Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Spring 2008

Into the Light
Side by Side

LETTER

GAUGUIN'S FAMOUS TAHITIAN PAINTING, *Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?*, came to mind as the Museum began developing a new three-year strategic plan last summer. Every conscientious institution needs to review its mission, goals, and aspirations on a regular basis, and it was time for a reappraisal here at the MHCAM. Over the past eight months, the staff has evaluated the unique strengths that distinguish this teaching museum and incorporated them into our plan for the future.

Our major goals are to make the collections even more accessible than they already are and to enhance the ways works of art are used in teaching and learning across the curriculum. The new strategic plan will also focus on attracting audiences beyond the campus—alumnae as well as the general public, both regionally and nationally. The primary mission of the Museum—to enrich the curricular and co-curricular life of Mount Holyoke students and faculty—will be re-emphasized.

This work has been enthusiastically supported by the Museum's Art Advisory Board which gathered in South Hadley in November to brainstorm with us. Interviews with faculty, administrators, and students have also figured prominently in the process, many conducted by consultant Edward Hudner. Hudner's firm, Cambridge Hill Partners, helps educational institutions determine strategic directions and respond to emerging trends. His conversations with President Creighton, senior staff, and faculty revealed a clear consensus on two points: that the relevance of the Museum to the central mission of the College is unquestionable, and that the Museum is perceived as a draw for prospective students.

Staff members also interviewed colleagues, posing questions about the Museum's mission, its strengths and its weaknesses. History and Asian studies professor Jonathan Lipman commented on its accessibility to faculty for teaching purposes: "The Museum staff is always ready to consult about objects in the collection. They'll pull objects from storage or exhibition cases when requested, set them up for classes in the Carson Teaching Gallery, whatever you want!" Lipman now uses the Museum often, and has changed the way he teaches, using both the permanent collection and special exhibitions.

We received lots of great suggestions about opportunities the Museum should consider as it reviews strategic priorities. First-year seminar director and economist Jim Hartley remarked, for example, that collaboration with first-year seminars would be particularly beneficial, an idea that is already being implemented. Historian Kavita Datla suggested that new faculty be introduced to the Museum and its resources during their orientation seminar.

Newsletter readers and friends of the Museum constitute another crucial source for guidance, so if you have ideas about how we can more effectively serve our audiences, feel free to contact me by email, phone, or as we cross paths on the campus. I would be delighted to talk with you.

MARIANNE DOEZEMA
Florence Finch Abbott Director

COVER:
Janet Fish (American, b. 1938)
Detail of *Lawn Sale*
Oil on canvas, 2000
Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York

Janet Fish: Into the Light

INTERVIEW

IN THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION, Laura Weston, Art Advisory Board Fellow at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, discusses the retrospective exhibition *Janet Fish: Into the Light* with the artist.

LW: You've never been one to conform to the opinions of the masses. Since the beginning of your painting career it seems you have ignored what the critics have said, both about your work specifically and art trends in general. You went against the advice of your instructors at Yale and painted still lifes and flowers while your classmates were following the tenets of Abstract Expressionism and renouncing figurative painting. Could you tell me why you chose to switch from abstraction to realism?

JF: When I was in school, the women students were noticed, but it was the men who were important. That is an incredibly freeing thing because if people aren't really giving you respect and attention, you don't have the pressure of their praise and criticism. At first, I definitely tried all the things my instructors suggested; I certainly studied de Kooning and the other Abstract Expressionists. I bought into an awful lot of what was in Abstract Expressionism: the ideas about energy, structure, and mark-making, but it wasn't meaningful enough to me. I became interested in the California realists and started to move in that direction. I decided that I needed to get out of my head, so that is why I decided to look outside, to actually go outdoors and observe things first-hand. It was new for me, a way to analyze exactly how and what I was seeing. I discovered new forms, colors, and new relationships between things. I had no idea where this was going to take me, even whether or not I would stay with it. I was just happy to be setting a path for myself.

LW: Did you have peers that were going in the same direction as you?

JF: We all ended up going in different directions. Chuck Close was there, Brice Marden, Bob Mangold, Silvia Mangold, and many others. They all took off from Abstract Expressionism and did something different with it. When you are an artist, you can either listen to everybody or ignore them and do your own thing. If you are going to do exactly what other people tell you to do, then maybe you should find a line of work where you will make money!

LW: Was there a rift between the Abstract Expressionists and those who were painting objective and realist paintings?

Janet Fish (American, b. 1938)
Painted Water Glasses
Oil on canvas, 1974
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from Susan and David Workman, 74.15
Photograph Sheldan C. Collins

Janet Fish (American, b. 1938)
8 Vinegar Bottles
Oil on canvas, 1972–1973
Dallas Museum of Art, gift of The 500, Inc.

JF: It depended on the artist. There were certainly Abstract Expressionist artists who refused to associate with realists. An awful lot of artists I know are really open to a lot of different kinds of painting because there is something to be gained from everything—it only makes you a better artist.

LW: Were you ever so discouraged, being a realist still-life painter surrounded by Abstract Expressionists, that you thought you might not make a career out of painting?

JF: I was never confident and I never expected success. That was not really why I was painting. I had a far more romantic idea at the time. The artists that I had known as a child, those with whom my family associated, were not famous people. I never understood why you would become an artist. For me it was the process of creating; I define for myself what is good and what is not—it was doing something that I wanted to do. One good thing about Yale was that the critiques were so harsh that you learned how to handle criticism and others' opinions; it was good preparation for when I brought my work into the city. I used to say that if you got a bad review, you should never let it upset you for more than one day.

LW: Were the criticisms that you got at Yale similar to those you would get when you brought your work to galleries in the city?

JF: Well, they were probably even rougher at Yale!

LW: In what ways do you think you were influenced by Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, and Minimalism?

JF: All those movements gave me ideas to play with. Abstract Expressionism had the biggest influence on me. I liked the tactile surfaces and the physicality of it—the energy—the way the painting could become so animated, and of course the freedom to play with color. The reductive way that I approached the painting was somewhat Minimalist, but Minimalism wasn't really for me. I remember hearing a speaker at Skowhegan [the

Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine]. He declared that a painting should be only sixty percent active and forty percent inactive, and I said, "Ha, let's try one hundred percent active! You know, these rules were meant to be broken!"

LW: When you first began painting fruits and vegetables in the 1960s, you worked on very large canvases. Why did you decide to make the objects so monumental?

JF: They seemed to grow as I worked on them. It really had to do with defining my interest and what I was painting: the mark, and the way the brush moved across the surface. I didn't want to have to work with my nose to the canvas. I wanted to be far enough away so that I could put my whole body into making the strokes. I wanted the marks to have life and energy.

LW: Could you describe how you choose and arrange objects for a particular still life?

JF: There are different ways and, over time, the reasons change. Sometimes I choose by the way things go together in a kind of subject-oriented way. It primarily has to do with shape and color relationships, but structure is always part of it too; all these things work together to create a particular character, feeling, or atmosphere.

LW: It was often the practice of 17th-century Dutch still-life painters to incorporate miniature self-portraits in the reflective objects they depicted. Have you ever done this?

JF: I don't really like to have myself in the paintings! When I've appeared on something I usually paint myself out!

LW: One of the main subjects of your paintings, sunlight, is fleeting. The sun is always moving, so the reflection of light through various objects is continuously changing. How do you record something that is so transient?

JF: The objects themselves are really just an excuse for painting—the paintings are about the way light moves through and is reflected by objects. Because the light is always changing, it gives the painting vitality and movement. That is what keeps me alert when I'm constructing the painting. I can never predict what the end result will be, and I like that uncertainty. That's what makes it interesting.

Janet Fish (American, b. 1938)
Spring Evening
Oil on canvas, 1977
Rose Art Museum,
Brandeis University
Courtesy of Herbert W.
Plimpton Collection

LW: In an interview with art critic and independent curator, Vincent Katz, you mention a "revolving composition." Would you mind explaining what that is?

JF: Composition is really about controlling how the viewers' eyes move when they look at my paintings. First of all, I want the person walking through the gallery or

OPENING EVENTS

Thursday, 21 February, 7:00 pm
Exhibition Opening and Reception
Janet Fish: Into the Light
Panel Discussion and Reception
Speakers include: Sondra Freckleton, realist painter and friend of the artist, James McGarrell, contemporary painter, and Bridget Moore, President D.C. Moore Gallery, New York. Moderated by Marianne Doezema, Florence Finch Abbott Director, Mount Holyoke Art Museum.
Gamble Auditorium
Art Building
Mount Holyoke College

Thursday, 3 April, 4:30 pm
Opening and Reception
Side by Side
Docents' Choice: Works on Paper
Hinchcliff Reception Hall
Art Building
Mount Holyoke College

SPECIAL LECTURES

Tuesday, 26 February, 7:00 pm
Louise R. Weiser Lecture
"Homelessness: On Early Chinese Conceptualism"
Bingyi Huang (MHC '98), Assistant Professor of Visual Studies at SUNY Buffalo, will lecture on issues related to contemporary Chinese art.
Gamble Auditorium
Art Building
Mount Holyoke College

Thursday, 27 March, 4:30 pm
"Extravagant Realities"
John Arthur, independent curator and writer, will discuss Janet Fish's work within the context of American contemporary realism and figurative painting.
Gamble Auditorium
Art Building
Mount Holyoke College

museum to stop and look at my painting, not to just walk by. If the composition leads your eye right off the painting, the person will walk away quickly. It is important to create paths within the composition for the viewers' eyes to follow. For example, there may be a line in an object that leads to another shape, and then the next shape leads you to something else. The idea is to hold the viewers' attention for as long as possible.

LW: In your large genre scenes, such as *Up in Smoke* and *Lawn Sale,* I've noticed a pattern of perspective. There is typically a table in the foreground with still-life objects that allude to a family party: opened bags of potato chips, cupcakes, half-eaten cake, brightly colored plastic cups haphazardly turned on their sides, and children's toys. Beyond the table we see children running around, playing games, chasing balls, and conversing with each other. While some may interpret these paintings as playful and fun, I've also noticed a somewhat poignant side to them. The viewer's perspective is from behind the table looking out. Because the table is closest, everything on it is very vivid, yet the people beyond are slightly blurred. What is presented to the viewer is what has been left behind by the partygoers: unfinished food and forgotten toys. There are children playing and adults conversing, yet they don't interact with the viewer. We are onlookers, voyeurs, excluded from the activity and confronted by all this stuff that has been left behind. Have you ever interpreted it in a similar way?

JF: I haven't ever thought about that, but as a still-life painter I'm looking from near to far, and because I'm very near-sighted, objects that are close to me are clearer than those that are farther away. As the painter, the original onlooker, I participate by watching and observing. I never really saw myself as not being part of the activity. But you are right; when painting these potlucks and picnics, I am an observer, sitting in a chair and just watching. I'm usually captivated by the chaos of all the activity.

LW: In an interview with Robert Berlind, painter and writer for *Art in America,* he remarked that you never painted a bad painting, not even a "fumbled passage." You responded that sometimes when a painting has been around for a while you have to change it because you suddenly start to see its great failing. Do you ever feel the same way when you walk into a retrospective of your own work?

JF: Actually, one time when I was in Texas I saw my *8 Vinegar Bottles.* I said to myself, "Oh good, it's not so bad after all!" Sometimes it's difficult for me to see problems when I am deeply involved in a painting. But once a painting is out of my hands, I think "Okay, it's gone, I can't think about it anymore!" I don't actually like to go back to those earlier paintings because I can't change them.

LW: You said to Robert Berlind, "I went to Skowhegan after my first year at Yale, and I was thrashing around making big, gestural, messy paintings, and feeling like it was kind of meaningless." You've obviously been able to find meaning in still life painting since then.

JF: I have. For me, painting has been a way of exploring shapes and forms, playing with the interaction of the meanings of objects. It has opened up the world for me.

Janet Fish: Into the Light
12 February–1 June 2008

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CAPTIVATED by a cabbage or stunned by salad dressing? Are you aware that the canned vegetables that line the shelves of your pantry and the glass dishes that hide behind your cupboard doors secretly possess the power to excite your senses? Visitors to *Janet Fish: Into the Light*, a retrospective exhibition organized in collaboration with the Southern Vermont Arts Center, will never again overlook inconspicuous household objects. On display are nearly 30 works by the artist, including oil paintings, watercolors, and pastel drawings that exemplify her enduring fascination with light and reflections.

Janet Fish is a highly acclaimed artist and recipient of numerous awards, including the William A. Paton Prize from the National Academy Museum, and the American Artist Achievement Award. Her work has been exhibited at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and The Art Institute of Chicago.

Born into a family of artists, Fish demonstrated artistic talent at an early age. She graduated from Smith College and went on to earn a Master of Fine Arts degree at Yale. While it was her ability that guided her through school, it was her strong will and self-confidence that helped her forge a successful career. In the 1960s, when Abstract Expressionism dominated the art scene, Fish defiantly dove headlong into realism. She emerged as a "painterly realist," projecting the physicality and dynamism of Abstract Expressionism onto realist subject matter.

Janet Fish (American, b. 1938)
Kraft Salad Dressing
Oil on canvas, 1973
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Barancik (parents of Jill Barancik, class of 1986)
Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe

Vincent Katz, an independent curator, describes her paintings as "dazzling, gossamer tours de force of glass, light, and shadow." He explains: "She has frequently chosen subjects considered to be off-limits, boldly flouting received opinion. Her paintings of things can be seen as pure delight, beautiful objects that convey no message, that cause the mind to stop thinking and to contemplate the marvel before one's eye. That contemplation can go on for many years." Her "unmistakable style" has been described by art critic Dottie Indyke as "realism injected with a dose of expressionistic passion." Each of her

Janet Fish (American, b. 1938)
Lawn Sale
Oil on canvas, 2000
Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York

large canvasses—which typically measure between four and eight feet in length—burst with lushly saturated colors, energy, motion, and vivid light.

As the Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot exclaimed in 1756 upon viewing the still lifes of Jean-Siméon Chardin: "Here you are again, great magician, with your silent arrangements! How eloquently they speak to the artist! How much they have to tell about the imitation of nature, the science of color and harmony! How freely the air circulates around your objects! The light of the sun is no better at preserving the individual qualities of the things it illuminates." Janet Fish's paintings, however, are anything but "silent arrangements." Indyke has admiringly described them as "excessive, loud, and technically brilliant," the product of a painter whom she calls "a great magician." And, like those of Chardin's, the still-life and genre paintings of Fish are likely to astound and amaze any viewer.

Side by Side
Docents' Choice: Works on Paper
4 March–1 June 2008

WHAT IS IT that makes comparing two works of art so powerful? What do we see when we examine things side by side that we don't see when we look at objects individually? The docents of the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum set about answering that question during the fall of 2007, and the exhibition *Side By Side* is the result of their investigations.

Since the early 1970s, an active corps of volunteer docents has been integral to the Museum's efforts to serve its diverse constituencies. Besides providing tours of the permanent collection and special exhibitions to visiting groups, these volunteers offer educational initiatives to school children of all ages. Meeting each week to discuss works of art and to hone their pedagogical skills, these volunteers are engaged in all aspects of museum work and serve as a link to the community beyond the walls of the Museum and the College.

This year, in addition to their regular duties, the docents were challenged not only to learn about the Museum's permanent and changing exhibitions, but to create one of their

own. Delving into the myriad works on paper in the Museum's collection that are not regularly on view, the docents were asked to select two objects, to find a way to compare them, and to share with each other and the public what that process of comparison reveals. Do they corroborate, complicate, contradict, correct, or debate with one another? That conversation was at the heart of their venture.

Articulating the similarities and differences was an integral part of the process. As Susan Woodford writes in her book, *Looking At Pictures,* ". . . odd as it might seem, looking on its own is frequently not enough. Finding words to describe and analyse pictures often provides the only way to help us progress from passive looking to active, perceptive seeing." Presentations based on their research provided the background for writing the wall texts for the exhibition. The docents soon learned that condensing extensive research into a few hundred words is much more challenging than it first seemed. They had to decide whether to focus on the formal properties of a work, such as design and composition, or whether to examine content, context, or method of making.

The thirty works in the exhibition selected by fifteen docents include drawings, etchings and prints, photographs, paintings, silhouettes, and collage. Two quite different crucifixion images by Romare Bearden and Rico LeBrun each use the imagery to reflect the unprecedented brutality and suffering perpetrated during World War II. Other comparisons include photographs of artists at work, cityscapes, nudes, and landscapes from both western and eastern traditions from the 18th century through contemporary times.

Anita Page, who has recently joined the docent group remarked, "Doing research on two works creates a third entity—the interconnectedness of the two, unintended but vital to the art viewing process. It's very exciting!" Adds veteran docent Sheila McElwaine, "Selecting, researching, and presenting works on paper from the collection has been a powerful learning experience and has given docents more appreciation for issues the museum staff confront year in and year out. Being entrusted with backstage access and direct contact with museum objects sends a strong message about our place on the team."

Robert Motherwell
(American, 1915–1991)
Beside the Sea with Fish and Chips
Collage and acrylic, 1977
Gift of Jeffrey H. Loria in honor of Julie Lavin (class of 1986)

Romare Bearden
(American, 1914–1988)
Home to Ithaca
Cut-paper collage, 1977
Gift of the estate of Eileen Paradis Barber (class of 1929)
Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe

Ancient Bronzes of the Asian Grasslands from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation

Buckle plaque
Northern China
Bronze, 2nd century BCE
Arthur M. Sackler Foundation

Ancient Bronzes of the Asian Grasslands brings to life the complex cultures that flourished across an enormous expanse of territory from northern China and Mongolia into Eastern Europe, and reveals the cross-pollination of cultures throughout a vast region. This exhibition focuses on the eastern or Asian steppes whose rolling grassy plains are punctuated by snow-topped mountain ranges like the Tien Shan (Heavenly Mountains), and deserts like the Gobi and Taklamakan. In 2000 BCE, villages of farmers, hunters, and fisherman populated the grasslands. Six centuries later, many people had left their villages to range over the territory managing herds of sheep, goats, cattle, and horses. Horses, first domesticated in the steppes, were integral to this new way of life. By 900 BCE, the steppe dwellers, now legendary as riders and breeders, began to supply horses to the empires of eastern and western Asia. The famous trade routes linking Asia and Europe in ancient times, such as the Silk Road that connected China and Rome, traversed the grasslands. By guiding and supplying the trade caravans, the steppe dwellers played an essential role in the exchange of goods and ideas between the East and West.

The exquisite and technically sophisticated bronze artworks in the show cast new light on these remote Asian peoples whose history and culture were transmitted solely through oral tradition and who are only now beginning to be understood by scholars. Eighty-five objects drawn from the Arthur M. Sackler Foundation's holdings range from ornate bronze belt-buckles, pendants, and ornaments, to detailed plaques and weapons. These small-scale personal objects were eminently portable, reflecting the lifestyles of these equestrian nomads. They reveal how the steppe dwellers relied upon the animal kingdom as a primary source of symbolic imagery to indicate tribe, social rank, and connection to the spirit world. Animal motifs including lively antlered stags, horses, camels, deer, ferocious wild boars, and birds of prey abound. While some animals were tribal or clan totems, other fantastic creatures may refer to myths, epics, and legends, aspects of religious beliefs now forgotten.

This exhibition of spectacular ancient bronzes from the Asian steppes is drawn from the renowned collections of the late Arthur M. Sackler (1913–1987), a research psychiatrist, medical publisher, connoisseur, and art collector. It was organized by Trudy S. Kawami, Director of Research for the Sackler Foundation, which was established by Dr. Sackler in 1965 to make his extensive collections widely accessible to the public.

Museum Acquisitions: How, What, Why?

In 1876, the wives of two College trustees joined forces to acquire a major painting of Hetch Hetchy Canyon by the then-contemporary artist Albert Bierstadt (1830–1902). Executed the year before, it was purchased directly from the artist, who apparently contributed to the fundraising himself. In a letter in the Museum's files from Bierstadt to Mrs. Sawyer and Mrs. Williston, he writes: "Dear Ladies: You have thanked me for becoming a contributor to the fund for the purchase of my own picture, but how could I do less when influenced by your own generous spirit?" This now-iconic canvas was the first important acquisition for the new museum's collection that, 132 years later, contains over 14,000 objects.

Students and other museum visitors often ask the staff, "How does the Museum acquire objects—are they all gifts from alumnae, or does the Museum also purchase works of art?" This column usually highlights works of art that are new to the permanent collection, and a multitude of stories have been recounted here. These have ranged from the donation by artworld powerhouse Jennifer Josselson Vorbach ('78) of a cutting-edge work by British photographer Susan Derges to the purchase of an 11th-century Islamic dish that grew out of a student's research project. On this occasion we're taking a broader perspective.

The development and refinement of a museum collection is both scientific and serendipitous. On the "scientific" side, the MHCAM staff works diligently to plan the growth of the collection, consulting with professors, Museum board members, and art experts to decide what will best serve the needs of its primary constituency, students and faculty. A collections management policy outlines, among other things, the ways in which works of art enter, and sometimes leave, a permanent collection as it evolves. It articulates the criteria by which potential acquisitions are judged and how they relate to the Museum's central mission. Ethical standards are carefully delineated to underscore the Museum's commitment to acquiring only provenanced objects that are untainted by issues such as illegal exportation or seizure from earlier owners.

Faith Ringgold at work on the serigraph *Mama Can Sing*, given to the Museum recently by Harold and Janet Tague (Janet Hickey, class of 1966). The gift of this print and others created at Lafayette College's Experimental Printmaking Workshop is a significant step in enhancing the Museum's holdings in art by prominent artists of color.

Faith Ringgold
(American, b. 1930)
Papa Can Blow
Serigraph, 2003.
Gift of Harold and Janet Tague (Janet Hickey, class of 1966).
This vibrant serigraph is one of nineteen prints given by the Tagues, all of which were created at the Experimental Printmaking Workshop (EPI) at Lafayette College. EPI provides a creative environment for professional artists from diverse backgrounds to work with students to create work and investigate new and experimental approaches to the print medium. Among the Tagues' recent gifts are works by Sam Gilliam, Kay WalkingStick, Benny Andrews, Elizabeth Catlett, and Curlee Raven Holton, Lafayette professor and director of EPI.

Over the 132 years of its existence, the MHCAM has successfully built endowments dedicated to the purchase of works of art that now comprise its broad-ranging, high-quality teaching collection. The work goes on to refine the list of objects the Museum is seeking. At the moment, an important Italian Renaissance painting is high on the list, along with contemporary prints and photographs, a Dutch 17th-century genre picture, Buddhist sculpture, Latin American art, illuminated manuscripts and Koran pages, and aquatints by Mary Cassatt. Purchases, of course, are always affected by market trends and fashions in collecting. Objects on the wish-list may be easily identified and acquired fairly quickly or, as in the case of the Roman portrait head of Faustina, it can take twenty years to find the perfect example.

And there are more providential elements that come into play, the most important of which is the benevolence of individual collectors and donors, both alumnae and others. Many generous friends have contributed thousands of works of art—like that original important gift of the Bierstadt—which now populate the "cultural laboratory" that is the Art Museum. In the last year alone, courses in Medieval history, religion, English, Italian, art history, Asian studies, chemistry, philosophy, studio art, Classics, dance, environmental studies, and other disciplines have made valuable use of both the permanent collection and the special exhibitions in the Museum's galleries.

Faculty who were interviewed recently for the Museum's strategic plan (see Director's Letter) have noted the vital role that the MHCAM plays in a liberal arts education. Economics professor Jim Hartley noted the "obvious importance of working directly with originals" and went on to point out that he values the Museum not only for the educational opportunities but for simply "having beautiful, important works of art to look at!" Classicist Paula Debnar lauded the Museum staff for their creativity in helping faculty work with collections and even conceive of new courses and new methodologies. Elizabeth Young of the English Department, feels extremely fortunate to have a great art museum right here on campus. "I'm dedicated to using the Museum in my teaching, but I also feel that when I come here, I am a student, too."

A NEW TRADITION FOR MOUNT HOLYOKE

On the night of November 8, 2007, more than 100 students visited the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum to receive henna tattoos, facials, and other spa services. The festive atmosphere—punctuated by strains of sitar music, the smell of fresh fruit and brie, and the sparkle of Andy Warhol's painting, *Diamond Dust Shoes*—was typical of Spa Night, the Museum event organized annually by the student organization known as the Society of Art Goddesses. Spa Night's main initiative is to encourage students to enjoy a relaxing evening in an environment filled with exceptional artwork, and to experience the Museum as a social and cultural resource. Though the tattoos administered last November were merely temporary, the consistent popularity of Spa Night suggests that the event itself won't fade away anytime soon.

Begun in 2004 under the direction of the Goddesses' chair Allegra Hunt '06, Spa Night is now considered a traditional highlight of the fall semester at Mount Holyoke. Offering a night of professional yoga lessons, massages, and manicures, the evening has become a way for the Society of Art Goddesses to attract new community members to the Museum while generating revenue for group trips to other museums, artist's studios, architectural landmarks, and galleries.

Above all, Spa Night is about making connections. It is a backdrop for meaningful interactions among students, and between students and objects. Refreshments are available in the lobby after strolls in the galleries, where students congregate to chat. Even the planning process exemplifies how the students, faculty, and MHCAM staff interact productively. Each year the Society invites a scholar to give a lecture on a topic related to the intersection of art, health, and beauty practices. Talks have included Roman hairstyles, the toilette of the 18th-century French woman, and "extreme" 20th-century clothing styles. A fashion show of vintage Pucci frocks modelled by attendees was the all-time favorite. Spa Night renders the rewards of such collaborative efforts tangible to all involved.

Sarah Obuobi (left), Kanchan Burathoki (right)
Henna Tattooing
Spa Night
November 7, 2007

Bettina Bergmann, Helene Phillips Herzig '49 Professor of Art History (left), Liz Petcu '08 (right)
Spa Night
November 7, 2007

Today, museums realize that they must forge a new relationship with audiences to remain relevant to the concerns of the public they serve. Accordingly, Spa Night embodies an innovative way to attract student visitors without compromising the professional integrity of the institution itself. It represents MHCAM and its partnership with the Society of Art Goddesses at its best: responsive to the evolving ways Mount Holyoke students and the wider community interact with art. Mount Holyoke students love traditions, and Spa Night is becoming a modern one.

— Liz Petcu '08, Chair of the Society of Art Goddesses, Student Assistant to the Curator

This fall the Mount Holyoke College Printmaking Workshop welcomed Jessica Stockholder as its visiting artist. The program—established in 1984 by studio art professor Nancy Campbell—brings accomplished women artists to the campus. Throughout their residency, the selected artists work in the College's printmaking studio while students from Mount Holyoke, and the other Five Colleges (Amherst, Hampshire, and Smith Colleges, and the University of Massachusetts) observe and occasionally assist the artist and master printer. The artist also presents a public lecture to discuss her work and career. Campbell explains "The workshop started as a way to inspire the students at Mount Holyoke. It was designed to give them role models of strong, capable, and successful women artists, and allow them to interact in close proximity to the actual working process that the artist goes through in planning and executing a fine art print." Examples of the prints that are produced during the Workshop are given to the Museum for its permanent collection, and others are sold to raise funds for future workshops.

Jessica Stockholder
(American, b. 1959)
Untitled
Relief print, 2007
Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe

Jessica Stockholder (right),
Liz Chalfin (left)
Mount Holyoke College
Printmaking Workshop, 2007
Photograph Laura Weston

Jessica Stockholder, a prominent contemporary sculptor and Director of Graduate Studies in Sculpture at Yale University, was an ideal candidate for the MHC workshop. She is known for her vibrant, energetic, and site-specific installations, as well as complex sculptures made from a multitude of materials: yarn, wire, rocks, fabric, fans, hay, toys, lights, plastic fruit, children's toys, glass, brick, concrete, sheetrock, plywood, newspaper, paint, and even kitchen appliances. While she works primarily in three dimensions, she enthusiastically accepted the opportunity to be part of the project. Stockholder commented, "I am interested in the gestural marks and different textures that I can use in printmaking." The program offered her the chance to convey her sculptural dexterity in a two-dimensional format. She worked throughout the fall semester, collaborating with Liz Chalfin, Master Printmaker and Director of Zea Mays Printmaking in Florence, Massachusetts.

The workshop is an excellent learning opportunity for all students, not just those studying art. Campbell recalls one such student who was clearly inspired by the experience: "A number of years ago, one of my students, who ended up becoming a computer systems analyst, told me that she used printmaking as inspiration in her work. The workshop had helped her take what she had been learning in her other classes to a different level. She carried the creative process and critical thinking methods into her work as a systems analyst."

A TRIBUTE: JOE HOFHEIMER

A dear friend and fellow Art Advisory Board member, Joe Hofheimer, unexpectedly passed away on September 10, 2007. Joe was a devoted and enthusiastic supporter of the Museum, a passion he shared with his beloved wife Natalie Doernberg Hofheimer, a Mount Holyoke graduate of the class of 1944.

Joining the Advisory Board in 1983, Joe quickly made his presence felt as he solicited financial support, networked with potential art donors, and kept up a lively correspondence with the Museum's director regarding current trends in the field. Joe's commitment to and belief in the work of the Museum was further evidenced by his ongoing personal investments. He was the most generous of donors, offering everything from paper for the copy machines to objects from his own art collection, and a major gift to the Capital Campaign for the Museum's expansion and renovation. He was the Inaugural Chairman and a long-standing member of the Director's Circle and established a much-needed program fund in his wife's memory after her death in July 2004.

As a board leader at Blythedale Children's Hospital, White Plains Hospital, and numerous other health, educational, and community organizations, Joe understood full well the essential role that volunteers play in supporting, energizing, and guiding their chosen organizations. Joe's active leadership and hard work on behalf of the Museum serve as a model for us all. But it is even more as a friend that we will remember him. Joe was a big man, a tall man; but his physical stature was nothing compared to the size of his heart. He will be sorely missed.

— Mary Buchan, Chair, Art Advisory Board

Joe Hofheimer, longtime Art Advisory Board member

THE MUSEUM'S FIRST AAB FELLOW JOINS A NEW TEAM

Kate Dalton ('03), the Museum's inaugural Art Advisory Board Fellow, recently accepted a job as Curatorial Assistant at the Worcester Art Museum (WAM). She was tapped for the position over more than 80 other highly qualified applicants. In her new role, Kate assists the Worcester curators with exhibitions, acquisitions, and collections management, tasks with which she gained great familiarity at the MHCAM. She tracks acquisitions, responds to inquiries from scholars and the general public, and works closely with the Collections Committee at the WAM. This valuable opportunity gives her the chance to build on what she learned during her two-year fellowship, while exposing her to the world of public museums.

Kate is busy using a new database, building relationships with a new board of trustees, and learning about appraisals, among other things. "A lot of my experiences at Mount Holyoke translate to what I'm doing now. I came in knowing what it takes. I recognize what steps need to be followed, and how to be prepared for the unexpected. I came into my new position with the ability to multitask with large projects and still accomplish the daily responsibilities. I couldn't be more grateful to the staff at Mount Holyoke for setting me on this path, and to the Art Advisory Board members for making the fellowship possible in the first place," remarked Dalton.

Kate Dalton, Art Advisory Board Fellow 2005–07 (class of 2003)

FRIENDS OF ART MEMBERSHIP

Become a Friend of Art.

Friends of Art provides core funding for special exhibitions, publications, and public programs. Friends receive invitations to opening receptions, lectures, and other events as well as the newsletter. Memberships, valid for one year, are tax-deductible contributions to support Mount Holyoke College Art Museum.

Museum Hours: Tuesday–Friday, 11 a.m.–5 p.m. and weekends, 1–5 p.m.
Admission is free. Donations welcome.
413-538-2245 www.mtholyoke.edu/go/artmuseum

ABOVE: Barbara Morgan (American, 1900–1992), *Martha Graham—Celebration*
Gelatin silver print photograph, 1937, Gift of Donald Holden
Photograph Petegorsky/Gipe

Membership categories

Student/Young Alumna (Mount Holyoke students or alumnae in classes 2003 or later)	$10
Individual Member	$30
Family/Dual Member	$50
Patron	$100
Sponsor	$250
Benefactor	$500
Director's Circle	$1,000

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☐ I would like information on bequests, life insurance annuities, endowed funds, gifts of art, and other planned giving opportunities.

Please send form and check, payable to MHC Friends of Art, to Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, Lower Lake Road, South Hadley, MA 01075-1499. Questions? Call 413-538-2245 or email artmuseum@mtholyoke.edu.

To sign up for *MHCToday,* a biweekly e-newsletter, go to www.mtholyoke.edu/go/mhctoday.

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