Hannah joins us from the Colby College Museum of Art where she was the Langlais Curator for Special Projects. For her debut at MHCAM, Hannah has created a sensitive and nuanced exhibition featuring contemporary works from the permanent collection. She centers her show, *Energies and Elegies*, on concepts of transformation, impermanence, and loss. Her exhibition features work in which the difference between presence and absence is far from absolute.

I look forward to welcoming you to the Museum both physically and virtually this fall. Our schedule is filled with great lectures, exhibitions, talks, and social moments. And, as always, you're invited!

— John Stomberg,  
Florence Finch Abbott  
Director



## MHCAM Now!

### VISION:

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum aims to spark intellectual curiosity and ignite a lasting passion for learning and creativity through direct engagement with its rich collections of art and material culture.

### MISSION:

In support of this vision, MHCAM:

- serves as a nexus for experiential learning across academic disciplines and as a resource for the broader community
- stewards, displays, and interprets an expanding collection of global art and material culture
- fosters innovative object-based teaching
- provides an environment for academic experimentation, creativity, and collaboration
- generates thought-provoking exhibitions, publications, and programs

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**ART MUSEUM ADVISORY BOARD** · Susan (Abert) Noonan '82, Chair · Judith K. Stein, Vice Chair · Norman F. Abbott · Patty Perkins Andringa '66 · Astrid Rehl Baumgardner '73 · Ludmila Schwarzenberg Bidwell '67 · Anna B. Boatwright '07 · Beth A. Chernichowski '73 · Julie Herzig Desnick '73 · Ellen J. (Danaczko) Ellison '80 · Patricia (Altman) Falkenberg '64 · Kristen Kelly Fisher '92 · Linda Friedlaender · Anne (Greer) Garonzik '64 · Beverly (Parks) Greenberg '62 · Julie (Lavin) Loria '86 · Judith W. Mann '72 · Elizabeth M. O'Brien '83 · Elizabeth A. Rogers '67 · Mia A. Schlappi '86 · Odysia Skouras '54 (Honorary Member) · Susan (Stevens) Sullivan '64 · Gay R. Strickler '73 · Susan E. Strickler '73 · Pamela B. Stuart '70 · Susan (Hedlund) Vicinelli '64 · Jennifer (Josselson) Vorbach '78 · Jie Xia '11 · Michelle T. Yun '96



***betwixt: Judy Pfaff 1985/92***  
**September 3–December 20, 2015**

John Stomberg, Florence Finch Abbott Director

The exhibition *betwixt: Judy Pfaff 1985/92* presents the work of an exciting visual artist during a period of intense experimentation. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, Judy Pfaff created large-scale, painted, multimedia works that bridge, both conceptually and physically, the surface of the wall and the space of the gallery. Featuring a selection of her signature installations from this period, the exhibition will provide visitors an opportunity to witness Pfaff's restless quest for visual equilibrium within an explosive array of forms and colors, shapes and lines, solids and voids. Also on view are several prints that echo in two dimensions the artist's formal concerns in sculpture.

A significant catalyst for this exhibition was the gift of *Wallabout* from Museum Board Member Astrid Rehl Baumgardner (Class of 1973) in 2014, a work that embodies the exuberance of Pfaff's work

at the beginning of the seven-year period examined in the show. Before 1985, Pfaff created reliefs, sculptures in the round, and full-gallery installations. However, from 1985 to 1992 she merged these endeavors into a bold new hybrid. Her cyclonic compositions challenge notions of a static object in the gallery. To engage her work the viewer must move continually to take in all of the visual elements and their shifting correlations. Imagine these sculptures as frozen moments, singular and organized, in an otherwise chaotic continuum. Pfaff wrestles simultaneously with the nature of physics and aesthetics to create these captivating artworks.

The English language is rife with vernacular phrases like "betwixt and between," "between a rock and a hard spot," "betwixt heaven and the deep blue sea," and "betwixt the devil and the deep blue sea." All of these suggest Pfaff's work obliquely. In particular, the idea of something existing "betwixt" two infinite spheres, such as heaven and the sea, resonates with art that multiplies the potential of two-dimensional walls with that of three-dimensional space.

The internationally acclaimed Pfaff has been the subject of countless one-person exhibitions, the recipient of major honors including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She lives and works in upstate New York and is the Richard B. Fisher Professor in the Arts at Bard College.

*This exhibition is made possible by the Lucy P. Eisenhart Fund.*

Judy Pfaff (American, b. 1946)  
*Wallabout*, 1986  
 Mixed media assemblage  
 Purchase with funds from Astrid Rehl Baumgardner (Class of 1973)  
 2014.8a-k  
 Photograph by Laura Shea



## Energies and Elegies

July 14–December 2, 2015

Hannah W. Blunt, Assistant Curator

ON VIEW

Exploring themes of absence and abundance, entropy and energy, this new installation brings together highlights from the Museum's continuously expanding holdings in contemporary art.

An important law of physics states that nothing comes to be or perishes, but is simply transformed from one state to another. In Kiki Smith's sumptuous depiction of a dead falcon and Jerome Liebling's ethereal photograph of Emily Dickinson's white dress, absence is infused with presence and extinguished life reveals new forms of energy. Rosamond

Purcell's camera captures burned, mildewed, and decayed books, altered from their original state by the ravages of time and the elements. Once valued as repositories of mental energy—of ideas and information—these tomes have become wondrous physical objects. Thematic paradoxes imbue Sally Mann's *Yard Eggs*, an image of the photographer's daughter posed in a farmyard. The child's straw hat brimming with gathered eggs and her youthful reverie suggest new life and nascent possibility, but there is also a ghostly quality to her appearance reminiscent of nineteenth-century spirit photographs. A foreboding gust of wind blows her hair high into the brambles behind her, a thicket that seems to engulf her like a shroud.



A centerpiece of the exhibition, Julie Mehretu's portfolio of mesmerizing *Landscape Allegories*, shares with Mann's photograph a churning, centrifugal quality. These etchings take familiar imagery from the Romantic landscape-painting tradition—swirling clouds, windswept foliage, and penetrating rays of light—and wrestle it into evocative diagrams of nature's energetic transformations.

*This exhibition is made possible by the Natalie Hofheimer Program Fund.*

Sally Mann (American, b. 1951)  
*Yard Eggs*, 1991  
Silver gelatin print photograph  
Purchase with funds from Barbara Johnson Parnass (Class of 1948) and David Nalle in memory of Jane Oliver Nalle (Class of 1948) 2000.4  
© Sally Mann, Courtesy Gagolian Gallery

**Mel Bochner: Illustrating Philosophy****Curated by Thomas E. Wartenberg, Professor of Philosophy****July 21–December 20, 2015**

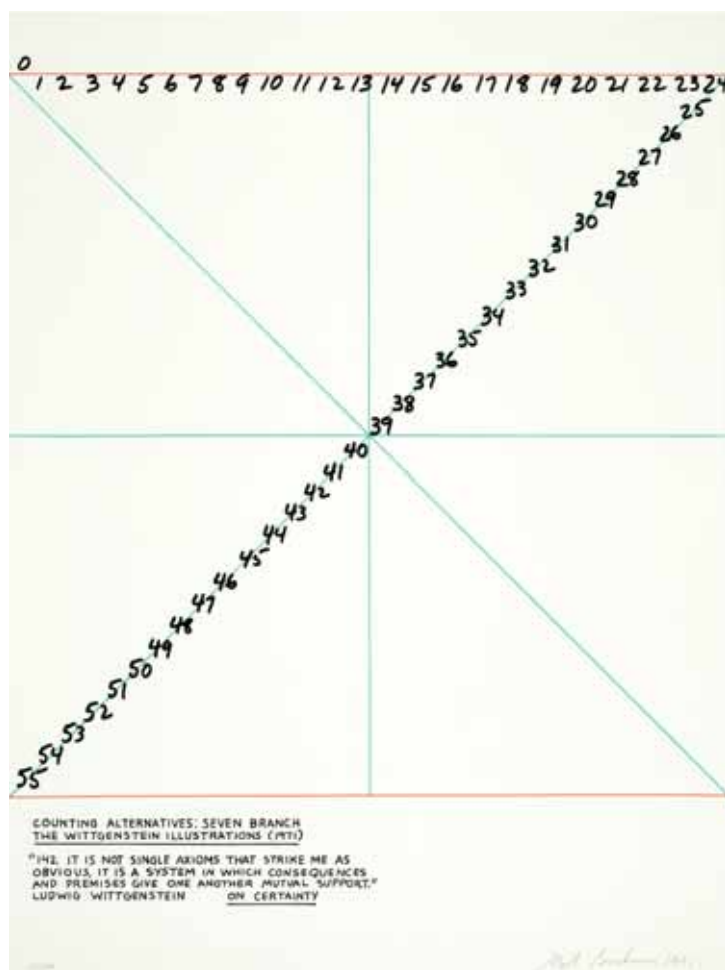
Hannah W. Blunt, Assistant Curator

William Blake (British, 1757–1827)  
*The Pit of Disease: The Falsifiers*, from *Illustrations to Dante's Divine Comedy*, 1826–27 plate; 20th-century print  
 Engraving  
 Gift of Marjorie Benedict Cohn (Class of 1960)  
 1966.16.D.RII  
 Photograph by Laura Shea

How can a work of art illustrate a philosophical idea? This question has intrigued Professor Thomas Wartenberg ever since working on an article about comics in 2011, when he became interested in the field of illustration. As a scholar of philosophy, Wartenberg began looking for examples of illustrated philosophical texts, but his quest turned up few images that deal directly with the conceptual arguments they accompany. In examples like the 1651 frontispiece by Abraham Bosse for Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, or representations of Plato's "allegory of the cave," or the myriad illustrations to Dante's poetic texts by the likes of



Mel Bochner (American, b. 1940)  
*Seven Branch*, from the portfolio *Counting Alternatives: The Wittgenstein Illustrations*, 1991; based on drawings from 1971  
 Planographic print on T.H. Saunders English mould-made paper  
 Purchase with the Nancy Eisner Zankel (Class of 1956) Art Acquisition Fund  
 2015.3.1.7  
 Reproduced with permission from the artist  
 Photograph by Laura Shea



Sandro Botticelli, Gustave Doré, and William Blake, artists chose to depict the "storytelling" elements already present in philosophers' writings. Wartenberg challenges the effectiveness of these types of pictorial images to illustrate abstract philosophical ideas.

Two years later, while preparing to teach a course with the book illustrator Barry Moser (see "Teaching with Art" on p. 8), Wartenberg found a reference to a 1991 edition of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, published by Arion Press, with 12 illustrations and end papers by the conceptual artist Mel Bochner. Unlike Blake's engraving for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, an example of pictorial illustration in the MHCAM collection (above), Bochner's prints have no obvious visual anchors in the Wittgenstein text. Instead, they serve as analogical illustrations to Wittgenstein's ideas. Originally published in 1969, *On Certainty* is an exploration of

the relationship between knowledge and doubt, compiled posthumously from the philosopher's notebooks. Wittgenstein argues that we can only question something we know if we hold a range of other beliefs immune from doubt. The relationship between Bochner's *Wittgenstein Illustrations*—which comprise repeated series of numerals hand-drawn in black over a square matrix—and Wittgenstein's text is at first exceedingly difficult to discern. Nonetheless, Wartenberg took a closer look. With an almost obsessive fascination, he examined the rules and procedures that Bochner used to create his drawings, discovering convincing parallels between the artist's process and Wittgenstein's philosophy. As part of his research, Wartenberg contacted Bochner's gallery in Boston (Barbara Krakow Gallery) seeking background information about the Wittgenstein project. A response to his inquiry came directly from Bochner. A camaraderie between artist and professor emerged, with ensuing studio visits and discussions about art and philosophy.

The result of Wartenberg's investigations, a special exhibition titled *Mel Bochner: Illustrating Philosophy* is now on view at the Museum; it presents the suite of prints that accompanies the 1991 edition of *On Certainty*, as well as two examples from Bochner's "Range" drawings, a series of works from the 1970s that also relate to Wittgenstein's philosophy. In addition to curating the exhibition, Wartenberg will publish an article on elements of Bochner's work for *On Certainty* in a



Mel Bochner (American, b. 1940)  
*Asterisk Branch*, from the portfolio *Counting Alternatives: The Wittgenstein Illustrations*, 1991; based on drawings from 1971  
Planographic print on T.H. Saunders English mould-made paper  
Purchase with the Nancy Eisner Zankel (Class of 1956) Art Acquisition Fund  
2015.3.1.10  
Reproduced with permission from the artist  
Photograph by Laura Shea

forthcoming issue of *Word & Image*, a prestigious academic journal. The exhibition catalogue for *Mel Bochner: Illustrating Philosophy* will include a comprehensive essay by Wartenberg that expands on this work.

*This exhibition is made possible by the Susan Davenport Page and Margaret Page Fales Art Fund and the Joyce Marcus Art Exhibition Fund.*



## The Philosophy of Illustration: From Theory to Practice

Ellen Alvord, Head of Education and Weatherbie Curator of Academic Programs

Often the most innovative and interesting courses taught at Mount Holyoke are generated when a faculty member decides to pursue a new branch of scholarship, using the classroom as a laboratory for incubating new ideas in partnership with students. This is the case for Professor Thomas Wartenberg's "Philosophy of Illustration" seminar, which he has now offered twice, both times in collaboration with the Museum and practicing artists.

A few years ago, Professor Wartenberg began exploring the idea of what it means to illustrate a text. As he delved deeper, he found that the topic was largely absent from discussions on philosophical aesthetics, which only served to increase his curiosity. Examining the nature of illustrations was a job well suited for Professor Wartenberg, given his grounding in the field of aesthetics and his unique qualifications as the founder of "Teaching Children Philosophy," an internationally acclaimed program utilizing illustrated children's books.

Shortly thereafter, Wartenberg met the celebrated artist and illustrator Barry Moser at a gallery in nearby Northampton, Massachusetts. As someone who had spent much of his life's work illustrating major volumes in the Western canon, such as *Moby Dick* and the Bible, Moser was a perfect partner to help Wartenberg explore this topic. The two began a lively conversation that soon evolved into the idea of co-teaching a course designed to examine the meaning of illustration—both its possibilities and limitations. This course would combine the close study of influential book illustrations with in-depth readings of related philosophical and literary texts and, most innovatively, have students actually practice this visual art form.

First taught in the spring of 2013, and then again in the spring of 2015, the "Philosophy of Illustration" seminar was designed to investigate the nature of illustration from a theoretical and practical perspective. Collaborating with the Mu-

seum seemed like a natural fit not only because students could have access to a collection of related works by important artists, but also because the Museum's educational mission supports creative pedagogical practice as well as experiential object-based learning. As Professor Wartenberg writes in his course description, "Our approach will be eclectic, hoping to educate our eyes, minds, and bodies about this important use of images. We will attempt to understand the nature of illustration as an art form as we also create illustrations that exemplify our growing understanding of their nature and aesthetics."

Students in the seminar spent five sessions at the Museum looking at works of art ranging from medieval European and Persian illuminated manuscript pages to seminal print illustrations, including works by William Blake, Honoré Daumier, Benton Spruance, John Wilson, and Norman Rockwell. Throughout the semester, they examined questions such as "Is there a correct way to understand the relationship between the text and the images in an illustrated book?" and "What role do images play in the construction of a narrative?" The rich variety of required texts for the course included Dante's *Inferno*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*.

Students responded enthusiastically to both the course material and design. Lauren Brooks '15 (Psychology major, Philosophy minor) signed up for this class in the second semester of her senior year knowing it would be a challenge, but she relished the idea of trying something new and a bit "artsy." At first she wasn't sure how the studio components were going to add to her appreciation of the course material, but she soon found that the act of drawing put her "in the mindset" for understanding the role of the artist. Theoretically it makes sense that illustrations are context depend-



ent, but Brooks realized that both the artist and the viewer needed to think through the specific function of each image in relation to the text and consider how the illustrations enhanced the written work overall. The hybrid nature of the class with its studio component allowed Brooks, as a viewer, “to step into the artist’s shoes and immerse herself in the philosophical concepts from the artist’s perspective.”

In the final segment of the class, students took on the challenge of studying the more conceptual and less pictorial illustrations of a philosophical text—specifically, a portfolio of prints by Mel Bochner related to Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty* (acquired by the Museum in tandem with this seminar). Since Wartenberg was already researching and writing about this series, he was eager to gather student feedback, and he organized a three-hour Museum session focused on Bochner’s lithographs. Students studied single illustrations in pairs before piecing together individual

interpretations into a larger discussion focused on the full suite of prints. They contributed a range of insights that are now reflected in the current exhibition of these same works (see “On View” for more on the Mel Bochner exhibition, p. 6).

The “Philosophy of Illustration” seminar represents an exciting Teaching with Art model, inte-

grating faculty research interests with an innovative curricular format. It culminated in the acquisition of an important print portfolio for the Museum as well as a cross-disciplinary exhibition opening up this new scholarship to both the campus community and the wider public.



Lauren Brooks '15 studies Mel Bochner's *Double Square Branch* as part of an assignment for her “Philosophy of Illustration” seminar.



Professor Tom Wartenberg exchanges ideas with students about the connections between philosophy and art in his spring seminar course.

Aaron F. Miller, Assistant Curator of Visual and Material Culture, NAGPRA Coordinator

After a long figurative drought, the Skinner Museum is blooming once again. The Art Museum's initiative to meaningfully expand the Teaching with Art program into the realm of material and visual culture has yielded substantial fruit. Spring 2015 brought multiple courses with dozens of class visits to the Skinner Museum and the Art Museum. This article highlights three of these courses and the diverse ways artifacts were employed in object-based inquiry during visits to both Museums.

When speaking of the value of the Skinner Museum, we often reference the dualistic pedagogical nature of the collection. When you enter the Museum for the first time you are bombarded by thousands of objects, lovingly placed by Skinner in every square inch of the repurposed church that houses the collection. These artifacts become the amalgamation of one man's collecting interests. The collection as a whole reveals insights into the man, his place in the world, and the time in which he lived. The Skinner Museum itself becomes an artifact of the history of museums and the history

of collecting. Criteria such as what is included or not included, and how these items are arranged, invite the visitor to experience the wonder of the space and challenge modern viewers to deconstruct their preconceived notions of what a museum can or should be.

Once the Skinner Museum as an artifact in its own right has been considered, we can turn to the 7,000 items that are housed there. Every object in the collection has a story to tell—in many cases more than one. As objects transitioned from their original contexts as functional items to exhibited "collectibles," their purposes changed to encompass a blend of education, memorialization, preservation, and admiration. The Skinner Museum contains both one-of-a-kind objects, and items that—on the surface—might appear very ordinary. However, in their individual histories their true worth lies. More and more of these histories are being revealed by curators, students, and faculty every semester.

In 1946, when Joseph Skinner passed away, he

Students from Professor DeLucia's material culture course discuss an 1836 silhouette by Augustin Amant Constant Fidèle Edouart and Rebecca Reed's 1794 sampler.





gave his Museum to Mount Holyoke College. The building that now stands on Woodbridge Street was a deeply personal space for Skinner, filled with thoughtfully placed objects—the result of a lifetime of collecting. The Museum contains treasures from across the world as well as relics representing places and events from Skinner’s own family narrative. Skinner wanted to share his remarkable collection with the region’s residents, visitors from afar, and the students of Mount Holyoke. Under the stewardship of the Art Museum, Skinner’s vision is still being realized more than 80 years after he first opened its doors to the public.

In Associate Professor of Italian Ombretta Frau’s innovative Italian literature course, “Bric-a-Brac, Needlework, Pen and Paper: Gendering Material Culture in Italy,” her students coupled visits to the Skinner Museum with 19th- and 20th-century Italian texts focusing on the lives of women. Undergraduates examined objects through the lens of their readings, which culminated in Italian-language blog posts on topics including timekeeping devices, lighting, writing implements and typewriters, and even bicycles. One student examined a sampler made by a young woman named

Rebecca Reed in 1794, placing it within the context of *l’ago* (the needle) in Italian literature.

The Reed sampler was also used by another class that frequented the two Museums nearly every week, Assistant Professor of History Christine DeLucia’s course “The Afterlives of Objects: Revisiting Early American and Indigenous Histories through Material Culture.” For this course, a student examined the sampler as a final project, looking at the historical context in which it was created. For each class visit, new objects relevant to the weekly readings and discussion were made available for investigation. One week the focus was on objects created by Native Americans for the tourist market; the burnished earthenware vessel attributed to the Tewa artist Sara Fina Tafoya became an entry point for an engaging conversation about authenticity and cultural appropriation.

The Tafoya jar was used the same day for a visit by Lynn Morgan, Mary E. Woolley Professor of Anthropology’s “Development of Anthropological Thought” course. Morgan’s students spent the semester focusing on the origins of Mount Holyoke’s Anthropology Department in the 1930s and 1940s. The jar and other Museum objects were used to prompt class conversations about how these items were seen by anthropologists in the past, and in some cases to contemplate how the very same objects were used in Mount Holyoke courses in the first half of the 20th century.

The material culture at the Skinner Museum and the Art Museum is expanding its relevance on campus, revealing new insights into the collections, and connecting new departments with the Museum’s Teaching with Art initiative. As more classes use these materials in innovative ways, the pedagogic flowers of the collection will continue to blossom.

Attributed to Sara Fina Tafoya (Tewa; Santa Clara Pueblo, ca. 1863–1949)  
*Double shoulder jar*, ca. 1900–1940  
Burnished earthenware with slip  
Joseph Allen Skinner Museum, Mount Holyoke College  
SK K.110  
Petegorsky / Gipe photo

## At Home in Renaissance Italy

Wendy Watson, Consulting Curator

One of the Museum's most recent acquisitions is also one of its smallest. Diminutive though it is, this elegant casket opens a window into the past, taking us into the domestic world of 16th-century Italy and offering a glimpse into the private lives of Renaissance women. At the same time, the coffer hints at social practices and marriage customs of the time, developments in decoration and furnishings of private interiors, and even economic trends of the Renaissance, when interest in classical literature, art, and cultural achievements underwent an unparalleled revival.

This little box was once the cherished personal possession of a young woman who used it to hold her trinkets and treasures, toilet articles, cosmetics, perfumes, less valuable jewelry, and perhaps small collectible items like ancient coins. The familiar mythological narratives on this gilded casket would have served as lightly coded messages to a bride about fidelity, honor, chastity, and other wifely virtues. Pastiglia boxes came into fashion in the first third of the 16th century as part of a woman's trousseau, tucked inside a larger chest or *cassone* as it was carried from her old home to her new one, often in a public procession (see illustration on p. 13).

*Cassoni*—usually made in pairs—were installed in the newlyweds' bedroom to provide both storage and seating for private social events that took place in these multi-use spaces.

Decorative items like pastiglia caskets, bronze inkwells, and polychrome ceramics signaled a momentous

change in the marketplace as newly affluent consumers pursued luxury goods to adorn their homes. Artists and craftsmen responded to this demand by creating more goods and greater varieties of them—furniture, textiles, ceramics, metalwares, and all types of elegant household accoutrements—along with paintings and sculpture. At the same time, these ever-more magnificent possessions resurrected the styles, motifs, and narratives of antiquity, whose rebirth was at the heart of the Italian Renaissance.

Pastiglia boxes are perfect exemplars of this classical revival; even in their miniature scale they look back to monumental Roman sarcophagi, marble relief sculpture, and triumphal arches for their sources. The makers of these boxes, ceramics, and other such works of decorative art drew upon varied media for inspiration—including prints, book illustrations, and metalwork conceived in the spirit of antiquity which they, in turn, adapted to suit their own purposes. The portability of such works, along with the peripatetic nature of the



Italian  
*Pastiglia* casket,  
ca. 1530  
Gilt wood mounted  
with pastiglia, lined  
with silk  
Purchase with funds  
from Gaetano and  
Susan Vicinelli (Class of  
1964) and the Art  
Acquisition Fund  
2015.1  
Photograph by Laura  
Shea



artisans themselves, ensured the spread of stylistic influences and borrowings.

Fewer than 150 of these caskets survive, most probably originating in Venice, although Ferrara has also been mentioned as a possible source. Their sumptuous appearance belies their actual substance:



Detail from *The Marriage of Lionora de' Bardi and Ippolito Buondelmonti*, mid-15th c., front panel of a chest (tempera on wood), Giovanni di Ser Giovanni, (Lo Scheggia) (15th c.) / Alberto Bruschi di Grassina Collection, Florence, Italy / Bridgeman Images

what seems to be a gold box embellished with intricate ivory panels is composed of far humbler materials—alder wood, layers of gesso, thinly applied gold leaf, and lead paste appliqué. For a Renaissance consumer, however, the excellence or *virtù* of an object like this lay in its beauty and the virtuosity of its workmanship rather than the intrinsic value of its components.

The figures, landscape elements, and decorative motifs were made in highly detailed metal molds, which were filled with a paste of white lead. Removed from their matrices, the elements could be assembled in various configurations according to the narrative, much like Wedgwood ceramics. Figures, horses, trees, and architectural elements could therefore be reproduced and efficiently recombined to tell different stories, saving both time and labor.

The Mount Holyoke casket displays scenes found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Orpheus calming the wild beasts with his lyre following the loss of his beloved Eurydice; the judgment of Paris, whose choice of Aphrodite as the fairest goddess of Olympia results in the abduction of Helen and the Trojan War; and Narcissus who, callously spurning the wood nymph Echo, becomes enamored with

his own reflection in the river, and pines away with self-love. These moralizing tales would have been familiar to a young Renaissance woman; all are related to different aspects of love, promoting the virtues of devotion, sacrifice, loyalty, and honor while condemning the vices of unbridled passion, vanity, and faithlessness. Along with painted cassoni and images of the Virgin and Christ child, such possessions were intended as both visual delights and didactic lessons, not only about virtue, but also about a wife's duty to provide children—preferably male heirs.

These visually appealing gilded boxes could incorporate an olfactory element as well if scents were added to the lead paste of the appliqué. Fragrances were routinely used to promote health and healing, to create an atmosphere of protection, and to serve as aphrodisiacs and aids in the creation of children. There were scents specifically for the bedroom, such as deer musk, which were thought to promote intercourse and the conception of boys rather than girls. Scent cases, pomanders, and perfumed gloves were all popular in early modern Europe, and gilded pastiglia boxes were part of this arsenal of sensory devices.



◀ After two years as the Art Museum Advisory Board Fellow, Yingxi (Lucy) Gong '13 will be pursuing an MA degree in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Art Museum Advisory Board members surprise Florence Finch Abbott Director John Stomberg with an endowed curatorial internship in his name. ▼



Assistant Curator of Visual and Material Culture Aaron Miller sparks the curiosity of Mosier Elementary School students at the Joseph Allen Skinner Museum. ▼

▲ Friends of Art members visit contemporary artist Mark di Suvero's studio as part of the spring Director's Circle Art Tour.







◀ Florence Finch Abbott Director John Stomberg contextualizes a recent acquisition by ceramic artist Paul Scott for students in Hampshire College's summer 2015 Institute for Curatorial Practice.



▲ The Museum is pleased to welcome Taylor Anderson '15 as the new Art Museum Advisory Board Fellow. Overseen by her advisor, Professor Bettina Bergmann, she wrote an honors thesis focused on the digital reconstruction of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli.



▲ Assistant Professor Desmond Fitz-Gibbon helps students examine an 18th-century account book for his "History of Money and Finance" course.

# exhibitions

*betwixt: Judy Pfaff 1985/92*  
September 3–December 20, 2015

*Energies and Elegies*  
July 14–December 2, 2015

*Mel Bochner: Illustrating  
Philosophy*  
Curated by Thomas E. Wartenberg, Professor of Philosophy  
July 21–December 20, 2015

# talks

## ART À LA CARTE GALLERY TALK SERIES

All talks begin at 12:20 p.m. and last 30 minutes

**Thursday, October 1**

“Innovation and Interaction:  
Ceramics from China and the  
Islamic World”  
Kendra Weisbin, Assistant  
Curator of Education, and  
Aaron Miller, Assistant  
Curator of Visual and Mat-  
erial Culture

**Tuesday, October 20**

“Investigating Fourth Range:  
Thoughts on Illustration as Philosophy”  
Thomas E. Wartenberg, Professor of Philosophy

**Thursday, November 5**

“Energies and Elegies”  
Hannah W. Blunt, Assistant Curator

**Thursday, November 19**

“betwixt: Judy Pfaff 1985/92”  
John Stomberg, Florence Finch Abbott Director



# events

**Thursday, September 24, 5:30 p.m.**



The Fifth Annual  
Louise R. Weiser Lec-  
ture in Creativity, Inno-  
vation, and Leadership  
through Art  
“From the Beginning”  
Judy Pfaff, artist  
Gamble Auditorium  
*Fall Opening Reception  
to follow*

**Tuesday, October 6, 5:30 p.m.**

“Thinking Through Images”  
Artist Mel Bochner in conversation with  
Thomas E. Wartenberg, Professor of  
Philosophy  
Gamble Auditorium  
*Reception to follow*

Above: Turkish, *Dish with saz leaf and cypress tree*, ca. 1580–1590 (Ottoman Period, 1299–1923). Stonepaste with polychrome painted under transparent glaze. Purchase with the John Martyn Warbeke Art Fund and the Belle and Hy Baier Art Acquisition Fund, 2006.5. Photograph by Laura Shea  
Left: Judy Pfaff, photograph courtesy of the artist



# Experience Art

## as a member of MHCAM's Director's Circle!

Do you seek new experiences with art? Do you enjoy developing friendships with others who share your passion for art? MHCAM's Director's Circle offers this and more! Those who support MHCAM at the Director's Circle, Patron, and Benefactor levels are invited to many art-themed events around the country annually.

Benefits include:

- Annual tour and dinner each December at Art Basel Miami led and hosted by Florence Finch Abbott Director John Stomberg.
- Tours led by Director John Stomberg at the Art Dealers Association of America (ADAA) Art Fair in New York City every March.
- Annual two-day Art Tour led by Director John Stomberg in a different city every spring including visits to private collections, behind-the-scenes tours of galleries and museums, special receptions, and dinners. Recent trips have been to New York City, Houston, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. The spring 2016 Art Tour will be based in San Francisco.
- Pop-up, one-day art tours organized by MHCAM volunteers at museums around the country. Several are offered each year to destinations such as the Brooklyn Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Driehaus Museum, Chicago.
- And, of course, all of MHCAM's own exhibitions, lectures, receptions, and gallery talks!



Florence Finch Abbott Director John Stomberg touring alumnae through the ADAA Art Fair (Art Dealers Association of America) in New York on March 5, 2015.

**Join now! We would love to invite you to this year's exciting events!**

Membership information is located on the next page and on the Museum's website at:  
[www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum)



Tomochika  
(Japanese)  
*Seiobo with  
peaches*, 19th  
century  
Ivory carved  
with pigment  
William Richter  
Collection, Gift of  
Margaret Ruth  
Richter (Class of  
1939)  
1986.30.59

## Become a Friend of Art

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum is *your* Museum. A place you can visit in person or online to learn, meditate, make connections, be inspired, and spark your creativity. The Museum is many things to many people. Get involved and support *your* Museum today.

### Engage with Art! Become a member!

#### Friends of Art Membership Levels

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Recent Alumna* \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Director's Circle \$1500 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Member \$30      | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter \$250   | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$2500            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family/Dual Member \$50     | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor \$500     | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$5000        |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Fellow \$1000     |   |

\*Mount Holyoke students or alumnae who graduated within the last 5 years

Name(s) as it will appear on mailing list \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

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Checks may be made payable to Mount Holyoke College Art Museum or MHCAM.

Return this form to: Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Lower Lake Road, South Hadley, MA 01075

- I would like more information on donating art.
- I would like more information on: endowing a fund, gifts that provide income, establishing a bequest.

Memberships are tax-deductible contributions to support the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, a department of Mount Holyoke College. Memberships are valid for one year.

Questions? Call 413.538.2245 or email [artmuseum@mtholyoke.edu](mailto:artmuseum@mtholyoke.edu)

Thank you for your support!

## Close Looking, Fresh Thinking: A Model Curator's Passion

Susan B. Matheson '68, The Molly and Walter Bareiss Curator of Ancient Art, Yale University Art Gallery

## TRIBUTE

No curator has ever done more for her museum, or done it with more intelligence, grace, and generosity of spirit, than Wendy Watson has for the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. In her forty-one years as curator (the Museum's first), she has transformed a collection of fewer than 4,000 objects, to one of more than 17,000 works of art that span the millennia and the world, and launched the Museum as a dynamic center for learning at the College.

The Museum's acquisitions under Wendy's leadership have anchored the collection with memorable works of art chosen for quality and importance in teaching. These major acquisitions, "thoughtfully and purposefully sought out"—notably a French Gothic Madonna, a Dutch vanitas painting, a ninth-century Indian stone Ganesha, an important Renaissance altarpiece, and most recently a long-lost French Neoclassical history painting (by Etienne Aubry)—were often the subjects of decades-long searches to get "just the right one." All were worth the wait.

There is no area of the collection or gallery of the Museum that Wendy has not transformed, including the Skinner Museum, which has been revitalized under her stewardship. Wendy pioneered the acquisition of important contemporary works, notably by outstanding artists such as Jane Hammond '72 and the installation artist Rosamund Purcell. Beginning a fruitful partnership with Florence Finch Abbott Director John Stomberg in 2011, she continued to build the Museum's collection of contemporary art and photography. Wendy ensured that student research helped shape the Museum's collection—a beautiful Iznik ceramic dish recommended by a student studying the arts of Islam was one such acquisition. Her mentoring of students and engagement with faculty were a priority and an inspiring success.

Wendy's exhibitions were exquisite, thoughtful shows that advanced scholarship and brought a



Wendy Watson poses with her 1997 acquisition, *Faustina the Elder* (Purchase with the Art Acquisition Endowment Fund, Marian Hayes (Class of 1925) Art Purchase Fund, Susan and Bernard Schilling (Susan Eisenhart, Class of 1932) Fund, Warbeke Art Museum Fund, Abbie Bosworth Williams (Class of 1927) Fund, 1997.15) Photograph by Ralph Lieberman

wide range of art to Mount Holyoke. Often they were tied to acquisitions for the permanent collection. Her most important are also among her favorites: *The Moon and the Stars: Afterlife of a Roman Empress* (portrait of Faustina the Elder); *Valenciennes, Daubigny, and the Origins of French Landscape Painting* (Neoclassical landscape by Pierre-Henri Valenciennes); and *Hendrick Andriessen and the Vanitas Still Life: Reality and Metaphor* (Hendrick Andriessen vanitas painting).

Wendy's own goals and those of the Museum—to provide "direct engagement with works of art on different disciplinary planes" and to "open the eyes and minds of students, faculty, and museum visitors to new ideas and fresh visual experiences"—were in perfect harmony. Her passion for her work and for art is an inspiration to students and colleagues. As a grateful alumna whose museum career began with a Greek vase at MHCAM, it has been a privilege to know and work with Wendy. The Museum could not have been more fortunate in its first curator!

# MOUNT HOLYOKE

Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

50 College Street, South Hadley, MA 01075-1499

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To sign up for the  
*MHCAM Newsletter*  
and receive exhibi-  
tion and event  
announcements,  
visit [www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/artmuseum)

#### MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday–Friday,

11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday,

1–5 p.m.

Free, open to the  
public, and fully  
accessible.

#### Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Lower Lake Road,

South Hadley, MA

01075-1499

T 413-538-2245

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